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**A case study inquiry into the implementation of a professional  
learning intervention in cultural competence and culturally responsive  
pedagogy to support refugee students**

Thesis submitted by

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in fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts, Society and Education at James Cook University

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### Statement of the Contribution of Others

Type of assistance	Contribution	Names, titles, and affiliations of co-contributors
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	Secondary Supervisor (2014-2018)	
	Secondary Supervisor (2018-2021)	Dr Neus (Snowy) Evans
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## Abstract

Teachers are required to know, adjust, and respond to the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of their students. This is emphasised in scholarly work and teacher professional standards. In Australia, Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs), *Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds*, speaks directly to the requirement for teachers to adjust and respond to students' diverse cultural, social, and linguistic needs. However, there is little that prepares classroom teachers to understand the refugee experience, respond to cultural differences, and help refugees' transition to Australian schooling. Consequently, teachers find themselves unprepared, not knowing how to effectively respond cross culturally, which makes it very difficult to enact Standard 1.3.

This doctoral study is an investigation into how a school-based professional learning intervention, with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, can facilitate a teacher designed framework for guiding ongoing professional development thereby assisting classroom teachers to better enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs. The researcher also investigated the intervention's impact on teacher beliefs and assumptions about working with students from a refugee background. The study was informed by a culturally responsive methodology and involved a qualitative single case study approach involving six classroom teachers from a primary school in regional Far North Queensland, Australia, with high enrolments of students from refugee backgrounds. Data collection involved multiple sources: a pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire, a series of semi-structured interviews, a researcher's reflective journal and discussions among teachers through co-planning sessions. For data analysis, an integrated approach employed both deductive and inductive methods. Firstly, data was analysed deductively using predetermined themes and subthemes informed by Beven-Brown's (2003) *cultural self-review*. Secondly, data was analysed inductively using a conceptual framework that drew on Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008) *iterative learning process framework* and Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) *interactive model*.

There are three main findings in this study. These concern teachers' unconscious bias, cultural safety, and strategies for effective professional learning in cultural competence. Teachers experienced cognitive dissonance when exploring their own unconscious bias and no one was immune from experiencing such unconscious bias. Cultural safety was identified as a prominent theme recognised by teachers as essential to creating culturally responsive

practices. Teachers also identified that a culturally unsafe environment created a lack of trust of Anglo-Saxon teachers, which contributed to a gap in information gathering about students and their families. Teachers established that their commitment to cultural safety was critical to transforming existing power imbalances and providing an environment where students and families feel culturally safe to engage in education.

The findings also identified two significant strategies as important for shifting teachers' beliefs and assumptions which are necessary for supporting teachers' journey during professional learning in cultural competence. By providing opportunities for co-and self-regulation and critical self-reflection teachers can clearly articulate their relationship between their unconscious bias and their pedagogical choices. These strategies help to inform the future development of professional learning in cultural competence.

One major outcome from this study is a pedagogical tool co-created by teachers. The tool assisted teachers to recognise and reframe their own unconscious bias, enact strategies to establish cultural safety, and provide strategies to enact a culturally responsive pedagogy. This pedagogical tool will enable other teachers to embed this into their own classroom practice.

This study emphasises that system-wide professional learning is imperative in supporting teachers to be culturally competent and respond effectively to students from refugee backgrounds. It is also strongly argued that through targeted professional learning, teachers can begin to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs. Finally, this study shows that teachers can reposition their existing beliefs and assumptions about students from refugee backgrounds and apply new pedagogies that respond to students' needs in a culturally responsive manner.

**Keywords:** culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive methodology, cultural competency, refugee background, professional learning, primary school, cultural safety

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.0 Introduction

Australia is one of the world's most culturally diverse countries, with 29.7 percent of the current population born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The country's cultural diversity is partly attributable to its enduring humanitarian program that has provided a haven to as many as 880,000 refugees over the past 60 years (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019). Refugees come from a variety of countries with various languages, religions, and cultures and bring with them a diverse range of skills, experiences, and qualifications that have made a significant and positive impact on Australian society. This includes for example, enhanced economic growth through reducing labour shortages and developing new businesses. Refugees also contribute by their social resilience, adaptability, and vibrance (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019).

Australia caters to refugees' initial arrival needs through a resettlement program that adheres to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR's) definition of refugees, which is based on the 1951 Refugee Convention. In doing so, the program provides protection and resettlement to refugees in humanitarian need from all around the world. The UNHCR's 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as a person who:

- is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence
- has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, and
- is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (UNHCR, 2002).

The core strategy of UNHCR resettlement is to mandate and safeguard the rights of refugees while advocating for host countries to provide successful resettlement programs (UNHCR, 2002), a strategy to which Australia is committed.

The resettlement process for refugees is critical in aiding their successful transition and engagement with their new community. An effective resettlement program not only prepares newly arrived refugees to adapt to their host country, but also maintains their cultural identity (UNHCR, 2002). Institutions such as schools are an important part of this process. This is because, for refugee families with children, schools are the first organisation with which refugees interact and engage (McBrien, 2005; Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012). For many refugee families, schools are the places that provide everyday interactions and routines that promote connections which allow these families to quickly engage with the community

(Hek, 2005a). Thus, schools are "...a stabilizing feature in the unsettled lives of refugee students" (Matthews, p. 31) and, as such, are the so-called 'frontline,' pivotal to the resettlement process. Researchers in the field of refugee education also stress that providing quality educational experiences at the start of their first encounter with schools is crucial in how well children settle and integrate. In short, this implies the role of schools in the resettlement process cannot be underestimated (Rutter, 2006).

Currently, education in Australia has no overarching policy or framework to assist students from refugee backgrounds. There is no document or body that assists state education departments in implementing good practice or that guides school leaders and classroom teachers in classrooms (Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006; West, 2004). Consequently, there are gaps and inconsistencies in how Australian states support students from refugee backgrounds; provision for their school needs varies from state to state (Rose, 2019). Matthews (2008) describes this lack of systematic intervention as a piecemeal approach which has adhered very little to international human rights conventions, particularly concerning newly arrived refugee students. However, examples of best practices have been identified in international educational policy and research. For instance, this includes elements such as: the importance of our school ethos; a welcoming school and classroom environment; quality induction processes for new teachers in schools with high numbers of refugee students; community engagement; pastoral care; and responding to racism (Matthews, 2008). These are considered essential components in assisting successful resettlement and, consequently, contributing to the academic success of newly arrived refugee students (Hek, 2005a; Hek, 2005b; Rutter, 2006).

There are profound consequences for Australia's lack of consistent policy and piecemeal approach to assisting newly arrived refugee students. This means that for many schools, students receive a lack of appropriate support, which, in the long term, has led to lower engagement in the school system, feelings of disempowerment, high levels of absenteeism, difficulty in establishing or sustaining strong healthy relationships, poor retention rates, risk of poor academic success, and difficulty seeking long term employment and overall socioeconomic status (Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014; Porche, Fortuna, Lin, & Alegria, 2011; Watson, 2009). In comparison, international researchers who identified educational systems with consistent policy and frameworks to guide schools saw newly arrived refugee students having greater success in education; greater social support and inclusion into the wider community; and improved psychological health and emotional

wellbeing (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Ross & Wu, 1995; Sznitman, Reisel, & Romer, 2011).

The role of schools in newly arrived refugee students' and their families' lives is significant as they assist with transitioning into living in Australia. For example, schools need to develop their staff's knowledge and understanding of pre- and post-migration experiences, and the impact of acculturation and trauma on learning (Ministry of Education, 2007). To do this requires work and commitment from both schools and teachers through ongoing professional learning (Foundation House, 2011; Watkins, Nobel, & Wong, 2018). Further, it requires school leaders to ensure that they are staffed with high quality, culturally competent teachers who can guide newly arrived students' smooth transition into Australian schooling (Stewart, 2011).

This chapter sets out the motivation and background for the research in this thesis. The study is an investigation into a professional learning intervention, centred on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, to help build teacher capability in working with students from refugee backgrounds. Firstly, this chapter gives an outline of the purpose and significance of this study. Secondly, it provides its background by setting out existing educational policies and describing their impact on students from refugee backgrounds. This is followed by a description of the research design. Finally, the last section of this chapter establishes how this thesis is organised.

## **1.2 Purpose and significance of this study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate and build on the existing gaps in research relating to education and support for students from refugee backgrounds. Currently, the teaching profession has professional standards that teachers across Australia are required to demonstrate at a proficient level. It is Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) that this study is concerned with. Standard 1.3 requires teachers to demonstrate that they are competent in: *Designing and implementing teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

However, in order for teachers to demonstrate this standard, a number of factors need to be considered. Firstly, this standard is not widely understood and, in some cases, not enacted upon as there is little that assists or guides teachers to unpack what it looks like in practice. Secondly, to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs requires cultural competence. Thirdly, quality teaching in culturally diverse contexts requires a knowledge of cultures, of working cross culturally and of responding to the complex needs of refugee learners. These factors are not

explicitly explained in the APSTs (Santoro, 2013). Furthermore, they are not specific enough for teachers to understand and enact inclusive teaching practices that are beneficial for newly arrived refugee students. Teachers find it difficult to know how this is translated into their teaching practice. Further to this, there is either very little professional learning to prepare teachers to work with the complex needs of students from refugee backgrounds, or none is available at all. This study is an attempt to provide a way forward in assisting teachers to unpack and enact the professional teaching standards through a professional learning intervention, which is further discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Research into refugee education for the most part has focused on the challenges of newly arrived refugee students and has provided little to inform schools and teachers on best practice. (Correa-Velez, Gifford, McMichael, & Sampson, 2017; Matthews, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Riggs & Due, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). For example, much of the research has centred on difficulties facing refugee students in acquiring English language proficiency (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Forrest, Lean, & Dunn, 2016; Miller, Ziaian, & Esterman, 2018; Rose, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018). There is also concentrated research on the challenges teachers encounter when supporting students from refugee backgrounds (Watkins et al., 2018). In this study, the researcher has sought to shift the attention away from the perceived inadequacies of newly arrived refugee students and instead look to the actions of their teachers in an attempt to change this deficit mindset.

This study examines how a professional learning intervention can help teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs and influence their attitudes and beliefs towards working with newly arrived refugee students by exploring the following research questions:

How does a research-informed, school-based professional learning—with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy:

1. Affect teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students from a refugee background?
2. Facilitate a teacher designed framework for guiding ongoing professional learning and changes to classroom practice for students from refugee backgrounds?

The development of culturally competent teachers requires teachers to actively change themselves. One way to do this is through personal development. In this study, these existing assumptions and beliefs are examined, through a professional learning intervention. At present, there is minimal literature focuses on how teachers' existing assumptions and beliefs about refugees might influence the pedagogies teachers use and the consequent impact of those pedagogies on refugee students' successful transition into Australian schooling. This



study contributes to a small body of research in cultural competence but also, as far as the researcher is aware, is the first of its kind in the context of students from refugee backgrounds in the Far North Queensland context.

### **1.3 Impact of Australian education policy on students from refugee backgrounds**

The impact of global neoliberal reforms on educational policy in Australia has been significant in establishing a culture of invisibility for refugee students, or at least, of marginalising students from refugee backgrounds in policy discourse. According to Ball (2016), neoliberalism has changed “how we value ourselves and value others, how we think about what we do, and why we do it” (p. 147). As such, neoliberalism is manifested in competition, decentralised and privatised education systems, choice, a performative culture, and measurable outcomes such as standardised testing (Teng, Abu Bakar, & Layne, 2020). This has provided and endorsed education systems with an approach characterised by the same curriculum and the same pedagogy to close achievement gaps between mainstream and marginalised groups (Sleeter, 2011a). Consequently, students from refugee backgrounds are significantly disadvantaged (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

Governments that subscribe to neoliberalism focus on human capital building through promoting education. Human capital building is described as the education and training of individuals, so that they are adequately equipped for producing labour of economic value (Quiggin, 1999). This has led to a direct response to governments’ need to ensure national competitiveness in an international economy (Lingard, 2010), resulting in the development of neoliberal education policy. Education has become a matter of economics, creating a culture of performativity, competitiveness, and high-stakes standardised testing (Ball, 2003; Burgess & Evans, 2017; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Lingard, 2010; Lingard, Mills, & Hayes, 2000).

Education policy is strongly endorsed by those who are politically influential and powerful and valued by politicians (Ball, 2003), therefore establishing a visible inextricable link between a national schooling agenda, funding, and economic productivity (Comber & Nixon, 2009). For some there is an acceptance of neoliberal doctrine in the educational context as a positive way forward in equity in education. This acceptance has led to a belief in which educational aims are most valuable for individuals and for the economy. Neoliberalism also presupposes there is a relationship between education and social justice (Patrick, 2013). For example, access to education is a core neoliberal assumption where all students can succeed regardless of their sociocultural contexts. Neoliberalism speaks of doing away with the unfair advantage that students from wealthy backgrounds have and establishing a level playing field by raising standards for all. However, there is a strong argument stating

that the current education policy has created a “system of neoliberalism that subverts educational social justice by holding minoritised individuals and communities responsible for their own marginalisation; and invests instead in deficit policies that problematise the ‘Other’ ” (Burgess & Evans, 2017, p. 10).

Neoliberalism also impacts how schools and teachers think about and respond to newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds. Neoliberalism gives an illusion of equity, fairness, and raising the benchmark and expectations for students from marginalised communities, but simultaneously negates the values, language, worldview, and experiences which students bring into the classroom (Sleeter, 2012). Consequently, this makes it difficult for teachers to differentiate and respond to the diverse needs of learners, resulting in pedagogies of indifference, which fail to value the cultural differences and diversity of students from refugee backgrounds (Morrison, Rigney, Hattam, & Diplock, 2019).

The context of policies and political decision making in Australia has been influenced by historical events of European occupation to the present day. This has impacted the way in which education systems approach policies that inform newly arrived refugees (Sidhu, Taylor, & Christie, 2011). We also need to contextualise these experiences against the British settlement of Australia, which led to the marginalisation of Indigenous Australians through its pervasive policies. The Australian education system reflects historical, social, and cultural contexts which were adopted from the British system (Burgess & Evans, 2017) and influenced by its colonial past. As such, the schooling system represents a “monolingual, hegemonic Western-based system” (Thomas & Kearney, 2008, p. 7) that enacts neoliberalism, “a contemporary manifestation of colonisation” (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 11).

It follows therefore, that education and the inclusion of students from refugee backgrounds are woven into Australia’s narrative of neoliberal policies and practices (Burgess & Evans, 2017; Thomas & Kearney, 2008). While Australia is a signatory to the Hague Convention and other human rights conventions, according to Taylor and Sidhu (2012) there is a real disconnection between the principles of human rights and the existing policies and practices that have institutionalised refugees. These policies and practices create “the conditions for the marginalisation of refugees and in the worst case scenarios, facilitate their slide into an underclass” (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012, p. 3).

Neoliberal educational policies and practices are created and powered by a racial hierarchy, supported through institutional powers (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017) and driven by and linked with racism (Morrison et al., 2019), therefore impacting the successful transition of students from refugee backgrounds. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) note that racism

and attitudinal barriers further impede students' inclusion into the Australian school context and wider community. Kohli et al. (2017) emphasise that, through such processes, inequality in some cases, becomes accepted as normal practice, therefore further problematising or blaming marginalised groups for their educational inequality at the individual level, consequently hiding institutional responsibility. Moreover, policy addressing the needs of students from refugee backgrounds has been ignored or reframed to hide students' specific needs within inclusive policies (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

The hiding of refugee students makes for “the discursive invisibility of refugees in policy and research [and therefore works] against their cultural, social and economic integration” (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012, p. 4). As a result, this makes it difficult to gain any traction in pushing for change in policy and practice. For example, two existing national policy documents that are used to inform and guide teachers in how to work effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse educational settings mask the complex learning needs of refugee students within the discourse of their being ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ along with other migrant and Indigenous students. These policies include the APSTs (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014) and *The English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource: Overview and Advice*.

The APSTs (2014) pay clear attention to learner diversity and the ethos of a culturally responsive pedagogy for all learners at a national level. Standard 1 of the APSTs requires teachers to “demonstrate professional knowledge as to how students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds learn” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014; Queensland College of Teachers, 2015). Currently no literature, sufficient resources or tools are available to help teachers unpack the standards, making it very difficult for teachers to know how to enact Standard 1.3, among others.

Another example of national inclusive policies and resources that highlight cultural diversity is found in the document *The English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource: Overview and Advice* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). Its purpose is to support classroom teachers without specialist English as an additional language (EAL) or dialect (EAL/D) training in working with this cohort of students and to:

- help teachers understand students' cultural and linguistic diversity, and the ways this understanding can be used in the classroom
- provide examples of teaching strategies supportive of EAL/D students

- direct teachers to additional relevant and useful support for teaching EAL/D students (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014, p. 1).

While making no specific reference to refugee students, this document also identifies and acknowledges explicitly the difficulties and challenges EAL students encounter with the Australian Curriculum:

EAL/D students bring with them their own cultural knowledge and experiences, and therefore it cannot be assumed that they will have the cultural knowledge and perspectives required for success in schooling through the Australian Curriculum. As well as providing guidance on how to promote English language development, this EAL/D resource provides advice to teachers on how to value and incorporate the cultural knowledge and perspectives of their students. The advice will assist teachers to:

- provide learning experiences that reflect the identities and experiences of all students in the classroom
- provide an inclusive and nurturing environment for EAL/D students
- broaden the intercultural understandings of all students in the classroom
- identify the assumed knowledge implicit in the Australian Curriculum and take steps to make this knowledge explicit to their EAL/D student (p. 6).

This policy document highlights the importance of teachers' understanding of cultural diversity, recognises the knowledge and skills students bring with them, and the importance of utilising students' prior knowledge in the teaching and learning process. However, newly arrived refugee learners are notionally placed in the homogeneous group of all EAL/D learners, therefore this conceals and discounts their complex learning needs, which could include trauma (Queensland Program for Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, 2001).

#### **1.4 Educational policy: A Queensland context**

In Queensland an “invisibility of refugees in policy” (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012, p. 4) impedes the way in which schools and teachers are able to respond to their newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds. Existing policies define individual groups under one homogeneous umbrella, therefore negating the uniqueness and complexity of needs and barriers to accessing education that impact each group. Furthermore, existing policies encourage a culture of homogenisation, standardisation of the curriculum, standardised testing

and, by association, undifferentiated pedagogy (Lingard, 2010; Ball 2003; Comber & Nixon, 2009).

Currently, a major state policy document for students from refugee backgrounds in Queensland is the Queensland Department of Education's Inclusion Education Policy (Department of Education, 2020). These students are identified within the wider group of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CALD). Included in this group are migrants, international students, Australian born students of migrant parents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Inclusion Education Policy ensures that teachers still work within a standardised national framework and high-stakes national benchmarking regime (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Young, 2010) therefore disempowering refugee and other students in this category and by subsuming all groups under one approach.

#### *1.4.1 Educational Provision in Queensland for Supporting Refugee Students.*

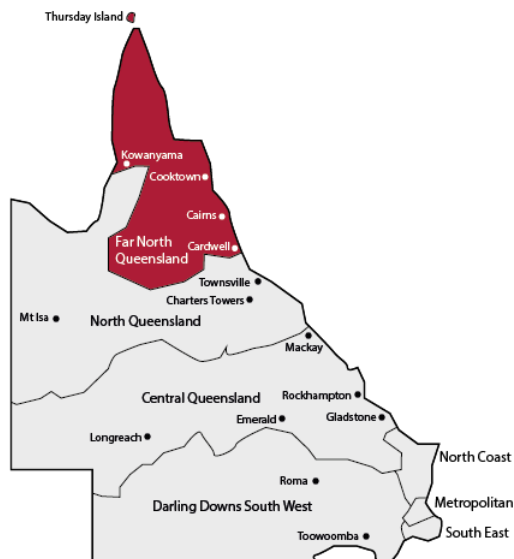
There is a lack of provision or guidance that informs schools and teachers on how to best support newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds in Queensland schools. For example, as stated previously, in Queensland, refugee students fall under the Inclusive Education policy, which not only blends all non-mainstream cultures under the rubric of diversity but also includes students with disability. Instead of a policy that deals with the specific complex needs of refugee learners, the Queensland Department of Education makes provisions in the form of a funding model to support schools with refugee students (State of Queensland, 2016). This funding is solely based on visa class and date of arrival into Australia and is dependent on fixed budget allocations. Regions within Queensland are allocated funds based on the number of 'weighted' refugees per region. For example, funding varies according to whether they are in their first, second or third year in Australia, after which this particular type of funding ceases. Then, each region distributes funds to schools based on need (State of Queensland, 2014). However, this funding model only outlines a vague list of expenditure guidelines, making it difficult for schools to target their funding appropriately and in a way that is responsive to students' needs.

In the context of this study, schools in the Far North region of Queensland (Figure 1.1) are provided funding with no direction or support from the Far North Queensland regional office that supervises schools in this region, leaving decision making to schools. In Far North Queensland, schools are entitled to a maximum of three years of English language support, which is based on the current Queensland Department of Education's formula for providing support to refugee children, as outlined above. As such, staffing of EAL teachers is allocated

directly from the region's statistical proportion of New Arrival (NAP) funding from the Commonwealth Government. Schools do not provide any extra funding or staffing to support refugee student needs apart from that provided by the NAP funding.

### Figure 1.1

#### *Education Department Queensland - Far North Queensland Region*



Note. Where Far North Queensland is in Queensland. From State of Queensland (Department of Education), 2021 (<https://teach.qld.gov.au/teach-in-queensland-state-schools/our-schools/far-north-queensland-region> )

At the time of this study which began in 2014, there was no officially designated English Language Centre for newly arrived refugee children in the Far North region. However, in 2015, two Intensive English Centres were officially established, one each at primary and high school levels. English language support time in this region was dependant on the school at which students were enrolled. As a result, students could receive as little as one hour a month or up to 3 hours a day of English language support.

Refugees have been arriving in Far North Queensland schools for decades and there still is limited literature or policy that informs school leaders and educators on how to respond to refugee students' needs in the classroom. The reality then, for many mainstream primary teachers in the region (and elsewhere in Australia), is that they are required to have sophisticated knowledge and skills to teach this complex and diverse group of students, with little or no support and few resources (Dooley, 2009; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

There is considerable pressure, enhanced by thin funding regimes, to place refugee students in regular classes supported only by the classroom teacher. Newly arrived students who do not have enough English language proficiency are often integrated into mainstream classrooms with limited or no support. Current practices for the integration of students from refugee backgrounds within the mainstream school system are ineffective. To its detriment, current education policy is unclear about the time it takes for students to acquire English proficiency to the level of their native English-speaking peers. For example, the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) guidelines for New Arrival students state, “Students with a language background other than English who arrived from overseas and have been attending school for less than a year before the test may be exempted. However, these students are not automatically exempt and should be given the opportunity to participate in testing” (Australian Curriculum, 2015, p. 10).

Currently, policies relating to targeted funding for newly arrived refugee students do not account for the diversity and complexity of this group of learners. Instead, newly arrived refugee students are defined as a homogeneous group who learn English and acculturate to their new surroundings at the same rate and in the same way. Such practices and policies are in direct opposition to both second language acquisition and refugee education research which demonstrate that much longer periods of specialist second language support are required than the funding allows. In acknowledging the level of trauma and interrupted schooling such students have experienced, it is fair to say that if they are to be successful then students from refugee backgrounds cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group. Neither is it at all reasonable to consider them as part of a homogeneous overall EAL/D group. As Miller, Mitchell, and Brown (2005) stress “the complexity of language acquisition itself cannot be overemphasised” (p.22). Refugee students must acquire social communication skills, academic writing, and speaking skills, while concurrently struggling to catch up to their native English-speaking peers, who are themselves still developing academic and writing skills.

### **1.5 Research design**

This study is informed by my personal narrative. Its methodological approach is discussed in Chapter 6. It is theoretically grounded in critical social theory (Freire & Ramos, 2000; Giroux, 1983), social constructivism (Glaserfeld, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978), and an ethics of care (Noddings, 2002). For these theorists, knowledge is constructed through experiences, encounters, and social interactions. Knowledge is bound to personal experiences mediated through the interaction with others (Glaserfeld, 1995). These theorists are

concerned with how educational institutions position marginalised students. Also, they advocate for critically addressing cultural differences and existing power relations, which, in the context of this study, occur within the school context.

A qualitative single case study approach was adopted to investigate an intervention based on cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and its impact on a group of classroom teachers. This case study examined how a professional learning intervention can help teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs and influence their attitudes and beliefs towards working with newly arrived refugee students. This case study is an investigation of a phenomenon in depth within a real-life context, which helped me to answer the how and why of the problem (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2014) and investigate the problem deeply. A major strength in executing a single case study is that it enabled the use of multiple sources for the collection of data. The sources consisted of a pre- and post-professional development learning questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, discussions, artefacts created from co-planning sessions, and a personal reflective journal.

Data analysis was informed by a conceptual framework to capture data in a way that it honoured participants and their lived experiences and showed changes in teachers' beliefs and assumptions towards working with students from refugee backgrounds. This conceptual framework incorporated both Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008a) *iterative learning process framework* and Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) *interactive model* (Figure 6.2). This framework acted as a professional learning lens that showed the iterative nature of learning, data collection, and analysis. Full details of the research design are discussed in Chapter 6.

## **1.6 Organisation of the thesis**

This first chapter includes a background to the state of play in education for students from refugee backgrounds. I have also outlined the reasons for undertaking this research.

Chapter 2 consists of an outline of my personal narrative, illustrating how this significantly impacted the impetus for this study. In this chapter, I discuss how my background and personal experiences growing up, migrating to Australia and teaching in a range of culturally diverse contexts have influenced the subject of this research.

The literature review for this study is presented over three chapters. This study requires substantial background knowledge to provide context to this study. It also provides a context and framework for development of my professional learning intervention. Chapter 3 commences with a review of existing literature on issues, concerns and current practices in schools to support students from refugee backgrounds. The literature is explored on teacher quality and teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of culture. The final section to



Chapter 3 is a review of the literature on professional learning in the educational context. This section informs best practice for developing teacher capacity and provides the necessary background for Chapter 5, where professional learning is explored in more detail, as related to developing cultural competence.

Chapter 4 extends the scope of the literature review in Chapter 3. In this chapter is set out how I approach and conceptualise culture, cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy within the context of this study and of education.

Chapter 5 builds on Chapters 3 and 4 by outlining and justifying a professional learning framework developed in this research to inform my design of the professional learning intervention. Chapter 5 also provides a comprehensive review of the literature on best practice in professional learning related to cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. Here, six strategies are discussed identified as critical in developing and implementing professional learning in cultural competence.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the methodology used for this study, with an outline of its theoretical, methodological and research approach. This chapter also includes data collection and data analysis strategies.

Chapter 7 presents the first series of findings from the research: This includes participants' cultural positions before engaging in a professional learning intervention on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Chapter 8 focuses on findings that illustrate changes in participants' cultural positions after the professional learning intervention. Findings are identified through three major themes: "we all need to work towards cultural safety", "we all have an unconscious bias" and "effective professional learning".

In Chapter 9, the outcomes of this study are presented. It focuses on participants' learning trajectories and presents a pedagogical framework that was co-constructed during co-planning sessions.

Chapter 10 comprises a discussion of the findings. This chapter discusses three key findings that were identified in this study: (1) we all have an unconscious bias (2) we all need to work towards cultural safety and (3) effective professional learning for cultural competency. It also provides a discussion linking the findings to the literature outlined in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Finally, Chapter 11, consists of the study's recommendations, its limitations and future research suggestions which emerge from this study. A conclusion to the entire thesis is also given here.

## Chapter 2: Bringing my authentic self to the research

### 2.0 Introduction

I'm still getting my feet wet... One cannot attempt to understand and know the other without first knowing oneself (Valenzeuela, 2013, p. 69).

This chapter sets the context of how I have come to identify and understand myself before going out in the field of research. In following Nevin (2013), rather than masking my subjectivity in this research, I expose how my personal beliefs, experiences and subjectivity inform my research by tracing the events in my life that have led me to become a teacher of students from refugee backgrounds and engage in this study. This is because it is only by explicitly acknowledging my background and experiences that I am able to bring my authentic self to this research (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013). In this chapter, I firstly talk about my links to Maori ancestry and the impact of colonisation on my identity. Following that, I discuss my experiences as a migrant to Australia as a teenager and its impact on my initial experiences in Australia. Then I recount my experiences as a primary teacher and an English as an additional language (EAL/D) teacher living and working in many different cross-cultural contexts in Australia and overseas. I then conclude by describing how my experiences and professional learning opportunities lead me to realise that I had to change my thinking and approach to teaching, if I were to teach in a culturally responsive manner.

### 2.1 My personal story

I am of Maori descent belonging to the Whakatohea *iwi* (tribe) of New Zealand. My “Maoriness” comes from my *whakapapa* or descent line, which comes through my maternal grandfather. I can trace my *whakapapa* to the arrival of Mataatua waka (name of the canoe) which carried my descendant, Muriwai of chiefly descent. My father is *pakeha* (white New Zealander) of English, Scottish and Irish ancestry. My mother is of Maori and English descent. Growing up in Auckland with my four siblings, my father and my mother, we did not question our heritage. My mother did not acknowledge her “Maoriness” because she did not know it. In the last two years, I questioned her about how she could not have known her father was of Maori heritage, given that he had brown skin. Her response was that she was told we were French (which was used to hide the perceived shame of Maori heritage), and she accepted that. Sometimes at family gatherings conversations arose concerning my great grandmother who was referred to as the “old Maori lady”. Nothing else was said about our Maori ancestry. Therefore, I was raised with the belief that I only had European heritage, which made sense given my grandmother was English and my grandfather was just who he

was, my grandfather, all loving and caring. As a child, I regularly participated in learning Maori language, *kapa haka* (singing and dancing performances) and the *powhiri* (welcoming ceremonies) at school. This was part of New Zealand life which I had no reason to question.

Not until my early twenties did I discover my *whakapapa* and a family history of secrecy and denial of Maori heritage. My grandfather was born in 1912 and raised on the *marae* (meeting place, which is the basis of traditional community life) in Omarumutu, Bay of Plenty on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island. He eventually left with his parents to farmland in Drury, outside of Auckland and then later to Mission Bay, Auckland, without ever returning to his *iwi*. My grandmother told me that there were attempts by members of the *iwi* to persuade him to come back and that he turned away from offers of traditional land. No one knows why he made that decision. His wife, my grandmother, is still living and I have sought answers from her in the past. Unfortunately, she is a product of her time in that being married to a Maori was shameful and meant a life of discrimination. Therefore, any discussions about this topic were very sensitive.

I can only surmise from what history tells us. My grandfather was born into a time of decline in the numbers of Maori speakers and schools discouraged speaking the Maori language. Between 1920 and 1960, many Maori families were encouraged to integrate into New Zealand mainstream life and move to more urbanised areas, this was known as "pepper potting". This was part of New Zealand's government policy to scatter Maori families among white New Zealanders. Consequently, this push to urbanise Maori meant that many did not grow up in their *marae* with their traditions and guidance by elders in what it was to be Maori. This meant that many Maori people could not speak the language and did not know their traditions or heritage (Meredith, 2015). I believe that my grandfather assumed that by assimilating into the *pakeha* culture, this would bring a better outcome for himself and his children.

To understand my grandfather's motivations for rejecting his culture and people requires me to come to terms with culture and language loss and to understand the role colonisation played in shaping my family's history. Colonisation has restructured the way in which Maori communities have existed and continue to exist. For me, as an adult, this restructure meant that I had to re-establish social and cultural connections with my *iwi* without knowing all the cultural nuances and language to assist me in meaningful engagement with this community (Harris, Carlson, & Poata-Smith, 2013).

Smith's (2012) description of the effects of colonisation and its profound influence and effects on indigenous cultures best describes my history and what underpins my worldview, beliefs on education and outlook on life:

Thus, the world's indigenous populations belong to a network of peoples. They share as peoples who have been subjected to the colonisation of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonising society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out (Smith, 2012, p. 7).

The political and social history of New Zealand has profoundly influenced and contributed to my ideas and beliefs around social justice and equity. The effects of colonisation have stolen part of my identity, the Maoriness of me. As such, I have missed out on learning to speak *te reo Maori* fluently, on engagement in the culture and connection to a *whanau* (family) and *iwi* I did not know existed. I believe these feelings of missing out on crucial elements of being Maori and having connection to my country have given me the understanding and drive to advocate for other cultural groups to maintain their own culture and language. My feelings of missing out were also deepened through migration. Moving to Australia meant I was pushed further away from learning and understanding my heritage and all things Maori.

My family migrated to Brisbane, Australia in 1985 from Auckland, New Zealand. This was a time of deep recession when many New Zealanders took the opportunity to leave for a better economic life in Australia. For my father, an engineer, moving to Brisbane meant economic prosperity. My initial experiences of migration were negative and often painful. At 14, I had already established friendships and was very settled in secondary school in New Zealand. As a new student who looked different and spoke differently, I drew a lot of unwanted attention from students and teachers at my new school.

In my first few years in Australia, I was teased, and in some cases verbally abused by students and teachers. Comments included "you kiwis come over here and take our jobs" and "dole bludgers." Although they contradicted each other, insults like these blighted my existence every day until senior school, by which time I had established myself in the culture of Australian schooling and the remarks stopped or dwindled off to very few. However, my general opinion and attitude towards the Australian culture and people at that time was that they were intolerant and unaccepting of difference.

At university, when studying teaching in Brisbane, this exposed me to themes of feminism, social justice and the subtle discrimination of minority cultures, especially of

Australian Indigenous peoples. I also became aware of the shocking history of colonisation for Indigenous Australians, which cemented my opinion about European Australian culture even further. During my last year at university in 1996, the Australian government changed its policy for New Zealanders holding permanent visas. All permanent visa holders would be subject to the same conditions as international students, and therefore incur extra fees.

This meant that I had to become an Australian citizen. This practice was seen by many New Zealanders living in Australia, where a reciprocal agreement existed between the two countries, as discriminatory. It is difficult to explain my feelings at that time. I think it must be different for children than adults. I was not happy as a teenager relocating to a new country and resented my parents for uprooting my life. Even though I could retain my New Zealand citizenship as a dual citizen, I felt that by becoming an Australian citizen, meant my connection to my country was gradually disappearing. I knew I had to take the citizenship step. I wanted to be a teacher and complete my university degree, but it was hard to swallow. However, I did it. After finishing my Bachelor of Education (Primary) in Brisbane, I took the opportunity to live and teach in a remote community in the Northern Territory.

## **2.2 Influences as a teacher and the context of the workplace**

My experiences as a classroom teacher and as an EAL/D specialist teacher, working in a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse contexts, both in Australia and abroad, have afforded me many opportunities to engage with and deepen my understanding of people from these different backgrounds. I have always taken interest in working with students who are learning English as an extra language, while advocating for the preservation of their own cultures and languages. I believe my experiences of migration, discrimination and the loss of my cultural heritage have helped me empathise with students who have experienced discrimination and difficulties with migration.

In 1997, I started my teaching career in Bulman, a small isolated Aboriginal community of approximately 300 people in Central Arnhem land in the Northern Territory. Bulman is situated along the Central Arnhem Road between the town of Katherine and Nhulunbuy. This was the first time I had experienced schooling where no one spoke English as their native tongue. From there, I only worked in schools that were culturally diverse: Kormilda College in Darwin, then a series of schools in the Torres Strait, including Thursday Island, Warraber Island and Poruma Island.

After completing my Masters in Education (TESOL) in 2006, I decided to make the move into migrant and refugee education. In 2003, Cairns, Queensland became a regional settlement community and therefore schools attracted enrolments of students from refugee

backgrounds from African countries including Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Sudan, and Burundi. At this time, my husband and I began to volunteer with newly arrived refugee families from Sudan and I took a position teaching newly arrived refugee students at a local high school.

My first experiences of teaching this group of students were hit and miss as there were no previous programs or resources to draw on to assist with my pedagogy. I was forced to continually research programs from other states in Australia and rely on this information to inform my practice. Although, other states had a long history of supporting refugee learners and therefore they had funding and infrastructure, the education system and school I worked in did not. In addition, I was able to draw on my previous teaching experiences working in low literacy primary and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D contexts, however, most of the time I needed to think of different approaches to cater to the refugee students' needs. What I did learn was the need for flexibility, patience and relationship-building. These are critical in order to begin teaching.

In 2006, my husband, who was also a teacher, and I made the decision to take leave from teaching and work in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I took the role as the head teacher for the Kindergarten to Preparatory campus (which was from 3 years old to Year 1 in the Australian context) at a private school for local Ethiopians called Dandii Boru. I was the only white staff member on campus. This was not new for me because of my experiences of being the only white person while working in remote Australia and I thrived in this context. Living and working in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, provided me with insight into some ups and downs, with the joys and frustrations of experiencing something new and living outside my comfort zone. For instance, there were the challenges of learning cultural rules and nuances in communicating with staff, families, and students. Sometimes I would get it right, but mostly I got it wrong, which meant I had to learn humility, patience and understand that living cross-culturally required me to make significant changes in myself. After having my appendix removed and suffering typhus twice whilst living in Ethiopia, I decided I needed to be closer to hospitals that were more reliable, and in June 2008 we relocated to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

I took a position at the Australian International School in Sharjah as the EAL and learning support teacher for Middle School boys (Year 6-10). The school employed cultural awareness specialists to help new teachers transition to the UAE and Emirati culture. Upon completion of the course, we were assigned a psychologist who coached us for six months to help adapt to the new culture. This course provided by the school began to make an impact on how I viewed the world, how I interacted with others around me and my unconscious bias.

I began to learn about the worldview of the Emirati people and what was important to them. In understanding this, I began to see that the perceived behaviour and interactions I experienced were just that, perceived by my cultural lens, judged in terms of my cultural values and previous experiences.

Slowly, it was beginning to make sense. I started to better understand the importance of accepting difference as critical to working cross-culturally. I also identified that I was at the beginning of my journey in learning how to communicate cross-culturally, but I still required more knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, I wanted to know how to reflect on my own practice and develop skills in cross-cultural communication. I understood that I needed to change the way I communicated but did not really know what effective cross-cultural communication looked like. I knew that if I worked to transform myself, I would be more effective in my teaching.

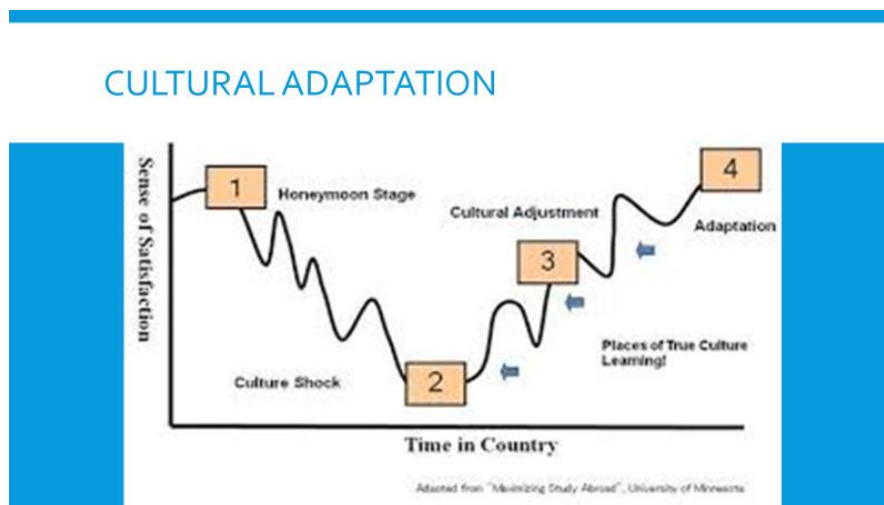
Through this process, I began to question my experiences of working in Australia which had only ever been in cross-cultural situations. This led me to wonder why teachers in Australia did not have training in how to work cross-culturally, to help them understand newly arrived refugee students and their adjustments. Despite being in a multicultural country, nowhere in my teacher education training or teaching experiences did I ever formally learn about how to work across cultures.

On returning to Cairns in November 2009, I took a position as an EAL/D advisory teacher for a primary school and a high school for the start of the 2010 academic year. The caseload at the primary school was approximately thirty students and the high school I supported approximately five students from Year 8 to Year 11. My role at these two schools was twofold: I was teaching English to migrant and refugee background students and also supporting classroom teachers differentiating the curriculum for their EALD learners.

In 2011, I came across a professional learning opportunity through my EAL/D teacher network about a cultural competence course. This was a two- training course run by TAFE Queensland in partnership with Harmony Place: Multicultural Centre for Mental Health in Brisbane. During this professional learning, I was again reminded of how my unconscious bias impacted the way I communicated and interacted cross-culturally. The professional learning also revisited Lysgaard's (1955) stages of cultural adaptation or adjustment (Figure 2.1). This was a critical stage in my journey of being able to effectively work with migrant and refugee students.

**Figure 2.1**

*Stages of cultural adaptation*



Note. Diagram of Lysgaard (1955), Stages of cultural adaptation. From Advising and Counselling Services: International education and exchange centre, Nagoya University, n.d. (<https://acs.iee.nagoya-u.ac.jp/en/interculture/adjust.html>).

My experiences overseas in adapting to new cultures and ways of living were suddenly clearly articulated in a simple diagram (Figure 2.1). I was immediately able to link my own experiences of migration to Australia as a teenager and then working and living overseas as a teacher, to the experiences of the students I was working with in Cairns. After the training, on returning to my two schools, I began to clearly understand why some students were unsettled or misbehaving. Furthermore, I began to see the way teachers communicated with students and their families. This was often confronting and at times culturally inappropriate.

The professional learning helped me to see the classroom context from the students' reality. I could perceive when teachers did not make adjustments to how they interacted or communicated with their students and families. I noticed that teachers took on a deficit model of thinking and blamed students' failures and behaviours on these students' culture. This was an experience I was all too familiar with. I saw that my experiences of migration and my own teachers' responses were mirrored in the teachers with whom I was working.

This all meant that I had come to another stage in my journey. My exploration of learning to be culturally competent had moved beyond awareness. I now had the tools to embed culturally responsive practices into my daily teaching. I believe my cross-cultural experiences in Australia and overseas in developing countries gave me the advantage of



significant empathy and understandings of the lives of Third World peoples, which would have eluded most of my colleagues. However, it is only by exploring cultural competence, understanding my own personal history and piecing together my own cross-cultural experiences, was I able to integrate new knowledge and apply this into my teaching practice.

In 2012, I accepted a position as an EAL/D teacher in an intensive English centre based in a primary school in Cairns. This is where the research for this thesis was undertaken. The centre provided English language support to newly arrived migrant and refugee background students. As part of my role, I provided a program which my colleagues and I coined 'the resettlement program'. This program was developed to assist in catering to students transition into Australian schooling.

My experiences of living in developing countries and professional learning in cultural competence enabled me to put into practice strategies to improve the way in which newly arrived students experienced schooling in Australia for the first time. It was important that I created a safe learning environment that not only provided English language instruction but also programs that built student resilience in transitioning to a new culture. The program encompassed art and play therapy, cooking and social and emotional learning.

In addition to my teaching role, I was required to support classroom teachers with newly arrived students, which was the most challenging aspect of the position. This role sometimes involved professional learning for the teaching staff. These sessions were usually based around planning and differentiating the curriculum and assessment for EAL/D students to enable access the mainstream curriculum. Most of the difficulty in my role was around dealing with teachers' misconceptions about how best to work cross-culturally and how to respond more effectively to newly arrived students, in particular students with a refugee background. It was these misconceptions that spurred me on to begin this study.

For many of the teachers in my school, this was the first time they had worked with students who were new to English and/or new to Australia. In addition, there were no formal guidelines or processes, at either the regional or school level, to assist and support teachers in working across cultures. This was why I began to consider how best I could do this as part of my role at the school. I felt frustrated by the lack of formal professional learning that specifically focused on cultural competence. Many of the teachers I supported did not have the foundational knowledge to adapt their teaching and learning to work across cultures. This was what prompted me to act. Because many colleagues lacked this basic knowledge, I enrolled in a PhD to learn how best to help teachers work across cultures more effectively.

## **Chapter 3: Issues surrounding the transition of newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter is the first of three chapters that explore the research literature surrounding this study. This chapter consists of a review of the literature pertaining to issues surrounding the transition of newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds and it is organised into three main parts. Firstly, the literature in both Australian and international contexts is analysed, highlighting current practices and issues that impact the successful transition of new arrival students from refugee backgrounds. Following that, studies are reviewed that relate to teacher attitudes, values, and perspectives on culture as contributing factors that act as a barrier to student success. I also explore literature that highlights the relationship between student achievement and teacher attitudes and beliefs. Finally, the literature is examined relating to professional learning as a way of improving teachers' practice and pedagogy, to support teachers working across cultures more effectively, therefore improving the transition of students from refugee backgrounds into Australian schooling. It goes without saying that the purpose of this literature review is not to criticise teachers and schools in their interactions with students from refugee backgrounds and their families but rather, to examine the current literature in the context of what is missing, therefore providing the potential for a possible solution.

### **3.1 Pedagogical practices in refugee education**

Schools are at the front line for newly arrived student refugees and their families (Matthews, 2008) and one of the first experiences they will have with an institution in the new country is with the education system. Schools are also central in promoting and supporting refugee students' social and emotional development as they transition into a new culture and school system (Hek, 2005b). But is the current system prepared and ready to successfully deal with the complex issues that these people bring? Current literature in the resettlement and transition of newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds has so far presented a narrow focus mainly concerned with: (1) programs to develop students' English language proficiency; (2) teachers' limited agency in understanding and knowing the educational needs of refugee students (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Forrest et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2018; Rose, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018); and (3) issues such as increased teacher workload, funding, limited resources, interagency coordination and community liaison (Watkins et al., 2018).

Current practices and research in the context of working with newly arrived refugee students have had varying success and concentrate mainly on teachers' experiences of the

challenges when improving literacy and English language proficiency (Correa-Velez et al., 2017; Matthews, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Riggs & Due, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Other researchers note scenarios of overwhelmed teachers not coping with the demands of their students (de Heer, Due, Riggs, & Augoustinos, 2016; Due, Riggs, & Mandara, 2015; Watkins et al., 2018). However, some studies, although limited, investigate and document the kinds of practices and pedagogies that impact student success (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005; Sidhu & Taylor, 2009; Taylor, 2008). Also, there appears to be little systematic action towards formulating processes for schools to work successfully with students from refugee backgrounds.

Adding to these concerns, scholars observe that refugee education is not visible in educational policy and therefore not seen as a priority for governments (Matthews, 2019; Rose, 2019; Taylor, 2008). Matthews (2019) posits that there is a void in acknowledging refugee students in policy and “their experience is not taken account of and does not inform education policy (p. 11)”. Furthermore, Matthews (2008) and Sidhu and Taylor (2007) add that teacher awareness of refugee policy and practice is inadequate, which they claim is due to the lack of a clear and consistent approach to supporting students and their transition into Australian schooling. As such, with the absence of refugee students visibly positioned and manifestly addressed in educational policy, there is very little to guide effective practice with refugee students.

In 2018, the NSW Teachers Federation undertook a qualitative study to investigate the needs of students of refugee backgrounds and their families. The aim is to investigate how best to support students in NSW public schools and the strategies used at the time. It examines the challenges faced by schools and these students’ broader needs. Significantly, this study identifies that addressing the academic needs of students from refugee backgrounds was not enough. Schools also need to address their complex linguistic, social, cultural, psychological, and economic needs. In doing so, schools need to consider their role as much more than educational institutions but intricate and complicated sites that engage with a myriad of resources (Watkins et al., 2018).

What is particularly concerning in the research are the experiences of racism and discrimination that many students of refugee background reported they face in the school environment. Studies into the racism experienced by refugee students is scant. However, when documented, racial vilification is only briefly mentioned along, with a myriad of other challenges (Correa-Velez et al., 2017; Major, Wilkinson, Langat, & Santoro, 2013; Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan, & Taouk, 2009; Pedersen, Walker, & Wise, 2005).

I thus contend that, as a result, the central significance of racism and its consequences for newly arrived students are overlooked. For example, when mentioned within the literature it is rarely expanded upon. When institutional systems leaders, policymakers and researchers ignore or minimise such a significant issue, the undeniably serious and often long-term adverse physical and emotional repercussions that are felt by refugee students and others from the non-dominant culture can be devalued, or worse, lost among the many other issues of concern. Additionally, most teachers and academics in Australia are from the dominant culture, so the existence of racist attitudes towards refugee students may not easily register with them, possibly due to their own unconscious bias. Racism must be explicitly acknowledged and addressed.

In a study by Watkins, Nobel, and Wong (2018) students' experiences of racism in their schools are documented. These researchers identify that teachers often do not deal with or respond to acts of discrimination and racism in the school when students report these acts. This finding has been documented by other scholars in this field (Riggs & Due, 2011). Such a response may indicate a level of unconscious bias (or even racism) in teachers. They may possess deficit assumptions that underpin their thinking and teaching, which contributes to their inaction in dealing with complaints of racism and discrimination. Wilkinson and Langat (2012), argue that teachers play a significant role in students rejecting 'deficit' models. Therefore, working with teachers to help change these deficit models may make such teachers better equipped to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This would also suggest that teachers might then become actively engaged in dealing with complaints of racist behaviour.

Correa-Velez et al. (2017) find that students from refugee backgrounds in Australia who experience discrimination are considerably less likely to complete their education than those who did not experience discrimination. They note that experiences of racism and discrimination occur mainly in the school context and that students from migrant and refugee backgrounds are more likely to be the main victims of racial attacks (Mansouri et al., 2009). The researchers further find in this Australian study that "racism has a negative impact upon the settlement and transition of young migrants and refugees, affecting self-esteem, self-confidence, and belonging to the broader community" (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014, p. 3).

In a review on the experience of refugee students, newly arrived refugee students report discriminatory practices among teachers and other students (Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Mansouri et al., 2009; McBrien, 2005). Students who experience discrimination are those

from visible minorities such as Hmong and Somali (McBrien, 2011). McBrien (2005) stresses that such “practices increased students’ isolation and had an adverse impact on their academic goals and career aspirations” (p. 16). With this in mind, the discussion turns to solutions for dealing with racism and discrimination in schools against students from minority social groups.

### **3.2 Whole school approach**

Using a whole school approach to change deficit language is one strategy that may assist in reducing the number of racial incidents in the school environment. Wilkinson and Langat (2012) identify the whole school approach as a significant factor in changing the language used by teachers and students to describe the cultural and linguistic diversity in their school. In this qualitative case study, they focus on secondary schools in regional Australia with an increase in students of refugee backgrounds from a variety of African nations. The aim is to document implications for leadership and pedagogical practices in a monocultural government regional secondary school with an increasing enrolment of African students from refugee backgrounds.

Key findings emphasise preconditions as critical to work more productively and responsively with such students. One pivotal precondition is the role of leadership for developing a whole school approach and in accessing ongoing professional learning. Through consistent supportive leadership, a whole school approach to inclusion can be shaped and negotiated with staff. For example, schools can seek to change how language describes the school environment. Words such as diversity, tolerance and acceptance have been identified to create a culture of inclusion and change teacher’s views of working with students from diverse backgrounds.

Another precondition is ensuring teachers have access to ongoing professional learning that consists both of cultural awareness and pedagogical strategies. As such, these innovative pedagogical changes focus on engagement through building on students’ existing knowledge and strengths, establishing links to their home life and culture. These researchers argue for a capacity building approach, i.e., building the capability of leadership and staff through professional learning and a whole school approach. This contrasts with a deficit-based model that focuses on the challenges and difficulties. The approach advocated by Wilkinson and Langat (2012) is widely supported by other scholars, (Major et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2005) and confirms existing teacher attitudes and assumptions at underpin how teachers teach and interact with (Wilkinson & Langat, 2012) students from refugee backgrounds.

International literature in this field also cites this approach as critical to success. For example, the New Zealand Government commissioned a comprehensive literature review to inform educators of best practices when working with young children with a refugee background (Hamilton, Anderson, Frator-Mathieson, Loewen, & Moore, 2000). Hamilton, Anderson, Frator-Mathieson, Loewen and Moore (2000), conclude that there is a paucity of research about refugee children, particularly in the context of school intervention programs and best practice. The authors also contend that schools require highly specialised programs that meet the range of their specific needs. They recommend programs with a differentiated approach to intervention that validate students' cultural frames of reference and that support staff in understanding the refugee experience. They add that programs for refugee students need to be well organised and structured and driven by a supportive leadership team that endorses a whole school approach to intervention (University of Auckland, 2000). These points are confirmed by the later findings of Wilkinson and Angat (2012).

A whole school approach was also documented in a small-scale qualitative study in the UK (Hek & Sales, 2002). These investigators support the findings of other research (Richman, 1998; Rutter, 2006) which emphasise the value of a whole school approach in supporting newly arrived refugee students. Findings include that refugee students were successful when there was (1) a bilingual specialist teacher who could speak their first language and had skills in addressing specific learning needs and (2) support from friends and the peer group (Hek & Sales, 2002).

In the Australian context, several reports and reviews, mainly over the last ten years, have provided school communities with strategies to meet the challenges for students from refugee backgrounds in adjusting to Australian schooling (Block et al., 2014; Due & Riggs, 2009; Due, Riggs, & Augoustinos, 2015; Due, Riggs, & Mandara, 2015; Major et al., 2013; Matthews, 2008; Miller et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2005; Pugh et al., 2012; Rose, 2019; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Sidhu et al., 2011; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Woods, 2009). In 2004 the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, (known as Foundation House) designed a resource for schools, *School's in for Refugees*. This was developed through extensive consultation with teachers and other education and community services that worked with these families. A key recommendation is the development of a whole school approach. Of particular significance is the later evolution of a comprehensive website for schools to access advice, strategies and professional learning (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2011).

Block et al. (2014) reviewed programs of best practice in support newly arrived refugee students in Victorian schools. They identify that a holistic model that addresses the academic (cognitive), social and emotional learning of students within a whole school approach is effective. This is supported by other researchers also arguing for a whole school and holistic models for support for students from refugee backgrounds (Pugh et al., 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

However, while this research points to recommendations of best practice, such recommendations are not clearly articulated in the Queensland education context. Currently, reference to supporting students from refugee backgrounds on the Education Queensland website is framed in terms of the distribution of allocated funds across Queensland state schools (see <https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/budgets-funding-grants/grants/state-schools/core-funding/refugee-program>). The website also provides a statement that recognises such students' complex learning, social and psychological needs, with examples of how the funding can be spent (Department of Education, 2021). There are no clear guidelines on the website or links to references for examples of best practice. This makes it extremely problematic for school administrators and teachers in Queensland who struggle with understanding how to best cater for newly arrived refugee students. They are forced to search outside their own state's relevant department for guidance on how to implement programs which demonstrate best practice. The guidance offered on Education Queensland's website takes form of what money can be spent on. The framing is in terms of accountability for piecemeal services rather than offering recommendations for an overall approach.

