

*Teacher Educator Perspectives and Practices of  
Intercultural Education in a Bachelor of  
Education Program in a South African University*

ERICA AMERY

No Affiliation

IAN WINCHESTER

University of Calgary

SYLVAN BLINGNAUT

No Affiliation

**Abstract:** Intercultural Education is becoming increasingly necessary in teacher training contexts throughout the world, including South Africa. This narrative study explored the perspectives of teacher educators and their understanding of intercultural education and the role it played in the Bachelor of Education program in a South African university. Two female and three male teacher educators from diverse backgrounds were invited to share their perspectives of intercultural education and the role it played in the Bachelor of Education program. The study revealed that they mainly agreed that intercultural education would be beneficial, but it was not adequately covered in the curriculum.

**Résumé :** L'éducation interculturelle devient de plus en plus nécessaire dans les contextes de formation des enseignants à travers le monde, y compris en Afrique du Sud. Cette étude narrative a exploré les perspectives des formateurs d'enseignants et leur compréhension de l'éducation interculturelle et du rôle qu'elle a joué dans le programme de baccalauréat en éducation d'une université sud-africaine. Deux formatrices et trois formateurs d'enseignants de divers contextes ont été invités à partager leurs points de vue sur l'éducation interculturelle et le rôle qu'elle a joué dans le programme de baccalauréat en éducation. L'étude a révélé qu'ils étaient principalement d'accord pour dire que l'éducation interculturelle serait bénéfique, mais

qu'elle n'était pas suffisamment couverte dans le programme d'études.

## **Introduction**

Teacher educators are tasked with a critical role in preparing student teachers to effectively facilitate lessons that prepare students to succeed in their class which can help them succeed in their day to day lives during and after they finish school. In addition to their numerous responsibilities, they must be prepared to interact with student teachers from a variety of linguistic, cultural, religious, gender and socio-economic backgrounds and in turn prepare their student teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds. To adequately prepare their students, teacher educators must have the tools necessary to enhance their own intercultural competencies as well as their students. Increasing their students' cultural awareness, fostering empathy, respect and listening, reflection and adaptability have been referred to as intercultural competencies which can be fostered through intercultural education.

However, not all teacher educators are adequately prepared for the role of preparing student-teachers to interact with students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In fact, the work of teacher educators is not a well-developed role (Ping, Shchellings, & Beijgaard, 2018) and the role of teacher educators had been overlooked in the teacher education arena (Murray & Kosnik, 2011). Furthermore, most university instructors have not received formal training for intercultural (Paige & Goode, 2009) learning or inclusive education (Paige & Goode, 2009), so they often feel unprepared for this task, learn by trial and error, and seek support for this work from teaching and learning centres at their institutions (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Moreover, teacher education as a context for intercultural education is often overlooked and curricula and programmes are more of piecemeal (Lanas, 2014).

This study aims to add to the body of literature on teacher educators' perspectives of intercultural education and what role it plays in the Bachelor of Education program at a University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

## **The South African Context: Teacher Education in South Africa**

While South Africa is comprised of people from a variety of

linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds, not everyone has accepted and embraced one another's differences. In fact, South Africans lived under an apartheid system from 1948-1994 which meant that Black South Africans were forced to live in separate areas than white South Africans, which included attending separate schools. Nelson Mandela's introduction of the new constitution in 1994 led to reforms in education which included curriculum changes from a prescriptive principle to an outcomes-based curriculum, the integration of students from a variety of backgrounds in post-secondary institution classrooms and schools and changes in teacher education (Chisholm, 2012). The education system continues to be evaluated and challenged 30 years after apartheid ended. Despite new policies and the overlay of new trends coming from a new era of international educational reform, there is still the presence of the past in the present education system (Chisholm, 2012).

The curriculum is an issue for many post-secondary students and in response, they have continued to protest to decolonize the curriculum. These 2015-2016 protests are an indication that educators and administrators need to continue to evaluate the curriculum to ensure that they are valuing students' belief systems and including their perspectives. Decolonizing the curriculum includes intercultural education principles such as critical thinking and including perspectives from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the curriculum, instead of focusing on the dominant perspective which is often the Western perspective. Gorski (2008), an equity specialist, who focuses on social justice education and diversity proposed to decolonize intercultural education which requires important shifts in teacher education programs and teacher professional development that prepare teachers to critically examine and respond to the complexities of their particular sociopolitical contexts.

