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HOW CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE IS VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

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Abstract

New Zealand is becoming an increasingly multicultural society and as a consequence its student population is progressively diverse. Governmental education policy and curriculum documents transmit messages of cultural inclusiveness, with each drawing attention to the need for teachers to respond to the cultural diversity that will mark schools and society in the twenty-first century. Analysis of these documents, together with a critique of pedagogical practices for culturally inclusive art education, provided the framework for a fieldwork study in a sample of secondary schools in 2005. In this research I investigated the ways in which secondary school art teachers' understandings of the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students were reflected in their pedagogical practices in year 9-10 visual arts programmes, and the extent to which those practices were shaped by personal and professional experiences. Findings from the study showed that the alignment of cultural diversity with ethnicity, a continued emphasis in curriculum policy on art forms in relation to the tangata whenua and to biculturalism, and a privileging of the values and art forms of the western aesthetic and the dominant European culture, were major influences on pedagogy. The findings raise questions about the role and value of visual arts education for secondary school students from diverse cultures living in contemporary New Zealand society. They challenge government, schools and, in particular, visual arts educators to rethink existing educational traditions, content and practice.

Contextualising the study

The demographic shift in the student population in New Zealand secondary schools was a prime motivation for my investigation into visual arts pedagogy. Both the 2001 and 2006 census snapshots on 'cultural diversity' (Statistics New Zealand, 2001, 2006) foreshadow the continuing changes within the ethnic composition of schools. In

2006 Europeans comprised 67.6 percent of the population and 11.1 percent stated their ethnicity as New Zealander (a new category). One in seven people identified as Māori, Asian groups grew the fastest (an increase of almost 50 percent), and those identifying with Pacific peoples' ethnic groups had the second-largest increase (up 14.7 percent). The changing composition of the population was also reflected in the 10.4 percent who identified with more than one ethnic group.

In its evaluation report, *Multi-cultural Schools in New Zealand*, the Education Review Office (ERO) (2000) emphasized the need for teachers to respond to the challenges of teaching children of diverse cultural backgrounds and to "acknowledge and respect these diverse cultures" (p. 5).[3] An analysis of policy and curriculum documents, which are intended to guide teachers' practice, showed that each contains messages of cultural inclusiveness. Section 63 of the *Education Act 1989* requires every school charter to contain the aim of developing policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity. In *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993), which currently provides the overarching direction for teaching, learning and assessment in schools, cultural policy is articulated in terms of acknowledging "the value of the Treaty of Waitangi, and of New Zealand's bicultural identity and multicultural society" (p. 1). Referring to both ethnicity and cultural diversity, it is stated in the framework that students will be encouraged "to understand and respect the different cultures which make up New Zealand society", and that "the school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs of … students of all ethnic groups" (p. 7). The framework's emphases are further encapsulated in the goals of the *National Education Guidelines* (NEGs) (Ministry of Education, 1997), which are expected to be part of each school's charter, and in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000), the key policy document which underpinned my study.

Of the five Auckland secondary schools (herein referred to as Schools A-E) purposively selected for the field work investigation on the bases of decile classification, geographical spread, and the inclusion of single-sex, co-educational, state, integrated

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[3] The Education Review Office is the government department which reviews and reports on the quality of education in all New Zealand schools and early childhood services. This includes primary and secondary schools, private schools, kura kaupapa Māori (Māori language immersion schools), special schools, kohanga reo (Māori language early childhood groups), and homeschooling.

state and private schools, three exemplified the demographic shift. The student population in School B comprised 60 ethnic groups. At School C nearly 50 percent of the students came from overseas, from a total of 57 different countries. In School E students of Asian (23 percent), Māori (20 percent), and Pacific Islands (14 percent) ethnicity outnumbered the 43 percent of European students. The rationale for inclusion of two less culturally diverse schools, School A with 75 percent and School D with 80 percent European students, was in response to claims by multicultural theorists that attention should be given to cultures regardless of whether or not they are represented in a school's population (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). The ERO (2000) report also stressed that many teachers in New Zealand, themselves predominantly European/Pākehā, now work with student populations more culturally diverse than when they began teaching. The selection of the ten participants in my study, the head of art department (HOD) and an assistant art teacher in each of the five secondary schools, reflected this demographic reality.[4] All five HODs identified variously as European, New Zealand, or New Zealand/Pākehā. Three assistant art teachers identified as Samoan, Taiwanese and Māori, and two as New Zealand/Pākehā.

