COPYRIGHT NOTICE

FedUni ResearchOnline
<http://researchonline.ballarat.edu.au>

This is the submitted for peer-review version of the following article:

Nuttall, J., & Ortlipp, M. (2012). Practicum assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood pre-service teachers. *Early European Childhood Education Research Journal*, 20(1). 47-60

Which has been published in final form at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2012.650011>

© European Early Childhood Education Research Association.

This is the author's version of the work. It is posted here with permission of the publisher for your personal use. No further distribution is permitted.

Practicum assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood pre-service teachers

Joce Nuttall, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Michelle Ortlipp, University of Ballarat, Ballarat, Australia

Keywords: diversity, early childhood, practicum, teacher education

Introduction

This paper reports findings from a study that investigated the experiences of English-speaking pre-service early childhood teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We had observed (anecdotally) in our university teacher education settings that these students seemed to fail teaching practica at a higher rate than their Anglo-Australian peers. This struck us as problematic, given the strategic importance of diverse and international students to the Australian higher education market (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010) and the early childhood teaching workforce. We found, however, that there is little research into this phenomenon in Australia or elsewhere.

We took as our starting point the assumption that assessment processes during the practicum are a crucial factor in the experience of these pre-service teachers, with important consequences for subsequent graduation and retention. This is the focus of this paper. Our definition of CALD students, however, specifically excludes Indigenous Australian students because we understand Indigenous students to face challenges which are additional to those facing non-Indigenous CALD students. (See Fleet, Kitson, Cassady, *et al* (2007) for a discussion of the characteristic needs of indigenous students in ECE teacher preparation courses.)

This study is located within education research in Australia and elsewhere that examines the growth of international enrolments and otherwise diverse students in Australia's universities (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005; Ryan & Carrol, 2005), and global markets

in education (International Organisation for Migration, 2005; United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2004) although a thorough review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. This study draws primarily on initial teacher education literature about the need for teacher education programs to prepare culturally sensitive and competent pre-service teachers (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Ball, 2000; Milner, 2003). This overview reveals there is little research about the cultural competence of teacher educators, including teachers in early childhood services who play a significant role in the supervision of pre-service teachers during the practicum. The research that has been done reveals an “unrecognised and unconscious ethnocentrism” (Han, 2006, p.28) in communicating with CALD pre-service teachers (Hatton, 1996) and the lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of supervising teachers (Cruickshank, 2004). As researchers and teacher educators, we are not immune from these criticisms and Ortlipp’s previous research (Ortlipp, 2005) questioned how equitable the practicum assessment process is for CALD early childhood pre-service teachers. Given the need to increase and retain the numbers of CALD pre-service teachers (Hartsuyker, 2007; Prime, 2001), teacher education programs need to review policies and practices to identify the barriers and supports for CALD pre-service teachers to achieve success (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004). Although the present study focuses on early childhood pre-service teachers, it has the potential to contribute insights into practicum supervision and assessment for all pre-service teachers.

Previous explorations of the experiences of CALD pre-service teachers

With the exception of Ortlipp (2005) and Heald (2006), we were unable to identify empirical studies about CALD early childhood pre-service teachers in Australia or New Zealand. This is despite the small but significant number of pre-service teachers in Australia who do not speak English at home, many from neighbouring Asian countries (Santoro, 1999; Han, 2006). Some authors have expressed concerns about the retention rates for these pre-service teachers and the difficulties they face achieving success (Cruickshank, 2004; Clark & Flores, 2001; Han, 2006). Santoro’s (1999) case study of the experiences of two Chinese-born-and-educated pre-service

teachers on the practicum in Australian secondary schools suggests that racist discourses in schools impact negatively on student teachers' practicum experience. In one case, it was clear that the pre-service teacher's ethnicity impinged negatively on the supervising teacher's assessment. Similarly, Ortlipp (2005) reported on incidents involving early childhood pre-service teachers from CALD backgrounds that highlighted the "potential equity issue of assessors basing their judgments of a student's competence against practicum assessment criteria on their own (often unconscious and unacknowledged) culturally based values" (p.45). Dubetz, Turley, and Erickson's (1997) analysis of their own reflective stories of assessing pre-service teachers from minority cultural groups showed that university lecturers' own cultural values and beliefs influence the judgments they make. These findings are consistent with research into performance-based assessment, which indicates that assessor prejudice regarding race, appearance, language, and ethnicity has the potential to affect judgment, particularly in high-inference performance-based assessment (Gillis & Bateman, 1999; Villegas, 1997).

