

# Chapter 8

## Teacher Education for Diversity

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### Introduction

Welcome to the world of teacher education, a world inhabited by the writers of this chapter for almost 20 years. Both of us entered the teacher education profession from the school classroom where, in the 1980s in inner city Scotland, Geri taught a linguistically and ethnically diverse range of students and Paul taught a range of students from very low socio-economic to middle class backgrounds in a bilingual situation in both primary and secondary schools in Malta. At that time, the norm in the teaching profession in both our countries was that classrooms were populated by pupils from monolingual, monoethnic backgrounds and children with additional support needs were frequently educated outside of the mainstream classroom.

Classrooms are changing and in this first decade of the 21st century, teachers need to be prepared for ensuring a high-quality education for an increasingly diverse school population coming from different racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, and differing abilities. Student diversity incorporates a number of dimensions including social class/socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, sexuality and special educational needs. It is important to recognise that these categories frequently overlap and when added together, it is clear that this is not a minority issue but is the reality of experience for all teachers and all potential teachers who will teach pupils from across this diverse spectrum. Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognise that each of the dimensions does have a different 'history', with some having been classroom reality for many years and, therefore, being the subject of considerable research and literature, while other dimensions are relatively newly being recognised in mainstream classrooms and consequently much less has been written about them. Some dimensions are the subject of national legislation (e.g. in the United Kingdom, race and disability). Others are the subject of recent or imminent directives from the European Union (e.g. religion, sexual orientation, age).

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Other dimensions are not yet subject to legislation as such (social class, language), although there may be national policy initiatives concerning underachievement, for example, which influence educational responses to children who are in lower achieving groups as a result of social class or language. Three main factors which appear to have highlighted diversity issues in education in recent years are demography, mainstreaming and underachievement. There has been a demographic and associated cultural shift due to the impact of an increasing number of immigrants in Europe and increasing mobility within and across countries (Eurydice, 2002; EC, 2003). At the same time, there has been a wide policy of mainstreaming of students with impairments or special needs, which calls ‘for the acquisition by teachers of specific skills, such as the ability to offer teaching geared to individual needs and adapt the curriculum accordingly’ (Eurydice, 2002, p. 47). One may add to this the wider democratic concerns on the entitlement of each student to reach his/her potential, whether they are gifted or have a different learning style from the majority of the class (see, e.g., Tomlinson, 2001; Meijer, 2003). Further, there is a new concern about the difficulties that are faced in modern society by youths who fail to achieve adequate levels of literacy or drop out of school, together with an awareness of the multiplicity and complexity of competences required in today’s society (see, e.g., Gregory & Kuzmich, 2005; CEC, 2007).

It is not surprising then to find that three of the eight questions raised by the EU Commission consultation on ‘Schools for the 21st century’ address diversity issues. These are worthwhile questions for all teacher educators to consider.

- How can school systems best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?
- If schools are to respond to each pupil’s individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organisation and the roles of teachers?
- How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity? (CEC, 2007).

All teacher educators, whether engaged in theoretical approaches such as psychology, philosophy, or sociology of education, or as general or subject-specific pedagogy experts, have to consider how to respond to diversity in their teacher education. Teacher educators also have to consider the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse student teacher population.

At this point, the authors wish to declare some concerns about raising the issues of diversity in a separate chapter, as these issues should truly permeate all areas of teacher education, be it our own teaching approaches, assessment issues, the content of our input, support for students on placement in the field or any other area of our professional practice. While being a separate chapter, it is intended to make diversity issues familiar to all teacher educators who may sometimes tend to consider the issues as belonging only to a few colleagues. It is also hoped that the chapter will reduce the distance from diversity issues that sometimes arises from the fact that most teacher educators come from a background of success at school and belong to dominant groups in society.

In so doing, the authors of this chapter would like to first say that as teacher educators we consider ourselves to be in a privileged occupation. We work directly with those who will be involved in the education of future generations and also, through our research, with children in classrooms. To an extent, our pairing is diverse – Paul is a male from Malta and Geri is a female from Scotland. However, what we have in common is perhaps far more significant – we are around the same age with a similar class and religious upbringing and similar family situations. We share values as to what education is and can be and are passionate believers in social justice. What this cannot mean is that we want all teachers to be clones of our value systems and beliefs. Indeed, both of us also feel a great need for contact and dialogue with teacher educators from other cultures and ethnic and other minority groups as an essential ingredient in our continuing professional development.