### **3.3 Exclusion through inclusionary practices**

The research above indicates a lack of awareness of the impact of refugee experiences within school policy in Queensland. When the major emphasis is to develop students' English language acquisition, or when this is the only strategy for the inclusion of refugees, the prompts the unintentional growth of exclusionary practices. In the context of refugee education in Australia, inclusion is equated as having to "conform to a normative image of what constitutes belonging in Australia" (Riggs & Due, 2011, p. 273). In fact, for many schools identified in the literature, support for English language development was their only service for refugee students (Brown et al., 2006; Matthews, 2008). As such, it has been noted by some scholars that such practices are in essence discriminatory and exclude students from refugee backgrounds from participating in the wider school context (Riggs & Due, 2011; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

Some research also suggests these exclusionary practices, which take the form of considering such student to have “not enough English,” are not valid and that a deeper and broader issue is at play (Miller et al., 2018; Riggs & Due, 2011). For example, exclusionary practices in schools are found to be unintentional and unconscious. However, they marginalise newly arrived refugee students based on their English proficiency. In fact, other research on the integration of this student group into the wider school context shows that children play and socialise together, even with English as a barrier (Riggs & Due, 2011). As such, problematising English proficiency as a challenge may be interpreted as a strategy for not unpacking and dealing with some of the deeper issues at play.

Other literature in this field also documents that a focus on providing “English only support” is exclusionary and prevents students from fully participating in activities such as social and emotional wellbeing programs in the wider school. As such, important elements of education such as social and emotional learning, which is beneficial to support newly arrived students, are not addressed (Due, Riggs, & Augoustinos, 2015; Due, Riggs, & Mandara, 2015; Hamilton et al., 2000). An example of providing inclusion through highlighting students’ social and emotional learning is found in a South Australian study by Due, Riggs, and Mandara (2015). These researchers use an inductive qualitative approach to understand and document the intensive English language program (IELP) educators’ perceptions and experiences of working with newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds in three South Australian primary schools (Due, Riggs, & Mandara, 2015). They identify the strengths and challenges of an intensive English centre based in a mainstream school. As with most of the literature previously discussed, the challenges and difficulties of language acquisition are strongly highlighted. However, this some other positive actions and strategies in assisting in students’ adjustment into Australian schooling are also given, which supports existing literature. For example, the provision of culturally safe spaces for students encourages a smoother transition into mainstream classes. Also, with an established intensive English centre, mainstream teachers are exposed to diverse cultural groups, which helps to equip them to work across cultures. In summary, these two strategies are small steps towards inclusion. However, this would only be achievable and sustainable within a whole school approach, driven by leadership.

### **3.4 Summary of common issues and complexities in refugee education**

A review of literature about New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom and Australian refugee experiences shows an urgent need for evidence-led policy and frameworks



that address the complex needs of refugee students. The important components of successful practice in refugee education common across the research are:

- a) A whole school response led by a strong leadership team;
- b) Well-prepared teaching staff to assist in the transition of newly arrived refugee students to a new educational context;
- c) A positive whole school attitude towards refugee students;
- d) Consistent policy and frameworks at both national and state level; and
- e) Consistent, ongoing and sustainable professional learning that informs and prepares teachers of the best approaches when working with newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds.

### **3.5 Teacher Quality**

Teachers have the greatest impact on success for student learning and development. With this in mind, there have been considerable efforts, both internationally and nationally, to improve student achievement by improving teacher quality (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of 800 studies identifies the link between teachers' choice of pedagogy and student achievement. Components of quality teaching include challenging thinking tasks, feedback, high expectations for students and positive teacher-student relationships (Boon, 2011). Hattie (2003) suggests that student achievement is influenced by teachers' knowledge of their students, their reflection on their teaching practice and how this affects students' learning. This research has, however, been contested (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015; Snook, O'Neill, Clark, O'Neill, & Openshaw, 2009). Boon and Lewthwaite (2015), for example, challenge Hattie's (2003) assumptions of a uniform approach to teaching and emphasise that his findings exclude "the potential power of the context – and culture – bound nature of learners and learning" (p. 41). Snook et al. (2009) stress that, while Hattie's (2009) work makes a noteworthy contribution to helping educators understand the variables surrounding successful teaching, his findings may be "presented in isolation from their historical, cultural and social contexts, and their interaction with home and community backgrounds" (p. 104). More recently, Hattie (2015), has responded to his critics, in particular, the criticism around leaving the effects of poverty out of his research. He explains that, while poverty may impede student success, it is the teacher who can offer the best chances for success for those students, no matter their home situation, by removing the barrier of low expectations.

Hattie (2015), while not explicitly identifying teacher beliefs and attitudes as a major contributor to student success, nevertheless contributes to the growing body of literature

relating to the influence of teacher attitudes and beliefs on both student achievement and teacher quality (Yazzie, 1999). Hattie (2015) states,

A belief that we can make a difference for children from poorly resourced families is a critical starting point, and the mantra needs to be, ‘I can make a profound positive difference to every person who crosses the school gate into my class or school regardless of their background.’ Poverty and low family resources are no excuses for not making a major contribution to students, although they certainly make for a tough start (p. 6).

This belief that teachers can make a difference no matter the circumstances is also echoed by Gore, Ladwig, Griffiths, and Amosa (2007). Their contribution to the discussion around teacher quality, and improved student success, is also underscored by the importance they place on teachers’ commitment to social justice (which is influenced by their internalised value systems). In other words, teachers’ values and beliefs also determine teacher quality (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015). Boon (2011) also highlights a strong ethic of care for students as central to teacher quality. This ethic is not only fundamental to understanding and appreciating students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds but is also reflective and embedded within a culturally responsive pedagogy (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015).

In the context of Native American students, studies indicate that effective and high quality teachers working in these contexts are “informal, are caring and warm, give up authority, and have and show respect for their students” (Yazzie, 1999, p. 94). Other scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995) and Klug and Whitfield (2003) note that the teacher’s disposition, temperament and flexibility is crucial when teaching students of colour. Further to this, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) add that high quality teachers also display, “an attitude and presence that expects high performance levels while caring about and understanding Indigenous youth” (p. 970).

Shallow and Whittington (2014), in their study of wellbeing of refugee children in an early childhood setting, propose that supportive school environments are created by teachers with an ethic of care. They point out that an ethic of care is more than just sympathy for refugee children. Respect, empathy for refugees and a strong sense of social justice “which impels them into caring action” (p. 20) are fundamental. However, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) argue that while an ethic of care contributes significantly to being a high quality culturally responsive teacher, caring in itself is not enough. Kennedy (1991) agrees with this stance, adding that technical competence and subject matter knowledge are also crucial in developing student success.

Although empathy is a key characteristic of successful teachers of diverse students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Delpit, 2006; Gordon, 1999; McAllister & Irvine, 2002), Kennedy (1991) and Rosenberg (1997) caution against empathy as a superficial understanding of the different cultures within the classroom. Assumed teacher knowledge of student backgrounds could disguise the need to address other larger issues such as racism, equity and discriminatory practices and policies in the school context.

### **3.6 Teachers' perspectives on culture**

In the literature which links empathy to quality teaching, researchers exploring both a culturally responsive pedagogy and raising refugee background students' academic performance highlight a connection between the challenges teachers face and their attitudes and beliefs around working with such students (Brown et al., 2006; Dooley, 2009; Matthews, 2008). Some scholars note that teacher perspectives are influenced by their worldviews, their vested interests, and their experiences. Curriculum delivery is imbued with teachers' personalities (Hatnachek, 1999; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Nespor, 1987; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas, 2007). Camp and Oesterreich (2010) also emphasise that a culturally responsive pedagogy or 'uncommon teaching' is influenced by teachers' past and present life experiences, including those prior to entering the teaching profession. Perso (2012), also contributes to this discussion by stating that "we need to go beyond a head knowledge and checklist approach since cultural responsiveness is more than doing the right thing from a compliance and humanitarian position" (p. 17). In other words, teachers need to use their cultural lenses to relate to their students, families and communities.

Darling-Hammond (2000) provides more substance to this research with suggestions on how to assist teachers in understanding their worldviews, constructs and the potential consequences for their pedagogy. In the context of preservice teacher education, she asserts that an inquiry approach is necessary in helping teachers to learn how to see and reflect on the world from multiple perspectives, especially those of students who have very different experiences from their own. Darling-Hammond (2000) also argues that good teachers need to develop an awareness of their own cultural bias and perspectives, which assists in developing a deeper understanding of whom they teach.

These differences between cultures that contribute to teacher bias are also evident in the different communication styles between teacher and student, creating cultural conflict in the classroom and therefore eventually affecting the learning environment. These differences have been explained by the anthropologist Edward Hall in his models of low context and high context cultures. Hall (1976) uses linguistic examples which reflect these cultural differences,

positing that such examples point to cognitions which are so deeply embedded that they are unconscious. In his research on Navajo peoples, he proposes that labelling and understanding unconscious patterns of perception and behaviour are necessary for developing an understanding of cultural differences and are effective in reducing cross-cultural conflict and tensions between groups (Hall, 1990). Similarly, Delpit (1995) notes, “we all interpret behaviours, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply ‘the way it is’” (p.51).

While it is agreed in the literature that teacher’ perceptions of students and their backgrounds do influence and determine their pedagogy, some scholars note this can also be problematic. A large proportion of the teaching profession are of European origin, middle class and come from the dominant culture, which may have a direct impact on schools that operate in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts (Gay, 2010b). Within English speaking colonial settler societies like Australia, the US and New Zealand, schools are mainly set in Anglo-Saxon landscapes (Forrest, Lean, & Dunn, 2017). As Gay (2010a) asserts, there may be a cultural divide between students, their community, and their teachers’ worlds. For many teachers, appreciating or understanding students’ worlds is not a priority. Scholars such as Picower (2009) and Taylor (2012), highlight that ‘white’ middle class teachers have been criticised for reproducing and supporting dominant patterns of white hegemony. Bishop (2003) illustrates this phenomenon for Maori children in the New Zealand education system, explaining the danger of stereotyping. Instead, he proposes teachers create classroom contexts that allow Maori children to determine their own diverse positionalities. For instance, within Maori life, “individual identities are multifaceted and multi-generative” (Bishop, 2003, p. 226). It is not a monoculture. Bishop (2003), explains that teachers need to allow for the many diverse relationships and realities within which children might live. Kalantzis and Cope (1999) concur, stating “just as there are multiple layers and facets to everyone’s identity, so too there are multiple discourses of identity and multiple discourses of recognition to be negotiated” (p. 270). As educators are predominantly members of the dominant and more powerful culture, they may hold negative attitudes towards their students who belong to less powerful cultures and communities (Gay, 2010a; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007).

In a study in rural New South Wales, Australia, Forrest et al. (2017) examine the current attitudes of classroom teachers on cultural diversity and multicultural education, using an online survey with 688 classroom teachers. Results reconfirm the existing literature,

finding the teaching profession was predominantly white and female. Survey responses include strong support for strategies to promote cultural inclusiveness, improving intercultural relations and prompting better engagement of parents from culturally diverse backgrounds. The study found across the state, a teacher perception of ‘things are better’ in the wider community in terms of race relations than perceived by the broader community. Responses from community members were taken from a survey conducted for the Challenging Racism Project in 2001 (Forrest & Dunn, 2006). This inconsistency is perhaps based on teachers’ own professional and personal experiences. As members of the dominant culture, they may be oblivious to the experiences and insights of the wider community.

In the context of New Zealand, some researchers assert that teachers’ lack of insight into students’ experiences of discrimination has been a major factor in the poor performance of Maori students. Macfarlane et al. (2007) argue that,

Taking such positions locates the entire problem with the students and their communities. There is no space for considering that problematic student behaviour might have resulted from interactions within the classroom, and that perhaps it is the ecological environment that needs to change (p. 66).

Similarly, literature affirms that negative teacher attitudes about students are unhelpful in educational reform (Gay, 2013). To put it bluntly, the culture of blaming students’ cultural and socioeconomic background for poor academic performance does not help the student (Gay, 2010a, 2010b). Nieto (2005) provides educators with a framework of useful attitudinal qualities in promoting cultural diversity and social justice:

- (a) a sense of mission to serve ethnically diverse children to the best of their abilities;
- (b) solidarity with, empathy for, and value of students’ lives, experiences, cultures, and human dignity;
- (c) courage to question mainstream school knowledge and conventional ways of doing things, and beliefs and assumptions about diverse students, families, cultures, and communities;
- (d) willingness to improvise, to push the envelope, to go beyond established templates and frameworks, and to embrace uncertainty and flexibility; and
- (e) a passion for equality and social justice (cited in Gay, 2010a, p. 145).

In addition, these attitudes provide a useful framework for developing professional learning, to help shift teachers’ negative assumptions and misconceptions around diversity.

Focused professional learning is critical in developing empathy and understanding of students from linguistic and diverse backgrounds (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2006;

Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Youngs and Youngs (2001), for example, examine what underlies teachers' positive attitudes towards ESL students through a survey of 143 junior high/middle school mainstream teachers in the Great Plains region of the United States. The survey was based on model of teachers' attitudes toward ESL students offering six categories of possible predictors suggested explicitly or implicitly by past ESL-related research: the mainstream teacher's (1) general educational experiences, (2) specific ESL training, (3) personal contact with diverse cultures, (4) prior contact with ESL students, (5) demographic characteristics, and (6) personality. This study elaborates on and supports prior research finding that teacher training around cultural diversity and EAL learning impacts positively upon mainstream teachers' attitudes. In addition, exposure and interaction in culturally diverse contexts is identified as an underlying prerequisite towards developing cultural competency.

Walker, Shafer, and Liam (2004) investigate predominant ideological beliefs and attitudes of mainstream teachers towards their English language learners (ELLs) by surveying 422 K-12 teachers and interviewing six teachers of ELLs. The research explores three topics: the extent and nature of mainstream teacher attitudes towards this group of students; exploration of the factors that contribute to teacher attitude development; and how teacher attitudes towards English language learning vary by demographics. The researchers make three general conclusions:

- a) Whilst most teachers did not start out with negative attitudes and prejudicial beliefs about their students, these developed over time;
- b) Teachers who received little or no professional learning and development were more likely to develop stereotypes and misinformation about refugees; and
- c) Teachers were more likely to develop negative attitudes and stereotypes when they were unsupported and underprepared to work in culturally diverse contexts.

Sleeter (2011b), asserts that there is little research around the connection between professional learning and the impact it has on teachers' pedagogy, which is what Gay (2013) refers to as "restructuring teacher attitudes and beliefs" (p. 54). For this to happen, teachers need to examine and critique their own attitudes and beliefs around cultural diversity (Brown, 2004b; Gay, 2010a; Hollins & Oliver, 1999). Professional development offers the opportunity, time and space for this reflection.

A lack of professional learning results in teachers not being prepared to work in culturally diverse settings. In a small-scale qualitative study by Karatas and Oral (2015) of 25 teachers taking postgraduate training in South Eastern Anatolia, a region in Turkey, the

researchers identify that, while teachers agreed that a culturally responsive pedagogy would enhance social cohesiveness, peace and tolerance among students, teachers lacked confidence in teaching cross-culturally due to a lack of opportunities to develop skills within the school and teacher education context. Results include that teacher would be better prepared if a systemic approach were supported and implemented. Schools would then be better prepared to inform teachers of the cultural context of the school, leaving teachers better able to respond to the needs of their students (Karatas and Oral (2015). The study findings thus support the whole school approach.

### **3.7 Supporting teachers through professional learning**

A common theme identified in the literature was teachers who work in cross-cultural contexts or situations explicitly identify the need for professional learning (Watkins et al., 2018; Wilkinson & Langat, 2012). For example, they ask for professional learning around language acquisition, thus developing mainstream teaching staff around the needs of refugee background learners.

Internationally, Hek (2005a), in her comprehensive review on the needs of refugee children in the UK, finds that teachers often felt ill-equipped to deal with issues arising from refugee children and results emphasise the importance of ongoing training for teachers, both points supported by other researchers (Blackwell & Melzak, 2000; Rutter & Jones, 1998). The need for professional learning in culturally responsive pedagogy is also highlighted (Major et al., 2013; Santoro, 2009) to improve teacher responsiveness in working cross-culturally.

This literature review has demonstrated a gap in the research about refugee education and the link between professional learning and successful implementation of appropriate pedagogies for students with a refugee background. What *is* known is that professional learning may be useful in building teacher capacity when working with the challenges some refugee students encounter (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008; Dooley, 2009; Due & Riggs, 2009; Hek, 2002, 2005a, 2005c; Hek & Sales, 2002; Richman, 1998). In a substantial number of studies, researchers underline the effectiveness of professional learning about culturally responsive pedagogy in assisting with changing teachers' attitudes, beliefs and capacities in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, 2010; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Bishop, Berryman, Powell, et al., 2007; Clair & Adger, 1999; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Gay, 2010a; Sleeter, 2001, 2011a, 2011b). A review of Australian national and Queensland state policies for diverse learners also shows a lack of

strategies for mainstream teachers and an apparent lack of interest for supporting mainstream teachers working with students from refugee backgrounds. This study aims to address both issues by investigating the implementation of a professional learning program specifically focused on culturally responsive pedagogy.

### **3.8 Defining professional development and professional learning**

Professional development and professional learning are terms which are often used interchangeably within the teaching profession, although in the literature certain distinctions are made. The OECD's (2009) *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS) defines professional development as "activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (2009, p. 49). Loughran (2012) defines professional development as a learning activity linked to some implementation of change which is expected to be carried out. In contrast, Fullan (2007) argues that "professional development as a term and as a strategy has run its course" (p. 35) because student learning depends on teachers participating in learning constantly and, citing Elmore (2004), Fullan continues that appropriate professional learning involves "every teacher learning to do the right things in the setting where [they] work (p. 37)". This however raises some logistical issues which Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) specifically point to,

...the problem [is that] there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and classrooms of other teachers in other schools confronting similar problems (p. 127).

Loughran (2012) on the other hand, distinguishes between the two, claiming that professional learning operates in a different way from professional development. Professional learning assumes that teachers have a commitment to change and that change is refined or developed by individual teachers. Professional learning occurs through a process and then teachers apply it through their teaching practice. It is personal, shaped and directed by teachers as individuals (Loughran, 2012). Mayer and Lloyd (2011) contend that there are subtle differences between the concepts of professional development and professional learning and use the definition provided by Day and Sachs (2004),

...all natural learning experiences are those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as



change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (p. 34).

Timperley (2011) on the other hand refers to professional learning and development as “... inclusive of both formal and informal opportunities for teachers and leaders to deepen professional knowledge and refine professional skills as described in the relevant standards” (p. 4). Timperley emphasises the need for these formal and informal learning opportunities to challenge teachers’ beliefs and attitudes. Also, professional learning and development opportunities need to be designed to change teaching practice for the benefit of the student.

Literature in the area of professional learning supports the notion that improving student outcomes is the fundamental driver of professional learning and development in schools but, paradoxically, also shows that there is little research that links professional learning to its effects on student achievement, making it difficult to ascertain what is good practice in delivering professional learning and development to teachers (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Knapp, 2003; Mayer & Lloyd, 2011; Timperley, 2011; Timperley & Phillips, 2003; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). For the purposes of this study, I am drawn to Fullan’s (2007) and Hargreaves and Fullan’s (2012) conceptualisations of professional learning to construct professional capital where teachers collaboratively build knowledge, human and social capital, thereby contributing to the professional capital of the school. A culture of working collaboratively, particularly within the context of teachers’ day to day work, allows teachers to access other teachers’ capital, therefore adding to their own professional capital (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This definition of professional learning for professional capital building informs this research.

### **3.9 What makes for successful professional learning and development?**

In recent years there has been some attempt to address the continuing changing nature of curriculum and diversity in schools through professional learning. Timperley et al. (2007) constructed a meta-analysis of professional learning and development in which they identify links between teacher learning and improving student learning, particularly for diverse learners. They located 97 individual studies and groups of studies that identified a set of methodological criteria including the documentation of substantive student outcomes associated with professional learning. In sum, these researchers identify seven elements that are fundamental for successful professional learning and development:

- a) Providing sufficient time for extended opportunities to learn and using the time effectively;
- b) Engaging external expertise;
- c) Focusing on engaging teachers in the learning process rather than being concerned about whether they volunteered or not;
- d) Challenging problematic discourses;
- e) Providing opportunities to interact in a community of professionals;
- f) Ensuring content was consistent with wider policy trends; and
- g) In school-based initiatives, having leaders actively leading the professional learning opportunities (p. xxiv).

Aspects of these seven elements are also found in a review on professional learning and development from the US. Yoon et al. (2007) identify several common factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the professional development:

- a) Workshops that were shown to be successful in changing student outcomes were focused on research based instructional practices, active learning experiences and opportunities for teachers to adapt practices in their classroom.
- b) Outside experts involved in professional development brought about enhanced student academic performance. Outside experts were either program authors or researchers who presented directly to the teachers and then facilitated change implementation.
- c) Differences in time spent in professional development were unrelated to student improvement. However, those professional development and learning activities that had positive effects required 30 or more contact hours. These need to be well organised, structured, purposefully directed and content and pedagogy focused.
- d) In all the studies that showed improvement in student achievement, there was structured and sustained follow up after the professional learning and development sessions.
- e) Most useful professional learning and development occurs when there is careful and thoughtful adaptation of a variety of practices of specific content, processes and contextual elements.
- f) Successful professional learning and development occurred when teachers were engaged in enhancing their content knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, pp. 496-497).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) in their meta-analysis of 1,300 research studies and evaluation reports on professional learning identify just nine experimental or quasi-experimental studies that could evaluate impacts of professional learning and development on student achievement. From these studies they establish four guiding principles to assist with designing successful professional learning and development for school leaders and policymakers:

- a) Professional development should be intensive, ongoing and connected to practice.
- b) Professional development should focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content.
- c) Professional development should align with school improvement priorities and goals.
- d) Professional development should build strong working relationships among teachers (pp. 9-11).

The literature concerning what good professional learning looks like is therefore quite consistent across different studies and contexts: it needs to be ongoing, contextualised and collaborative (Fullan, 2003). In relation to professional learning for and in cross-cultural contexts, Timperley et al. (2007) identify a clear association between improved student outcomes and reconstructing teachers' thinking, which changes their explanations and practices. Although, as previously stated, research in this area is relatively thin, eight studies from New Zealand and the US demonstrate a positive effect of professional learning on student outcomes. Not only is challenging teacher's perceptions, values, and social positioning an important part of successful professional learning, this is also emphasised as an essential component of culturally responsive pedagogy. That is, effective professional learning to foster culturally responsive pedagogy would ensure opportunities to disrupt and reconstruct teachers' thinking (Bishop, Berryman, Powell, et al., 2007; Gay, 2010a; Hachfeld et al., 2011; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Nesper, 1987; Villegas, 2007). Bishop, Berryman and Powell, et al. (2007) provide an example of an intervention known as *Te Kotahitanga* (meaning unity in Maori) which assisted in reconstructing teachers thinking about working cross-culturally. This study encompassed the seven elements they identify as crucial for success professional learning impacting on student achievement and focused particularly on the pedagogical relationships and social positioning of Maori students in English medium schools. In this study, students told shared their experiences of school. Their experiences were used to challenge teachers' ways of thinking about Maori students. Encouraging outcomes were reported, especially for lower-achieving Maori

students. The researchers devised the professional learning to challenge teachers' thinking in a respectful and supportive way (Bishop, Berryman, Powell, & Teddy, 2007).

Timperley, Phillips and Wisemen (2003) describe this challenge to pre-existing thinking as cognitive, affective or cultural dissonance. They assert that, for successful professional learning to occur, this learning needs to challenge teachers and give them a better understanding of the power imbalances that may exist in the school context. In another study, Timperley and Phillips (2003) examine how teachers' expectations of students changed over six months of professional development in literacy and were sustained over a year after the professional development finished. This small-scale study involved 26 teachers from six schools. Pre- and post-course questionnaires and follow up interviews ascertained changes in participants' expectations and feelings of self-efficacy. When teachers were asked to examine their own expectations of students from low-income communities, new pedagogical approaches were implemented. As a result, the researchers saw significant achievement in reading for Year 1 students.

In summary, to improve teachers' capability in working more effectively and responsively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds, carefully and intentionally planned professional learning can provide opportunities to build teachers' knowledge, skills, and awareness of their students. However, in the quest for a culturally competent teaching workforce, professional learning needs to be driven both systemically and at the whole school level. Furthermore, teachers need to be willing participants, committed to engaging in critiquing their own assumptions and beliefs about themselves and their interactions with students from culturally diverse cultures. Without the open mindedness of teachers, refugee students will continually experience barriers and challenges in their schooling.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This review has shown a significant gap in the literature for the guidance of teachers' practice with refugee children internationally, in Australia and in Queensland. Research suggests that teachers who employ a culturally responsive pedagogy are more successful with culturally and linguistically diverse students but, to date, few studies have focused on culturally responsive pedagogy for refugee students. Some studies point to the kinds of professional learning that may be effective in addressing teachers' beliefs, attitudes, capacity, and effectiveness when working with student diversity in their classrooms.

This chapter has given a review of the current practices and barriers that students experience when transitioning to school in Australia. Teachers' attitudes, values and perspectives on culture have been identified as some of the contributing factors that act as a

barrier to student success. The whole school approach has been identified as a successful policy intervention to make change at the school level. In the final section of this chapter a definition of professional learning has been provided together with a description of what constitutes a successful professional learning intervention (see Chapter 5). Important elements of what good professional learning should entail have been unpacked, together with the possibilities of professional learning coupled with reflection as a strategy to assist schools and teachers in improving the way in which newly arrived students experience schooling in Australia.

## **Chapter 4: Enacting cultural competence through culturally responsive pedagogy**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This is the second of three literature review chapters. In this chapter, different perspectives of culture are explored. I define and explain how these perspectives of culture inform this study, drawing also from my own experience (see Chapter 2). Following this, the term ‘cultural competence’ is introduced. I argue that, while it has not yet been clearly defined in the education context (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2020a; Morrison et al., 2019), it is still relevant and useful in establishing how teachers develop their cross-cultural skills in culturally diverse classrooms. Then, CRP is presented as a way in which teachers can work more effectively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Finally, I discuss relevant investigations of examples of culturally responsive practices in the classroom which inform this study.

### **4.1 What is culture?**

The notion of ‘culture’ as Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) outline, has multiple and varied definitions. These definitions have been iterated, argued and interpreted by numerous scholars over many years, with no real consensus (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011). Therefore, it is critical to this study to define culture within this study’s aims, context and research focus.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) consider that culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits. Geertz (1973) writes that culture is a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). Similarly, UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations, stated that culture is the “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2002, p. 1).

Culture is “the cluster of learned and shared beliefs, values (achievement, individualism, collective, etc.), practices (rituals and ceremonies), behaviours (roles, customs, traditions, etc.), symbols (institutions, language, ideas, objects, and artefacts, etc.), and attitudes (moral, political, religious, etc.) that are characteristic of a particular group of people and that are communicated from one generation to another” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011, p. 5). Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2018) add further that culture involves more

than just differences in race or ethnicity but “shared characteristics of human description, including age, gender, geography, ancestry, language, history, sexual orientation, faith, and physical ability, as well as occupation and affiliations” (p.11-12).

While there is some general agreement to the definition, with slight nuances, Goodenough (1976) argues that although these definitions are important, such views of culture are simplistic and lead to a comparing of societies and does not account for individual differences within that society. As such, he maintains that some definitions of culture generalise and do not account for individuals “... as learners of culture in the context of social interaction, as they pursue their various interests ...” (p. 4). Therefore, he challenges us to also consider culture as “... a phenomenon, arising out of learning in the context of interaction” (p. 5).

Azuma (2005) takes this further by proposing a new conceptualisation of culture as, “functional culture” (p. xii). He argues beyond this notion of a traditional, homogenised, uncontaminated, and distinct static traditional system to a more fluid or fragmented nature of cultures that interact with and influence each other. Giroux (1992) adds to this discussion, “... culture is not viewed as monolithic or unchanging, but as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege” (p. 32). Therefore, culture is considered in the social, cultural, and historical context and individuals are not viewed as isolated beings but dynamic learners with fluid boundaries “acquiring knowledge and skills from the society and then in turn shaping their environment” (Miller, 2011, p. 173). It is this view of culture within which this study is situated.

## **4.2 Cultural competence**

Cultural competence has become part of the national dialogue when defining and contextualising cross-cultural understanding in the context of education (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2020a). The term ‘cultural competence’ became prominent in the human services industry in the 1990s to improve work practices responsive to people from CALD backgrounds. As such, cultural competence has emerged as a framework for training to provide more culturally responsive services across the health, travel, social work, and education sector (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw, & McNamara, 2013).

At its most basic level, cultural competence has been defined as “mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies” to assist and solve communication problems when engaging across cultures (Palmer & Carter, 2014, p. 28). The most commonly used definition

for cultural competence, and one that informs this study, has been defined by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) as:

a system of care that acknowledges and incorporates the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs (p. 1).

A review of the literature reveals that there are many definitions of cultural competence, however these definitions share key features. These include valuing diversity, the ability to reflect and self-assess, being aware of the dynamic nature of cross-cultural interactions, institutionalizing the importance of cultural knowledge and adapting to reflect cultural understanding (Stewart, 2006).

To summarise, five key features that are essential for a definition of cultural competence:

- a) Individuals must acknowledge and value culture and cultural competence;
- b) It requires self-assessment of one's interaction with peoples of CALD cultures;
- c) Building and developing cultural knowledge is critical in working towards cultural competence;
- d) We must accept and expect to work hard at being culturally competent; and
- e) Culture is dynamic in nature and ever changing so we need to adapt to it.

Stewart (2006) adds another layer to this definition by stating that cultural competence extends cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness and requires action, accountability and change in one's behaviour. According to Stewart (2006), the word 'competence' on its own implies both action and accountability, whereas, it is possible to be culturally aware and sensitive to cultural difference without actually changing one's practice. Similarly, Perso (2012), views the term 'cultural responsiveness' as cultural competence in action, that is "cultural responsiveness results from cultural competence" (p. 17). Therefore, developing one's cultural competence is essential in responding in appropriate ways in the workplace (Perso, 2012). The corollary to this is that cultural competence without action is meaningless and ineffective.

While a range of definitions exist for cultural competence, there is however a common agreement that cultural competence is "a personal capability comprised of attitudes, values and beliefs that develop over time through a personal journey" (Perso, 2012, p. 19). Davis (2020), describes cultural competence as "a journey and a pathway towards becoming competent in working with, and between, diverse cultural situations and contexts" (p. 15).



Other scholars contribute similarly, for example cultural competence is seen as a cumulative, continuum of learning (Cross et al., 1989; Perso, 2012; Russell, 2020). Palmer and Carter (2014), state that cultural competence is “an ongoing work and a process, not an end state” (p. 54). It requires a lifelong commitment to reflexivity (Palmer & Carter, 2014).

According to Palmer and Carter (2014), reflexivity is a critical component of cultural competence and requires self-awareness about one’s own cultural values, assumptions and biases. Morrison et al. (2019) concur that cultural competence must first begin with critical self-reflection and self-critique. They argue that without critical self-reflection, cultural competence leads to the ‘othering’ of non-whites and to representing the ‘other’ in tokenistic ways.

Several scholars have also been critical of cultural competence training, as it is considered to be reflective of values of the dominant culture (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016; Fredericks & Bargallie, 2020; Morrison et al., 2019; Sakamoto, 2007). The contention is that many training programs are developed by those from the dominant culture and therefore any focus on cultural competence reinforces the dominant culture. Such training does “not challenge the way participants see themselves, their actions or their complicity in maintaining racial inequities” (Fredericks & Bargallie, 2020, p. 297). Morrison et al. (2019), further argue that “to interrogate the mechanisms of power and oppression that operate in our societies, cultural competence must begin with critical self-reflection” (p. 53), rather than concentrating on the “other” (Davis, 2020; Palmer & Carter, 2014). Adding further to this discussion, Azzopardi and McNeill (2016) state that within cultural competence sits an “apolitical stance, weak or absent analysis of power relations, promotion of othering, and (an) inadequate approach to addressing oppression at systemic and structural levels” (p. 6). Sakamoto (2007), also notes limitations in cultural competence and is critical of the lack of power analysis which is often seen in definitions and approaches.

In summary, in this study, for effective cultural competence, several elements need to be embedded that steer away from essentialising and stereotyping cultural groups. Cultural competence development involves participants working towards cultural competence and continually engaging in critical reflexive practice. We need to understand its fundamental purpose, that is, the role of cultural competence is to “effect changes in organisational and institutional cultures and to bring about a shift away from entrenched racialised behaviours, attitudes and values based on preconceived prejudices or discriminatory ideas” (Davis, 2020, p. 22). In the context of education, cultural competence is critical as it provides space for teachers to challenge their own biases, beliefs and attitudes and asks them to critically reflect

on their impact and contribution to valuing diversity. Finally, it provides a starting point for reflecting on current work practices (Russell, 2020). For example, teaching practices such as reshaping the curriculum to be culturally responsive, building on students' existing knowledge, and building relationships and connections between school and home are strategies of culturally competent teachers (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008).

### **4.3 Culturally responsive pedagogy**

Teachers have the greatest influence for change and “are at the coalface for cultural diversity in schools” (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 27). With increasing migration and cultural diversity, there is a growing cultural gap between teachers and students (Gay, 2010a) which limits teachers' abilities to provide effective and responsive pedagogies. Literature on culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) emphasises the important influence of teachers' attitudes and values on successful academic achievement amongst those students who are culturally and linguistically different from their teachers (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy & Hammer, 2003). As Gay (2013) states, “...teachers' instructional behaviours are strongly influenced by their attitudes and beliefs about various dimensions of student diversity” (p. 56). There is also an extensive body of work emphasising a strong relationship between teachers' instructional behaviours, teacher quality, teacher attitudes, beliefs and student achievement (Bishop et al., 2007; Gay, 2010a, 2010b; Hachfeld et al., 2011; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Nesper, 1987; Sleeter, 2012; Villegas, 2007).

In this section, the concept of CRP is explored as an effective approach to meet the needs of students from refugee backgrounds. Firstly, an outline is given of the evolution of CRP. Secondly, I define CRP in the context of this study. Finally, examples are identified of research that explain CRP in practice. These illustrations might benefit teachers and school leaders who are working in culturally diverse schools.

#### **4.3.1 Genealogy of CRP**

The concept of CRP has changed over time but, fundamentally, it is a framework focused on a “... closer fit between students' home culture and the school” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159) in order to improve the academic achievement of students of CALD backgrounds. The idea of bridging the gap between CALD groups and the mainstream has been discussed for over 30 years through many studies of cultural difference. Several key concepts have been used over this time to describe approaches that can assist teachers working with a standardised curriculum in cross-cultural contexts. These key concepts include ‘culturally congruent’ (Erickson & Mohatt, 1977) ‘culturally appropriate’ (Au & Jordan,

1981), 'culturally responsive' (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Erickson & Mohatt, 1977), and 'culturally compatible' (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987) pedagogy.

In a study by Erickson and Mohatt on Native Americans students (1977), they observed that teachers who used the language structures of both Native American and Anglo English languages in instruction, to mirror the language patterns of their students, were the most successful. Essentially what Erickson and Mohatt (1977) advocate is the importance of one to one correspondence between the home and school cultures to provide academic success. Erickson and Mohatt (1977) call this 'culturally congruent pedagogy'. While this framework had success, this was in the context of one culture and one language. What is evident from their research was that the link between the community and school was essential for student success and this is relevant for multicultural and multilingual contexts.

The term 'culturally appropriate pedagogy' is used by Au and Jordan (1981) to describe school learning which incorporates the informal learning that occurs in the home culture. Au and Jordan investigated a reading program in which teachers in a Hawaiian school incorporated aspects of their students' culture. In this program, these teachers supported a 'talk story', a language interaction style used in Hawaiian culture. Teachers saw improvement in standardised testing results, especially in reading (Au & Jordan, 1981). However, as Osborne (2001) explains, culturally 'appropriate' suggests that "...something is proper or correct. This implies that we know the right adjustments to make, that there is no subsequent room for modification/improvement" (p. 59). Although students in this study improved in their reading in standardised testing, this pedagogy may be more difficult to employ in a context of cultural and linguistic diversity, given that not all cultural groups share the same communication style.

The term 'culturally compatible', came out of the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) program, a language arts program for underachieving Hawaiian children. Cultural compatibility was defined by Jordan (1985) thus:

...to be successful educational practice must be compatible with the culture(s) of the children being educated. This means that educational practices must mesh with the children's culture in ways that ensure the generation of academically important behaviours. It does not mean that all school practices need be completely congruent with natal culture practices, in the sense of exactly or even closely matching or agreeing with them. The point of cultural compatibility is that the natal culture is used as a guide in the selection of educational program elements so that academically desired behaviours are produced and undesired behaviours are avoided (p. 112).

This concept shares a focus with other pedagogies on academic achievement and valuing home language and culture. Again, like its predecessors, its success may be limited to monolingual or monocultural contexts, making it difficult to enact within schools where there is high linguistic and cultural diversity.

It is therefore fairly obvious that although these conceptual frameworks are useful in the context of communities where one main culture exists, it is difficult for teachers to transfer or replicate such pedagogies within more diverse groups, such as urban multicultural communities. A much broader framework is needed that still allows for the fundamental aspects of previous frameworks but responds to the changing dynamics of culturally diverse communities.

The term ‘cultural responsiveness’, coined by Cazden and Leggett (1976), provides such a framework and highlights the need to acknowledge student differences within the context of a diverse classroom. To summarise, by acknowledging these differences teachers are asked to question what must be changed in order to cater and respond to cultural heterogeneity in students (Cazden & Leggett, 1976). Osborne (2001), in his analysis of Cazden and Leggett’s (1976) work, adds that educational systems need to how children learn so that pedagogy can be used to create educational success. In other words, acknowledging and valuing children’s culture and language is crucial to academic success. CRP thus provides a conceptually broader way for teachers working in diverse settings, providing a space for students to maintain their cultural integrity (Gay, 2002, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2011a).

#### **4.4 Defining culturally responsive pedagogy within the context of this study**

A CRP provides teachers with a way of addressing the needs of CALD children for academic success. Researchers describe it as a conceptual framework that promotes academic success, requiring a teacher to be culturally competent and possess a form of socio-political consciousness (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995); Young (2010). Gay (2013) expands this definition stating, “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 50).

Also contributing to this discussion of CRP, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) agree that this approach enables teachers to understand how to interact with diversity in the classroom but they also argue that CRP should be viewed through the lens for critical race theory (CRT). That is, race should be considered in how CRP is implemented and used to critically analyse the social inequity within educational institutions. Ladson-Billings and Tate

(1995) maintain that CRP does not adequately examine these educational institutions enough and therefore, CRT "... is a radical critique of both the status quo and the purported reforms" Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995, p. 62). This enhances the CRP framework.

In a review of literature based on effective CRP practices, Aceves and Orosco (2014), identify six themes based on culturally responsive teaching, four CRT practices, two recommended teaching approaches and two instructional considerations that are evident in investigations of instructional practices with K-12 student outcomes (see Table 4.1 for a summary of their findings). While observing key features, Aceves and Orosco (2014) warn that some teaching professionals may presume that on the surface this is "a case of just good teaching" (Au, 2009). However, in the context of CRP, we must consider there is an added layer of awareness to what is considered "good teaching practice". This is the understanding that learning and teaching are culturally situated, and that implementing these practices requires teachers to "consciously make connections to students' cultures, languages, and everyday experiences in order for students to experience academic achievement while preserving their cultural and linguistic identities" (Aceves & Orosco, 2014, p. 20) which is what truly makes this a CRP. Academic success is the ultimate goal of teaching and learning and research shows that teachers who are culturally competent and have a socio-political conscience to provide the affective conditions for academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Table 4.1**  
*Culturally responsive teaching practices*

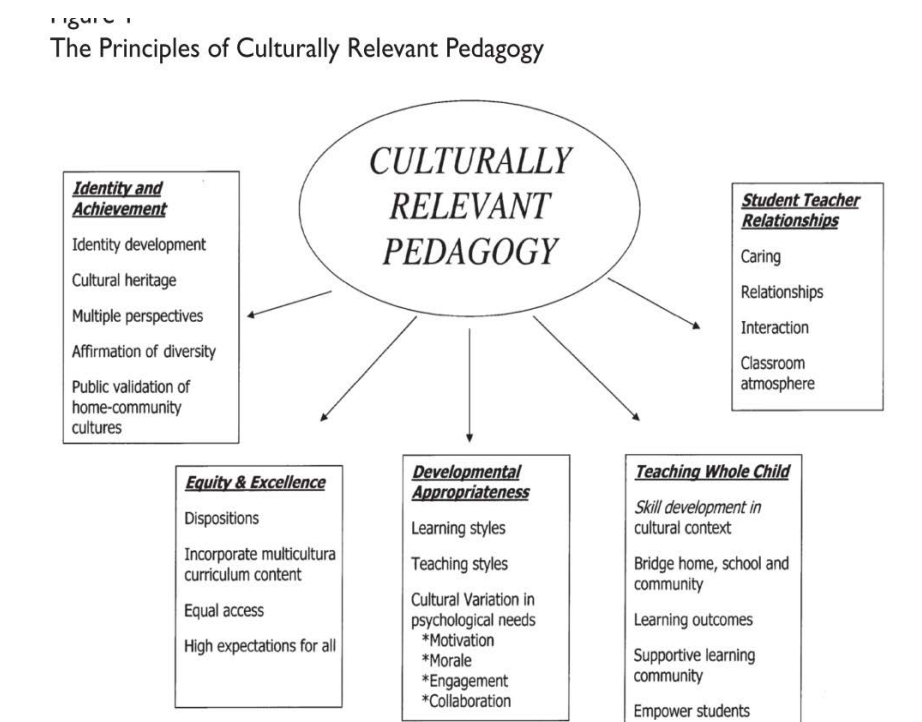
<b>Relevant themes of CRT</b>	<b>Emerging evidence-based CRT practices</b>	<b>Recommended CRT approaches and considerations</b>
<b>Instructional engagement</b>	Collaborative teaching	Problem-solving approach
<b>Culture, language, and racial identity</b>	Responsive feedback	Child-centred instruction
<b>Multicultural awareness</b>	Modelling	Assessment
<b>High expectations</b>	Instructional scaffolding	Materials
<b>Critical thinking</b>		
<b>Social justice</b>		

Note. Reprinted from Culturally responsive teaching (Document No. 1C-2) (p.7) by Aceves and Orosco (2014), United States of America. Copyright 2014 by Aceves and Orosco.

In another synthesis of the literature concerning CRP, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) develop a conceptual framework of CRP teaching behaviours. This framework is a synthesis of research around culturally responsive teaching, arranged into five themes as illustrated in Figure 4.1. The themes are: identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships as central to enacting a CRP. Furthermore, they identify several tenets of culturally responsive teaching which they believe provide principles that represent CRP. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) note that while each of the five themes is a step towards enacting a CRP, “the combination of these elements is what truly makes one engaged in and a more comprehensive practitioner” of CRP (p. 80).

**Figure 4.1**

*The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*



Note. Reprinted from “Towards a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature,” by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, p.72. Copyright 2011 by Brown-Jeffy and Copper.

Morrison, Robbin and Rose (2008) examine 45 classroom-based research studies from 1995 to 2008 using Ladson-Billing's (1995) framework for CRP to organise their findings, with the aim of assisting teachers to understand what CRP looks like in the classroom. Their analysis shows a common theme of teachers' inability to translate theory to practice in the context of the classroom. This is also supported by Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries (2004) who report there are few empirical studies of teacher practice in culturally diverse populations.

Although existing research in the field of how CRP translates into the classroom context is thin, what does exist provides a useful guide for educators. Morrison et al. (2008) find that high expectations and a rigorous curriculum alone do not work successfully without additional substantial support for the learning process. In their synthesis of classroom-based research, they extrapolate the successful strategies that teachers were using with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Their findings are summarised in Table 4. 2. Each theme is discussed in turn in the rest of this section.

**Table 4.2**

*Summary of Morrison, Robbins, and Rose's (2008) synthesis of classroom-based research on CRP*

Strategies	Key elements
<b>High academic expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum</li> <li>• Using student's strengths as instructional starting points</li> <li>• Investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success</li> <li>• Creating and nurturing cooperative environments</li> <li>• High behavioural expectations</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reshaping the prescribed curriculum</li> <li>• Building on students' funds of knowledge</li> <li>• Establishing relationships between school and the children's homes</li> </ul>
<b>Critical consciousness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical literacy</li> <li>• Engaging students in social justice work</li> <li>• Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society</li> <li>• Sharing power in the classroom</li> </ul>

Note. Reprinted from Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: a Synthesis of Classroom-Based Research by K. Morrison, H. Robbins and D. Rose, 2008, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(4), p. 433-452. Copyright 2008 by K. Morrison, H. Robbins and D. Rose.

#### **4.4.1 Strategy One: High Academic Expectations**

Ladison-Billings (1995) and Morrison et al. (2008) argue that providing a challenging rigorous curriculum on its own does not ensure a culturally relevant pedagogy. Students also need to be supported throughout the learning process. Morrison et al. (2008) identify five common elements across the studies they investigated that were important in assisting students in achieving academic success: intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum; using students' strengths as instructional starting points; investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success; creating and nurturing cooperative environments; and high behavioural expectations.

**4. 4.1a Intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum.** Many teachers using a CRP were explicitly modelling activities and instruction that promoted metacognition. These teachers also set clear expectations and monitored student learning closely and frequently (Brown, 2003; Gutierrez, 2000; Hollie, 2001; Sheets, 1995; Stuart & Volk, 2002). Providing reading texts which students were able to identify with and which made sense to them ensured success in reading and listening comprehension (Feger, 2006; Jiménez, 1997; Lee, 1995). For example, Conrad, Gong and Sipp's (2004), whose research is set in a Grade 3 classroom, note that during read-aloud sessions, a reading strategy called 'text talk' was employed and challenging texts were used to improve students' oral language and reading comprehension. In combining both the 'text talk' strategy and a CRP, teachers engaged learners through carefully planned and scaffolded questions and vocabulary activities. These enabled students to understand more conceptually challenging ideas whilst building on their vocabulary development.

**4.4.1b Using students' strengths as instructional starting points.** Incorporating students' strengths as a starting point in managing students is highlighted in Brown's (2004a) research. Brown (2004) proposes that, to successfully manage students from culturally diverse contexts in a culturally responsive way, the teacher should develop a classroom environment where students agree to work together with teachers and other students in search of academic success. Brown (2004) illustrates this in a qualitative study of 13 teachers from seven cities across the US. Relevant classroom management strategies identified are:

- a) Development of personal relationships with students; the creation of caring communities;
- b) Establishment of business-like learning environments;
- c) Use of culturally and ethnically congruent communication processes;
- d) Demonstrations of assertiveness; and



e) Utilisation of clearly stated and enforced expectations to effectively assist students to succeed academically (p. 266).

Using Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework, Powell (1997) conducted a five year case study of a classroom teacher working in a culturally diverse school in the US. Here the teacher built on students' strengths whilst still meeting the academic and personal needs of her CALD students. Conclusions include that, through the teacher making connections between students' personal experiences and backgrounds and the curriculum, this improved students' commitment to learning, teacher-student relationships and students' academic success.

#### **4.4.1c Investing in and taking personal responsibility for students' success.**

Teachers who took personal responsibility for students' success, "going above and beyond their required duties as a classroom teacher" (Morrison et al., 2008, p. 436) had better success. For example, Pierce (2005) highlights the importance of actively celebrating student success. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties and challenges of working in a system of standardised testing, this researcher emphasises the importance of preparing students for it. Pierce (2005) also points out that it is equally important for teachers to take responsibility for any failure, cautioning against a 'pedagogy of poverty' which normalises low expectations for disadvantaged students.

**4.4.1d Creating and nurturing cooperative environments.** Sheets (1995) illustrates evidence that teachers who created a climate of acceptance enabled students to gain confidence and excel academically. This climate of acceptance is also clear in Parson's (2005) study where culturally relevant caring boosted students' confidence and engagement in learning. Brown (2003) identifies that mutual respect and showing a genuine interest in student success and welfare was an effective management strategy that provided opportunities for academic success.

**4.4.1e High behavioural expectations.** Morrison et al. (2008) notes that teachers acknowledge high standards of behaviour are necessary if their students are to be successful academically. Standards of classroom behaviour need to be made explicit, remain consistent and be communicated so that students know what is expected (Brown, 2003; 2004).

#### **4.4.2 Strategy Two: Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence is critical to enacting a CRP. As discussed in Section 3.2, cultural competence has been defined as a "set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enable them to work

effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Cross, 1989, p. iv). Hanley (1999) defines culturally competent practice as existing when:

agencies and individuals accept and respect cultural differences, continue self-assessment of cultural awareness, pay careful attention to the dynamics of cultural differences, continually expand their cultural knowledge and resources, and adopt culturally relevant service models to better meet the needs of minority populations (p. 6).

In the context of education, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that within a culturally responsive framework, culturally competent teachers would provide a learning environment that develops a “dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467). Also, these teachers would assist students to develop positive cultural identities (Gay, 2013; Sleeter, 2011a). Morrison, Robbins, and Rose (2008) synthesise classroom-based research, finding that teachers exhibited cultural competence in a number of ways including:

- a) Reshaping the prescribed curriculum;
- b) Building on students’ funds of knowledge; and
- c) Establishing relationships between school and the children’s homes (p 437).

**4.4.2a Reshaping the prescribed curriculum.** In order to ensure a connectedness between school and home culture, culturally competent teachers integrate the prescribed Eurocentric curriculum with non-mainstream content (Banks & Banks, 2001). For example, as Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist (2003) identify, teachers in a small remote Aboriginal community used the state syllabus materials only as a guide and shaped the curriculum to reflect the home culture and interests of the students.

**4.4.2b Building on students’ funds of knowledge.** A considerable amount of research suggests that culturally competent teachers build on their students’ funds of knowledge. That is, culturally competent teachers first learn about of students’ culture through their own investigations and develop meaningful relationships with their students. From making links with the students’ home culture and knowledge, the teacher can draw in their funds of knowledge and link this to the curriculum. Culturally competent teachers also affirm and recognise their students’ first language and actively use it wherever possible (Benson, 2003; Guha, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Howard, 2001b; Pierce, 2005; Powell, 1997). Sleeter (2012) and Nykiel-Herbert (2010) highlight the frequency with which educators misinterpret engaging in cultural celebrations. They argue that such activities do not build on students’ funds of knowledge and are superficial and tokenistic (Morrison et

al., 2019). Nykiel-Herbert (2010) posit that, by engaging in tokenistic cultural celebrations alone, this may contribute to the continued poor academic performance of immigrant and minority students as their backgrounds are not adequately used for their own learning (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010). Culturally competent teachers understand and can differentiate ways to make links between students' home culture and school culture for learning.

**4.4.2c Encouraging relationships between school and community.** According to Nieto (1999), “the nature of and the extent of the relationships between teachers and their students are critical in promoting student learning” (p. 167). Teachers who emulate community engagement do this through activities such as home visits, inviting parents to be part of the school community, and including them in decision making (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Jiménez, 1997; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Powell, 1997; Sheets, 1995).

#### ***4.4.3 Strategy Three: Critical Consciousness***

Ladson-Billings (1995) states in her definition of a CRP that, “not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognise, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). Ladson-Billings (2013) also asserts that CRP is about “questioning and preparing students to question the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (p. 128). In Morrison, Robbin and Rose's (2008) synthesis of classroom-based research around CRP, they find few examples of teachers enacting critical consciousness as evidenced in critical literacy, engaging students in social justice work, making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society and sharing power in the classroom.

**4.4.3a Critical literacy.** Culturally responsive teachers take on “a critical stance toward the content of their literacy instruction” (Morrison et al., 2008, p. 441) through their curriculum delivery and assist their students to develop a similar critical stance. Such teachers employ activities such as selecting texts with a critical perspective and providing opportunities for discussions that allow students to discuss controversial topics (Feger, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003), using critical thinking prompts before reading (Conrad, Gong, & Sipp, 2004; Duran, 1998; Newell & Sweet, 1999), and asking students to take a more critical or sometimes political view of texts studied in the class (Feger, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Hyland, 2005).

**4.4.3b Engaging students in social justice work.** Some teachers engage students in social justice work or prepare them to act upon social justice issues in their future (Arce 2004; Hyland, 2005; Jacob, 1995; Lynn, Johnson, & Hassan, 1999; Newell & Sweet, 1999; Tate,

1995). Hawkins (2009) elaborates on this element, proposing that teaching social justice requires engaging students not only on a cognitive level but also on a personal level through discussions where students are challenged on their perceptions and provided with alternative viewpoints to develop and understand their relationship to others and “process collective problems, aims and resolutions” (Hawkins, 2009, p. 5). Hawkins (2014), who conducted participatory action research in two Australian preschool settings, provides an example of such an approach, the three Ds (difference, diversity and human dignity) strategy, which used children’s literature to develop pre-schoolers’ awareness of social justice issues. This researcher identified that pre-schoolers formed skills of critical reflection and participated in thoughtful conversations.

**4.4.3c Making explicit the power dynamics in mainstream society.** Delpit (1995) argues that acknowledging the existence of a culture of power requires teachers to make explicit the rules of this culture of power. Teachers who enact a CRP, “make explicit the dynamics of mainstream society to those students from cultures outside this mainstream, while simultaneously validating the unique cultures and heritages of their students” (Morrison et al., 2008, p. 442). Howard (2001a) looked into the work of four elementary teachers who exemplified a cultural responsiveness, identifying that respecting and understanding students’ culture was vital for student success. In assisting African American students to understand the culture of power in the mainstream, through frank conversations, teachers made explicit the appropriate use of students’ home language, Ebonics, and the need to understand the use of American English for social, financial, and educational opportunities. Students’ home language was not belittled, rather it was valued and used as a vehicle for assisting students to understand and connect their culture to the school content. Teachers in this study used different varieties of African American discourse in their teaching practice to make connections with their students and to encourage them to excel academically.

**4.4.3d Sharing power in the classroom.** Morrison et al. (2008) find few examples in the literature evidencing the sharing of power in the classroom but some strategies were allowing students to call the teacher by their first name and encouraging students’ autonomy (Hyland, 2005; Sheets, 1995). Camp and Oesterreich’s (2010) study of a Grade 5 teacher provides examples of power sharing, such as the absence of a teacher’s desk in the classroom and classroom management strategies based on mutual respect. This teacher’s approach was influenced by Freire and Ramos (2000) in empowering her students to think critically about their world as they develop their own agency. Freire and Ramos (2000) contend that “the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue

with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (p. 80). Sleeter (2011b) argues that a social political conscience would be an ideal characteristic for all teachers and should perhaps be a criterion for employment. However, given that teachers of refugee students in Australia are already employed, this seems impractical. Sleeter’s (2011) proposition does point to the need for better preservice teacher education and in-service professional learning that raises teachers’ awareness of the benefits of a social consciousness to improve academic success.

