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Teaching Education

**Teacher education and teaching for diversity: A call to action**

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## **Teacher education and teaching for diversity: A call to action**

### **Abstract**

Teachers around the world report a lack of confidence about working with learners who are regarded as ‘diverse’. This paper draws on mixed methods research to explore knowledge claims that underpin the pedagogical work of teacher educators. Using our theoretical framing of epistemic reflexivity, we show connections between knowledge claims made across the broad literature of teacher education/diversity and those made by teacher educators about their practices and programs. Findings identified challenges with respect to existing practice which point to different ways of knowing about our work. This paper is a call to action for teacher educators to reclaim their accountability for teaching diversity.

### **Keywords:**

Diversity in schools, epistemic reflexivity, teacher education, teacher educators, teaching for diversity

### **Introduction**

Student diversity is a self-evident reality in the contemporary educational landscape. Researchers across the world increasingly reference old, new, and newly emerging forms of population diversity to highlight the ways in which various forms and combinations of differences are linked to experiences of social and educational disadvantage (Keddie, 2012; Rowan, 2018). This awareness (while painfully slow to develop) has informed many attempts to improve the design or delivery or outcomes of educational programs, with particular attention being focused on issues relating to the quality of teachers and teaching. At the same time, however, teachers in all parts of the world report a lack of confidence about working with

learners that they, or their communities, or their employers regard as ‘diverse’ and/or ‘at risk’ (Mayer et al., 2017).

These concerns around teaching diversity provide a significant challenge for teacher education. Issues of student diversity, social justice, and educational equity have featured prominently in teacher education research for more than five decades: reflected in what Cochran-Smith and others describe as one of the major programs of research addressed by teacher educators ‘Teacher Preparation for Diversity and Equity’ (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015;). Across this time we have learnt much about the origins of educational inequity, and the multiple and powerful ways in which schools can work to reinforce or deconstruct hegemonic understandings of the ‘typical’ student. Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2018) explained that many teacher educators have identified theoretical resources and analytical frameworks that help make visible practices of alienation and marginalisation, highlighting the operation and naturalisation of power. Many others have focused on demonstrating the link between teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, skills, and self-confidence and the outcomes for students who have traditionally been minoritized in educational settings. Others have explored the ways in which teacher education programs are able to impact upon preservice teachers’ beliefs and values and, by extension, on the objectives of future teachers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

Despite this rich and varied work, some familiar groups of students continue to be at greater risk of educational alienation and failure than others, and many teachers continue to report their work with ‘diverse’ and/or ‘at risk’ learners as stressful, difficult and ineffective (Colon-Muniz, Brady, & SooHoo, 2010; Rowan, Kline, & Mayer, 2017). This raises two conceptually challenging questions for teacher educators: What’s going wrong?, and, How can we help to do better? We pose these questions to the teacher education community of which we

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ourselves are part. As members of this group we are conscious of the sensitivities associated with asking any questions about the ‘effectiveness’ of teacher education given that it is an easy target for governments and media.

Teacher education is routinely battered in policy and public commentary that focuses on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of teacher education. This commentary often suggests that teacher education can do *everything* better, and that reforms of teacher education could start with issues of design, and a review of content. Questions about the design and content of initial teacher education (ITE) programs and the need for/impact of various ‘quality control’ mechanisms including professional standards and program accreditation are similarly common in ITE literature (see Bourke, Ryan & Lloyd, 2016; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014). Questions about the disciplinary knowledge required of contemporary teachers, and the kinds of experiences likely to support the development of ‘quality’ teachers are equally frequent (Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, & Hobbs-Johnson, with Brown, DaCosta, Hales, Kuehn, Sohn, & Steffensen, 2016; Rowan, Kline, & Mayer, 2017). However, relatively little attention has been paid to teacher educators’ understandings about the nature of knowledge and knowing - their epistemic cognition. We know little about the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing that teacher educators draw upon in preparing preservice teachers to work with ‘diverse learners’; the associated ways we conceptualise and justify our aims in this area; and, factors which appear to enable or constrain our work.

The relationship between teacher educators’ understandings about the nature of knowledge and knowing and what they do (or attempt to do) relates to what Loughran and Menter recently referred to as the ‘why’ of teaching (2019, p. 216). Promoting a pedagogy of teacher education that is focussed on the ‘why’ ensures that preservice teachers move beyond

attending to ‘tips and tricks’ (p. 217), reflecting second order teaching (Loughran & Menter, 2019). We argue that an important first step in re-imagining teacher education that is truly able to support preservice teachers to engage with diverse learners involves a focus on second order teaching. Recognising the persistent patterns of educational success and failure, and motivated by a desire to find new ways to respond to this truly wicked phenomenon, this paper explores knowledge claims that underpin the pedagogical work of teacher educators. In this paper we interrogate our concept of epistemic reflexivity (Lunn et al., 2019; Barr & Askill-Williams, 2020) as a process for analysing and reimagining our work, demonstrating the way this conceptualisation draws attention to the strengths and weaknesses of our current approaches with respect to teacher educators’ knowledge claims (about knowledge and knowing).

The paper that follows is divided into three sections. In the first we provide some brief background about the research project that provides the evidence for this *call to action* as well as the theoretical resources that underpin the design and conduct of the research. In the second section we report on findings related to three data assemblages collected throughout this project: a systematic review of literature focused on teacher education and ‘diverse learners’; social labs conducted with a range of university-based teacher educators; and, a survey of 286 teacher educators. In Section 3, Discussion and implications, we draw together these findings to argue that teacher educators need to be courageous enough to identify the limitations of existing practice and investigate different ways of knowing about our work. We conclude with a call to action to teacher educators across the world: a call based explicitly on the belief that we—teacher educators—*can do better* in our efforts to prepare future teachers for diverse and diversifying populations if we are prepared to look at issues relating to the alignment between

our aims for diverse learners, our epistemic decision making and, importantly, our reflexive actions.