Educational theorists and art educators argue that the reality of the ethnic diversity of students, the number of languages they speak, the multiplicity of cultures, and the variables within the communities of students means that a teaching force comprising the dominant cultural majority can no longer ignore or exclude 'others' from having an identity within the educational contexts of school, curriculum and classroom (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Chalmers, 1996, 2003; Hall & Bishop, 2001; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). For Nieto (2004) this lends potency to the imperative for teachers to both "learn *about* and *from* their students" (p. 161, original emphasis). The dilemma of diversity means that teachers must not only address the cultural identities of learners, but also understand their own cultural identities and cultural positions (Hall & Bishop, 2001; Sleeter, 2001, 2004). Such points of view, supported by the demographic snapshot above, provided the impetus to investigate the complexities for visual arts pedagogy generated by the diversity of the population and the ERO expectations which reflect this diversity.

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[4] This was confirmed by a survey I conducted with heads of departments in Auckland secondary schools in 2005 in which 83 percent identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā, and 34 percent had been teaching for over 20 years (Smith, 2005).

The theoretical framework for the study

The decision to posit the research methodology within a qualitative paradigm was founded on the nature of the research problem which sought answers to the following questions:

- How are understandings of ethnic diversity and cultural difference reflected in teachers' pedagogical practices in Year 9-10 art programmes?
- In what ways, and to what extent, are these practices shaped by personal and professional factors?

The methodology was based on the need to search for and interpret meanings of culture, diversity and difference, and the art of culturally inclusive art education within the framework of multiculturalism and multicultural art education. Consistent with case study research, the perspectives of the ten participants were gained through multiple data collection methods which did not privilege one method over another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 2000; Wolcott, 1994). Critical analysis of school, art department and teachers' documents was followed by a series of interviews which explored personal and professional perspectives, and by classroom observations. The photographic documentation of students' outcomes from Year 9-10 visual arts programmes included the desire to present concrete visual evidence. These 'material traces' provided alternative insights (Hodder, 2003). The interconnected interpretive practices employed in the study were correlated to explore the nature of visual arts pedagogy at Years 9 and 10 according to the interpretations and behaviours of the participants in the social settings selected. Each method informed the investigation into the inextricable link between pedagogical understanding, educational theory, and the application of these to curriculum development and art education practice. It was envisaged that the personal and professional histories of the participants would be an important element in shaping their present identities, and in contributing to their personas as secondary school art teachers (Chalmers, 2001; Palmer, 1998).

Findings from the investigation into visual arts pedagogy

A notable feature of the overall findings of the field work was the correlation between the data collected from the examination of documents, interviews, observations, and the visible outcomes of the Year 9-10 students' work. The relationship between what teachers purported to do according to their art department schemes, programme

planning, and verbal accounts, and what they actually did, was confirmed in almost every respect (Stake, 2000).

