The Impact of Diversity in Queensland Classrooms on Literacy Teaching in Changing Times

Mary-Anne Fleming, Faculty of Education
University of Southern Queensland (flemingm@usq.edu.au)

Abstract

The intent of the paper is to identify possible inhibitors to best practice for literacy teaching and learning and to identify key considerations for a responsive, relevant and constructive curriculum and pedagogy for the teaching of literacy in diverse classrooms. A review of relevant research and pedagogical frameworks such as sociocultural constructivism, productive pedagogies and multiliteracies pedagogy, will provide the basis on which to argue some possible classroom practices for teachers to consider for the as ways forward in diverse classrooms. This paper will be contextualized within the current political agenda in regard to literacy education and recent research into literacy teaching and learning in Australia, reported in 'The National Inquiry into Literacy' and consider the issues together with the assessment demands placed on teachers in classrooms.

Literacy

Historically there have been a variety of ways in which the term literacy has been understood and so defined. Early research described literacy as a psychological phenomena and theories were developed as a result of analysing readers and writers and what they were doing internally (Comber and Cormack, 2005; Anstey and Bull, 2004). This led to a view of literacy as a set of isolated skills which were independent of context, required to understand and create written language (Fang, 2005). Within this view of literacy those not acquiring these skills were constructed as deficient and illiterate (Anstey and Bull, 2004). According to Freebody and Freiberg (2001) the view of literacy from a psychological perspective did not describe why or how literacy occurred between adults and children. More recent views of literacy draw on the social and cultural context in which literate practices are constructed and the resources that are required to develop a repertoire of practices that integrate speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking with reading and writing particularly in relation to diverse learner and communities integrating texts both traditional and from new communication technologies (Lankshear and Lawler, 1987; Luke and Freebody 2000; Luke, Comber and Grant, 2003). Within these communities students achievement in literacy "is associated with a variety of social and demographic factors, such as sex, location, cultural and family background, personality, learning style and school attended" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, 2002, p. 2). Literacy has been defined in many ways and definitions have evolved in response to the changing views and beliefs of different groups (Bull and Anstey, 2002). Literacy, in the context of this paper, draws from a range of definitions, acknowledging the multiple rather than singular nature of literacy, which is developed

and sustained over time within a variety of social and cultural settings for a changing world.

Diversity

Diversity similarly to literacy can be described or defined in a number of different ways. The state education authority in Queensland, Australia, Education Queensland (2002, p. 51) defines diversity as the "variation in social, economic, cultural, linguistic and personal characteristics seen among individuals in a group" and further identifies the following groupings that add to the diverse nature of classrooms: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, English as a Second Language students, gifted and talented children, students with disabilities, disadvantaged students, children and young people in care (Education Queensland, 2006). For the purpose of this paper 'diversity' will apply to those children who come from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The range of diversity in classrooms depends on the demographics of the population in which the school exists.

Australian schools in the 21st century are sites of diverse student populations. "During the 20th century Australia developed into, a more culturally diverse and much more urbanized society, holding wider religious affiliations" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000). School populations increasingly reflect this diversity of groups and communities that constitute the Australian population, which is "one of the world's most culturally and linguistically diverse countries" (Bremner and Dufficy, 2006, p. 71). Students emanate not only from different economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds but also have a range of ability levels, physical or emotional challenges, interests, and life experiences which generate the heterogenous nature of our complex society.

Australian government statistics in relation to diversity within groups of students over the last two decades reveal that:
- one in four children are from a non English speaking background (Gibbons, 1991)
- 1 in 4 Queensland school children live in poverty (Education Queensland, 2002)
- Between 1986 and 2001, the number of one – parent families in Australia increased by 53% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003)
- As at 30 June 2001, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was estimated to be 458,520, or 2.4% of the total population. Most of the Indigenous Australian population is in age groups under 20 years (Australian Government, 2004)
- In 2002, New South Wales government schools enrolled 191,818 students for whom English was not their first language (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2002).
- "40% of Australians are migrants or the children of migrants, while approximately 25% of our current population were born overseas, with more than half of this number from countries where English was not the language of state or public participation" (Bremner and Dufficy, 2006, p. 71)

Further to the above statistics, Pat Thomson (2002), in her study of the 'rust belt' neighbourhoods of Adelaide, Australia, raised the issue of the increased numbers of single parent families and the social implications for both children and schools.