This chapter investigates two diversity challenges for teacher educators in succession: first, how teacher educators themselves can be increasingly open to the diverse needs and strengths of their own student teachers in all aspects of their pre-service development; and second, how teacher educators can help their student teachers to develop competences in responding to diversity in schools and classrooms.

## **The Challenges**

### ***Student Teacher Diversity***

The first challenge is for teacher educators to be aware of and responsive to the diversity of their own student teachers. An audit by observation of your classes in terms of gender and visible ethnicities and abilities may not reveal a very diverse group. However, widening access initiatives have changed the social class and physical ability of entrants to higher education. Gradually, the teaching force is becoming more culturally and ethnically heterogeneous and this is to be welcomed (see, e.g., report of REMIT seminar, 2004). There are now increasingly diverse student teachers because of job and trans-European mobility and more heterogeneous societies, as well as an encouragement in some countries of diverse routes to teacher education to people working in business and industry, particularly for new subject areas. Moreover, we are recognising the fact that student teachers may have different learning styles (Ehle, 2007). This situation calls on teacher educators to acknowledge, respect and respond to the diversity of their students through understanding and developing the backgrounds, cultures, experiences and values that all students bring to teacher education.

### ***Professional Self-Development of Teacher Educators***

The development of openness towards diversity is primarily related to acknowledgement of one's own attitudes. As such, it calls for personal reflection and value

clarification as an essential learning tool. Teacher educators have included such reflection as an essential part of teachers' professional development for a long time, but most strongly since Schön's (1983) accounts of *The Reflective Practitioner*. This approach should also be an essential part of the professional self-development of the teacher educator in responding to diversity.

As teacher educators, we ourselves need to reflect on what backgrounds and cultural experiences we are bringing to our teaching. It is helpful to reflect on our implicit theories of education. For instance, ask yourself what do you think is the main aim of education. If you consider the main aim as being to pass on the prevailing culture and values to students, you are liable to consider student teachers as a group of educators whom you have to form into the ideal teachers according to your own understanding, values and criteria for the ideal educator.

On the other hand, if you consider the main aim of education as being to enable students to achieve autonomous thinking and skills that will lead them to use their capabilities and learning to make the world a better place for themselves and others, then you may see your task differently: you are likely to consider student teachers as individuals with particular characteristics and learning that can contribute towards a better understanding of the education system and with a potential for changing it into a more equitable and effective system for learners.

Another opportunity for reflective practice is to consider your responses to differences in the group of student teachers. You may be lucky in your student body to have a mixture of genders, ethnic and language groups, ideological orientations and other differences. How do you respond to such differences? Do you see it as a problem, for example, if you have student teachers who do not share the same first language as yourself or who require particular access arrangements to be made to class material? Do you plan your activities assuming a particular shared cultural knowledge base among the group? Or can you see student diversity as an opportunity to enable your student teachers to appreciate the richness of classroom diversity? Do you see yourself making use of the different contributions that each of your students can offer to their peers in opening up to new perspectives on education? Do you encourage debates about the nature of education and, for example, the teacher–pupil relationship, or do you assume that all your students share your views and experiences?

Prior to engaging with diverse groups, it is important to acknowledge how one positions oneself in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, physical and intellectual ability, social class and so on. This can be initiated by reflection on how one's own reaction to difference has developed over time and experiences. Teacher educators can engage in a variety of strategies for understanding how their own background has influenced the development of their own identities and how this in turn shapes and influences their interaction with people from other cultures or minorities (see, e.g., Cushner, 2006; or internet resources such as <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activityarch.html>).

Such reflection can make you more aware of possible barriers that you may set up when encountering different individuals and can enable you to be more prepared to open yourself up to the positive aspects of diversity.