#### **4.4 Summary of the CRP research**

CRP is multifaceted and dynamic. Just as the three tenets of CRP: high expectations, cultural competence and critical consciousness are interrelated, they are also complex both as constructs and in practice. Complex too is the context of the school where CRP is enacted. Although the literature examined provides examples of authentic classroom practice, these are predominantly in culturally and linguistically homogenous contexts. To date, there has been very little research that provides examples of how teachers enact a CRP in more culturally heterogeneous settings. Furthermore, there appears to be little evidence as to whether the strategies identified in the existing literature can be translated into a multicultural setting or when working with students from a refugee background.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, student achievement is the ultimate goal of teaching and learning. For culturally competent teachers working in culturally diverse settings, their socio-political conscience provides the affective conditions for student to arrive at academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is because culturally competent teachers understand that cultures cannot be confined by one static unchangeable definition. They accept that this malleable construct may change over time as it is influenced by its contextual surroundings. Culturally competent teachers make the commitment to critically self-reflect and analyse their bias, cultural values, assumptions and privilege while working towards changing the redistribution of the power and privilege (Morrison et al., 2019) that operate in society. Through critical reflexive practice, they commit to an ongoing journey of learning and acquiring new skills that enable them to better understand their impact on students from culturally diverse backgrounds. They do this by enacting their CRP by changing and adjusting their teaching practices.

In this chapter, I have discussed how culture is defined by scholars and presented a definition of culture that underpins this study. The literature surrounding cultural competence has been explored and the construct has been defined in an educational context and positioned

within this study. Finally, I have examined the research concerning CRP and described its value as an effective pedagogy for teaching across cultures. As previously stated, little research has been documented on CRP's success for the teaching in culturally heterogeneous schools. In this chapter, the existing literature concerning CRP and related themes that informs this study has been presented, with the intention to provide insight, ideas, and strategies for developing a framework for teachers working with students from refugee backgrounds.

In the following chapter, a professional learning framework is introduced that builds on from this chapter. I examine the literature underpinning the professional learning framework and describe how it was used in this study to develop an intervention to build teachers' cultural competence and develop their skills in enacting a CRP.

## **Chapter 5: The professional learning intervention**

### **5.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I introduce a professional learning framework that informed the development and delivery of a professional learning intervention. This intervention formed part of my research process, as indicated in Figure 5.2. and Table 6.3. The purpose of the professional learning intervention was twofold. Firstly, it focused on building teachers' cultural competence. Secondly, it introduced teachers to a culturally responsive pedagogy, as a possible pedagogy for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. This chapter contains a description and discussion of the professional learning intervention and the professional learning framework on which it is based. This contextualises and explains why and how I designed and implemented the professional learning intervention.

The framework is introduced, with the six strategies identified as critical for effective professional learning that develops and builds teachers' cultural competence. I then discuss each of these six strategies in detail with reference to the relevant literature that underpins it. In this, I outline how each strategy was developed and implemented within the professional learning intervention.

### **5.1 The professional learning framework**

The professional learning framework (Figure 5.1) is a conceptual structure that I developed which draws from existing bodies of literature in the fields of cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-prejudice, and anti-racism education and training (Bean, 2006; Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop et al., 2007; Pedersen, Walker, Paradies, & Guerin, 2011; Pedersen et al., 2005; Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017; Singleton, 2015). While literature surrounding professional learning has been and discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter focuses on the literature underpinning the professional learning framework, providing details on how the professional learning intervention was organised, designed, and implemented for the purpose of this study.

In reviewing the relevant literature on sustainable professional learning focusing on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, six key strategies (see Figure 5.1) were identified as critical for successful professional learning in developing cultural competence in the workplace (Bean, 2006; Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Bhawuk, 1998; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Brown, 2004b; Clair & Adger, 1999; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008b; Williams, 2008). These strategies are:

1. Professional learning to develop cultural competence is contextualised and localised
2. It involves cultural safety

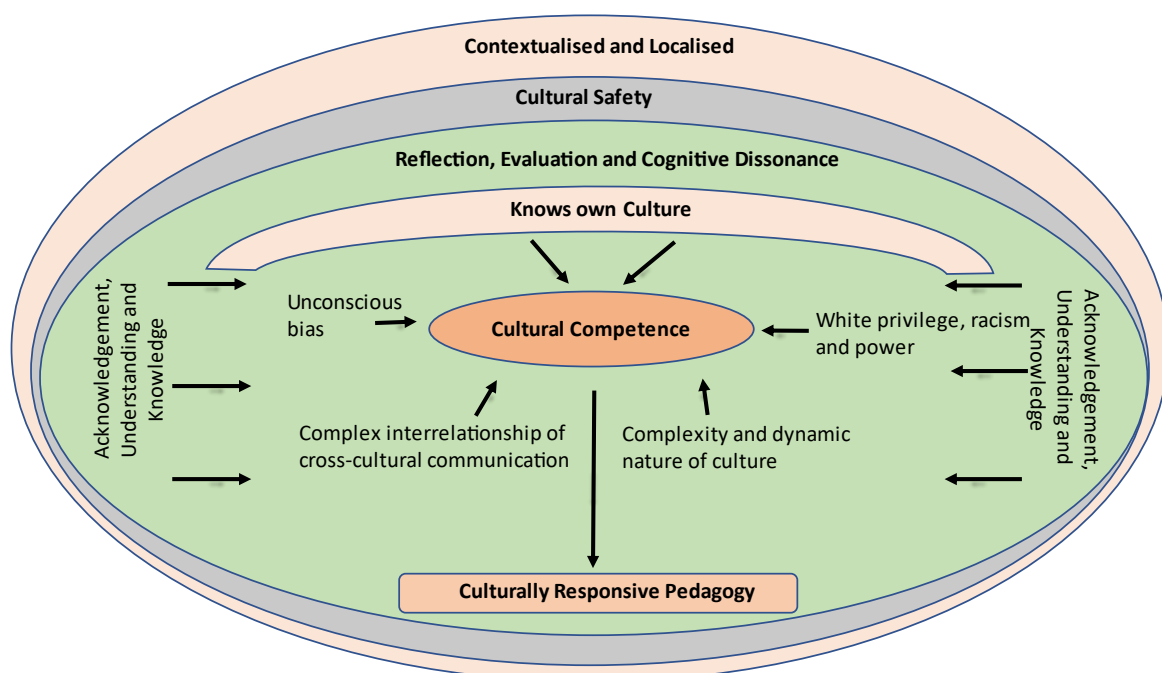
3. It is reflective, evaluative, and prompts cognitive dissonance
4. It requires the learners to know their own culture
5. Cultural competence includes awareness of
  - a. Unconscious bias, white privilege, racism, and power
  - b. The complex interrelationship of cross-cultural communication
  - c. The complexity of culture and its dynamic nature
6. Cultural competence is needed to develop a culturally responsive pedagogy

This professional learning framework illustrated in Figure 5.1 identifies cultural competence as critical to enacting a culturally responsive pedagogy. In Figure 5.1 the key concepts for developing and building cultural competence are depicted. As listed above, these are unconscious bias, white privilege, racism, and power; the complex interrelationship of cross-cultural communication; and the complexity and dynamic nature of culture.

Overarching cultural competence is the idea of knowing one's culture, which is a fundamental step before developing cultural competence. This framework also illustrates the importance of contextualising and localising professional learning and, more importantly, ensuring the cultural safety of teachers engaging in this process. These points are discussed more in detail in Section 5.2.1 and Section 5.2.2.

**Figure 5.1**

*Professional learning framework*





### 5.1.1 The professional learning intervention

The professional learning intervention was implemented over five weeks and included only the participants in the study. Each session was approximately one and a half to two hours. Figure 5.2 shows an outline of each session that I developed and is underpinned by the professional learning framework in Figure 5.1. After the five-week intervention four collaborative planning sessions are held for teachers to develop an artefact that incorporates new learning and understandings from the five-week professional learning intervention.

**Figure 5.2**

*Professional learning intervention sessions*

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>articulate strategies to increase our skills and knowledge related to cultural competency</li> <li>define cultural competence and the differences between individual and workplace cultural competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>raised individual and group awareness about implicit/unconscious biases</li> <li>Share an awareness of own cultural identity, values, attitudes and bias to a small group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use and explain the courageous conversation compass as a reflection model to recognising implicit bias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and use key cultural knowledge to communicate cross culturally and responsively</li> <li>Recognise cultural nuances and use cultural safety within an educational context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define culturally responsive pedagogy</li> <li>Examine and identify current practices already in the workplace</li> <li>Identify and discuss new culturally responsive strategies to increase teachers culturally responsive skills at school and classroom level</li> </ul>
Concepts and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looking at diversity across Cairns West SS. The big picture.</li> <li>What is culture?</li> <li>Cultural iceberg</li> <li>What is cultural competency? Individual and workplace cultural competency. What should it look like?</li> <li>Stages of learning/learning through our cultural imprints</li> <li>Ranges of contexts/worldviews (high context vs low context cultures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconscious bias and white privilege</li> <li>Looking at institutional and individual racial prejudice in the context of education. How does this affect us as teachers in working cross culturally?</li> <li>Difference and sameness Cultural competency continuum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scenarios that generate discussion about implicit/unconscious bias through the courageous conversations compass Strategies for reducing racial prejudice and racism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural adaptation for refugee and migrants</li> <li>Post migration experiences</li> <li>What does this mean for us as educators?</li> <li>Bring knowledge learnt from previous sessions as a tool for assisting teachers to communicate cross culturally</li> <li>The third space in communicating</li> <li>Working with interpreters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culturally responsive pedagogy, what is it?</li> <li>Individual and school audit on how responsive it is? Listing strategies that are being used.</li> <li>What next? Where do we go from here?</li> </ul>

In the following sections, I describe each of the six strategies identified in the literature as essential for effective professional learning that focuses on developing cultural competence.

#### 5.1.2 Strategy 1: Contextualised and localised

Situating professional learning in the context of the workplace (in this study, the school) localises and contextualises learning so that the immediate issues and needs of the teachers can be supported. Professional learning is more effective when it is reflective of both

the complexity and diversity of the school and its community (as represented by the outer oval in Figure 5.1). Pedersen, Walker, Rapley and Wise (2003) contribute to the plethora of relevant research by emphasising that the design of professional learning to the context of the school is the most effective strategy for its implementation. Therefore, effective professional learning in cultural competence, with relevant local examples and input, can create a sustainable behavioural change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards cultural diversity. Furthermore, contextualised professional learning can effectively address the current needs of the school by relating more directly to issues which participants perceive and raise. This is especially critical if changes in behaviour and practices are required (Pedersen et al., 2011). Contextualising enables schools the flexibility to develop their own relevant content and focus on cases when there is urgency, when it fits the school schedule.

Similarly, the design of an intervention that focuses on cultural competence is also more effective when new learning is tailored around both the current experience and expertise of staff and, as Pedersen et al. (2005) suggest, the current demographic of the school population. This is underscored by the assumption that the purpose of professional learning should ultimately be for the benefit of students (Timperley et al., 2007). For example, focusing the context around the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students assist teachers in making meaningful connections to new content.

By this contextualisation, teachers can reflect on and evaluate their current attitudes, behaviours towards diversity, and their current teaching practices, any of which may act as a barrier to student success and a culturally responsive pedagogy. Furthermore, by referring to what happens within the particular school context, teachers have better opportunities to develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding of their students and the community in which they are situated. Additionally, contextualising the professional learning intervention provides opportunities for teachers to discuss and reflect on their immediate experiences and current practices, making the experience more authentic.

By contextualising the professional learning intervention, teachers' conversations are steered specifically to the context and needs of their students and their community, which gives teachers opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the students' backgrounds (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008b). For example, to make the professional learning useful and meaningful, a range of activities and examples that are contextualised to the school can provide collaboratively developed solutions. These solutions are based on students' backgrounds and built on teachers' existing experiences, skills, and knowledge. By taking this approach teachers are able to respond more openly and honestly.

### **5.1.3 Strategy 2: Cultural safety**

Culturally safe practices in the school and the classroom are necessary when working with high diversity and marginalised groups. The term ‘cultural safety’ originated from Maori nurses and medical practitioners in New Zealand working with marginalised patients or patients with CALD backgrounds (Curtis et al., 2019). Williams (2008), defines cultural safety as,

An environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safety for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and the experience of learning together (p. 213).

Bin-Sallik (2003) gives a fuller definition than Williams’s (2008) definition of cultural safety by stating that it goes beyond cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. She emphasises that cultural safety is an outcome of cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. Bin-Sallik (2003) states, “[i]t empowers individuals and enables them to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes” (p 21). Through an established culturally safe environment, Bin-Sallik continues, there is reflection on cultural identity and acknowledgement of the impact and influence of one’s personal culture on one’s professional practice. Critical to the success of cultural safety in the context of education is that teachers acknowledge their membership of the dominant culture and recognise that they may hold unfavourable attitudes towards their students who belong to marginalised and less powerful cultures and communities. Macfarlane et al. (2007) argue that this mode of thinking is a contributing factor in these students’ low academic performance as it causes teachers to focus their attention on less positive indicators of student achievement. Therefore, this creates an urgent need to work with teachers in creating culturally safe spaces for students. My perception that many teachers have lower expectations for such students formed part of the motivation for this research.

As suggested by Macfarlane et al. (2007) and others, to assist teachers in creating culturally safe spaces requires professional learning that helps teachers understand and reflect on their privilege and position as the dominant culture in the school and community context. Establishing cultural safety within professional learning is effective in shifting teachers’ views that negatively stereotype students and their families. These views act as a barrier to student success. Cultural safety, in the context of this professional learning framework, which is represented as the second oval in Figure 5.1, relates to establishing a safe space for teachers

to interact and reflect on new ideas and information that challenge their existing views. More importantly, it is necessary for sustainable change.

Implementing cultural safety as part of the professional learning design is reflected in the work of Pedersen, Walker and Wise (2005) and Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) on anti-prejudice and anti-racism education. They warn that engagement within social justice can be highly emotive and politically charged and, at times, block growth towards cultural competence. Reflecting on this, I designed time, space and opportunities in the professional learning intervention that allows teachers to engage in sustained and open dialogue. Through the purposeful design of planning for cognitive dissonance, teachers can talk through their new learnings, listen and respect each other's points of view, in an atmosphere where they were able to freely express their opinions.

Providing enough time to develop and reflect on attitudes and values is important in professional learning around racism and cultural competence. Also crucial is the establishment of trust. Benson and Fiarman (2019) explain that trust is born out of witnessing others' courageous actions and when we find ourselves in uncomfortable situations with our colleagues, trust happens when "we agree to stay in the struggle with respect and honesty, we come out in a different place. We trust more" (p. 78).

To create environments that encourage courageous conversations about challenging topics (such as unconscious bias and racism) requires a set shared of norms. Pedersen et al. (2011) state that it is essential to provide participants with space that allows them to view their ideas, even if their views are perceived as racist. With this in mind, Singleton's (2015) four agreements of courageous conversation were applied to this professional learning intervention (as highlighted in Figure 5.2). These four agreements or shared norms established expectations of behaviour and a shared understanding for engaging in this intervention and are a tool to guide difficult dialogue. He states that the agreements "serve as a bridge to engaging, sustaining, and deepening conversations about race" (2015, p. 27). In recognising these agreements as a foundation for conversation, this allows teachers who would otherwise feel confronted and unsafe to feel more at ease when experiencing discomfort (Singleton, 2015). Also, these act to confirm the confidentiality about what might be said in the sessions, therefore, developing trust and goodwill amongst teachers.

### Figure 5.3

*Singleton's (2015) four agreements or shared norms for courageous conversations*



Note. From *Courageous conversations about race* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 70), by G. Singleton, 2015, Corwin. Copyright 2015 by G. Singleton.

These four agreements are to be established and reinforced at the beginning of each session and during sessions when the conversation becomes difficult. Establishing these shared norms of behaviour provides teachers with a sense that the professional learning sessions are a space where, whatever they contribute, they would be respected and not judged.

#### ***5.1.4 Strategy 3: Reflection, evaluation and cognitive dissonance***

Effective and sustainable professional learning provides opportunities for teachers' reflection and evaluation of new information. Encouraging teachers to experience cognitive dissonance allows for a shift in teacher attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Furthermore, Bishop et al., (2007) argue that offering teachers with multiple opportunities to experience cognitive dissonance is necessary to disrupt and reconstruct teachers' current thinking. This means opportunities to challenge teacher's perceptions, values, and social positioning, even though it might be uncomfortable, provides rich and meaning learning. Timperley, Phillips and Wisemen (2003) describe this as cognitive and affective dissonance or cultural dissonance. They emphasise that professional learning for cultural competence needs to challenge teachers and give them a better understanding of the power imbalances that may exist in the school context through challenging teachers' thinking in a respectful and supportive way.

To challenge teachers, Russell (2020) and Yoon (2012) stress that, “without critical thinking, cultural competence becomes a safe alternative, complicit in avoiding difficult conversations about racism and individuals’ beliefs or their heart and soul” (Yoon, 2012, p. 598). Additionally, difference is acknowledged and discussed as dysfunction, rather than the outcome of the ongoing effects of trauma, colonisation, and racism, which needs to be unpacked and explored (Herring et al., 2013). Therefore, this professional learning intervention was purposely planned to prompt reflection, evaluation, and dissonance and this is illustrated in the inner green circle of the professional learning framework (Figure 5.1).

Timperley and Alton-Lee’s (2008a) framework for analysing the effectiveness of professional learning experiences was used to structure these evaluations for teachers of their current practices. Through reflecting on their practices and beliefs, teachers are given opportunities to propose new possibilities. However, while moving forward in this iterative process through the professional learning, dissonance in teachers’ current beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of effective practice, may lead to an agreement that there needs to be considerable change in their current practice (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008a).

Adding to this view, Coburn (2001) acknowledges there are possible risks that this cognitive dissonance may cause teachers to reject any of the new learnings. However, as Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) state, while dissonance is a potentially uncomfortable and unpleasant process, it is not necessarily problematic, depending on whether teachers in the professional learning take a constructive or destructive role in dealing with this process. To put this in less judgemental terms, while there is a risk of teachers rejecting any new learning, it is important for the learning development coordinator and the participants to take the view that a process is occurring. Expecting and planning for dissonance can guide teachers through possible uncomfortable components of the professional learning intervention, which can help to ensure that teachers felt safe, were reflective, and did not feel hurried in taking on new ways of knowing and doing.

#### ***5.1.5 Strategy 4: Knowledge of one’s own culture***

Critical to effectively understanding and working successfully with diversity and difference is knowing oneself. Through the act of knowing oneself we can critique how our interactions with people of different cultures are influenced and impacted by our existing knowledge of the world. More importantly, we can critique how we interact with and benefit from existing social structures which imbue privilege to the dominant culture (Russell, 2020). Russell (2020) notes that one of the major challenges for cultural competence education is that it focuses on individual behaviour change and, at times, reinforces and protects the

dominant culture. In elaborating on how this happens, she explains that while learning about other cultures we are limiting learning about ourselves and our own culture, which avoids addressing institutionalised racism and oppressive systems. Therefore, developing critical self-reflection is essential for cultural competence (Morrison et al., 2019) and it requires intentional development (Russell, 2020).

In my professional learning framework, the act of knowing one's own culture is placed in an overarching position to cultural competence (Figure 5.1). The framework clearly illustrates that cultural competence cannot occur without knowledge of the self. As the framework indicates, this takes place via critical self-reflection which is informed by critical theory in knowledge construction (Freire & Ramos, 2000; Giroux, 1983). Thus, knowledge is socially constructed and is reflective of the values and ideas of those who produce it (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). That is, knowing and understanding one's own culture assists in understanding the concept of positionality. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) argue, "positionality asserts that knowledge is dependent upon a complex web of cultural values, beliefs, experiences, and social positions" (p. 29). In other words, understanding that your attitudes and beliefs are influenced by your culture and status may affect your awareness and sensitivity towards students of CALD backgrounds.

In addition to this, unpacking and engaging in critical self-reflection of 'white culture' or 'whiteness' (Di Angelo, 2018) and the characteristic differences of other cultures (without stereotyping) can assist teachers to understand how these influence their own behaviour in the classroom. Understanding such differences between cultures is critical for teachers to effectively engage in meaningful and effective dialogue in the professional learning interventions. In developing these, I adopted Singleton's (2015) standpoint, whereby examining the presence of whiteness is critical for innovating and differentiating instruction in such ways that all students are able to achieve in a rigorous curriculum (Singleton, 2015). For example, teachers needed to unpack the differences between the dominant and minoritised cultures to understand how this affects interactions between the two groups, so that teachers can better communicate responsively.

For this purpose, the professional learning intervention included building knowledge around concepts and theories of culture. This included the following:

- low context and high context cultures (Hall, 1990), and
- individualism, and collectivism (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010)

**Figure 5.4**

*Extract from professional learning intervention: High context and low context cultures (Hall, 1990)*

### HIGH CONTEXT AND LOW CONTEXT CULTURES

Low Context 30%	High Context 70%
<b>Universalists</b> The law is the law	<b>Particularist</b> It depends
<b>Short Term view</b> Time is linear, limited	<b>Long term view</b> Time is circular external
<b>Doing</b> What do you do?	<b>Being</b> Who are you?
<b>Achieved status</b> Judged on merit, what do you know?	<b>Ascribed status</b> Judged on contacts, who do you know?
<b>Written context</b> I trust you but....	<b>Oral agreement</b> My word is my bond
<b>Informal</b> Call me John	<b>Formal</b> This is Mr Brown

### ACTIVITY: RANGE OF CONTEXT



**Figure 5.5**

*Extract from professional learning intervention: Individualism and collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010)*

### INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Individualism and collectivism	
Individual needs and goals	Group (family) needs and goals
Values: independence and self reliance	Values: protect and enhance group power
Behaviours: assertiveness, directness, initiative, risk taking, creativity	Behaviours: obedience, respect Avoidance of shame, conflict avoidance
Egalitarian family structures	Hierarchical family structures, gender, age, wealth



Throughout the professional learning intervention, teachers are presented with a range of different models that assist in understanding the theories of how cultures are organised. I focused on these two concepts of culture as I felt that they presented the difference between the teaching staff's dominant culture and the students' minority cultures (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). These models enable teacher discussions around how the school is organised and how different this is to the perceptions and ways of life of people in high context or collectivist cultures. This also provide an explicit explanation of how schools and classrooms are organised and highlights how this is vastly different to students' lives.

#### **5.1.6 Strategy 5: Cultural competence**

Enacting a culturally responsive pedagogy implies that a teacher is culturally competent (Perso, 2012). As discussed in 4.2, to be culturally competent requires teachers to interrogate the structures of power and oppression that function in our organisations, engage in critical self-reflection and critique how our behaviour reinforces stereotype notions of the 'other' (Morrison et al., 2019). In doing so, we able to steer away from stereotyping cultural groups and work towards a more responsive approach to communicating across cultures. In this professional learning framework, I identified four key components that are critical components towards cultural competence (illustrated in Figure 5.1). These are:

1. The complexity and dynamic nature of culture;
2. Unconscious bias;
3. White privilege, racism, and power; and
4. The complex interrelationship of cross-cultural communication.

These four key components were incorporated into the professional learning intervention and explored with the participants through discussions, videos, and activities.

##### **5.1.6a Cultural competence: complexity and dynamic nature of culture.**

Theorising and conceptualising the complexity and dynamic nature of culture supports us to comprehend and make sense of the world. It also assists us to navigate our way when we encounter new cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence enables us to interrogate structures of power and oppression by unpacking and exploring different theories of culture. This then provides us with the tools to navigate our journey towards cultural responsiveness. As Sensoy and Di Angelo (2017) state, we "cannot address issues of social justice without first examining the maps we are using to identify the problem and conceptualise its solutions" (p. 28). For example, while it may remain invisible to many of us (Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017), these researchers understand the complex and fluid nature of culture and how this contributes significantly in the classroom (Morrison et al., 2008). Such an understanding

assists teachers to enact a culturally responsive pedagogy. Furthermore, it can provide a way to work towards cultural competence (Davis, 2020).

The professional learning intervention provides opportunities for the exploration of theoretical distinctions (Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017) through identifying and solving problems using two cultural theoretical frameworks. These were low context and high context cultures (Hall, 1990), and individualist versus collectivist cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010). These two frameworks help teachers to conceptualise the relevant characteristics for each cultural category: low and high context cultures (Hall, 1990), and individualism compared with collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). In doing so, teachers were able to identify the impact of interactions between people of such different cultures (Singleton, 2015) which enable their understanding of and appropriate responses to these dissimilarities in a way distinct from their previous habitual thinking and behaviour.

By focusing on difference, teachers can understand the world from other perspectives (Duckitt, 2001). Therefore, this helps teachers to unpack misunderstandings. To be specific, this is done through a series of vignettes that describe examples of miscommunication, followed by group discussion that explores and interprets the contexts of these miscommunications. This process was designed to reduce stereotyping and improve attitudes towards other cultures (Bean, 2006; Singleton, 2015)

#### **5.1.6b Cultural competence: unconscious bias, white privilege, racism, and power.**

All humans have prejudice, we cannot avoid it. If I am aware that a social group exists, I will have gained information about that group from the society around me.

This information helps me make sense of the group from my cultural framework (Di Angelo, 2018, p. 19).

Earlier in this thesis, the framing of the dominant culture has largely been in terms of its European origins. However, in the literature, the issue of racial colour has emerged in connection with culture, to serve as a frame of reference for cultural power imbalance within heterogeneous societies. This is confronting. Not all training programs or professional learning on cultural competence and anti-racism directly explore race, racism, and white privilege. Those which do can provoke forms of resistance from members of the dominant culture or those who hold privilege in the group. Di Angelo (2016) argues that this response takes a range of forms such as anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentativeness, and cognitive dissonance. These feelings and behaviours are what she

terms ‘white fragility’ which she defines as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (p. 247). According to the literature, white fragility is manifested in a number of ways; ‘white talk’ (Bailey, 2015), colour blindness, the good non-racist and bad racist binary (Benson & Fiarman, 2019), and problematising behaviour. Di Angelo (2019) frames such manifestations as arising from a lack of racial stamina, an absence of the capacity to endure racial stress when talking about race and racism. Di Angelo (2019) explains that those who belong to the dominant group have rarely experienced racial discomfort, thus they have not had the opportunity to develop their racial stamina. This professional learning serves to build that stamina and increases teachers’ resilience when engaging in racially charged conversations.

Racial stress is interpreted as a threat to the self-image as being morally pure (Liebow & Glazer, 2019). In order to restore this self-image, Liebow and Glazer (2019) state that a discursive strategy known as ‘white talk’ is used, which Bailey (2015) describes,

White talk is designed, indeed scripted, for the purposes of evading, rejecting, and remaining ignorant about the injustices that flow from whiteness and its attendant privileges... It is a privilege exercising discourse that usually springs from the lips without notice. White people habitually fall into white talk as a strategy for steering clear of entertaining the possibility that many of our actions, utterances, and thoughts contribute to the perpetuation of racial injustices and that we bear some responsibility for these (p. 39).

Another manifestation of white fragility is colour blindness. When teachers claim they do not see colour, while this is well intended, it is not helpful (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Moreover, Benson and Fiarman argue that teachers who claim to be colour blind believe that, by not acknowledging differences and skin tone, they are increasing equity. As a feature of white fragility, Di Angelo (2018) describes colour blindness as an “example of racism’s ability to adapt to cultural change” (p. 40). This, however, makes it very difficult to address existing unconscious beliefs and attitudes. Another prevalent aspect of such colour blindness is that it prevents us from seeing our ‘whiteness’ and the privilege that comes with it (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Eddo-Lodge (2017) characterises colour blindness as this “idea that to eliminate race, you have to eliminate all discourse, including efforts to acknowledge racial structures and hierarchies and address them (p. 82)”.

A major problem in discussions about race, racism and white privilege, is that no one wants to be labelled as prejudiced or racist. Through our day-to-day discussions, we weave and duck to avoid conflict and mask our feelings and biases. In fact, we are all conditioned

and taught that racists are mean, ignorant and uneducated whereas non-racists are good, educated, socially progressive, open minded, with good intentions, and generally middle class (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Di Angelo, 2018; Gay, 2010a). Benson's (2019) work on anti-racism in the education context reinforces that the bad racist/good non-racist binary concept is a way of explaining our condition. This binary paradigm was coined by Benson and Fiarman (2019) to explain the mindset that assumes,

...all people fit into two distinct identities: they're either racist or they're not racist.

Within this mindset, these are mutually exclusive categories, mirror opposite, one good and one bad. Operating from this mindset, people are sorted into categories and judge others and themselves accordingly (p. 32).

Di Angelo (2018), a white academic who teaches whiteness studies, contributes to this discussion, explaining that this paradigm causes a moral blow to 'white' teachers as they tend to defend their character in the face of a perceived character assassination attempt if the concept is presented so simply. Di Angelo (2018) concludes that it is almost impossible to talk to white people about race and racism. She stresses that we need to let go of this binary conceptualisation of the bad racist/good non-racist as it "obscures the structural nature of racism and makes it difficult for us to see or understand" (p. 73).

As such, aspects of white fragility can be experienced throughout the professional learning intervention by teachers, as discussed in 10.1. However, the design of this professional learning intervention helps teachers move away from the bad racist/good non-racist binary idea. The purpose of the intervention is to assist teachers to find a way out of their discomfort, through talking about race and strengthening their racial stamina. This is based on the belief that, if we avoid talking about race in an intervention to promote cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, we will never move forward. When we fail to talk about race, we become judgemental and shut down our learning and others' ability to learn (Benson & Fiarman, 2019) in a collaborative environment focused on these themes. Benson and Fiarman (2019) articulate this by stating that only by facing that uncomfortable truth, will we "feel compelled to reduce the negative impact of those biases" (p. 98).

Santoro (2013) explains that, for some teachers, unsophisticated meanings of culture lead to its essentialisation, resulting in problematising perceived behaviours. In some circumstances, student differences are viewed as a hindrance and therefore teachers work unintentionally to assimilate them into the values and beliefs of the dominant culture. Santoro's (2013) findings parallel those in this study, highlighting an unintentional culture of problematising as discussed in 10.1.3.

Reflective practices and self-critique lead to uncovering the unintentional, unconscious behaviours and thinking, the setting others apart from oneself which is known as ‘othering’ (Morrison et al., 2019). Professional learning centred on cultural competence requires opportunities for critical reflection that “interrogate[s] the mechanisms of power and oppression that operate in our societies” (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 53). Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, and Beckingham (2004) note that a shift in attitudes and beliefs was possible via ongoing professional learning. This learning provides opportunities for teachers to construct new knowledge through both self- and co-regulating their learning, which may result in their implementing pedagogical changes in their classes. This is supported by existing literature centred around professional learning in developing empathy and understanding for students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). It also provides substantial insight into how to approach professional learning for the development of cultural competence.

The professional learning intervention assists teachers to interrogate their privilege and their position in the dominant culture (Di Angelo, 2018; Herring et al., 2013; Singleton, 2015) As stated in Chapter 3.9, teachers also need to develop an awareness of their own cultural bias and perspectives, which then assists in developing a deeper understanding of whom they teach (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Through a range of activities, scenarios and videos, teachers are able to explore, discuss and share their own attitudes, skills, and awareness around cultural diversity and reflect on uncomfortable topics such as their own position of privilege and how this might affect their pedagogy. Through these challenging conversations, opportunities are provided for exploration and a process for reflection. Having open, honest discussions assists teachers in acknowledging and coming to terms with their own cultural bias (Pedersen et al., 2005).

The intention of this professional learning intervention was to ensure that the topics of unconscious bias, white privilege, and racism were central to the discussions. The professional learning intervention allows time and space for teachers to vigorously discuss these themes in a personalised way close to their own working lives. By providing opportunities for safe discussions, conversations can be steered towards constructive solutions from difficult, robust conversations, thereby developing teachers’ racial stamina. However, when resolving difficult conversations is not possible, leaving teachers to accept the protocol of non-closure (see Figure 5.2).

### **5.1.6c Cultural competence: complex interrelationships of cross-cultural**

**communication.** Effective cross-cultural communication is a key part of working towards cultural competence and requires teachers to understand the complexity and multilayered nature of culture (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Davis, 2020; Hofstede et al., 2010) and its impact on how we communicate. Cross-cultural communication is also about acquiring the skills to manage differences and develop an alternative frame of communicating without bias (Chung, 2019). As communicating is a process where information is shared between two or more people, this implies that those engaged in communicating acquire meaningful information (Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kakabadse, & Savery, 2001).

However, this is not as simple and straightforward as one might think. According to Hall (1976), information that surrounds an event is bound by the meaning's context. In other words, communication is pivotal to the definition of our cultural experiences and cross-cultural encounters. That is, our interactions when we communicate are influenced by our behaviour with others (Chung, 2019). Communication in high and low context cultures is therefore distinctly different (Hall, 1976). High context communication is reliant on and tuned into nonverbal communication. Also, meaning is conveyed through status and informally through friends where there are established relationships. Whereas low context communication relies on the verbal message. This message contains most of the information and very little is embedded in the context (Zou, 2019). Hall's (1976) work has been historically used in cultural competence training for teaching cross-cultural communication, and currently still is, however it has attracted disapproval from some scholars. One criticism is that Hall overgeneralises cultures, essentialising, stereotyping and placing them as the "other" (Morrison et al., 2019) culture. Other researchers highlight the lack of empirical research, even though Hall's distinction between high and low context communication is still applied to working in cross-cultural contexts. However, while there are limitations to this work, it is also important to point out that there is limited research in the field of cross-cultural communication and Hall (1976) does provide a way of explicitly explaining how to communicate cross culturally at a basic level.

Effective cross-cultural communicators in culturally diverse classrooms understand how culture influences a culturally diverse school setting. In sessions one and two of the professional learning intervention, theories and concepts describing culture and differing world views from previous sessions were brought together and put into the context of communicating cross culturally. These included concepts such as individualism and collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010), high and low context cultures (Hall, 1990), defining

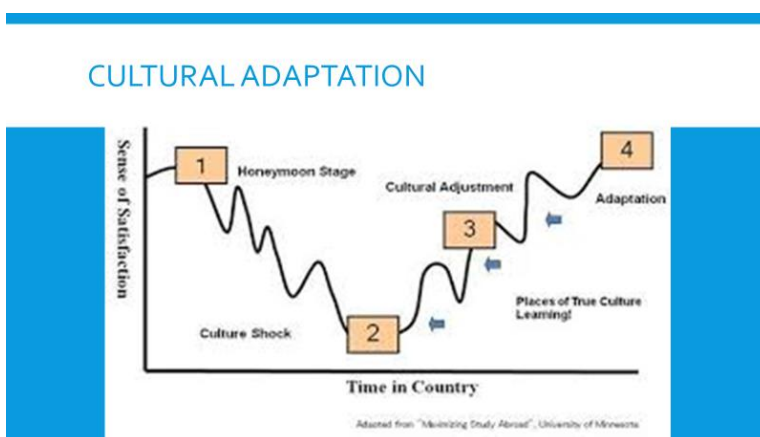
culture, and the iceberg model of culture (Hall, 1976). This is to help teachers connect and incorporate the theory into real-world applications. It is also imperative for teachers to understand the impact of effective cross-cultural communication in the school environment. The outcomes of the session were to:

- Identify and use cultural knowledge to communicate cross-culturally and responsively
- Recognise cultural nuances and use cultural safety within an educational context.

Another key concept to help build teachers' knowledge around communicating cross-culturally was the stages of cultural adaptation developed by Lysgaard (1955). These stages (see Figure 5.4) are introduced to describe the resettlement process of newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds and help teachers understand what adapting to a new culture means as a process. Lysgaard (1955) argues that adjusting to a new culture generates emotions and reactions. Newly arrived students may experience the consecutive stages of the adjustment process at different times and for different lengths of time. Teachers are then provided a framework to assess where students might be in relation to their cultural adaptation. Teachers could use this to reflect on how they communicate, behave, and react to newly arrived students.

**Figure 5.6**

*Extract from professional learning intervention: Stages of cultural adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955)*

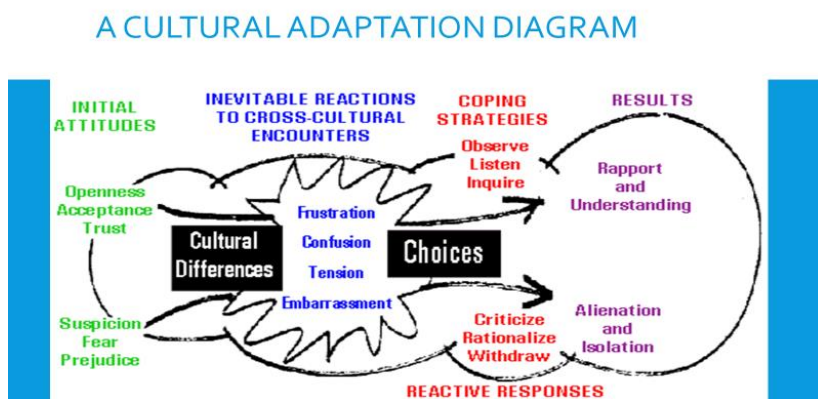


Note. Diagram of Lysgaard (1955), Stages of cultural adaptation. From Advising and Counselling Services: International education and exchange centre, Nagoya University, n.d. (<https://acs.iee.nagoya-u.ac.jp/en/interculture/adjust.html>).

Following the stages of cultural adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955), I used the cultural adaptation diagram (see Figure 5.6). This diagram, using concepts of high and low context cultures can be incorporated as a lens to help teachers make connections between how newly arrived students might acculturate successfully and the choices teachers make to communicate responsively as a catalyst to a positive and effective resettlement experience.

**Figure 5.7**

*Extract from professional learning intervention: Cultural adaptation*



Note. From *Overcoming Culture Shock* by D. Swallow, 2010.

(<https://www.deborahswallow.com/2010/05/16/overcoming-culture-shock/>)

Figure 5.7 represents an elaboration of Lysgaard's (1955) concept, with an emphasis on cultural shock. I used this model in the intervention to illustrate the initial attitude of a newly arrived student entering a new cultural context. The student could either take the attitude of openness, acceptance, and trust or suspicion, fear, and prejudice. Upon entering the school and classroom, the student encounters cultural differences that inevitably lead to several reactions. The student then exhibits emotions of frustration, confusion, tension and, in some cases, embarrassment. The diagram then offers two choices that the student could possibly make. One is openness and acceptance of their life in a new culture, which inevitably leads to a mindset of understanding and rapport with new friends. However, there is another option, the student might respond to the new environment through criticising, rationalising, and withdrawing from interacting with people. This leads students down a path of alienation and isolation, making their resettlement a negative process (Stewart, 2011; Winkelman, 1994; Zapf, 1991). In summary, this diagram illustrates how teachers can actively change this second choice, by a pedagogy that is responsive, with our effective communication.



### 5.1.7 Culturally responsive pedagogy

Before understanding what a culturally responsive pedagogy might look like, it is critical to first build teachers' cultural competence and explore their unconscious bias (Ladson-Billings, 1995). A culturally responsive pedagogy is illustrated in Figure 5.1 as the final piece of this professional learning intervention which brings together all the new understandings and concepts of culture presented in earlier sessions. Using this pedagogy, they can position themselves as cultural beings interacting with other cultural beings, very different to themselves. It is only by changing and looking at ourselves we able to respond in new and different ways that benefit students.

In the final session of the professional learning intervention the outcomes were:

- Define culturally responsive pedagogy
- Examine and identify current practices already in the workforce
- Identify and discuss new culturally responsive strategies to increase teachers' culturally responsive skills at the school and classroom level

In this session, a culturally responsive pedagogy is conceptualised using Ladson-Billings (1995), Brown-Jeffy and Copper (2011) and Gay's (2002) definitions. These were discussed in Chapter 4.3. Through video vignettes that illustrate examples of culturally responsive teachers in the classroom, Morrison et al.'s (2008) synthesis based on Ladson-Billings' (1995) theoretical framework as a model extrapolates successful strategies that these culturally responsive teachers in the vignettes used (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1**

*Summary of Morrison, Robbins and Rose's (2008) synthesis of classroom-based research on CRP*

Strategies	Key elements
<b>High academic expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum</li> <li>• Using students' strengths as instructional starting points</li> <li>• Investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success</li> <li>• Creating and nurturing cooperative environments</li> <li>• High behavioural expectations</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reshaping the prescribed curriculum</li> <li>• Building on students' funds of knowledge</li> <li>• Establishing relationships between school and the children's homes</li> </ul>

<b>Critical consciousness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical literacy</li> <li>• Engaging students in social justice work</li> <li>• Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society</li> <li>• Sharing power in the classroom</li> </ul>
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Note. Reprinted from Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: a Synthesis of Classroom-Based Research by K. Morrison, H. Robbins and D. Rose, 2008, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(4), p. 433-452. Copyright 2008 by K. Morrison, H. Robbins and D. Rose.

I used this framework because of its simplicity and teachers would be able to easily access it as an audit tool to identify strategies and key elements that are culturally responsive in their own practice. Discussions about their existing practices would help teachers to find responsive practices for implementation into their pedagogical repertoire. Figure 5.8 illustrates this document.

### Figure 5.8

*Extract of reflective notes for culturally responsive pedagogy: Intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum*

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy - Reflective notes

Strategies	Key elements	What the research says	What you do already?	Possible ideas for implementation
High academic expectations	1. Intensive modelling, scaffolding, clarification of the challenging curriculum	<p>Research showed that many teachers using a culturally responsive pedagogy were explicitly modelling activities and instruction that promoted metacognition. These teachers also set clear expectations and monitored student learning closely and frequently (Brown, 2003; Gutierrez, 2000; Hollie, 2001; Sheets, 1995; Stuart &amp; Volk, 2002).</p> <p>The provision of reading texts that students could identify with and which made sense to them ensured success in reading and listening comprehension (Feger, 2006; Jiménez, 1997; Lee, 1995). For example, Conrad, Gong and Sipp's (2004) investigated a Grade 3 classroom, where during read aloud, a reading strategy called 'text talk' was employed and challenging texts were used to improve students' oral language and reading comprehension. In combining both the 'text talk' strategy and a culturally responsive pedagogy, teachers in this study engaged learners through carefully planned and scaffolded questions and vocabulary activities, which enabled students to understand more conceptually challenging ideas whilst building on their vocabulary development.</p>		
	2. Using students' strengths as instructional starting points	<p>To successfully manage students from culturally diverse contexts in a culturally responsive way involves the teacher's ability to develop a classroom environment where students agree to cooperate with the teacher and fellow students in pursuit of academic growth (Brown, 2004). This is illustrated in a qualitative study of thirteen teachers ranging from seven cities across the United States. It was found that classroom management strategies such as the development of personal relationships with students, creation of caring communities, establishment of business-like learning environments, use of culturally and ethnically congruent communication processes, demonstrations of assertiveness, and utilization of clearly stated and enforced expectations were effective in assisting students to succeed academically (Brown, 2004).</p>		

Cultural competence	1. Reshaping the prescribed curriculum	In order to ensure a connectedness between school and home culture, culturally competent teachers integrate the prescribed "Eurocentric curriculum" with non – mainstream content (Banks & Banks, 2001). For example, in a study by Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist (2003), teachers in a small remote Aboriginal community used the state syllabus materials as only a guide and shaped the curriculum to reflect the home culture and interests of the students.		
	2. Building on students' funds of knowledge	Culturally competent teachers first learn about elements of students' culture through their own research and develop personal relationships with their students. It is from making links with the students' home culture and knowledge that the teacher can draw upon their funds of knowledge and the curriculum. Culturally competent teachers also affirm and recognise their students' first language and actively use it wherever possible (Benson, 2003; Guha, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Howard, 2001b; Pierce, 2005; Powell, 1997). Sleeter (2012) and Nykiel-Herbert (2010) highlight the frequency with which educators misinterpret engaging in cultural celebrations as building on students' funds of knowledge thereby contributing to continued poor academic performance of immigrant and minority students as their backgrounds are not sufficiently utilised for their own learning (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010). Culturally competent teachers understand and can differentiate ways to make links between students' home culture and school culture for learning.		
	3. Establishing relationships between school and the children's homes.	According to Nieto (1999), "the nature of and the extent of the relationships between teachers and their students are critical in promoting student learning" (p.167). Teachers who emulate community engagement do this through activities such as: home visits; inviting parents to be part of the school community and; including them in decision making (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Hyland, 2005; Jiménez, 1997; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Powell, 1997; Sheets, 1995).		

		In Powell's (1997) five year case study of a classroom teacher working in a culturally diverse school in the United States which used Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework, the teacher built on students' strengths whilst still meeting the academic and personal needs of her CALD students. Findings demonstrated that, through making connections between students' personal experiences and backgrounds and the curriculum, this improved their commitment to learning, teacher-student relationships and academic success.		
	3. Investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success	Pierce (2005) highlighted the importance of actively celebrating student success. Pierce acknowledged the difficulties and challenges of working in a system of standardized testing but emphasized the importance of preparing students for it. Also, it is equally important for teachers to take responsibility for any failure, cautioning against a "pedagogy of poverty" which normalises low expectations for disadvantaged students.		
	4. Creating and nurturing cooperative environments	Teachers who created a climate of acceptance enabled students to gain confidence and excel academically (Sheets, 1995). This climate of acceptance is also evident in Parson's (2005) study where culturally relevant caring boosted students' confidence and engagement in learning. Brown (2003) identified that mutual respect and showing a genuine interest in student success and welfare was an effective management strategy that provided opportunities for academic success.		
	5. High behavioural expectations	Teachers knew that, if their students were to be successful academically, they needed to have high standards of behaviour (Morrison et al., 2008)  Standards of classroom behaviour need to be made explicit, remain consistent and be communicated in such a way that students know what to expect and what is expected of them (Brown, 2003, 2004).		

Critical Consciousness	1. Critical literacy	Culturally responsive teachers take a critical stance toward the content of their literacy instruction and through their curriculum delivery and assist their students to develop a similar critical stance. Studies have shown that such teachers employ, for example, activities such as selecting texts with a critical perspective and provide opportunities for discussions that allow students to discuss controversial topics (Feger, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003), use critical thinking prompts before reading (Conrad, Gong, & Sipp, 2004; Duran, 1998; Newell & Sweet, 1999) and ask students to take a more critical or sometimes political view of texts studied in the class (Feger, 2006; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Hyland, 2005)		
	2. Engaging students in social justice work	Teachers engaged their students in social justice work or prepared them to act upon social justice issues in their future (Arce 2004; Hyland, 2005; Jacob, 1995; Lynn, Johnson, & Hassan, 1999; Newell & Sweet, 1999; Tate, 1995). Hawkins (2009), teaching social justice requires engaging students not only on a cognitive level but also on a sensitive and personal level through discussions where students are challenged on their perceptions and provided with alternative viewpoints to develop an understand their relationship to others and process collective problems, aims and resolutions. Hawkins' (2014) participatory action research in two Australian preschool settings provides an example of such an approach, the Three Ds (Difference, Diversity and Human Dignity) strategy which used children's literature to develop pre-schoolers' awareness, understandings of, and sensitivities to, social justice issues. This study found that pre-schoolers developed capabilities of critical reflection and could participate in profound discussions that challenged taken-for-granted assumptions on issues of physical appearance, gender, colour, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and ability.		
	3. Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society	Delpit (1995) argues that acknowledging that there is a culture of power requires teachers to make explicit the rules of the culture of power. Teachers who enact a culturally responsive pedagogy, "make explicit the dynamics of mainstream society to those students from cultures outside this mainstream, while simultaneously validating the unique cultures and heritages of their students" (Morrison et al., 2008, p. 442). Howard's (2001a) study of four elementary teachers who		

		exemplified a cultural responsiveness identified that respecting and understanding students' culture was vital. In assisting African American students to understand the culture of power in the mainstream, teachers made explicit through frank conversations the appropriate use of students' home language, Ebonics, and the need to understand the use of American English for social, financial and educational opportunities. Students' home language was not belittled, rather it was valued and used as a vehicle for assisting students to understand and connect their culture to school content. Teachers in this study used various forms of African American discourse patterns in their pedagogy to connect with their students and to encourage them to achieve at higher levels.		
	4. Sharing power in the classroom	Morrison et al.'s (2008) analysis found few examples in the literature evidencing the sharing of power in the classroom but strategies included allowing students to call the teacher by their first name and encouraging students' autonomy (Hyland, 2005; Sheets, 1995). Camp and Oesterriech's (2010) study of a grade 5 teacher provides examples of power sharing, such as the absence of a teacher's desk in the classroom and classroom management strategies based on mutual respect. This teacher's approach was influenced by Freire and Ramos (2000) in empowering her students to think critically about their world as they develop their own agency. Freire and Ramos (2000) state "The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches" (p. 80).		

In addition to this, teachers view a range of vignettes on video from other schools with teachers implementing culturally responsive practices. Teachers discuss each strategy and identified where it sits in the framework devised by Morrison et al. (2008) (Figure 5.8). Following that, teachers recorded possible strategies for implementation. This exercise acts as an audit to put into perspective the existing examples from the vignettes viewed, existing strategies already implemented and prompting reflections about the possibilities teachers may have to ‘tweak’ their pedagogy. This exercise helps translate theory into classroom practice (Morrison et al., 2008).

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the design of the professional learning intervention for this study. The purpose of the professional learning intervention was to assist teachers in understanding their impact on diversity and to work towards cultural competence through a culturally responsive pedagogy.

In this chapter, I have explained and justified how professional learning to develop cultural competence needs to include critical self-reflection to explore bias, cultural values, assumptions and privilege, to support a change in behaviour and action in the redistribution of the power and privilege (Morrison et al., 2019) that operate in our society. When teachers change their beliefs about these themes, they would move towards a culturally responsive pedagogy that would enable them to teach more effectively across cultures.

This chapter began with a professional learning framework to assist the development and implementation of the professional learning intervention. This was followed by an outline of six key strategies that are critical for effective professional learning, focusing on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. Finally, I explained these six strategies in detail, discussing relevant literature that underpinned each and how this strategy was developed and implemented in the intervention.

The following chapter gives details of the qualitative case study research that informs this thesis. This includes its theoretical framework in critical social theory, social constructivism, and the ethics of care, culturally responsive methodology as its methodological approach, and a single case study as its research design. The research methods are then detailed, including the selection of participants, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

## **Chapter 6: Research Methodology and Design**

### **6.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the rationale is established for a qualitative case study that centres on a professional learning intervention based on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. The chapter also provides the study's theoretical foundations and reasoning for its methodological steps, in detail.

The professional learning intervention is a program developed for classroom teachers working in CALD schools with high populations of approximately 120 students from refugee backgrounds. The study was concerned with investigating:

- a) The impact of the intervention in terms of how it supports classroom teachers to work with students from refugee backgrounds;
- b) How a professional learning intervention might affect and challenge teachers' assumptions and beliefs about students from refugee backgrounds; and
- c) How teachers can be better prepared, and responsive in their approach to teaching.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, critical social theory, social constructivism, and ethics of care are discussed as the theoretical framework that underpins this study. A culturally responsive methodology is then introduced as my methodological approach, and some of the advantages and challenges are outlined for an insider researcher who is researching in her own workplace. Following this, I explain why I adopted a qualitative single case study as my research approach and then introduce the site where the research took place and the participants.

The procedures for data collection and data analysis are then described, with an explanation of how and why the process for data analysis is set within a culturally responsive methodological approach. I also justify the implementation of both deductive and inductive themed data analysis as the data analysis method. This is followed by an outline of strategies that enhanced the integrity and trustworthiness of the study to minimise bias within the research. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion focusing on ethical considerations pertinent to this research's integrity and its limitations.

### **6.1 Research questions**

This study examines how a professional learning intervention can help teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs and influence their attitudes and beliefs towards working with newly arrived refugee students by exploring the following research questions:

How does a research-informed, school-based professional learning—with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy:

1. Affect teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students from a refugee background?
2. Facilitate a teacher designed framework for guiding ongoing professional learning and changes to classroom practice for students from refugee backgrounds?

## **6.2 Conceptualising a theoretical framework**

In this section, I define and discuss how critical social theory, social constructivism, and an ethics of care as my theoretical framework informs and situates my approach to this research.

### **6.2.1 Critical social theory**

Critical social theory, drawn from the work of Giroux (1983) and Freire (2000), promotes “ideology critique, and analysis of culture, attention to discourse, and a recasting of the teacher as an intellectual or cultural worker” (Leonardo, 2004a, p. 12). Importantly, critical social theory is concerned with how educational institutions position marginalised students. It advocates for critically addressing cultural differences and the power relations that exist in the school context. In essence, its implicit goal is the advancement of the emancipatory function of knowledge (Leonardo, 2004b). In the context of this study, teachers take the role of ‘cultural workers’ (Giroux, 1983), or ‘cultural brokers’ (Gay, 1993; Michie, 2014) to address cultural differences, the emancipation of marginalised students and to respond to the power dynamics that disadvantage marginalised students in the school context. Gay (1993) defines a cultural broker as,

... one who thoroughly understands different cultural systems, is able to interpret cultural systems from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process (p. 9).

Gay’s (1993) definition describes how I situated myself as an EAL/D teacher and insider researcher working in an intensive English centre (IEC) with students from refugee backgrounds. For example, in my previous role as an EAL/D teacher in a primary school setting, I worked across many different cultures. As such, I found myself continually learning, understanding and interpreting a range of world views and different cultural systems. It was through this process that I moved towards building bridges and linkages across different groups to work more responsively as an EAL/D teacher. Throughout the professional learning intervention, participants were learning to position themselves as cultural brokers in the classroom context. Moreover, by learning to take on this role, participants were

understanding, interpreting, and responding to cultural differences, inequities, and power relations that disadvantage marginalised students.

A theoretical framework that has critical social theory as a part of its underpinning considers both the researcher's and the participants' lived experiences as a process of sharing and co-constructing new knowledge. This was also foundational to this study. Teachers are valued members of staff and have a range of knowledge, skills and understanding about how to teach although sometimes these skills are not highlighted, utilised, or valued. Through engagement in this study, the six teachers were provided with opportunities to learn, share their skills and co-construct new knowledge. Co-constructing new knowledge is a fundamental construct in critical social theory (Freire & Ramos, 2000; Giroux, 1983, 1992; Leonardo, 2004a) and is concerned with creating new knowledge as a liberating activity (Leonardo, 2004b). For example, co-creating new ways of teaching recognises and values teachers' experiences and contribution to the research as equal to that of the researcher.

In the context of this study, critical social theory is helpful as part of its theoretical framework because it enables teachers to develop understanding about how dominant groups can address power relationships. In addition, the use of critical social theory allows teachers to share and explore their lived experiences in both their personal and professional lives and to investigate critically how these experiences might affect their teaching practice. Through this process, teachers can co-create new knowledge that might improve their pedagogies for working with students from refugee backgrounds.