Paradoxically, the practicum is where pre-service teachers experience the diversity of children in early childhood services, and can develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. However, the focus of studies in this area (e.g. Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007; Santos Rego & Nieto, 2000) is on 'white' student teachers becoming culturally sensitive and able to work with children from diverse backgrounds. According to Amos and Ladwig (2004) "curriculum knowledge in Australia has been constructed and framed within dominant "Australian" cultural definitions, understanding and conventions" (p.3). There is little research that specifically examines teacher education curriculum for similar hidden cultural expectations. In a small study exploring tertiary educators' perspectives on the practicum assessment process (Ortlipp, 2005), analysis of practicum documents showed the assessment process used by the early childhood teacher education program reflected Anglo-Australian values and expectations. According to the tertiary educators who took part in Ortlipp's study, pre-service teachers from particular cultural backgrounds found it almost impossible to take the initiative in triadic (student – university – supervising teacher) assessment

meetings. Villegas (1997) points out there is a clear equity challenge involved in assessing teacher competence, particularly in “finding effective strategies for guarding against assessor bias and for preventing miscommunication derived from cultural differences between the assessed and their assessors” (p. 275).

Research design

The study was designed to address three main exploratory research questions:

1. To what extent do the approaches to practicum assessment described in university practicum documents take into account the diversity of the pre-service teacher population, and how their supervising teachers might address this diversity?
2. What are the characteristic struggles (if any) that CALD pre-service teachers face in meeting the assessment requirements of their practicum in early childhood settings?
3. What are the perspectives of teachers who have supervised CALD pre-service teachers, particularly any challenges and/or opportunities they have experienced?

The data set was generated via three strategies:

1. Content analysis of the practicum documents from four university early childhood teacher education courses in Australia. This strategy addressed the research sub-questions ‘How do practicum documents acknowledge pre-service teacher diversity and reflect (or not) issues of cultural sensitivity for CALD pre-service teachers?’ and ‘What are the cultural beliefs produced, reproduced, and circulated in and through practicum documents?’
2. Semi-structured interviews with three CALD early childhood pre-service teachers. These focused on the sub-questions ‘How do CALD pre-service teachers experience the practicum assessment process?’ and ‘How do practicum documents assist CALD pre-service teachers to achieve success in the practicum?’
3. Semi-structured interviews with four preschool teachers who have supervised CALD pre-service teachers on the practicum, exploring the sub-questions ‘What do supervising teachers notice, privilege, and find problematic in supervising and assessing CALD pre-

service teachers?’, ‘How do the practicum documents assist supervising teachers to supervise and assess CALD pre-service teachers?’ and ‘How do supervising teachers’ cultural values and beliefs influence the judgments they make about CALD pre-service teachers’ teaching practices?’

This paper discusses findings related to the first two research questions and draws on data generated through strategies 1 and 2, outlined above. A discussion of the findings of the third research strategy – the perspectives of the supervising teachers – is provided elsewhere (Ortlipp & Nuttall, forthcoming). The pre-service teacher interview participants were recruited from an early childhood teacher education course in one university in Melbourne, Australia. The university enrolls many pre-service teachers who are full-fee-paying international students from non-Anglophone countries (principally in south-east Asia), and Australian residents or citizens who do not speak English at home. The ethical issues involved in recruiting participants from a course in which one of the authors taught were addressed to the satisfaction of the Ethics Committees at both authors’ universities. For example, the interviews were conducted by the author who was not a lecturer at the university from which the pre-service teacher participants were recruited, and care was taken to ensure the participants were not recruited until their results in practicum studies had been finalised. Recruitment of the pre-service teacher participants in the study ensured their participation was not known to staff of the university, and interview transcripts were de-identified before analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken at three levels. A basic set of *a priori* constructs were applied at the first level of analysis of the documents. These were “divers*”, “cultur*”, “rac*”, “ethnic*”, and “language/linguistic”. These codes were then sorted using four broad criteria. First, two separate categories captured data related to (1) the characteristics of pre-service teachers, and (2) data related to preparing pre-service teachers to engage with cultural diversity. Second, data were ordered according to the roles of the two participant groups in the study, (1) the pre-service teachers and (2) the supervising teachers. The two researchers read and coded the interview transcripts

independently, looking initially for responses to constructs presented in the interview questions, then for spontaneous or unanticipated constructs. Since the participants were recounting recent practicum experiences, these responses sometimes took the form of identifiable narratives, which were identified and analysed according to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) framework for narrative analysis, including temporality, point-of-view, plot, characterization, and coherence. Particular attention was paid to narratives that could be interpreted as stories of 'success', 'struggle', 'language', 'race', and/or 'difference'.