### **Intercultural Education and Teacher Educators**

Changes in social, political and economic spheres have increased the likelihood that educational settings will be diverse (Cushner, 2014). This is evident in classrooms in post-secondary institutions and secondary and elementary classrooms in Post-Apartheid South Africa.

While other terms are used to discuss diversity in education such as multicultural education, inclusive education and diverse education, we will use the term intercultural education.

Intercultural education is often seen as more action orientated and proactive than multicultural education and includes cultural awareness, attitudes and skills which may help one's ability to interact with their colleagues, peers and acquaintances from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cushner, 2014). Intercultural education for teachers in the globalising world is usually perceived as important by educators, students, teachers and policymakers (Lanas, 2014).

Intercultural education can prepare teacher educators and student teachers to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions, consider one another's epistemologies and embrace their peers, colleagues and students' viewpoints. Embracing and encouraging one another to consider a wide range of epistemologies, including non-dominant and non-western perspectives require a lot of time, commitment and skills, attitudes and knowledge. Intercultural education should include being able to examine one's own biases and identify discrimination, racism and prejudices and working towards taking action to reducing them and accepting everyone.

According to Cushner (2014), teacher educators are faced with three tasks related to intercultural education, how to enhance their own intercultural competence, how to guide pre-service teachers to develop their skills and knowledge and at the same time, transfer this to their students.

What complicates the above tasks even further within the South African context is students' insistence on the decolonization of the curriculum.

However, despite the calls from students to include non-Western perspectives and decolonize the curriculum, in reality there are still issues with the curriculum with what is being taught and whose perspectives are focused on which is mainly the Western perspective. In South Africa, Teise & Alexander (2017) argued that pre-service teachers struggle with the connection between culture and education and there is an urgent need for teacher training programs that prepare both educators and learners to engage with issues of oppression, discrimination and diversity (Reygan & Steyn, 2017).

Overall, research focused on teachers' intercultural training is a relatively unexplored, marginal research field with few empirical studies and there is a need for more studies in this area (Hinojosa & Lopez Lopez, 2016; Tarozzi, 2014).

## Methodology

This study took place within a Bachelor of Education program at Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha), South Africa. Individual interviews were conducted with five teacher educators: two females and three males from backgrounds representative of South Africa. The instructors had a varied background in terms of what level they taught, how long they taught and their expertise. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all the research participants.

For example, Cassidy was from Zimbabwe originally and arrived in South Africa after high school. She taught in the foundation phase of the Bachelor of Education program which prepared student teachers to teach grade one to three. Her specialization was literacy development. She had been teaching at Nelson Mandela for eight years. In addition, to being a teacher, Cassidy also worked in Canada with immigrants who needed to improve their literacy skills.

James was born in Port Elizabeth; South Africa and he had been a high school teacher for 27 years and then had joined the Faculty of Education in 2018. He taught first, and second year students and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PCGE) students who had been working for several years before they decided to take the certificate in education. James taught most subjects in social sciences, language, including Afrikaans, and geography.

Dawn was from the United States and had been an elementary school teacher for 24 years. She had been working in the foundation phase of the Bachelor of Education program for 10 years.

Mark was the 3<sup>rd</sup> male I interviewed. He has been a teacher at a primary school for 16 years and he has been teaching in the education program at Nelson Mandela for 12 years. He has taught in the intermediate phase in math and philosophy and ICT education and the senior phase (grades 10-12) of the Bachelor of Education program in math and science.

Mandla had taught for over 34 years in all levels from teaching students in primary school to university undergraduates, masters and PhD students. According to Mandla, he had “been through the whole system.” He had taught in the Bachelor of Education program at Nelson Mandela for over 20 years. He had also travelled to Germany as part of his graduate work and worked with people of diverse backgrounds both nationally and internationally.

The researcher who conducted the field work went through each interview line by line, coding, and then looked for patterns and themes.

## Findings

### Teacher Educator perspectives of intercultural education

The teacher educator perspectives of intercultural education were mixed, but one thing that they all agreed on was that one should be aware of the diversity and wide range of knowledge brought into the classroom by students.