### **6.2.2 Social constructivism**

Social constructivism proposes that knowledge is constructed through encounters or experiences. Glasersfeld (1995) asserts that processes of knowing have roots in social interaction and an individual's knowledge of the world, are bound to personal experiences and are mediated through interaction (language) with others (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). From the perspective of a cultural broker, (as described in Section 6.2.1) knowledge is constructed through engagement with students and their families. The concept of teachers as cultural brokers in this study is underpinned by a social constructivist view. This social constructive view centres on the teachers' lived experiences as it is felt and understood by social actors (Schwandt, 1994) and is concerned in the "collective generation of meaning among people" (Au, 1998, p. 299).

Social constructivism has been criticised by some scholars as a teaching approach that is unguided or minimally guided without building a strong knowledge foundation in students (Alanazi, 2016; Kirschner, Clark, & Sweller, 2006). As such, it is argued that without a



strong knowledge base it is difficult for students demonstrate problem-based approaches without first developing a knowledge base (Wilson, 2005). Furthermore, it has been contended that a social constructivist approach downplays the mental construction of knowledge (Doolittle & Camp, 1999) and therefore not an effective pedagogy. Wilson (2005) adds that while it is legitimate learning theory, it is not a teaching approach. While I have considered this argument, this study is concerned with how social constructivism is helpful in assisting teachers through a professional learning intervention to develop themselves as cultural brokers. As cultural brokers, teachers can respond and interact with students and their families in culturally responsive ways (Gay, 1993). I draw on the social constructivist perspective to inform how knowledge is constructed by teachers collaboratively to inform the development of an artefact that will assist in responding to CALD students and, in particular, to students from refugee background. It is my premise that through interacting with colleagues, students and families, teachers will engage in ongoing learning and development to create new ways of knowing that assist in responding effectively to students from refugee backgrounds.

### **6.2.3 Ethics of care**

As echoed in critical social theory and social constructivism, the theory of ethics of care is also concerned with the belief that society is structured by power relations that create unequal social situations (Martin, 2002). Within an educational context, the ethics of care emphasise the importance of relationships, reciprocity, and community (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013), to break down oppression, inequity, and problems with power. Noddings argues that caring should be a foundation for all ethical decision making and justice is an extension of caring. As Noddings (2002) stated,

The key, central to care theory, is this: caring-about (or, perhaps a sense of justice) must be seen as instrumental in establishing the conditions under which caring-for can flourish. Although the preferred form of caring is cared-for, caring-about can help in establishing, maintaining, and enhancing it. Those who care about others in the justice sense must keep in mind that the objective is to ensure that caring actually occurs.

Caring-about is empty if it does not culminate in caring relations (pp. 23-24).

Noddings' view of an ethics of care highlights the importance of relationships and of knowing others without objectifying them. The act of knowing requires us to be open and listen objectively while understanding others' different viewpoints and perspectives. An ethics of care requires us to engage in self-reflection and be aware that we are prone to errors and bias on our own social context. Therefore, caring is a practice that strengthens people.

Caring emphasises and recognises the relational, dependent and non-voluntary nature of care relationships and the disparities of power inferred in these relationships (Held, 2006). Also, the ethics of caring is about understanding and correcting any issues of power, equity, and oppression that one encounters and experiences. It is this stance that I take. I argue that care should be seen as a primal part of humanity and that the desire to care is what makes us human (Kawamura, 2013).

In this study, Noddings' (1995) ethics of care is conceptualised through different ways of investigating participants' experiences in life and how their perceptions influence their pedagogical choices (Noddings, 2012). Through Noddings' act of caring, those relationships allow the researcher and participants to bring their authentic selves to the table to co-create new knowledge. The co-creation of knowledge has evolved through mutual engagement and there are no spectators (Noddings, 2012) therefore, this challenges traditional qualitative research. As such, the ethics of care is congruent with my personal beliefs about social justice and the marginalisation of the 'other,' to improve teachers' understandings and beliefs about refugee students and their resettlement journey (Eletreby, 2013).

### **6.3 Culturally responsive methodology**

This is a qualitative study that draws on a culturally responsive methodology, as a methodological approach. A culturally responsive methodology challenges conventional research methodologies (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al., 2013) by claiming a commitment to inclusiveness, cultural diversity and epistemological pluralism (Beirmann, 2011). A culturally responsive methodology is grounded in critical social theory (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011), social constructivism (Glaserfeld, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962), and the ethics of care (Noddings, 1995).

As a methodological approach, it cannot be confined to one definition. However, the definition offered by Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al. (2013) resonates with me. They state that "... a culturally responsive methodology 1) embraces cultural and epistemological pluralism; 2) deconstructs Western colonial traditions of research and 3) recognises the primacy of relationships within power-sharing dialogic encounters" (p. 3). This definition underpins the culturally responsive methodology adopted in this study.

A culturally responsive methodology requires researchers to consider and engage in four important characteristics concurrently through all aspects of the research process. Firstly, a culturally responsive methodology in research encourages the researcher and participants to "bring their identities and ideologies to the research table so that these authentic selves inform the co-creation of new knowledge in a third space" (Berryman,

SooHoo, Orange, & Nevin, 2013, p. 5). Secondly, through dialogical action, research is reframed whereby the researcher is positioned as the learner, not the expert exerting their power over the participants. The participants take the role as leaders in actively engaging in the co-construction of new knowledge. Thirdly, the humility of the researcher and participants bring together a “mutual incompleteness” (Berryman, SooHoo, Orange, et al., 2013, p. 6), which supports the relationship between the researcher, the participants and the work that is done together. Finally, core to a culturally responsive methodology is the primacy of the humanisation of research. Berryman et al., (2013) reinforce this in the following statement “the socially responsible researcher must extend rights and respect to research participants in order to not replicate hierarchical colonisation” (p. 6). Therefore, in taking this approach, I encourage the sharing of power among the researcher and participants while co-constructing new knowledge, meanings and understandings through the research (Eletreby, 2013).

This methodological approach allowed me to participate as an insider researcher, working and researching alongside my colleagues to improve teacher practice. As an insider researcher, I was interested in how I could engage in research as well as maintain collegial professional relationships with the participants. Through these relationships there is a shared power, and therefore a deeper development of trust resulting in sustainable working relationships (This is discussed further in Section 6.4). I was also drawn to the idea of the role participants play in a culturally responsive methodology, whereby collaboration and co-creation of new knowledge fitted in with my personal views, as a teacher, of sharing with colleagues and learning new ways of doing things together that improve learning outcomes for students. In other words, through collaboration we are all experts and all learning from each other, bringing our strengths to create new ways of teaching. Finally, participating in research in the school where I was teaching made complete sense to me. As a teacher, I am always refining and striving to improve my practice. By being able to do this with colleagues, this would ultimately create a richer and deeper learning experience that would improve teachers’ pedagogical practice for working across cultures, especially students from refugee backgrounds.

A culturally responsive methodology is useful for researching within the school context. For example, a culturally responsive pedagogy promotes student values and cultural experiences to inform how teachers approach their teaching (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Similarly, a culturally responsive methodology honours and values participants’ responses and informs how researchers best respond in culturally responsive ways. Therefore, a culturally responsive methodology is pertinent for this study as it is “a conceptual

companion to culturally responsive pedagogy” and an important approach to provide professional learning for teachers who are working with students with cultural and linguistic diversity (Berryman, SooHoo, Orange, et al., 2013, p. 5).

A culturally responsive methodology is influenced by and set within an interpretative paradigm which emphasises the skill of individuals to create meaning (Mack, 2010). Through this interpretative paradigm the researcher is “directed at understanding phenomenon from an individual’s perspective, investigating interaction among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, a culturally responsive methodology, through an interpretative paradigm, challenges some of the traditional ideas of research and honours different ways of knowing. This study draws on both the researcher’s and participants’ lived experiences (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al., 2013; Tillman, 2002) to create new ways of working with and responding to students from refugee backgrounds.

To guide the research and ensure it stays authentic within the context of a culturally responsive methodology, the five principles of culturally responsive research methodology were incorporated, as developed by Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, Barrett, Ford, Nodelman, Valenzeula and Wilson (2013). These five principles are:

- a) Learning from multiple sources;
- b) Bringing your authentic self to the research;
- c) Bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness;
- d) Enacting ongoing critical reflection; and
- e) Assessing shared relationships and agreements.

These five principles guided my decision making about the selection of data to collect, the data gathering process, and data analysis, in the spirit of a culturally responsive methodology. Moreover, the five principles were helpful in establishing my role as the researcher. They helped me to understand how to move into and live within contexts where I sought to be involved as both a co-researcher and a co-participant. Table 6.1 outlines Berryman et al’s (2013c) guiding questions and implications that are useful for a researcher engaging in responsive research. This provided the framework for how I conducted the research. Also, these questions guided how data was collected and analysed in a culturally responsive way that honoured the contributions of the participants, their lived experiences, and contributions in co-creating new knowledge. For instance, in this study, both participants and the myself as the researcher were engaged in co-constructing an artefact that was based on the development of new knowledge through the professional learning intervention. My

role as the researcher also meant that I was the knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978), who facilitates and guides participants new learnings. The purpose of this professional learning intervention was to build on developing participants' knowledge around cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. The intent of this artefact was to help participants better respond to students from refugee backgrounds.

**Table 6.1**

*Principles and questions to ask self and implications for responsive research*

<b>Guiding principles and questions to ask self when seeking to work in culturally responsive ways</b>	<b>Implications for researcher seeking to work in culturally responsive ways</b>
<p><b>Learn from multiple sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you come prepared with some social or cultural knowledge of the people with whom you are seeking to engage?</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Do the work before the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out about the person/group with whom you wish to work.</li> <li>Learn about/understand the wider social agenda within which this person/group is located.</li> <li>Be prepared for a long term rather than a momentary commitment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bring you authentic self to the research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What subjectivities, positionalities, and ideologies do you bring to the research? How will they broker your access?</li> <li>Are your own rituals of encounter respectful and humble as a visitor in someone else's place?</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Arrive as a respectful visitor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be prepared for them to 'feel you' as well as 'see you'.</li> <li>Listen and wait to be invited.</li> <li>Learn to use all of your senses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bring a relational and dialogical consciousness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what ways do you convey open mindedness?</li> <li>What are your intentions/research questions?</li> <li>What roles might people play?</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. When/ if you are asked to respond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify who you are, your personal self before your professional self.</li> <li>Be upfront about your research intentions.</li> <li>Ask for their ideas.</li> <li>Listen respectfully to their ideas and understand how your agenda may change in response.</li> <li>Be patient, be flexible, and be prepared to change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enact ongoing critical reflection</b></p>	<p><b>4. If you are asked to stay to co-construct the research</b></p>

- 
- How have the relationships affected the research endeavour?
  - How has the research endeavour affected the relationships?
  - How is the work evolving as a result of this collaboration?
  - How have lives benefited as a result of this collaboration?
- Remain patient, flexible, and prepared to change.
  - Read your participants and expect that they will be reading you.
  - Learn together and own together.
  - Question your own assumptions.
  - Recognise and respect resistance.
  - Be open to a new relational consciousness.
- 

**Assess shared relationships and agreements**

- What have you learned about their values, beliefs, and epistemologies?
  - How will constructed understandings contribute to your continued work/relationship?
  - How has the work benefited and how will it continue to benefit the group you are working with?
- 

**5. When the research is finished**

- Understand that the relationship and the responsibility to the group remain.

Note. Reprinted from *Culturally Responsive Methodologies* (p. 22-23) by M. Berryman, S. SooHoo and A. Nevin, 2013, Emerald. Copyright 2013, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

**6.4 Closeness to the context of the study, the insider researcher**

Merton (1972) describes insider researchers as members of specified groups, collectives or in some cases “occupants of specified social statuses” (p. 21). My role as an insider researcher lay within own work practice. As such, this study was set within a situated practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Merton, 1972). Through being an insider researcher, I was able to bring my lived familiarity with the group being researched, which facilitated entry to this group (Mercer, 2007). The concept of ‘social situatedness’ (Vygotsky, 1962) and situatedness in learning or activity to improve work practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is, as described by Gibbs (2007), “the place where our professional practices grow and where we come to understand the nature of the impact of what we do on others” (p. 224).

As an insider researcher examining existing work practices, this provided me with multiple perspectives for understanding the context (Greene, 2014; Merton, 1972). For example, the participants in the study gave me insight into their current practices and experiences from their perspectives. Therefore, this offered a richer and deeper understanding

into participant' thoughts and behaviours (Scotland, 2012) than might have occurred if the research was not an insider.

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) outline three essential advantages of insider research:

- a) Understanding of the culture being studied;
- b) A natural flow of authentic social interaction; and
- c) trust and honesty through existing established relationships

These advantages have influenced and guided me to respectfully engage in participants' narratives and bring an authentic self to the research, therefore honouring a culturally responsive methodology (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013).

Insider research provides many challenges that are important to consider ensuring respectful ways of working with participants and honouring the research. Firstly, scholars point out that insider researchers are more likely to assume their own perspective (Mercer, 2007) and therefore seen as bias (Unluer, 2012). Furthermore, the closeness of the insider researcher and participants may cause aspects of the research to go unnoticed or even perhaps overlooked (Field, 1991). As such, important obvious questions may not be asked or glossed over without challenging. Another challenge that may present itself is the insider researcher's awareness and experience off existing issues in the school which may lead the researcher to identify a problem prematurely without delving deeper to examine all data resulting in data being overlooked (Greene, 2014). Finally, a further challenge that is problematic for an insider researcher is the issue of power relationships between researchers and their participants. However, while these challenges may present themselves as problematic, they also provide the insider researcher with a coming up with innovative ways developing skills in overcoming such disadvantages (Mullings, 1999).

Embedding an ethics of care into research assists in overcoming barriers and challenges for the insider researcher. Furthermore, an ethics of care is central to participants as it ensures engagement in their narratives and brings the authentic self to the research. Noddings' (1995) concept of the ethics of care was critical in informing how I interacted and engaged with participants. Noddings and Shore (1984) state that,

caring involves stepping out of one's frame of reference into the others. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting, then, have to do both with the other's wants and desires and with the objective elements of his problematic situation (p. 24).

In this study, participants came from a range of different worldviews and have different lived experiences. Taking on the ethics of care meant that I needed to listen and acknowledge my own unconscious bias to ensure that participants felt safe in opening up and expressing their ways of knowing, without fear of judgement from the researcher. Without this, then the “other’s reality becomes data, stuff to be analysed, studied, interpreted” (Noddings & Shore, 1984, p. 36). The insider researcher contributes to the establishment of trust and this can lead to more open contributions. Using an approach involving the ethics of care allows the insider researcher to meet the participants on their terms. Therefore, establishing trust between the insider and the other (Eletreby, 2013) is essential to a culturally responsive methodology in research.

At the beginning of this journey, it was necessary to acknowledge my insider position within this study. Positioning, as described by both Greene (2014) and Merriam (2001), refers to where one stands in relationship to another and this is comparative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants. Mullings (1999) discusses possible challenges and bias to the success of insider research. For example, variables such as age, gender, and racial attributes may provide concern over personal identity work that is associated with prolonged and close relationships. While the argument for biases in insider research exists, Greene (2014) maintains that we must not fear bias, but rather think of insider bias as a “source of insight as well as error” (Aguilar, 1981, p. 26). Greene’s (2014) stance, which I have taken, allows opportunities for me to be authentic and humble when interacting with participants and conducting the research.

### **6.5 A qualitative case study**

In this study, I adopted a qualitative single case study as its research design to investigate an intervention based on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy and its impact on a group of classroom teachers. Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses how people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world around them (Flick, 2018). According to Ponelis (2015), it is necessary to position one’s self within a paradigmatic framework, which leads one to a greater understanding around the paradigm within which one is working.

In this study, I have used an interpretative view that is “based on a life-world ontology” (Ponelis, 2015, p. 538) and therefore argue that observations are both theory- and value-laden investigations of the social world (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2010). Using an interpretive paradigm in a qualitative study can be characterised by the researcher’s need to



understand the world as it is, from a subjective point of view, seeking an explanation within the context of participants' lived experiences (Ponelis, 2015).

Given the interpretative position adopted in this study, a single case study was the most suitable approach. According to Yin (2009) a case study is "... 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 (p. 9)." Furthermore, a case study answers the how and why of the problem, pushes the study beyond description alone and provides insights into a broader problem (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2014). Through providing greater insight to a broader problem, Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) suggest that one of the pitfalls of a case study is that researchers attempt to answer a question that is too broad, leaving too many objectives in the study. They suggest that providing the following boundaries around a case is critical in avoiding this problem and to ensure the study remains in scope: (i) time and place (Creswell, 2003); (ii) activity (Stake, 1995); and (iii) context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For example, in this research, I set boundaries around my case study. The case study was situated around a group of teachers undertaking professional learning that is contextualised within their school.

This case study was undertaken using an interpretive approach where knowledge or constructs were understood through interacting with the participants. Crotty (1989) states that "knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context" (p. 42). Therefore, I was able to uncover interpretations of participants' perceptions of the world and lived experiences. In doing so, I was able to discover new layers of understanding that could be "thickly described" (Scotland, 2012, p. 12). Using a single case study gave me the capacity to investigate the problem deeply.

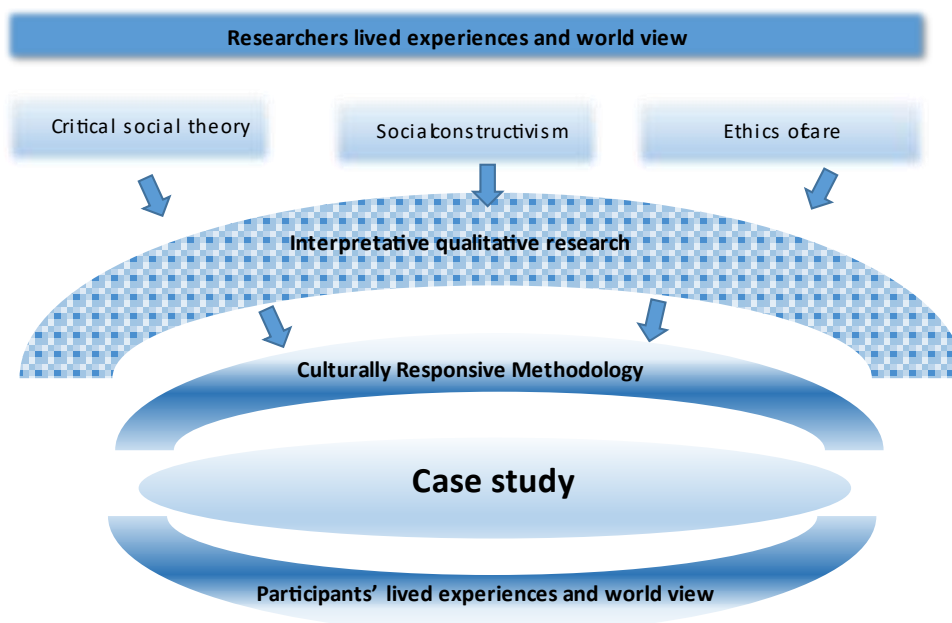
Case studies have limitations and may be problematic because of their interpretative nature and therefore maybe difficult to replicate in other studies. However, Erickson (1986) argues that what we learn in a particular case study can be transferred to similar situations. It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can be applied to his or her context (Stake, 2005). This is the stance that I took in choosing a single site case study. Furthermore, it also offered me the flexibility to use multiple tools for the collection of data (see Section 6.7.1) and the flexibility to assume the stance of an insider researcher, while maintaining my role as the school's EAL/D teacher.

Figure 6.1 is a conceptual framework that I developed to illustrate how this case study, which is the primary focus, is informed by the ability of individuals to construct meaning

about the world (Mack, 2010). In other words, this case study is influenced by both the researcher and participants of this study (as seen at the top and bottom of Figure 6.1). Following underneath is my theoretical framework; critical social theory, social constructivism and ethics of care. Figure 6.1 illustrates the connection between my lived experiences and worldview and how the theoretical framework is framed in the context of how I perceive the world. Furthermore, it highlights the subjective nature of the research and shows how knowledge is socially constructed through human interaction. Following on from this, the layer on top of the case study is the study's methodological approach, which is drawn from a culturally responsive methodology. This section of Figure 6.1 illustrates that there is a relationship between culturally responsive methodology and the theoretical framework. Furthermore, this diagram shows that a culturally responsive methodology is influenced by interpretative qualitative research and highlights the subjective nature of reality within an interpretative paradigm, a reality which is different from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

**Figure 6.1**

*A conceptual framework for culturally responsive methodology*



In order to honour the participants' subjective interpretations, their perceptions of the world and their lived experiences (Ernest, 1994; Noddings, 1995, 2012) it was necessary to use qualitative interpretative methods through meaningful interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

with the participants being central to the research (Scotland, 2012). This conceptual framework (Figure 6.1) allows me, as the insider researcher, to explore individuals and organisations more deeply within a context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2014). Therefore, the use of a single case study with an organisation sits well with qualitative interpretative research within the framework of a culturally responsive methodology.

## **6.6 The research site**

This study took place in a regional school in Far North Queensland, Australia, where I worked as an EAL/D teacher in an IEC. The school caters for Prep to Year 6 students and supports a special education unit (SEU). Teachers work with large numbers of students from CALD backgrounds. The My School website, at the time when data was collected, reported that the school had an enrolment of 677 students, with 70 percent Indigenous and 73 percent having English as an additional language or dialect. This included an enrolment of approximately 100 students from refugee backgrounds. The school is known for its population of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The main groups are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Nepali speaking Bhutanese, Burmese, Cook Islander, Sudanese, Burundian, and other Pasifika (a term for peoples from the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and other South Pacific nations) backgrounds.

To assist in the resettlement of these new arrivals and their families, the IEC was established by Education Queensland in response to a growing number of newly arrived migrant and refugee background students. The school has had students from refugee backgrounds for fifteen years. In the past, students came from Sudan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. At the time of this study, the unit supported approximately 100 students, predominantly from Burundi, Myanmar, and Nepal (of Bhutanese origin).

The intensive English program at the school was based on a withdrawal model where (depending on their English proficiency and prior schooling experience) students were taken out of class and given English language and literacy instruction. Also, to help newly arrived students integrate successfully and develop resilience, organised play and art were incorporated into the IEC's program. When students were not engaged in the IEC's program they were in mainstream classrooms, where classroom teachers were expected to differentiate the curriculum. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, teachers were provided with bilingual support through the staff at the IEC. The bilingual staff were trained teacher aides that spoke either Nepali, Arakanese or Burmese.

**6.7 Participants in the study**

The selection of participants for this study was based on purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling, as explained by Maxwell (2005), is “a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). This study comprised six participants who were classroom teachers. Classroom teachers were chosen as they were considered to be at the front line of teaching, therefore having the most in-school impact on student success (Hattie, 2003). The study was only open to classroom teachers because its central focus involved the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and pedagogy for classroom teachers of students from refugee backgrounds. Members of the school management team (Principal, Deputies, Heads of Curriculum, Master teacher, and pedagogy coaches) were invited to participate in the professional learning intervention, however, they did not take up the invitation.

The six classroom teachers represented a cross section of year levels at the school, as summarised in Table 6.2. All names used in this study are pseudonyms and care has been taken to ensure their identity and school were protected. However, given that the school is set in a regional location in Far North Queensland, with high enrolments of students from refugee backgrounds, total anonymity was not possible.

**Table 6.2**  
*Participants teaching experience*

	<b>Camila</b>	<b>Ruth</b>	<b>Tara</b>	<b>Naomi</b>	<b>Mia</b>	<b>Maria</b>
<b>Current position</b>	Year 4 classroom teacher	Year 6 classroom teacher	Year 3 classroom teacher	Year 2 classroom teacher	Year 2 classroom teacher	Year 4 classroom teacher
<b>Overall teaching experience</b>	4 years	30+ years	4 years	10 years	20 years	10 years
<b>Time in current school</b>	3 years	8 years	4 years	5 years	3 years	12 months

Camila is a 40-year-old, Year 4 teacher born in Australia. She speaks Standard Australian English as her main language. Her partner, a Mauritian Australian, is bilingual (French and English). At the time of the study, Camila had four years’ teaching experience.

Camila moved into the teaching profession after having her family and working as a special education teacher aide for many years.

Ruth is an experienced teacher with more than 30 years teaching in primary school contexts. She has worked as a classroom teacher across all year levels. At the time of this study, she had been teaching Year 6 for several years and has taught in both Western Australia and Queensland schools. Ruth's life experiences underpin her values and she has a very strong conviction that everyone has the right to feel privileged, given that Australia is a wealthy society.

Tara migrated to Australia from Germany and worked in the travel industry before studying a degree in education in her thirties. At the time of this study, she had four years' teaching experience, with Years 3 and 4. She has married a New Zealander she met in Australia and her family live in Germany whilst her husband's live in New Zealand. This means that accessing their immediate and extended family is difficult and requires a lot to travel for them.

Naomi is another migrant from Germany in her middle 30's. She migrated to Australia at 23, is married to an Australian and has three children. Like Tara, she came into teaching as a mature age student. At the time of the study, she had taught for ten years in two schools in the Far North Queensland region, both with large enrolments of students from CALD backgrounds. Naomi sees herself as a very positive person and was looking at moving into a more specialised area in education, having enrolled in postgraduate study to become a guidance officer.

Mia is an early childhood trained teacher who has worked in and managed many early childhood centres and taught in different primary schools in various parts of Australia for over 20 years. At the time of the study, Mia was teaching Year 2 and had taught at the school for three years. Mia is in her early 40s and is a single mother with two adult daughters.

Maria is a Year 4 teacher in her late 30s. At the time of the study, Maria had been teaching for ten years. She is married with one child who has just finished high school and moved away from home, making her and her husband recent 'empty nesters'. For much of her teaching career, Maria worked in several rural and regional centres in Queensland. Before the study commenced, Maria had worked at her current school for just over a year, before which she was teaching in a small regional centre in Central Queensland.

### ***6.7.1 Process for participant recruitment***

The size of the participant group was an essential consideration in the design of this research. A small group assisted me as the researcher to develop relationships, trust, space for

more dialogue to occur and a collection of rich, authentic data, as set out within the context of a culturally responsive methodology (Eletreby, 2013). Morse (2000) also suggests that a small number of participants enables more focus on the topic. Therefore, less data is required to reach the saturation of themes. A wide range of tools was used to collect data: pre- and post-professional learning questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, co-planning sessions, and a researcher's journal. The six participants provided data in the questionnaires, interviews and co-planning sessions, thus providing thick, descriptive and rich data (Ponterotto, 2006).

Participants were invited to this study at the beginning of the 2017 academic school year. The study was initiated during "student-free days," where time for a general information session was set aside by the Principal to allow me to explain the purpose and general design of the study. This was a short ten-minute presentation about the research project, outlining information provided on the information sheet (Appendix A) which was distributed to all staff during the presentation along with the consent forms (see Appendix D and Appendix C). An information sheet was also given to the Principal (Appendix B) to ensure the transparency of the study.

Follow up invitations via email were sent directly after this information session with the consent form and information sheet attached. Also, a poster about the professional learning intervention, with the information sheet and consent form was made available on the staff noticeboard. The information session, information sheet and subsequent emails explicitly explained the different aspects of the study, including the benefits of participation, possible risks and the proviso that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Recruitment took about two weeks.

## **6.8 Data collection**

A variety of sources to collect data were used, enhancing data credibility and allowing the phenomenon to be understood more clearly (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014). Data collection through multiple sources allows data convergence (triangulation) for more comprehensive results. As mentioned above, I used four primary sources of evidence (Yin, 2014): a pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, discussions and artefacts created from co-planning sessions around a culturally responsive pedagogy, and a personal reflective journal. The data collection took one semester of a school academic year. Given the workload of teachers, the intention was to work within the demands of the school program without interfering with or overloading their already busy work schedule. A data collection schedule was designed to fit within the context of the school timetable, as illustrated in Table 6.3. This schedule outlines the timing of the study from

recruitment, data collection, and the implementation of the professional learning intervention and co-planning sessions over a semester. By embedding my research into the existing school program, this allowed participants to be more relaxed, focused and engaged in the study.

**Table 6.3**

*Data collection schedule and research activities*

<b>Semester 1 Term 1, 2017</b>			
<b>Week</b>	<b>Research activity</b>	<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Research procedure</b>
<b>1</b>			Remind Principal of time needed in staff meeting for an information session on PhD research project
<b>2</b>			Introduction session to staff at staff meeting on details of PhD research project and advertising professional learning sessions Advertising for professional learning on staff notices Recruitment of participants for case study Follow up email with information sheet and form to teaching staff
<b>3</b>			Advertising for professional learning on staff notices
<b>4</b>			Advertising for professional learning on staff notices 1 <sup>st</sup> follow up email with information sheet and form to teaching staff
<b>5</b>		Participants complete pre professional learning questionnaire Conduct Session 1 of the semi-structured	

		interviews in IEC classroom	
<b>6</b>		Participants complete pre professional learning questionnaire	
		Continue conducting first round semi-structured interviews in IEC classroom	
<b>7</b>	Professional Learning Intervention session 1 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after professional learning session	Send Session 2 of interviews to be transcribed Participants to complete the post-professional learning questionnaire
<b>8</b>	Professional Learning Intervention session 2 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after professional learning session	Transcription of interviews
<b>9</b>	Professional Learning Intervention session 3 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after professional learning session	Interview transcriptions given to participants to check and approve as they become available
<b>10</b>			

**Semester 1 Term 2, 2017**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Research activity</b>	<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Research procedure</b>
<b>1</b>	Professional Learning Intervention 4 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after professional learning session	
<b>2</b>	Professional Learning Intervention 5 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after professional learning session Participants complete post-professional learning questionnaire	



<b>3</b>		Conduct Session 2 of the semi-structured interviews	
<b>4</b>	Co-planning Session 1 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after co-planning session	Send Session 2 of interviews to be transcribed
<b>5</b>	Co-planning Session 2 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after co-planning session	Transcription of interviews given to participants to check and approve as they are completed
<b>6</b>	Co-planning Session 3 (1 hour)	Record reflections for researcher's journal after co-planning session	Transcription of interviews given to participants to check and approve as they are completed
<b>7</b>	Co-planning Session 4 (1 hour)	Begin Session 3 of semi-structured interviews Record reflections for researcher's journal after co-planning session and semi-structured interviews	Transcription of interviews given to participants to check and approve as they are completed
<b>8</b>		Continue with Session 3 of semi-structured interviews Record reflections for researcher's journal after semi-structured interviews	Send session of interviews to be transcribed Transcription of interviews given to participants to check and approve as they are completed
<b>9</b>	Afternoon tea for participants to say thank you	Continue with Session 3 of semi-structured interviews Record reflections for researcher's journal after semi-structured interviews	Transcription of interviews given to participants to check and approve as they are completed
<b>10</b>			Transcription of interviews given to

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participants to check and approve  
Transcription of co-planning sessions given to participants for approval as they become available

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### **6.8.1 The pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire**

The pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire was adapted from Bevan-Brown's (2003) *Cultural Self-Review* which is an evaluative tool that consists of a framework, a checklist, and an exemplar for schools to develop effective and responsive practices for Maori students in New Zealand schools. I was given written permission from Jill Bevan-Brown to adapt her evaluation framework (see Appendix E). While Bevan-Brown's evaluative tool focused specifically on Maori students and their families, how it was organised was useful for this study. The questions were divided into three themes related to culturally responsive pedagogy which have been considered essential for working cross-culturally in multicultural settings (Hachfeld et al., 2011; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). These themes are:

- teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching
- understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups
- how professional learning and development improved teacher knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Patara, 2012).

The questionnaire (see Appendix F) was used for two purposes. Initially, it acted as a self-review instrument for teachers participating in the professional learning and finally, as a reflection tool at the end of the professional learning sequence. Teachers completed the same questionnaire in order that they might reflect on any changes in their professional and personal growth, specifically around working more culturally responsively. Responses also provided insights into whether the professional learning had assisted teachers to be more culturally responsive.

Before participants engaged in the professional learning intervention, they were required to complete the questionnaire. They answered each question using a Likert scale of A-C, C being less frequent, B occasionally and A frequently. The second time the questionnaire was completed was after the five-week professional learning intervention. The instrument consisted of 42 questions and was organised into five categories:

- Category 1: Physical environment, materials, and resources
- Category 2: Communication
- Category 3: Awareness
- Category 4: Knowledge
- Category 5: Values and attitudes

The following table (Table 6.4) provides a summary of each category.

**Table 6.4**

*Summary of pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire questions*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Description of summary</b>
<b>Category 1: Physical environment, materials, and resources</b>	1-4	Explored how teachers might change resources and create a different environment to respond to students from culturally diverse backgrounds
<b>Category 2: Communication</b>	5-10	Explored teachers' awareness and knowledge of their students and their family's language barriers
<b>Category 3: Awareness</b>	11-20	Explored teachers' awareness of their privilege, stereotyping, and cultural difference
<b>Category 4: Knowledge</b>	21-24	Explored teachers' knowledge of Australia's history that demonstrates racism towards Indigenous people and other minorities, their own family's story of migration and gaps in their knowledge
<b>Category 5: Values and attitudes</b>	25-42	Explored teachers' values and attitudes on a range of topics about culture and cultural diversity

### **6.8.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Kvale (2008) and Rabionet (2011) recommend semi-structured interviews as a way to explore and understand the participants' lived worlds. Semi-structured interviews are a "flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences" (Rabionet, 2011, p. 563). Furthermore, this position is attuned and aligned with the second and third principles delineated by Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al. (2013) for a culturally responsive methodology: bringing your authentic self to the research, and bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness to the approach. Kvale (2008) states that semi-

structured interviews encourage participants to describe how they feel and experience the world. Not only does it allow for the authentic self, but the interview is also an “interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest. It is a specific for human interaction in which knowledge evolves through a dialogue” (p. 125), which is an essential element of a culturally responsive methodology.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen as it encouraged participants to share experiences, knowledge, attitudes and feelings that they would not usually share with other teaching colleagues. I wanted a structure that was both flexible and facilitated both the interviewee and interviewer to bring their authentic selves to the research. Semi-structured interviews created this possibility. The semi-structured interview questions were divided into the same three themes advocated by Bevan-Brown (2003) as in the pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire (see Appendix G). The interview questions were open-ended to enhance participants’ reflection of the themes of inquiry, allowing any dimensions that were of interest for the participants to be explored (Kvale, 2008). This provided a dialogic space (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013; Blakeney-Williams & Daly, 2013).

The first interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study, before the commencement of professional learning intervention (Figure 5.2). The second interviews were conducted at the halfway point, seven weeks after the first interview and after the completion of the professional learning intervention. The final interviews were conducted at the end of the co-planning sessions. All interviews were one to one and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were also audio-recorded and transcribed. Table 6.3 illustrates the scheduling of semi-structured interviews, three times over a semester.

### **6.8.3 Co-planning sessions**

The purpose of the co-planning sessions was to provide opportunities for participants to collaboratively co-construct new knowledge through dialogue and action (Berryman, SooHoo, Orange, et al., 2013; Freire & Ramos, 2000). Also, co-planning sessions enabled the group to collectively create new learning through producing artefacts and engaging in open-ended tasks that informed culturally responsive practices (Blakeney-Williams & Daly, 2013). Moreover, the co-planning sessions provided opportunities for me to assume the stance of humility, a fundamental construct in a culturally responsive methodology (Kitonga, 2010).

There were four co-planning sessions which were each an hour in length. The structure of these sessions was informed by Bevan-Brown’s (2003) *Cultural Self-Review*. This enabled participants to engage in dialogue, conversations, and exchange in a balanced reciprocal interaction (Blakeney-Williams & Daly, 2013; Eleteby, 2013) which resonated

with how these teachers were familiar with planning and interacting professionally. The group decided on topics for the co-planning sessions which came from the professional learning intervention sessions. My role as the insider researcher was to act as a facilitator and learner in this process, creating new understanding and knowledge together. The four co-planning sessions occurred after the professional learning invention and these sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were also used to write up reflective notes in the research journal. Through these co-planning sessions, I engaged in four of the five principles that Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, Barrett, Ford, Nodelman, Valenzeula and Wilson (2013) outline for culturally responsive methodology: bringing your authentic self to the research, bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness, enacting ongoing critical reflection, and assessing shared relationships and agreements (p. 101).

#### ***6.8.4 Reflective journal***

In qualitative research, a reflective journal is a useful tool to record any thoughts, feelings, concerns from interviews. Ortlipp (2008) also asserts that a reflective journal is “a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity” (p. 695) and allow critical reflection about values or assumptions that may occur during the course for data collecting, a necessary factor in a culturally responsive methodology (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al., 2013). These thoughts, feelings, and concerns may not be visible in the data or the transcriptions, but may be useful in the process of reflection and the process of recording them “helps to bring the unconscious into consciousness and thus open for inspection” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 703). Taking reflective notes afforded me the opportunity to address the fourth principle of culturally responsive methodology: enacting ongoing critical reflection (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al., 2013, p. 101). This also encouraged me to interrogate my own assumptions and values and how they might have influenced how I interacted and communicated with participants. Table 6.5 summarises the data collection methods and their relationship to culturally responsive methodology.

**Table 6.5**

*Summary of data collection methods and relationship to a culturally responsive methodology*

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Culturally responsive methodology principles (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, Barrett, Ford, Nodelman, Valenzeula &amp; Wilson, (2013))</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire</b>	1. Learning from multiple sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers’ cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</li> <li>• Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</li> <li>• How professional learning and development improved teachers’ knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Beven-Brown, 2003; Patara, 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	2. Bringing your authentic self to the research 3. Bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows participants to describe how they feel, experience, and respond to a situation, allowing both the interviewee and interviewer to bring their authentic selves to the research</li> <li>• Facilitates the researcher to engage in caring research</li> <li>• Open-ended questions guide, explore and provide a dialogic space</li> </ul>
<b>Co-planning sessions</b>	2. Bringing your authentic self to the research 3. Bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness 4. Enacting ongoing critical reflection 5. Assessing shared relationships and agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers collaborative co-construction of new knowledge through dialogue group</li> <li>• Gives opportunities for the researcher to assume the stance of humility, a fundamental construct in a CRM</li> <li>• Enables participants to engage in dialogue and conversations, and to exchange in a balanced reciprocal interaction</li> <li>• Teachers collectively own new learning through producing artefacts and engaging in open-ended tasks that inform CRP</li> </ul>
<b>Reflective journal</b>	4. Enacting ongoing critical reflection 5. Assessing shared relationships and agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interrogate own assumptions, values and how these influence researcher’s interaction and communication with participants</li> <li>• Record thoughts, feelings and concerns that may not be visible in the data</li> </ul>

## **6.9 Data analysis**

Culturally responsive researchers acknowledge that it is not possible to have value-free knowledge. This is because beliefs and values have already been established when researchers choose what to study, how to investigate it and how to interpret their data (Edge & Richards, 1998). To counteract this, given that this study relies heavily on participants' personal stories and lived experiences, it was essential to consider a data analysis approach that allowed me to see understand the data objectively without interference from my own prejudices and assumptions. Also, it was imperative to show the process of continuous iterative interaction between data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This continuous iterative interaction between the data collection and analysis is illustrated in Figure 6.2 and provided a structure to identify what changes were occurring in the professional learning intervention. It also assisted with triangulation across the different methods of data collection. This is elaborated in the following sections.

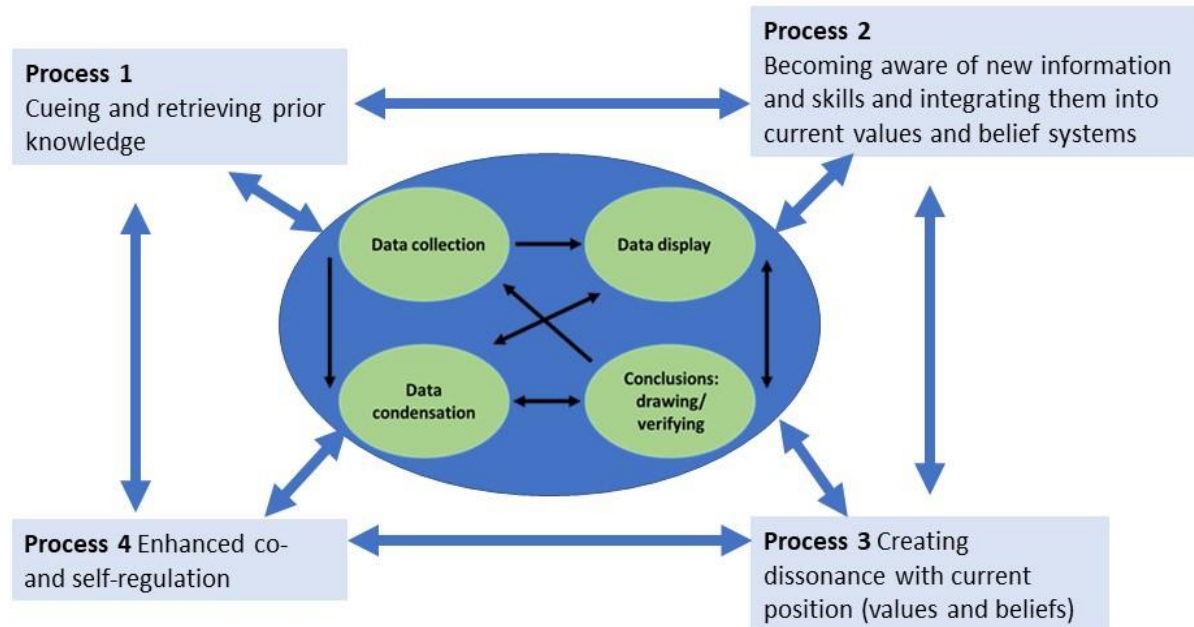
### ***6.9.1 A conceptual framework for data analysis***

To analyse the data, I developed a conceptual framework that integrated both a component of Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008a) iterative learning framework and Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) interactive model for analysing data (see Figure 6.2). I developed this to analyse data through a professional learning lens that showed the iterative nature of learning, data collection and analysis. The iterative learning framework is a component of Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008a) broader framework for analysing the effectiveness of professional learning experiences (see Chapter 2 and also Black and William (1998). This framework is a useful organising device to assist with identifying critical features of iterative effective learning situations. As such, it is helpful for identifying changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes towards culture and diversity (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008a; Timperley et al., 2007)

Central to the conceptual framework for data analysis (Figure 6.2) is Huberman and Saldana's (2014) interactive model for analysing data and surrounding the interactive model is Timperley and Alton's (2008a), framework for analysing professional learning experiences. In this conceptual framework, double arrows are placed around the interactive model illustrating the interactive nature of the model. For example, at any point or stage of data analysis, I am able to move back and forward (or sideways) enabling me to seek further clarification on data, re-check data at any point in time during the data analysis stage.

**Figure 6.2**

*Interrelated aspects of the data analysis process*



In Process 1, as Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008a) emphasise, consolidating and examining teachers' prior knowledge could form the basis for change. However, on its own, this approach is unlikely to result in changed practice through professional learning (see Figure 6.2). In the context of this study, an important question I needed to examine was teachers' prior knowledge before the professional learning intervention in order to identify any changes after the intervention in their thinking and actions. It was also imperative, in this stage of the process, to explore how the professional learning intervention consolidated their current thinking, if at all, and lead participants in examining their prior knowledge and any changes to their beliefs and practices in Process 2.

In Process 2, I investigated, in more depth, teachers' awareness of new information and skills which has developed because of the professional learning intervention (see Figure 6.2). More importantly, the focus was on exploring whether any new information and skills were integrated into their current values and belief systems (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008a).



Essential questions that were considered were: Was new knowledge adopted and adapted? Was it superficial or was there much deeper learning occurring?

In Process 3, I examined the possibility of dissonance with participants' current position in values and beliefs (see Figure 6.2). Here I was able to analyse and identify any repositioning and restructuring in values and beliefs throughout the professional learning intervention and the focused planning groups (Bishop et al., 2007; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008a; Timperley et al., 2007). Some researchers argue that dissonance is necessary for substantive change and for any future reform, and that dissonance implies teachers would need to unlearn what they believe and know (Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Snow, 2011; Timperley & Phillips, 2003).

In Process 4, as Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008a) and Butler, Schnellert, and Cartier (2013) highlight, through a community of inquiry, teachers engage in both self-regulation and co-regulation strategies that individually and collectively identify opportunities to engage in iterative cycles of inquiry to refine and adjust their practices. In this process, I examined the extent to which the professional learning intervention and the co-planning groups provided opportunities for inquiry into the improvement of current teaching practice (see Figure 6.2).

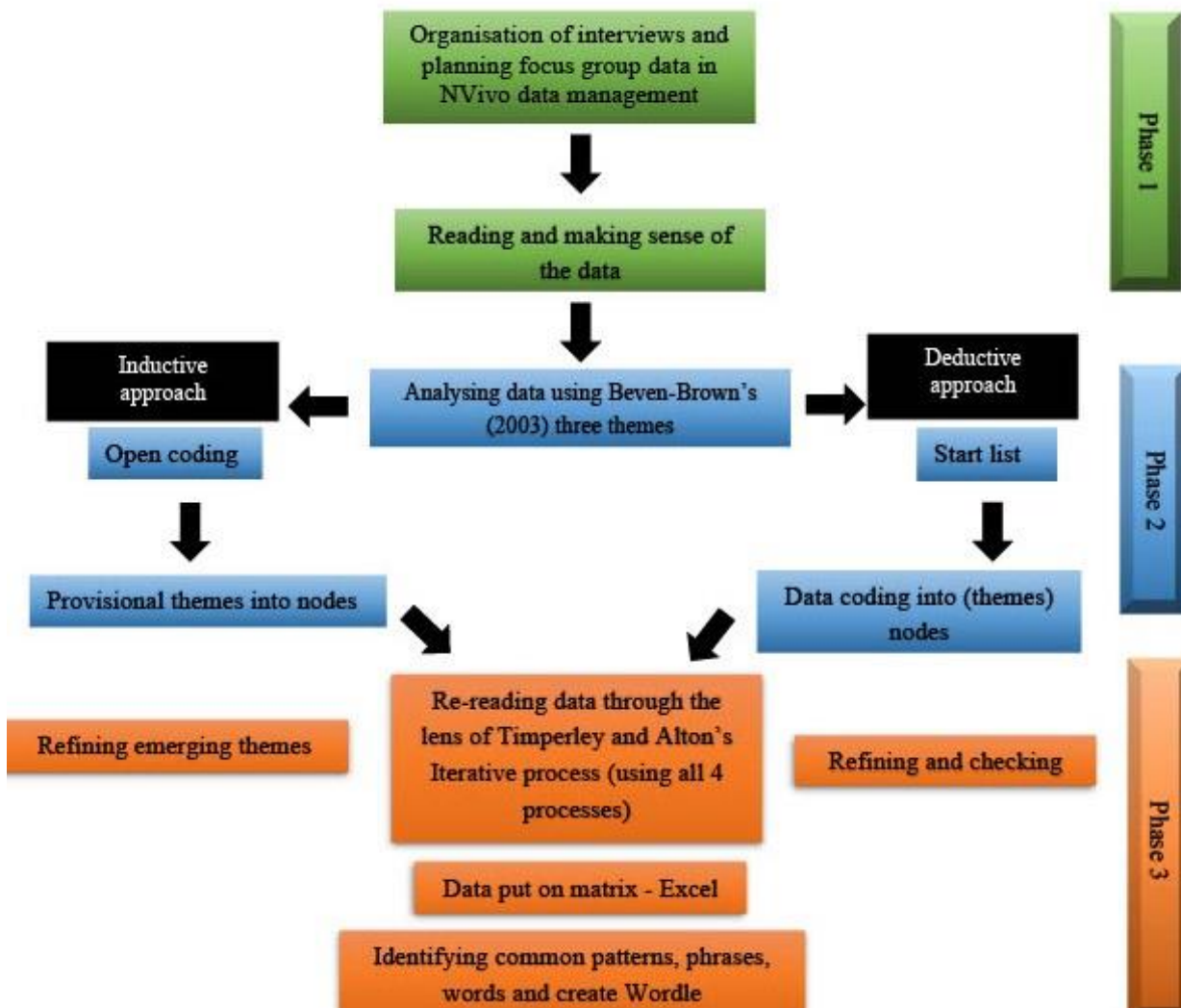
### **6.9.2 Process for analysing data**

After each interview cycle, the scripts were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for emergent themes using the QSR NVivo data management program. These themes then formed the basis of subsequent interviews, allowing for clarification, probing, and extending themes identified from each participant's earlier interview. Permission to audio-record was sought from participants, and they were offered a semi-structured interview guide prior to each interview so that they were able to prepare and be reflective (Berryman, SooHoo, Nevin, et al., 2013; Burke, Nolan, & Rheingold, 2012; Yin, 2014). Transcripts of their interviews were shown to the participants so that they could modify or agree to the content as it was written.

Robson (1993) proposes that researchers should be guided by the aim of the study and the research questions. Therefore, an integrated approach that employs both an inductive and deductive approach to data analysis was chosen (Azungah, 2018a; Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Fereday, 2006). Figure 6.3 outlines the stages of data analysis. There were three phases to the process for analysing data, as illustrated in Figure 6.3. The first phase consisted of organising the data. The second comprised inductive and deductive processes for data analysis, with the steps outlined in Figure 6.3. Finally, the third phase involved data analysis through Timperley and Alton's (2008) iterative learning process.

**Figure 6.3**

*Stages of data analysis*



**6.9.2a Phase 1: Data organisation.** Once data was collected, I utilised the QSR NVivo data management program to store and organise all the data materials, creating separate folders for each data set. I also read through all the transcripts of the interviews and co-planning sections in sequence to gain some preliminary familiarity with the data.

**6.9.2b Phase 2: The deductive process.** As described by Miles et al. (2014), developing a 'start list' of codes or themes before commencing fieldwork and data analysis was necessary to ensure critical aspects were related directly to the research question (Azungah, 2018a; Miles et al., 2014). In the initial stage of planning the data collection, pre- and post-professional learning questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions were designed around Beven-Brown's framework (2003) and my research questions. This

deductive approach started with the three initial themes (see Table 6.6) for the coding process where, as the researcher, I tested prior assumptions (Fereday, 2006). This process allowed for new inquiries to emerge and the building on previous insights from existing research (Miles et al., 2014). These predetermined themes were essential for establishing the effectiveness of the professional learning intervention and its relationship to changing teacher behaviour and attitudes. While other themes and concepts emerged through an inductive process, these three themes were constant through each stage of data collection and data analysis. These three key themes, together with their sub-themes, are outlined in Table 6.6. No sub-themes for the third theme were predetermined as they emerged from the data

**Table 6.6**

*Pre-existing themes and sub-themes for start list*

<b>Themes for coding process Beven-Brown (2003)</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Theme 1: Teachers’ cultural competence and how their culture influences teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Knowing oneself and one’s culture</li> <li>• Ideas on cultural competence</li> <li>• Cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>• Preparedness for working cross-culturally</li> <li>• Expectations of schooling</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2: Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of being marginalised</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 3: How professional learning and development improved teacher knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds</b>	

6.9.2c Phase 2 The inductive process. Inductive themed analysis (see Figure 6.3) is useful in qualitative studies as it allows the researcher to analyse without the restraints that are imposed by other structured methodologies (Thomas, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the process as a flexible research approach that provides a detailed and sophisticated account of data that is not committed to any pre-existing theoretical framework and is therefore appropriate in a qualitative study that draws on a culturally responsive methodological approach (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013; Blakeney-Williams & Daly, 2013). The inductive process entails analysing the participants’ experiences and drives the

analysis (Azungah, 2018b). In this phase, I analysed and coded the data through emerging and dominant themes that were strongly linked and inherent in the data (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2006).

6.9.2d Phase 2 Initial coding. Data analysis through an inductive process began with data collection and continued throughout the study (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). Once data collection was completed and transcripts were written, I began reading them to help me understand “what is going on” (Morse, 1999, p. 404). Whilst reading, I began to identify emerging themes and concepts, using both my research questions and Timperley and Alton-Lee’s iterative learning process framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Whilst reading the transcripts, I moved back and forward between the data sets (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014), identifying emerging or potential themes as they became apparent. This process of data condensation (see Figure 6.2) allowed me to select, focus, and simplify any abstract data (Miles et al., 2014). I used the QSR NVivo data management program to store and analyse the data. This enabled me to identify emerging themes by placing relevant texts into nodes quickly.

After I had read through all the semi-structured interview transcripts and the co-planning transcripts and was familiar with the data, I was able to reread and check through the nodes to ensure I did not inappropriately code data (Azungah, 2018b). Also, through this process, I recorded my thoughts and initial conclusions in my research journal. This part of the analysis (data condensation), (see Figure 6.2) enabled me to sharpen, refine, discard and organise my themes (Miles et al., 2014).

Once data was arranged and condensed into themes, I began to draw initial conclusions as the data was organised into nodes which provided visual representations of the themes (see Figure 6.2). The nodes assisted with drawing preliminary conclusions as they displayed data in an easily accessible way. At this step that I revisited the purpose of the research and the research questions to ensure that I did not go off topic. I also needed to ‘dig deeper’ into the data to find out what was going on (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

6.9.2e Phase 3 Data analysis through a Timperley and Alton’s iterative process. This phase of the data analysis involved another round of reading the data. However, rather than reading across the participants and noting emerging themes, I read across the themes through the lens of the Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008a) iterative learning process. I made observations on any common characteristics, emerging patterns of change or anomalous concepts or ideas, across the participants, in the context of the themes. Again, in this process,

I reread the transcripts to gain a deeper insight into the context, to see what I had missed, or for greater clarification.

Table 6.7 provides an overview of all the components involved in Phase 3 of the data analysis. It shows each of the four processes identified by Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008) iterative learning process, and how I used both inductive and deductive analysis within this framework. Also incorporated into this overview are the themes and sub-themes for the coding process, as informed by Beven-Brown (2003).