To shift the level of analysis from the descriptive to the conceptual, a third order of analysis was applied, drawing on specific concepts from Foucault's analysis of power-knowledge. Discourse, subjectivity and power were the specific concepts used to frame the answers to the research questions guiding this study. Discourses are understood to be systems of knowledge, often institutionally based, that act as the truth according to which individuals understand the world and their life in that world (MacNaughton, 2000). They provide norms, values, principles, rules and standards, which act as the truth upon which individuals are constituted, and constitute themselves as particular types of people; for example, how to be an 'appropriate' Australian early childhood teacher. An individual's subjectivity, or way of understanding the self in relation to the world, is formed as the individual participates in the discourses available and to which they have access. The constitution of subjectivity in and through discourse is understood as an exercise of power (Foucault, 1980).

The third level of analysis allowed us to move beyond basic content analysis to identify silences, assumptions, and other more subtle forms of knowledge production and reproduction. What follows is our analysis of the practicum documents and one of the interviews with CALD pre-service teachers.

Discourse analysis of university practicum documents

There is no standard requirement across Australian teacher education programs for the organization of practicum documentation, nor are there common assessment protocols or criteria. A

basic criterion was applied in order to determine relevant documents: that they were directly related to the supervision and assessment of pre-service early childhood teachers in prior-to-school settings

Table 1 summarises the documents analysed for the study from the four universities:

Table 1: Summary of practicum documentation data set

	Generic teacher education practicum handbook	ECE-specific practicum handbook	Handbook specific to practicum placement	Assessment guidelines and/or report form	Other
University 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, within preschool practicum handbook	
University 2	No	Yes	No, included in ECE handbook	Yes	Unit guide for practicum unit of study
University 3	Yes	Yes	No, but practicum - specific guidelines provided	Yes	
University 4	No	No but generic information repeated in each unit-specific practicum handbook	Yes	Yes, within preschool practicum handbook	

How do practicum documents acknowledge pre-service teacher diversity and reflect (or not) issues of cultural sensitivity for CALD pre-service teachers?

Comparison of the two categories of data related to this sub-question provided a startling insight. On the one hand, early childhood practicum documentation from all four universities included requirements for pre-service teachers to engage with and respect cultural diversity:

[The pre-service teacher] includes activities that acknowledge the implications of social, cultural and ethnic differences [Practicum handbook, University 1]

The student teacher interacts respectfully and warmly with children and adults of all social and cultural backgrounds by taking the initiative to communicate with children, families, and staff [Assessment criterion, University 2]

Graduates of [the award] will demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of Australian society and the influence of culture, family circumstances, gender and disability on development and influence of these on the education of young children [Course objective, Preschool practicum handbook, University 3]

[The student's] plans are sensitive to family, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds of the children [Assessment criterion, Preschool practicum, University 4]

By contrast, the documentation from the universities was almost entirely silent about the diversity of pre-service teachers. By employing the *a priori* constructs listed above (i.e. culture/cultural, race/racial/ethnic, etc), 46 separate items were coded about the need for pre-service teachers to learn about diverse children and families, whilst only one item explicitly acknowledged pre-service teacher diversity:

Student teachers undertaking [teaching practicums] differ in background, prior experiences, personal styles, beliefs, values, interests, strengths and learning styles [ECE handbook, University 2].

Universities 2 and 3 acknowledged the diversity of pre-service teachers but only tangentially. University 2 included a copy of state guidelines for ethical practice in early childhood field experience (as an appendix to the practicum handbook), which specify that the supervising teacher will 'recognise, accept and value diversity among students ...' [Appendix C, ECE practicum

handbook, University 2]. University 3 included a copy of the University's anti-discrimination policy as an appendix to both its general practicum handbook and preschool practicum handbook.