A related area for growth in one's openness to diversity is offered by the opportunity to reflect on one's position in the constant debates that arise in contemporary societies. As demographics change and evolve, attitudes to difference are challenged among society at large. One such issue is immigration. The Eurobarometer and European Social Survey of *Majorities' attitudes towards minorities* (EUMC, 2006) showed that over the period 1997–2003, there continued to be substantial resistance to ethnic diversity among the populations of EU countries, with three particular areas of concern being that there should be a limit to the development of a multicultural society, an opposition to civil rights, even for legal migrants, and an increasing minority of respondents from the 15 EU Member States (about one in five) that were in favour of repatriation policies for legal migrants. Teacher educators need to be aware of trends in attitudes towards migration issues in order to be able to engage in meaningful discussions with their students on issues of diversity. It is also important to consider one's own value positions regarding such issues and how they have been developed.

Immigrant minorities are only one of the many types of minorities that are vulnerable to exclusion in the larger community. For instance, a European concern has been that of homophobic attitudes that can lead to bullying and exclusion of school students with a minority sexual orientation – gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered (Rivers, 2001). Although most studies concern students in secondary education, there is increasing concern over the impact of homophobic bullying on younger children (see, e.g., a recent report on homophobic incidents in Scottish schools available from <http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/EducationResearchandResources.htm>). In another area, studies show that overweight and obesity may interfere with children's social relations and, therefore, emotional development (Janssen, Craig, Boyce, & Pickett, 2004). These diversities are present in our lecture rooms.

We would recommend engaging with personal reflection on the above issues before attempting some of the activities we suggest for helping student teachers to consider promoting positive attitudes to diversity in their classrooms.

### ***Understanding the Impact of Discrimination***

At this time, the majority of teacher educators as well as teachers come from a background of success at school and from majority groups in society in terms, for example, of ethnicity, language and physical ability. They may, therefore, have difficulty understanding the experience of those who feel that they are failures and unwelcome at school. Moreover, those who are failures often also belong to minority groups and have been the targets of discrimination from the agent majority groups to which we belong. Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) refer to the existence of dominant or agent groups and subordinate or target groups in each form of oppression. It is, therefore, important that all educators deeply consider issues of equal entitlement of all learners to a quality education and how such entitlement may be interfered through discrimination. The *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* has a long list of potential sources of discrimination that are prohibited:

Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited (EU, 2000, Article 21).

Discrimination against 'minority' groups can have a significant impact on educational opportunities at personal, cultural, institutional and structural levels. Ignoring difference can have a negative impact on children's academic achievement. Further discussion of these terms can be found in the section on ways of approaching discussions about diversity with student teachers.

Evidence may be obtained from reports such as the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) on the achievement gap between native and migrant pupils that is reported across Europe. Partial or even total segregation in education is still a common phenomenon in large parts of the EU. An analysis and overview of the Europe-wide PISA education performance study and others concluded firmly in 2005 that highly differentiated and segregationist school systems produce and reproduce inequality:

A few Member States reported a narrowing of the gap in educational attainment between the majority population and some migrant/minority groups. In general, however, the attainment gap between different ethnic/national groups has remained at a significant level, with certain groups, such as Roma, particularly vulnerable to falling behind (EUMC, 2006, p. 14).

It is useful to access the data relevant to one's own national context. In Germany, for example:

Foreign pupils are, on average, still less successful in the educational system than German pupils are. This disadvantaged position of non-Germans is particularly obvious in secondary education and, later on, at universities. The latest international OECD study (PISA) also concluded that children with a migration background and those from a lower social stratum achieve a significantly lower level of educational competence (Bosch & Peucker, 2006, p. 6).

In the United Kingdom, a recent report on Ethnicity and Education describes a similar situation: minority ethnic pupils are more likely to experience deprivation than white British pupils, especially Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean pupils. For example, 70% of Bangladeshi pupils and almost 60% of Pakistani and Black African pupils live in the 20% most deprived postcode areas (as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation) compared to less than 20% of white British pupils. Gypsy/Roma, Travelers of Irish Heritage, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils consistently have lower levels of attainment than other ethnic groups (DfES, 2006).

