

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Rethinking Multiculturalism

**Dr Megan Watkins and Associate Professor Greg Noble of the Centre for Cultural Research and Professor Kevin Dunn from the School of Social Sciences, together with investigators from the NSW Department of Education and Communities and the NSW Institute of Teachers, are examining prevailing practices of multicultural education in Australian schools. This project is funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Projects scheme in conjunction with the NSW Department of Education and Communities and the NSW Institute of Teachers.**

'Australia's society is becoming increasingly culturally diverse and globalised' says Dr Watkins. 'For teachers multicultural education can mean that they are faced with dealing with extraordinary diversity, and encouraging social inclusion. When teaching core literacies teachers need to personalise the learning for students and they need to develop a deep understanding of students' educational needs, including understanding the role that culture, language and identity play in schooling. This is not a simple task and requires teachers' knowledge and skills in multicultural education to be developed. In particular, the complexity of what "culture" is needs to be better understood so that all students, regardless of background, acquire the skills necessary to be successful learners and culturally competent citizens.'

The current practices of multicultural education will be explored by surveys and focus groups conducted with teachers, parents and students in NSW. Following on from this, projects informed by the findings will be implemented in a number of schools to explore different aspects of multicultural education for specific school contexts. Once these have been evaluated for their effectiveness, the outcomes of the projects will be disseminated to schools and teachers.



Investigating the challenges posed by cultural complexity in schools and developing innovative professional learning strategies to deal with them is more important now than ever before. By using new information and approaches, schools in both urban and rural areas will be assisted in delivering education for current and future generations of culturally diverse Australians.

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