**Table 6.7**

*Phase 3: Data analysis framework*

		<b>Data collection analysed</b>
<b>Process 1: Cueing and retrieving prior knowledge</b>		
<b>Deductive</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 1: Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sub-themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Knowing oneself and one's culture</li> <li>• Ideas on cultural competence</li> <li>• Cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>• Preparedness for working cross-culturally</li> <li>• Expectations of schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 1</li> <li>• Pre-professional learning survey</li> <li>• Researcher's reflection notes</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 2: Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of being marginalised</li> </ul>	
<b>Inductive</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>	
<b>Process 2: Becoming aware of new information and skills and integrating them into current values and belief systems</b>		
<b>Deductive</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 1: Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sub-themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Knowing oneself and one's culture</li> <li>• Ideas on cultural competence</li> <li>• Cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>• Preparedness for working cross-culturally</li> <li>• Expectations of schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 2</li> <li>• Post-professional learning survey</li> <li>• Researcher's reflective notes</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Theme 2: Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of being marginalised</li> </ul>	

	<b>Theme 3 How professional learning and development improved teachers' knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds</b>	
<b>Inductive</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>	
<b>Process 3: Creating dissonance with current position (values and beliefs)</b>		
<b>Deductive</b>	<b>Theme 1: Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b> <i>Sub-themes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Knowing oneself and one's culture</li> <li>• Ideas on cultural competence</li> <li>• Cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>• Preparedness for working cross-culturally</li> <li>• Expectations of schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 2</li> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 3</li> <li>• Co-planning group sessions</li> <li>• Researcher's reflective notes</li> </ul>
	<b>Theme 2: Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of being marginalised</li> </ul>	
	<b>Theme 3 How professional learning and development improved teachers' knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds</b>	
<b>Inductive</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>	
<b>Process 4: Enhanced co- and self-regulation</b>		
<b>Deductive</b>	<b>Theme 1: Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b> <i>Sub-themes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Knowing oneself and one's culture</li> <li>• Ideas on cultural competence</li> <li>• Cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>• Preparedness for working cross-culturally</li> <li>• Expectations of schooling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 2</li> <li>• Semi-structured Interview 3</li> <li>• Co-planning group sessions</li> <li>• Researcher's reflective notes</li> </ul>
	<b>Theme 2: Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of being marginalised</li> </ul>	
	<b>Theme 3 How professional learning and development improved teachers' knowledge of cultural and linguistic backgrounds</b>	
<b>Inductive</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>	

## 6.10 Validation strategies: Quality and trustworthiness of the study

Qualitative research requires safeguards to give assurance that there is quality, integrity, and trustworthiness in both the process and findings of the research. Merriam (1995) states that “reality is constructed, multidimensional and ever changing” (p. 54). Within the context of qualitative research, the researcher offers an interpretation of participants’ reality. Therefore, as participants shared their lived experiences and their reality, it was my role to ensure that my interpretation of the data honoured and respected participants’ contribution to the research was within the ethics of care framework (Noddings, 1995). In addition, I put mechanisms in place that made sure of the quality of this research, process, and findings. For this, I used Merriam’s (1995) strategies to safeguard the validity and integrity of the data.

Also, Gasson (2004) asks us to consider “how we ensure rigour in the research process and how we communicate to others that we have done so” (p. 95). In this study it was necessary to add another dimension to this process, making links to a culturally responsive methodology. Table 6.8 illustrates how Merriam’s (1995) strategies enhanced the integrity of participants’ contribution to the study, while keeping this study within the spirit of a culturally responsive methodology.

**Table 6.8**

*Summary of strategies used to ensure validity and integrity of data*

<b>Strategies for safeguarding the validity and integrity of data (Merriam, 1995)</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Links to culturally responsive pedagogy</b>
<b>Audit trail</b>	Documentation of data collection and analysis activities. Identifying the source of data, its collection method, data management and preparation, and analysis. This enabled the external reviewer to examine the process of how the research data was analysed and how decisions were made through the study (Morrow 2005; Merriam, 1995). It also provided accountability for how the research was carried out.	1. Learning from multiple sources  4. Enacting ongoing critical reflection

<b>Triangulation of data</b>	Triangulation was conducted using multiple sources of data to reduce or eliminate my own bias, thus improving the validity (Mathison, 1998) and the cross-validation of the data (Wiersma, 2000).	1. Learning from multiple sources
<b>Member check</b>	A member check, as described by Merriam (1995, 2002) involved my sending each participant a copy of the transcript to verify the accuracy of the content.	2. Bringing your authentic self to the research 3. Bringing a relational and dialogic consciousness 6. Assessing shared relationships and agreements
<b>Peer review</b>	During the data collection phases, I met with my supervisors fortnightly to discuss data and emerging findings (Merriam, 1995).	4. Enacting ongoing critical reflection 6. Assessing shared relationships and agreements
<b>Reflective journal</b>	Reflective journals provide opportunities for researchers to disclose their own bias within the process of the research (Merriam, 2002). In this study, I used a reflective journal as part of my data and to understand how my own experiences and understandings of the world have affected the research process (Morrow, 2005). Also, it provided an understanding of how the data was interpreted (Merriam, 1995).	4. Enacting ongoing critical reflection  6. Assessing shared relationships and agreements

### 6.11 Ethical considerations and approval

Researchers are bound to conduct ethical research that minimises the risk of possible harm to participants in the study. To ensure that this research project adhered to the highest possible standards of professional conduct, particular principles (outlined in Table 6.9) were carefully considered and implemented where appropriate. As this table illustrates, a range of strategies and ethical considerations was taken on board to ensure data collection was ethical.



**Table 6.9***Overview of ethical considerations for data collection*

<b>Research activity</b>	<b>Strategies used for ethical consideration</b>
<b>Information session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on participation as a voluntary activity and participants could exit at any time</li> <li>• Information sheets were handed out</li> </ul>
<b>Pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent was automatic when participants completed the pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire</li> <li>• Questionnaires were initially identifiable but pseudonyms were assigned later to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants in the findings or the later dissemination of findings</li> </ul>
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants were offered an interview guide before each session</li> <li>• Informed consent sought for permission to audio-record</li> <li>• Transcripts of interviews were shown to and agreed on by the participants</li> <li>• Information was kept in confidence</li> <li>• Pseudonyms were assigned to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants in the findings or dissemination of findings</li> </ul>
<b>Co-planning sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk management strategies in the planning group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion and formulation of a list of agreed behaviours and ground rules to ensure that opinions within the group were respected</li> <li>○ Any opinions or personal information stated in the planning group could not remain confidential. However, group participants were requested not to share personal or sensitive information outside of the planning group, consistent with the Australian Professional Teaching ethical standards</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Informed consent was given for each of the sessions to be audio-recorded</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcripts were sent to participants to be verified</li> <li>• Pseudonyms were assigned to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants in the publication or dissemination of any findings from this research</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher's reflective journal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pseudonyms were assigned to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants in the publication or dissemination of any findings from this research</li> </ul>
<b>Data management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-recordings and transcripts were placed in James Cook University's Research Data JCU</li> </ul>

To secure official ethical clearance for the study, a formal application was made to the Human Research Ethics Committee of James Cook University which was approved on 30/9/2016 (Approval Number H6718). A second ethics application was made to the Department of Education, Queensland with approval granted on 21/12/2016 (File Number 550/27/1797). A third document was provided by the school Principal giving permission for me to conduct research in the school in which I worked. All three documents of ethical clearance have been included as appendices to this thesis:

- a letter of ethics clearance from James Cook University to commence research (Appendix H)
- a letter of ethics clearance from Education Queensland to approach schools (Appendix I)
- a letter from the Principal allowing research to be done on the school site (Appendix J)

## **6.12 Limitations**

As with any research, the design of this study is subject to limitations. In this case, my role as an insider researcher presented a limitation that might influence the interpretation of the data. In this role, I had the responsibility ensure the participants' responses were honoured and respected without prejudice, however, my subjectivity towards participants' data was a limitation. Gasson (2004) emphasises that in qualitative research multiple perspectives are important and therefore this requires us to be sensitive to the different accounts of 'reality' shared by participants, no matter how this may conflict with one's personal views. Gasson's (2004) stance on subjectivity is that "we must report our findings in context, consistently and with sufficient detail to allow our readers to share the subjects' experiences of the phenomena

that we report” (p. 88). Therefore, a careful approach is needed to honour the voices of those participants who contributed to the research. To manage my subjectivity, I wrote my reflections in my researcher’s journal. Firstly, I wrote down the events which took place, then my own thoughts and assumptions. Over time, I reflected and deconstructed my insights to help me understand my own subjectivity.

It was within a culturally responsive methodology that I was able to unmask my subjectivity, embrace and utilise my personal beliefs to inform and contribute to the research (Berryman, SooHoo, Orange, et al., 2013). Through the process of self-interrogation, I found myself unlearning my traditional Western constructs and listening and working towards humility (Nevin, 2013; Nodelman, 2013). Also, through humility, as described by Soohoo (2013), I recognised my own ignorance. Further, as SooHoo (2013) explains, taking a humble stance requires the researcher to admit to the vulnerability of not knowing and honouring different ways of knowing. Therefore, I engaged in a process of turning the traditional view of researchers’ knowledge construction upside down and co-creating new knowledge alongside participants. Through feelings of discomfort and cognitive dissonance, I have repositioned myself to gain a deeper insight into participants’ ideas and beliefs around working in culturally diverse classroom contexts. Through this process, I am developing a new identity as a culturally responsive researcher.

### **6.13 Summary**

In this chapter, I have examined critical social theory, social constructivism, and the ethics of care as my theoretical framework for this study. The culturally responsive methodological approach has also been explained and justified. A rationale has been argued for a qualitative single case study as my research design. I have also explained my role as an insider researcher within the context of this study and my workplace.

This chapter also includes a description and discussion of the data collection and its relationship to the five principles of culturally responsive methodology. Following this, I outlined the data analysis process, including procedures to ensure integrity, consistency, and trustworthiness to ensure minimising bias. Finally, the ethical considerations relevant to the integrity of this research were identified and discussed, together with the limitations to this study.

## **Chapter 7: Cultural positions before intervention**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of professional learning in cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy in changing teachers' attitudes, beliefs and professional practice. A further intention was to investigate whether professional learning interventions in cultural competence can support teachers in enacting Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards.

This chapter contains the findings from the initial stage (Process 1) of data analysis (see Table 6.7). Data was analysed through a deductive process (Miles et al., 2014). Seven predetermined themes were used as an analytical lens to explore participants' assumptions and experiences prior to the professional learning intervention. These are the sub-themes discussed in Section 6.6 They provide a context for exploring participants' prior knowledge, which that helped to provide a baseline to understand the effectiveness of the professional learning intervention in terms of changing teachers' behaviour and attitudes.

This chapter proceeds as follows: firstly, data analysed from the first semi-structured interviews is presented in a summary (Table 7.1), then explained. Following this, the chapter is organised into the seven sub-themes as illustrated in Table 6.6. In each of these, I present the six participants' views, experiences, knowledge, and thoughts before engaging in the professional learning intervention.

### **7.1 Summary of participants' prior knowledge**

Table 7.1 presents data from the first semi-structured interviews. It illustrates participants' prior knowledge before the professional learning intervention, arranged around the six sub-themes. In this summary, common ideas, keywords, and phrases provide an overview for each participant prior to the professional learning. This overview features some of the similarities and differences in participants' knowledge and skills that were identified during the initial interviews.

This summary illustrates a common culture shared by all participants in this study, European culture, both migrant and Australian born (see Table 7.1). In addition, participants demonstrated a theoretical understanding of cultural competence, as evidenced by common phrases they used. For example, participants used words such as "awareness", "valuing", "respect for difference" and "tolerance" when defining cultural competence. However, there was no evidence that they understood how to apply this into the classroom context. In other words, participants acknowledged that cultural competence, in practice, would be very difficult for them to recognise. All six participants came into the study with no prior

professional learning or preparation in working cross-culturally, nor with any cultural competence training.

In addition to featuring similarities across participants, some differences were obvious in the data. For example, experiences of working and living in cross-cultural situations and expectations of schooling varied greatly across all participants. Also, all participants felt they had some experience of marginalisation, to differing degrees. However, two participants also acknowledged their privileged position as part of the dominant culture, therefore mitigating this experience of marginalisation as a negative effect on their lives. In the following section, data is presented in more detail. This gives insights to each of the participant's personal and professional lives before involvement in this study.

**Table 7.1**

*Summary of participants' prior knowledge*

	Camila	Ruth	Tara	Naomi	Mia	Maria
Year level	4	6	2	2	2	4
Years taught	4	30+	4	10	20	10
Values	Sense of belonging; Connection; The courage and ability to change one's life situation	Family; truth; honesty; Equity; freedom and a fair go; Education	Family supporting education; Family and spending time together	Being generous and flexible	Family connections	Christian values; Honesty; Hard work
Knowing self and one's culture	White; Caucasian; Scottish; Irish and English ancestry	1950s white Australian family	German; Dominant white culture	German; White Caucasian and privileged	English, Scottish and Irish heritage	White Australian; Links to England, Ireland and Scotland
Ideas on cultural competence	Awareness of your own biases, judgements, and perspectives	Being aware; valuing her culture; valuing other people's cultures as well	Beyond awareness; Something more than what we see	Every culture is different and has different ways of doing things; Awareness; Respect of difference	Acceptance; Teacher's responsibility to respond to student needs; Building relationship; Knowing your learner	Understanding Australian history from pre-colonial to colonial times; Tolerance of other people from other cultures
Cross-cultural experiences	Living in shared house with migrant and refugee background flat mates; Travel; Spending time with partner's family	Aboriginal communities; Lived in Hong Kong for 6 months	Migrant to Australia; Husband's family – Maori background	Europe; 3 months in South America	Worked with Aboriginal families in the Northern Territory; Not travelled out of the country	No cross-cultural experiences before moving to this school
Preparedness for working cross-culturally	No school induction; Subject in undergraduate degree	No opportunities for professional learning	Subject in undergraduate degree	Having English as a Second Language; Migrant	No support or induction	No support or induction
Expectations of schooling	Expectations are placed on self and her impact with students	For equity and a fair go	Parent engagement and learning intertwined	Part of a team with teachers, students and their families	Centred around readiness to learn and preparing them for learning	Hard work
Experience being marginalised	Being white in a black community in Cairns growing up but explicit in acknowledging her privilege and power as the dominant group	Single young mother	Being a migrant with an accent – but still sees herself as the dominant white society	Being a migrant but sees herself as part of the dominant group	Adult living in an alternative lifestyle with a community	Single young mother

## 7.2 Values

The purpose of investigating values was to ascertain whether participants would be able to identify and compare the differences and similarities in values of their culture with other cultures. It provided baseline information to determine whether the professional learning intervention changed some of the participants' initial values.

When interviewing the participants, it was noted that the values of belonging, family, connection, and relationships were important and common to all participants. Other values that were consistent across participants were social justice, equity, and the idea of 'a fair go'. However, also evident from the interviews was that participants believed their values were in conflict with the values of their students and the students' families.

For example, Camila identified that she had a deep connection to family. Camila lives across the road from her parents and they contribute daily to her life. Camila explained that she values the part they play in her life, especially supporting her through difficult times in her early life as a single mother, which brought her closer to her parents. This connection is seen in the first interview. Camila stated,

...my mum's mother, she's 95 this year and my mum and dad look after her. At one stage, not long after my husband died, I moved back home with my parents, to which a lot of my Australian friends said "oh would you wanna?!", "oh what's wrong with you?" It's interesting in that a lot of my Australian friends just thought that was like, how could you do that? Don't you want your own place? It's like, you know what? This is my own place. This is my family home. Coz this is where my family is. It's not just about me and the boys (Camila, Interview 1).

This value of family and connections was also evident in Tara's interview. She expressed that the co role family played in education was critical in her upbringing and it grounded her for adult life. Tara saw that her parents' input and engagement in her education had influenced how she saw and valued education as a teacher. Tara stated,

...being a teacher, [I] obviously value parents' input. I think because my parents were always engaged in our education. It's very difficult when you have parents that don't show a lot of interest or can't show a lot of interest (Tara, Interview 1).

Tara had identified a significant difference between her personal experience and those of some of her students in the valuing of education, which she found difficult. She also emphasised that she feels for her students when families did not have a lot of interest in homework or supporting their children.

Another value that Tara identified was connection, which was important because of her experience of migration. Migration to Australia from Germany has meant that she had to rethink and establish fresh connections and relationships to re-create a new family in another country. An example that Tara shared was celebrating outside with her new extended family,

Close family time is valued and that's with your immediate family. Whereas here, everything seems to be more outside and it's you know, lots of friends and family – extended family, playing cricket and all of that (Tara, Interview 1).

The theme of building and maintaining connections with friends and family was also evident in Mia's interview. Music is a big part of Mia's life as it had been a vehicle in maintaining her connections with her family and friends. In the past, family gatherings and parties involved playing music, memories of which were very special for her. For example, Mia commented,

Music has been absolutely front and centre in my life. So, for me, having times where you can express yourself, not through the spoken word or through just sitting and talking or whatever, has been much more important because any family gathering was spent playing music (Mia, Interview 1).

Themes surrounding the family also appear prominently in Ruth's interviews. Also, Ruth expressed a strong sense of social justice where she saw truth, equity, and honesty as the values that inform how she lives. These values also influenced her approach to teaching,

My family. Truth and honesty. Freedom and the rights for everybody to feel privileged. Like, we live in a privileged society and I believe everyone has that right to feel privileged in Australia and not everyone does, but I think everyone should do" (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth acknowledged that she lives in a privileged society and that everyone should recognise this privilege. Like Tara, Ruth holds education in high esteem. She believes that valuing education is demonstrated through students' behaviour, actions, displaying resilience by having a go and trying new work that might be challenging. However, she believed that her students did not show this and struggled with on task behaviour, which she found to be in conflict with her own ideas of what valuing education looked like. Ruth explained,

Kids not trying. Kids coming to school and just not trying. Coz I'll help a child, even if they can't get it, a thousand times. I'll help them forever and a day if I know they're trying. But as soon as they just say, 'oh, I can't do that!' I'm just, 'well off you go mate, coz, I'm just not even bothered with you (Ruth, Interview 1).

During the interview, Ruth explained that equity, freedom and a fair go underpinned her teaching. In her classes this, at times, offered some dissonance for her as she believed her students did not share those values because of the behaviour they exhibited towards their learning.

Similarly to equity in the sense of freedom and getting a fair go, another value that was common and consistent across the participants was equity in the sense of tolerance and fairness. Camila expressed this through the idea of changing one's life to improve one's situation. In the interview, she reflected on her life experiences of having a child with autism, becoming a single mother, having a partner from Mauritius, and retraining as a teacher later in life. Camila had experienced challenges. After her husband died, she raised a child with autism. However, she has actively sought to improve her situation. She values the courage and ability to change one's life situation and acknowledges how difficult it is to make major life adjustments,

You're arrogant if you know about it but you're not willing to change it or do anything. And I'm a big believer that, if you want something to change, you have to make the change first. And I guess the biggest example, would be that I did a parenting course because, with my eldest son...when he was four, I became a widow that was very challenging. I had a younger son who was just not, sitting in the normal box and I later found out he had autism. And so I was dealing with, you know, this contemptuous four year old and this other child that I had no idea what to do with and my husband had died... So, I was dealing with all this crap and I didn't like how I was parenting my children and I didn't like my four year old son's behaviour. I thought, you know what? I'm the adult here. He's not going to change if I don't change. He's not going to learn anything if I don't learn anything

(Camila, Interview 1).

When I asked about what Naomi values, her response has been very different to the other participants. She values being open, being generous and flexible. During the conversation, Naomi also discussed the challenges of coming from a country with a difficult history and how this has impacted on her as a person. She reflected on how Germany's history has shaped the country positively and discussed how current events in Syria have highlighted how her country has responded openly and generously,

I think it's shaped the German culture into being more open, seeing how many refugees they've just taken lately and talking to my family members when I was there last December. They have opened their houses and they've got quite a few Syrians who stayed in their houses and the government pays for the housing but the Syrians stay there and they've all had a really good experience. So, having that difficult history, I think has actually made Germans more aware and I often find that when they



travel in different countries. They're very respectful towards other cultures (Naomi, Interview 1).

It is these values of tolerance, openness, and kindness that Naomi aspires to. While she sees Germany in a positive light, she is also realistic in stating that not all Germans hold these values. However, Naomi has noticed the change in her country over the years and this has made her feel proud, especially given that the values are parallel with hers,

It makes me a little bit proud. Going back twenty years, I would have never said I'm proud of my own culture coz there was more to be ashamed of. And travelling's made me realise that other people are actually proud of their country whereas I was, I always thought "how can you be proud of your country?" No, every country's got such terrible histories and they've done terrible things and I was always almost ashamed of being German whereas now, being a bit removed, I'm thinking 'no, good on you Germany!' You know, we're doing some good things... And they've got very strong humanitarian values and I think that's the way to be (Naomi, Interview 1).

Maria had very different values to the rest of the participant group. She saw Australia as built on Christian values and believed these values were intrinsic to how it is governed and how its people lived their lives. In our discussion about the different values some cultures might hold that conflict with her own, I asked Maria to clarify what she believed were the values fundamental to Australian society and how that might influence her own values,

I've spoken to my husband about this and I have to keep reminding him that the Australian culture is built on a Christian belief. We're a Christian country, Christian beliefs that are slowly changing but our democracy is set up in a Christian way. Our values that we have been influenced by, if we have been here long enough, which I have, are Christian values and Christian beliefs, which can at times, go against other cultures that have now come into our country, in particular a couple that have been really big in the media of late.

I don't agree with some of those cultures and I don't choose to live in those countries but at some point, you do have to be tolerant I suppose (Maria, Interview 1).

In addition to Christian values, she also rated honesty and hard work fairly highly. Maria attributes her success to hard work. For example, as a teenager, she was a young single mother. Even though she saw this as a difficult situation, with hard work, she was able to achieve her goals. Maria was able to do this without the help of government benefits or housing, and without the support of her family. She commented,

It can be done but I mean if you're going to sit there and wait for it to be given to you on a silver platter, I'd never become a teacher. I had to do that when my child was three years old, working part time at the age of 21 (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria also expressed her frustration when others do not share those values of hard work,

It's just when they sit around, and they expect it to be given to them and they won't do anything about it. I can't stand it. I can't stand them standing there and arguing with me that, 'you don't give me this. You don't give me enough' Yet I'm busting my arse and working my arse off to have what I have and then unfortunately I see people with cars that I can't even afford, or you know, things like that and I get really angry (Maria, Interview 1).

While Maria was able to achieve without the assistance from government funding, she did believe that support from government is necessary for those who found themselves in difficult times and hardship. However, she did not support the life choices of other people who chose not to work and decided to use government benefits for long periods of time.

These are values that are constantly in conflict with her,

I don't believe people should have handouts. I get nothing but I'm constantly giving to other people. I know that there are situations where people are stuck, and they need that help for short periods of time but I don't believe in it for extended periods. I don't believe that someone should need 35 years of government help (Maria, Interview 1).

It is obvious that Maria held strong views about hard work. This was evident in how she viewed the world. She also found it difficult to accept some peoples' life choices, values and expectations that are very different to hers. This also played out in the classroom and how she viewed some of the students' families.

### **7.3 Knowing oneself and one's culture**

The second sub-theme used to analyse participant's prior knowledge was knowing oneself and one's culture. This was to ascertain if participants were able to articulate and explain their culture. According to Di Angelo (2018), understanding your culture, and the differences and shared characteristics between one's own and other cultures have an impact in influencing teachers' interactions. This is critical for creating effective meaningful engagement with students from different cultural backgrounds than their teachers'.

During the first semi-structured interviews, I asked participants to talk about what they knew about their culture. While they all identified as European, the participants presented

different explanations as to what that meant to them and how they responded to this in their lives.

During the interview, Camila identified as a white Caucasian with Scottish, Irish, and English ancestry, of which she was very proud. She had always had a deep interest in other cultures and languages, which she explained was useful in helping her to understand her own cultural background. In her first interview she commented,

I guess, first and foremost, I have a real passion for language and I think... to the best way to understand your own language, how it works, is by finding out how other languages work and by speaking other languages, by writing other languages and finding out about the culture of those other countries! (Camila, Interview 1).

Ruth grew up in Australia in the 1950's and 60's. She described her family as "1950's, rather white Australian." She recognised that these values conflicted with her own ideas about culture and that there are apparent strong genetic links that influence and predetermine how one makes choices in life,

I think I'm very different to the rest of my family. I think I'm probably more like other branches of my family – on my mother's side who are all teachers, social workers and people like that. So maybe my genealogy takes more after my mother's side than maybe the dominant father's side (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth believed that her immediate family's ideas were conservative and not very broadminded. Ruth commented,

My family and the way they think is very narrow. And so really, the person that I have become is actually the very reverse compared to the family background that I have come from (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth decided that the values she grew up with were not those she aspired to or wished to replicate. It is this self-awareness that has led Ruth to establishing a career in teaching.

When I asked Tara what he knew about her culture, she acknowledged that Australian culture was very different to that of Germany. In addition, she stated that both were the "white dominant cultures". Tara believed that, through her undergraduate education degree, she had developed a better understanding of how to describe her background,

I'm white, so I think that I have, to a certain degree, no idea what sort of life a lot of our students have because they're not from the dominant culture, they are (silence)  
I've always been in the middle class or upper class (Interview 1, Tara).

During the first interviews, I asked Tara how she came to know of her privilege and that she was from the dominant culture. She commented,

I was always aware of that. I think that came through my studies of being a teacher. We did a culture subject at uni [university] so they talked a lot about that. I was also going to different schools. I went to Cooktown and obviously their life up there is completely different. Then learning that some kids live in the bush and don't have a proper house, no electricity. All that makes you, I think, realise how privileged you are and reflect on your own childhood. How I never went without anything. I wore second-hand clothes and all that but we never went without anything. We went on holidays every year you know, my parents, my mum was a stay-at-home mum and, looking at that now, I think I realise that that's not the norm. It means you're quite privileged (Tara, Interview 1).

Tara saw herself in the role of the dominant privileged white teacher, using this to help her understand difference. Tara had a French mother and a German father. This meant she experienced two different cultures growing up. She reflected on her upbringing,

I think because you're just aware that there's difference. That not everyone is the way I am and to me it's quite natural that everyone's different... I've always grown up with different people around our life – different cultures that you just, it's not a big deal (Tara, Interview 1).

Tara's awareness of cultural difference stemmed from her own experiences growing up in a bicultural family, believing that this was different to those of her peers. Tara has embraced the idea of difference even though sometimes these conflicts with her own ideas. She views cultural conflict as something to learn and develop from.

Naomi understands that she has a long German genealogical history in her family and remarked that she was the only member that "ventured out", implying that her family are deeply rooted in Germany. She has a strong understanding of the privilege she holds as a Caucasian.

Accepting Germany's history has been a journey for Naomi meant she had to go through a process of denial and then acceptance of her country's difficult past, which she described,

Germany obviously has got a difficult history. So when I grew up, you go through those phases and initially you're thinking '..I didn't kill the Jews! That wasn't me. It's got nothing to do with me.' You know, I'm innocent and I respect all of them and then you're going through the '...oh I can't believe they did this. This is just the most terrible thing that could have ever happened.' And then eventually you see what has

come of it and sadly there are still some racist groups in Germany and all over the world (Naomi, Interview 1).

Through this process Naomi, was able to see how her country has grown and developed positively through its dark and violent racist past. She commented that, even in a multicultural country like Australia, racism existed, particularly, with Indigenous Australians. She explained that although the Indigenous Australians were here first, “they have got it often harder than I have it as a Caucasian from a sort of rich, western country. So, I do get it sometimes but not as much as they do [racial comments]” (Naomi, Interview 1).

The idea of knowing oneself and one’s culture was integral in Mia’s childhood and a theme in Mia’s life,

My family history’s been very integral. I’ve got a twin brother and they brought us up deliberately not being a girl or boy... not giving us gender specific toys or treating us differently. That was a really deep focus for them. So that certainly made me think it’s who you are as a person, not what you’re considered to be that’s important (Mia, Interview 1).

Mia’s childhood and her family interactions growing up were a pivotal part of her teaching philosophy which is focused on developmentally appropriate learning. She explained above the critical importance of knowing oneself. She believed this value had influenced her approach to interacting and responding to her students,

As far as family history goes, family experiences, that is fairly fundamental to what I think about when I’m teaching. Spending years in early childhood is what I draw on all the time in the classroom. All of that social, emotional work and just that child development. You see it all the time with this age group [Year 2] and this demographic and so that’s what I spend most of my time drawing from, rather than the primary education curriculum (Mia, Interview 1).

Maria identified as a white Australian and felt that she did not have a ‘culture’ like other migrants in Australia. When I asked what she understands her cultural background to be, she stated,

I think for me it’s a very white perspective – a European Australian perspective, I suppose. I don’t really know, just not very culturally, back in the 80s and 90s Australia wasn’t as cultural as what it is now so I guess, that’s about it. I don’t know! I really don’t know! (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria’s understanding of her cultural background is related her genealogical links to England, Ireland and Scotland,

We didn't have a lot to do with other cultures. It was just white (Maria, Interview 1).

Her experiences growing up in a family with little contact with people from CALD backgrounds meant that, as a student at university, she actively sought subjects on Aboriginal history,

When I went through uni [university], I deliberately did all the Indigenous studies and it was really interesting to see the two different sides of the story and that it wasn't as black and white as what people seemed to have thought it was. But once you start looking into it, a lot of the way that people were treated was wrong. That's what I had a strong issue against, what my family was saying, which did happen. It didn't sit right with me, so you know, all the Palm Island, the dog chains, and even the rabbit proof fence. It's not right what happened. Should never have happened (Maria, Interview 1).

While Maria sought to improve her understanding of Indigenous Australia, this meant that her existing knowledge and understandings were challenged, which left her confused about what she believes,

But then it's also created a conflict with me because sometimes, I can understand both sides but at the moment, me personally in my age bracket, I'm sick and tired of being blamed for what happened 50 years ago and I'm tired of those older people blaming me for something I wasn't even born to do. So that also makes me really cranky. And I know that it's recent history. I understand that. It's recent in their eyes, and recent in parents' eyes of kids my age, but I wasn't there and I shouldn't, I didn't do those things and I don't agree with it so why am I getting blamed at all? I'm not racist or anything, I just find it really sad what happened, but they have to find a way and we have to find a way to move on (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria was challenged by her understandings of Australia's history. She did not believe that she should take responsibility for the consequences of historical actions. She had also begun to develop an awareness of how her culture, the European Australian culture, has impacted on Indigenous Australia.

#### **7.4 Ideas on cultural competence**

The purpose of investigating participants' prior knowledge of cultural competence before the professional learning intervention was that it provided insight into participants' initial understandings and served as a baseline to determine the level of growth made after engagement in the intervention. Before starting the intervention, most of the participants had some awareness about what it meant to be culturally competent. Participants agreed that

cultural competence required teachers to learn, value, and accept students' differences in the cultures they bring into the classroom.

For instance, Camila understood cultural competence to involve an awareness of one's own biases, judgements, and perspectives. This included knowledge of one's prejudices and an awareness of when one is stereotyping. Camila described cultural competence as the ability to bridge cultural differences, which required one to know one's own culture well,

Currently 'culturally competent' means that you are at least aware of your own biases, judgements, perspectives um... you know, any prejudices – especially stereotypes even. All of that. Because, I guess, crossing cultures or bridging those differences, you first have to understand where you come from you know? (Camila, Interview 1)

Camila believed that her thoughts on cultural competence were translated into her practice. For instance, her awareness of cultural differences in the classroom created a sense of responsibility to respond more effectively in the classroom. In addition, she considered that learning is continually developed through being interested in other cultures and other languages. Camila explained that awareness of her unconscious bias is key to her pedagogical approach and ensured her interactions with her students and families were culturally responsive.

Awareness and valuing other cultures were highlighted on more than one occasion by participants in the initial interviews. For example, Ruth described cultural competence as being aware, valuing her culture, and valuing other people's cultures. She pointed out that no culture is superior or inferior, and that all people have one,

To be culturally competent, I would imagine it would be that you wouldn't think that your culture is any better than anyone else's. I don't know [what it means] to be culturally competent... (Ruth, Interview 1).

While Ruth was able to articulate some aspects of culturally competence, she was still very unsure. Her intention to improve her skills as a teacher prompted her to engage in the professional learning intervention. Acknowledgment of difference meant that Ruth would be more responsive in her approach to teaching. It was not an expectation that teachers who participated in the study understood the notion of cultural competence beforehand. However, through engagement in the professional learning intervention, cultural competence would be understood at a deeper level.

Tara's initial concept of cultural competence was that it involved more than the awareness of cultures. For example, in the context of her teaching, she described it as

knowing the students' language, cultural backgrounds and important festivals and then integrating this into teaching practice,

I think cultural competence means that you are... it's beyond the awareness. So, it means that you are then able to make your classroom culturally appropriate to everyone. So you know about all the cultures that you can integrate into your classroom, which – I don't think I do very well but I think that's what, I would think that's what it means, that you know greeting them in different languages or relating it back to their home language, especially with language 'this is how you say it.'

Knowing when they have their important festivals and maybe that's why they might be tired because they stay up late and had a celebration – those sort of things. That's what I think it means but I could be wrong (Tara, Interview 1).

This statement indicates Tara is of what cultural competence is, however, three points stand out. Firstly, Tara understood that there was something more to what she is doing and experiencing. However, she was unable to articulate or describe it. Secondly, she believed that acknowledging and using students' first language as a bridge to learning English was critical to making connections with students. Tara was taking the time to know which students have English as an additional language or dialect and therefore valued the skills students brought into the classroom. Finally, Tara acknowledged the cultural and family obligations of her students and their families. She also believed that, at times, this impacted on their schooling, and felt that knowledge of these events would help her to plan and adjust her pedagogy.

Acceptance and responding to students' points of need was also an evident theme for Mia. When asked about what it means to be culturally competent, Mia stated,

Having an awareness of cultural diversity and having an acceptance that everybody comes from different backgrounds and an acceptance of my responsibility to treat them all as equals and individuals, to work with them with all their complexities and all of my complexities, to give them the same opportunity that any other child in any other classroom, anywhere in Australia, deserves to have. And obviously, there are different levels of ability to do that and different levels of experience and understanding of what each child has and needs. If you're culturally proficient, then you know, you will speak words in some of those languages and feel very comfortable and knowledgeable about lots of different languages (Mia, Interview 1).

Mia believed cultural competence to be the acceptance that everybody comes from a different background. She also considered that all teachers had the responsibility to respond to



students' needs. To do this, she felt cultural competence required teachers to take the time to know and understand their students' background, including knowledge about their languages.

Acceptance of difference and valuing students' cultures was also identified by Naomi as important for cultural competence,

Culturally competent for me does not mean that you know every culture because that's impossible, but it just tells me that you need to be aware that every culture is different, and they all have different traditions and ways of doing things and different values.

And I think it's just being accepting of different cultures and incorporating it into your everyday teaching and life. Embracing it in the classroom and making it something so the kids can be proud of their culture (Naomi, Interview 1).

Naomi's saw working cross-culturally as an enriching experience. She also viewed culture as dynamic and ongoing, with students' learning being boosted by a relationship to their cultures. However, she also believed that she could develop a deeper awareness of cultural competence than her current understanding.

Maria was confident enough to say that she had no idea what cultural competence meant. She ruefully described her previous experience in other schools as 'guest performances' to tick off a requirement to justify the inclusion of intercultural understanding or Indigenous perspectives in the Australian Curriculum,

I honestly don't know what they're talking about in the curriculum with cultural competence. I'm not talking about if they're understanding the history of it? I'm not understanding if they're saying inclusivity of their language into it or teaching. We've done many P.D.'s [professional development sessions] with Indigenous work, whether that's what they want. I don't know what they actually mean. I really don't (Maria, Interview 1).

However, through deeper probing, she was able to articulate more ideas, "Culturally competent for me, would be more about understanding the history from pre-colonial to colonial, the fights that they've had" (Maria, Interview 1). During the interview, Maria spent a lot of time discussing the importance of understanding Aboriginal prehistory and the conflict from contact, stressing that this was also part of cultural competence.

### **7.5 Cross-cultural experiences**

It was important to ascertain participants' experiences of other cultures before teaching at their current school. This is supported by researchers in the field of culturally responsive pedagogy who claim that teachers' pedagogical practices were influenced by their experiences (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010). In other words, through these experiences of other

cultures, teachers were more likely to have a greater awareness of cultural differences and also some personal bias towards other cultures.

Many of the participants had limited experiences in cross-cultural contexts. Camila was one with quite a considerable number of cross-cultural experiences whereas Maria and Mia had very few cultural experiences outside their own culture. As such, what was evident throughout the first interviews was the range of experiences participants brought into the professional learning intervention.

Camila's experiences with different cultures have been diverse and spread over the course of her life. In her 20s, she lived in a shared house in Sydney with a group of young people from the Czech Republic. This gave her a social life that was very different to what she had previously known. She gained insight into young people of her age who had experienced conflict and war in their country while growing up during the Slovenian Independence war in 1991. This prompted her to reflect on the differences and similarities between her Czech friends' experiences and those of Aboriginal peoples,

So, it was in my lifetime, being born in '72... I know there were atrocities – disgusting atrocities when the settlers and the colonials stole land, women, children, took away their men and did some really horrible things. Really upsetting things. Murder  
(Camila, Interview 1).

Camila's experiences have assisted her in understanding the impact of education on students from marginalised backgrounds. She used these understandings of marginalisation and difference in disability education and applied them in her practice as a teacher of CALD students. For example, when she visited her partner's family in Mauritius, Camila lived where English was not spoken. This experience helped her to reflect on her own feelings of being an outsider and to understand newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds.

Knowing the different ways children learn is not enough for teachers who work with newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds. Camila indicated that these students are unlikely to share the same school routines and ways of learning as their Australian counterparts,

And I guess it's those different routines and things like that you know, things will be different in a refugee camp. Things will be different in schooling... I visited a school when I was in Singapore and that was completely different to how we do things here. I visited a school in Mauritius and they're completely different as well, so it's, like, being aware of those nuances (Camila, Interview 1).

When considering children from refugee backgrounds, she also stated, "...they've got to transition from what they know to what is new. And that's a very difficult transition as an adult, and for children" (Camila, Interview 1). Cross-cultural experiences influenced Camila's current pedagogical practices and approach when connecting with her students. For instance, she considered that effective learning involved students' different expectations and understandings of schooling, which had also contributed to how Camila responded to each of her students.

Migration and bilingualism enable a wider awareness of others who have the same experiences. As a migrant and a speaker of both German and English, Tara found it easy to understand the linguistic and cultural diversity demographic of the school. At the same time, she acknowledged that her cross-cultural experiences had been superficial and limited through her immediate life experiences. Married to a New Zealander, she has learned a little bit about New Zealand (Maori) culture through her husband's sister who was married to a Maori, "I know a little bit about family and how tight they are and how important language is to them and you know um... they go about certain things in ways completely differently than we would" (Interview 1, Tara). Tara differentiates between her own and other cultures. She can see the ways in which different cultural groups celebrate and interact together. It is probable that through being a migrant and her cross-cultural experiences, this gives Tara more insight into the cultural differences in her classroom context.

Naomi had a range of cross-cultural experiences, travelling through Europe and spending time in South America for three months in her 20s. She believed this had expanded her worldview of different cultures, "I think that has shaped my worldview in the way that it's broadened my horizon and made me realise that different cultures have different ways" (Naomi, Interview 1). However, Naomi commented that it was not until she started teaching at the school that she experienced a wider range of cultural diversity in one space. Drawing from her experiences of travelling, Naomi tries not to put her own judgements or bias first, but to respect difference,

As a teacher, I'm seeing families come new to the class, I have, well I can't really imagine how it is but I know that there's so many different family situations that I know that I can't judge and can't say, 'oh this is how it should be and you're doing it wrong.' I know that everyone lives differently and has got the right to do so and I completely respect that and rather I find that I learn from those families, rather than judging them and thinking they're doing something wrong (Naomi, Interview 1).

Naomi's previous experiences of cross-cultural interactions inform how she conducts herself in the school context. She has an awareness of difference as positive and something to be learned from and developed from rather than judging and trying to modify it, "You're trying to adjust to whatever situation you are thrown into and whatever cultural situation and families you are in" (Naomi, Interview 1).

Mia's cross-cultural experiences are very different to those of Naomi and Tara as she has not travelled overseas although having lived in Darwin for four years exposed Mia to working in very culturally diverse situations. She also worked with various Aboriginal families and Aboriginal community groups. As part of her role in managing day care centres she ensured that in all the care rooms, all the cultures were embraced. Relationships with families are central to her idea of working cross-culturally. She saw expectations concerning visual displays as only working at the surface level and an easy but inauthentic way to acknowledge diversity. For Mia, the Early Childhood Board's expectations caused a few heated discussions. Although Mia has not travelled out of Australia, she does not see this as a disadvantage,

Well I've only travelled in Australia. I've never been overseas yet, I don't feel that my lack of travelling overseas makes me unaware of cultures because I accept everybody as they are. I take people on face value and I'm interested in their culture or what makes them who they are. I don't believe that you necessarily become more attuned to a culture just because you go to their country because there are lots of people that go to South East Asia and they don't get it. Just coz you've been to Bali doesn't mean that you're suddenly understanding Indonesian culture and so to me that's not what it's about. It's more about being accepting or being more open to embracing a culture of a student when the time is there, and you need to, as opposed to when you want to (Mia, Interview 1).

What is obvious from Mia's statement is that establishing relationships is critical to really understanding a student. Her view is that by knowing her learners at a deeper level, she can respond to their point of need in an effective and timely manner.

Maria has taught predominantly in rural farming towns in Central Queensland that are mainly 'white Australian'. She has never worked with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other cultural groups outside her own cultural background until her current school. Since arriving, Maria has faced many challenges in terms of conflicts with her own cultural understandings, worldviews and values. She comments when referring to newly arrived refugee students eating lunch "we had kids last year who had issues with food because they

didn't know how to eat properly". Maria is very candid about her lack of experience working cross-culturally and has taken her teaching role at the school as an opportunity for learning,

I have noticed that there's a big difference though between the cultural groups that are based in Australia or that were born in Australia as opposed to those families that may be new to Australia, there's a big difference between them. I find that the minority, the other groups [refugee and migrant students], they have a lot more respect. The family is a lot more tightly knit, they're more interested in their children's education. You've even got these [Indigenous Australians] other ones who have got access to a free education, a really good education, who don't want it (Maria, Interview 1).

Clearly, while some participants had limited experiences working in cross-cultural contexts, they brought very different experiences and skills that enabled some insight to begin working cross-culturally. Some participants had come with cross-cultural experiences but for other participants, their journey had just begun.

#### **7.6 Preparedness for working cross-culturally**

The participants identified that no professional learning concerning working cross-culturally was available when they arrived at the school. Also, they all stated that no support or follow up in understanding the diverse and complex range of students at the school had occurred. Camila's only formal learning in this area has been through her undergraduate degree at James Cook University. However, her experiences working in the school prior to teaching have given her practical insight of what to expect,

I go back to my times of being a teacher aide and watching good teaching practices and how they manage the students from culturally diverse backgrounds. I am a big believer that good teaching is good teaching. That if it works for one you know, it's um... good teaching is good teaching. And that you're making allowances for that child. You are differentiating for each child – what their needs are, regardless of EAL/D (Camila, Interview 1).

Observing good teacher practice in CALD settings have been a powerful contributing factor in Camila's preparedness for working in these contexts. While her undergraduate degree has given her some theoretical underpinnings and insight, the mentoring of good teacher practice has contributed to her readiness.

Over 30 years of teaching, Ruth has not had any opportunities to engage in professional learning to assist her in working more effectively in cross-cultural situations. It has been through Ruth's own experiences and trial and error that she has developed skills to

work with Indigenous students. When asked about her preparedness for working with newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds, Ruth commented,

I hadn't been prepared – I've never worked with refugee students. I'm trying to think back 10 years, 11 years nearly. I don't think we had refugee students in Mandurah [in Western Australia]. I know some African students were there before I left. I don't think there were any in my class, so I never had any before I come here, never taught any. But the way I look at it is, they're new to Australia, so they're like they're coming to Prep and so I would give them Prep experiences and that's how I would handle it (Ruth, Interview 1).

As a seasoned teacher through Prep to Year 7, Ruth draws on her previous experiences to make decisions on the gaps and priorities for her newly arrived students' educational experiences. Ruth responds to students as needed and uses the support offered by the intensive English centre on site.

Migrating to Australia and working in the travel industry, Tara had developed an awareness for working cross-culturally. However, it wasn't until she started her undergraduate studies in education at James Cook University that a subject around cultural awareness (which coincided with a practicum in a rather remote coastal town), that it really began to highlight some cultural differences. This was particularly confronting for someone who had no prior experiences working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,

I went to Cooktown. Obviously, their life up there is completely different. Learning that some kids live in the bush and don't have a proper house, no electricity and all that, it makes you, I think, realise how privileged you are reflecting on my own childhood (Tara, Interview 1).

Perhaps because of Tara's different background and being part of the wider dominant culture, she associates class structures with cultural backgrounds. When asked to discuss her views on the relationship between culture and learning, she predominantly centred this around class and wealth,

I guess an understanding that they have other priorities in their life you know, I was always – I was middle class you know, it wasn't an issue to have food on the table. But if you have a look at some of them, they don't know where their next meal is coming from and they're not going to run to school to see the teacher, that's not their priority. And I think realising that makes you maybe accept it more and just think that they're doing the best they can, and you know, hopefully when they get into a better spot they might ... try to work around it (Tara, Interview 1).

As this is the first school that Tara has worked in, it is probable that she has little other experience to draw on for comparison. While there is a lack of differentiation between class and culture, Tara displays empathy for her students and family in some of their daily challenges around survival and the expectations of schooling.

Naomi sees her situation as an English as a second language learner and migrant as an advantage for teaching across cultures in schools. She expresses her reservations about coming into the teaching profession as she felt her English language skills were lacking. In fact, it was not until she was at university that she realised her theoretical background in English and English grammar would be helpful in her teaching, as many of her native English counterparts lacked this knowledge. She sees herself as a lifelong learner of English. Her experiences as a second language learner in English have assisted in picking up errors in students' English language learning and providing feedback, which makes her a better equipped teacher,

I find that I've got an awareness of what I know and what I don't know. And I think that knowing that is actually good. I'm really happy that I've got that background because I do think it strengthens me as a teacher. I look at those kids, especially the Indigenous kids, and I understand that sometimes they don't get it because I've been there and sometimes I would sit there and I not get it.

...Just to have that awareness. I think people who haven't travelled, they haven't been in a country where another language is spoken, I think they miss out on that understanding a little bit so. I think I see that as a strength (Naomi, Interview 1).

Naomi uses her own experiences as an outsider and an English language learner to help her make connections with students. With no formal or informal preparation for the diverse working context, Naomi draws on her own experiences as a migrant, considering that it might help her make meaningful connections with her students.

Mia's openness allows her to accept the unknown and take it as a learning experience rather than unsettling her. Her approach to handling different conditions allows her to model resilience and create a classroom for children with difficult family backgrounds with "some sense of security and have an understanding of not pushing them too much." While connection is crucial to Mia's approach to teaching, she finds that you "don't want to be too familiar with your kids either. And they want to have that point where they just go, 'you actually don't know anything about that side of my life.' And that's actually a good thing." Respecting students' privacy and choices on how much they want to share about their families

and culture has been a core philosophy. Mia takes a pragmatic approach to working across diversity, “Whether or not you are prepared to work cross-culturally in a school, you must be accepting of any student that comes in and what I like about this school is that there’s support” (Mia, Interview 1). Mia feels comfortable asking for help from the intensive English centre. This means she has more time to focus on students’ social, emotional, and academic development, as other needs can be met by a support team that assists teachers with understanding her students’ linguistic and cultural diversity. Mia values a whole child approach; this is part of her philosophy of teaching.

Maria has had no previous professional learning in cross-cultural awareness. Her experiences have been in rural Queensland, which is predominantly European Australian. When asked about any previous professional learning to prepare her to work in cross-cultural situations, she commented,

Yeah, I guess. But when you think of cross-culture in the broader sense, no... When I went through uni, the history gave me a greater understanding but not the actual cross-cultural teaching. I haven’t been exposed to it in my years of service, in my 10 years that I’ve been teaching. Except until I got here last year (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria experienced culture shock when first starting at her current school. She felt that any professional cross-cultural learning prior to this would not have prepared her, commenting “unless you’re working with it, in that context I don’t think you can really understand it” (Maria, Interview 1). However, despite the demographic of the school and diverse nature of the community, no training was given to help her with teaching CALD students. Maria candidly stated during the first interview that at times she was unprepared and overwhelmed by the cultural differences.

What is evident in the discussion with participants in the initial interviews, is that the school provided no support, information or professional learning to inform or prepare new teachers to teach cross-culturally. Furthermore, what is concerning is that by not acknowledging the cultural diversity in the school, the school management is ignoring cultural difference and a pedagogy that is responsive to difference. Finally, and more importantly, teachers feel they are not supported to understand how to teach more effectively and appropriately, given the school community’s cultural diversity and needs.

### **7.7 Expectations of schooling**

Teachers’ expectations about schooling can be markedly different to those of students and their families. Also, at times, teachers’ expectations of schooling are demonstrated in



ways which cause misunderstanding. This miscommunication can have a profound impact on teachers' pedagogy and therefore act as a barrier to being culturally responsive.

Camila's expectation of schooling is very much centred on herself and how she impacts students. She acknowledges that the school has many challenging students and that conflict in her classroom is an everyday occurrence. So, she embeds her own philosophy of life into her teaching practice, "Other times you speak it and you forgive. A lot of it is forgiving and moving on and forgetting and that's what you do. And sometimes that's what you need to do as a teacher as well" (Camila, Interview 1). Camila's expectations of schooling are not placed on the students and their families, but rather on herself. Forgiveness, moving on and letting go have been central to how she interacts and manages her classroom. She instils these values into her students and models the expectation of forgiveness in her teaching.

Ruth has a strong desire for equity and a fair go, which influences her approach to teaching and expectations of schooling. She has a strong conviction of 'having a go' as a work ethic and believes that others should think alike. The result is that she is faced with, at times, this expectation not being shared by her students and their families, which she acknowledges,

What can affect children's education... are a lot of the 'sorry' days for religious observants, for death in the families. It can impact if one comes from a very large family with a lot of elderly parents, sick elders or just sick people. So that there's a lot of days off for those, which I totally understand. So that can impact  
(Ruth, Interview 1).

It is essential for students and their families to participate in events of cultural significance. For example, funerals and family sickness requires Indigenous, Bhutanese, and Nepali students to be away for long periods of time. While Ruth strongly supports this, she also highlights that this non-attendance affects learning. Ruth made parallels with some of the communities' current social issues,

Families who end up having a lot of family members move in with them so that the money then is non-existent so there are no lunches and things like that. I understand how that can impact kids – having late nights, not having lunches. Not being as well cared for, so I do understand all of that, which is in their culture to do all of those sorts of things but that does impact on the school. A lot of violence – like it can be violence. That can be in any sort of, from anywhere. That's not just from our kids that can come in anywhere (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth sees some of the social issues that her students and their families experiences as part of their culture and not just social issues because of marginalisation and poverty. While she is supportive of students engaging in important cultural celebrations and funerals, which may involve travelling, she is also aware of the impact this has on their schooling. When I asked about how she might respond in planning for teaching students who missed school due to cultural obligations, she explained that her teaching was cyclical,

I'm forever picking up, going forward, picking up, going forward, picking up – like that. I don't... um... I don't have a daily work pad that has Week seven on the Thursday I'm giving lesson Number 23... I haven't filled in Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday's maths because we haven't... we've only just done Monday's and my kids were still working on um... time facts because they don't know that there are twelve months in a year (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth's practice involves differentiating and meeting students' point of need. She believes in ensuring that no child is left behind and spends most of her time "filling in the gaps", due to students' extended absences. She sees that newly arrived students benefit from her teaching approach as they also have large gaps in their development,

... there's no kids that I leave behind. I refuse to leave kids behind. Especially in maths coz it's one subject that you can get. You shouldn't leave anyone behind in maths. It's very easy and I really don't worry too much if kids can't write the most amazing narratives, that doesn't really worry me too much (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ensuring students are learning at their point of need and making sure her students experience success, no matter what level they are working at, Ruth has high expectations in her teaching that her students also achieve, no matter how far behind they might be.

Tara's values and expectations of learning behaviour and parental engagement are very much intertwined. When asked about whether there was conflict with her expectations of schooling and those of her families, she admitted in her first interview that these were noticeably different,

I don't know if it's a conflict, but I find it sometimes difficult when you don't get to see the parents very much. I guess they're less involved than what I would expect. They don't put a lot of emphasis on homework or supporting their kids and progressing as much as I would like. I think that would be the main conflict (Tara, Interview 1).

In her first year of teaching, this was a challenge and at times cultural conflict was evident. However, over two years at the school and through developing relationships with

families, she has begun to understand some of the challenges which families encounter. Tara has accepted that her views are very different to those of these families. She reflects how different her experiences have been to her students’,

My parents always supported us in learning and were very much involved in school. We got dropped off and picked up until we were old enough to go on our own. I have those memories of us all sitting around the same table at different school levels. My little brother was still in day care and he used to still sit at the same table and do drawings while my other brother and I did homework and all that... Report cards were a big deal ‘what did you get?’ ‘Why did you let yourself down?’ The expectations were quite high to perform well and probably still are – even when I went to uni I felt like I had to justify to my parents why my grades were not as high as they could have been or something like that (Tara, Interview 1).

In summary, it is Tara’s experiences as a second language learner and a migrant that influence her teaching and how she responds to the language needs of her learners. This has also provided her with empathy about the challenges her students might face when learning English in a context that is culturally different. In her first interview, Tara acknowledged a difference in expectations of schooling across the different cultural groups in her class. She also noticed that family connections and relationships are paramount and expressed to her in very different ways. The expectation of parental involvement is essential for Tara. However, she explained that she struggles with this at times because many families she works with are not visible in the school. This expectation of parental involvement has come out of her lived experiences where her family were visibly engaged in her schooling and supported the school she attended.

Naomi is reflective in responding about her expectations of schooling. Her approach is related to what is working for newly arrived students and their families. She sees herself as a part of a team that works with students with the intensive English centre as the other part,

I’m a very positive person so I look at the positive things, but I do see that it’s often very difficult for most families. But most of them that I’ve seen, they’ve settled in really well because they get a lot of support. As difficult as it is, it’s always difficult, but it could be more difficult and you could always do better. There’s always better and we should always strive for the best, but I actually think they’re doing a really good job (Naomi, Interview 1).

Naomi explains that she is accessible, adaptable and welcoming. This is reflected in her expectations of having to teach children concepts and skills when they are not ready,

I have to say, on the whole about this school where I worked before, the principal had a little bit of a military background and she ran her school very, very strictly. I'm more of a creative person so I found that more difficult whereas coming here, I feel that this school is very open, very flexible, welcoming and understanding. And it suits me a lot better, so I haven't come across lots of conflicting messages. The only thing that I dislike was when we have to teach the kids things that they're not ready for yet. I don't like doing that (Naomi, Interview 1).

This school environment provides Naomi with the space to teach responsively. It is her expectation that schooling meet students where they are at and that pushing students into learning that is developmentally inappropriate is not responsive.

Mia's approach to education is like Naomi's. She is centred around the child and their readiness to learn,

You can't force a child to learn something, as much as I know that in education, we need to be teaching the children every day and they come in and it's mandatory that they go to school. If their minds are closed, they're not going to learn, and they can sit here for six hours and not take anything in because they're not interested (Mia, Interview 1).

