

4

Critical teaching in diverse classrooms

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Schools around the world are recognising the importance of preparing teachers for working in culturally diverse classrooms. This chapter first summarises demographic and academic rationales for multicultural education, before presenting an overview of how the movement has evolved with a stronger focus on equity and social justice. Given the importance of teacher preparation in multicultural education, this chapter discusses potential survey questions and key trade-offs with assessments that may need to be considered. This chapter concludes with implications for policy, practice, and research that advocates for critical forms of multicultural education to address inequality.

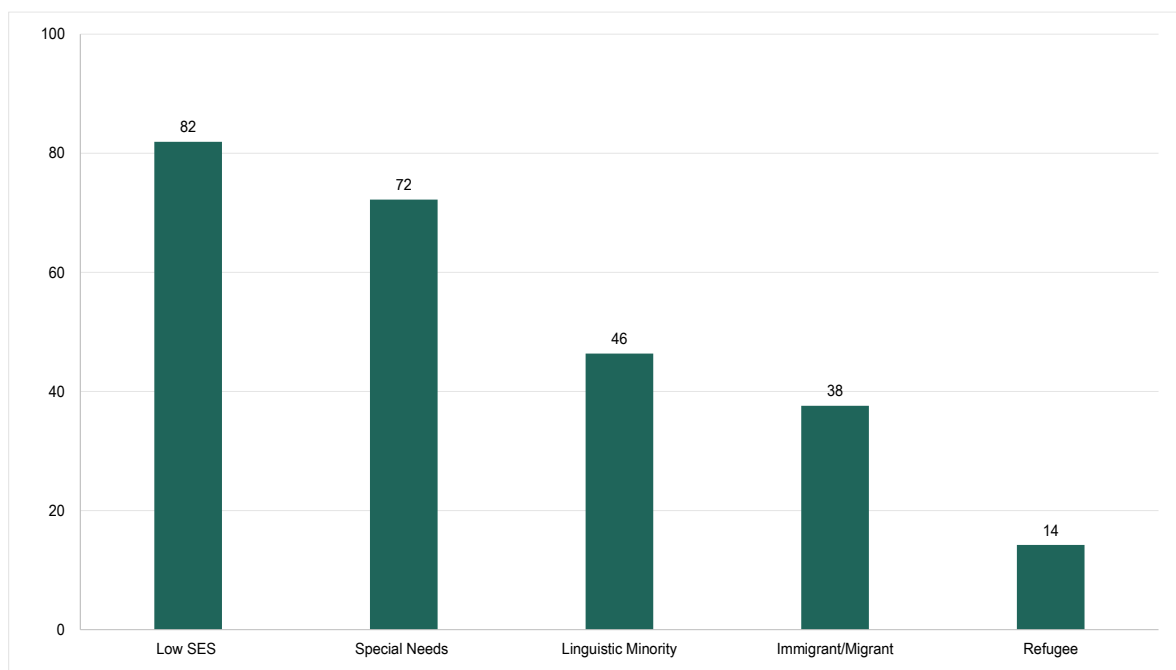
Trends in culturally diverse classrooms

Schools around the world are recognising the importance of preparing teachers for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. Part of the challenge in this work is that culture and diversity encompass multiple dimensions of social identity and inequality, including but not limited to: race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, ability and disability, nationality, socio-economic class, language, religion, migration, indigeneity, and geography. This chapter considers each dimension as part of the cultural backgrounds of individuals. Although policies and programmes for teacher education—including initial teacher training and ongoing professional development—vary across and within countries, four key trends in many schools and in the broader research literature motivate a greater urgency to improve the learning experiences of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. These four trends also provide insight into tools for measuring and monitoring teacher attitudes and skills.

First, classrooms today enrol a large proportion of students from marginalised backgrounds. Figure 4.1 illustrates five different categories of student background represented in lower secondary classrooms from the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). Most classrooms have at least one student from a socioeconomically disadvantaged household or at least one student with special needs. A smaller but significant percentage of classrooms also have at least one student speaking a first language that is different from the language of instruction or at least one student from an immigrant or migrant background. Also noteworthy is that 14% of all classrooms have at least one student from a refugee background. The growing diversity of the worldwide student population comes also at a time when teachers are less likely to come from similar backgrounds (Cooc and Kim, 2021^[11]).