Attitudes towards cultural policy

Insights into cultural policy in each school were gained from the analysis of schools' documents, together with teachers' perspectives. For example, in its mission statement School A claimed to provide for students "opportunities to understand differences of race, religion and culture". The HOD noted, however, that while the school promoted "ideas of tolerance and open mindedness towards other cultures and beliefs, European dominance, as in wider society, comes through" (as cited in Smith, 2007, p. 166). She added that while the influence of the curriculum framework on equity policy was inherent in this pastoral-type school, the "emphasis is on the gifted and talented rather than on treating everyone equally" (ibid). In comparison, School B's focus was upon cultural activities which were "designed to share cultural learning" (p. 177). Described as "an increasingly cosmopolitan school" by the art teacher and as "a very safe multicultural environment" by the HOD (p. 176), School B's rhetoric was complemented in practical terms by cultural events that aligned strongly with its multiethnic population. Similarly, a feature of School C was the prominence given in its documentation, and in practice, to the creative and performing arts "within a multicultural environment that allows for students to develop confidence in relating to a wide diversity of students" (p. 185). School D, with its 80 percent European population, claimed that its cultural programme was "an active and vibrant part of the whole community" (p. 195). Cultural activities were enunciated in terms of theatre-sports, choir, drama productions, jazz, stage and rock bands, singing competitions, and a Māori cultural group. While the HOD acknowledged that the school "does not reflect the multicultural nature of New Zealand society" (ibid) she pointed to the support of a whare (in a classroom) for the 5 percent of Māori boys at the school. While in its staff manual, School E emphasised the "multicultural ethos of the school" and the opportunities for students "to develop their cultural talents", the HOD considered this to be "mere rhetoric" (p. 204). Without exception, the policies of the schools in the study abided by cultural policy articulated in national curriculum policies and regulations. In practice, there was variance between policy and practice in School E and in the two schools with less culturally diverse student populations.

Compliance with national curriculum policy

An early finding, which became evident through analysis of school policy documents and art department schemes supported by interview data, was the marked degree to which accountability to national curriculum policy influenced the teachers' programming, assessment, and art department structuring. While value was placed on art education by all five schools, and it was positioned securely within the crowded Years 9-10 curriculum, the approach to the subject appeared to be affected by the academic and economic achievement imperatives inherent in the curriculum reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. For example, each art department scheme reflected the emphasis in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) upon the eight groupings of essential skills designed to contribute to a highly skilled, technologically competent and adaptable workforce. Reporting systems to students and their parents/caregivers focused specifically on these essential skills, although variations in emphases reflected the character and idiosyncracies of the particular school.

Accountability to the arts curriculum

Art programming was based predominantly on the requirements of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000). The four 'strands' in the visual arts discipline of the curriculum were used exclusively by all schools to define key areas of learning, assessment, and reporting. Each strand was included in every programme observed. While research on art and artists (UC - Understanding the visual arts in context) was generally used as the starting point, the greatest emphasis was given to art making (PK – Developing practical knowledge in the visual arts). Time allocation for spontaneous and informal art activities that were not driven by curriculum objectives was minimal. All ten teachers, in contrast to critics of the arts curriculum (see Bracey, 2003; Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2000, 2003), maintained that it offered them freedom, independence, and a useful guide for programme development. The curriculum was not perceived by these specialist secondary school art teachers as confining or exclusive but, rather, as having a positive influence upon art education. It was evident, too, that while the art units observed during the fieldwork were designed by the teachers, with little input from the students, the latter appeared to value and have a good understanding of the programmes offered. During observation lessons many of the Year 9 and 10 students said they enjoyed art and

liked developing skills in research and art making. Being encouraged to produce high quality finished art works was identified by many as particularly important. Furthermore, the arts curriculum was seen by all the teachers as providing an essential foundation for Year 11 visual arts. A number of Year 10 students informally confirmed this. Without exception, the teachers stated that their programmes reflected a conscious decision to prepare students for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

The framing of the references to culture in the arts curriculum contributed to a significant finding during the field work. For example, reference is made to "the multicultural nature of our society and its traditions" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 7), and to the arts of other countries which "have progressively become part of the New Zealand cultural tapestry" (p. 9). However, the greatest emphasis in the document is upon biculturalism and understanding the "significance and value of toi Māori in different contexts" (p. 11, p. 90), "opportunities to learn about traditional and contemporary Māori art forms" (p. 71, p. 90), and learning about the "indigenous heritage of Māori" and the "the heritage of the tangata whenua" (p. 104). By comparison, "the diverse traditions of European, Pacific, and other cultures that make up our nation" (ibid) are downplayed. Of even greater concern, reference to the cultural diversity of students is presented in the penultimate section of the 109-page document. Here it is stated that "culturally inclusive programmes in the arts will encourage positive attitudes towards cultural diversity … recognise the diversity of individual students within particular cultures … and, recognise that knowledge bases can be culturally diverse" (p. 104). The implication is that teachers and students of all cultures, regardless of the ethnic make-up of each school's population, should be imbued with respect for diverse cultures. The question must be asked as to whether 'respect' is a sufficient objective. The phrasing implies the dominance of the western view of recognising that 'other' cultures should be attended to.