### **Part 1: Research background and theoretical framework**

Between 2017 and 2020 the authors conducted a national research project titled: *Educating pre-service teachers to teach diverse learners*. As the title implies, the project was motivated by a desire to find out more about the ways teacher educators approach the challenge of preparing future teachers to work with learners regarded as ‘diverse’. More specifically, we wanted to investigate the way teacher educators talk about the various challenges in this space, and the ways they conceptualise and enact responses with respect to their views about the nature of knowledge and knowing. Put simply: we were interested in how problems related to teaching diversity are framed and how solutions are imagined with an epistemic reflexivity lens. The project, to date, has proceeded through three phases from 2017 through to 2020.

*2017 Pilot study.* A pilot study using social lab methodology asked 12 teacher educators what it means to prepare future teachers to work with teacher educators. A social lab is a collaborative process of collecting data and typically progresses through a number of stages: mapping the system, questioning our understandings, identifying points for intervention, and developing an hypothesis and actionable goals related to intervention (McKenzie, 2015).

*2018 Social labs.* A larger scale social lab with 32 teacher educators from nineteen universities asked teacher educators to respond to questions: What does it mean to prepare future teachers to work with diverse learners? How is this achieved? What is happening in your teacher education programs? What enables or constrains your work?

*2019/20 National survey, case studies, systematic review.* Based in part on the data from the social labs, a new epistemic reflexivity survey was developed titled ‘Epistemic Reflexivity Survey for Teacher Educators (ERS-TE)’. While the survey was planned as a national survey, we had two teacher educators from New Zealand who wanted to participate and we included their responses. Responses from the 286 teacher educator participants in Australia and New Zealand measured constructs related to epistemic reflexivity (i.e., epistemic aims, epistemic ideals, reliable teaching processes, reflexivity and enablements and constraints in relation to teaching practices). Next, using case study methodology (observations and interviews), we explored how 26 teacher educators from across Australia (n=24) and New Zealand (n=2) understood and enacted epistemic reflexivity in regards to teaching about/to/for diversity. We also completed a large scale systematic review of the literature which addressed simultaneously both ‘teacher education’ and ‘diverse learners in schools’; a review also focused specifically on questions relating to the way the problem of ‘diversity in schools’ is both framed and responded to.

This paper draws on evidence relating to the 2018-2020 phases of the research. We focus the discussion on the following research questions:

1. What knowledge claims dominate recent research literature relating to teacher education and the preparation of teachers to work with ‘diverse learners’? (2020 systematic review findings)
2. How are these knowledge claims reflected in the beliefs of teacher educators and the structures of teacher education programs? (2018 social lab findings)
3. How are teacher educators’ epistemic cognitions related to their reflexivity, their teaching practices with preservice teachers, and their knowledge about teaching *about, to, and for* diversity? (2019 survey findings)



From this basis we issue a ‘call to action’ to our teacher education colleagues around the world.

### ***Theoretical framework***

The concept of epistemic reflexivity informs the design of our research and our mixed method data analysis. Epistemic Reflexivity (see Figure 1) integrates two theoretical positions – epistemic cognition and reflexivity. The term *epistemic cognition* acknowledges the central role that cognitions about the nature of knowledge and knowing can play in teaching and learning (for a review see Greene, Sandoval, & Braton, 2016). Epistemic cognition, according to Hofer (2016, p. 20) relates to ‘a set of mental processes that involve the development and employment of one’s conceptions of knowledge and knowing’. Drawing upon Chinn et al.’s (2011; 2014) AIR framework for understanding epistemic cognition, we argue that teacher educators’ decision making with respect to challenging problems can be enhanced when they explicitly consider epistemic *Aims*, *Ideals* and *Reliable* processes that support preservice teachers to teach about/to/for diversity. *Aims* may relate to *knowledge* (e.g., acquiring accurate learning content); *understanding* (e.g., developing deep understandings about diverse groups of children); and *justification* (e.g., evaluation and adjudication related to theories on teaching ). *Ideals* are the criteria for determining what constitutes effective knowledge in teaching about/to/for diversity, for example, knowledge is accurate; knowledge connects points of view; knowledge is justified by weighing up evidence. *Reliable* epistemic processes are the processes used to achieve epistemic aims. For example, argumentation can be a *Reliable* epistemic process used to achieve the epistemic *Aim* of justification. We argue that epistemic cognition should be foregrounded through a cycle of reflexivity.

The term *reflexivity* is taken from Margaret Archer’s (2012) critical realist theory of reflexivity. For Archer, decision making regarding how, when and why we choose to act is a

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process that involves three connected, and recurring phases: discernment, deliberate decision making and dedicated action in particular contexts (see Ryan et al., 2019 for application to teacher education). In previous work we have argued that combining the two theoretical positions allows for consideration of *epistemic reflexivity*, a perspective that focuses on educational thinking (discernment), decision making (deliberation) and actions (dedication) using an epistemic lens (Lunn et al., 2019).

*Discernment.* As outlined in Figure 1, epistemic reflexivity begins with a focus on Discernment related to epistemic cognition. This Discernment phase of reflexivity draws attention to how teacher educators epistemically define and understand a pedagogical problem about supporting preservice teachers to teach about/to/for diversity. Such discernment of epistemic thinking also addresses the ‘why’ or second order teaching advocated by Loughran and Menter (2019) and is an important first step in re-imagining a pedagogy for teacher education. Teacher educators can consider their key concerns in relation to teaching about/to/for diversity and discern a range of epistemic aims (e.g. critical evaluation of evidence related to diversity), epistemic ideals (e.g. what are the criteria for determining what constitutes good knowledge about diversity), and reliable epistemic processes (e.g. how can preservice teachers reliably achieve these aims with respect to learning how to teach diverse groups of children).