Most of the teacher educators spoke about the importance of understanding who was in the classroom. They all spoke about the diverse make-up of their students and the importance of looking beyond culture, recognizing that there were numerous differences, implying that intercultural education in South Africa required teacher educators to be aware of differences in languages, religion and socio-economic status. James referred to the importance of understanding the diversity in the classroom and how one interacts with one another based on these differences. He relayed:

So, for me intercultural education is about understanding. First of all the diversity in my classroom and then to discover the knowledge in my classroom. Yeh, so interculturality for me it is trying to discover how do we in a diverse group interact with one another. How do we communicate with one another because we each as a culture have our own nuances of how we interact with our world in a certain way? For instance, for me interculturality, in religion I am a Christian man so if I do this... This is an open way of expressing my faith, but I see it as the same as the Muslim woman wearing something on her head or a married woman in IsiXhosa culture also wearing...Those intercultural expressions.

Another participant, Mark also referred to the importance of recognizing who was in the classroom and added that even if students spoke the same language, they still may be from different cultural groupings. He stated:

Intercultural education refers to acknowledging that there are different cultural groupings even different cultural groupings within the same language.

Dawn also highlighted the importance of recognizing the multiplicity of culture knowledge, implying that the wide variety of cultural knowledge due to the differences and the importance of recognizing these diverse cultural backgrounds, but added it was important to value the knowledge that students brought to the classroom. She said:

so is intercultural the...Is it the recognition of the multiplicity of cultural knowledge, knowledge that you have within a space and being able to recognize it for one and see value in it for two and utilize it to support learning amongst students who come from that culture but then also sharing it with others who maybe don't have it. I don't know if I had to take a guess.

Dawn also mentioned that intercultural education was not a term that was typically used in the curriculum, but the terms used were inclusive education, understanding and recognizing diversity. She continued thus:

Yeh and I am working through my curriculum from my studies and I don't know if we use the terms multicultural. I mean you'll see more diversity, inclusive education, but I think you will see diversity more than... So, understanding diversity, recognizing diversity. I don't think we use the term multicultural here

These excerpts indicate that the teacher educators were not oblivious to the diversity in their classrooms. They all agreed that intercultural education was about recognizing the diverse backgrounds and knowledge that students came with, but also valuing this knowledge and taking the steps to really understand their students and who they were and where they came from.

### **Creating an inclusive classroom environment which depends on the teacher's beliefs.**

Another theme that emerged from the data was intercultural education meant that teachers had the responsibility to create an

inclusive and open classroom which meant encouraging students to share their knowledge with others in the classroom. For instance, Dawn spoke about the teachers' responsibility to encourage students to share their knowledge with others in the classroom. She said:

... utilize it [the diversity within the classroom] to support learning amongst students who come from that culture but then also sharing it with others who maybe don't have it. I don't know if I had to take a guess...

James referred to the teachers' responsibility to create a safe space where everyone who feel comfortable sharing what they have to offer.

...in order for intercultural education to succeed one needs to create the space where students experience you as lecturer or teacher, as authentic and caring, fair, but it doesn't mean that you are lowering your standards. It means creating a safe space conducive to teaching and learning where everyone feels what they have to offer is valued.

Cassidy also referred to intercultural education as promoting dialogue amongst all students, including students who were marginalized so they would have a chance to have their voices heard. She spoke from a social justice perspective in intercultural education promoting societal change. She commented:

Well it [intercultural education] would include that, it all depends on your definition of culture and that's where it... I don't walk into a classroom and say well all the Xhosa people explain to the Zulu people, explain what it is meant to be Xhosa. That is the most bizarre thing ever, so I don't subscribe to bounded systems of culture. I don't think that's valid at all and so I work in a dialogue fashion. People must identify who and what they believe they are and its open for dialogue and for me my definition of intercultural education would probably be my definition for education in general which would be to well education, I am Freirean so education for me is about societal change, allowing voices that are marginalized, that are not heard to enter into a space for the



purposes of changing consciousness, building criticality to make changes in everyday life and ultimately changes in society. (Cassidy)

Mandla also referred to intercultural education and the benefits it posed for the larger society, not just in the classroom. He said:

I think when one looks at intercultural pedagogic or intercultural relationships, one has to look at from a broader perspective in terms of how, even in terms of how the talents or skills that come from different cultures could be used to the benefits of a particular institution or the country at large, rather than specifically focusing on labeling or putting people into boxes and ticking that off.