The lack of attention to the cultural diversity of students in the arts curriculum was, similarly, a noticeable feature of visual arts programming. The HOD at School A, for example, saw little need to include the cultures of 'other' students in art units. She said:

I prefer not to teach about the art of other cultures because I feel like I know little about it and don't 'own' it. I do teach Māori and Pacific art units since it is an important part of New Zealand culture – and required by the curriculum – but I feel like it is tokenism because I am not directly of that culture and so my ability to teach it feels limited … if it wasn't 'compulsory' then I would probably avoid teaching it where possible (as cited in Smith, 2007, p. 172).

Although every teacher professed to be aware of the focus in the arts curriculum upon students gaining an understanding of how and why individuals, communities and societies make art works, opportunities for them to develop "deeper understandings of cultural traditions and practices in New Zealand and overseas" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 5) was interpreted by the teachers predominantly in terms of biculturalism. Each expressed clear understanding of biculturalism in terms of the curriculum framework's declaration, consistent with government policy, of acknowledgement of the value of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi and of New Zealand's bicultural identity. While the inclusion of studies of Māori art and culture responds to a mandated requirement all but one of the participants were sympathetic to the focus in the arts curriculum upon toi Māori, traditional Māori art forms and contemporary developments and their significance in different contexts, and the requirement to understand aspects of reo, tikanga, and whakapapa. Indeed, analysis of Māori art units in schemes, and observed in one classroom, showed they mostly began with the UC (Understanding the visual arts in context) strand, from which insights gained by students were used to explore the art forms of Māori as a springboard for their own art making.

Throughout the fieldwork encounter the dual focus on Māori and European/Pākehā art and culture reinforced Mane-Wheoki's (2003) commentary that "an insistent 'bicultural' vision" continues to pervade art curriculum in New Zealand (p. 8). A move beyond the bicultural emphasis was largely confined to the art of Pacific Island nations. Every school included a program with a Pasifika focus. These consisted of a study of either the material art forms of Pacific peoples, or of symbols which could be considered cultural stereotypes of particular Pacific peoples' ethnic groups, or the work of contemporary artists as models. In contrast to the Māori art units, study of the underlying cultural significance of Pasifika art forms was minimal. There was no

commensurate study of the art and cultures of the ethnically diverse and culturally different students in the fieldwork schools. The Samoan art teacher at School A confirmed that multiculturalism was not being addressed in art programmes. "We're still not open to that as a school … it's not at the forefront … Asian or Indian or other students would not have an opportunity to draw on their cultures …" (as cited in Smith, 2007, p. 167, p. 169). She attributed this to the 75 percent European student population. The art teacher at School C, alone, suggested that that although the arts curriculum "is trying to expand culturally, it doesn't embrace other than Māori or Pacific Island culture" (p. 225). It was apparent from the fieldwork that 'difference' was allowed to exist and be practiced at the margins, but not at the "front and centre" (Nieto, 2000, p. 180).

From policy to practice

The literature on pedagogical approaches to culturally inclusive art education, and the theoretical positions underpinning them, as possible solutions to issues of culture, diversity and difference in secondary school settings, informed my fieldwork. Explicated in the literature were the views of protagonists and antagonists towards 'modernist' versions of multicultural art education which celebrate pluralism and diversity, while serving to reproduce existing political, social and cultural conditions (Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996; Stuhr, 1994). It was suggested that 'postmodern' conceptions, such as social reconstructionist multiculturalism and teaching visual culture, should be adopted. These approaches emphasise difference and challenge the dominant power and knowledge structures that tend to create socio-cultural inequities (Duncum, 2001; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). A critical approach to policy and pedagogy in art education, and an ethic that gives priority to equity and democracy as primary social objectives, was considered a way forward for an active engagement of social responsibility and cultural inclusion (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Grierson, 2003).