*Deliberation.* Next, as shown in Figure 1, teacher educators Deliberate or make decisions with respect to how their epistemic thinking (e.g. *Aims*, and *Ideals* for teaching about, to and for diversity) can be enacted in their current context as opposed to a hypothetical or ‘ideal’ reality. As teacher educators deliberate on a course of action, they may engage in internal and peer-peer dialogue to calibrate epistemic thinking (*Aims*, *Ideals*, and *Reliable* processes) with teaching processes (Archer, 2012; Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, & Ryan, 2017). For example, if their

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epistemic aims relate to critical thinking and reasoning, do they provide opportunities for preservice teachers to question what they hear and read in class. Assessing the current context is a critical component of Deliberation, involving evaluation and adaptation as indicated by the right to left directional arrows in Figure 1. Persistent patterns of educational success and failure demand such adaptability and new ways of thinking about pedagogies for teacher education.

*Dedication.* The final component in Figure 1 involves Dedication or action. This is where pedagogical decisions are put into action in pre-service education, particularly in interactive learning experiences that include labs or workshops. Using our example on critical thinking and reasoning, critical dialogue enacted in workshops would encourage, for example, debate about alternate theories and perspectives that disrupt prevailing deficit views about diversity.

Drawing upon the framework of epistemic reflexivity, we have explored the ways teacher educators—individually and collectively—respond to the question about what it means to prepare teachers to work with diverse learners. Epistemic reflexivity provides a theoretical lens to support decision making that connects: 1) the ways the ‘problem’ of diversity is understood; 2) our stated epistemic thinking for preservice teachers’ learning about teaching about/to/for diversity; and, 3) what we actually do in teacher education programs to support preservice teachers’ learning and teaching. Taking an epistemically reflexive stance in preparing future teachers for population diversity allows us to construct a new pedagogy of teacher education which addresses Loughran and Menter’s (2019) call for second order teaching.

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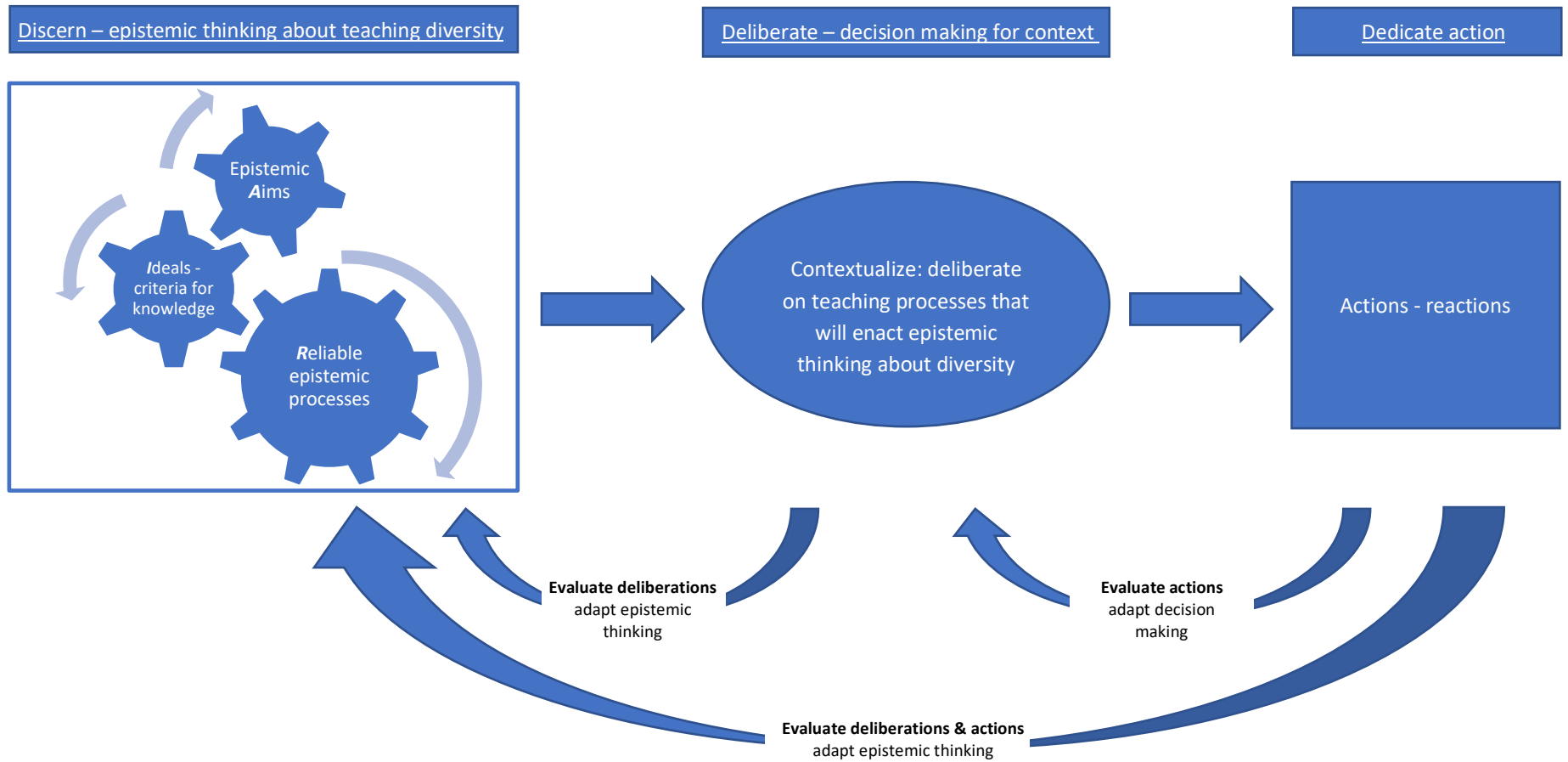


Figure 1. Epistemic Reflexivity framework for teacher education pedagogy - teaching about/to/for diversity

Epistemic reflexivity therefore encourages teacher educators interested in the challenges associated with preparing future teachers to work with diverse learners to consider perspectives on knowledge and ways of knowing that we draw upon and legitimate in our practice.