This contrast between an emphasis on teaching for diversity and silence with respect to pre-service teacher diversity is a striking paradox. It also presented the empirical challenge of making sense of a known phenomenon – pre-service teacher diversity – that was obscured within the data set. This led to the second research sub-question applied to the documents: Who is the early childhood pre-service teacher who *is* portrayed in practicum documents.

What are the cultural beliefs produced, reproduced, and circulated in and through practicum documents?

This question could not be addressed without operationalising the concept of 'cultural difference'. The basic distinction in the study was between CALD students and students from English-speaking backgrounds. This means that 'culture' was less related to nationality than to home language. Many Australian students in higher education (e.g. some second- and third-generation Greek and Italian students) do not speak English as their first language but are also native speakers of Australian English, reflecting the fundamental relationship between language and culture. This provides them with an 'insider' status with respect to Australian cultural norms, and these pre-service teachers may not be identified as culturally 'different' by supervising teachers. This definition of culture – as the ability to articulate and enact norms and values defined and conveyed through a shared language – also acknowledges there is a distinctive culture of early childhood education in Australia (including cultural sub-groups related to service types) that also contributes to construction of pre-service teachers' professional identities. So it is unsurprising, that English language proficiency, a highly assertive (but not *too* assertive) and stereotypically 'Western' approach to interpersonal communication, and appropriation of the 'culture' of preschools all appear as part of the requirements for the early childhood practicum:

Demonstrates an adequate standard of spelling, grammar and written presentation
[Assessment criterion, Preschool practicum, University 4]

Demonstrates appropriate communication skills with children by listening attentively, using a well modulated and appropriate voice and non-verbal communication, eg: eye contact
[Assessment criterion, Child care practicum, University 4]

Discuss planned learning experiences with staff and act upon constructive feedback
[Assessment criterion, child care practicum, University 1]

Demonstrates enthusiasm and initiative in teaching and learning [Assessment criterion, 3-5 practicum, University 1]

Negotiates effectively with staff, gaining their confidence and trust [Assessment criterion, first year practicum, University 2]

In all the documents there is an expectation that the pre-service teacher will be proactive in initiating discussions with the supervising teacher and that they will take an active role in the assessment process. These are practices privileged within a Western discourse of how to be an appropriate pre-service teacher. Through the assessment criteria and the responsibilities of pre-service teachers they describe, the practicum documents produce, reproduce, and circulate particular understandings of what it means to be a 'successful' pre-service teacher on the practicum: professional, reflective, creative, respectful, responsible, cooperative, courteous, enthusiastic, confident, and someone who uses her/his initiative. Exactly how one enacts this professional identity is not elaborated on. Supervising teachers must interpret these requirements by drawing on

their own cultural understandings of what it means to be an appropriate early childhood pre-service teacher in an Australian early childhood service.

It is important to not overstate the role of practicum documentation in creating norms of behaviour, since they may or may not reflect the official discourse. There is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that practicum documentation is not routinely read, and that supervising teachers rely instead on locally constructed assessment expectations. Our analysis provides one kind of backdrop against which the experiences of pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers can be understood: an institutional commitment to differentiated curriculum for diverse children and families but an institutional silence with respect to the needs of pre-service teachers. This claim was subsequently tested in interviews with CALD pre-service teachers.

The CALD student experience of practicum assessment: Sue's story

We draw here on one interview within the study. We do not claim that this pre-service teacher's experience is generalisable. Instead, we offer this as one example of the lived experience of the discursive silence surrounding CALD pre-service teachers.

Sue (this name is a pseudonym) is a full-fee-paying student from Singapore whose home language is Mandarin. Sue was a final-year pre-service teacher in a four-year early childhood teacher education program and had just completed an extended preschool practicum, having already successfully completed practicum placements in middle and lower school classrooms, child care, and preschool settings. Sue described how her attempts to "fit into the environment" of the preschool were undermined by the assumptions of her supervising teacher about Sue's cultural background:

Sue: I try to immerse in that environment and that culture, how the children are comfortable with [it], and I thought it wasn't very much [about] where I come from because I am trying to fit into the environment so I am trying to do things that the children are familiar with. So that was all right but I got the sense from the teacher that 'You are Asian, you are this, this,

this', so I have that mindset of 'You are like that' but, in fact, I am not, but it's really hard to erase that image in her head. Yeah.