My data collection was further influenced by Nieto's (2004) findings from her case studies in the United States. Nieto claimed that while "teachers' ethnic group membership may have a very powerful impact on student learning, it is this in conjunction with teachers' cultural knowledge and awareness, and their curriculum and instructional accommodations that can make a major difference" (p. 376). Nieto

was particularly critical of the dominance of subject matter on pedagogy in secondary schools. She claimed that pedagogy is influenced by teachers' lack of knowledge concerning the diversity of their students, that teaching from the point of view of students is uncommon, and that many teachers attempt to treat all students in the same way. These findings were instrumental in shaping the interviews, observations and documentation of student outcomes in my study.

Only the art teacher at School D, who identified as New Zealand/Pākehā, professed to have some awareness of multiculturalism. Among the other nine participants there was little sign of conscious knowledge of the multicultural pedagogies in visual arts education which focus on issues of cultural pluralism, cultural diversity, and cultural difference and the theoretical positions underpinning them. Inclusion, where it occurred, was largely in terms of the assimilationist approaches identified by Sleeter and Grant (1987). For example, there was some evidence of 'teaching the culturally different', an approach that requires little change to the existing curriculum other than by the tokenistic addition of examples of other cultures which supplement the dominant cultural view. Illustrative of the 'human relations approach' the HOD at School E, who identified as European, professed to look for cultural events around which to design a unit. Here, students made Chinese lanterns to coincide with the Chinese Lantern Festival. Such approaches illustrated a lack of awareness of debates which suggest that ethnic histories and cultures are not seen as integral parts of mainstream culture and that the realities of cultural conflict can be avoided, or even not perceived.

However, in spite of their professed lack of knowledge of multicultural pedagogies, most of the teachers' programmes were based on interpretations of culture which reflected awareness of their particular students. With the exception of the HODs at Schools A and E, who professed to take little account of the ethnicity and cultural differences of students when planning, the remaining teachers felt they were attentive to "the ethnicity of students … acknowledgement of cultural differences … sensitivity to ethnic needs … and the cultures and the individuality of students" (as cited in Smith, 2007, p. 227). The HOD at School B reported that the art staff was particularly aware of the 60 different ethnic groups at her school. At School C, where the

population was largely immigrant, the HOD considered that all students were treated equally. In this Year 9 class students were given opportunity to depict aspects of their cultural and transnational backgrounds, albeit through nationalistic identifiers such as kangaroos, sheep and pandas. At the integrated-state school students explored art within the cultural context of its Christian ethos. Six of the ten programs enabled students to use universal, cultural and personal symbols to represent themselves to themselves, an approach that aligned with ideas articulated by Geertz (1977). The opportunity to collaboratively express the popular cultural iconography of New Zealand was given to students by the assistant art teacher at School E, although the approach did not include a critical examination of popular forms of visual culture in a socio-cultural context (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). In other instances teachers used culture of the western art aesthetic as a starting point, based on their views that western art provides a sufficient and valid source of examples of artistic accomplishment.

The arts curriculum was considered by the majority to be the key influence on their effectiveness as teachers. Reflective of Hattie's (2003) emphasis on the importance of "excellent teachers and inspiring teaching" (p. 6), the personal and professional effect which these art teachers had on the formative and summative achievements of their Year 9 or 10 students was a noticeable feature of the fieldwork. In each case the engagement of students in classrooms over a sustained period of researcher-participant observation was due, in no small part, to the supportive environment established by the teachers, the positive inter-personal relationships between teachers, students and peers, the teachers' respect for their students, and the students' responses to their teachers in the learning encounter. These teachers reflected, albeit in varying degrees, Palmer's (1998) belief that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique, but is rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher. That they possessed what Palmer calls a capacity to connect with their students and their subject was reflected in the level of student involvement. Of the 231 students observed in the ten art rooms only a few were not engaged or failed to complete components within units of work. Also noticeable was the implicit, rather than explicitly stated, high expectations which all the teachers had of students to perform to the best of their ability.