## **Part 2: Findings**

### ***Part 2A: Insights from the systematic review***

The first question guiding this paper is ‘*What knowledge claims dominate recent research literature relating to teacher education and the preparation of teachers to work with ‘diverse learners’?*’ In order to address this question the authors conducted a systematic review of the body of literature that considers issues relating to both ‘teacher education’ and categories associated with the concept of ‘diverse learners’. The review (see Rowan, Bourke, L’Estrange, Lunn Brownlee, Ryan, & Walker, 2020) combined two approaches to reviews as outlined by Dixon-Woods (2016). The contractual approach emphasizes issues of procedure, ensuring that the search process can be replicated by others. The authorial approach sees the review as involving the application of authorial expertise in the analysis and coding of the data (Dixon-Woods, 2016). Adopting this hybrid approach allows the review to be interpretive, rather than aggregative; and, thematic, rather than simply summative.

The review began with a search of 5 databases to identify peer reviewed papers published between 2009 and 2019 that included key words relating to: diversity, diverse learners and various groups commonly referenced within related discussions: socio-economics, gender, and disability. This produced an initial set of 418 papers. Our goal was to map the literature to identify patterns related to teacher education (rather than to map only one sub-section of the literature). The search criteria eliminated half of the original papers leaving the authors with 209 papers to code. The coding process was iterative and cyclical and allowed us to identify

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recurring themes within the literature, and a range of associated knowledge claims. These knowledge claims relate to: 1) The groups of learners (most commonly) cited as diverse and at risk; 2) The ways that teacher education can best prepare future teachers to work with diverse learners specifically with regards to claims relating to content, pedagogies, course/program structure or other features of ITE that are best suited for preparing teachers for diverse learners—approaches that we describe as being focused on ‘teaching about’, ‘teaching to’ or ‘teaching for’ diversity; and 3) Factors that were believed to constrain the work of teacher educators.

We present a summary of these three knowledge claims here. First, some groups of students were more commonly referenced as ‘diverse’ or ‘at risk’ than others, with cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, inclusive education, special education, disability, and socioeconomic status being the most frequently referenced. Issues associated with gender and sexual identity were considered in depth by only a few articles, despite the ongoing impact of gender/sexual identity on student lives. These data are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

*Diversity Referents Summary (Rowan, Bourke, L’Estrange, Lunn Brownlee, Ryan, & Walker, forthcoming)*

<b>Diversity referents</b>	<b>Total papers</b>
Cultural	93
Linguistic	33
Inclusion	33
Special education	26
Socioeconomic factors	26
Race, racial	16
Rurality	13
Family, families	12
First Nations	5

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Sexuality	1
Gender	4
Religion, religious	5

Sixty-one papers signified an intent (via titles, keywords, or abstracts) to focus on combinations of difference, including cultural and linguistic diversity, or ethnicity and inclusion, or cultural identity and socioeconomics. These intentions suggest a growing responsiveness to the reality of intersecting axes of identity and that no population is truly homogenous (Azano & Stewart, 2016; Miller, 2018); but only 10 papers explicitly referenced intersectionality.

The second knowledge claim to emerge from the systematic review involved three qualitatively different ways in which authors conceptualised what it means to prepare future teachers to work appropriately or successfully with diverse learners. We describe these approaches variously as focused on: teaching *about* diversity; catering *to* diversity; and teaching *for* diversity.

One hundred and ninety of the 209 papers included in this search focused on what it means to teach *about* diversity. These papers are characterised by arguments concerning knowledge about diversity needed in ITE. This is illustrated through a specific focus on one or more signifier of diversity (e.g., gender, SES) or broad phenomenon of ‘diverse learners’; statistics/numerical data relating to demographics and achievement; links between selected signifiers and educational or life pathways; and, exploration of specific knowledge or facts or figures relating to the selected signifiers of diversity teachers need to be aware of.

One hundred and eighty seven of the 209 included papers had a focus that we describe as preparing preservice teachers to cater *to* diversity, although they do not address teacher educators

themselves teaching to diversity in ITE. These papers are characterised by attempts to identify and describe effective responses *to* a diverse population including:

- specific pedagogical/classroom strategies that the authors believe generally work well with particular cohorts/groups of students (not pre-service teachers) (e.g. Cardona-Moltó, Tichá, & Abery, 2018);
- strategies that help teachers to support learners by building positive relationships with students' families or communities (e.g. D'Haem & Griswold, 2017).

A final set of papers (n=40) can be described as substantially concerned with teaching *for* diversity. These papers share similarities with those which focus exclusively on teaching about, or teaching to, because of the way the authors position education as fundamentally about the pursuit of social justice. They are illustrated by:

- A profound belief that the purpose of education is social transformation not social reproduction (e.g. Berta-Avila & William-White, 2010);
- Substantial engagement with anti-essentialist theories of justice, difference or identity and 'specialist' literature relating to various references (e.g., feminism, post-colonialism) literature that defines or unpacks social justice. This literature also highlights the ways meanings become attached to differences and by extension, the fact that meaning can be disrupted (e.g. Seltzer-Kelly et al., 2011);
- Awareness and critique of approaches to 'diversity education' that focus on what is variously described as inclusion, tokenism, tolerance, assimilationist approaches: approaches which ultimately work to naturalise and reproduce the idea that 'they' are diverse while 'we' constitute the white, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle class, mainstream, 'norm' (eg Pimentel, 2010);



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- Emphasis on the need for teacher education to help future teachers understand complex theoretical resources that will allow them to pursue the broad goal of socially just education: noting that these aren't skills that can be achieved simply through exposure to, or familiarity with various 'facts' of diversity (see Naraian, 2014); and,
- An interest in ensuring that future teachers graduate with the awareness that there is more to teaching diverse learners than can be reduced to a list of facts about, or tips for, 'working with' diverse learners. Rather, these papers argue that teacher education needs to enable students to develop the skills to recognise origins and manifestations of inequity in order to conceptualise educational interventions or educational decisions that operate on many planes/axes, to focus not only on recognising and responding to immediate need but also, and most importantly, to imagine and strive for fundamental social, cultural, and educational change. This is a perspective premised on the belief that the links between diversity and disadvantage are neither natural nor permanent and that social justice is both a goal and a process (eg Lynskey, 2015; Naraian & Schlessinger, 2017).