Mia's teaching is greatly influenced by her family experiences as a child. Years working in early childhood have also impacted on how she responds to her students. She draws on the social and emotional development of her students, ensuring she provides a developmentally appropriate pedagogy rather than following the demands of state-wide expectations when she believes some students are not ready for it. Responding to students' point of need is critical for Mia's teaching philosophy. Her relaxed nature is due to her upbringing, and she uses this to create an atmosphere and classroom culture where students see her in this way.

Mia is very open and has a strong awareness of the complexities of the students in her class: a variety of cultures, languages and different learning styles. Some of these learning styles do not quite correspond to their cultural background. Through her experiences and openness, she can respond to the students in her classroom.

While Mia and Naomi have similar expectations of schooling, Maria's expectations of are very different, being centred around behaviour, which is a high priority for her. Currently, Maria sees her students' behaviour as an issue; she emphasises that they show little respect for authority and other students in the school. She also sees this as an increasing trend over the last few years in her current and previous schools,

So, their behaviour is escalating, and I don't know if that's a breakdown with parental, in general, parenting, I don't know if that is a lack of family cohesiveness, you know, community structure, safety, you know, all those care responses. It is very profound at this school. It's easier to count the non-behavioural issues than the behaviours. And most of them [behaviours] are environmental" (Maria, Interview 1).

Understanding the differences in how families value and respond to education has been a challenge for Maria. At times she perceives her families as not wanting to engage or support their children's education, "You've got these other ones [Indigenous families] who have got access to a free education, a really good education, who don't want it" (Maria, Interview 1). Furthermore, Maria is experiencing cultural conflict. She perceives how families respond to education as a contributing factor to problems in the classroom,

I'm not a hundred per cent sure what I've said before about cultural backgrounds. I'm not quite sure exactly whether when I see culture, I'm thinking more of the Indigenous. The Chinese, maybe that's another issue that we're thinking of. And you've already highlighted there are other... sorts of cultures. So if we're looking at the socioeconomic cultures and the family cultures and you know, those sorts of things, our kids, like kids aren't just getting anything they need. A lot of them are not getting the love, they're not getting or consistently getting those sorts of things. They're not getting sleep. Their diets are probably not the best. So that's all impacting on their brain development which is impacting on their learning. But if I'm going to stay up here, even to be teaching where I am, I need a bigger, a broader understanding. I'm not a racist, I'm not narrow-minded, I can see but I need a deeper understanding of how this all fits together and how my views will need to change or even be able to assimilate in these different cultures instead of me just going 'ah she'll be right. Don't worry about it.' You know, that's the sort of thing that I'm looking for. How do I find out what they mean by cultural competence or cultural diversity or inclusivity in education? What are they actually asking you to do? And does it go against what I really believe and can my beliefs change? I'm always torn. This is my problem. Always torn. Like I do believe that there are very lazy people. Lazy, lazy people. And then you know, it's a shame to stereotype them all the time and I'll say 'hang on, but they're not always like that. There is this over here.' You know, constant conflict in what you believe (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria's experiences at the school have challenged some of her preconceived views, therefore shifting and shaping her worldviews. Her expectations of schooling are very much tied to her

personal values. Her current experiences have confronted some of her initial stereotypes of Indigenous people

### **7.8 Experience being marginalised**

Experiences of marginalisation can assist with developing empathy and understanding of difference. These skills are necessary in developing a culturally competent teacher. All participants in this study identified that they experienced marginalisation in some form during their life. These experiences were all uniquely different. How they responded has influenced how they approach teaching.

Camila experienced being marginalised during her schooling. Growing up in a regional city with a high population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families meant that Camila's circle of friends was from the local Aboriginal community of that area. When growing up, Camila stated that she was the minority at school. She looked different and did not share the language of her peers, "At the time I knew that I was different. I knew I couldn't speak their language. I knew that my skin wouldn't go beautiful and brown like theirs" (Camila, Interview 1). Being different has given her empathy when working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Her experiences has enabled insight into how it feels to be excluded and powerless within a group. However, during the interview, Camila was explicit in acknowledging her privilege and power as part of the dominant culture within the wider community,

...that was pretty powerful for me and like I was saying, reflecting as a university student, it was like, wow, you know, I was the minority and to really analyse it and pull it apart and go, yeah. But I still would have had so much more privilege and power as opposed to [her Aboriginal friends] and I was still the minority. And that's quite powerful and really pathetically sad (Camila, Interview 1)

Camila believes this has impacted on her empathy and understanding of her students from marginalised backgrounds,

I guess that's what's really hard to understand. It's that paradox... and that's only of being a high school student and being in a minority and I guess that was a good experience for me, now to reflect back on because I can go 'I've never been where you are. But, you know what? I have been a minority in my peer group, in my teenage years (Camila, Interview 1).

In her 20s, Ruth found herself a so-called 'unmarried mother'. It was at a time when women either married or gave up the child,

I was part of the unmarried mother brigade of Australia, when girls either got married walking up the aisle pregnant or their parents forced them to move away and give their babies up for adoption. So that was the other lost generation, but no one talks about that. So yeah, I was a minority there. I was in the minority of the girls who said, ‘you can all go and get f... I’m keeping my child (Ruth, Interview 1).

Ruth’s situation was difficult. Her decision to keep her son was outside the bounds of accepted behaviour and norms for that time with her decisions leading to discrimination by her own family members, which made her very angry, “It only dawned on me two years ago that my father actually refused to have me in the house, and I went to live with my Aunty. And it only dawned on me a couple of years ago that she actually took me in” (Ruth, Interview 1). Her experiences of having been marginalised in the past, Ruth believed, have assisted in understanding some of the challenges her students encounter. These experiences have contributed to her empathic approach to building relationships with students and her overall pedagogy.

While a member of the dominant culture, Tara briefly experienced marginalisation while travelling outside her country,

I do not know because – I think they just liked – because I was different, they just all wanted a photo with me and all that sort of stuff. Actually, I do remember, and this is a teenager being in Egypt and going through the markets. Again, because I was so blonde, they were all trying to buy me off my parents and offering camels. It made me feel so uncomfortable, I refused to ever go back to the markets. [laughs] It was just horrible! (Tara, Interview 1).

What stands out here are ideas of difference and feelings of discomfort. These feelings have possibly given Tara some insight into how her students experience life when marginalised. Also, the feeling of being different because one speaks another language and has less proficiency in English is sometimes painful. Tara uses this to her advantage to help her students to understand that learning English is hard, and she sometimes makes mistakes too,

I always point out to my kids that English is not my first language either, so it is okay to make mistakes and that sometimes I don’t understand. And sometimes they don’t understand me because I use the wrong words. So, I make it very obvious because I know how awkward that can feel... I value it –that there is a difference and that we are all different (Tara, Interview 1).

When discussing her views of her Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it is evident that she has an understanding and acknowledgement of difference between her own culture,

Australian culture, and Indigenous culture, “Yes, and not trying to be angry at them or blaming them for it or even, you know, sometimes you think they do not care. They do care, but they care in a different way than what I expect” (Tara, Interview 1). Tara acknowledges miscommunication on her part and reading her families based on her own cultural assumptions, acknowledging perhaps she does not know about her families’ circumstances, expectations and values.

Naomi is one of three German teachers at the school, which was not the case in her prior Australian schools, I was the only German teacher in the previous schools and a minority. I guess, as a woman, you are also sometimes in a minority group” (Naomi, Interview 1). Naomi explained that while working in schools there was hidden discrimination that was very subtle, leaving her at times unsure why some of her colleagues did not take her seriously,

Nobody would ever say anything nasty but sometimes I would sense maybe one or two people may not take me as seriously as I would have liked them to. And I, it could be because of my cultural background (Naomi, Interview 1).

Naomi’s experiences of connecting with other teachers at her school from her own cultural background have helped her to understand the same experiences that newly arrived refugee students and their families encounter. For example, this includes being able to have a conversation in her mother tongue and a shared u cultural background,

As a teacher, I’m seeing families come new to the class, I have, well I can’t really imagine how it is, but I know that there are so many different family situations that I know that I can’t judge. I can’t say ‘oh this is how it should be and you’re doing it wrong.’ I know that everyone lives differently and has got the right to do so and I completely respect that. I find that I learn from those families, rather than judging them and thinking they’re doing something wrong (Naomi, Interview 1).

To summarise, Naomi is accepting of difference and prepared to learn more to improve as a teacher. When asked about what she hoped to get out of the professional learning, she stated,

I hope some of the beliefs that I have now are going to be confirmed. I hope they’re going to be deepened or strengthened, and I’m going to gain more knowledge. I also hope that I’m going to get some more skills for how to engage with the families, and also how to plan my teaching and how to teach the kids properly. I mean, at the moment, we’ve already looked a little bit at the developmental stages and trying to break that English apart and teaching those little skills step by step (Naomi, Interview 1).



Mia's experience of marginalisation occurred when her daughters were growing up. They lived an alternative lifestyle in a small community on a cattle farm. To struggle to be accepted by the wider cattle farming community was difficult,

It certainly makes you realise that you have to justify your existence all the time and you have to do all of those things that minority groups do. Where you fight for your acceptance and you feel you constantly have to show that you're a valid person, regardless of the differences that you have. Obviously one of the advantages of being an adult is that you can rationalise it all and just go 'well actually I don't care what you think of what I do and you know, like it or lump it, I'm still living here'.

Obviously for children, that's much more difficult when they don't understand the stigma attached or the bullying or whatever it is. I'm lucky that I experienced that as an adult, not as a child (Mia, Interview 1).

Through this experience, Mia can empathise with students, although she acknowledges that she was less vulnerable than her marginalised students as she did not face marginalisation as a child. She uses this experience to advocate for her students and makes sure that they understand the shared commonalities that connect them to her.

Maria's experiences of being marginalised have come from experiencing discrimination and bullying when she was a teenage mother. During her pregnancy she was unable to access pre-natal clinics and found appointments with the doctor unhelpful. So, at the birth of her daughter she found herself not knowing what to expect. She was also denied medical assistance after the birth. Maria explained that she had felt unsafe talking to staff. She described herself as having felt embarrassed and belittled. This experience has influenced Maria in understanding and having empathy for others who are marginalised and discriminated against,

I can empathise with the Indigenous because of what's happened 30 or 40 years ago to me. I had it hard too because I was raising a young child, but I did have support. So, I have a lot of empathy towards just other cultures in general who are trying to get ahead and who are trying to do things they may not be able to do for whatever reason. ...How that influences my thinking on a lot of things is that there are options and there are choices and there are ways to get around it and those supports are there in place, but um... I don't feel like a handout is always the best option either. And that's something else that I see a lot of too, so when I had her, I had nothing. No help from anyone. I was on my own and now I just see, 'here, have a lot of money for having a child. Have a child, have a child.'

...But I think just me in general and the person that I sort of am, I can see past a lot of stereotyping. I can see past the façade they have to put on. You know, there's always something else going on behind it. There's always something you don't know about. There's always a tragedy that every single persons had in their life and they could be at any grieving point through that process, at any particular point. So, you don't know if they're at the beginning. It could be grieving for a country that they've lost or family members they've left behind, or you know, things like that. Especially if they're refugees (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria's experiences outside her own culture are more drawn to Indigenous Australians rather than migrants and peoples from refugee backgrounds, therefore her first interview was mainly reflecting on her personal experiences in that context. When speaking to Maria, she appeared to show a genuine commitment to shift her current thinking. She commented that she was prepared to challenge herself to be transformed into a more culturally responsive teacher. As Maria is a hard worker and values this, it is also seen in how she is as a teacher, always striving to be better. She is reflective in her teaching. What worked for her before does not necessarily work now and so she is wanting to improve her effectiveness as a teacher.

## **7.9 Summary**

To summarise, a series of themes ran through each of the six participants' stories. For Camila, there was evidence of an inner strength and desire to change when life presented difficulty. This strength had provided her with an understanding of others' perspectives, all of which impacted her approach to teaching. Camila made connections from her life experiences and this had a direct influence in how she responded to students with culturally diverse backgrounds. Her openness to learn new ideas to improve her approaches have all been influenced by her life experiences. Even though at times Camila had struggles and missed opportunities, she acknowledged her privilege.

For Ruth, equity and a fair go was central to her core values and beliefs. This was perhaps because of her experiences of being marginalised as a young single mother which enacted an empathic approach to her teaching. She demonstrated this through ensuring that all her students participated in the learning process at their level. Differentiation and meeting students' point of need underpins her teaching philosophy. Sometimes, Ruth's expectations of schooling were in conflict with her own experiences however her teaching approach and authentic relationships with her students showed she has empathy and an understanding of the varying needs of her students to respond accordingly.

Strong themes of family and connection are central to Tara. Even as a migrant to Australia, she understood how her privilege from the white dominant culture played in the education space. She acknowledges that sometimes there was cultural conflict based on her own assumptions and previous experiences. While sometimes Tara experienced cultural conflict, growing up in a bicultural family has given her cause to reflect on how she viewed difference in other cultures. Tara used this to help her understand the position of her students and responded in a more effective way.

Migration from Germany and speaking English as an additional language has provided Naomi with skills and empathy to work in her current teaching context. Enrolling in a teacher education course has also allowed Naomi to reflect on how she views herself in the wider community. Naomi sees herself as part of the dominant culture therefore her responsibility is to ensure that she respects difference and understands that different cultures have different ways of doing things that are not necessarily aligned to her way of life.

Connections and relationships are central both in Mia's personal and professional life. This has influenced Mia's way of approaching how she relates to her students. For Mia, it is knowing her students and how they learn first before anything else. This is also critical in how she manages learning and how she responds to students' academic, social and emotional learning needs.

Maria provides a different approach to how she views diversity and working cross-culturally. With values such as Christian values, honesty and hard work, she incorporates this into her teaching approach and expectations of her students and their families. Maria has struggled in the past twelve months to understand and make sense of difference. However, while this has been a difficult time for her, she is well aware that her current way of doing things in the classroom is not working and requires her to change.

This chapter has provided the context of the school and the community where this study took place. It also presented data from Phase 3, Process 1: cueing and retrieving prior knowledge, as outlined in Table 6.5. Data was drawn from the first series of semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I unpacked participants' knowledge before engaging in the professional learning intervention. Establishing prior knowledge was essential to determine the later impact of the learning intervention in teachers changing their beliefs and practices for working with students from CALD backgrounds. Also, organised under the predetermined sub-themes as outlined in Table 7.1, participants' stories and experiences help us understand what they come into the research with and their journeys of experiences through the

professional learning intervention and the co-planning sessions. A summary of the key findings of participant's prior knowledge is outlined in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 indicates some key observations about the extent of experience participants have in working with students from refugee backgrounds and their general experiences in cross-cultural situations. Firstly, all participants had little or no experience of working with this with group prior to coming to this school. Furthermore, no professional learning or induction was provided by the school to assist with working across diversity, even though it has a long history of students from refugee backgrounds. Any support was given by the intensive English centre as supplementary support, provided to teachers as required. This means there was no mandated whole school approach to assisting teachers to work cross-culturally. As a result, this made it very difficult for some of the teachers to understand how to engage and respond to diversity.

Furthermore, most participants already had a very good idea as to what cultural competence entailed and saw this as something that was lacking in their own teaching practice. Prior to working at the school, many had very little experience in cross-cultural situations, making their experiences at school challenging. However, all the participants were committed to engaging in the professional learning intervention and saw this as a positive move to improve themselves as teachers.

In the following chapter, I describe the professional learning intervention. This assists in building context to Chapter 6, which introduced the professional learning framework that underpins the intervention. In Chapter 8 I also provide insights into how I implemented this intervention, using the professional learning framework as a design tool.

## **Chapter 8: Cultural positions and learnings after intervention**

### **8.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I introduced each of the six participants through describing their prior knowledge before engaging in the professional learning intervention. This data mainly relied on their responses in the first individual semi-structured interview and was organised around a framework, as outlined in Chapter 6. The framework emerged from a critical review of the literature. This data was analysed deductively and presented in seven predetermined sub-themes, according to the outline provided in Table 7.1. Participants were interviewed individually three times. The first time was before the professional learning intervention, the second time was after some sessions in which they had discussed relevant models and thirdly at the end, after they had engaged in their practical session of co-creating an artefact they could use in their culturally diverse classrooms.

In this chapter, I present the findings from various data sources derived directly after the professional learning intervention. This data was analysed inductively and through the lens of Timperley and Alton's (2008) iterative learning process to identify themes that illustrate evidence of changes to participants' existing knowledge and beliefs around cultural diversity. Various data sources were used: pre- and post-professional learning questionnaires, the three semi-structured interviews, the co-planning sessions and the researcher's reflective journal. By identifying themes from this data, I address the second research question: How can school-based professional learning, with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, affect teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students from a refugee background?

Chapter 8 provides some evidence to respond to RQ2. Through a separate process, further evidence is given in Chapter 9 which answers RQ2, together with a response to RQ1. In the current chapter, I introduce two themes that emerged from the data analysis.

- Theme 1: We all have unconscious bias
- Theme 2: We all need to work towards cultural safety

### **8.1 Theme 1: We all have unconscious bias**

Participants highlighted their awareness that an unconscious bias exists in all of us, even for the most culturally competent teacher. According to Benson and Fiarman (2019), we are not born with an unconscious bias, we learn it. This kind of bias has been defined by Di Angelo (2016) as:

The largely unconscious and automatic prejudice that operates below conscious awareness and without intentional control. Implicit bias is absorbed from the messages surrounding us and results in acts of discrimination. Because implicit bias is below conscious awareness and often in conflict with what a person consciously believes, the person is unaware of the discrimination that results from it (p. 59).

In the professional learning, I used a range of diagrams to explain theory and concepts of culture awareness and cultural competence to assist participants develop their knowledge and understandings of other cultural groups and cultural differences. This enabled participants to understand the world from different perspectives (Duckitt, 2001). To achieve this, I used a range of diagrams to explain Lysgaard's (1955) model of cultural adaptation (Figure 5.6) and Hall's (1990) model of high context and low cultures (Figure 5.4). These two models have played a significant role in challenging existing beliefs and assisting participants to understand and conceptualise new ideas and learning (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008a).

In the learning intervention, time was spent exploring the notion of Hall's (1990) distinction between high and low context cultures in the contexts of society and the school. All participants saw this as an overwhelming learning moment, realising the importance of this model for learning how to communicate cross-culturally. This highlighted the distance between the teachers' cultural background and students' backgrounds. In this shift in thinking, I saw participants reflect on and articulate how they talk about their students, considering possible ways they can implement some change to improve teaching cross-culturally.

After the first session of the professional learning intervention, I asked participants to consider how the notion of high and low context cultures might impact on their practice and reflect on this for the week. In my research journal, I pondered on the responses which the participants gave in the session in the following summary,

Two to three teachers thought they needed to consider the idea of high and low context cultures and how that might impact on their teaching and decisions about teaching, given that students are coming from different perspectives and they need to keep in mind their own assumptions before making a decision or a judgement.

Generally, more consciousness raising and awareness about how they might impact others" (Research Journal, 16/2/17).

The other concept presented during the professional learning was Lysgaard's (1955) model of cultural adaptation (Figure 5.6), showing the process and stages of adjusting to a new culture. Participants were asked to reflect on the students in their classroom, both past and present, and plot where they might have been in the stages and then compare this to

behaviours that these students exhibited. Participants noted that these two models were crucial in helping them to understand the ups and downs of recently enrolled students and their families while trying to adapt to their new life in Australia. The following summary from my researcher's journal illustrates how learning some models to develop this knowledge and understanding was useful in establishing more understanding of cultural differences,

Reflections from participants illustrate that spending time on theories of culture and cultural adaptation enable greater understanding around the dynamics of culture and how assumptions and bias might affect decisions around pedagogical choices. Also, this provided teachers with a deeper understanding of the different perspectives' students come into the classroom with and, in most cases, these are not shared by the teacher. In fact, it highlighted the large chasm between the Indigenous students and refugee background students from high context cultures and the teachers, who are from low context cultures" (Research Journal, 16/2/17).

In my interviews with participants, I sought to explore key aspects that stood out and changed their thinking about cultural diversity. In Mia's last interview, I asked what part of the professional learning intervention stood out as significant for her. Mia pointed out that the model of cultural adaptation was the most compelling aspect and she discussed how she was able to recognise particular points in the phases of cultural adaptation that impacted her classroom practice,

It means that I can recognise the some of the key points in those stages so then because of that, I can start to develop a plan on how I can support them, and with the whole family, obviously supporting the child in the class. I mean again, I'm still hamstrung by curriculum. So, there's still only so much that I can do but at least, I can be supportive and aware of when to embrace, when to encourage the children to embrace their culture within the school and when to acknowledge that they're not ready to do that (Mia, Interview 3).

Mia's comment above highlights that the learning intervention has contributed to her existing knowledge and skills. She recognises where students sit in the stages of adaptation and, in doing so, believes she can better support and respond to students. She can integrate new ideas into the classroom context. It is here that we see that a deeper level of cultural experience has been established.

Whilst, initially in the first round of interviews, five of the six participants noted that they had some cultural preparation in teacher training, and some had many years' experience working with Aboriginal students, none had experience working with students with a refugee

background. It was not until after the five-week professional learning intervention that participants were able to understand the extent to which they had not been prepared to work with students from refugee backgrounds. This intervention gave them opportunities to draw on their school and classroom context, making it authentic, highlighting their assumptions about their preparedness.

Part of this involved activities were used to assist participants in exploring any possible unconscious bias towards students from culturally diverse backgrounds. While some of the participants showed openness and acceptance of diversity, they were still challenged by some new ideas discussed in the professional learning sessions. For example, in the first interview, prior to engaging in the intervention, Naomi presented as having a very good understanding of cultural competence and provided examples of culturally responsive practices that she uses to better engage her students. This was her response when asked how she tries to understand students' perspective when planning for teaching and learning,

Well, if I get the chance, I try and talk to the parents at least at the parent/teacher interviews that are coming up. And also if we are lucky that we've got the interpreters that come into class, I try and have an open – there's never enough time – but I try and have an open communication with them and ask them what they think might be happening. And they've been fantastic, you know, having communication with the families, so that's been a really good insight. In my planning, I do try and plan more visuals and more role play. So, for those kids that might not understand my words, or might not understand what those words might be meaning, even if they know the words, then yeah, I try and make it more picturesque, I guess. I don't know, it's very complex [giggles] so complex! (Naomi, Interview 1).

In the pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire, Naomi indicated that she had frequently responded positively to cultural difference and that her cultural awareness and bias had no impact on her teaching. However, her experience of the professional learning intervention challenged her current beliefs and assumptions about her own cultural competence. Naomi acknowledges that she was forced to rethink some of her own assumptions about herself, "I think I've got a bit more awareness of, um... you know the things that you are thinking you are clear about, I thought I was quite emancipated, and I thought I was clear about lots of things but then there's other things where I got a surprise" (Naomi, Interview 2). Naomi also indicated in the first interview that she expected the professional learning to reinforce some of her existing beliefs,



I hope some of my beliefs that I have now are going to be confirmed. I hope they're going to be deepened and strengthened and I'm going to gain more knowledge. I also hope that I'm going to get some more skills for how to engage with the families and also how to plan my teaching and how to teach the kids properly (Naomi, Interview 1).

It is evident that Naomi is genuinely seeking to improve her pedagogy and sees a link between teachers' cultural competence and effective pedagogies for working across cultures. During the learning intervention, her unconscious bias and beliefs about culture were challenged. Through a period of cognitive dissonance, she was able to reposition her thinking around her own bias. Even though Naomi is a teacher with a high level of cultural competence, the intervention revealed some of her bias and this deepened her understanding, "I am shocked at my own perception and that I did not pick that up. So, it's those little unconscious things that you just don't pick up unless you really search" (Naomi, Interview 2).

Camila also highlighted the impact of a teacher's unconscious bias on the teacher's pedagogy. During her last interview, when asked how the professional learning might have changed her thinking in regard to working cross-culturally, Camila noted that she was more conscious of the way she practised her teaching,

I'm challenging and I'm interrogating, I guess. I've gotten more [confidence] over the course. I guess this is the biggest thing and I know that one time we did touch on this as a group. You've given us a language that we can go 'this is what a culturally responsive pedagogy actually looks like.' Because of this, because of my own cultural beliefs and of my own culture as well as others, and I can thoroughly interrogate those ideals, ideas and idiosyncrasies as such without going 'oh you know, is this appropriate?' Or, 'am I doing this the right way?' So, I'm more confident with that interrogation to make sure that my kids are not excluded. That the power is not just about me, but they've got some of that. They can see it in representations of themselves and their families, and their culture is very much alive  
(Camila, Interview 3)

During this discussion, Camila acknowledged some change in the way that she believes in herself and her students in the classroom and how they interact together. She expresses that the intervention has given her the confidence to "interrogate" and challenge her beliefs to ensure "that my kids are not excluded". Also evident is the connection between the professional learning's focus on uncovering unconscious bias and Camila's increase in

confidence, demonstrated by her capacity to interrogate her personal assumptions and beliefs around culture and ethnicity.

Overall, participants' confidence rose in examining their own unconscious bias and level of cross-cultural understanding. In Mia's pre-professional learning questionnaire, she identified a strong cross-cultural understanding and the impact of her values and attitudes on students and their families. However, during her second interview, I asked her to reflect on the professional learning and whether her views had changed, "I don't think that it's changed very much, I think that it's just deepened my awareness and broadened my awareness of other aspects of cultural competence" (Mia, Interview 2). Mia indicated that, whilst she might already have a level of cultural competence, there was still more to learn and understand, with the belief that one does not stop learning and that learning to be culturally competent is ongoing,

I think before I started this, I did feel that I was quite open and aware of a lot of different cultures and how to bring that into the classroom. I guess doing this five-week course has made me really analyse what I do and ask myself why I'm doing certain things and if there are other ways to bring in diversity into the classroom (Mia, Interview 2).

The theme of uncovering hidden unconscious bias also was also reflected in Tara's second interview. Whilst Tara still believed that cultural competence was about culture and language, she also expanded this to include the importance of knowing her own unconscious bias and adjusting this to change her own behaviour, without blaming students and their families,

Yeah, it's probably more than that. It's still about culture, it's still about language, but it's also being able to use all the little things that kids bring in and knowing your own biases and knowing that we have a different pattern that we go to and catching yourself, slowing down and not putting that on the kids or even just the generalist thoughts that you have (Tara, Interview 2).

Challenged by the way she viewed her own students, Tara expressed that the professional learning also helped to see her students through a different lens. She admitted that previously she would stereotype and make assumptions about her students and families, without knowing their stories or developing any relationships with them. After the co-planning sessions, at the final interview, she spoke about how she had changed her approach and the impact it had made in her classroom practice,

I have a more relaxed outlook now as to how our kids are at the school. See there are some teachers that really get irky when they don't have shoes and they don't have lunch and they don't do this and that and I'm just like 'you know what? It's not important to them, why should it bother me?' If they really want shoes, they will find themselves shoes but I don't care if they have shoes or not because they're more comfortable without shoes. They're at school. It's their culture to walk around barefoot. It doesn't matter if they have shoes. We force shoes onto their feet, they know it's a school rule to have shoes but at the same time they also know that the consequences are they can't go and play. They just have to sit and most of them are quite happy to do that, or they go to the library. So I don't get upset about it anymore. I don't get upset when they're not having lunch. I taught my kids, if you don't have lunch, there's bread, there's food. You just go and help yourself. You just make it. You don't even have to tell me. I don't have to check if you have lunch. You know you just make it yourself. I keep an eye on it yes, but I don't get upset about it. It's not something that, it's the culture! The culture is, the fridge is open to the entire family so if they have 10 people staying for dinner well there's nothing left to make lunch. That's just what it is. I understand that now

I don't put the blame on the families or the kid or anything like that because you know what? We're putting it on them. That's our expectations you know like, some of the Nepalese kids that I have, they don't have lunch. They have a big breakfast. So, they don't bring lunch. I used to worry about it. I don't worry about it anymore because I know they know if they're hungry to make something, and occasionally they will (Tara, Interview 3).

Whilst some participants expressed a high level of cultural competence one participant was very honest and adamant in her lack of understanding and experiences in working in a cross-cultural space. Maria's experiences have illustrated the impact of the professional learning intervention on teachers with very little experience and understanding of working in cross-cultural situations. Over the course of the study, Maria's beliefs and values were challenged. Through the conflict within her ideas, she started to change her mind about what she understood as culture and how her unconscious bias impacted her view of the world,

I didn't realise how bias, not in a bad way, but how narrow minded I was in a lot area and how my biases affect my everyday life, as they do for every human being. I know that I'm more tolerant of a lot of other things, but it was really pointing out that

everything we look at is through a biased lens of some description. Not a bad thing, not a good thing, but somewhere along those lines. Then by just understanding that you're looking at things through a biased lens, you can stand back and go 'okay, well what's really going on here?' And that's I guess what I've learned

(Maria, Interview 2).

Maria admits that she was narrow minded and acknowledged that her unconscious bias does somehow impact others. Maria, in five weeks has become more reflective in viewing the world. She is reflecting and evaluating new situations as she encounters them in the classroom. The professional learning had more immediate effect on Maria than other participants in the study. Not only had she become aware of her unconscious bias, but she also applied this new knowledge to understand and influence others around her,

I think for me, for the whole process, it created especially quite a few small issues, what do you call it? An 'aha moment' I suppose. When I realised how my thoughts were impacting and how I can go about changing things and how I perceive the world as unfair because of this. Like, I'm not looking at it from the right perspective. I suppose it won't change how I look at my family coz they're entitled to their own opinions and they're entitled to their own biases. We've had many arguments with my husband over this and he's slowly starting to come around to a few things at times. But I think it's just really, it's not just cultural understanding, it's just really a big picture of looking at the world in a different way (Maria, Interview 2).

Maria has experienced cognitive dissonance around her beliefs and assumptions of students' cultural backgrounds. This dissonance led to a sudden realisation, enabling her to have the confidence to influence others around her, for example, her husband.

After the professional learning intervention, participants then engaged in five co-planning sessions whose purpose was the opportunity to apply their new knowledge and co-create an artefact of their choosing. Maria was able to put her changing awareness into practice,

I think my pedagogical practices were always there to be inclusive, just the way that I was always trained with differentiations and stuff like that. It's always been there, but the actual cultural component to it, it's still hard to articulate what I do differently because I do it anyway. I do it naturally. I think for me, the biggest learning curve has been to understand what culture is, what my biases have been, you know, and stop putting my personal lens over teaching and start thinking in a wider perspective about what our kids need (Maria, Interview 3).

Maria has been able to begin to consciously change her thinking as she recognises how her unconscious bias has influenced decisions around her classroom practice. While she always tended to cater for individual differences, she now is able to make better choices in her classroom practice. These are based on a broader awareness of students' needs, not based on previous assumptions. She has been able to resolve within her teaching practice not to project her own beliefs and values, which are quite different to many of her students,

Trying. I think I'm just really conscious of it all the time. I'm constantly thinking is it me that's projecting my beliefs onto these guys? Is it the school's beliefs? Is it theirs? You know, what's culturally acceptable, and not acceptable? I'm trying to make something that's not always harmonious, but something that looks harmonious (Maria, Interview 3)

Maria's willingness to consciously change some of her perspective has meant there modifications in her pedagogical practice in the classroom,

(It's)... been a complete shock. And that for me has been a big, big change so, I'm trying to, just watch a lot more. A lot more of the interactions with these kids, particularly new arrivals... Just checking in with them all the time and, you know, watching what they're doing and what's culturally acceptable for them and not us. Which is really, really good (Maria, Interview 3).

In summary, the professional learning intervention has had some impact in altering participants' beliefs and way of teaching. They have a greater understanding of the refugee experience of resettlement into a new country. What is evident from this is that providing the theoretical grounding to build on teachers' knowledge is critical, particularly for them to gain a deeper knowledge of their students.

## **8.2 Theme 2: We all need to work towards cultural safety**

Cultural safety practices in the school and classroom environment are necessary when working in contexts of high diversity and marginalised groups. In the context of the research site, cultural safety involved the engagement of students and their families in the school and curriculum. As indicated in Section 5.1.3, a widely used definition of cultural safety, and one that underpins this study, is that of Williams (2008),

...an environment that is spiritually, socially, and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and the experience of learning together" (p. 213).

Creating spaces of cultural safety was also a major theme across the participants in the study. Participants identified that the current school and classroom practices were not sufficiently culturally safe. In fact, it was during the study that participants realised that it was the school leadership and teaching staff that had to change their approach and not the families. As participants began to understand their position of privilege and power and how that impacted students' and their families' interactions with teachers and the wider school community, they began to sense an urgency to address this.

Across all six participants, cultural safety was a prominent theme that emerged from the data. Participants noted a direct link between perceived behaviours exhibited by students and their adaptive behaviours in the school context. Once participants were presented with theories of culture and developed more understanding about the differences of worldview, this challenged their assumptions around perceived student behaviour. This led to discussions around the immediate need to create safe classrooms, not only for newly arrived refugee students but for newly enrolled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### **8.3 Cultural safety in the classroom and school**

During the second semi-structured interview, I asked Tara about her initial feelings about working cross-culturally and if she had been concerned with the cultural safety of her students' families. Tara had stated a real willingness to engage with families, which she thought was quite important, "They are uncomfortable. We are uncomfortable. It's not going to be productive" (Tara, Interview 2). Not until after the co-planning sessions, did Tara develop some of her own solutions for engaging families and ensuring those families experience cultural safety. This was highlighted in her third interview,

Yes! And maybe some families would not be comfortable when you go to their space, that's why maybe it needs to be a community space where people feel comfortable to go to. It's not necessarily their homes, but a comfortable place for the majority at least of the community. I know you can't, again, they're all individuals, you can't accommodate everyone, but if you can accommodate the majority then others might think 'oh, they're approachable to change, so maybe I can approach them about saying, can you come here?' I don't know! (Tara, Interview 3).

Tara's suggestion of a possible scenario to create safe places and safe opportunities for parent engagement demonstrates that she is putting the needs of her students and families first in a novel way,

a supportive environment where we say, 'well all Year Threes go on this day', we're all sitting there and parents feel free for two hours to come and have a chat to us. And

it's coffee and it's cake. And it's not this, here's a table, let's sit. That entire environment is uncomfortable, I find! (Tara, Interview 2).

Developing relationships with students and families is seen as important to create cultural safety in the classroom and the school community. Mia makes very clear statements around the roles teacher play in building relationships of trust, making her students feel recognised and welcome,

I know that obviously as a teacher, it's important to build up those relationships with the kids and... I think that it's all – comes in under the umbrella of, you know, feeling – for each child to feel that they're acknowledged and accepted in the class. And I think that the students in this class, they know that they're all accepted as being individuals, so whatever it is that they do, um... you can see over the year that they've become a lot more relaxed coz they know that they're all different but the same. And so the way that I accept them all and the way that they accept each other because they're in a new class together and you know, they have to work out each other's idiosyncrasies (Mia, Interview 2).

Mia explained that by creating trust and acceptance, she is creating a culturally safe classroom where students work together readily with each other. She expands that this takes some time to develop as her students become more at ease in the classroom, which implies that their learning is optimally facilitated.

#### **8.4 Culturally safe environments for family engagement**

A common theme across participants was the lack of training and support for teachers in how to engage with families in responsive ways. Across all participants there was a willingness to interact with families. However, the school did not provide any opportunities for this to occur outside the designated planned school events. In their everyday work, participants could see a richness and purpose to communicating with families. In the professional learning intervention, time was spent on exploring and unpacking white privilege and dominant discourse. Through these discussions, a shift was made in how participants saw the role they must play in engaging families, “I think it needs to just shift away from ‘everything has to happen at school’. We need to, as the dominant culture in this school in particular, go out and maybe do more in the community” (Tara, Interview 2). In Tara's comment, we see how she positions teachers as part of the dominant culture and acknowledges her responsibility in moving the interactions with families to where the families are at, and not vice versa.

Through the discussions with participants, it became apparent that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families did not feel culturally safe in providing the school correct information about the languages spoken at home. In the following discussion, participants discuss the importance of having the right people to collect information and the need for a person in administration to have links to the community. Here they are talking about two white Australian females who are required to work closely with local families and community members. The participants talk about the differences between the two and the impact each of them have on families.

Mia: And we really need to have somebody in admin that is a fantastic link between the community and...

Tara: Like Sarah [pseudonym]?

Naomi: We've got Jo (pseudonym) though [referring to the member of management responsible for community engagement].

Mia: Yeah. She must just get so much respect from the parents (sarcastically).

Maria: I think she's getting more and more now.

Naomi: She's a different personality to Sarah [pseudonym]. Sarah's just got it really down pat.

Tara: Sarah's been here a long time.

Researcher: She already came with that buy in from the community.

Naomi: Where Jo is super young so she's super young to be in that role.

Mia: But we had that conversation around having to do this Sea of Languages with the fish and how different [students' languages] were in One School [Department of Education data management program]. How that's so different to what the students are thinking and trying to find out [what languages they actually speak]. She [Jo] asked her parents... She got four responses so here are families who are saying we're not including them. But they are not doing anything to help us to include them so that we can say what language they speak. You ask the children and they've got no idea.

Naomi: But at least they got four... What language does your mum speak? Normal. Dad? Normal. And you, what can you speak? Normal.

Maria: SAE [Standard Australian English]

Naomi: Whatever normal is.

Researcher: Normal for their context.

Tara: Whatever's normal to them is not necessarily normal to us.



Mia: So, then you think, well, what do you do? Coz if Jo does that whole process with the families and she asks them the questions, then we have to go with what's on One School because that's the official information. But like last year when we had to do all of this, half of my kids didn't even know the name of their own language

(Co-planning Session 2).

This conversation illustrates participants' frustration in not having the right person in the role of community engagement. Their concern is that the cultural safety of families is key to collecting correct information about their students. The current information is not accurate as families do not feel safe enough to even disclose their home languages.

Participants identified the importance of families engaging in the school context but recognised some of the barriers that parents and families face in being part of the school. In the second co-planning session, Camila stated,

And even if we put it as a cohort. Instead of putting the onus on those families. Coz they belong to a school community as well. They're... even though their children are in a classroom, it is a school community and it's the... I think to share the load... Most of them know each other or they are related too – yeah, that's my aunty, that's my cousin, that's my uncle, you know? So if you look at it even from that kinship perspective, instead of just having them in one classroom, you could share that, on the pure basis that you can't always can't get someone into one classroom. But if you share that resource, and making that person feel really, really good, it's like this is great that you're not only sharing it for your kids or your family, but you're sharing it for the whole school community (Camila, Co-planning Session 2).

Later in the same co-planning session, participants identified the lack of cultural safety as a major contributor to families not engaging in the school context. In the following discussion, participants are describing the importance of meeting the families where they are at, mentioning that the current way of engaging families has been ineffectual.

Tara: It obviously doesn't work, us getting parents in here. Maybe we need to change it and we go out into the community?

Maria: Let's just go to someone's house and just pull up sticks!

Tara: Doesn't have to be in a house. But there's a community centre in Murray Street where a lot of our kids live for example.

Maria: know, I see them every afternoon over my fence!

Tara: Can we not have a Friday afternoon where you take turns and you go over there with your class and parents might feel more comfortable going there? Because, I don't know how you feel, but would you want to come into the hall for a parent teacher interview? I would find it really daunting to come in here. If my English isn't really good (Co-planning session 2).

The discussion moves towards teachers meeting families in a community space to make families feel more culturally safe. The participants have understood how daunting it is for families to come to parent teacher interviews. In Tara's second interview, she identified the cultural difference between the school context and its community as an indicator for parents not coming into the school,

I don't know a lot of the culture that my kids have, so I feel a little bit fearful of going coz you feel like, oh is that the right question to ask? Am I going to step on toes? Or, you know, is it a sensitive issue that I shouldn't bring up? And all those things, but you're very aware when it's close to your own culture. You're more open to it because you know it's a safe spot – I know a little bit about it and I know I can ask those questions and find out more but here they're so different to my own that I often feel I don't know who to ask. Is it appropriate to ask this person? Can I ask that question? Should I not ask? Who do I go to? You don't have that and I think it's also because the cultures that you have here, a lot of them are fearful. They know we're dominant so they don't feel like – no matter how many times I say 'my door is open, come in any time', they don't feel like they can come in because they feel also very different to me. And I don't know how to bridge that. How can you do that unless you're like Sarah, confidently out there, you know? And you put yourself out there. You go into the families and you want to learn. I mean I want to learn but I am restricted to my classroom (Tara, Interview 2).

Tara acknowledges her privilege as a barrier to parents engaging with her. By going out into the community and meeting families in their space she would hope to change the power dynamics, allowing families to feel safe, to have some control and power, therefore allowing herself to feel uncomfortable and challenged. Tara acknowledges that this new form of engagement needs to come from management,

I mean, even when you look at, you know, we do the parent/teacher interviews, we do the information nights and all that, but we have minimal, to me, minimal engagement really. The shift needs to come from up the top where we say 'well parents don't come to us. We need to go to parents, so let's do a parent information night somewhere

where most of our kids actually live'. In the community where they feel comfortable coming – they obviously don't feel comfortable coming to the school or it's always the same parents. So maybe they're more comfortable if we go and sit at the villas [a caravan park that is used for families that cannot access public housing] or, you know, we go out into Murray Street [a street that has a lot of public housing] and go to the community centre and do it there. Do you know what I mean? And maybe some families would not be comfortable when you go to their space, that's why maybe it needs to be a community space where people feel comfortable to go to (Tara, Interview 2).

### **8.5 Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the findings that identified participants' cultural positions and learnings that occurred after the professional learning intervention. These findings centred on two major themes:

- (1) We all have unconscious bias; and
- (2) We all need to work towards cultural safety.

These demonstrate how participants shifted some of the beliefs and assumptions they held about their students and their students' families. Firstly, by providing new theoretical knowledge, teachers were better able to understand the cultural dynamics between themselves and their students. Through the professional learning, participants began to realise that their unconscious bias impacted their teaching practice and was a barrier to creating a culturally safe learning context. Secondly, they appreciated that a lack of cultural safety was a major barrier in student engagement. This lack of cultural safety prevented families from engaging in the school community. Finally, they resolved that creating cultural safety, both in the classroom and school, must be worked on at the whole school level by the management and all staff.

## Chapter 9: Teachers' learning trajectory

### 9.0 Introduction

In the two previous chapters, I discussed findings that were based on data collected from the first two semi-structured interviews and the pre- and post-professional learning questionnaires. In Chapter 7, I provided findings that emerged from data analysed deductively through predetermined seven sub-themes. I unpacked participants' prior knowledge before engaging in the professional learning intervention and provided findings to assist in identifying any changes to their thinking and practice as a direct result of the professional learning intervention. In Chapter 8, data was analysed inductively to investigate the direct impact of the professional learning intervention. The purpose of this stage was to examine participants' existing knowledge and practice and then investigate if any cognitive dissonance experienced influenced participants' reflections on their current beliefs and attitudes and how this changed their existing knowledge. In Chapter 8, two themes were outlined in some detail that emerged from the data:

- Theme 1: We all have unconscious bias
- Theme 2: We all need to work towards cultural safety

The focus of the present chapter is to investigate participants' co-creation of an artefact. The teachers' aim was to produce a pedagogical framework to assist in their teaching cross-culturally. This revealed the degree to which the professional learning intervention supported a process of inquiry to co-create a pedagogical tool that assists teaching practice (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008b). Also, evidence is produced of new skills and changes in ideas that have been either integrated or restructured into participants' existing values, beliefs and classroom practice.

The four co-planning sessions occurred directly after the professional learning intervention. The co-planning sessions were approximately one and half to two hours in length and participants negotiated with me to hold each session once a fortnight to fit in with their busy school schedule. In these sessions, participants engaged in reflective discussions about what a culturally responsive pedagogy might look like and together they worked on the co-construction of a pedagogical framework to assist when they teach cross-culturally. This chapter unpacks the findings that emerged from these four collaborative sessions, the three semi-structured interviews and the researcher's reflective journal to address both the research questions:

How does a research-informed, school-based professional learning—with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy:

3. Affect teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students from a refugee background?
4. Facilitate a teacher designed framework for guiding ongoing professional learning and changes to classroom practice for students from refugee backgrounds?

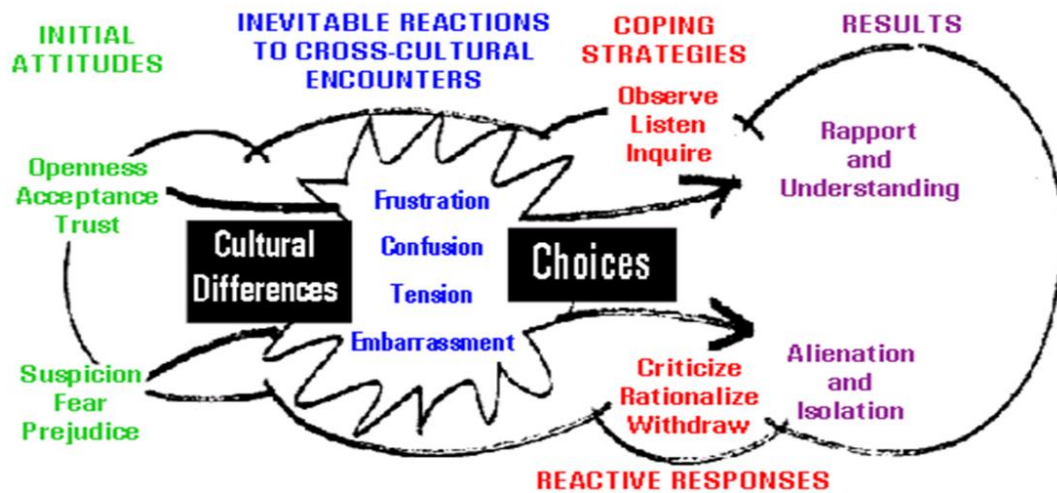
Data was analysed inductively and through the lens of Timperley and Alton's (2008) iterative learning process. The pedagogical framework emerged after a series of drafts co-created in the four collaborative sessions. Discussions during these sessions produced the data. In this chapter, firstly, the context is set for how the pedagogical framework came to fruition. A simple diagram shown in the professional learning sessions inspired this. Secondly, findings are provided which are centred around collaborative discussions during the co-planning sessions for each of the drafts. There were three drafts in total, with the final draft as the final product, the pedagogical framework.

### **9.1 The artefact (a pedagogical framework for classroom teachers)**

The professional learning intervention used several diagrams to help explain concepts of cultural difference, culture, and adaptation to a new culture (see Chapter 5). During the second round of semi-structured interviews, it became apparent that a particular diagram that I used in the professional learning intervention (see Figure 9.1) had more impact on the six participants than I anticipated. This graphical representation is a cultural adjustment map developed by Elmer (2002) to help those living abroad navigate their way in adjusting to new culture. The cultural adjustment map resonated with participants and inspired them to collaboratively develop their own pedagogical framework that would inform their own classroom practice, as a tool for themselves and other teachers. This tool was to assist in foregrounding their own unconscious bias and frame positive curriculum choices and decisions when interacting with students from CALD backgrounds.

Figure 9. 1

Diagram from professional learning intervention – Session 2: The cultural adaptation map



Note. From *Overcoming Culture Shock* by D. Swallow, 2010.

(<https://www.deborahswallow.com/2010/05/16/overcoming-culture-shock/>)

In the following section, I explore how this diagram was used as a stimulus to create a pedagogical framework for the classroom. This sets the background, explaining how the diagram was initially introduced to the participants.

## 9.2 The cultural adjustment map diagram

During the fourth session of the professional learning intervention, I presented the cultural adjustment map (Elmer, 2002) showing the inevitable reactions a person might have to cross-cultural encounters (see Figure 9.1). This diagram was shown after Lysgaard's (1955) model of cultural adaptation (see Figure 5.3) because it added further information, highlighting the experience of culture shock. The cultural adjustment map illustrated a process involving dilemmas that involved either cultural adaptation or cultural marginalisation. Its purpose was to explain that, through adapting to a new culture, students will choose one of two options. They will either receive cultural differences through openness, acceptance, and trust or view cultural differences through suspicion, fear, and prejudice.

Importantly, making either choice will always lead to culture shock. In this diagram, culture shock encompasses emotions of frustration, confusion, tension, and embarrassment. The point is that people decide how they interpret this shock. Their attitude and chosen

reactions to culture shock impacts how successfully they adapt to a culture. For example, in accepting the cultural difference of a new country and making a choice to observe, listen and inquire, this will ultimately help students to adapt positively to it. By reacting to the new culture through criticism, rationalising, withdrawing or distancing themselves, this leads to a life of alienation and isolation. I then explained to participants that, as teachers, we can influence newly arrived students and their families to make the positive choice.

It was during the professional learning intervention that participants began to see this diagram as a tool for their own decision making about how to respond to students with cultural difference. Participants also perceived its applicability to remind them of their unconscious bias and prompt them to interact in a culturally responsive way.

### **9.3 The first draft of the artefact**

During the second co-planning session, discussions focused on what a classroom would look like if participants enacted a culturally responsive pedagogy. My intention was to unpack their ideas to help them later when co-creating an artefact. Participants started to discuss the upcoming NADIOC (a national celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures) week celebrations in which the school participated annually. I took this opportunity to ask questions around how they would use this time to engage students responsively. Mia's comments and the subsequent discussion reflected the group's concerns,

Mia: But it's really hard as well because I feel in this school, you know, as a middle-aged white woman, that you're gonna be at the bottom of the pecking order as far as respect goes, from a lot of the people in the communities. I freely admit that I haven't lived in any of the communities. I've worked and lived on the periphery of a lot of communities, spent a lot of time, you know, working in schools and day care centres and things where there were high Indigenous populations. But not really integrating into the communities, so I don't feel comfortable on any level, initiating anything where I'm trying to teach in the language or talk to the children about their language. So then that's also a barrier because we're almost at the stage, to some extent, where there's a reversed bias or reversed prejudice or whatever now in society. In general, whatever you do, it's wrong! I'm just thinking in terms of decorating our doors for NAIDOC week and thinking, here I am this white woman, going, we're going to do something 'Indigenous'. I don't know what Indigenous is because you're all from different tribes, so unless you can do something from your own group, but I don't know whether men are allowed to do that or only the women.

Maria: Do you feel that's disrespectful? That's what I feel like and I feel like I'm being disrespectful.

Tara: It's tokenistic, I find.

Mia: Totally tokenistic and that was always my argument. In day care centres I managed, we would go through accreditation and all that sort of stuff. I used to say, 'having nothing is less offensive than having tokenistic posters or artwork or dolls or whatever'.

Camila: That's one way of looking at it.

Mia: From you know, a few cultures.

Researcher: So, what does authentic practice look like?

Mia: Yeah exactly! What does it look like?

Naomi: Well again, you'd have to invite someone who is Indigenous to maybe...

Mia: (interrupts Naomi and finishes her sentence) ...from one group. From one of the thousands of groups.

Camila: That's the thing.

Mia: Only some of the children can relate to that (Co-planning Session 2).

In this discussion, Mia is concerned that she is expected to have understandings and skills in all her students' language and culture, intimately. She expresses the inappropriateness of the situation. Teachers are expected to 'do activities' in NAIDOC Week without support of bicultural and Indigenous support staff. The other participants agree and add that they feel uncomfortable because of the tokenism of what they were asked to do. Also, teachers express a desire to experience and engage in authentic practice. They know what tokenistic looks and feels like and want something more genuine. This discussion highlights a misunderstanding around defining Indigeneity and cultural diversity. There is also the added difficulty and complexity of what authentic practice is with a diverse range of cultures in the classroom.

I used this part of the discussion to contribute a possible solution for supporting participants to address the complexity of teaching with cultural responsiveness to a class with CALD students. I presented the group with two drafts of a diagram that was discussed previously, during the second semi-structured interviews. These diagrams (Figures 9.2 and 9.3) were created based on initial discussions from the professional learning intervention and the second semi-structured interviews. Figure 9.2 shows that when a teacher's initial attitudes and beliefs around cultural diversity lead to displaying openness, acceptance and trust, a culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) would be inevitable. This CRP overlaps with coping strategies, thus positive coping strategies and positive results are only possible if a teacher



upholds a CRP. Without CRP implementation, there are negative consequences for teachers and, ultimately, students.

**Figure 9.2**

*Diagram option 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> draft*

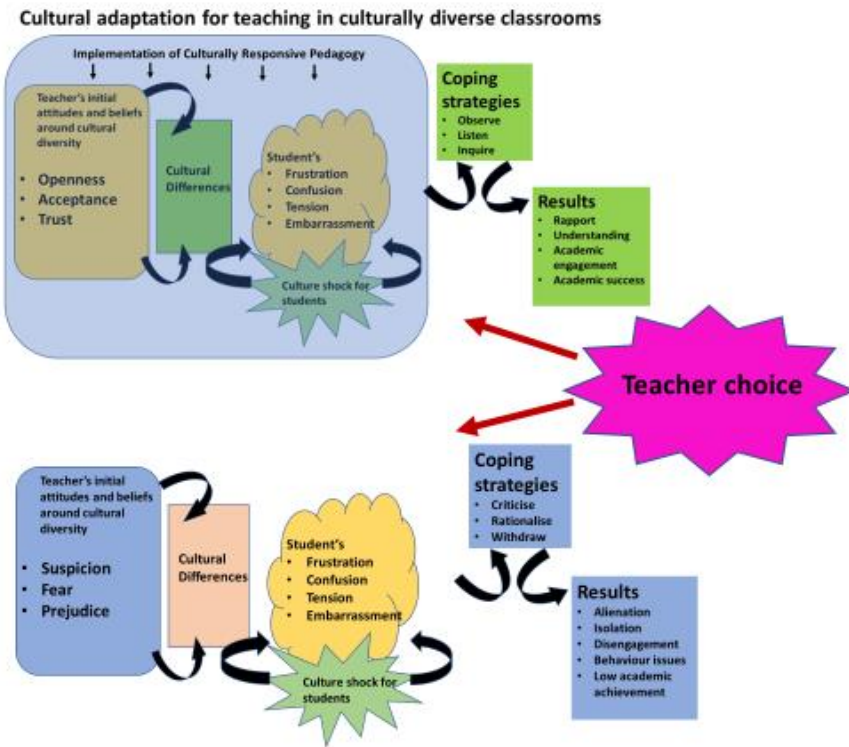
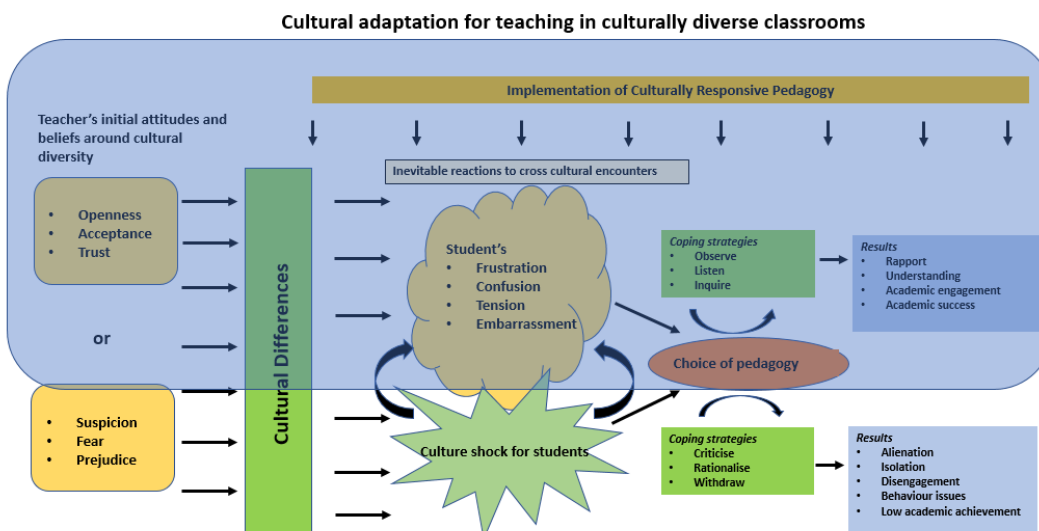


Figure 9.2, like Figure 9.3, shows the choice of pedagogies and CRP overlying the positive choice made by the teacher. Figure 9.3 indicate the starting point of a teacher’s initial attitudes and beliefs, which directly impact CALD students.