The pedagogical practices observed during the fieldwork aligned, however, with Hattie's (2003) assertion that "educators still make most of their practice decisions on the basis of personal belief and personal experience" (p. 12). Nine participants professed no conscious knowledge of multicultural theory, and all ten were unaware of discourses on critical pedagogy. The HOD at School D expressed an emphatic "no", explaining that she was "too pragmatic" (as cited in Smith, 2007, p. 224). Planning and teaching were based largely on the teachers' beliefs about what constituted appropriate art education, and on the broader social conditions and experiences which had shaped their practice. With the exception of one teacher, who was required to implement the department-wide Year 9 art program designed by the HOD, elements of the personal, school and tertiary education experiences of the participants were evident in their approaches. For example, positive experiences of studying art history at school and university and a passion for classical art, as well as a stated preference for traditional art, were carried over into the pedagogical practices of the HOD at School E. Students in this Year 10 class adopted the teacher's ethos of developing skills, exploring media and techniques, and understanding art styles to "achieve the pride of a good finished outcome" (p. 223). In comparison, vivid experiences at a bicultural secondary school and inter-disciplinary-style polytechnic, an early introduction to photography, interest in issues of low versus high art and art versus craft, and increased awareness during teacher training of the need to explore and place more value on other cultures and their art, were reflected in the pedagogical practices of the art teacher at another. Teaching and learning in this Year 10 class were approached from the perspective of enabling students to explore their "individual ethnicity or their culture" (p. 224) through experimenting with contemporary forms of art making.

The influence on pedagogical practices of preparing students for NCEA was particularly evident in the focus upon students researching artists' works and procedures as inspiration for personal practice. Sustaining critiques of the arts curriculum (see Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2000, 2003), interviews with the teachers, classroom observations and the photographic recording of students' work confirmed that the 'artist models' selected by teachers were drawn primarily from a modernist western aesthetic. While the majority of teachers expressed no bias towards 'high art', nor rejection of the so-called 'low art' of popular culture, crafts, decorative arts, and tribal

and indigenous art, the artists and art works studied in seven of the ten programmes conformed to definitions of art within the western art canon. Reflecting the historical experiences of the teachers themselves, classical forms of antiquity and the development of Cubism were studied by Year 10 students in two schools and the conventions of portraiture in a further three. In most instances emphasis was placed upon the art forms as self-sufficient products, rather than on their underlying social, political and cultural contexts. Only three programmes drew upon art which extended beyond the western aesthetic. Popular culture provided the basis for a collaborative construction of "kiwiana chairs" in one school. Study of indigenous art, which drew upon understanding of the forms and significance of Māori kākahu, inspired the construction of "personal identity cloaks" in another. In a third, "symbolic self-portraits" were underpinned by study of the cultural and personal symbolism in the works of Niuean artist, John Pule.

The autonomy of action which the teachers considered the arts curriculum provided was evident in their personal and professional search for programmes designed in the interests of their students. Culture as a political issue in education and schooling was not referred to in art department documentation nor, in response to my questions, expressed as a relevant concern. Neither was the politics of culture, the way in which curricula reflect cultural forces that are the outcome of competing interests of stakeholders, a dimension of their pedagogical practices.

Where to from here?

New Zealand teachers accept employment on the understanding that they will deliver a curriculum as laid down by government statute. The curriculum framework and the arts curriculum require schools to meet a multicultural requirement responsive to the increasing cultural diversity of the New Zealand population. The literature reviewed suggested that teachers have a responsibility to make a conscious and informed commitment to a socially responsive multiculturalism (Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Giroux, 1994; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999, Nieto, 2000, 2004). The question can be asked as to how far the government's curriculum policy aligns with this position, especially since there is no substantial evidence to show any relationship between culturally inclusive art education and students' attitudes to

democracy, culture, and each other. Much depends upon what is meant by a responsive curriculum and what pedagogical interpretations it requires.