Sue's attempt to "immerse" herself in the preschool and "do things the children are familiar with" is consistent with findings from Myles, Cheng and Wang's (2006) study of foreign-trained pre-service teachers, which showed they are very aware they have to adapt their thinking and practice to the new environment in which they find themselves in order to "fit into the community of practice" (p.239) and be assessed positively. In Sue's case, her attempt to use this strategy was cut across by the supervising teachers' frequent reminders of her difference:

Sue: She would talk about my language and she said 'It might be your language problem'. And – I don't know how she phrased it – but she made me feel that I had a language problem, that she couldn't understand what I was trying to say, things like that. So when I got home I always feel not good enough, that's what I mean, just little things that she would say.

Sue is describing here the effect of being positioned in and through the teacher's discourse of 'difference-as-deficit' as an "Asian" who has a "language problem". Although Sue resists this positioning by claiming she is "not like that" she cannot "erase" the image produced through the teacher's discourse. She takes up the discourse of difference as a deficit and constitutes *herself* as someone who cannot be understood and "not good enough".

One way of resisting being constituted and constituting herself within the 'difference-as-deficit' discourse is to draw on alternative discourses of 'difference as celebratory' and 'difference as a curriculum resource'. Sue's account of other practicum placements draws on the discourses made available by other supervising teachers, and recalls how she was positioned within these discourses as a valued member of the community: :

Sue: ... other teachers actually said 'Why don't you talk about where you come from with the children and things like that and they include you in the curriculum... at least the rest of the placement[s] I felt comfortable and then I was included in the community.

Interviewer: So, in those other examples that you were giving me where you felt included, you felt that your particular background was valued by the teachers, they wanted you to use it, is that what you're saying?

Sue: Most of them, yes, they would like you to talk about yourself and talk about where you come from and maps and just tools that you could use. Like, we used maps, compasses and things like that and then you extend from there.

Sue's differing experiences across practicum placements reflect the way funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992), held within particular cultural communities, can be accessed through the backgrounds of CALD pre-service teachers when supervising teachers recognize the curricular and relational opportunities these knowledges provide. But not all supervising teachers view diverse cultural heritages as a potential resource. In describing her supervising teacher's "perception of things", Sue described an opposite example: the teacher's assumption that Sue would have limited 'creativity' because of her background as a Singaporean.

Interviewer: I might have misinterpreted, so, the teacher didn't say that she thought it was difficult for you to be creative because of where you'd come from?...That you were from Singapore and so you wouldn't be creative?

Sue: Yeah. Because she knows, and I didn't say that [Singaporean education] is very structured, teaching was very structured, so probably that reinforced what she had in mind. I'm not really sure.

Interviewer: I understand what you mean.

Sue: Probably I would get it from other teachers as well. They would have this stereotype image of Asians or where I come from and, 'You would have done this, this, this', but it wasn't shown as much as this one.

We interpret this data as indicating that Sue's ethnicity impinged on the supervising teacher's judgment of what Sue was capable of doing as an early childhood pre-service teacher (cf. Santoro, 1999). Sue's statement that the teacher knows Singaporean teaching is "very structured" points to the mobilization of a discourse of 'Singaporean education as structured' within which Sue is positioned as not creative.

In the final third of the transcript, the interview returns repeatedly to her struggle to understand and act upon her supervising teacher's increasingly brief comments. Sue described how other teachers had assisted her then, in response to the prompt "[So] that helped you achieve the requirements of the placement?", Sue continued:

Sue: Mm. Whereas this one, I wasn't like that so very much. I would ask for help and she'd say 'It's in my head', so things like that. And I [would] say 'Oh, but we need some paperwork' and she said 'Oh, if someone comes in and wants to spot check my papers, just say I haven't got the time, so I would probably just write it up after that'. So she was quite sure and she was able to express what she believes, that's what she was going to do... [A]

lot of things are just in her head so it was very hard for me to refer to her head, so that's how I felt as compared to others.

The issue of communication dominates the remainder of the interview. Sue had signaled this difficulty at the beginning of the interview when she said, "... it seems to me I felt something is missing but she doesn't want to tell you what it is." By the end of the practicum, Sue had resorted to imitating her supervising teacher. For example, when criticized for her gentle tone of voice, for not being "firm enough", and being told by the teacher that she was "not fun with the children", Sue:

... only raised my voice because she told me to but in real life I still wouldn't have done that. I would probably use another method rather than using her way of raising her voice. I just did it because she said 'You haven't done it'... I feel often that would probably add to the pressure because you're just doing what she says you're not doing, but that may not be your belief or how you would have done it.