The third and final set of knowledge claims to emerge from the systematic review related to factors that were believed to constrain the work of teacher educators in this regard, namely:

- The beliefs/backgrounds of ITE candidates themselves. 37 papers explored the relationship between ITE students' existing beliefs and the impact of specialist or embedded diversity education (e.g. Bannister-Tyrrell et al., 2018);
- The context of ITE. While this was a theme considered by many authors, 3 of the papers focused in depth on the impact of context on what teacher education is able to achieve. These papers included reference to hostile external policy environments, neo-liberal agendas, and critical student reviews received by staff who were seen as 'too' closely aligned with social justice agendas (e.g. Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff, 2011); and,

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- TEs knowledge/skills/dispositions. Twenty-two papers considered in depth the knowledge/skills/dispositions of TES (e.g. D’Haem & Griswold, 2017).

### *Key insights*

Consistent with this paper’s focus on identifying patterns in the knowledge claims underpinning teacher education and areas where we need to *do better*, there are four insights from the review we draw particular attention to. First, all of the papers expressed an awareness of, and concern about, uneven patterns relating to educational access and outcomes. Most (190) papers reviewed expressed the belief that in order to work effectively with diverse learners, teachers need access to facts about forms of diversity and consequences of diversity—thus teacher education needs to teach ABOUT diversity. Second, all but three of these papers (187 total) also made a link between what teachers need to know ABOUT diverse learners, and how they need to respond in order to cater TO diverse learners. Third, only 40 papers reviewed went beyond knowing about and catering to diversity in order to ask more fundamental questions regarding the origins of equity, the operation of power, the ways in which differences are consistently made to matter and what education can do to address this—teaching FOR diversity. Finally, of the papers that focused on problems or barriers that impact upon the ability of teacher education to prepare future teachers for diverse learners, most considered issues relating to pre-service teachers, rather than teacher educators ourselves. As well as this, only two papers explicitly addressed the concerns expressed by teacher educators themselves about their knowledge base, and capacity to help pre-service teachers know about, respond to, or teach for diversity.

This overview of the findings from the systematic review demonstrates that the knowledge base referenced within literature that simultaneously considers issues of teacher

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education and student diversity is limited in important ways. While there is a clear and consistently stated desire to improve education for diverse learners, and frequent reference to the pursuit of equity and social justice, in the majority of cases this desire is actioned through the development of initiatives that focus on teaching about, or catering to, diversity, and fall short of conceptualising what it might mean to teach for diversity. By extension, the specialist literature associated with teaching for diversity—literature, for example, that explores gender in conjunction with feminist theory; or race with reference to post-colonial literature or critical race studies; or disability via engagement with disability studies—is significantly under-represented. The persistent patterns of underachievement that are linked to various signifiers of difference suggest that further questions need to be asked about whether the knowledge base outlined in the literature is as helpful as it could be for informing the design and delivery of teacher education.

### ***Part 2B: Social lab outcomes***

The second question guiding this paper was, *'How are knowledge claims reflected in the beliefs of teacher educators and the structures of teacher education programs?'* The summary of data considered within this part of the paper was gleaned from the social lab as described above and analysed using reflexivity theory (Archer, 2012). For a detailed account of this part of the project see Bourke, Ryan, Rowan, Lunn Brownlee, Walker and L'Estrange, (forthcoming).

Here we report on two lines of inquiry: 1) university-based teacher educators' views on knowledge around teaching diversity: what future teachers should be exposed to; and, 2) teacher educators' knowledge of program design for teaching diversity. Additionally, we explain whether such knowledge is seen as enabling or constraining. The following table is a

summary of the 11 enabling and/or constraining themes or concerns identified (concerns is a term used by Archer (2012) to describe concepts or things that participants raise).

Table 2  
*Identified concerns seen as either enabling or constraining.*

	<b>Identified concerns</b>	<b>Enablement/constraint</b>
<b>Teacher educators’ views on knowledge around diversity: curriculum questions</b>	Diversity as inclusion	Enabling
	Social justice ideals	Enabling
	Shared understandings	Enabling
	Deficit views around student mindsets	Constraining
	Experience as basis of knowledge	Enabling and constraining
<b>Teacher educators’ knowledge of program design around diversity: structure questions</b>	Siloed knowledge	Constraining
	Tokenism	Constraining
	Ambivalence	Constraining
	Time	Constraining
	Leadership	Enabling and constraining
	Professional Standards	Enabling and constraining

When teacher educators were asked about what knowledge they considered important when teaching around diversity—how/what they believe teacher educators should teach—responses clustered around five concerns: diversity as inclusion; social justice ideals; shared understandings; deficit views around student mind-sets, and, experience as the basis of knowledge. These concerns were variously seen as enabling or constraining. For the second line of inquiry, teacher educators were asked about their knowledge of program design in relation to the teaching of diversity in their universities. In response, the concerns of siloed knowledge; tokenism; ambivalence; time; professional standards; and, leadership emerged as either enabling and/or constraining.

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As can be seen from Table 2, in response to the first line of inquiry about teacher educators' views on knowledge around diversity most of the concerns were seen as enabling. The first was a concern about inclusion: They made it clear that knowing about and understanding diversity for both them and their students was very important. Consistent with the systematic literature review, the teacher educators in this study articulated that educators needed to realise that diversity encompassed 'all of us' and not just the 'marginalised'. They talked about inclusion repeatedly and synonymously with diversity and named many different facets including EAL/D; ATSI; special needs; gifted and talented; challenging behaviour; disability; children with additional needs; mental health and well-being; and, cultural awareness. They viewed a broad notion of diversity and inclusion as helpful and enabling for effective teaching around diversity.