In Australia, diverse classrooms present opportunities as well as issues and challenges for teachers in an educational climate where the standardisation of curriculum and pedagogy are constantly on the political agenda. Teachers need to respond to diversity and yet are grappling with overcrowded curriculum … in an environment that is results - focused due to the requirements of benchmarking and student assessment (Comber and Kamler, 2005). Teachers face many contradictions with the requirement for best practice on the one hand and benchmarking and testing on the other. This apparent contradiction militates against excellence in learning and teaching in a diverse world due to the focus on results. "It is a period of intense pressure in schools as teachers deal with competing priorities, including the insistence on meeting normative benchmarks and continuous improvement" (Comber and Kamler, 2005, p. 2). How then do schools and teachers build on the diversity that children bring to school and cater for their literacy learning needs within a politicised context?

Political Agenda

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999) states that:

> Australian Government and State and Territory education ministers agreed to a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. This plan is focussed on the crucial early years of school. It means that all students will be assessed as early as possible in their first years of schooling by their teachers.
>
> - The development of agreed national benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7, against which all children's achievement in these years can be measured;
> o The measurement of students' progress against these benchmarks using rigorous state-based assessment procedures;
> o National reporting of student achievement against the benchmarks, within the framework of the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR);
> - Professional development for teachers to support the key elements of the Plan.

The focus on literacy benchmarking and assessment for years 3, 5 and 7 as stated above, would appear to be in stark contrast to, and at odds with, the other espoused National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century which stated:

> Schooling should be socially just, so that:
> 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.
> 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.
> 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students.

The Adelaide Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999) recognises that, "Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision". It also acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, the role of schooling in developing that capacity, the role of parents as the first educators of their children and, importantly, the central role of teachers in the learning process.

The paradox between the requirement to benchmark and assess literacy on the one hand and the recognition of differences arising from students' socio- cultural background or geographic location and all that that entails is rather stark. It is quite apparent from the research into literacy and what counts as literacy (Freebody and Luke, 2003; Anstey and Bull; 2004) and the socio-cultural understandings of literacy (Heath, 1983; Courts; 1991; Freire, 1983) that it is difficult, if not impossible, to benchmark, lockstep learning and assess outcomes of all students, at fixed intervals of "children on, diverse social, cultural and linguistic trajectories" (Dufficy, 2005, p. vi).

Since the publication of "Learning to Read: The Great Debate" (Chall, 1967), literacy teaching has been, and continues to remain, "a fiercely debated field of educational research and practice" (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 54). The ever changing and dynamic society in which we now live, characterised by technological, economic and societal change, has an emerging skilled workforce with literacy needs that require teachers who are able to meet the literacy needs for a changing world (Education Queensland, 2000; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Anstey and Bull, 2006). More recently in Australia the political agenda has focused on literacy and the underachievement of children in Australian schools in regard to literacy development. As a result the Federal Government's educational policy has moved its focus to narrow educational outcomes, spelling, reading and writing, away from the holistic approach to learning (Thomson, 2002). Changing agendas and policies have implications for teachers and schools in regard to what is included in the curriculum and how it is included.