Figure 4.1. Increasing diversity in classrooms around the world

Percentage of lower secondary teachers reporting to have at least one student from each marginalised group in their classroom



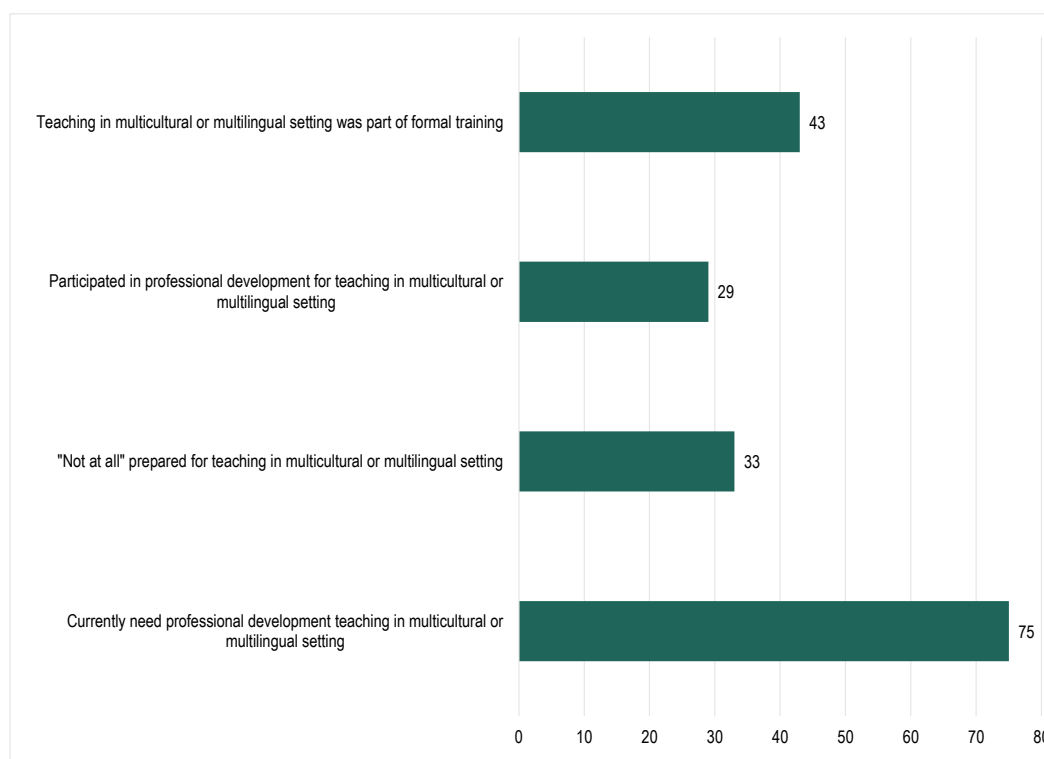
SES = Socio-economic status. Results are based on an analysis of the responses from 145 617 lower secondary teachers from 47 OECD and partnering countries and economies participating in TALIS, using teacher and sample replicate weights.

Source: Authors' calculations (OECD, 2018^[21])

Second, teachers internationally are unlikely to have had formal training in teaching diverse classrooms. Figure 4.2 shows the low level of preparation for instruction in multicultural and multilingual classrooms among TALIS 2018 teachers. Less than half of teachers reported any formal training in their tertiary education and less than 30% had attended any professional development for teaching in multicultural or multilingual classrooms in the last 12 months. Not surprisingly, about one-third felt “not at all” prepared to teach in multicultural or multilingual classrooms and 75% reported currently needing professional development in this area. Research shows that among US teachers with some formal training focused on multicultural education or diversity, this work often consisted of a few discussions in classes - an approach that may have negative effects (Pollock et al., 2010^[3]). One positive indicator in the TALIS data is that teachers are recognising a gap in their preparation for teaching an increasingly diverse student population and are asking for ongoing professional development in this area. A related component of diversity is students with special needs. Nearly 60% of teachers reported moderate to high need in professional development to teach special needs education (authors’ calculations).

Figure 4.2. Low levels of teacher preparation and professional development for multilingual or multilingual classrooms

Percentage of TALIS 2018 lower secondary teachers reporting on past training and current preparedness and need for professional development



SES = Socio-economic status. Results are based on an analysis of the responses from 145 617 lower secondary teachers from 47 OECD and partnering countries and economies participating in TALIS, using teacher and sample replicate weights.