Teacher educators do not, of course, work in isolation and it is important to take account of how we may be influenced by the prevalent attitudes to diversity of the institution where we work. Guidelines exist to consider how institutions can be measured in terms of how they are promoting respect for diversity. For instance, Zeichner, Grants, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas (1998, cited in Ryan, 2003) proposed 14 indicators for assessing how far a teacher education programme promotes multicultural education. These include the statement of respect for diversity in the

institution's mission statement and policies; that 'multicultural perspectives permeate the entire teacher education curriculum, including general education courses and those in academic subject areas'; that 'the program helps prospective teachers develop the commitment to be change agents who work to promote greater equity and social justice in schooling and society'; and that 'the program teaches prospective teachers how to learn about students, families, and communities, and how to use knowledge of culturally diverse students' backgrounds in planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction' (Ryan, 2003, pp. 163–169).

If the institution where you are engaged as a teacher educator is not yet open to diversity, it may be difficult for you as an individual to promote the idea for staff development on this issue. However, legislative requirements can be a powerful influence for change. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act in the United Kingdom has required institutions to give much more consideration to how policies and practice influence racial equality and has resulted in the publication in Scotland of The Race Equality Toolkit, a resource for mainstreaming race equality into learning and teaching in higher education (Universities Scotland, 2006).

As a new teacher educator concerned with equality and social justice for your student teachers, you will need to find out about recruitment and admission policies in your institution. Investigate which committees make these policies, how decisions are made in these committees and what organisational strategies are in place for encouraging a more heterogeneous student teacher population. Investigate the existence of local support schemes, which encourage a wider variety of student teachers to join programmes. For instance, the US state of Vermont introduced a 'Loan cancellation program to support students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who wish to become teachers in the Vermont public school system' (<http://templeton.vsc.edu/teacherdiversity/downloaded> 28.05.06). In Scotland, the Refugees Into Teaching in Scotland (RITEs) project supports refugees who have been teachers in their country of origin into joining the teaching profession in their new country (see more information about this project at the website <http://www.strath.ac.uk/cps/rites/>).

Kelly & Grenfell (2004, p. 6) suggest the use of 'flexible and modular' teacher education programmes 'to attract a diverse range of trainees into language teaching, to adapt to different lifestyles and financial factors and to promote the use of new learning environments and life-long learning strategies'. These could include, for instance, courses available through distance learning or the possibility of studying part-time (available on <http://www.lang.soton.ac.uk/profile/report/index.htm>).

## **Preparation of Beginning Teachers for Classroom Diversity**

Although there may still be some teacher education institutions with rather homogeneous student teacher cohorts, teachers in almost all contemporary schools have to meet the needs of pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a diverse range of needs. Policy makers and educators across Europe see issues of diversity

as being a core challenge of training for today's teachers (EC Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2003; Meijer, 2003; CEC, 2007).

In many European countries, the student teacher and indeed teaching population come from a largely homogeneous background with little prior experience of diverse contexts (see, e.g., Hagan & McGlynn, 2004; Menter, Hartshorn, Hextall, Howell, & Smyth, 2006). Rego Santos and Nieto (2000), based on their experience as pre-service and practicing teachers and their analysis of the situation in Spain and USA, suggest teacher education needs to be linked to a more critical understanding of diversity. This section will suggest the strategies that may be employed to ensure more effective preparation of beginning teachers for teaching in diverse classrooms.

### *Professional Self-Development of Teachers*

As for the teacher educator, the first important factor for teachers in responding to diversity among pupils is self-reflection on the teacher's attitudes (Humphrey et al., 2006). Among the six main teacher competences that have been highlighted in culturally responsive education, the first three concern attitudes:

Culturally responsive teachers (a) are socioculturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 20).

