

Abstract Template

TITLE: Courageous Conversations and Disruptive Dialogues in Pre-service Teacher Education

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Abstract (*no more than 300 words with no figures or tables*):

Equity and Diversity are key elements in current Australian policy that impacts on teacher training today (cf. AITSL, ACARA, MCEETYA, 2008). This is a critically reflective paper that asks whether raising critical consciousness (Hinchey, 2004) consequently has a place in contemporary teacher education. Discomfort is a crucial pedagogical element that is typically met with resistance and negative experiences and evaluations from a vocal proportion of pre-service teachers.

I became aware of the 'Courageous Conversations about Race' framework through the work of Glenn E. Singleton (cf. 2005) who facilitates memorable workshops that provoke such encounters and provide tools for openly encouraging this courageous conversation. Singleton suggests four agreements in engaging in courageous conversations: to stay engaged; to experience discomfort; to speak your truth; and expect/accept non-closure. At the same time, I became distinctly and at times rather frustratingly aware of the related 'Disruptive Dialogues' during my workshops for pre-service teachers in which I brought up areas of discussion that were largely construed as disruptive to the comfortably constructed worlds of my students in which discrimination, racism, sexism, and classism no longer existed, and were therefore not worth dwelling on. By bringing up these topics I was in fact, bringing them back into existence, rather than moving beyond them, as had they.

I contend that although many pre-service teachers will happily use the language of diversity, equity and social justice as expected by the aforementioned policy, few of them really want to experience the discomfort and disruption in effectively engaging in courageous conversations leading to socially just and ongoing action. This paper will examine examples of student responses and evaluations and my own reflections on critical classroom incidents, to consider the place of courageous and disruptive dialogue in contemporary teacher education. (289 words)