These sentiments were echoed in the second concern, where social justice ideals were also enabling for effective teaching practice. Inclusion and social justice/human rights principles underpinned these teacher educators' teaching philosophies, traits that they very much wanted to promote and instil in the teachers of tomorrow. The participants indicated a belief that a shared understanding about these concepts among teacher educators was equally important but acknowledged that sometimes this was difficult to realise in practice because of inflexible mind-sets or casualisation processes at work. A common word used to describe this was 'disconnect'. In a study by Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang and Macdonald (2005) across four education colleges, it was found that teacher educators quite often did not share common attitudes and beliefs about effective ways to address diversity. These writers called for self-examination of beliefs and practices from teacher educators themselves. Findings from the systematic literature review echo this call.

However, what was more prevalent than self-examination in the teacher educators' voices in this study was criticism of their students' fixed mind-sets and deficit language and a one-size-fits-all expectation when dealing with diverse learners. This constraint has been pointed out by various writers including Peček, Macura-Milovanović and Vujšić-Živković (2014) and Sleeter (2008) who maintain that pre-service teachers often see students with diverse backgrounds as problems; their negative attitudes stemming from limited knowledge, fear and bias towards individuals different from themselves. Regardless, there tended to be an essence of blame shifting by teacher educators rather than a reflexive stance on enabling deep identity work in their pre-service teachers to broaden their worldviews.

The last concern for this first line of inquiry was experience as the basis of knowledge. Many teacher educators relayed stories about longevity in the field, specifically time spent in classrooms in schools before entering ITE. The dominant construction of knowledge in this concern was through experiential learning, not only in schools but also through life experience. For these teacher educators such tacit knowledge was enabling. However, other teacher educators were critical of this stance stating the importance of context in teaching, and research informed, evidence-based practices. They believed that a view of diversity constructed through experiential or tacit knowledge was insufficient. Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) and Willegems, Consuegra, Struyven, and Engels (2017) have shown that a researcherly disposition is more enabling than tacit ways of knowing for problem-solving in contemporary diverse classrooms. In effect, the concern about experience was seen as both enabling and constraining.

The second line of inquiry focused more on teacher educators' knowledge of program design around diversity. However, unlike the first line of inquiry, the concerns in response to this question were seen as more constraining than enabling. The first three were touted as

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effects: a siloed approach, tokenism and ambivalence; while the latter three seemed to be posited as causes: time, leadership and professional standards.

The concern we identified about a siloed approach was the most dominant in relation to teacher educators' knowledge about program design. It became clear that most of the teacher educators in this study had limited knowledge of what the whole of program architecture or learning progression for diversity might be in their universities. Teacher educators knew what knowledge and skills they promoted in their own units but not how their units contributed to preparing pre-service teachers or what they were supposed to be building on or building towards in the program design. Along with a siloed approach, some teacher educators in this study admitted that they only paid token attention to diversity in their units. Many used the terms 'tick and flick' or 'check-box' exercises. They tended to be ambivalent about their lack of knowledge around program design using phrases such as 'can't remember' and rhetorical questions like 'what do you call it?', and, 'who knows'? The amalgam of these concerns concurs with previous studies. For example, Sleeter (2008) maintained that rather than a comprehensive conception for excellent teaching in racially diverse contexts, more often ITE programs are disjointed and compartmentalised where teacher educators do not plan coherently with a shared vision.

The concern of time (or a lack thereof) appeared to be the major cause for the concerns of tokenism, ambivalence and a siloed approach. Teacher educators in the social labs maintained that they did not have enough time to think about or map a whole of program design related to diversity. They also alluded to an increasing use of intensive units where time was limited for pre-service teachers to do the identity work as outlined earlier. Lack of time was seen as constraining and exacerbating the problem of ill-prepared pre-service teachers to be

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diverse classroom ready. Furthermore, they equally perceived that diversity isn't given enough air time in standards or accreditation documents.

Where professional standards were identified as a concern, teacher educators saw them as both enabling and constraining. As enablements, teacher educators argued that they (standards) provided a common language around teaching diversity, created an awareness for teaching the concept and were the impetus for making changes to program design where required. However, some teacher educators equally saw them as constraining, linking them to tokenism where they were seen as 'nothing more than a tick the box activity', adding very little to a whole of course design around diversity.

Finally, leadership was a minor concern in this study. Teacher educators were clear that if teaching diversity and preparing pre-service teachers for diverse classrooms was to happen effectively it had to be part of an organisation's fabric with strong leadership driving the agenda. Where this was the case, it was seen as an enablement; however, some mentioned that university leaders' interests were in research dollars, not valuing the importance of teaching diversity.

### ***Part 2C: National survey on epistemic reflexivity***

The third question guiding this paper was '*How are teacher educators' epistemic cognitions related to their reflexivity, their teaching practices with preservice teachers, and their knowledge about teaching about, to, and for diversity?*'. The Epistemic Reflexivity Survey for Teacher Educators (ERS-TE) was developed specifically for this project to examine the relationships between the different theoretical constructs from our framework of epistemic reflexivity (see Figure 1) for teacher educators. Based on our analysis of literature (embedded within the systematic review reported above) and data from the social labs (also described above) these constructs included epistemic aims and reliable processes, reflexivity, teaching



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practices and views about the relative importance of teaching *about*, *to*, and *for* diversity.

The survey consisted of six scales: Epistemic aims (2 subscales: knowledge and understanding/critical connection); Reliable Epistemic Processes (3 subscales: personal reflection, teaching reflection and social justice critical reflection) ; Criteria for Knowledge, i.e. epistemic ideals (2 subscales: evaluation of evidence and personal experiences); Reflexivity (3 subscales: reflection, weighing up teaching beliefs experiences and strategies and evidence informed); Teaching practices (3 subscales: strategies, critical pedagogy and content); and Enablements and Constraints (4 subscales: local contextual concerns, personal concerns, broad contextual concerns, cultural concerns). The psychometric properties of the scales and subscales are the focus of forthcoming papers.

Questions on the survey also asked about the extent to which the participants endorsed as important teaching *about diversity* (i.e. work with preservice teachers to develop their understanding of diversity, and how it impacts upon education), teaching *to diversity* (i.e. meet the needs of all students in my own classes) and teaching *for diversity* (i.e. contribute to the pursuit of educational and social justice by contesting narrow/essentialist understandings of difference and ultimately re-creating a society in which differences can be represented and understood positively).