**Figure 9.3**

*Diagram option 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> draft*



I presented both these diagrams to the participants to discuss which was the most effective in capturing their ideas from the interviews,

Researcher: This is the model that you guys talked about right at the beginning. If you were going to have new staff, and you were going to tell them about...

Naomi: (Interrupting whilst reading the draft) This is important. You need to be open, accepting and have trust relationships (pointing to the diagram).

Researcher: And you can only really do that within a culturally responsive pedagogy, because you have to, in order to get this, you have to make choices and I did this one here – I divided them into two (points to Figure 9.2, showing the two different choices).

Naomi: The only thing I'm thinking, if you've got the openness, acceptance and trust, then you also have something positive here about the students' feelings because if you are having this, then the students will feel welcomed (pointing to Figure 9.2, Naomi was indicating that culture shock was negative and should not be at the top).

Maria: Wouldn't this be down here (asking the researcher)?

Naomi: On the plus?

Researcher: No, because all children feel culture shock, all children and even us, we all go through that process of feeling frustrated. So, it's a natural human reaction to culture shock. So, culture shock happens when they come into the classroom.

Naomi: Yes, but you can have a culture shock, but you can still feel that they're welcoming you.

Researcher: ... Yes, yes.

Maria: I would've thought that would've been down here.

Naomi: ...As a negative, have like a positive thing up the top. I mean that's a natural thing. It's not necessarily negative. It's just a fact (referring to Figure 9.2)

Researcher: Yeah, it's a fact. So, when you've got a newly arrived student...

Naomi: Because they can't understand what you're saying, it's frustrating...

Researcher: And they feel embarrassed over their lunches (referring to a problem that newly arrived students encounter at lunch time when they notice their lunch is so vastly different from everyone else's).

Maria: Maybe we need to write that in specifically. I know that sounds trivial but maybe that needs to be in there, a specific point. Clearer? (pointing to Figure 9.2 at top of the culture shock section)

Researcher: Okay, so how would we make that clearer?

Maria: Exactly what you just said! Write it as facts. That this is something every single child will feel. Regardless of whether we're being sensitive or not (referring to teachers responding to newly arrived students).

Researcher: That is something that we just have to manage and how we respond to that.

Maria: That will determine which way this then goes. So, that's sitting halfway in between because it can go both ways. If you respond with kindness and acceptance, they move over (referring to Figure 9.3).

Naomi: ... And that's what the thing is, when I come to a new school and I'm getting fifty thousand pieces of paper and this is about cultural things, and this is about reading, and this is about the...

Maria: ... I'm going to look at the pretty one first! It's too much anyway (pointing to Figure 9.2).

Camila: I like this one (pointing to Figure 9.3), but I think this here needs to be not shaded at all because that's a natural reaction. Do you know what I'm saying? (Suggesting removing the shaded section so it does not cover the culture shock section) (Co-planning Session 2).

During this discussion, participants started to make decisions on how the diagram should look. Naomi was adamant that, because teachers receive endless paperwork, the diagram needed to be simple, brief and to the point. It needed to be a useable tool for teachers to access when they need to. In addition, participants identified culture shock as a critical component to the diagram and that all students encounter culture shock, even if the teacher is welcoming.

Maria provided more clarification of her understanding of the diagram,

Maria: Because like this way – you've always got these two choices, right? And I know, I know what you're saying, if you have openness, acceptance and trust, this is still always going to happen. But when you do that, these are the things you can do and these will be the results that come from it. If you don't do it, you'll be fearful and suspicious (pointing the Figure 9.3) (Co-planning Session 2).

This discussion reveals the group's realisation about the impact of culture shock which newly arrived students experience. The comments also indicate that participants understanding they

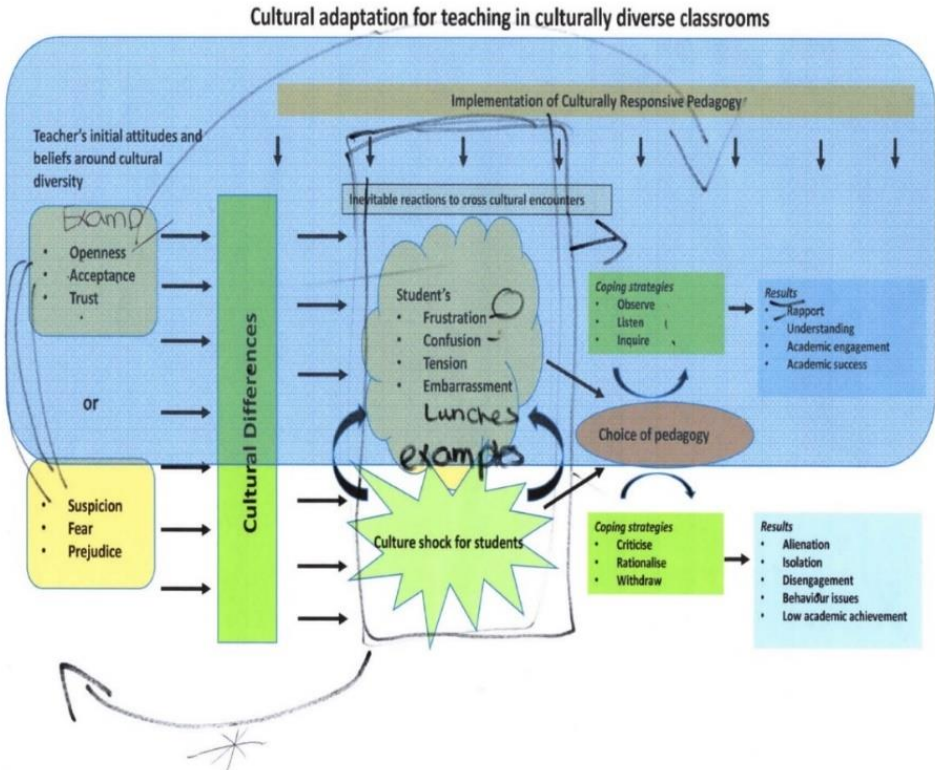
have a choice in how they respond to students experiencing culture shock. This dialogue shows an appreciation that students' negative behaviours are a result of the culture shock involved in adapting to a new culture. Participants are beginning to acknowledge that how they view behaviours in the classroom is influenced by their unconscious bias. This diagram represents a way to remind them to change their thinking.

**9.4 Draft 2 of the artefact**

During the third co-planning session, I presented participants with the changes to the diagram that they had made during the previous co-planning session. Participants restated that the diagram was to be used as a pedagogical tool to help teachers become aware of their unconscious bias and decide on how to make responsive choices that enhance learning and engagement for their CALD students, particularly newly arrived refugees. Participants talked about the problem of high staff turnover and the culturally and linguistically challenging nature of the school. They reiterated that a visual tool that helped them make choices about how to respond appropriately would be most useful.

**Figure 9.4**

*Diagram – 2<sup>nd</sup> draft Cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms: A pedagogical tool*



Teachers wanted the culture shock section of the diagram (Figure 9.4) moved to the front of the diagram to highlight that when entering the Australian school context, culture shock is inevitable. By moving this section, participants acknowledged that they had unconscious cultural bias. They recognised a significant cultural difference between the culture of the student and the culture of the teacher and, therefore, the culture of the classroom. They believed that positioning this at the beginning would focus teachers' thinking. It would remind them that students do not necessarily see schooling the same way as teachers do. In the conversation below, participants discuss and justify these changes. They also highlight their commitment to the project and the tool's usefulness that other teachers could use in their practice.

Importantly, in this discussion, participants begin to use their new knowledge and articulate the metalanguage around the impact of adapting to a new culture. Participants identify the stress and shock newly arrived students go through and that they, as teachers, contribute to the success of students' school experience. This conversation illustrates that the professional learning intervention has shaped participants' understanding of their chosen responses to CALD students, which has a profound influence on the curriculum they put into practice in their classrooms. This is depicted firstly by Maria and then other participants, when referring to Figure 9.4,

Maria: Just think, if you're going to look at it, you'd look at it and you'd go, okay so when kids come into our room, they come in with a mixture of fear, confusion, tension and embarrassment. It can be a big culture shock, not only for students but for teachers. How the teachers then react, if they respond with openness and acceptance and trust, then they can work towards using these (pointing to CRP strategies in Figure 9.4) you know. You would assume that they'd be using these culturally responsive pedagogical practices and then allowing those coping choices with the kids to then come through. But if you're coming through with fear and suspicion, you wouldn't have these (culturally responsive pedagogical strategies), you know? You might do one or two of them but you wouldn't have a lot of these culturally responsive pedagogical practices. And then we're going to bomb out down in the bottom end.

Tara: So, it means the arrow that goes up to here would just go straight down the bottom?

Maria: Fear, suspicion...

Camila: Yeah, fear and suspicion goes to...

Researcher: Straight to coping strategies.

Maria: Yeah, because then you're withdrawn from the kids, you're rationalising, you're criticising things.

Researcher: So, you're not really choosing a pedagogy.

Maria: No, not really. Well, you wouldn't be, would you?

Naomi: You're just teaching.

Maria: Or is this unconscious? Do you know what I mean? Is this like an unconscious thing?

Researcher: Or is it that the choice of pedagogy is the wrong pedagogy to use?

Tara: But it could be conscious or unconscious. Could be both. I mean you could consciously say, you know, we've talked about consciously being fearful of you know, Arabs, and all that sort of stuff because of the media and stuff, but there's lots of unconscious things... (Co-planning Session 3).

Participants acknowledge here that some students entering the classroom context may experience a range of emotions because of the cultural difference between themselves and that of the teacher and classroom. Maria, Naomi and Camila all clearly articulated that teachers have choices in how they respond to students. They are aware of the power of relationships in working with their students and that teachers' choices of pedagogy are central to the success of how teachers and students work together. As teachers make these choices, they are coming to terms with their unconscious bias. In the conversation, participants acknowledged that, before they can begin to make better pedagogical choices, they must deal with their unconscious biases.

#### **9.4 Draft 3 of the artefact**

During the fourth co-planning session, participants were presented with a modification of the model, based on the previous session (Figure 9.4), and were asked to provide more feedback on the artefact's design. During this discussion, they began to take more control of the artefact as a potential tool to inform their pedagogical practice. Discourse emerged around blaming parents and students for a lack of engagement in education. The framing of this changed. In this conversation, participants again began to take even more responsibility for how they responded to students and their families. They acknowledged that there were times when their thinking and actions were not helpful when responding to students. Participants again recognised that their behaviour had a direct impact on how children and their families engage with the school.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged their classroom decisions were often not based on understanding how cultural differences can create a cultural clash or conflict in the

classroom. Participants realised that, rather than changing the students and how their families respond, teachers could change how they respond to difference. During the fourth co-planning session, I presented the third draft of the artefact (Figure 9.5) to the participants and then they provided feedback,

Researcher: We've got students entering school with cultural differences to that of the teacher. So, their cultural difference is impacting and then this frustration and stuff occurs. It's a normal reaction. So, I took the arrows away. Do you want something to link that to openness and suspicion?

Maria: No, because it can still be for me, a culture shock for teachers as well.

Tara: I think it runs both ways. I think teachers can feel frustration and confusion and tension and embarrassment. Do you know what I mean?

Camila: And maybe we need to take students out of it. Culture shock for students. So, for students, out of the culture shock as well? [suggesting that both teachers and students experience culture shock so remove the label, students. When you are coming across someone who's from a completely different background. You know, just someone that's different to you in any culture, sometimes you're going to find out something and it's like '...oh shit you're not the same!' Like you know what I mean? All those worries and vagueness (laughs).

Tara: Come to a school like this and you're definitely in for a culture shock. As a teacher.

Camila: I've seen a lot of teachers not cope with it (laughing).

Tara: Well at first you don't, do you? Because you just don't know what hits you.

Maria: And it's all about the third week when you go '...holy f..., I'm in trouble.'

Tara: ...In denial.

Maria: No, no, you don't have to change it. I was just saying that. It's reciprocal.

Researcher: So, do we want to link this frustration to openness, how do we link that or do we just leave it sort of hanging there?

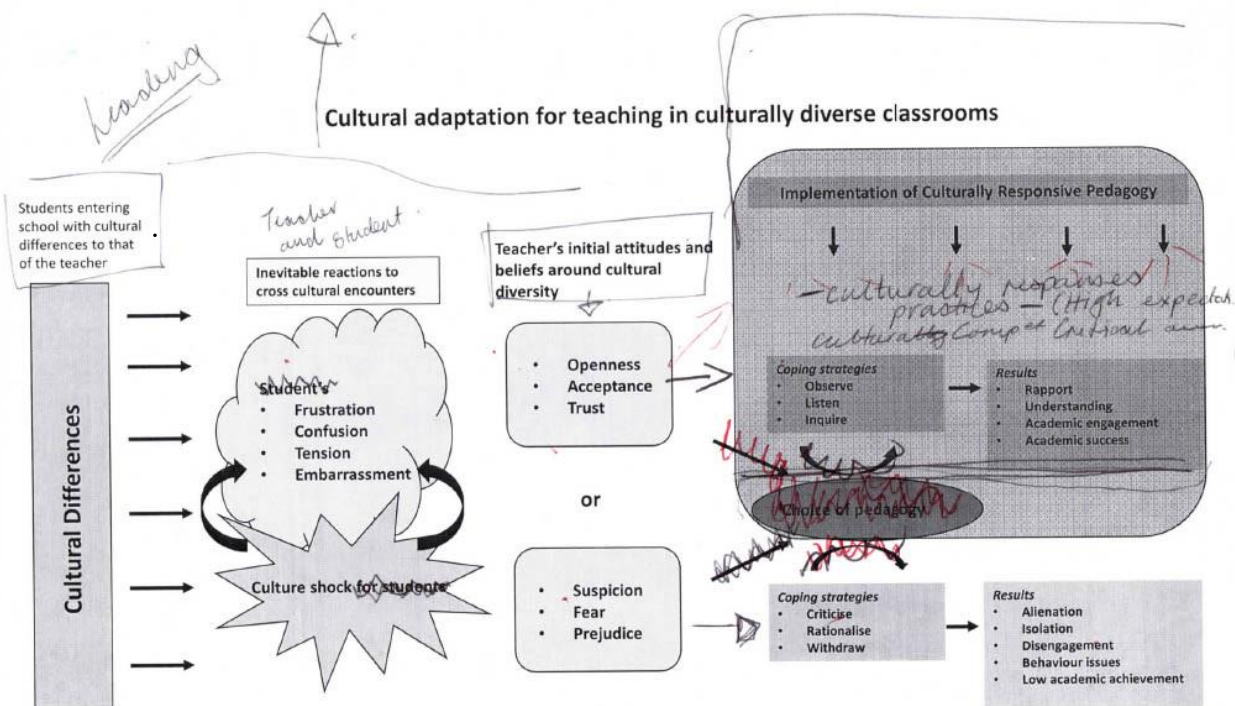
Maria: I reckon you just need to leave it. What do you reckon, Tara?

Researcher: Coz we've got our attitudes as teachers. So, your cultural shock and how you deal with your attitude, with your cultural shock. Is that what you're talking about?

Maria: Yeah. Fear, suspicion, prejudice, frustration, confusion (Co-planning Session 4).

**Figure 9.5**

Diagram – 3<sup>rd</sup> draft Cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms: A pedagogical tool



This discussion highlights the difficulties teachers have faced in the past when newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds are placed in their class. What is obvious is that during this session, participants are more confident in wanting to make changes to the artefact that reflect their experiences in the classroom and the new knowledge gained from the professional learning intervention. Teachers expressed that, not only is it culture shock for the new students in the classroom but also a culture shock for new teachers coming into the school and encountering a class of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Maria steps up and articulates a shift in thinking. She acknowledges that, without culturally responsive pedagogical practices, students would “bomb out down the bottom end,” meaning their achievement would be quite low. However, when choosing a culturally sensitive attitude, this can impact on the kinds of pedagogies teachers use. In the third co-planning session, Maria starts to acknowledge that with openness and acceptance leads towards culturally responsive strategies. However, she also remarked her openness towards her Indigenous students and clearly stated that she was more “fearful and suspicious” of the



Nepali/Bhutanese students (who are from refugee backgrounds). This comes from not understanding the culture and not having relationships with groups outside her culture.

In the following comment, Maria discusses different components of the artefact. She is becoming aware that she is more comfortable with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, she admits that she is suspicious of the Nepali students as they are a new cultural group that she is unfamiliar with,

I think if you do have more of an openness and acceptance and a trust then you are more likely to choose these strategies up here. I think you're more likely because you are aware of those biases. So, if you look at it from, well if I look at it from my perspective, if you're looking at it Indigenous, Nepalese and Bhutanese kids, I can say that with the Indigenous kids I'm sitting up in that openness but I'm still quite fearful and suspicious of the Nepali kids because I don't know enough about them (Co-planning Session 4).

During the co-planning sessions, participants were beginning to articulate awareness of their unconscious bias which influenced their pedagogical choices. This was evident through the discussion presented above which centred around the development of the third draft.

There is an evident change of discourse in participants' dialogue as we start to see participants use the metalanguage for cultural competence. Tara indicated that one can be constantly fearful of a particular culture and therefore consciously prejudiced against them. She also suggested that media may contribute to cementing people's bias. Again, Tara has provided a familiar theme that has been consistently emphasised by other participants: teachers have control over their behaviour and choose how they respond to cultural difference.

### **9.5 Final draft: The pedagogical framework**

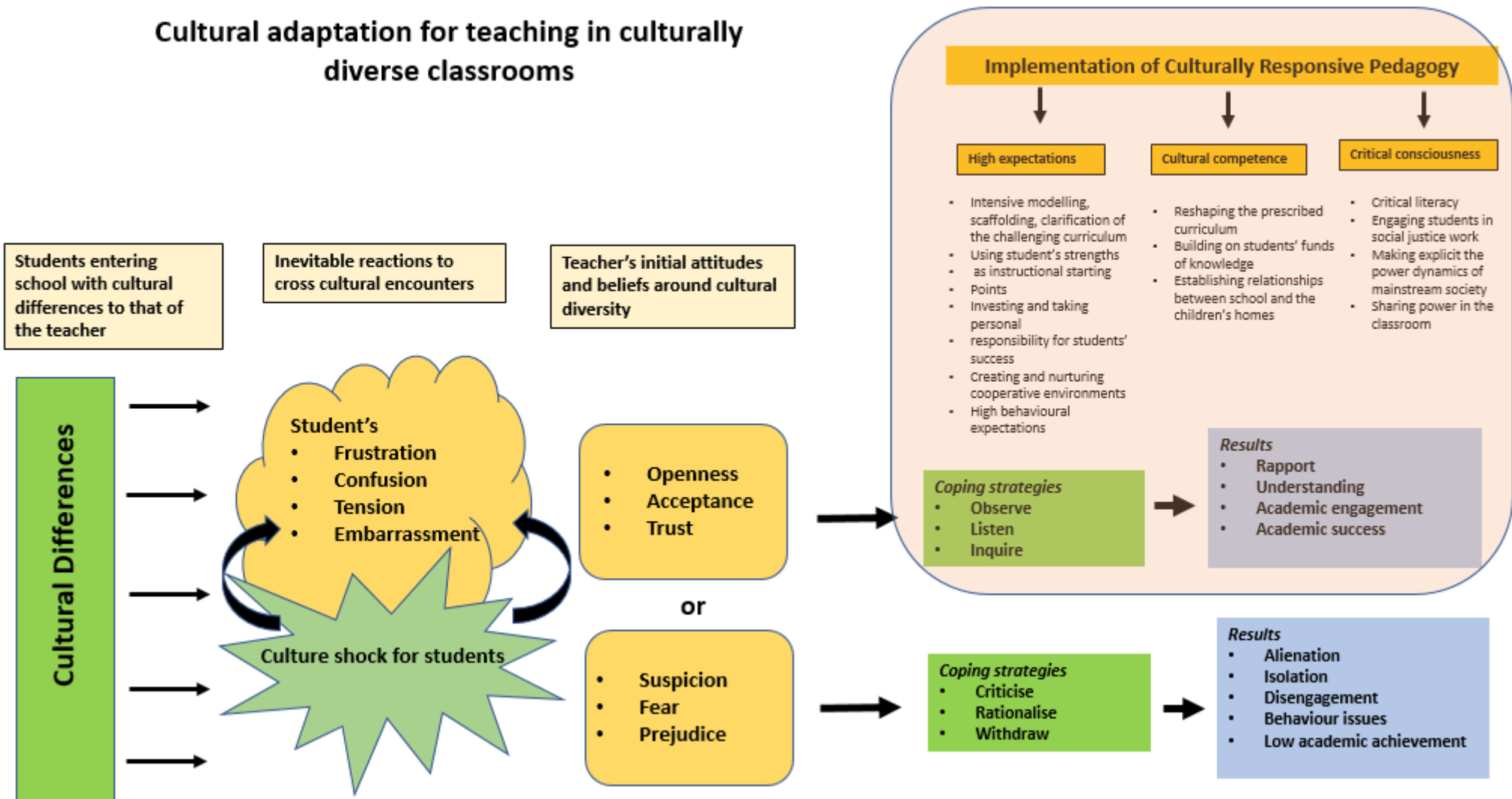
The final draft (Figure 9.6) which emerged from the fourth co-planning session is a pedagogical framework that reminds teachers to make decisions on pedagogies and strategies to use daily in the classroom, keeping in mind the potential for culture shock and that the response to it leads in positive or negative directions. In the initial diagram (Figure 9.1) the focus was on the person/s entering a situation of cultural difference, experiencing culture shock, and deciding how they respond to a new cross-cultural situation. The final draft is slightly different as it shows teachers as central, making their choices on how they respond to cultural diversity. The final draft shows also clearly denotes the students entering the classroom context and being confronted with cultural differences. Therefore, this puts the responsibility on the teachers to change their approach.

In the final draft of the pedagogical framework, participants wanted to be reminded of the different strategies of CRP as illustrated in Morrison, Robins and Rose's (2008) synthesis of classroom-based research on CRP (see Section 4.4). Teachers felt that, given their teaching workload and additional administrative paperwork, explicitly displaying strategies would help them to quickly remind them of the main points they took away from the professional learning intervention. They did not want an additional separate piece of paper identifying strategies as the school administration provide them with more than enough of these. They wanted something to put on the wall next to their desk where they plan and use students' strengths as instructional starting points. It is here that participants are beginning to invest and take responsibility for students' success.

Figure 9.6

The final artefact

### Cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms



In the last interview with Maria, I asked her about what changes she had made in her teaching practices,

I think a couple of things I've noticed is I've got a couple of new kids in my class that came in from overseas. So, I'm very conscious of where they are up to in that honeymoon phase, the disengagement phase and the re-engagement phase. So, I'm watching very carefully where they're sitting and ensuring that they don't disengage from their learning and that they're included (Maria, Interview 3).

Maria's comments illustrate some of the metalanguage from the professional learning intervention. She is using her new knowledge as a lens to observe the recently arrived students in her classroom. Through recognising the potential stages of adjustment behaviours, Maria can respond a little differently to how she previously did. This allowed her to frame her thinking before responding to her students,

I'm really conscious and I know I have said this to you just about every single time about that bloody framework that, you know the one I'm talking about? Every single time you've talked to me I've always mentioned it because it is the one thing that is constantly stuck in my mind" (Maria, Interview 3).

Maria has begun to reflect on her own teaching practice and ideas of where her teaching practices come from. She has always differentiated her teaching to address what she perceived as students' various learning needs in her classes. However, the pedagogical framework created through the planning sessions took this differentiation into another dimension. She is now using this pedagogical framework to inform her daily decisions and understandings around new students and their classroom behaviours. This diagram has made a major impact on her teaching practice and conceptualisation about the background of these students.

During the professional learning intervention, Maria experienced some dissonance in her beliefs and began to regard her students very differently by referring to *the cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms model* (Figure 9.6) that was collaborative developed. This was an anchor that assisted and informed her about her students' journey towards adaptation. Challenges arose for her concerning what she needed to do to change her attitudes and classroom practice to ensure her students were culturally safe,

I think I've learnt about how... what were we talking about, you know that um, oh... that graph thing [*The cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms model*] that we were looking at, with the, we were talking about, um... I can see it as clear as day. And we were talking about fear and I said that can be acquired in the

classroom, um... the orientation, the disengagement, the um... hang on, the honeymoon, the disengagement, the re-orientation” (Maria, Interview 3).

Through a process of cognitive dissonance, Maria was able to revise her beliefs and perspectives about her students. When asked, in the third interview, whether she had changed her approach in the classroom, she stated that she was able to respond differently to students in her classroom,

Big changes in the sense that I’m more confident to talk to them about where they feel with their journeys, where they’re coming from. And it’s not just the refugee kids, it’s the Indigenous kids that have come down, it’s the T.I. (Thursday Island) kids that have come down, so it’s just across the board (Maria, Interview 3).

I asked this question to all participants in the third and final interview. Mia, reflecting on the professional learning and planning sessions, also acknowledged her changed approach to her teaching practice,

I think that I’ve made changes... (I) haven’t necessarily made changes to the day-to-day way that I deliver lessons but I’ve certainly made changes to my understanding of, particularly relating to (student’s name) and children like refugee children. She looks like she’s settling in really well, but now I’ve got a deeper understanding of everything that would have gone on prior to her being in my class. You know, reading well and seemingly coming from a well-adjusted family. I think that I had a reasonable understanding of what was involved intuitively, but it wasn’t something that I could articulate, I guess, as well as I can now. About that slide that you showed that showed all the different stages that the refugee families go through (Figure 9.4) and how all the different decisions they make have major impacts on which direction they’re going to end up. When you think that that is obviously affecting all the other children in the class as well, it makes me analyse a lot more, what we do and how we do it (Mia, Interview 3).

Mia’s comments highlight how the professional learning intervention had impacted on her understanding of her students from refugee backgrounds and provided her with the metalanguage to articulate this understanding. The *cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms model* (Figure 9.6) was effective in helping Mia analyse how her decisions affect her students.

Some participants acknowledged that the use of models, activities and the co-construction of the *cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms model* (Figure 9.6) allowed them to further develop their knowledge and then apply it to their

classroom. Mia identified that appreciating and identifying the different adaptive stages her students are experiencing, meant that she was also able to change her pedagogy to meet the needs of her students more effectively,

Just even at base level knowledge of the inability for them to be in control of so much and for them to go through all these different stages... I know that now, it's been articulated and, you know, there are other visual representations of all of those things. Then it means that I can recognise some of the key points in those stages and be aware that that might be where the families are at. So then because of that, I can start to develop a plan for how I can support them and, through the whole family, obviously support the child in the class (Mia, Interview 3).

To help participants understand the components of a CRP, in the co-planning sessions I provided an opportunity for participants to unpack aspects of a CRP. Through the co-construction, participants engaged in exploring and reflecting on new knowledge. In doing so, participants employed self- and co-regulation as a tool to review and revise their ideas. Self-regulation is described by Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008b) as taking a deliberate inquiry stance to their work where teachers individually and collectively “identify important issues, become the drivers for acquiring the knowledge they need to solve them, monitor their impact, and adjust practice accordingly” (p.353). Through taking ownership for the development of the co-constructed artefact, participants were able to restructure their thinking and change their pedagogical practice.

Naomi's comment provides a snapshot of the effectiveness of co-creating an artefact to consolidate and apply new knowledge to change her teaching practice,

I think I have (changed my thinking). Especially some of the videos we watched have had quite a big impact. I remember them still, so when I'm not teaching the kids and I'm expecting certain things of them I'm thinking 'hang on. They are not performing the way I want them to because I'm not teaching them the way I should be teaching them.' So, I do reflect on that the whole time and I do a lot more group work now. So that's probably the biggest change I've made. You know, putting them into groups and letting them work things out between themselves (Naomi, Interview 3).

Working in groups fitted with some elements in the implementation section of the co-created culturally responsive pedagogical framework, in particular “creating and nurturing cooperative environments” and “sharing power in the classroom”.

## 9.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the findings that were centred on the collaborative planning of the pedagogical framework: *Cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms* (see Figure 9.6). Through the conversations in the co-planning sessions, several key findings have emerged which illustrate the professional learning intervention's impact on participants.

Firstly, participants identified that their decisions were often clouded by their bias and beliefs, and this influences how they engaged with and responded to students. Secondly, they recognised that some of the behaviour of newly arrived refugee students is the result of culture shock. Thirdly, they appreciated that, as teachers, they could respond with more effective pedagogical choices for these students who need the time and space to adjust to their new culture.

The co-created pedagogical framework demonstrates that teachers can apply new knowledge, reposition their thinking and change their pedagogical approach. The framework illustrates how teachers can be empowered and confident to take control of their changes in attitudes and understanding. It depicts how they can channel these changes to improve their teaching practice.

In the following chapter, I present a discussion of the findings from Chapter 7, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, relating them to the research outlined in the literature review (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). In Chapter 10, I consider the impact of the professional learning intervention on the participant teachers' cultural competence. I also consider the reasons for teachers' reactions when experiencing cognitive dissonance and discuss why this discomfort is an important phase for teachers to experience as they work towards cultural competence.

## Chapter 10: Discussion

### 10.0 Introduction

In this chapter, three key themes identified in the study are discussed: (1) we all have an unconscious bias (2) we all need to work toward cultural safety and (3) effective professional learning for cultural competence. The first and second themes add to an existing body of knowledge in the field by exploring the context of education and, more specifically, the field of refugee education. The acceptance of these themes is emphasised as a primary prerequisite for cultural competence. It is pertinent that this study provides insights into how teachers talk about race and culture, as this is the first step in understanding why they make pedagogical choices that are not useful for their students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The third theme provides new knowledge that focuses on critical factors that are essential for effective professional learning for cultural competence. In this chapter, it is discussed how a professional learning framework and pedagogical framework became central to the success of developing culturally competent teachers. Two critical factors identified in this study are also elaborated: providing opportunities for self- and co-regulation and engaging teachers in critical reflection to develop and sustain teachers' journeys toward cultural competence. These essential factors offer guidelines and tools for the implementation of effective professional learning in cultural competence in educational contexts.

The organisation of the chapter is as follows. I begin by discussing the first theme, with evidence of teachers' unconscious bias expressed in three different ways: the bad racist and the good nonracist binary (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Di Angelo, 2011), colour blindness (Gay, 2010a) and a culture of problematising and blame (Di Angelo, 2018). Then, I explore the second theme that, as teachers, we all need to work toward cultural safety. I introduce findings that illustrate a process of cognitive dissonance where teachers identified their unconscious bias which resulted in reflecting on their current teaching practice as not culturally safe. Following this, the final theme is investigated: effective professional learning for cultural competence. Here I identify the processes which teachers engaged in to develop a pedagogical tool that will assist in transforming their teaching approach. This was illustrated through the co-construction of a pedagogical framework which was an outcome of this study.

### 10.1 We all have an unconscious bias

When teachers engage in talking about culture and race, their unconscious bias may be demonstrated in several ways. Findings related to the transcripts show that teachers demonstrated their unconscious bias through the bad racist and the good nonracist binary, colour blindness and a culture of problematising and blame. These findings align with studies



(Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Di Angelo, 2011; Gay, 2010a) that also explore these constructs as markers of racial stress and provide insight into how teachers respond when engaging in race-based discussions. Also, the results confirm that teachers' unconscious bias in this study is not dissimilar to that identified in other studies in cultural competence and anti-racism (Bean, 2006; Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop et al., 2007; Pedersen et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2005; Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017; Singleton, 2015). However, these studies are set in contexts outside of Australia. This study builds on from such previous studies by investigating unconscious bias in the Australian education context.

Teachers require racial stamina to work daily at the frontline of cultural diversity. Through understanding, identifying, and naming these manifestations of unconscious behaviours, we are better equipped in helping teachers to their build racial stamina. As discussed in Section 5.1.6b, racial stamina is the capacity to endure racial stress when talking about race and racism (Di Angelo, 2019). Di Angelo (2019) argues that many white people, who are in the racially dominant group, have very little opportunity to experience racial discomfort. Thus, they have not had the opportunity to develop their racial stamina. There is also an agreement by other on the importance of being able to explicitly name those behaviours and identify potential resistance (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Singleton, 2015) so as to assist teachers in building their racial stamina in the context of professional learning in cultural competence.

### ***10.1.1 The bad racist and good nonracist binary***

Teachers engage in the bad racist and good nonracist binary in several ways that (1) hide their unconscious bias; (2) negate blame and involvement in acts of racism and institutionalised racism; (3) remove their responsibility for acting on racism behaviour as a reaction; and (4) restore racial stress by reinstating their self-image as the good nonracist (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). This binary concept is one manifestation of white fragility and a narrative that is used to deny racism. An example that illustrates this in action was observed when teachers talked about Australia's history of colonisation. In Maria's case, when talking about Aboriginal people's experiences of colonisation, she was generally horrified and disagreed with how Aboriginal peoples have been treated in the past. However, it was evident that she explained this using the bad racist/good nonracist binary, which played a major part in confirming her cognitive dissonance and unconscious bias,

And I know that it's a recent history and I understand that and it's recent in their eyes, and recent in parents' eyes of kids my age. But I wasn't there, I didn't do those things and I don't agree with it so why am I getting blamed for it all? I'm not racist or

anything. I just find it really sad what happened, but they have to find a way and we have to find a way to move on (Maria, Interview 1).

Maria has experienced racial stress and needed to set up a narrative of herself as the good nonracist. She did this by describing herself: “I’m not racist or anything...” These words soften her opinion and hide her unconscious bias, setting a scene so that no one would accuse her of racism. In addition, by stating “but I wasn’t there, I didn’t do those things and I don’t agree with it so why am I getting blamed for it all?” (Maria, Interview 1) Maria deflects blame for the effects of Australia’s racist policy and treatment of Aboriginal people. She also negates any responsibility she may have as a teacher by suggesting that “...they have to find a way...,” meaning that those who are the most marginalised must do the work of resolving their problems. While unintentional, Maria removes any liability she has for contributing to the institutionalised racism that persists, thus reinstating her white racial equilibrium and white privilege (Di Angelo, 2011). Her defensiveness about historical events can be explained as a way to dismiss “...people of color’s very real day to day grievances, or to privilege our own desire not to talk about it. We opt to dwell in an imagined state of invulnerability, where past atrocities are conveniently severed from present realities” (Bailey, 2015, p. 43).

When teachers are under racial stress they often engage in the bad racist/good nonracist binary to restore their self-image. For example, when thinking about her whiteness, Maria induced racial stress and unwillingness to see herself as complicit in a racist system, resulting in statements such as “I’m not a racist, I’m not narrow minded...” (Maria, Interview 1). Maria’s racial stress can be interpreted as a threat to her self-image as being morally pure (Liebow & Glazer, 2019). Therefore, in order to restore her self-image, she uses the binary concept and asks others to do the same (Liebow & Glazer, 2019; Singleton, 2015). These strategies of evasion and rejection help Maria to remain ignorant of the injustices that have resulted from her white privilege (Bailey, 2015).

When teachers set themselves up as the good nonracist, they hinder the anti-racism movement as true progress can come only when teachers acknowledge their own biases (Di Angelo, 2016). Therefore, this study reinforces the imperative that professional learning must take a brave approach to uncovering bias. We need to identify and then address this bias, as it impacts on our teaching practice. We need to examine what influences our pedagogical practices. This involves having courageous conversations about race. In other words, we need to challenge our racial consciousness in conversations to reach a greater understanding of race in our lives (Singleton, 2015).

### ***10.1.2 Colour blindness***

Teachers' colour blindness acts as a barrier to seeing difference in the classroom, therefore, impacting their ability to address varying student needs in a culturally responsive manner. The problem with colour blindness is that, when teachers' colour blind ideology is challenged, they assume a defensive position, making it very difficult to address existing unconscious beliefs. Colour blindness also prevents us from seeing our 'whiteness' and the privilege that comes with it (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). In this way, colour blindness hinders any effort to acknowledge and address racial structures and institutionalised racism (Eddo-Lodge, 2017). Consequently, colour blindness eliminates the space to discuss race or examine one's bias, which results in impeding progress to cultural competence.

One important finding in this study is that through professional learning we can 'unlearn' our colour blindness and begin to work toward cultural competence. For example, in Mia's first interview she justified her teaching approach of treating all her students the same,

I can say in my class there's no bullying, there's no stereotyping or there's no focus on differences between people because I don't focus on the difference. Last year I had absolutely no issues with anybody bullying (Mia, Interview 1).

By eliminating any discourse of difference, Mia believed she was being fair and equitable. Mia positioned herself as the good nonracist by treating everyone the same (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). When she did not focus on difference because she considered her classroom ran smoothly without conflict, she dismissed the need for a deeper analysis of the existing disparities and power dynamics in her classroom (Gay, 2010a). Moreover, Mia's colour blindness negated the refugee experience as a legitimate factor and barrier in determining successful schooling.

The professional learning intervention and the co-planning sessions provided Mia with opportunities to see the world from different perspectives (Duckitt, 2001). For instance, she could develop new knowledge and understanding about the refugee experience, cultural adaptation (Lysgarrd, 1955), high and low context cultures (Hall, 1990), and individualism and collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010). These helped Mia build her understanding of cultural differences and the importance of acknowledging such differences. Mia ultimately acknowledged her unconscious colour blindness in terms of an absence of recognising power relations and began to think about the needs of her students from refugee backgrounds in terms of such differences. When teachers began to acknowledge diversity, they were able to unlearn colour blindness and make the step toward cultural competence.

Camila also spoke of unlearning her colour blindness.

I'm always having conversations with my students and my own children, about you know, the differences between... about your own biases and where you come from and how your power..., by how you place other people or position them through your language (Camila, Interview 2).

The unlearning of colour blindness, as experienced by Mia and Camila, is supported and described by Choi (2008) who maintains 'unlearning' is not simply substituting your beliefs but instead allowing to come to terms with your location "in relation to power relations" (p. 67). Moving from unconsciously being colour blind to examining their privilege, position and power, according to Choi (2008), requires carefully planned self-reflection and mediation. Other scholars also encourage actively engaging in critical self-reflection to bring about change (Davis, 2020; Morrison et al., 2019; Palmer & Carter, 2014; Sakamoto, 2007).

Effective professional learning in cultural competence unpacks unconscious bias, racism, and white privilege. However, in doing so, we need to accept that there will be resistance and reactions by teachers which are manifested because of their unconscious bias (Di Angelo, 2018). Professional learning needs to assist teachers to change their understandings and perceptions about colour blindness. In the words of Jenkins "white people think it is a compliment when they do not 'see' you as a black person" (Jenkins, M. cited in Saad, 2020, p. 77). As such, professional learning moves teachers toward understanding and acknowledging difference.

### ***10.1.3 A culture of problematising behaviour and blame***

Teachers' unconscious bias can also be exhibited through engaging in a culture of problematising behaviours and blame. This can significantly impact teachers' behaviour management and pedagogical approaches in responding to newly arrived refugee students. However, through professional learning, teachers' assumptions and stereotypes can be challenged, therefore impacting and changing their cultural lens and view of students. This, in turn, affects their behaviour management and interactions with students and their families.

For example, this study identified teachers' responses to student behaviour were often based on their bias. As a result, student behaviour was often misinterpreted and seen as negative. I found that teacher bias often clouded their judgement, which resulted in regularly mistaking newly arrived students' adaptive behaviours as negative. Another contributing factor to teachers' problematising behaviour and blaming students is viewing students by using a deficit model of 'othering' (Morrison et al., 2019) and stereotyping (Singleton, 2015). This impact of seeing the students as others, as different from ourselves, also contributed to a

tendency to problematise students, where teachers felt that some of their students needed to be managed and controlled.

This study identified that professional learning in cultural competence can significantly change teachers' views and cultural lens. Results in this study showed that teachers acknowledged that they saw their students' and families' behaviours through "the haze of [their] own cultural lenses" (Delpit, 2006, p. xv) and they focused on external factors rather than examining their own assumptions, bias and classroom practices (Singleton, 2015).

For instance, before the professional learning intervention, Tara problematised students' circumstances of poverty and cultural difference and blamed them for not being able to adjust to the dominant culture with ease. Gay (2010a) clearly speaks to this, stating that blaming students' culture for poor academic achievement does not contribute to student success at school. It was evident that Tara, through a process of cognitive dissonance, was able to adjust her ideas and behaviour toward her new students. The iterative learning process devised by Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008b) was useful in ascertaining whether teachers were able to shift to thinking about their own actions toward their students. This is evident in Tara's changed approach in responding to difference in the classroom,

...it's also being able to use all the little things that kids bring in and knowing your own biases, knowing that we have a different pattern that we go to and catching yourself, slowing down and not putting that on the kids or even just the generalist thoughts that you have! (Tara, Interview 2).

Yeah, I don't put the blame on the families or the kid or anything like that because you know what? We're putting it on them. That's our expectations, you know. Like, some of the Nepalese kids that I have, they don't have lunch. They have a big breakfast. So, they don't bring lunch. I used to worry about it (Tara, Interview 3).

The above statements indicate that Tara had concluded that she had earlier problematised and blamed her students. Through developing her professional knowledge of culture and being open to learning about her students' background, Tara was able to shift her existing assumptions and make changes to how she communicated with students.

Another example of this process can be found in Maria, who, by the end of the professional learning intervention, demonstrated she was beginning to understand the impact of her unconscious bias on how she perceived her students and their families. She explained "I think I'm just really conscious of it all the time. I'm constantly thinking, is it me that's projecting my beliefs onto these guys?" (Maria, Interview 3). Maria had opportunities for

self-critical reflection and began to question her existing beliefs, understanding that her unconscious bias created a culture of blaming students. For example, she tended to punish newly arrived students for behaviours that were evidently reactions to adjusting to a new country and culture. In other words, she initially viewed students' reactions, their misunderstandings, and their adjustments to the new culture as negative behaviour but began to recognise and review this perception through the learning intervention.

This study identified that the professional learning intervention contributed to teachers understanding the need to change the power relationships between themselves and their students and families. Teachers came to realise that shifting the power balance would assist students and families to feel more comfortable in engaging with the school context.

For instance, by shifting this power balance, as described by Di Angelo (2011), Tara has come to terms with her privilege and how this impacted her students and families. Tara realised she needed to think differently about how she interacted with students' families. She stated "It obviously doesn't work, us getting parents in here. Maybe we need to change it and we go out into the community?" (Co-planning Session 2). As Tara considered ways to alter the power dynamics between herself, her students, and their families, she was then able to effectively respond to students' point of need (Santoro, 2013).

When teachers engaged in activities that interrogate new information through cognitive dissonance, this provides opportunities and time to adapt to their new knowledge, so they were able to shift their beliefs and assumptions about their students. Findings showed that teachers were able to change the narrative of problematising behaviours to review their own practices themselves rather than blaming their students and families. They acknowledged it was their problem and their responsibility to change. These findings are supported by Santoro (2013) who argues that quality teachers and quality teaching for culturally diverse contexts requires specific knowledge. Boon and Lewthwaite (2015) agree, adding that it is teachers' values and beliefs that also determine teacher quality. To achieve this, effective professional learning opportunities for teachers that challenge their existing values and beliefs are critical.

In this study, teachers' unconscious bias was manifested through the setting up of the binary concept of the bad racist and good nonracist (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Di Angelo, 2018) and colour blindness (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Eddo-Lodge, 2017). However, critical reflexive conversations around race, examining white privilege and power were critical in assisting teachers to explore some of their existing thinking that acted as a barrier to working cross-culturally. By unlearning our existing thinking and acknowledging our unconscious

bias, we can examine how these impact our teaching practice and thereby make significant positive changes. In fact, similar to Byrd's (2016) study, teachers in this study began to avoid stereotyping by educating themselves about cultural differences and knowing students at an individual level. For many students, their race and cultural background are important to their identity. When teachers ignore this, they miss out on part of that connection and relationship building (Byrd, 2016), which is an important aspect of cultural safety.

## **10.2 We all need to work toward cultural safety**

Cultural safety in schools is important if teaching staff want students and their families to engage successfully in the education process. The second major theme identified in this study was "we all need to work toward cultural safety". In other words, every staff member is responsible to ensure students and their families feel culturally safe. Teachers identified that a lack of cultural safety in their current school contributed to a culture of blame, confusion over who is ultimately responsible for engagement, failure of communication and significant gaps in student information, all of which impede teachers from knowing their learners.

Teachers also expressed the view that the school, as an institution, played a role in disenfranchising family engagement and that this resulted in a culture of blame placed on families. This meant that there was a failure in effective cross-cultural communication, meaningful engagement between teachers and families, and the creation of a culturally safe environment. Teachers acknowledged the professional learning intervention provided opportunities to change their thinking about how teachers and schools position themselves and to discuss how to change this.

Teachers believed that engagement with the school was the family responsibility. However, this belief changed as teachers acknowledged they needed to shift the existing power imbalance and their relationships with some of the students they had found challenging and/or problematic began to mend. Teachers identified that they needed to change their approach and not put the onus entirely onto families.

For example, when discussing parent engagement, Camila stated "...instead of putting the onus on those families. They belong to a school community as well" (Camila, Co-planning Session 2). Similarly, Tara commented "they are uncomfortable. We are uncomfortable. It's not going to be productive" (Tara, Interview 2). Tara realised that productive relationships are critical to the success of student learning and if students and families are not at ease, engagement is not going to occur effectively. This shift in thinking spurred teachers' desire to work toward creating culturally safe classrooms.

When there is a lack of cultural safety in the school, there is a lack of trust from families and therefore gaps in the student information collected from these families. In this study, teachers identified that families' lack of trust prevented them from engaging more with families and families did not feel comfortable giving information. They perceived that one barrier to receiving student information was embodied in the school enrolment officer who did not have a connection to the community outside the school context.

Teachers mentioned that whilst this staff member was on leave, she was replaced by someone who had already established deep relationships with families. Teachers saw noticeable changes in how the families engaged with the school during that period. Therefore, they stressed the importance of key members of staff dedicated to community engagement actually having connections to the community. Teachers suggested that this would make it easier for families to feel safe in contributing to and engaging with their children's education. This is further supported by Gerlach, Browne, and Greenwood (2017). Gerlach et al. (2017) found that caregivers' trust was significant to their willingness to share information. Whilst their study was in a social work context, the principle was the same. The relationship between the social worker and the caregiver paralleled the relationship between the teachers, the students and their families in this study. The establishment of such trust involves professionals' critical self-reflection and questioning about how they relate to the families they are working with. The acknowledgement of privilege, power, unconscious bias and assumptions was key to strengthening family relationships and trust.

Creating culturally safe teaching spaces requires ongoing commitment from both leaders and teachers. In this study, this was seen when Mia reflected on her experiences and journey through the professional learning intervention,

It's not going to be worked out by next year, that's for sure. It's a very long process and it will never be perfect and it will never be right in some people's eyes. But I think that as a school, if we show that we're doing something, then it's a continual conversation rather than a subject that is just taboo (Mia, Interview 3).

Mia's statement is reflected by Gopalkrishnan's (2019) work around the development of cultural safety, which involves working collaboratively in partnership. As Gopalkrishnan (2019) states, the process of developing cultural safety involves working with families and students where they are at and not where you want them to be. This process also involves teachers actively engaging with families, understanding that in this process, however, mistakes will be made along the way.



This study identified that professional learning in cultural competence can help teachers realise and acknowledge their dominant position as a contributing factor to culturally unsafe classrooms. As Tara stated “I think it needs to just shift away from everything has to happen at school. We need to, as the dominant culture in this school in particular, go out and maybe do more in the community” (Tara, Interview 2). This is consistent with the ideas of Lautensach and Lautensach (2011) who claim it is important to acknowledge one’s dominant culture and embed culturally safe practices, as it “transforms power imbalances and neutralises institutional discrimination... It serves to mend relationships between colonisers and colonised” (p. 3).

Professional learning that gives teachers opportunities for critical reflection helps teachers understand how their unconscious bias and assumptions about ‘others’ influences how they interact with students and their families (Gerlach, 2012). Through this process, teachers can mend relationships and begin the work of developing cultural safety in their classes and schools. Similar findings are promoted by Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby, and Allen-Eckard (2009) who find that families needed to be given the opportunities to participate in the educational process without the barriers that teachers unconsciously create. Schools must access families from where they are at “rather than embracing misperceptions and stereotypes that perpetuate ambiguity (p. 285)”. By turning one’s cultural lens inwards and critically reflecting and questioning one’s cultural heritage and colonial history, a shift in power is possible (Gerlach, 2012; Gopalkrishnan, 2019; Morrison et al., 2019).

### **10.3 Effective professional learning for cultural competence**

In this section, I discuss three significant critical factors that were effective in the professional learning intervention for cultural competence: (1) collaborative learning through co-construction of artefacts (2) providing opportunities for self- and co-regulation, and (3) engaging teachers in critical reflection to develop and sustain teachers’ cultural competence journey. I centre the discussion of these factors on the development of the pedagogical framework, *Cultural adaptation for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms* (Figure 9.4) that was collaboratively constructed during this study’s four co-planning sessions.

As stated previously in Section 9.1, the pedagogical framework was co-created by teachers engaged in this study to assist them in making more culturally responsive decisions in the classroom. This framework and the discussions which ensued during its formation provided a range of data to analyse. Firstly, the pedagogical framework is evidence that, by building teachers’ knowledge through theory and practice, teachers can shift their beliefs and assumptions about their newly arrived refugee students. Secondly, the co-construction of the

pedagogical framework demonstrates that, by providing collaborative activities, teachers can show their new understandings and apply these to their current teaching context. Thirdly, the pedagogical framework can be used as a tool for teachers to inform their practice. For example, teachers who are working toward cultural competence can benefit from this tool to foreground their unconscious bias and make changes to how they respond to students. In other words, the framework supports teachers to implement culturally responsive practices. Finally, this now can become a tool to use for future professional learning as it was developed by teachers for teachers, making it practical and meaningful for other teachers.

A gap was also discerned in this study between professional learning about cultural competence and actual on-the-ground school practice. To bridge this gap, I created a professional learning framework (Figure 5.1) to inform the development of the professional learning intervention. As discussed in Section 5.1, the professional learning framework incorporated six key strategies that were critical in developing and implementing cultural competence in the workplace. Therefore, all six were incorporated in the professional learning intervention.

### ***10.3.1 Collaborative learning through co-construction of artefacts***

Collaborative learning provides teachers with opportunities to access other teachers' capital when building on their own professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and opportunities to engage in new ideas and innovation (Schnellert, 2020). The co-construction of the pedagogical framework makes explicit the move away from good intentions to understanding teachers' own bias and reframing their ideas to make more thoughtful and responsive pedagogical choices.

The pedagogical framework challenges the assumption that if we have good intentions, then good teaching will follow. Good intentions according to Benson and Fiarman (2019) are problematic because, when we act on good intentions, we do not really know if we are acting fairly when "research on unconscious bias makes it clear that our actions aren't always aligned with our intentions" (p. 33). In addition, Timperley and Alton (2011) argue that good intentions are not enough to work effectively with students from CALD backgrounds. As evidenced in Section 9.5, teachers identified that the effect of their own unconscious bias influences their choice of pedagogies. The pedagogical framework which participants co-created worked to position their thinking away from good intentions toward a more responsive approach that changed their practices.

Professional learning requires teachers to self-regulate their current practices, reconstruct new knowledge, shift their existing beliefs and realign their practices in light of

new learning theories and pedagogies (Butler et al., 2004). However, in the context of professional learning, well intentioned teachers (Benson and Fiarman, 2019; Timperley and Alton, 2011) and self-regulation are not enough. It is in the demand for pedagogical changes that the collaboratively developed pedagogical tool allows this professional learning intervention to be ongoing, sustainable, and dynamic.

### ***10.3.2 Enhanced self- and co-regulation opportunities***

Activities involving self- and co-regulation in professional learning help teachers to develop new knowledge and inform future pedagogical practice collaboratively and authentically. Hence, the researcher identified through the professional learning intervention in this study that co-constructing activities that incorporate self- and co-regulation are critical for teachers to put into practice what they have learned and to restructure their teaching practices in more meaningful and sustainable ways.

Collaborative learning and engagement in authentic activities that engage teachers in self- and co-regulation are key in changing their classroom practice as they are relevant to teachers' own practices (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This study provided similar accounts and experiences to that of Butler et al. (2004) where teachers engaged in both self-and co-regulated learning and experienced the same outcome of shifting their assumptions, adapting their classroom practices and creating new ones.

Collaborative activities for professional learning in cultural competence that involve teachers co-creating artefacts assist in their acknowledgement of their own unconscious bias. More importantly, when teachers are provided opportunities to engage in self- and co-regulation, this has a more immediate impact for them. Through this collaborative learning, teachers began to understand their development toward cultural competence as a continuum, reflecting on and interrogating their assumptions as they encountered new knowledge and new ways of thinking. The activity of co-constructing a pedagogical framework not only provided evidence of the impact the professional learning intervention had on teachers but it also demonstrated teachers' change in their beliefs through their discussions whilst developing the pedagogical framework and in their final interviews.

A major learning from the pedagogical framework is how teachers can embed and articulate their new knowledge. It also demonstrated that teachers began to feel empowered to make different choices in their responses to students to cater to the needs of newly arrived refugee students. Teachers experienced a shift from their previous misconceptions and became enthusiastic to demonstrate their new knowledge through co-creating an artefact that can be shared with other teachers.

