

Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Engaging Teachers in Higher Education with Classroom Diversity
through Reflective Practice

by Susan Brooman-Jones

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the degree of

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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Susan Brooman-Jones declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Education, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

ENGAGING TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION WITH CLASSROOM DIVERSITY THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Universities in Australia are becoming increasingly diverse, with more students coming from culturally and linguistically varied backgrounds. Moreover, workforces, as well as workplace expectations, have become more globalised. Resulting from this, and from increased sensitivities to, and awareness of, social justice, increased focus has been placed on diversity and inclusivity in higher education and developing interculturally competent students. This Doctor of Education thesis investigates and analyses teacher perceptions of cultural diversity, factors affording or inhibiting engaging with diversity in the classroom, and implications of this for teacher decision-making, teacher practice, and learning. The research questions underpinning the thesis are:

- ❖ What are the main factors that influence and shape teachers' views and practices in relation to intercultural interaction in the classroom?
- ❖ To what extent and in what ways do these factors guide teachers' teaching and learning decisions in practice?

This thesis presents a model of learning that has been developed from the three key factors that emerged from the study: positioning the learner, classroom awareness and learning outcomes. Based on the findings of the research and literature on engaging diversity in the classroom, a model of four learning purposes has been developed. These purposes are: learning *about* diversity, learning *from* diversity, learning *through* diversity and learning *for* diversity. The four learning purposes are interrelated. The learning purposes proceed along a continuum, from surface-level engagement, learning *about* diversity, to critical consideration of values and the way cultural values frame behaviour, that is, learning *for* diversity. Learning *for* diversity is theorised as enabling inclusion through a decentring of power. Learning *for* diversity reframes cultural learning by moving the focus from external and generic cultural differences, to individuals' internal values and how they affect relationships. In doing so, the teacher's values are no longer considered the one, normative authority of learning; a wider range of values is considered and viewed as part of classroom diversity, which is dynamic and evolving.