The survey was distributed via Deans of Education networks. 286 teacher educators across Australia and New Zealand volunteered to participate. Regression analyses indicated some interesting relationships between the epistemic constructs of epistemic aims and reliable processes; between epistemic constructs and teacher educators' reflexivity; and between epistemic constructs and teacher educators' emphasis on teaching *about*, *to*, and *for* diversity. We summarize these key relationships here.

With respect to the relationships between epistemic aims and reliable processes, teacher

educators’ epistemic aims (related to both knowledge and understanding) were associated with the expectation that preservice teachers engage in reliable thinking processes of reflection (personal and teaching). However, only when teacher educators placed greater importance on epistemic aims related to understanding/critical connection, did they place greater importance on the expectation of preservice teachers to engage in reliable thinking processes around critical reflection for social justice (See Figure 2).

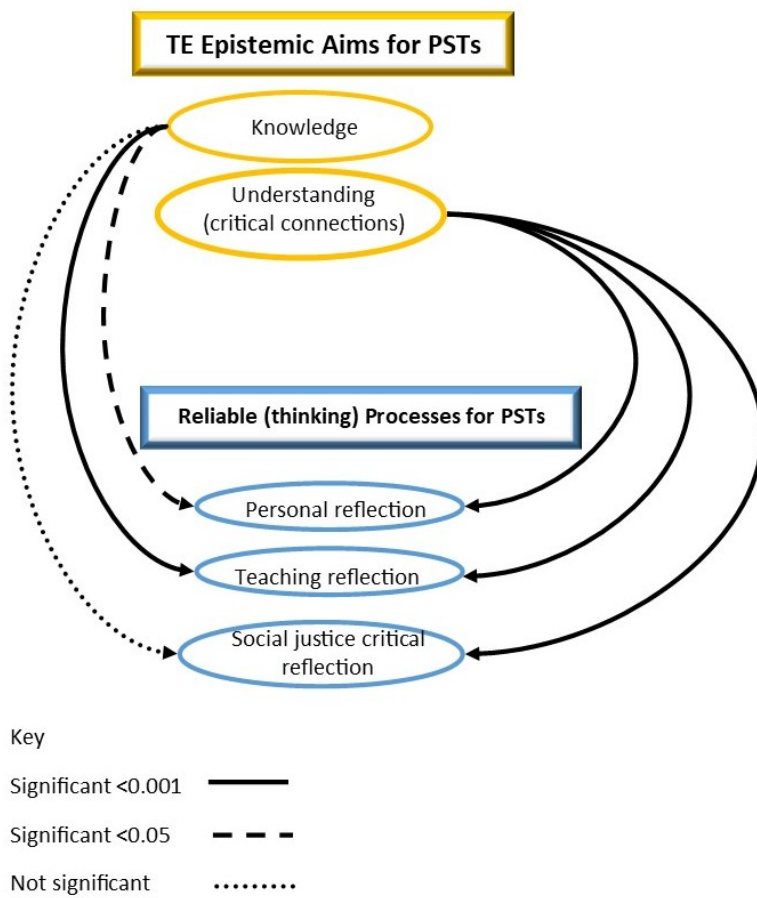


Figure 2. Relationships between teacher educators’ epistemic aims and reliable processes

Teacher educators’ epistemic aims were also related to their reflexivity. Specifically, teacher educators who placed more importance on epistemic aims related to understanding/critical connection (e.g. for preservice teachers (PSTs) to develop deep

understandings about teaching for diversity) were more likely to report engagement in reflexivity in the context of preparing PSTs to teach diverse learners. Teacher educators who placed greater importance on epistemic aims related only to knowledge (e.g. for PSTs to know that all learners differ in some way), reported engaging in reflexivity less often. So, an epistemic aim of understanding/critical connections was associated with reflexivity, across all three subscales, more so than an aim of knowledge alone (see Figure 3).

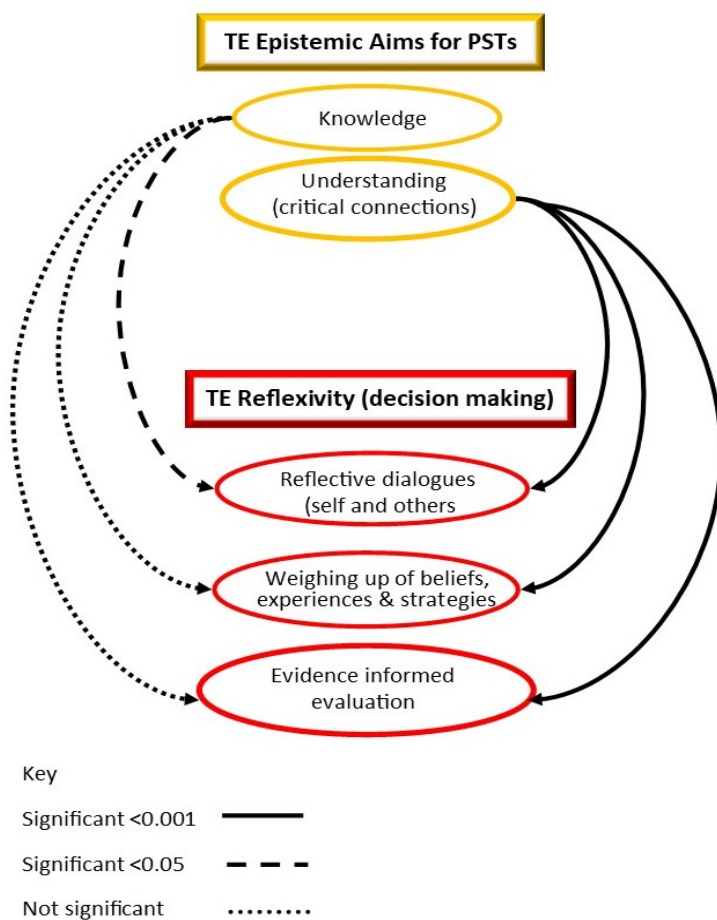


Figure 3. Relationships between teacher educators' epistemic aims and reflexivity

Finally, when teacher educators identified teaching *for* diversity as an overall approach to

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teaching preservice teachers, then this was associated with personal reflection and social justice critical reflection (reliable processes indicated in Figure 2) and the reflexive teaching indicators of reflective dialogues and weighing up of beliefs, experiences and strategies shown in Figure 3. These findings show a relationship between the theoretical constructs of epistemic cognition and reflexivity in relation to teaching diversity (reported in forthcoming papers). For example, a focus on teaching *for* diversity was associated with reliable epistemic processes related to engaging in critical thinking for social justice and personal reflection AND a reflexive teaching approach that involved weighing up teaching beliefs, experiences, strategies and reflection.