Sue explained she believed that tone of voice and speed of speech, which according to the assessment report form have to be "effective", are to do with personality and therefore hard to assess, but that "teachers require you to be more firm" because it's part of the assessment. Sue's account of her experience of the practicum assessment process and the role of the supervising teacher highlight how the relationships of power operated in this practicum placement. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is relationships of power; relationships in which one seeks to direct the behavior of another (Foucault, 1982). The assessment documents are an integral part of the relationships of power produced within the practicum. They provide for the possibility of the exercise of power, which the supervising teacher mobilised when she pointed out that Sue had not "done it" [used her tone of voice effectively] and required Sue to "be more firm". The assessment report form does not specify that an effective tone and speed of voice is a raised voice. This is the

supervising teacher's interpretation produced within her discourse of early childhood teaching. In Sue's description of what occurred, she draws on a discourse of the practicum within which the supervising teacher has a greater ability to exercise power: to use the assessment report form as an instrument of power and require Sue to use a firmer tone of voice. Sue feels the effect of the supervising teacher's exercise of power as "pressure"; pressure to do what the teacher tells her she is not doing but needs to do.

In order to pass the practicum, Sue had to become someone she would not be "in real life". This statement suggests that the exercise of power described in the analysis presented above is not only about power as actions upon actions; it is about power exercised through subjectification. Sue is constituted in and through the teacher's discourses of early childhood teaching as not firm enough and not creative. Sue's suggestion that it was not the way she would want to act signals resistance to being positioned as someone who raises her voice. However Sue's choice, and her capacity to resist, is limited because of the power relations in operation at the site of the practicum and her desire to pass. When she acknowledges that "teachers require you to be firm", that it is part of the assessment, and raises her voice, she takes up the subject position of an appropriate Australian early childhood pre-service teacher, made available within the teacher's discourse of early childhood teaching. As Phelan, Sawa, Barlow, *et al* (2006) suggest, "The desire to survive, to be 'a teacher' is exploitable. The one (mentor teacher) who holds out the promise of continued existence plays to the desire to survive" (p.174). Sue had to reconstruct herself as a recognizable teacher within her supervising teacher's discourse of early childhood teaching. Her difference was erased as she (re)made herself in her teacher's image.

Sue's final attempt to manage the relationship was to limit her interaction with her supervising teacher but this, inevitably, became self-defeating:

I think it's also because of...probably...my relationship with the teacher is a bit tense because, probably, she's feeling tense as well, that she might need to put me in 'at risk' [of

failing the practicum], that she might be tense as well. But my relationship with her is just that we don't talk, we usually wouldn't talk to each other because if I do say anything it would be a very short answer like there's nothing else to say, that's it, you know, that sort of relationship with her. So it's a bit strange. So you feel very tense all the time when you are with her. Even when you're teaching she is always looking and listening and, even though she's meant to do that, you can feel that it's really tense. I just feel that it's probably the relationship but it's not spoken [about] or no one would discuss about it, but it's taken just like that.

Myles, *et al* (2006) argue that the development of a positive relationship between the pre-service teacher and the supervising teacher is central to a successful practicum experience, and that where the relationship is one characterized by friction or misunderstanding, the power of supervising teachers as assessors is particularly revealing. This played out in Sue's case when she was placed 'at risk' of failing the practicum, and was visited by a university academic who concluded (as Sue commented) that "there isn't any issue". There were two consequences for Sue of the university's decision to keep her at the same practicum site. First, she had to seek counseling at the university to work through her experience. Sue told the research interviewer, "I just feel bad that I have to tell you all these things, because I had to tell the counselor". Second, Sue lost her faith in the possibility of being a preschool teacher; having tried to "climb up", she felt she had been "shot down":

Sue: ...I was trying to figure out everything and then I was trying to climb up and trying to understand how Australian teachers were in preschools and kinder[garten]. And then when you're still climbing up and still learning, you just got shot down. So I don't know. To me it's very sad to say but I probably would not enter kinder[garten] for the time being.