James spoke about the importance of breaking down assumptions that people had of one another. He said:

Yes, sharing their backgrounds, but that speaks also to the environment. Sharing their environment. Not only... You are talking about their mindsets. You are talking about urban, rural, not only physical. You are talking about the mindsets that come from there and how did they come together. So, you might think someone is coming from a school in South Africa specifically that comes from a rural school and you might think... there is probably nothing going on there and you might find the opposite.

Theme: Intercultural education is not a specific module. Rather principles are integrated into various modules and it depends on the instructor.

### **The connection between a teacher educator's attitudes and practice:**

A theme that emerged from the data was the connection between the teacher educator's attitudes and practices. There was not a course that focused specifically on intercultural education, but principles of intercultural education were integrated into the modules, although it depended on the instructor as to what principles of intercultural education were implemented. For

instance, Cassidy spoke about how the individual interests of the lecturer influenced what was taught. She commented:

My foundation phase students to my knowledge don't have a course that deals with issues such as race, class, and gender, they don't. That relies on specific individual lecturers. For example, I know the lecturer Dawn who sent me your information. Dawn teaches from a critical feminist point of view so she will deliberately bring in critical feminist theorists and bla, bla, bla. How can we rely on individual lecturers? It needs to be in the course.

Mandla reiterated the connection between an instructor's passions to determine if they incorporated intercultural education principles. He said, "If it is one of your passions, then you incorporate it."

James also shared that he thought intercultural principles were incorporated within the spectrum of the curriculum, but it depended on the instructor and their engagement with the students and the type of activities that they incorporated. James was evidently interested in learning about his students' perspectives as he shared stories about how he connected with his students. He commented:

Yes, because we... I would say yes. It is incorporated within the spectrum of the curriculum that we are to follow with students, so it is articulated that we want to be able to recognize and interact with the diversity of our students, for cohesion and to understand ourselves better as a nation as well. I think it is incorporated. However, I think it depends on the engagement that the teacher trainer and the student's kind of think about because you might find that my style is too... I have this interpersonal dimension of teaching, so I need to consider who am I so that comes out so already you see I am diverse. Then, I have certain activities and engagements to see how do we interact with this diversity?

Many of the teacher educators spoke about the importance of incorporating activities that facilitated dialogue which would challenge their students' assumptions. These activities were influenced by the instructors' attitudes of intercultural education and what the students needed. For example, James spoke about the

need to introduce students to activities that encouraged them to learn about other perspectives and break their assumptions. He said:

Yes, sharing their backgrounds, but that speaks also to the environment. Sharing their environment. Not only... You are talking about their mindsets. You are talking about urban, rural, not only physical. You are talking about the mindsets that come from there and how did they come together. So, you might think someone is coming from a school in South Africa specifically that comes from a rural school and you might think... there is probably nothing going on there and you might find the opposite. Because it's so easy for us to judge one another and have assumptions about one another and those kinds of things so I like your topic because this intercultural education speaks about bringing together people in different ways through activities or engagements or whatever the case may be, but it is what is needed especially in South Africa today. We see a rise in racist attitudes and that as much as we are post-apartheid.

Dawn shared how it was the teachers' responsibility to add it to the curriculum, adding the importance of reflecting on one's own identity and beliefs. She formulated it as follows:

Well again, if you look at our curriculum it is there, but ultimately it is the teacher educator that facilitates the curriculum. So, if the teacher educator hasn't done the work themselves with regards to unpacking their own identity and beliefs, they might think they are being inclusive and promoting intercultural educational practices, but in fact they might not be. I don't know if we've...

## Challenges

The most prominent theme was that faculty attitudes influenced their practices and often led to challenges in their lack of understanding amongst one another and willingness to open themselves up to other ways of learning and teaching such as incorporating intercultural principles into their classrooms.