In 2005, a National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (DEST, 2005) was held by the Australian Council for Educational Research headed by Dr. Ken Rowe. The ensuing report, National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, released in December, 2005, made 20 recommendations relating to the teaching of reading whereas only one of these recommendations referred directly to teaching by primary teachers. The report, while titled National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, appeared to focus entirely on the teaching of reading, not on the teaching of literacy, this, despite the fact that definitions of literacy are far broader than the definition of reading. The Teaching of Literacy (2005) report, in its focus on reading, narrowed its recommendations to the teaching of phonics and drew the conclusion that systematic, direct and explicit phonics instruction is what is needed to address the failing needs of students. Are the recommendations that are being put forward by the national inquiry any different from what has been put forward in the past? Since The Great Debate (Chall, 1967), the call has been to go back to basics. The media constantly prints snapshots of illiteracy which highlight our failing literacy levels and makes calls for a back to basics approach (The Age, November 8, 2004). Kevin Donnelly author of "Why our Schools are Failing" and a regular contributor to the debate through articles in the popular press, questions the post structuralist approach taken by education

departments across Australia. In an article "Exploding the Literary Canon" The Weekend Australian, Inquirer, (2006, p. 23) Donnelly claims that "the insidious influence of the postmodern is not restricted to senior school courses". Referring to a report analysing Australian primary school curriculum released by Federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, Donnelly uses examples from various state education documents to support the claim from the report that, "primary school English has also fallen victim to critical literacy". In a further article "Go back to basics, and give literacy teaching more of a chance" (Milburn, 2006, p. 29). Donnelly discusses "the battle between the two approaches to teaching reading, phonics and whole language", a battle which he claims "has raged in its modern form, since the mid to late 1970's". Donnelly further argues that "the evidence that the past 30 years of whole language and politically correct fads such as critical literacy….have failed to raise standards". In support of his stance, Donnelly quotes from the national benchmarking test in 1996, which showed that 27 percent of Year 3 and 29 percent of Year 5 students were illiterate, defined as below "the minimum standard of literacy without which a student would have difficulty making sufficient progress at school". Conveniently, or so it would appear, the diverse make up of the student population which has dramatically changed over the past 30 years, does not rate a mention. Donnelly and other like minded contributors to the debate via the media, appear to be supporting the federal government's position that state education, particularly in the area of literacy, is failing the students. The conflict between the Federal government and the states, in respect of educational outcomes, is as polarised as their respective political dogmas and, as according to Green, Hodgens and Luke (1997, p. 6), "the literacy debate is rarely about literacy itself. It is tied up with larger political and moral debates about the directions of communities and cultures, nation-states and economies". Green, Hodgens and Luke further claim that, "in this case, literacy is neither the real issue, problem or answer" (p. 7).

In spite of these continuing debates and reports, teachers are still faced with diverse classrooms and the need to deliver quality teaching and learning which will enhance the literacy learning of students in these classrooms. So how do teachers deal with this dilemma? On the one hand they have classrooms with numerous students from diverse backgrounds and yet they are still required to deliver best practice and demonstrate student achievement through benchmarking and continuous assessment. Teachers are required to develop life long learners with literacy skills for the 21st century and it is within this overarching paradigm that research would indicate the requirement for a multi-literate approach against the continuing backdrop of the political agenda, which continually calls for a somewhat simplistic back to basics approach.

Theorising Pedagogy in Changing Times

To lay a foundation for some working theories and approaches, this section will look at theories that teachers can draw upon to support diversity in their classrooms. "Teacher quality is predicated on teacher knowledge, particularly theoretical knowledge" (Wilkinson, 2005, p. 127). What pedagogical theories or theorists can teachers draw on to cater for the diversity that exists in the 21st century classroom?

Much of the research evidence suggests that the classroom teacher plays a vital role in the learning of children in a school context, emphasising that the teacher as the most important variable in making a difference for students. This view is supported by Darling Hammond, (2001) and more recently by the work of Comber and Kamler (2004, p. 294) who claim that "it is teachers' expectations, their enacted curriculum, their classroom talk, their relations to young people and their actual ways of inducting them into specific textual practices that most affect literacy outcomes". This vital connection between the classroom teacher and children's learning per se is seen to be particularly relevant in the area of literacy teaching where "studies have consistently indicated that the single most important in-school factor that impacts on children's literacy learning is the classroom teacher" (Comber and Kamler, 2005, p. 37). In spite of the evidence and body of knowledge in regard to the positive impact teachers have on student literacy development, in reference to the political impact on education, (Comber and Kamler, 2005, p. 295), claim that "teachers have been effectively silenced when it comes to building theories of better literacy practice".