The findings of the fieldwork suggested that all the teachers believed they were able to exercise professional autonomy within the requirements of educational policy. Programmes were driven not only by the arts curriculum but by a sincere concern for the welfare of students, in both educational and social terms. Many stated that they wanted to improve the life chances of their students, a position advocated by Nieto (2004). While admitting they held no theoretical knowledge of multicultural pedagogies, the majority believed that their art programs and pedagogical practices took into account the students in their classrooms. As exemplified in students' outcomes the art education provided by the teachers, and shaped in their own terms by the students, was vital, expressive and of high quality and was valued by their schools' communities. In the majority of cases, however, such production did not correlate with the pursuit and achievement of a visual arts education which took sufficient account of the individual differences within the cultures of students in New Zealand secondary schools. While some of the programmes enabled students to express their ethnicity this was manifested primarily through symbolic representation which drew upon cultural stereotypes associated with particular ethnic groups. There was little evidence in programmes of opportunities to study the forms of visual culture that resonate with the lives of young people in contemporary society. The question must be asked as to how secondary school art teachers can be provoked into rethinking existing art education traditions, content and practices.

It also became apparent during the fieldwork that the potent influences of the New Zealand European/Pākehā participants' own Europeanised artistic and cultural inheritances over-powered their understandings of diversity and difference. Even the five teachers from 'other' cultures maintained that their criteria for high student achievement in art remained predominantly within the western aesthetic. This alignment with claims by United States art educator Smith (2006) that excellence as a desired outcome of education rests in the maintenance of the European tradition raises a further issue for art education pedagogy. Overall, the nature of art education offered by these ten teachers maintained an emphasis on modernist art exemplars and continued to promote the predominantly bicultural position observed in an earlier study (Smith, 2001). The desire for students to achieve excellence was strong and an

imperative to prepare students for NCEA in year 11 inescapable. In combination, these factors produced a form of art education whose curriculum policy, content, and pedagogical practices remained rooted in a predominantly monocultural ethos. These findings provide a challenge for government, schools, and in particular visual arts educators.

My question – where to from here? – is predicated, not only upon the fieldwork findings, but on critiques of art education in New Zealand which press for change from the dominant European position to the adoption of a more revolutionary stance (Bracey, 2003; Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2003). Such a change would require a shift from pluralist multiculturalism, via the medium of modernist progressivist pedagogy, to critical (postmodern) pedagogies which specify inclusion and access and which affirm diversity and acknowledge difference as a dynamic conception of culture (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood & Park, 2003; West, 1993). Education, as advocated by such as Giroux (1994) and Bhabba (1995) and others is seen as a vital agency for informing people of the realities of ethnic diversity and cultural difference and the necessity for equity of achievement rather than mere equity of opportunity. In this context many art theorists argued that the very visibility of art, as well as its function as a metaphor of culture, can play a significant educational role in this respect (Chalmers, 2003; Duncum, 2001; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). A shift from the élitism of the fine arts, the modernist aesthetic, and the western art canon to the art of the everyday world in which students learn how to decode contemporary culture would be needed. Such decoding does not imply tacit acceptance of all aspects of the forms of what is being called 'art' in contemporary society. Rather, it focuses upon an equivalent critical enquiry that has traditionally been evident in the world of 'fine arts'.

The question remains as to how, and in what degree, an enhanced understanding of the theoretical arguments would improve a visual arts education which is truly responsive to the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students in New Zealand secondary schools today. The provision of such understanding would require recognition in both the pre-service and the continuing education of art teachers. It would require visual arts teachers to gain understanding of the importance of a transformative pedagogy and curriculum that challenges the hegemonic knowledge that perpetuates the power of the dominant culture and which operates in the socio-political context of students' lives (see Giroux, 1994; Nieto, 2000, 2004). In these

terms visual arts education would be expected to address issues regarding group differences and how power relations function to structure racial and ethnic identities. It would challenge teachers to make a space for different student voices.

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