Sue's feeling of being "shot down" is an example of "a kind of terrorism of the soul" (Martuswicz, 1997, in Phelan, *et al*, 2006, p.174). The teacher's construction of Sue as 'Asian', with all the stereotypical characteristics associated with that positioning, and Sue's reluctant reconstruction of herself as someone she would not be in "real life" in order to pass the practicum constitutes violence toward a pre-service teacher's subjectivity (Phelan *et al*, 2006). Drawing on Wenger's communities of practice perspective Myles *et al* (2006) explain that, when supervising teachers require pre-service teachers to follow their behaviour, pre-service teachers' "power to direct ... their own energy within the community of practice involves 'literal compliance, proceduralization, violence, conformity and submission' all of which generate 'alignment with little regard to negotiability'" (Wenger, 1998, in Myles *et al*, 2006, p.243). That Sue suffered violence is evident in her words, "in real life I wouldn't have done that", "I wasn't good enough", "I wouldn't dare", "I'm really, really afraid of her" and "I felt intimidated if I do it [be proactive in talking through the issue and seeking a resolution as suggested in the handbook] and I tried to avoid that aggressive argument so I usually just take it in

Conclusion

Sue is not unique in her experience of finding herself struggling to meet her supervising teacher's expectations during the practicum; this also happens to pre-service teachers from Anglo-Australian backgrounds. The salient feature of Sue's experience is the way her supervising teacher supervised Sue through the lens of cultural and linguistic difference. Sue's supervising teacher attributed Sue's perceived deficiencies— a lack of ideas and creativity, not being firm enough, voice too soft, no fun, and a language problem – to Sue's 'Asian' background. As Sue acknowledged, the practicum criteria required her to communicate with children appropriately; however, it appears that the supervising teacher may have based her interpretation of the criteria on her own culturally normative views of what constitutes 'appropriate' communication (a suitably loud voice and firm tone) and judged Sue as not achieving the criteria.

Our intention is not to demonize Sue's supervising teacher; rather, we must look to ourselves as teacher educators. How can we expect Sue's supervising teacher to foster Sue's development if we have not provided her with any advice about working with diverse pre-service teachers? This study has raised important questions for us: How can we prepare CALD pre-service teachers for the practicum beyond 'tips and tricks' about how early childhood services operate in Australia? How can we support teachers who supervise CALD pre-service teachers to engage with diverse pre-service teachers in ways that are relationally and pedagogically sound? And how can we change our practice as teacher educators to embrace the diversity and complexity of today's teacher education workforce?

One direction to follow in pursuing these questions is the growing literature on working with diverse learners in school settings. For example, authors such as Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton (2006) argue for a culture of high expectation of diverse students in order to promote successful learning. Assuming the same argument could apply in the preparation of early childhood teachers, this suggests the value of shifting the language of university documents from 'difference' to 'expectation' in framing the discourse of student assessment. Research into teacher expectations of diverse learners has established a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' effect (Jussim & Harber, 2005), whereby teachers who believe in a causal link between, for example, ethnicity and achievement will teach in ways that make real their belief: Sue's supervising teacher expected her to struggle and indeed she did.

A further potentially fruitful direction is in the education of *all* teachers about diversity and difference. As teachers become aware of cultural differences and how they can integrate these into their work with children to establish a positive environment for all learners (see, for example, Wubbels *et al.*, 2006), we suspect that diverse pre-service teachers would also benefit. This is the kind of environment that would allow young professionals such as Sue to explore and rehearse their subjectivity as 'successful' early childhood teachers. Strategies such as these apply not just to preparing and retaining a diverse early childhood teaching workforce, or how to shore up

Australia's market in international education. Ultimately, these are strategies for conducting ourselves as a profession with humanity and fairness.