The challenges of implementing intercultural education included a variety of responses, but the one that was common was faculty

mindsets and biases which may have been influenced by apartheid. One teacher educator, Dawn spoke about a lack of understanding amongst teachers because they were used to one perspective and were not open to other ways of being and learning. She referred to the white perspective being the dominant view and expressed her frustration. Dawn commented:

I think our biggest problem is that we don't understand... We're so closed off from...We don't listen to one another and understand one another at a human level and a lot of us don't accept that there are multiple ways of being in this world and experiencing things and multiple ways of solving problems and multiple ways of learning and everything. It is not one way, but we are bombarded with the past and how things were, and a lot of those things come from a white Western perspective and I am not sure that's...and we have to ask ourselves, how is that working for us globally.

Mandla reflected on his experience in working with colleagues who came from the apartheid era and the difficulties in breaking stereotypes.

Yes, but some of the challenges that we do have is that some of our colleagues come from the apartheid era. They still have some stereotypes which are difficult to break if you have been conscientized in a certain way. You always see, no matter how hard to try you always see the others as the other so for them it may be very difficult for them to break completely those mindsets and also those of us who lived in an integrated way and were forced like myself.

Like Mandla, James also shared how the effects of apartheid were still not gone and while they had made progress, there was still a lot of racism. He remarked:

They indoctrinated us, the apartheid system. They brain washed us to a large extent. We struggled to get over ourselves. It is my personal opinion. We are making progress, but you have to have intent of what it is to break down those kinds of barriers. They really did a good job. That's why the level of racism is so high now. In our society. We still think in the lines of color. We still think in

the lines of color. We still think in the lines of color. If I did that...then people view me, you think you are black. Even if you did it, they put you now in a little corner, in a little box. They say you are black progressive; you would like to hang out with black people. Okay that's it.

The challenge was that the history of apartheid influenced teachers' implementation of what they taught in the classroom, how they acted towards their colleagues and students. Most stayed within their own groups as several teacher educators mentioned. Cassidy expressed her disappointment in some of her colleagues' actions stating that they did not encourage students to think critically and discouraged them from expressing their opinion. She said:

Yes and my experience is completely opposite because it has happened before where students have voiced opinions or students have raised issues and instead of dealing with the issue, the faculty has chosen to for example go after the students who brought the issue up or go after, whose class were you in when this came up so this kind of...a refusal to engage in the criticality of our students so fees must fall hasn't changed anything in this faculty, fees must fall has changed nothing. They still treat students as if they can't think, that they somehow devoid of able to think critically of situation and they are waiting for the dean to tell them to think and react and it's a view of our students that I can't accept and that I find highly contradictory.

When asked if teacher educators had seen any changes since the dawn of democracy, most said that there were not a lot of changes in the education program except that of course the classes were mixed.

Mandla expressed how teachers had not changed their approaches to working with diverse students and had taken a colour-blind approach to working with students. He shared the findings from a study his student had conducted in ex-model C schools (formal white schools). He said:

One of my students did a follow-up study where she wanted to find out these so-called white teachers in ex-model c schools. Have they changed their strategies to accommodate for diversity and then in the findings, she did a qualitative

study and, in the findings, it came through that many of them said no, we don't really need to change approaches because what worked before works now? We don't see colour, we just see learners, so we basically use the same approaches we used so she looked at Bank and Banks and their models because they are the fathers of multiculturalism.

Interestingly, Mandla indicated that while some teachers had not changed their approaches in ex model C schools, the Bachelor of Education curriculum had a great emphasis on diversity. He remarked:

Since the dawn of democracy, I would say there is a great emphasis on diversity within our modules and also wider especially in terms of if you look at a broader perspective the university has the Centre for Advancement of non-racialism and Democracy and ... that unit organizes a diversity month in August every year. As the coordinator of the diversity month what normally happens is I send out a general communication to members of staff and then we put together a program so some of the members of staff are integrating diversity pedagogy or diversity into the specific modules without having a specific theme so their groups of learners will do outside presentations, inside presentations so then we will send advertisements out to the whole university so what happens in the class goes into a public space which is becoming accessible to a wider group which is the university and so like for example I was talking to one of the lecturers who is not specifically teaching diversity but just earlier on she said to me I've got something for diversity month which means that she is integrating diversity into her units and her modules. She's teaching an educational module which there is no unit on diversity, but diversity is infiltrating and being integrated into modules, across modules. Although, in the 3rd year module we are specifically looking at it but across the modules, it's always cropping up in some form or another.