A major group of studies on teacher education for diversity concern 'prejudice reduction' (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Student teachers need to have the opportunity to develop openness to the diversity of pupils they are going to encounter in their classrooms. They need to recognise all pupils as being equally worthy of their attention and effort. One can start with opportunities for reflection on their experience of difference. Students can be asked to recall and possibly write their 'life story' with regard to education, highlighting their encounters with difference in the early years, primary and secondary education, and their ideals in teaching. They can then be asked to analyse in collaboration with a tutor or group of peers how this has influenced their approach to diversity. Alternatively, one can ask student teachers to recall particular encounters with difference, such as the first encounter with a different person (in class, race, religion, etc.). Questions to be asked would include: How did you react? Did you experience fear/challenge, engagement/disengagement, disgust/pleasure, learn new insights/reinforce your previous understandings? Several types of such value clarification exercises were developed in a Comenius 2.1 project titled APT (available on <https://www.ltu.se/pol/d209/d223/2.1498/d1509/1.4754?l=sv>).

Student teachers can also be provided with opportunities for reflecting on how they are responding to the diversity of pupils during their teaching practice. They may be asked to keep a journal of incidents related to issues of diversity that would



then be used in tutorial sessions. In a meta-analysis of such endeavours, Jacobs (2006) found that researchers reported challenging supervision as more effective than engaging in discussion about social justice in society or schools in general. Supervision sessions should raise challenges for students as to how they ignored or responded positively or negatively to the diverse pupils in their class. For instance, Abt-Perkins, Hauschildt, & Dale (2000) reported that they found little impact on students through critical reflection about injustice, but reported significant impact when supervisors engaged the students in critical reflection on their challenges during teaching in the classroom. For example:

- The student teacher raised difficulties with student engagement and the supervisor brought up questions about the student's race, gender, ethnicity, class and other identity issues or beliefs and assumptions.
- The supervisor brought up an issue related to the pre-service teacher's authority in the classroom or relationships with students (highlighted by Jacobs, 2006).

One can also use dilemmas in teaching a diverse class for discussion among student teachers or present dilemmas in the form of case studies or role play. Case studies can be derived around experiences with which the tutor and/or students are familiar. The following examples have been used by Geri for problem-based learning exercises in teacher education in Scotland (see similar examples in Sheets, 2005).

### **Case 1**

You are a teacher in a mainstream primary school class of 8-year-old children. One pupil in your class is involved in an accident and has to use a wheel chair for at least a few months. What adaptations will you need to make to your classroom environment and curriculum in order to ensure that this child is not disadvantaged?

### **Case 2**

You are a teacher of geography in an English medium secondary school for 11- to 18-year-old pupils. Wladek from Poland is a new arrival in your fourth year (15–16 year olds) class. He has very little English and you speak no Polish. What first steps would you take to ensure Wladek's rapid integration into your class? How could you use Wladek's background to enhance your curriculum delivery?

Activities to enhance student understanding of diversity should preferably include examples or discussions that draw from the actual lived experiences of the participants. This is an essential strategy in helping student teachers to develop attitudes that are culturally responsive.

Reflection on the content of student journals can also provide sources of ‘teachable moments’: an incident raising a dilemma about discrimination or social justice that arises either in class or in society and engages your students deeply. They are then more receptive to reflection on those issues (Reuben, 1997).

We are constantly experiencing situations of conflict regarding inclusion and diversity issues in society and education. These can be used in a variety of ways to develop attitudes and skills towards using diversity for our own and our learners’ enrichment. For instance, in one school in Malta in which there were the first black children attending from a nearby refugee camp, a challenge was created for the school as parents were urging their children not to sit near these refugee children who they considered might have AIDS. The school administration addressed this problem by organising activities on democracy and respect for others, including a very successful day of celebration of children’s games from different cultures, which was enriched by the variety of games from the refugee children’s cultures in the presence of the parents of both Maltese children and children from the refugee families (Bartolo et al., 2007). Such situations relevant to teacher education are common in contemporary European societies. All teacher educators must keep informed about contemporary issues and consider how discussion in class can raise student understanding and respect for diversity. As mentioned earlier, facilitating such discussions fruitfully requires the teacher educator to have engaged in self-reflection about the issues as well as being skilful in respecting, and at the same time challenging, the expression of different views.