The process of self- and co-regulation supports teachers to develop empathy and understanding of their students' adjustment into Australian schooling. This aligns with Nieto's (2005) framework for attitudinal qualities. One of Nieto's (2005) arguments is that, to promote cultural diversity and social justice, teachers need to develop empathy for and value students' lives, experiences, and culture. The process of developing the pedagogical framework in which teachers self- and co-regulated their learning benefited teachers by focusing on what the students bring into the classroom. They were beginning to acknowledge their privilege and shift the culture of blame (Gay, 2010). Teachers began to value students' lived experiences and culture as a positive resource that contributes to the classroom rather than as problematic.

When teachers engage in such activities that co-create new knowledge, they begin to build new concepts, understandings, and metalanguage around cultural competence. Teachers identified that this process of building knowledge helped them to challenge their existing beliefs and ideas. This is also consistent with Yoon et al. (2007) who identified that one of the major factors for successful professional learning was the effectiveness of content to build teachers' knowledge. An example was Maria's metalanguage when explaining how she manages newly arrived students from refugee backgrounds in her classroom. Over the course of four weeks Maria had reflected on her existing practices,

I think a couple of things I've noticed is I've got a couple of new kids in my class that came in from overseas, so I'm very conscious of where they are up to in that honeymoon phase, the disengagement phase and the re-engagement phase. So, I'm watching very carefully where they're sitting and ensuring that they don't disengage from their learning and that they're included (Maria, Interview 3).

This discussion by Maria was further enhanced and supported by the opportunities of self- and co-regulation which the professional learning intervention provided to reframe her thinking. This has affected how she now responds to her students. In doing this, she was able provide a culturally safe learning environment that honoured and respected students' cultural backgrounds, which is a key element in enacting a culturally responsive pedagogy (Morrison, Robbins and Rose, 2008).

### ***10.3.3 Engaging teachers in critical reflection to develop and sustain teachers' cultural competence journey***

Professional learning in cultural competence that adopts a critical reflective approach contributes significantly to shifting teachers' initial belief system. In this study, opportunities for critical reflection provided space for teachers to clearly articulate the relationship between

their unconscious bias and their actions in the classroom. Mia provides an example, stating the professional learning “made me really analyse what I do and ask myself why I’m doing certain things and if there are other ways to bring in diversity into the classroom” (Mia, Interview 2).

Teachers who hold stereotyped beliefs require more opportunities and time to critically reflect, a point which is consistent with the views of Kumar and Hamer (2013) who identified that teachers who held strong feelings of stereotyped beliefs toward students from diverse backgrounds required more time for critical reflection to bring their unconscious bias to conscious awareness. In this study, Maria, who had the strongest stereotyped beliefs about her students, required more time to think about and discuss the new concepts explored in the professional learning intervention. Through a process of critical reflection, she was able to acknowledge her unconscious bias and its influence on how she approached her students in class. This reflection gave her the chance to work through her cognitive dissonance and disrupt her previous thinking (Bishop et al., 2007): “... just understanding that you’re looking at things through a biased lens, you can stand back and go okay, well what’s really going on here?” (Maria, Interview 2). Maria was also able to link her bias with her teaching practice “I didn’t realise how bias, not in a bad way that I was, but how narrow minded in a lot of areas and how my biases impact my everyday life” (Maria, Interview 3). This reaction was also consistent with other studies where teachers’ bias and assumptions are related to their teaching practice (Hines & Houston, 2016; Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail, & Portes, 2018; Singleton, 2015; Yoon, 2008).

Knowledge of one’s students is critical in being able to choose the right pedagogies to provide what they need. When students do not share the same cultural background as their teacher, it requires the teacher to work harder in understanding how to reach and maintain students’ trust and attention. Developing teachers’ cultural competence provides opportunities for them to start the journey in addressing their approach to teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds through critical reflective practices.

Critical reflection is necessary to maintaining sustainability in a changed classroom practice (Russell, 2020; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008b; Timperley & Phillips, 2003; Yoon, 2012). Gay (2010a) asserts that in order for teachers to change, teachers need to critically analyse their attitudes toward diversity. In other words, this approach, according to Darling-Hammond (2000), helps teachers learn to look from different perspectives. Through this practice, teachers can bring these qualities into their classroom behaviour and practice. This is further supported by Hines and Houston (2016) who discovered that teachers did not reject

the existence of white privilege and white fragility, but acknowledged it and used this to challenge themselves to change. This study also identified that, to interrogate our own perceptions, a conscious reflection on race was critical to acknowledging whiteness and white privilege. Teachers constantly rely on their own experiences “to make sense of their students’ lives—an unreflective habit that often results in misinterpretation of those students’ experiences and leads to miscommunication” (Villegas & Lucas, 2007, p. 31).

#### **10.4 Summary**

In this study, teachers’ unconscious bias was observed through the setting up of the bad racist and good nonracist binary concept (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Di Angelo, 2018), colour blindness (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Eddo-Lodge, 2017), problematising behaviour and ascribing blame to students (Di Angelo, 2018). However, through carefully developed professional learning that encompasses reflective conversations around race, examining white privilege and power, teachers’ racial stamina was built. Such conversations assist teachers to explore and unlearn some of their existing thinking that has been acting as a barrier to working cross-culturally. Furthermore, as we begin to acknowledge our unconscious bias, we can examine how this affects our teaching practice and therefore make significant positive changes. In fact, similar to Byrd’s (2016) finding, teachers in this study began to avoid such cultural stereotyping by educating themselves about cultural differences and getting to know students at an individual level. Many students’ race and cultural background are essential to their identity. When teachers ignore this, they miss out on part of the relationship building (Byrd, 2016) which is an important aspect of cultural safety.

Effective professional learning with a focus on cultural competence requires a delicate balance of building new knowledge, experiencing cognitive dissonance, and engaging in critical self-reflection. Professional learning requires opportunities and time for teachers to unpack their white privilege, unconscious bias, and assumptions. In doing so, they engage in their own personal learning and development and, thereby begin to restructure their thinking and disrupt their white fragility, which allows space to improve their teaching practice. Teachers also develop the racial stamina they need before being able to engage in a culturally responsive pedagogy.

In this chapter, I discussed the three main themes which emerged from this study. Firstly, we all have an unconscious bias. Teachers’ existing assumptions were discussed, which provided insight into the teachers’ thinking prior to the professional learning intervention. I illustrated what happened when these teachers talked about race, white privilege, racism and culture. This chapter provided evidence of the different ways teachers

minimised and denied the significance of cultural difference in their classroom. It also illustrated the prevalence of teachers' unconscious bias, deeply rooted in a system of white dominance (Hines & Houston, 2016) and the impact on their pedagogical practice.

The second theme is that we all need to work toward cultural safety. In this I looked at interrogating, adapting and adopting new knowledge through a process of cognitive dissonance, to create cultural safety in teachers' practice. The lack of cultural safety contributed to a gap in information gathering on students and their families. I surmised that this was a result of families' lack of trust in white teachers. The findings were that cultural safety required commitment from teachers and schools and took time to grow. I acknowledged that cultural safety was to be enacted by teachers, not the students and families. Cultural safety requires partnerships and meeting families where they at. In addition, it needs a transformed power balance.

For the third theme, effective professional learning for cultural competence, a discussion was provided on how a professional learning framework and pedagogical framework were effective in developing culturally competent teachers. Three critical factors that are essential for effective professional learning for cultural competence were discussed. These were: (1) collaborative learning through the co-construction of artefacts, (2) providing opportunities for self- and co-regulation, and (3) engaging teachers in critical reflection to develop and sustain their cultural competence journey.

## **Chapter 11: Conclusion**

### **11.0 Introduction**

The research in this thesis has addressed the impact of a professional learning intervention on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy on a group of teachers. Through the exploration of teachers' existing beliefs and assumptions in working with newly arrived refugee students, I also explored how professional learning assisted teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching, enabling them to effectively work with these newly arrived refugee students. This chapter begins with a brief review of the research outlined in this thesis. Secondly, the research questions are addressed by reiterating this study's findings. Thirdly, I discuss the limitations encountered while engaging in the research. Following this, its contributions to research are outlined before concluding with the recommendations emerging from this study.

### **11.1 Summary of the research**

In this thesis, it was emphasised that while schools play a major part in newly arrived refugee students' resettlement process (Hek, 2005b; Matthews, 2008), several barriers impinge on this process's success (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Forrest et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2018; Rose, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018). Firstly, the invisibility of newly arrived refugee students from educational policy has resulted in the lack of an overarching policy or framework to guide schools or teachers to best support these newly arrived refugee students (Matthews, 2019; Rose, 2019; Taylor, 2008). This has resulted in a piecemeal approach (Matthews, 2008) with no consistency of practice across Queensland, leading to an ongoing hit and miss approach to teaching and learning for these students. This invisibility in policy has certainly contributed to a culture of exclusionary practices in schools (Riggs & Due, 2011; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Secondly, I argued that this piecemeal and exclusionary situation in schools has encouraged deficit models of support and discriminatory practices. As a consequence, this has impacted significantly on the successful transition of newly arrived refugee students into Australian schooling and the wider Australian community.

The experience of discrimination in the school context is another barrier that has contributed to the continued culture of implementing deficit models of support in schools (Mansouri et al., 2009; Riggs & Due, 2011; Watkins et al., 2018). In this thesis, I proposed that newly arrived refugee students' experience of discrimination in schools is often overlooked and therefore not documented. Consequently, this has had major repercussions both physically and emotionally on this group of students (Correa-Velez et al., 2017). This



oversight indicates a level of unconscious bias that has contributed to a deficit model of thinking, teaching and inaction by teachers.

Teachers have the greatest impact on student success (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). In addition, teacher beliefs, values and attitudes determine both teacher quality and student success (Yazzie, 1999). Strategies to improve teacher quality are central to developing teachers' cultural competence through professional learning (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015). Professional learning in cultural competence would not only equip teachers to work with newly arrived refugee students but also help them move from a deficit model of practice to a culturally responsive approach that enables these new students to transition successfully into Australian education (Wilkinson & Langat, 2012). I also identified that, before teachers can understand and enact Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, they need to be culturally competent.

As outlined in Chapter 5, developing culturally competent teachers required the creation of a professional learning program that encompassed being connected and contextualised to teachers' practice. The sustainability of the professional learning was also highlighted as it allowed teachers to gradually build their knowledge and skills over a long period of time (Fullan, 2003; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008b; Timperley et al., 2007). More importantly, professional learning in cultural competence is effective when teachers are provided opportunities to challenge, disrupt and reconstruct their thinking (Bishop, Berryman, Powell, et al., 2007; Gay, 2010a; Hachfeld et al., 2011; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Nespor, 1987; Villegas, 2007). As there was little school-based professional learning with these characteristics, I developed a professional learning framework (Figure 5.1) to inform the design of my professional learning intervention.

Six strategies were identified as critical in developing and implementing professional learning in cultural competence. These were drawn from the field of professional learning about cultural competence and anti-racism education (Bean, 2006; Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop et al., 2007; Pedersen et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2005; Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017; Singleton, 2015) and were included in the professional learning framework. As critical self-reflection was pivotal but absent from existing cultural competence professional learning, especially in the context of education, I incorporated it into the program. Critical allows teachers to explore their bias, assumptions, and white privilege. In doing so, teachers can reflect on their behaviours and assumptions and connect these to the choices they make in the classroom.

For this study, a culturally responsive methodology was employed (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013) and a qualitative single case study was adopted as its research approach (Yin, 2009). This involved six classroom teachers from a primary school in regional Far North Queensland. A culturally responsive methodology resonated with me as it embraced cultural and epistemological pluralism, deconstructed Western colonial traditions of research and acknowledged the importance of power sharing when working collaboratively with teachers (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013). I maintain that knowledge is not value-free (Edge & Richards, 1998) but subjective, therefore, it is constructed and bound by personal experiences and social interactions. In this, I was inspired by a culturally responsive methodology, and this was conceptualised through a framework (Figure 6.1) I developed to illustrate the subjectiveness of the world (Ernest, 1994; Noddings 1995), a world that is contextualised through our social interactions (Yin, 2011) and lived experiences. Figure 6.1 also illustrates how my role as an insider researcher explored and investigated the problem more deeply within my workplace (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2014).

Data collection involved multiple sources (Yin, 2014), consisting of a pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire, a series of three semi-structured interviews for each participant, the researcher's reflective journal and participants' discussions throughout six co-planning sessions. Data analysis included an integrated approach, with both a deductive and inductive method. Firstly, data was analysed deductively using predetermined themes and sub-themes, informed by Beven-Brown's *cultural self-review* (2003). Secondly, data was analysed inductively using a conceptual framework that drew on Timperley and Alton-Lee's (2008) *iterative learning process framework* and Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) *interactive model*.

## **11.2 Responding to the research questions**

The focus of the research questions was to ascertain whether professional learning about cultural competence could help teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and change teachers' assumptions and beliefs concerning newly arrived refugee students.

This study examines how a professional learning intervention can help teachers to enact Standard 1.3 of the APSTs and influence their attitudes and beliefs towards working with newly arrived refugee students by exploring the following research questions:

*Research Question 1: How can school-based professional learning, with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, affect teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students from a refugee background?*

Professional learning to foster cultural competence contributes to developing teachers' capacities in working with newly arrived refugee students in several ways. It develops racial stamina, enables teachers to recognise their unconscious bias, disrupts deficit views and practices and links theory to practice. This study revealed that teachers must develop racial stamina and identify racial stresses as moments of learning. Before teachers can transform themselves, they need to reach beyond their comfort zones into racial discomfort and dissonance before embarking on reshaping and restructuring their thinking. In the analysis of teachers' discourse through interviews and conversations in intervention sessions, two key themes were identified: (1) we all have an unconscious bias and (2) we all need to work toward cultural safety. These themes are evidence that the teachers had the capacity and openness for change. This research shows that when teachers are given opportunities to explore and critically reflect during professional learning concerning cultural competence, they can disrupt their deficit views and practices, to work collaboratively in making links between theory and practice. In this space, teachers can recognise their own bias and develop racial stamina.

A key strategy for professional learning to develop cultural competence is building teachers' racial stamina. We need to begin the conversation about being raised in a system with oppressive mechanisms that influence teachers to work unintentionally to assimilate newly arrived refugee students into the dominant culture, and to adopt its values and beliefs. When we understand how this shapes our bias and behaviours, it is easier to come to terms with this influence in order to develop some stamina around reviewing and resisting our own unconscious bias.

This research has shown that when embarking on cultural competence professional learning, teachers exhibit racial stress when engaging in discourse around issues of race and social justice. The experience of racial stress, defined by (Di Angelo, 2018) as white fragility, is the first fundamental step in shifting teachers' deficit thinking. Teachers can accept that they have been raised in a society that is built on an oppressive system and, as a result, understand that that their worldview includes unconscious bias and comes from a dominant position. While this is uncomfortable, it gives teachers some certainty as to what actions need to take place for them to change this attitude. Furthermore, they feel empowered to disrupt the system (Di Angelo, 2011).

The teachers' collaborative co-creation of the pedagogical framework illustrates their ability to develop racial stamina and disrupt the system to create a pedagogy that shifts the

power dynamics in the classroom. It also demonstrates how teachers can link their theory to practice, embodying the effectiveness of the professional learning intervention.

*Research Question 2: How does a research-informed, school-based professional learning—with a focus on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy facilitate a teacher designed framework for guiding ongoing professional learning and changes to classroom practice for students from refugee backgrounds?*

The document which embodies the standards and the resources that support these standards are not enough for teachers to effectively enact Standard 1.3 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Teachers require immense support and ongoing professional learning to unpack what Standard 1.3 means in the context of their school and how to interpret this into their teaching practice. Findings included that professional learning that entailed collaborative learning by co-constructing artefacts that inform future practice is effective in shifting teachers' existing practices. However, this research shows that there is an amount of preparatory work to develop teachers' personal knowledge that needs to occur before teachers can enact Standard 1.3 with fidelity. In other words, to enact Standard 1.3 requires teachers to be culturally competent or in part, to be working toward cultural competence. The standard also actually demands that teachers critically reflect on their existing values, beliefs, and assumptions about “students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds” which includes refugees. Thus, teachers are required to acknowledge their privilege and come to terms with their own unconscious bias.

Professional learning for cultural competence must be ongoing and sustainable to allow teachers to continue their learning, contemplate it and then implement this by changing their teaching practice. It must be not assumed that enacting Standard 1.3 can be achieved through a ‘one off’ professional learning session with little or no follow up. It needs to be understood that Standard 1.3 is an action that is continually reflected on and understood within the different teaching which contexts teachers encounter throughout their teaching careers. Through a critically reflective approach, teachers are actively engaging in developing their personal and professional knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of their students and about what is required to react in culturally responsive ways as they encounter students of many different cultural contexts.

### **11.3 Limitations**

This study provided an approach for professional learning in cultural competence for teachers, however, like any research, it had some limitations that need consideration. Firstly, this was a small-scale study, therefore only representing a small section of the teaching

population. While initially I had hoped for more participants, only six wanted to engage and commit to this project. In addition, this study was at one school site, therefore it may be seen as not representative of the teaching population. However, as it was possible to deeply focus on the topic precisely because this was a small-scale study, less data was required to reach a saturation of themes (Morse, 2000). In addition, I initiated a wide range of strategies for safeguarding the validity and integrity of data (Merriam, 1995). This included membership checking, (Merriam 2002), data triangulation (Mathison, 1998; Wiersma, 2000) and using the voices of participants in the analysis. I believe that I portrayed participants' lived experiences and journey toward cultural competence with integrity.

Another limitation concerns the lack of existing research on two topics of interest: teachers' bias toward refugee learners and the impact of professional learning about cultural competence on changing teachers' assumptions, beliefs and practice. As far as I am aware there is very little evidence stemming from such research in the Australian context. Therefore, I had to draw from the UK scholars, Hek (2005b), Hek and Sales (2002) and Rutter (2006) and the US scholar, McBrien (2005).

Furthermore, research using culturally responsive methodology, this study's methodological approach (Chapter 6.3), is limited. While the subject area of this study and its methodological approach was narrow, I took it upon myself to be brave and innovative and engage in a methodology that aligned with my beliefs, rather than following the status quo. As such, this provided me with the opportunity to develop my own conceptual frameworks to make sense of the literature and allowed me to engage in research in my own teaching context. I devised a professional learning framework (Figure 5.1) to inform how I designed and implemented the professional learning intervention. I then designed a conceptual framework (Figure 6.1) to ensure a culturally responsive methodological approach was embedded throughout my research design. I also developed a conceptual framework for data analysis (Figure 6.2). This was necessary due to the context of the study. I wanted to analyse data through a professional learning lens and the iterative learning process framework by Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008b) was the only framework suitable for analysing the effectiveness of professional learning experiences for students with culturally diverse backgrounds.

Finally, as a novice researcher at the beginning of my research career, I believe my relative inexperience may have impacted this study. A certain unfamiliarity with interviewing skills and the process of the overall design and development of the pre- and post-professional learning questionnaire may have affected the quality and depth of participants' responses. For

example, the questionnaires used a Likert scale, eliciting quantitative responses. To balance this, I designed semi-structured interview research questions (Appendix H) as a script to guide me, ensuring I was keeping within the spirit of a culturally responsive methodology. In addition to this, planning out the interview questions was necessary to build good rapport with participants, which assisted in facilitating better responses (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

#### **11.4 Contributions to the field**

This study contributes in several ways to a small but growing body of research that highlights a demand for developing a culturally competent teaching workforce. Firstly, it contributes to the development of professional learning as the professional learning framework can be used in a variety of contexts. An intervention was designed which can, over time, change the practice of teachers by developing their cultural responsiveness with newly arrived refugee students. Therefore, this study contributes to culturally responsive pedagogy in the field of refugee education in Australia. In addition, my engagement in this research as already led to projects utilising outcomes of the research, such as working for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) on their project on Indigenous Cultural Competence in the Australian Teaching Workforce.

The research has made some practical contributions. As explained in Chapter 5, this professional learning framework is a major game changer for ensuring the professional learning intervention was reliably implemented. I drew on existing bodies of literature in the fields of cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-prejudice, and anti-racism education and training (Bean, 2006; Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop et al., 2007; Pedersen et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2005; Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2017; Singleton, 2015). Evidence from these different research streams was integrated in the design of this study's professional learning framework. The outcome of the intervention based on this framework is that teachers modified their bias and assumptions about culture and race. This study therefore illustrates how the professional learning framework can restructure teachers' thinking and apply new knowledge to their pedagogical practice.

This study provides a different approach to research in the field of refugee education for Far North Queensland. As stated in Chapter 3, literature in the field of refugee education has focused on the challenges of support and intervention for newly arrived refugee students (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Forrest et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2018; Rose, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018). However, this research's aim is entirely novel, centring on the development of culturally competent classroom teachers in Far North Queensland. No research to date in this context has had such a scope. Furthermore, while this study's focus is primarily on students

from refugee backgrounds, it is also relevant for teachers who work with students from CALD backgrounds in other regions in Australia. Therefore, this study makes both theoretical and practical contributions.

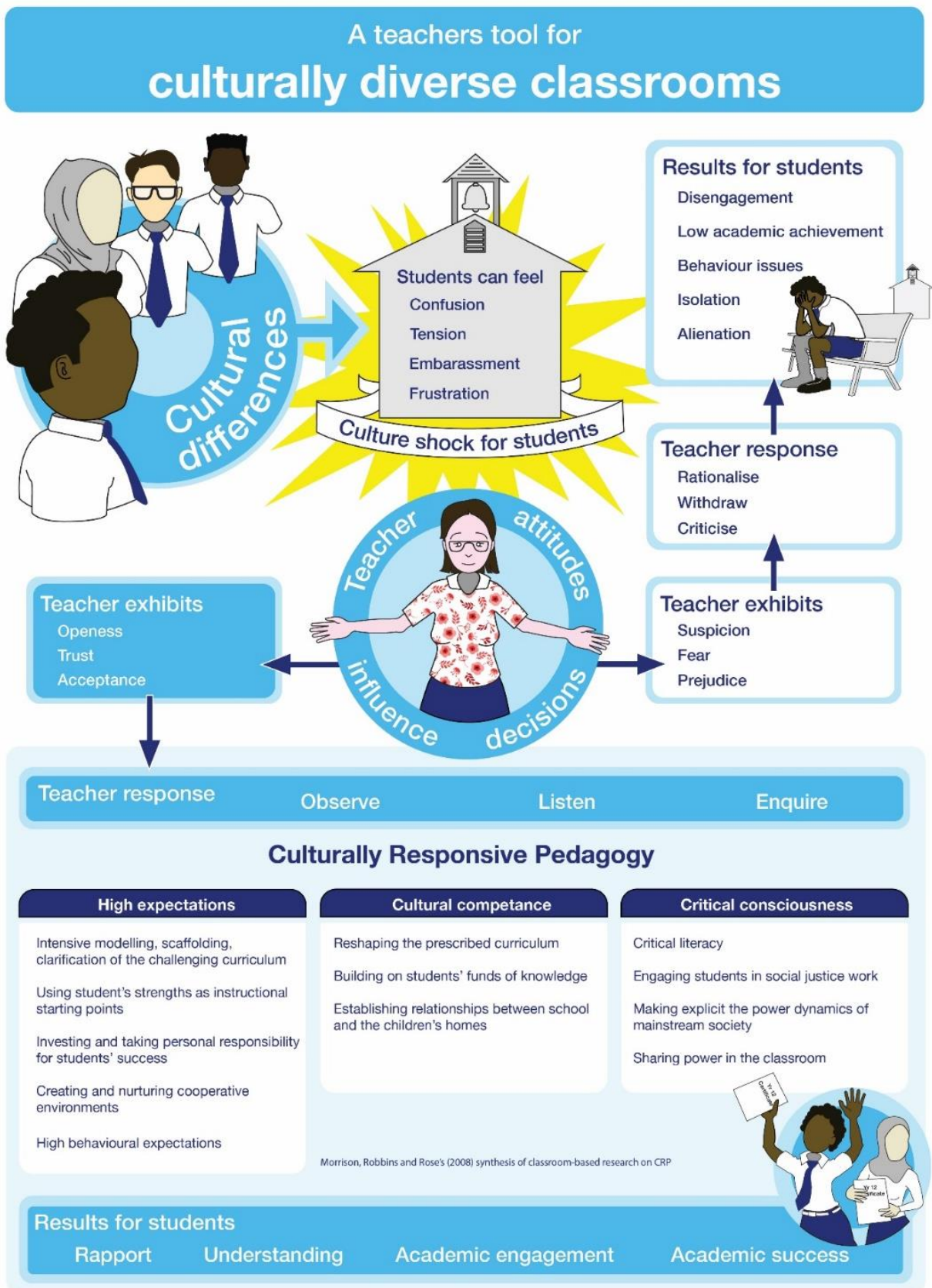
Research into culturally responsive pedagogy has been limited in the Australian education context. As stated in Chapter 4, culturally responsive pedagogy has previously been undertaken by scholars in the US focusing on First Nations American and African American students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2011a), in New Zealand, focusing on Maori students (Bishop & Berryman, 2010) and more recently, in North Queensland, Australia, focusing on Aboriginal students in remote locations (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015). This study focuses on newly arrived refugee students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, providing more scope to existing research in this area. Therefore, findings in this study will be relevant and beneficial for those working with newly arrived refugee students.

My contributions to research have already led me to engage in this work at a national level. In 2019, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was tasked by the federal Minister of Education to undertake a project on Indigenous Cultural Competence in the Australian Teaching Workforce. The aim of this project was to provide the Australian teaching workforce with the necessary resources and tools to create culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australian schools. As my research was centred on professional learning for cultural competence in schools, I was commissioned by AITSL to work with a team on their discussion paper. I was also invited to attend a National Dialogue in Canberra in April 2020 to contribute to the building of Indigenous cultural competence in Australian schools.

The pedagogical framework (Figure 9.6) that was co-constructed by teachers in this study was developed further to use with teachers. In 2019, I commissioned a graphic designer to work up the pedagogical framework into a commercial product that could be used in Responsive Intercultural Education Solutions, an educational consultancy which I established. This framework was renamed *A teacher's tool for culturally diverse classrooms* (Figure 11.1). I have already used this in my current role as the EAL/D coordinator of an intensive English centre at a high school in Cairns.

**Figure 11.1**

*A teacher's tool for culturally diverse classrooms*





## **11.5 Future directions**

The contributions of this study indicate that future research is required for policy makers, school leaders and teachers to fully understand the impact of teacher bias on pedagogy, and the impact which professional learning for cultural competence has on teachers and their pedagogical practice.

Further opportunities exist for research that examines the effectiveness of the professional learning framework (Figure 11.1) to develop professional learning in other contexts. This would establish greater scope for this framework's effectiveness as a professional learning framework. This is also necessary to measure the framework's impact on a broader population of teachers in a variety of culturally diverse contexts and measure its impact on their bias and practice. Furthermore, the exploration of the usefulness of the pedagogical framework (Figure 11.1) as a tool in the professional learning is also pertinent as it then provides more strength to the findings of this study.

Further research is needed to explore the impact of professional learning for cultural competence to improved academic outcomes of newly arrived refugee students. This research would entail a much larger scale involving more participants and more professional learning over a longer period of time. This study has explored issues that require some consideration to support the academic achievement of students from refugee backgrounds. Therefore, a longitudinal study that follows teachers over a period of time with ongoing professional learning and measures the effect on their students would potentially provide greater strength to the findings of this study.

## **11.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, I argue that policy makers and school leaders have an opportunity to prepare teachers to work effectively with newly arrived refugee students through developing teachers' cultural competence. Currently, those who are in positions to make change have the good will of teachers to begin change in how we work with newly arrived refugee students and their families. Generally, teachers are always looking to do the right thing by their students but need to guidance to change classroom practices which arise from unconscious bias or misconceptions.

This study has generated important findings that have practical implications for both school leaders and teachers who work with newly arrived refugee students. To teach with cultural competence requires teachers to take a brave approach in reimagining our pedagogy through a very different lens. Seeing the world through our students' perspectives requires teachers to embark on a journey. Engagement in professional learning is challenging and, for

some, incredibly confronting. In this, it is necessary for teachers to be reflective and think about our privilege, bias and assumptions and how these influence the decisions we make every day in the classroom.

As a teacher working in cross-cultural contexts, I must look inwardly and ask myself one question. How can I change my behaviour, my thinking and my pedagogy to ensure students are culturally safe and have high quality learning experiences? Lisa Garrett, English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) teacher (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2020b, p. 14)

Finally, this quote, which I contributed to the AITSL Indigenous Cultural Competence in the Australian Teaching Workforce Discussion Paper, captures what occurs for me every day on the frontline of teaching new arrived refugee students. It also captures the experiences of the teachers in this study, who made the commitment to see the world through the eyes of their students and families. It also has the potential to capture the hearts and minds of those teachers who are ready to take that challenge.

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## Appendix A: Information sheet for teachers



Human Research Ethics Committee Approval number H6718

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### *INFORMATION SHEET for teachers*

**PROJECT TITLE:**

**A case study inquiry into the relationship between professional learning and culturally responsive pedagogy and teachers' effectiveness with students of refugee backgrounds**

#### **1. Invitation**

Professor Elaine Sharplin and Dr Philemon Chigeza invite you to take part in a research project about investigating how professional learning in culturally responsive pedagogy might improve teachers' effectiveness, and understanding of student is from a refugee background. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of James Cook University (JCU) and is being conducted by Lisa Garrett and will contribute to the **Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)** at James Cook University.

#### **2. What is the purpose of the study?**

This project seeks to make a substantial contribution to the education sector in North Queensland and beyond, through investigating how professional learning and development in cultural competence and cultural responsiveness may influence mainstream classroom teachers' capacity to work with students from a refugee background. This study will also examine and explore whether school based professional learning and development is an effective form of intervention in assisting teachers' capacity to understand culturally responsive teaching to improve these students' initial adjustment and resettlement in their new school.

This timely and important study is guided by the following research questions:

- Can school-based professional learning and development, with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy, assist classroom teachers to enact Standard 1 of the Australian professional standards for teachers (AITSL), particularly in relation to working effectively with students with a refugee background? How?
- Can school-based professional learning and development with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy change teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students with a refugee background? How?

#### **3. What will I be asked to do?**

This research project requires attendance at all of the professional learning sessions on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy and has three aspects. Participants can choose to engage with the research at two levels. However, you may attend the professional learning sessions without being involved in this study.

##### **Level 1**

- completion of a pre and post professional learning questionnaire

##### **Level 2**

- completion of a pre and post professional learning questionnaire
- three (3) semi-structured interviews of about 20 - 30 minutes each
- four (4) planning sessions around the context of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The survey, interviews and planning sessions are explained in more detail below.

### **Level 1 participation**

#### **The pre and post professional learning questionnaire**

This study invites teachers who attend professional learning delivered by Lisa Garrett to complete a professional learning questionnaire. By completing the pre professional learning questionnaire you consent to participating in Level 1 of the study. The pre professional learning questionnaire will be completed before the professional learning program starts. It will take **approximately 10 minutes**. A post professional learning questionnaire will be completed after the professional learning sessions have finished. Again, this will take approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaires will be coded to identify pre and post professional learning only. Therefore, there will be anonymity. The questionnaires have two roles, firstly as a self-review enabling reflection on your professional and personal growth around working in more culturally responsive ways. Secondly, the questionnaires provide the researcher with insights into the success of the professional learning program in particular, assisting teachers to think and teach in a more culturally responsive manner.

### **Level 2 participation**

Participants agreeing to this level of this participation, in addition to the pre and post professional learning questionnaire, will be invited to participate in the following:

#### **Three (3) semi-structured interviews**

This research also requires three one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with the researcher conducted on-site after school at the convenience of the participants. The interviews will be semi-structured with open and closed questions. If you consent to participate in the interviews a copy of the interview questions will be emailed prior to the interview. If you consent, the interviews will be audio recorded on a handheld recording device and later transcribed. They will last **approximately thirty (30) minutes each** and you will have the opportunity to review and correct the interview transcript. The interviews will be conducted before the professional learning sessions begin, after the professional learning sessions have been completed and after the planning sessions. The information you provide will not be connected to your name or other identifying details. No one will have access to the interview/focus group recording or written notes except me and my supervisor. Your recording and notes will be kept in a locked and secure cabinet for a maximum period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

#### **Four (4) group planning sessions**

This study seeks your participation in four (4) group planning sessions. These group planning sessions will run for **one (1) hour each (approximately 4 hours in total)** and will be audio taped. The purpose of these planning sessions is to allow those teachers involved in the professional learning sessions to work through, as a group, and reflect on how to engage in a culturally responsive pedagogy through their planning. These co-planning sessions are opportunities for you to work collaboratively in sharing thoughts and ideas about how to work more effectively with students with a refugee background. Because the group planning sessions involves collaboration and interaction with others, confidentiality cannot be assured in this group. However, any notes and reflections taken by the researcher will be anonymous and in no way not connected to your name. Your personal information will remain confidential at all times and no information will be released by the researcher that may lead to the identification of individuals in the group, unless required by law. Thus, it is important that you do not divulge the identity of, or information shared by fellow participants outside of the focus group. **Involvement in this study will require approximately ten (10) hours of professional learning time.**

**4. Are there any possible benefits from participating in this study?**

Participation in this study may increase your awareness about working and communicating cross culturally and how this can be reflected in your teaching practice. In the broader context, it is hoped that this research may contribute to wider research based on best practice informing schools who work with students from a refugee background.

**5. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?**

I do not foresee any risks from participation in this study, though, in every study there are always risks. Participants in this study may be confronted by some of the content in the professional learning sessions, semi structured interviews and the planning sessions, as it will at times encourage participants to explore their perspectives on issues of race. You may also be challenged by others beliefs and values, please let me know if you have any concerns. You may contact my supervisor, Elaine Sharplin at any time if you have any concerns about your participation in the study.

**6. What if I change my mind during or after the study?**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

**7. What happens at the conclusion of the study?**

All raw data will be held by James Cook University, College of Arts, Society and Education, for a period of five (5) years from the publication of the study results, and will then be securely destroyed. Interview transcriptions will be stored within electronic files accessed via a password protected computer within the College of Arts, Society and Education at JCU. Paper copies used for the qualitative analysis of interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher. All data will be accessed only by the researcher. The data will be treated in a confidential manner. The findings of the study will be presented at professional conferences, and published in scholarly journals. You will not be identified in any way in these publications and professional conferences. If you are interested in receiving a summary of the study findings, please indicate this on the attached consent form.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact – **Professor Elaine Sharplin.**

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*If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:  
Human Ethics, Research Office  
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811  
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 ([ethics@jcu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@jcu.edu.au))*

## Appendix B: Information sheet for Principal

### *INFORMATION SHEET for the Michael Hansen, Principal, Cairns West State School*

**PROJECT TITLE:**

**A case study inquiry into the relationship between professional learning and culturally responsive pedagogy and teachers' effectiveness with students of refugee backgrounds**

#### **1. Invitation**

Professor Elaine Sharplin and Dr Philemon Chigeza invite you and teachers at Cairns West State School to take part in a research project about investigating how professional learning in culturally responsive pedagogy might improve teachers' effectiveness and understanding of student's from a refugee background. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of James Cook University (JCU) and is being conducted by Lisa Garrett and will contribute to the **Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)** at James Cook University.

#### **2. What is the purpose of the study?**

This project seeks to make a substantial contribution to the education sector in North Queensland and beyond through investigating how professional learning and development in cultural competence and cultural responsiveness may influence mainstream classroom teachers' capacity to work with students from a refugee background. This study will also examine and explore whether school based professional learning and development is an effective form of intervention in assisting teachers' capacity to understand culturally responsive teaching to improve these students' initial adjustment and resettlement in their new school.

This timely and important study is guided by the following research questions:

- Can school-based professional learning and development, with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy, assist classroom teachers to enact Standard 1 of the Australian professional standards for teachers (AITSL), particularly in relation to working effectively with students with a refugee background? How?
- Can school-based professional learning and development with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy change teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students with a refugee background? How?

#### **3. What will I be asked to do?**

To be eligible to participate in this study it is essential that teachers participate in all sessions of the PD program on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. This study has three aspects. Participants can choose to engage with the research at two levels. However, teachers may attend the professional learning sessions without being involved in this study.

##### **Level 1**

- completion of a pre and post professional learning questionnaire

##### **Level 2**

- completion of a pre and post professional learning questionnaire
- three (3) semi-structured interviews of about 20 to 30 minutes each
- four (4) planning sessions around the context of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The survey, interviews and planning sessions are explained in more detail below.

### **Level 1 participation**

#### **The pre and post professional learning questionnaire**

This study invites teachers who attend professional learning delivered by Lisa Garrett to complete a professional learning questionnaire. By completing the pre professional learning questionnaire teachers consent to participating in Level 1 of the study. The pre professional learning questionnaire will be completed before the professional learning program starts. It will take **approximately 10 minutes**. A post professional learning questionnaire will be completed after the professional learning sessions have finished. Again, this will take approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaires will be coded to identify pre and post professional learning only. Therefore, there will be anonymity. The questionnaires have two roles, firstly as a self-review enabling reflection on your professional and personal growth around working in more culturally responsive ways. Secondly, the questionnaires provide the researcher with insights into the success of the professional learning program in particular, assisting teachers to think and teach in a more culturally responsive manner.

### **Level 2 participation**

Participants agreeing to this level of this participation, in addition to the pre and post professional learning questionnaire, will be invited to participate in the following:

#### **Three (3) semi-structured interviews**

This research also requires three one-on-one face-to-face interviews with the researcher conducted on-site after school at the convenience of the participants. The interviews will be semi-structured with open and closed questions. If teachers consent to participate in the interviews, a copy of the interview questions will be emailed prior to the interviewee. If teachers consent the interviews, it will be audio recorded on a handheld recording device and later transcribed. They will last **approximately thirty (30) minutes each** and teachers will have the opportunity to review and correct the interview transcript. The interviews will be conducted before the professional learning sessions begin, after the professional learning sessions have been completed and after the planning sessions. The information teachers provide will not be connected to their name or other identifying details. No one will have access to the interview/focus group recording or written notes except me and my supervisor. Recordings and notes will be kept in a locked and secure cabinet for a maximum period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

#### **Four (4) group planning sessions**

This study seeks teachers to also participate in four (4) group planning sessions. These group planning sessions will run for **one (1) hour each (approximately 4 hours in total)** and will be audio taped. The purpose of these planning sessions is to allow those teachers involved in the professional learning sessions to work through, as a group, and reflect on how to engage in a culturally responsive pedagogy through their planning. These co-planning sessions are opportunities for you to work collaboratively in sharing thoughts and ideas about how to work more effectively with students from a refugee background. Because the group planning sessions involves collaboration and interaction with others confidentiality cannot be assured in this group. However, any notes and reflections taken by the researcher will be anonymous and in no way not connected to their name. Any personal information will remain confidential at all times and no information will be released by the researcher that may lead to the identification of individuals in the group, unless required by law. Thus, it is important that teachers who participate in this study do not divulge the identity of, or information shared by fellow participants outside of the focus group. **Involvement in this study will require approximately ten (10) hours of professional learning time and involvement in the study. This can be recorded as professional learning time.**



**4. Are there any possible benefits from participating in this study?**

Participation in this study may increase participants awareness about working and communicating cross culturally and how this can be reflected in their teaching practice. In the broader context, it is hoped that this research may contribute to wider research based on best practice informing schools who work with students from a refugee background.

**5. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?**

I do not foresee any risks from participation in this study, however, in every study there are always risks. However, participants in this study may be confronted by some of the professional learning sessions, semi structured interviews and the planning sessions as it will encourage participants to explore their perspectives on issues of race. Participants may also be challenged by others beliefs and values. Please let me know if you have any concerns. You may contact my supervisor, Elaine Sharplin at any time if you have any concerns about your participation in the study.

**6. What if I change my mind during or after the study?**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and participants can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

**7. What happens at the conclusion of the study?**

All raw data will be held by James Cook University, College of Arts, Society and Education, for a period of five (5) years from the publication of the study results, and will then be securely destroyed. Interview transcriptions will be stored within electronic files accessed via a password protected computer within the College of Arts, Society and Education at JCU. Paper copies used for the qualitative analysis of interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher. All data will be accessed only by the researcher. The data will be treated in a confidential manner. The findings of the study will be presented at professional conferences, and published in scholarly journals. Teachers participating in this study will not be identified in any way in these publications and professional conferences. If you are interested in receiving a summary of the study findings, please indicate this on the attached consent form.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact – Professor Elaine Sharplin.

**Principal Investigator:**

Lisa Garrett  
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*If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:  
Human Ethics, Research Office  
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811  
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 ([ethics@jcu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@jcu.edu.au))*

**Appendix C: Informed consent form: Principal**

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**Appendix D: Informed consent for interviews and focus groups**

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**Appendix E: Permission to use Cultural Self Review**

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**Appendix F: Pre - Post professional learning questionnaire**

**Participant code** \_\_\_\_\_

Please select a, b, or c for each item listed below.

**a. Things I do frequently b. Things I do occasionally c. Things I do rarely or never**

<b>Physical environment, materials, and resources</b>			
	A	B	C
In the classroom and other public areas, I display pictures, posters, artwork and other material that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of students and families attending our school.			
I ensure directly or indirectly (by reminding administration or other staff) that information sent home considers the average literacy levels and language of the students and families served by our school.			
Food offered for sale at our school and for other events and used as part of the curriculum program (not LOTE) includes foods from the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of children or young people and families attending our school, wherever possible and appropriate			
In the classroom, I ensure that magazines, brochures, and other printed materials reflect the different cultures of students and families attending our school.			
<b>Communication</b>			
When interacting with students and families who have limited English proficiency I keep in mind that:			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitation in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.</li> <li>• Their limited ability to speak the language of the dominant culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in their language of origin</li> <li>• They may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English</li> </ul>			
I am aware of and use the interpreter service available for interactions with families with limited English proficiency			
I plan for and communicate to the relevant staff members to assist me working with and interpreter to communicate with families that require an interpreter.			
I attempt to understand any familial colloquialisms used by my students and families that may impact our communication			
For students and families who speak languages or dialects other than English, I attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that I am better able to communicate with them and their families.			
I understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communication for some families and verbal communication may be a preferred method of receiving information.			
<b>Awareness</b>			
I am aware that to learn more about others I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture			
I am aware of my discomfort when I encounter differences in race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, language and ethnicity			

I view human difference as positive and cause for celebration			
I have a clear sense of my own ethnic, cultural and racial identity			
I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures different from my own			
I am aware of my stereotypes as they arise and have developed personal strategies for reducing the harm they cause			
I am aware of how my cultural perspective influences my judgement about what are 'appropriate', 'normal', or 'superior' behaviours, values and communication styles.			
I accept that in cross cultural situations there can be uncertainty and that uncertainty can make me anxious. It can also mean that I do not respond quickly and take the time needed to get more information			
I take the opportunity to put myself in places where I can learn about difference and create relationships			
If I am a non-Indigenous Australian, I understand that I will likely be perceived as a person with power and racial privilege and that I may not be 'unbiased' or as an ally.			
<b>Knowledge</b>			
I am knowledge about historical incidents in Australia's past that demonstrate racism and exclusion towards its First Nations People and other ethnic minorities			
I recognize and understand that cultures change over time and can vary from person to person, as does attachment to culture			

I know my family's story of migration and assimilation into Australia			
I continue to develop my capacity for assessing where there are gaps in my knowledge			
<b>Values and Attitudes</b>			
I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own (except where human rights are compromised)			
I screen books, movies, and other media resources for negative cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes before using them in curriculum and instruction or sharing them with students and families attending our school.			
I have a zero-tolerance attitude to children (or anyone else) using racial and ethnic slurs			
I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe students or other staff engaging in behaviours that show cultural insensitivity, racial bias and prejudice.			
I recognize and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.			
I understand and accept that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g. extended family members, non-blood-related kin, godparents).			
I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures and ethnic			



groups (e.g. who makes major decisions for the family and play and social interactions expected of male and female children).			
I understand that age and life cycle factors must be considered in interactions with individuals and families (e.g. high value place on the decision of elders, or the role of eldest male in families)			
Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the parent/guardian and families as the ultimate decision makers for educational services and, supports needed for their child.			
I recognize that the value of education may vary greatly among cultures.			
I understand that religion and other beliefs may influence how students and individuals respond to education.			
I understand that the perception of education has different meanings to different cultural or ethnic groups.			
I seek information from families or key community culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups and organisations that will assist helping me to respond to the needs and preferences of CALD children and families served by my school.  Before making a home visit, I seek information on acceptable behaviours, courtesies, customs, and expectations that are unique to families of specific culturally and ethnically diverse groups attending our school.			
I keep abreast of the major educational concerns and issues for the ethnically and racially diverse student/family population attending our school.			

I am aware of the socio-economic and environmental factors that can contribute to educational problems for the culturally, ethnically and racially diverse populations served by our school.			
I do not use knowledge of these factors to lower my level of expectations for my students regarding their behaviour or academic performance; rather, I provide additional support as needed.			
I avail myself to professional development and training to enhance my knowledge and skills in the provision of services and supports to culturally, ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse students.			

### Checklist results

This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of teachers working in culturally diverse school contexts to the importance of cultural diversity and cultural competence in school settings. It provides concrete examples of the kinds of values and practices that foster such an environment.

There is no answer key with correct responses. However, if you frequently responded „c“, you may not necessarily demonstrate values and engage in practices that promote a culturally diverse and culturally competent and supportive schooling environment for children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.

**Sources:** This questionnaire has been adapted from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: Building Community and Identity, Cultural Competency Checklist.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/partnerships/cl3cultcompet.pdf>

And

Tawara D. Goode - Georgetown University Centre for Child & Human Development  
University Centre for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service Adapted

from – “Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings” - June 1989. Revised 2004

And

Cultural Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society: Competence Self-assessment Checklist <http://static.diversityteam.org/files/414/cultural-competence-self-assessment-checklist.pdf?1342126927>

## Appendix G: Semi-structured interview questions

### Draft of semi-structured interview questions

Interview session	Beven-Brown's (2003) framework	Semi-structured interview questions	Kvale's (1998) question types	Literature supporting questions	Justification
Session one (to be completed before the professional learning sessions and after completing the pre professional learning questionnaire)	<b>Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b>	Part of being culturally competent, literature says life experiences, your world view contributes and influences the way we teach.  Reflecting on your own life experiences and family history, how do you think this has shaped who you as a teacher?  Do you believe this has prepared you for working in cross cultural situations? If so, how has this prepared you for working in cross cultural contexts, in particular working with refugee students?	Introducing question Probing Silence	Camp and Oestereich (2010) Sleeter (2001) Nespor (1987) Villegas (2007)	Important to know one's background before understanding and becoming culturally competent. This question gives an insight to the participants' background and also hopefully activates their thinking about the connection between their experiences and world view and their ability to work in cross cultural educational settings.
		You are about to engage in a professional learning experience about how to work in culturally diverse classrooms. Part of this professional learning will focus on what it means to be culturally competent. Currently, what does cultural competence mean to you?  So, you mean that...?	Direct May need to follow up with an interpreting question to ensure interviewer has understood the response correctly	Gay (2013) Ladson-Billings (1995) Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011)	Need to understand whether participants have any prior knowledge of cultural competence. This will assist in measuring change in their beliefs or attitudes during their professional learning journey.
		What experiences have you had with cultures other than your own? Can you give some examples?  Have you ever had experience of being part of a minority group? If so, how did this make you feel? How does this influence you as a teacher working with refugee students? Can you give some examples?	Specifying	Haberman and Post 1998	Haberman and Post (1998) identified those successful teachers that have success with working cross culturally have also had experience of being a minority or at risk. The purpose of this question is to enable to a greater understanding of the participants perspective and background.
		What are some things you value because your cultural values those things?	Direct		Getting participants to verbalise and reflect on aspects of their own culture. Literature is clear

					in saying that to engage and work with culturally and linguistic diverse students you need to have a greater understanding of your own culture. This question will help me to understand whether the participant is self-aware in their own culture and then it will be used again in the second session of interviews to measure any changes in the participants' journey to cultural competence.
		What are some expectations around school behaviour and learning that is in conflict with your own values? Provide some examples. How do you deal with this conflict? What strategies do you use?	Probing	Haberman and Post (1998) Gay	Setting the scene and then enables me to see whether there is change through the professional learning. Do the strategies change through professional learning?

Session	Theme	Question	Kvale's (1998) question type	Literature	Justification
	<b>Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b>	Moving to the next section of the interview, I want to explore your understanding of how culture impacts education and children from ethnic minority groups.  Looking at the cultural groups in your classroom, how do you think their cultural background impacts on their learning and education in general? What are your views? Can you provide some examples?	Structuring question and probing	Sleeter (2011; 2012) Gay (2010)	Again, in this question I want to explore whether or not teachers are already making the link between culture and its impact on education. This question and discussion will be readdressed in the following two sessions of interviews to establish whether there is change in teacher beliefs and knowledge. I am looking also to see a growth in teacher awareness.
		How do you currently make attempts to understand the children's perspective when planning or teaching for learning Do you differentiate, if so how do you differentiate? Can you provide any examples?	Direct and probing	Sleeter (2012) Gay (2013) Darling-Hammond (2000) Perso (2012)	This question establishes whether or not the participant is already differentiating for diversity and how? This question is important to measure growth and any changes in pedagogy.
	<b>How professional learning and development improved teacher knowledge of cultural linguistic backgrounds</b>	Moving now to the next section of the interview. Can you tell me how you think the professional learning will improve your teacher knowledge and skills of working in culturally diverse contexts? What do you hope to achieve?  So you think...? And you hope to achieve...?	Introducing Probing Silence Interpreting for clarification of interviewees response	Timperely (2007)	Looking to see teacher expectations of the professional learning journey. This question hopefully will establish some goals for the participants which will be examined in the following two interview sessions to see whether they have fulfilled those goals or whether they have had to reset their goals as their knowledge and understanding increases through professional learning.

Session	Theme	Questions	Kvale's (1998) question type	Literature	Justification
<b>Session two (After the professional learning sessions and before the planning sessions begin)</b>	<b>Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching</b>	Reflecting on the professional learning you have just completed and this question I asked you in your first session of interview, can you tell me what cultural competence mean to you? Can you tell me what this means to you now? What has shifted your thinking? Can you give some examples?  So, you mean that...?	Structuring, introducing and probing  Interpreting to clarify participants response	Camp and Oestereich (2010) Sleeter (2001) Nespor (1987) Villegas (2007)	Revisiting the questions in the first session to investigate whether the participants increased their understanding through professional learning.
		In the first interview, I stated that your life experiences and your world view contributes and influences the way we teach.  I then asked you to reflect on your own life experiences and family history, and to think about how this has shaped who you as a teacher. In particular, how has this prepared you for working in cross cultural contexts? Given that you have now completed the professional learning sessions, can you now tell me how has this changed? Can you give some examples?	Introducing and structured to move participant on to the next stage of questioning  Probing	Camp and Oestereich (2010) Sleeter (2001) Nespor (1987) Villegas (2007) Timperely, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2007)	Timperely, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) and Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2007) discuss the importance of professional learning as a way to change teacher attitudes and beliefs. These questions are to answer whether or not the participant feels that through professional learning there has been a shift in their thinking. This question also helps to answer the research questions:
		In your first session you stated that you value ... because your culture values those things. Can you tell me in what way being involved in the professional learning has changed your views about what you value? Can you give some examples?	Introducing  Probing		Can school-based professional learning and development, with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy, assist classroom teachers to better enact Standard 1 of the Australian professional standards for teachers (AITSL), particularly in relation to working effectively with students with a refugee background? How?
		In the first session you discussed your expectations around school behaviour and learning that was in conflict with your own values? Can you tell me how this has changed? If so, how? Can you provide some examples? If not, can	Introducing  Probing Silence to allow the participant to express their views. May need to use an interpreting		Can school-based professional learning and

		you give me some ideas why your view has not altered?	<b>question to ensure their answer is correctly interpreted.</b>		development with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy change teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students with a refugee background? How?
	<b>Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b>	Moving to the next section of the interview... In the previous session I wanted explore your understanding of how culture impacts education and children from ethnic minority groups.  Firstly I asked you to look at the cultural groups in your classroom and think about how their cultural background impacts on their learning and education in general. Do you still believe your initial response or has this changed? Discuss. Can you provide some examples how this has changed. If not, why has this not changed?	Structuring and introducing	Timperely, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2007) Timperely and Phillips (2003)	This question again is probing the participant to examine if any changes have occurred during the professional learning sessions. This question deals helps to answer the second research question: Can school-based professional learning and development with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy change teacher beliefs and assumptions in working with students with a refugee background? How?
	<b>How professional learning and development improved teacher knowledge of cultural linguistic backgrounds</b>	Moving now to the next section of the interview. How has the professional learning improved your teacher knowledge and skills of working in culturally diverse contexts? Give some examples.  In the next phase of the professional learning you will be involved in a series of planning sessions. What do you hope to achieve through this? Where do you want to go next in your professional learning journey?  So you think...? So you want to ..?	Structuring and introducing Probing  Indirect		

Session	Theme	Question	Kvale's (1998) question type	Literature	Justification
Session three (at the end of the planning sessions and professional learning sessions)	Teachers' cultural competence and how their own culture influences teaching	Reflecting on the professional learning sessions and the planning sessions, do you feel you have made any changes to your teaching practice? Can you tell me how their might be changes in your beliefs towards teaching children that are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds than you? Can you expand some more and give my some examples?	Introducing, direct and probing	Sleeter (2011) Walker, Shafer and Liam (2004)	The following questions in session 3 help to answer the first research question: Can school-based professional learning and development, with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy, assist classroom teachers to better enact Standard 1 of the Australian professional standards for teachers (AITSL), particularly in relation to working effectively with students with a refugee background? How?
		In what ways have you changed your classroom practice because of the professional learning in culturally responsive pedagogy? Give some examples of successes and failures.	Probing Silence to allow the participant time to think about their answer	Sleeter (2011) Gay (2013)	After the professional learning sessions and planning sessions participants should be more articulate in identifying aspects of a culturally responsive pedagogy.
	<b>Understanding how culture impacts upon education and how it affects children from ethnic minority groups</b>	Now that you have been involved in this professional learning, what strategies have you used or will use to show your understanding of how our education system impacts our refugee students? How do you differentiate? Do you think these strategies transfer across cultures? Discuss		Gay (2013)	
	<b>How professional learning and development improved teacher knowledge of cultural linguistic backgrounds</b>	What changes in student achievement do you believe you have seen that could attribute to the changes you have made to make it your program and practice more culturally responsive? Are there any aspects that you have seen change that you would like to mention? If so, what?	Indirect Probing Silence to allow the participant to think about their response	Timperley and Phillips (2003)	
		What has been your great success or achievement since being involved in the professional learning? How have your beliefs changed? Can you give some examples?  What are your challenges that you want to keep working on?		Farr, Sexton, Puckett, Pereira-Leon and Weissman (2005)	This question is to examine any changes in beliefs and whether the participants through professional learning are more self-aware and identify those changes. This question also acknowledges the ongoing learning that teachers need

## Appendix H: Ethics Approval

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**Appendix I: Permission to approach**

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## **Appendix J: Endorsement from Principal**

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