References

- Allard, A., & Santoro, N. (2004, December). *Making sense of difference? Teaching identities in postmodern contexts*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne.
- Amos, W., & Ladwig, J. (2004, December). *Examining non-dominant cultural perspectives in pedagogical practice*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne.
- Baldwin, S., Buchanan, A., & Rudisill, M. (2007). What teacher candidates learned about diversity, social justice, and themselves from service-learning experiences. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(4), 315-327.
- Ball, A. F. (2000). Preparing teachers for diversity: lessons learned from the US and South Africa. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16,(4), 491-509.
- Clark, E., & Flores, B. (2001). Who am I? The social construction of ethnic identity and self-perception of bilingual pre-service teachers. *Urban Review*, 33(2), 69-86.
- Clandinin, J., & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cruikshank, K. (2004). Towards diversity in teacher education: Teacher preparation of immigrant teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 27(2), 125-138.
- Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia). (2005). *Higher education report for the 2002-2004 triennium*. Retrieved 17 January, 2006, from http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/he_report/2002_2004/html
- Dubetz, N., Turley, S., & Erickson, M. (1997). Dilemmas of assessment and evaluation in preservice teacher education. In A. L. Goodwin (Ed.), *Assessment for equity and inclusion: Embracing all our children*, pp. 197-210. New York: Routledge.

- Foucault, M. (1980). Two lectures. In C. Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977* (Trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, & K. Soper), pp. 78–108. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Fleet, A., Kitson, R., Cassady, B., & Hughes, R. (2007). University-qualified Indigenous early childhood teachers: Voices of resilience. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 32(3), 17–25.
- Gillis, S., & Bateman, A. (1999). *Assessing in VET: Issues of reliability and validity*. Adelaide, Australia: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Han, J. (2006). *The retention of 'World English Speaking' student-teachers: A cultural studies perspective on teacher shortages in the context of the mobility of trans-national knowledge workers*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, Australia.
- Heald, D. (2006). *The journey towards employment for Chinese early childhood teachers: A case study*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Hartsuyker, L. (Chair) (2007). *Top of the class: Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on education and vocational training*. Canberra, Australia: The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- Hatton, E. (1996). Dealing with diversity: The failure of teacher education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 17(1), 25–42.
- Hobson-Horton, L., & Owens, L. (2004). From freshman to graduate: Recruiting and retaining minority students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(1), 86–107.
- International Organisation for Migration. (2005). *World migration report 2005*. Retrieved 21 August, 2008, from www.iom.int.

- Jussim, L., & Harber, K. D. (2005). Teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies: Knowns and unknowns, resolved and unresolved controversies. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9(2), 131-155.
- Marginson, S., Nyland, C., Sawir, E. & Forbes-Mewett, H. (2010). [*International student security*](#). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Milner, H. R. (2003). Reflection, racial competence, and critical pedagogy: how do we prepare pre-service teachers to pose tough questions? *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 6(2), 193-208.
- Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D. & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms, *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Myles, J., Cheng, L., & Wang, H. (2006). Teaching in elementary school: Perceptions of foreign-trained teacher candidates on their teaching practicum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 233-245.
- Ortlipp, M. (2005). *Tertiary supervisors' perceptions of the early childhood practicum assessment process* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Australia.
- Ortlipp, M., & Nuttall, J. (Forthcoming). Supervision and assessment of the early childhood practicum: Experiences of pre-service teachers who speak English as a second language and their supervising teachers. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*. [Accepted 6 October 2010.]
- Phelan, A., Sawa, R., Barlow, B., Hurlock, D., Irvine, K., Rogers, G., & Myrick, F. (2006). Violence and subjectivity in teacher education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(2), 161-179.
- Prime, G. (2001). A missing element in the retention discussion. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18(21) 120.

- Rubie-Davies, C., Hattie, J., & Hamilton, R. (2006). Expecting the best for students: Teachers expectations and students outcomes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76, 429-444.
- Ryan, J., & Carroll, J. (2005). Canaries in the coalmine: International students in Western universities. In J. Carroll & J. Ryan. (Eds.), *Teaching international students: Improving learning for all*, pp. 3-10. London: Routledge.
- Santos Rego, M. A., & Nieto, S. (2000). Multicultural/intercultural teacher education in two contexts: Lessons from the United States and Spain. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(4), 413-427.
- Santoro N. (1999). Relationships of power: An analysis of school practicum discourse. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 20(1), 31–41.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2004). *Statistical year book 2004. Trends in displacement, protection, and solutions*. Retrieved 21 August, 2008, from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/>.
- Villegas, A. M. (1997) Assessing teacher performance in a diverse society. In A. L. Goodwin (Ed.), *Assessment for equity and inclusion: Embracing all our children*, pp. 261-276. New York: Routledge.
- Wubbels,T., Brok, D. P., Veldman, I., & Tartwijk, J. V. (2006). Teacher interpersonal competence for Dutch secondary multicultural classrooms. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 12(4), 407-433.