### *Understanding the Potential for Discrimination*

Sociocultural consciousness can also be raised through highlighting the evidence of the discrimination that can be suffered by minority groups. This is important particularly because teachers coming from the dominant groups in society and achievers in the education system may have difficulty understanding the impact of discrimination. Moreover, education has often been seen as a central tool for preparing citizens to fit into the norms of society. A result of this is the application of one-size-fits-all standards and curricula to all schools and children. Within that framework, those who do not meet the standards and norms set by the dominant majority are regarded as failures and misfits and are pushed out of the system (Barton & Slee, 1999). Moreover, they are also blamed for their own failure and are labelled ‘drop outs’ rather than ‘pushed out’.

Teachers and student teachers, therefore, need to become more aware of the potential discrimination against minority groups and the different levels at which this may operate. It is important not to refer to minorities as far off and exotic phenomena, but to understand those that are within one’s own community. The framework given in Fig. 8.1 can provide a basis for a reflective exercise on the impact of discrimination at four levels. These four levels of discrimination interact and overlap (Adams et al., 1997).

<b>Dimension of diversity*</b>	<b>Structural</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Personal</b>
<b>Social class</b>	Access to certain (private) schools based on family's economic status	Access to higher education based on attendance at certain schools	Stereotypes of working class/unemployed as being low achievers in e.g. television comedy shows	Jokes about not having appropriate school uniform or kit for physical education
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Few black teachers so teaching not seen as a profession for black students	More black pupils suspended proportionately than white pupils	Stereotypes of black pupils being 'good' at sport	Comments to pupils about being terrorists based on the colour of their skin
<b>Language</b>	English as the dominant language in all matters of education	School forbidding or discouraging child's use of the mother tongue	Low status of non-European languages in school	Joking about 'monkey' languages or 'gobbledegook' when child's language unfamiliar
<b>Disability</b>	Lack of access to school facilities for pupils with limited mobility	Disabled pupils required to 'sit out' during physical activities	Lack of resources depicting people with disabilities	Use of discriminatory and derogatory language to describe pupils with mental or physical disabilities
<b>Religion</b>	Banning of wearing the hijab in schools in certain countries	Religious observation in school for only one faith	Use in teaching 'Other world religions' of the terms 'us' and 'them' suggesting a school norm	Derogatory comments about religious practices in hairstyles, dress etc
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Access to promotion for gay teachers can be difficult in Catholic schools in some countries	Assumptions of heterosexuality at school functions	Teachers using language such as 'are you a sissy'?	Playground 'jokes' questioning sexuality
<b>Special educational needs (SEN)</b>	Difficulty of access to mainstream education for many pupils with SEN	Limited training for teachers to effectively work with SEN assistants	SEN viewed as a 'problem' to be addressed after meeting mainstream needs	Teacher comments to whole class about need to wait for pupil x to finish work
*Note that any one person may belong to many categories				

**Fig. 8.1** Discrimination at structural, institutional, cultural and personal levels. Examples by G. Smyth using Adams et al. (1997) model as developed by University of Strathclyde Faculty of Education Social Justice team

- *Structural* – the ways in which different statuses and access to benefits in society are structured into society physically, politically and legally.
- *Institutional* – normal institutional procedures and practices, which work against the interests of certain groups even though there may be no conscious decision to discriminate.
- *Cultural* – shared assumptions about normality and unquestioned ideas.
- *Personal* – individual acts of stereotyping, discrimination, abuse, harassment and physical assault.

Examples of discrimination operating at the different levels across the dimensions have been inserted and the authors would encourage readers to complete the table with examples from their own contexts and a reminder that one person may belong to many categories. When Geri and Paul conducted this exercise in an international workshop for teacher educators, a number of other dimensions were suggested including size as a potential area for discrimination.

### ***Overcoming Deficit Thinking***

Educators who are genuinely concerned with diversity need to be aware of the biased view of success and failure in education, which results from standardised curricula and assessment. This application of the norms of the majority to all diverse others as misfits has been challenged particularly within disability studies, and from sociologists who were themselves disabled (e.g. Oliver, 1990). It is from such sources that the term ‘medical model’ of disability has come to be used to describe the ways in which presumed deficits in the individual are seen as being the paramount issue. Instead, they proposed what has been termed as ‘social model’ of disability whereby disabled people are only handicapped as a result of society failing to accommodate their needs. Teacher educators who are concerned about the need to prepare teachers for responding to diversity would see the adoption of the social rather than the deficit model of education as a major issue to be addressed with their students in regard to all aspects of diversity.