Cassidy also indicated that there were still issues amongst students with lack of understanding due to differences and the history of racial segregation in South Africa. She said:

People just don't understand why it is that... why are you shutting the university down, I don't understand? You should be grateful that you are here instead of trying to shut the university down so there is a lack of understanding around class issues because if it does not impact you you do not think it is an issue

The above excerpt refers to the closing of most of the universities in South Africa in 2015-2016 by students during the #Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements that advocated for decolonization of the curriculum and free higher education.

### Professional Development

When participants were asked about professional development, most indicated that professional development related to intercultural education was mainly informal and not mandatory for teacher educators. Rather, most of the teacher educators sought out professional development opportunities on their own. These consisted mostly of sessions offered by the university.

Overall, it was clear that the teacher educator participants were aware of the importance of recognizing the diverse backgrounds of their students and the value they brought to the classroom and society. It was evident that their attitudes towards intercultural education and what they thought was important influenced their approach to how they interacted with students, what they felt was important to include in the class and expand on. While there were principles of intercultural education embedded in the study guides, it was mainly up to the instructor which approach they took in presenting this material and how much and how they expanded on it. It was difficult to ignore the influences of the past and how it had shaped people's thinking, their interactions with their students, colleagues and practices. While some teacher educator participants had different perspectives on what should be included in intercultural education, they all agreed that more opportunities to collaborate and engage in dialogue amongst their colleagues to discuss what intercultural education was, reflect on their own identities and practices and share ideas with one another were required.

One teacher educator, Dawn indicated that more spaces where the teacher educators could talk to one another and reflect on oneself were needed. She said:

I think as lecturers we need to have more spaces where we can talk. We need to have a space where we can do work on ourselves and be okay with and understand that... I believe that everyone in their hearts wants to do the right thing, but we default into particular ideas and beliefs and unless you do that work, you are going to continue those patterns, and everyone is good at saying things and meanings and knowing what to say and playing the game and I also need to do that work. I am always reflecting on what I am doing and saying and who I am in this world and how I influence others based on who I am and where I am from. So, I am not saying that I am perfect. I also need to do that work, but in this space its hard. We have so many competing issues and things that need to be done and there were times that when I first got here that they had spaces for that to happen but it's not a one off, it's daily work. It's not something that you can be work shopped on. Let's put it that way.

Another teacher participant, James also shared how more spaces, such as formal professional development sessions were needed for teachers to examine their own ontologies and stories.

To give opportunities for people to really consider their own ontology, their own story because now people are just reacting from things from their own perspectives, and you are working with a multi-diverse group of students in this university. For someone to engage the space, to talk about these things. So, that people become aware that your story is not the only story and maybe your story is even based on a lie because that was definitely based on a lie, propaganda and misinformation.

## Discussion

In this study we set out to determine how teacher educators defined intercultural education and to find out what role it played in the Bachelor of Education program. The teacher educator participants in this study were all from diverse backgrounds and their interpretations of intercultural education differed, but most stated that intercultural education was being aware of the diversity in the classroom. As Gay (2015) indicated it is important for both authors and teachers to declare how they engage with diversity and that



some authors may focus on gender, social class and linguistic diversity and others may focus on race, culture and ethnicity. Much like Gay's (2015) comments, it was evident that the teacher educators' interest dictated how they approached diversity in the classroom. For instance, Cassidy mentioned that it depended on the individual instructor in what approach they took, referring to another teacher educator who taught from a critical feminist point of view. Similarly, James also said it depended on the individual instructor and their engagement with the students. There was evidently a connection between the teacher educators' perspectives of intercultural education and towards diversity and their teaching practices. This aligns with recent studies that indicate that there is a connection between knowledge, beliefs and classroom practices in the classroom (Dedeoglu & Lamme, 2011; Yang & Montgomery, 2011). Hence, it is critical that teachers' beliefs are taken into account when examining teacher educators' practices. Recent studies (OECD, 2009; Dedeoglu & Lamme, 2011; Yang & Montgomery, 2011) verify this complex correspondence between knowledge, beliefs, and teaching practices in the classroom. Hence, it is critical that teacher educators are asked to reflect on their own selves and personal experiences and the influence this can have on their classroom practices and their engagement with their student teachers. Several of the teacher educator participants (Dawn, James, Mandla) reiterated the importance of reflecting on one's own beliefs and values as an essential part of their role when working with their students.