Much twentieth century theory, research and practice was grounded in dominant knowledge and psychological frameworks that assumed the child as having an identity that emerged through a series of universal stages distinct from their culture, background or life experiences (Dufficy, 2005). This traditional view of children and learning did not take into account their role as participants actively engaged in learning within a broader social context. The more recent constructivist approach to instruction is based on the notion that students create their own meaning by building on what they already know and can do and create their understandings of literacy in the contexts in which they are situated (Au, 2005). This constructivist view of learning requires teachers to know about their students' needs, interests, concerns and abilities in order to develop appropriate teaching approaches and strategies (Baird, 1992). This approach to teaching and in particular to literacy instruction, is consistent with the influential socio-cultural perspective offered by Vygotsky (1978). His theoretical framework acknowledges the importance of social interaction in the cognitive development of children. "Vygotsky regarded education not only as central to cognitive development but as the quintessential socio-cultural activity" (Moll, 1990, p.1). It was Vygotsky's (1978, p.57) belief that, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological)". One significant and influential concept of Vygotsky's work was the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), the level of development that can be attained through social interaction with more experienced and knowledgeable adults or peers allowing children to develop beyond where they might without assistance. Further to these aspects of Vygotsky's work, Rogoff (2003, p. 10) draws on the Vygotskian idea "that children in all communities are cultural participants, living in a particular community at a specific time in history", to construct an understanding of "individual development in a social, cultural and historical context" (p.50).

Another philosopher, Bakhtin, also interested in the social nature of language, goes beyond the work of Vygotsky to say that children draw on other utterances situated within human and social relationships (Dyson, 1993). Furthermore Dyson, (1993, p.80) refers to Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and his view "that speakers and writers learn to linguistically enact varied social roles by listening and responding to the voices of others. In assuming new roles, composers use those already spoken utterances as

working material. Dyson uses the work of Bakhtin (1981. p. 288) and his notion of any one language being composed of a "multitude of concrete worlds" to describe the complexity of the language worlds and social arenas in which children operate within a given language. Building upon Bakhtin's ideas, Dyson (1993) explored classrooms in a low – income, working class, African - American community which included ethnically diverse communities to demonstrate that children draw on diverse cultural resources, both traditional and popular, to negotiate the complex social worlds of classrooms and literacy learning. Dyson (1993) suggests the notion of the 'dialogic curriculum' which is constructed through the involvement of parents and other community members and draws on their social language resources to bring to literacy learning.

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) use the term 'funds of knowledge' to refer to the accumulated knowledge and skills that children bring to the classroom. Moll and his colleagues argued that households have cultural and cognitive resources that allow them to manage and maintain their lives but "often remain invisible and under-valued in the school context" (Comber and Kamler, 2005, p. 5). In their research project, Moll, et al found that an important aspect for developing 'funds of knowledge' was that teachers became researchers in households and communities in order to develop heightened understanding about the children and their experiences. This finding further highlights the importance of teachers learning and developing an understanding of children in the context of their family lives and community activities. Pat Thomson (2001, p. 2) similarly argues that children come to school with "virtual school bags", full of "knowledge, narratives and interests" that in the case of some children can be used everyday while for others they may only be opened occasionally or not at all. Thomson draws on the Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital" to suggest that the knowledge valued in schools means there can be more congruence between a particular student's schoolbag and the school curriculum, resulting in children being more comfortable in the school setting, with the potential to achieve better outcomes.

