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Linking research and pedagogy: Empowering pre-service visual arts teachers to be culturally inclusive in thought and action

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Findings from my research

- cultural understandings were perceived predominantly in terms of biculturalism
- a broader than bicultural emphasis was evident mostly in terms of Pacific peoples’ art forms
- teachers professed little knowledge of multicultural theory or multicultural pedagogies in visual arts education
- pedagogy reflected aspects of teachers’ personal and professional histories
- art works and artists studied were drawn primarily from the modernist aesthetic and western art canon
- the cultures of ‘others’ were comparatively downplayed in programmes

 e.g. the art and culture of the Asian sector was noticeably absent
Linking research and pedagogy

A scaffolded approach

* five strategies requiring reflection reading thinking doing to empower pre-service art teachers to engage in being culturally inclusive
Strategy 1

Locating themselves

- Widening gap in Western countries between diverse students and 'white' teachers - the realities of diverse classrooms
- Conceptions of 'art' and 'culture' - attitudes to Western and non-Western art and culture - debates on visual culture and material culture
- Giroux's (1992) concept of 'teachers as cultural workers'

Critical self-reflection on own position and the cultural spaces inhabited - personal construct of self
Strategy 2

Critiquing national curriculum

- acceptance of national curriculum - embedded meanings in documents
- relationships between curricula and the politics of culture and education
- cultural theory – the responsibility of schooling to educate for an equitable society
- the contribution that art education can make to democratic practices

Locating cultural references - critically reflecting on and re-interpreting national curriculum
Strategy 3

Developing a culturally inclusive pedagogical stance

- fulfilling the curriculum ‘strands’ is rated well above consideration of the ethnicities/cultures of students
  
- “Culture is one of the differences students bring to school”  
  (Nieto, 2004)

- “Culture counts in the classroom… being willing to face up to the responsibility of catering for cultural difference in classrooms”  
  (Bishop & Berryman, 2006)

Reflection on personal and professional states of cultural knowledge in order to make a difference
Strategy 4

Acquiring knowledge of culturally inclusive practices in art education

- knowledge of pedagogies and cultural theories underpinning them
- modernist conceptions that celebrate pluralism but serve existing political, social and cultural conditions
- postmodern conceptions that emphasise difference and challenge dominant power and knowledge structures

Making connections between critical theories and socio-political-cultural contexts
Strategy 5

Putting multicultural theories into art teaching practices

- *Modernist conceptions* - creating programmes for year 9-10 students that celebrate ‘personal identity’ and the art and culture of ‘others’

- *Postmodern conceptions* - creating examples for year 12-13 students that explore cultural differences and raise cultural issues

Making connections through ‘doing’
Rachel Kang
Korean

Maori Heru (comb)
&
Korean Binyeo & Dwikkoji (hair ornaments)

as inspiration for a year 9-10 unit

Personal Identity Comb
Rachel’s ‘partial’ exemplar:
Personal Identity Comb
Māori ‘Tiki’ in carving & adornment

&

Chinese Dragon statuary

as inspiration for a year 9-10 personal identity sculpture:

The Layering of Culture
Development of ideas – page 1

Development of ideas – page 2
Penny Lin
Taiwanese

Maori MOKO (tattoo) patterns
&
Chinese paper Window Flowers

as inspiration for a year 9-10 personal jewellery unit
Veiling and Unveiling
Penny’s exemplar

…walking in / walking out…

Veiling & Unveiling
On practicum Penny taught her programme to year 10 students at Botany Downs College.
Chi Tsu Ma
Taiwanese

Artist model 1 – Ah Xian, Chinese sculptor
Artist model 2 – Shirin Neshat, Iranian photographer & film maker

Specialist art discipline – Photography
‘cultural issue’ for own practice
Cultural displacement relating to modern Chinese woman – me!
Ah Xian’s statement that “you can never leave your roots completely behind” is a reflection of what it means for me being Chinese living in New Zealand.

His work goes beyond the representation of the human body – the figure posed in stillness, like mortuary sculpture, is beautiful yet disturbing.
Much of Neshat’s work focuses on the idea of cultural displacement and exile (she is exiled in New York) … and often reflects on the ideology of the Islamic world and the nature of gender within it.

“The bride to be sits on the side and away from the camera, head turned. Her face is emotionless and shows no sign of joy or happiness for the big event … she has given in to fate and destiny, uncertain of what lies ahead.”
This photographic series shows the artist’s perspective of life and experience in contemporary Iranian culture. She uses her own image as the vessel to tell stories of Islamic women. The inscriptions across her face, hands and feet illustrate the language of memory… it is a language which Western people are not able to read.
I selected things from home that relate to my culture and to my self identity

The patterns on my grandmom’s traditional wedding dress, the Chinese style painting by my mom … these are like the ‘cultural patterns’ used by Ah Xian and Neshat

Chinese calligraphy symbolises history and knowledge passed down the generations. There is a Chinese saying – “If the writing is good the person is good too”
I set up a photoshoot as a representation of a Chinese bride-to-be… dressed in red for lucky… covered in veil as a virtuous woman
I tried different compositions using the bridal jacket and text from an old scroll which talked about the importance of being a virtuous woman.
I used Neshat’s method of text and photograph, and Ah Xian’s use of cultural and symbolic patterns.
Born in one country, growing up in another … there is a burden on the shoulder – culture, heritage – to carry on the family name.
Karen Zheng  
Chinese

Artist model 1 – Jerry Takigawa, Japanese photographer  
Artist model 2 – Vik Muniz, Brazilian sculptor, photographer

Specialist art discipline – photography

‘cultural issue’ for own practice

Chinese melamine scandal in 2008
I was inspired by Takigawa’s concern for environmental issues….broken pieces of debris and bottle caps arranged like sushi

Takigawa creates photographs in which he layers images from background to foreground… the top layer comprises objects of environmental concern
Muniz explores issues related to the livelihoods and occupations of the poor... as in the ‘Garbage Pickers’ series.

His ‘Sugar Children’ images were inspired by children in the Caribbean whose parents worked in the sugar industry... and the sad future for these young people.

Muniz photographed the children and later reconstructed their images with sugar, sweat and soil.
After the scandal, in which melamine was used to dilute milk powder in China, milk powder from New Zealand became the best gift for my relatives back home.

Melamine is a protein used in common plastic ware, like plates.
I used images of sick infants published in the press, and like Takigawa created layers of images of infants, containers of Karicare and plastic plates.
I wanted to show the fear of losing children due to the one-child policy in China.
Inspired by Muniz, my top layer was Karicare milk powder
I wish to thank my former pre-service art teachers
Rachel Kang
Jackson Tan
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Karen Zheng
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Source: Statistics New Zealand / Herald Graphic: Saturday 23 April 2005 Weekend Herald