Therefore, the consideration of the teacher and his/her perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes should be a critical part of teacher education.

All of the teacher educators said that intercultural education was not a formal part of the curriculum, although principles of intercultural education were embedded in the curriculum and it was up to the instructor what approach they took and if and how they will do it (Yang & Montgomery, 2011)

Another interesting theme that arose from the conversations with the teacher educators is that their attitudes about the past in the South African context likely led to the way they approached intercultural education in the classroom, their interactions with students and their colleagues and their willingness to participate in professional development to develop their intercultural competencies and learn tools to develop their students' intercultural competencies. Their responses to barriers to intercultural education

such as a lack of formal professional development related to intercultural education and a willingness to collaborate with one another is consistent with the literature. As Chrisholm (2012) stated there is still the past in the present, in South Africa despite advances and the reevaluation of education policies and the curriculum. This was evident from the teacher educator comments when they were asked about challenges with the Bachelor of Education program in relation to intercultural education. Most of the teacher educators mentioned that overall that while there were changes after apartheid, there were still many teacher educators who were not willing to adapt, still possessed stereotypes of their students and colleagues and had a lack of understanding of how to implement approaches to develop their own intercultural competencies and their students. These findings were similar to Keil, Syring and Weiss's (2017) study, that indicated that a shift in attitudes to being empathetic, open-minded and reflective is critical. Most of the teacher educators emphasized the need for more collaboration between one another to learn what one another were doing and to reflect on one another's practices and oneself.

Furthermore, they discussed the need for more formal professional development related to intercultural education. These findings are consistent with Keil et al.'s (2017) teacher educators' perspectives on the need for more teacher training related to increasing intercultural knowledge and instruction methods. These findings also correspond with Keil et al's (2017) and Pareja and Lopez's (2018) findings, that teacher educators in the current study emphasized the need for more collaboration amongst one another. Collaborating with one another could help bring instructors together who may not have had the opportunity and promote critical conversations and self-reflection. Given the diverse make-up of the faculty, it is likely that each individual experienced the past, particularly apartheid, differently and it is important to provide them the opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences and biases.

Furthermore, recognizing the effect that past attitudes can have on students is critical, especially in the South African context. For education to be effective and to respond to the needs of all students, meaningful connections between the students' culture, the curriculum and education practice therefore has to be made (Tiese & Alexander, 2017).

Intercultural education requires committed teachers with intercultural competence, beliefs, sensitivity and values (Tarozzi,

2014). This requires administrators to develop and provide facilitated professional development focusing on intercultural education as well as opportunities to engage in self-reflection on one's biases and assumptions.

Gay (2010) emphasized the need to pay more attention to teacher education programs and the critical analysis of different approaches to cultural diversity and their effects on educational practice, equity, and social cohesion. Teacher development that focuses on reflective practice through their interactions with other practitioners is a way to improve their professional practices; a paradigm shift that is needed to transform teacher professional development (Sari, 2012). This can come in the form of online or face to face knowledge building. While the teacher educators in this study seemed to have a solid understanding and commitment to facilitating activities that used intercultural education principles, they expressed a view that not all their colleagues did so. In fact, they indicated that some were resistant or did not have the knowledge and more collaboration amongst all teacher educators were suggestions from several of the research participants. The advantage to this method is that they are on a more equal footing with one another (Sari, 2012). This could be beneficial given the history of South Africa and inequality and the long shadow that the past continues to cast on the present.

The teacher educators' comments that intercultural education was not a focus in the Bachelor of Education program but rather it depended on the teacher is consistent with other studies that found that intercultural education was not a priority but rather an add on.