Discrimination operates in a number of ways for minority groups as has been demonstrated in Fig. 8.1. However, in day-to-day terms in school, the issues need to be considered for individuals. It is important to help our student teachers not to view individual pupils who have a physical impairment or disability or special educational needs or a different home language from the majority of their peers as having a low ability. A person with sensory or physical impairment may be as fast a learner as any non-disabled peer. In such a situation, as for gender and minority groups, persons with impairment must be provided with equal access to learning and assessment in order that they have the same opportunities as their peers to achieve. Moreover, equal access has to mean a respect for multiple intelligences and learning styles. Such respect applies to all pupils and implies that one-size-fits-all curricula and assessments are unfair for those who themselves do not fit that size, e.g. one who has strong practical intelligence will be unfairly treated on an assessment that only

measures verbal intelligence or achievement. Therefore as teacher educators, we need to help our student teachers understand the complexities of abilities, learning styles and intelligences and urge them to consider a wide range of approaches to teaching and assessing.

Notwithstanding what we have written, competitive situations in education will always be unfair for slower learners or those with intellectual impairment. Such pupils will never have an opportunity to compete successfully with their faster learning peers. Indeed, where the competitive norms of the school are standard achievement tests, these students will always show up as failures. So, in order to include all students as equal learners, the school teaching, learning and assessment systems must measure the progress of each student as an individual rather than against the absolute levels achieved. Only in this way can school and, indeed, lifelong learning apply to all students without exception. All children want to learn, and all children can learn if we provide the appropriate curricula and opportunities and measure their individual progress. This is not, of course, a change that can be made overnight or by one teacher alone, but our student teachers need to be empowered to see the possibilities, for they will be after all the educational leaders of tomorrow.

We want our student teachers to provide high expectations and challenges for all pupils. Their first goal must be to adapt the level and type of support so that all may engage with the core curriculum. But this must also allow for each student to feel encouraged through a sense of success and progress rather than be labelled and stigmatised as stupid or inadequate in being always compared to those who learn faster.

They must also consider the technical challenges that responding to a diverse classroom brings to the teacher (Smyth, 2003; Bartolo et al., 2007). Class- and subject-teaching methodology must address the issue of mixed ability teaching, and explore related strategies such as use of multilevel curricula, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring.

### *Experiencing Diversity*

Not all of our student teachers will have the opportunity on placement to engage with pupils in rich and diverse classrooms. Many will not encounter linguistic, cultural, ethnic or religious diversity in their pre-service experience and may have only limited involvement with students from diverse class and ability backgrounds. Another strategy for enabling teachers to respond to learner diversity is to enable them to experience the enrichment of intercultural experiences by participating in EU projects such as Socrates and Leonardo. With the ever increasing diversity of student teachers, not all will be able to take such opportunities for many reasons and so teacher education institutions, and individual teacher educators, need to widen their own networks and offer opportunities to student teachers for placements and connections with local community groups, which engage with diverse populations.

## Conclusion

This chapter challenges the teacher educator to consider addressing the issues of inequitable opportunities in all sectors of education as a major concern of educators. It suggests that the teacher educator is challenged to develop his/her appreciation of diversity as an enrichment and then pass this on also to his/her student teachers. This is presented as a challenge for self-development as well as for understanding the impact of discrimination and the value of making use of the opportunities for learning that diversity offers the teacher educator and student teacher.

There is a clear need across Europe for teacher educators to take the lead in enabling pre- and in-service teachers to address the growing demand for responding to the diversity of learners everywhere and at all levels. Teacher education institutions reaching towards excellence in their endeavours have to consider as one of their main criteria the promotion of responding to diversity. This needs to be addressed both in the procedures within their own programme as well as in the impact of their training on the student teachers' competence in responding to learner diversity. We hope that after reading this chapter, the readers will be stimulated to act to promote social justice for and with their student teachers.

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