Pedagogical Frameworks

Another lens through which improved student learning outcomes for students can be viewed is provided by research into the use of particular pedagogies. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS, 1998 - 2000) drew upon and built on the work of Newmann and Wehlage (1993) and their model of 'authentic instruction' or 'authentic pedagogy'. Through a study of primary and secondary school lessons, Lingard, Ludwig, Bahr, Mills, Hayes, Christie, Gore and Luke, (2001) used a 20 item scale of Productive Pedagogies to examine classroom practice and from the results, developed and proposed a model of Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2002), which became the basis for curriculum reform. The study found that the key aspects necessary for focus of instruction, and ensuing improved student outcomes, were Intellectual Quality, Connectedness, Supportive Classroom Environment and Recognition of Difference. These overarching pedagogies are further broken down to provide pedagogical elements to enable teachers to choose and develop strategies in relation to

- what they are teaching
- the variable styles, approaches and backgrounds of their students

While some of these strategies are more suited for teaching certain knowledge and skills than others, teachers should when using Productive Pedagogies:

- consider and understand the backgrounds and preferred learning styles of their students,
- identify the repertoires of practice and operational fields to be targeted and
- evaluate their own array of teaching strategies and select and apply the appropriate ones. (Education Queensland, 2002)

Productive pedagogies	Applied to Diverse Classrooms
Intellectual Quality	
Substantive Conversation	Classroom dialogue created and negotiated around the subject matter building on shared ideas
	student initiated dialogue with linked exchanges between speakers that moves beyond initiate, response, evaluate (IRE) classroom interaction allowing opportunities for equal participation
Metalanguage	Develop a language for talking about language and literacy that enables all students to be involved in conversations about literacy.
Connectedness	
Knowledge integration and connection to the world	Learning needs to take place in real contexts using authentic texts with connections to the world in which the students live
Background Knowledge	Acknowledge the linguistic, culture, world knowledge, experiences and interests of all students
Supportive classroom environment	
Student direction	Students have opportunities to identify the activities, interests and knowledge they would like to investigate
Social Support Academic engagement	Classrooms show mutual respect for all students languages, interests and literate practices while developing shared expectations of achievement.
Recognition of difference	Teachers investigate and build on their student's diversity including their literate practices
Cultural knowledge, inclusivity, group identity	Teaching and learning activities acknowledge the diversity and cultural knowledges of the students minimising the concept of a dominant culture
Active Citizenship	Students' diversity is built on through transformative classroom practices which develop their understanding of the role of literacy in their future lives.

Adapted from Anstey and Bull (2004); Education Queensland, 2002.

The table above outlines the productive pedagogies that would be important to recognise in diverse classrooms. It draws on the work of Anstey and Bull (2004) and their interpretation of the productive pedagogies for teaching mulitliteracies.

The Productive Pedagogies as a framework allows for quality student outcomes that are defined in terms of sustained inquiry into powerful ideas and significant concepts that are connected to students' experiences and the world in which they live. "Without these focal points for Pedagogy, Lingard et al. argued, classrooms are not providing the requisite pedagogical foci for sustainable improvement of students' academic and intellectual work beyond the basic skills level" (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 58).

Another framework that could be useful for teachers to consider when planning for literacy within diverse classrooms is the multi-literacies pedagogical framework. The term multiliteracies was coined in 1996 by the New London group to describe the literacy required for life long learners in the post-fordist, fast capitalist society of the 21st century (Gee, 2000). It acknowledges the growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity and the influence of new communication technologies. "New times, New literacies" (Literate Futures, 2000) is another term used to take into account the changes in literacy due to the technological, economical and societal changes in the ever-changing and dynamic society in which we live. In this sense, to be literate in today's society requires a command of a range of increasingly diverse and complex texts and technologies and therefore the need to be multiliterate (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The multiliteracies pedagogical framework focuses on four elements of teaching practice, Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice, and offers a way for teachers to rethink their literacy teaching within diverse classrooms. Through immersion in the experiences and interests of students, as well as new experiences with some familiarity, explicit teaching is given to uncover the underlying patterns in meaning while explaining purposes of communication with the facility to apply the learning to the real world.

A further well known and well established model or way into planning for the literacy pedagogy and assessment in the classroom is the Four Roles or Four Resource Model (Freebody and Luke, 1990; 1999). "The basic proposition of the 'four roles' model is that effective literacy in complex print and multi mediated societies requires a broad and flexible repertoire of practices" (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 56). The resources, breaking the code of texts, participating in the meaning of texts, using texts functionally and critically analysing and transforming texts, allow teachers to interrogate their practice and offer a balance of literacy practices to prepare students for the complex demands of the societies in which they live.