## Conclusion

It was evident from the conversations with the teacher educators that intercultural education was not a formal part of the Bachelor of Education program. The teacher educators all had their own perspectives of intercultural education which was evident in their practices. While this group of teacher educators seemed comfortable and knowledgeable in implementing intercultural education principles, it was clear that they were not representative of all the faculty in the Bachelor of Education program. They all could benefit from more structured professional development related to intercultural education which would encourage them to engage in self-reflection of their own biases and assumptions, collaborate with their colleagues and gain practical tools to enhance their students' intercultural competencies through intercultural

education practices. It is only by embracing such professional development opportunities that would enable teacher educators to truly become intercultural educators and as Archbishop Desmond Tutu suggested, "the rainbow people of God."

### *References*

- Chisholm, L. (2012). Apathied education legacies and new directions in post-apartheid South Africa. *Storia delle donne*, 81-103.
- Cushner, K. (2014). Strategies for enhancing intercultural competence across teacher education curriculum. In J. Phillion, S. Sharma, H. Sasser, & J. Rahatzad (Eds). *Internationalizing teacher education for social justice: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 139-144). Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Dedegoglu, H., & Lamme, L. (2011). Selected demographics, attitudes and beliefs about diversity of pre-service teachers. *Education and Urban Society*, 43(4), 468-485. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0013124510380718>
- Dimitrov, N., & Haque, A. (2016). Intercultural teaching competence: A multi disciplinary model for instructor reflection. *Intercultural Education*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2016.1240502>
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. Teachers college press.
- Gay, G. (2015). The what, why, and how of culturally responsive teaching: international mandates, challenges, and opportunities. *Multicultural education*, 7(3), 123-139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2015.1072079>
- Gorski, P. (2008). Good intentions are not enough: A decolonizing intercultural education. *Intercultural education*, 19(6), 515-525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980802568319>
- Grant, C., & Gibson, M. (2011). Diversity and teacher education: A historical perspective on research and policy. In A. Ball, & C. Tyson (Eds). *Studying diversity in teacher education*. (pp.19-62). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Hinojosa, E., & Lopez Lopez, C. (2016). Impact of intercultural teaching induction training. A review of research. *Convergencia*, 70, 1-19. <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/conver/v23n71/1405-1435-conver-23-71-00089-en.pdf>
- Keil, E., Syring, M., & Weiss, S. (2017). How can intercultural school development succeed? The perspectives of student teachers

- and teacher educators. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 25(2), 243-261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2016.1252421>
- Lanas, M. (2014). Failing intercultural education? Thoughtfulness for intercultural education for student teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(2), 171-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.882310>
- Murray, J. & Kosnik, C. (2011). Academic work and identities in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*. 37(3). 243-246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2011.587982>
- Paige , M., & Goode, M. (2009). Intecultural competence in international education administration. In D. Deardorff (Eds), *The Sage book of intercultural competence* (pp. 333-349). Thousand Oaks.
- Pareja, E., & Lopez Lopez, C. (2018). Interculturality and Teacher Education. A study. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 43(3), 74-92. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1174171>
- Ping , C., Shchellings , G., & Beijaard, D. (2018). Teacher educators' professional learning: A literature review. *Teaching and Education*, 93-104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.003>
- Reygan, F., & Steyn, M. (2017). Diversity in basic education in South Africa: Intersectionality and critical diversity literacy. *African Education Review*, 14(2), 68-81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2017.1280374>
- Sari , E. (2012). Online learning community: a case study of teacher professional development in Indonesia. *Intercultural Education*, 63(1), 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2012.664755>
- Tarozzi, M. (2014). Building 'intercultural ethos' in teacher education. *Intercultural Education* , 25(2), 128-142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.888804>
- Teise, K., & Alexander, G. (2017). Perceptions of teacher education students at a South African university on the relationship between culture and education: implications for social justice. *Bulletion for Christian Scholarship*, 82(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.82.3.2334>
- Yang , Y., & Montgomery, D. (2011). Behind cultural competence: The role of casual attribution in multicultural teacher education. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 36(9), 1-21.

**Author and Affiliation**

Dr. Erica Amery

Email: ameryerica@gmail.com

**Author and Affiliation**

Dr. Ian Winchester

Professor, Werklund School of Education

University of Calgary

Email: winchest@ucalgary.ca

**Author and Affiliation**

Dr. Sylvan Blignaut