We also asked participants for their top priorities for change in ITE. A greater focus on *developing PSTs as critically reflective practitioners rather than technicians* was reported to be in the top five most important priorities for 44% of respondents, with 16% stating it as the number one priority. The next most important priorities that respondents indicated in their top five were: *Greater use of 'real world' examples and case studies to encourage student development/learning about multiple forms of diversity* (30.7% in top 5; 8.7% number 1) and *Improve teacher educators' knowledge about types of diversity* (28.7% in top 5; 10.5% number 1).

Findings from the national survey suggest that teacher educators have clear aspirations around second order teaching (Loughland & Menter, 2019) whereby they espouse the value of critically reflexive practice and the 'why' not just the 'what' of teaching. Interrogation of epistemic cognitions, however, indicated that lower order epistemic aims of knowing, were much less likely to produce epistemic thinking about reliable processes of criticality and reflexive transformation in practice. Conversely, higher order epistemic aims around making critical connections, were likely to lead to reliable processes of knowing and doing for social justice and equity.

### **Part 3: Discussion and Implications**

In this paper we have drawn upon three assemblages of different but related findings from a national research project to explore the knowledge claims about teaching diversity that underpin the pedagogical work of teacher educators. Using our theoretical framing of epistemic reflexivity, we explored the connections between knowledge claims made across the broad literature of teacher education and diversity (systematic review); knowledge claims made by university-based teacher educators in relation to their practices and programs (social labs); and the extent to which particular knowledge claims aligned with calibrated, reflexive actions (national survey). Our systematic literature review identified a tripartite definition of teaching diversity: teaching about; teaching to; and teaching for diversity. We found that teaching *about* diversity was the most common response across the literature. Teaching *to* diversity was evident but mostly in secondary form, that is, practices that taught PSTs how to respond, NOT teacher educators themselves responding to the diversity of PSTs. Teaching *for* diversity was the least evident across the literature, which has implications for our capacity to transform the teaching profession in responding to diversity.

Teaching for diversity requires a systematic response across teacher education. A collective, course-wide approach to teaching about/to/for diversity is necessary (Lynskey, 2015; Naraian and Schlessinger, 2017) if we want our graduate teachers to address the persistent inequities in our educational systems (Cochran-Smith et. al, 2018). The social lab findings indicated that inclusion and social justice were important aims for the participants. However, there was a strong tendency to blame PSTs for their deficit views, and there was a clear acknowledgement that teacher educators lacked the specialist knowledge and skills to teach diversity in deep and transformative ways. Further, teacher educators were constrained by ambivalence, a siloed approach to course design, and tokenistic responses to high levels of

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regulation and control in the sector. These findings, in some ways, provide a level of understanding about the lack of evidence in the literature related to teaching *for* diversity in teacher education.

Using the ERS-TE survey, we tested our hypothesis that epistemic reflexivity may provide more nuanced clues to this persistent challenge in teacher education. The clear relationship between higher-order epistemic aims, reliable processes for knowing, and transformative reflexive practices suggests to us that we need to, as Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2018) suggest, take back control of our accountability for teaching diversity in teacher education. While we are conscious of the constraints within which we operate, these constraints are not the only reality—we also have choices we can make about how/when/if we act.

Therefore, we propose a call to action for teacher educators around the world:

- educational inequity is a problem we all need to take responsibility for (Rowan, Kline, & Mayer, 2017);
- we cannot simply blame the context, the PSTs or the regulatory environment and leave our own skills or knowledge unexamined (Bourke, Ryan & Lloyd, 2016);
- we cannot pretend that things will get better as society changes (Lynskey, 2015);
- we need to be pro-active in leading action in this area (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018); and,
- we need to be willing to interrogate our epistemic stance, our ways of knowing and our ways of doing in relation to teaching about/to/for diversity (Lunn Brownlee et. al, 2017).

Where do we start? First, we need more intersectional diversity research in teacher education to increase our evidence base for this work (Rowan et al., forthcoming; Gilham and Tompkins, 2016). We argue (using our evidence from this project) that an increased focus on teacher

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educators' epistemic cognition can provide a way to shift thinking and knowing about diversity. We recommend more opportunities for teacher educators to engage in collaborative professional learning and planning to increase knowledge and skills about teaching diversity (based on research, rather than simply on experience) (Naraian, 2014; Ryan et. al, 2019). Finally, we suggest that teacher educators need to interrogate their own (largely inadequate) knowledge and practices (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang & Macdonald, 2005) by engaging in both an individual and a shared process of epistemic reflexivity about this critical area of our work: teaching for diversity.

### **Conclusion**

We acknowledge, of course, that the work of teacher educators is highly scrutinised and dramatically impacted by the policies and procedures associated with accreditation authorities, employer bodies, and governments broadly. We understand, as well, that the constant portrayal of teacher education as failing/inadequate/broken and in fundamental need of firm regulation makes it difficult for those working in the field to publically acknowledge that there may be ways in which we, ourselves, can do better. But while the context is a challenging one, we, the authors of this paper, believe our responsibilities are clear. Motivated by the foundational belief that education can always serve to reproduce or transform existing social arrangements, we believe it is necessary for us to explore deeply the ways in which teacher educators can respond to the question: what does it mean to prepare future teachers to work with diverse learners?

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