Towards Success

A considerable body of research undertaken in literacy pedagogy has been undertaken in to how knowledge is conveyed and constructed through classroom interactions. Through this research, one of the characteristics identified as preventing effective literacy learning was that literacy teaching is often too socio-culturally constrained (Anstey and Bull, 2004). This means that not enough attention is paid to the socio-cultural, historical and literate backgrounds of students, resulting in literacy practices that all too often exclude rather than include.

Other researchers, Luke and Freebody (2000); Anstey and Bull (2003) and Edwards-Groves (2003) build on Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' to suggest that the literacies favoured in some schools will empower only some students while disempowering others. Therefore students whose home language, literate practices and resources are similar to those held as important by the school are more likely to achieve than those, having differing linguistic and cultural histories and resources. For students to succeed, it is essential that teachers acknowledge that as students bring "unexpected practices, symbolic materials and technological tools into the official school world, the curriculum itself should broaden to become more responsive to children's worlds" (Dyson, 2005, p. 264).

Comber and Kamler (2005, p. 7), referring to the media reaction to research that "frequently positions teachers as villains in the so called literacy crisis", developed a project that invited teachers to become collaborative participants in the research process and provided a space for teachers to interrogate their practice and dialogue about the complex challenges and effects of pedagogies and literacy curriculum. "One of the most significant findings from this study is that teachers needed to turn around to students and their families and see them differently in order to have an impact on their literacy achievement. While the curriculum redesigns were important …..what mattered more… was the willingness and capacity of teachers to open themselves to learning about who their students were and how they operated" (Comber and Kamler, 2005, p. 9). The teachers made sustainable changes to their classroom practice by re-thinking the lens through which they viewed their learners, their learners' families and their literacy practices. The teachers also used the resources of children who are often regarded as 'deficit'. This study is in congruence with the theoretical frameworks described and the need for teachers to move beyond the content and curriculum to investigate and interrogate the social, cultural and historical worlds of children and draw on their "funds of knowledge' and bring this knowledge into the classroom to provide a context for literacy practices that engage all children in the class.

Conclusion

The cultural impacts of a diverse society are not simple. Society is complex and it is therefore simplistic to believe that the answer to issues of diversity in the classroom and the so called, media hyped 'literacy crisis', can be as simple as the technical solution offered by the National Inquiry into Literacy (2005). The recommendation of the Inquiry is the "systematic, direct and explicit" approach to the teaching of phonics with the added requirement that phonics are taught within "an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies". Cambourne (2006, p. 30), in analysing the recommendations of the Inquiry, describes the possible effect of the implementation of the recommendations as being either tonic or toxic and believes "that this places an enormous professional responsibility on teachers". "The paradoxes and ambiguities around equity and justice in education are unpalatable to policymakers, who more than ever want simple and technical 'solutions', rather than slow movement against a murky tide and tugging backwash" (Thomson, 2002, p. 9).

There is a plethora of research available into literacy and best literacy practices for the classroom, some of which this paper has drawn upon. Theoretical approaches, including Vygotsky's socio-cultural underpinnings and the need to move through the ZPD and the need for learning through interaction, to the work of Moll, Dyson and

Thomson that advocate the consideration of the life worlds of the children in classrooms. These all offer strong reasons for acknowledging and building on the experiences, histories, cultures and interests of students, for effective literacy teaching. The Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2002) put forward as a framework for developing classroom teaching and learning along with the multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group, 1996) and the Four Resources Model (Freebody and Luke, 1990) as a way into planning for literacy teaching, offer excellent frameworks from which teachers can draw to redesign their classroom pedagogy for the teaching of literacy. Somewhat negating the ability of teachers to implement the findings from the available research is the political agenda and onerous requirement to measure literacy through national testing and benchmarking while, at the same time, striving to improve literacy standards.

Although teachers find themselves in the unenviable and somewhat untenable position of having to find a way forward, recent initiatives from Queensland Education (2006), which have drawn on two significant key initiatives by the Queensland State Education – 2010 (QSE -2010) and the "Literate futures Report of the Literacy Review for Queensland State Schools" as a basis for Literacy – the Key to Learning: Framework for Action 2006 - 2008 may hold the key. These papers identify key challenges for action in improving literacy outcomes for all students. The stated interrelated challenges are literacy teaching, literacy learning, literacy and the curriculum and literacy leadership as a focus for considering and acting on the issues that affect literacy learning. The goals of literacy must not focus on the mastery of certain knowledge and skills but develop the use of these skills in various social contexts drawn from the resources and practices of the students. This means, as Anstey and Bull (2003) suggest, that schools need to capitalise on diversity and become more community like. Teachers should consider, in diverse classrooms, what counts as best and effective practice in literacy teaching.

Research further indicates that teachers usually have theories about teaching and learning the what they do and why they do it (Wilkinson, 2005) that inform their planning and decision making. However, Willhelm, Baker and Dube (2001, p. 1) state that "these theories are typically underarticulated, unrecognised, underspecified, and quite often inconsistent if not schizophrenic in their application". It is therefore, imperative that teachers are given time to articulate their theories and to discuss and collaborate their understandings of both research and pedagogy, if they are to make sense of the "reduction of the idea of literacy to code-breaking and/or text-participant practices" (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 63). Time is also required by teachers to combine the demand for assessment with its narrow focus on spelling, reading and writing with their knowledge of what counts as best practice in literacy teaching and learning, in order to avoid "the risk of developing young people who are bankrupt consumers when it comes to the complex demands of contemporary societies" (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p. 63).

Teachers, in order to develop connectedness, provide situated practice, substantive conversations and transformed practice for active citizenship, need to develop profiles of their learners and find out about their life experiences, 'life worlds', 'funds of knowledge' and the 'virtual school bags' they bring to school (Dyson, 1993; Moll et al; 1992; Thomson, 2002). However, a further imperative is that teachers be allowed, and encouraged to have opportunities to engage in reflective practice that enables

them to interrogate their knowledge, understandings and attitudes in order to make connections between their own social worlds and their practices. "Bourdieu situated the individual within the social dynamic via the use of the concept of embodied habitus. The particular environmental conditions experienced by the individual within fields, whether material, emotional or social" (Carrington, 2001, p. 267). Further to this Darling – Hammond (1998) quotes Lisa Delpit (1995, p. 151) who noted that "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". This requires that teachers develop a "sociocultural consciousness" that enables a shift away from the notion of their own worldview as universal towards one reflecting their socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic experiences (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy and McDonald, 2005). In order to achieve this teachers, need not only to engage in knowledge about new curriculum initiatives and frameworks but also to develop an understanding of themselves and others enabling them "to "think pedagogically" about diversity…building a culturally responsive curriculum….that grows and changes as students, contexts and subject matters shift" (Banks et al., 2005) and be scaffolded by other knowledgeable peers and researchers to develop their "turn around" pedagogies (Comber and Kamler, 2005).

Teachers must be allowed the opportunity to be involved in the negotiating of curriculum at the macro level with curriculum developers and to investigate and respond to the socio cultural worlds of their students in order to be able to negotiate teaching and learning in the classroom with their students. In this way the diverse needs of students will be considered and included and so provide an opportunity for school to become a place that builds on their incredible bank of different, knowledge (Moll et al, 1992, Dyson, 1993).

Comprehensive research would indicate that literacy education is not a simple task and as such, there is no simple solution, no magic bullet or formulae which can be implemented to solve the literacy issues, perceived or real, across the Australian educational landscape. In this context, for the above recommendations to be implemented, all educational sectors need to engage in the process in order for teachers to efficiently and effectively undertake all of the responsibilities which more often than not fall on their shoulders in diverse classrooms in changing times.

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