Source: Authors' calculations (OECD, 2018^[2])

Third, students from culturally diverse backgrounds have been historically underserved in schools and continue to achieve at lower levels than their peers. Equity does not mean that all students should have the same academic achievement but that differences in outcomes should be not related to student

background. For example, an alarming result from the most recent 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows the reading performance gap between the 10% most socioeconomically disadvantaged and the 10% least socioeconomically disadvantaged students in France, Hungary, Israel, Peru, and the Slovak Republic is about four years of schooling (Schleicher, 2019^[4]). Socioeconomically disadvantaged students have fewer learning opportunities and less access to school-based resources, including qualified teachers. However, PISA results also show some countries appear more effective than others at mitigating the impact of social background on academic achievement as the academic gap in these countries is narrower between socioeconomically disadvantaged and advantaged students. Another area of concern is the academic achievement of immigrant students; across OECD countries, immigrant students score significantly lower than non-immigrant students in reading by an average of 41 points or about 0.41 standard deviations (Schleicher, 2019^[4]). Although gender gaps in academic achievement are smaller and depend on the subject (Schleicher, 2019^[4]), inequities persist in the labour market in terms of employment and income.

Lastly, increased focus on diversity and equity in teaching is timely because a growing empirical research literature shows that culturally responsive practices, such as integrating the cultural backgrounds of students into the curriculum, have a positive impact on student learning (Cabrera et al., 2014^[5]; Cammarota, 2007^[6]; Dee and Penner, 2017^[7]; Lewis, Sullivan and Bybee, 2006^[8]) and school climate (Khalifa, Gooden and Davis, 2016^[9]). Research additionally indicates such practices increase student engagement and psychological well-being (Cholewa et al., 2014^[10]; Savage et al., 2011^[11]), and also reduces the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education (Klingner et al., 2005^[12]). It is important to note that although multicultural teaching tends to focus on the learning of historically marginalised student groups, *all* students benefit from a classroom environment where teachers embrace critical pedagogies that acknowledge systemic inequities and the diverse learning styles of students (Kim and Cooc, 2020^[13]). In addition, the growing application of culturally responsive practices recognises current inequities within schools and the right of students from diverse backgrounds to receive not only an education equal to their peers, but one that supports their unique identities and developmental needs.

In short, although the persistent gaps in school outcomes among students from diverse cultural backgrounds is concerning, there is strong evidence that teachers with training in critical multicultural education can be part of the solution. Improvement in this area will require monitoring current levels of teacher preparation and gaps in training. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of multicultural teacher education, including common challenges and how the field has evolved. This chapter further argues that preparation and education for teaching in diverse classrooms is not a one-time or add-on component to existing educational programmes and policies. Pedagogies and practices related to multiculturalism raise questions about the purposes of education and which populations are served or underserved in schools. Given the importance of monitoring and addressing gaps in teacher preparation, this chapter also includes a discussion of issues to consider when designing tools and surveys to measure teacher self-reported knowledge and pedagogies in multicultural education, as well as examples of potential survey items. Lastly, the chapter provides implications for education policy and practice, as well as future research.

Multicultural education

Scholars and educators use different terms when describing how to support teachers in creating learning environments that reflect equity, diversity and social justice. The variation in terms partly reflects the evolution of how teacher education programmes have viewed the education of students from different cultural backgrounds. Table 4.1 summarises some of the teacher education strategies used since the 1960s. See Paris (2012^[14]) for a more detailed discussion of each.

Table 4.1. Brief overview of common terminology in multicultural education

Time	Description
1960s and 1970s	Deficit Approaches
1970s and 1980s	Differences Approaches
1980s and 1990s	Resource Pedagogies / Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992 ^[15])
1990s	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995 ^[16]) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2000 ^[17])
2010s	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012 ^[14])

Source: Adapted from Paris (2012^[14])

Growing teachers' knowledge and skills for working in classrooms comprised of students from diverse cultural backgrounds has become widespread as a priority of education internationally. However, similar to multiculturalism, multicultural education's history and definitions vary across and within national contexts (Torres and Tarozzi, 2020^[18]). Some countries use the term "multicultural education", while others prefer the term "intercultural education". Different historical trajectories of multiculturalism may also explain, for example, why some countries focus their multicultural education discussions and programmes primarily on racial and ethnic diversity, while others also include other dimensions of cultural diversity, such as gender and sexual orientation.

As an actualisation of diversity ideologies in the United States, multicultural education has been a part of teacher education since the 1970's and included ethnic studies, multi-ethnic education, antiracist education, critical pedagogy and critical race theory (Hernandez-Sheets, 2003^[19]). Ethnic studies and multi-ethnic education grew out of the late 1960s Civil Rights movement to address the rights and needs rights of African American students and students from other racially marginalised groups. In the late 1980's and 1990's, multi-ethnic education became subsumed under the broader multicultural education movement. Across its evolution, multicultural education has been conceptualised as an educational approach that recognises and values the knowledge, perspectives and practices of all cultures as "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992^[15]), especially from marginalised groups (Banks, 2006^[20]; Banks, 2009^[21]; Gay, 2000^[17]).

Interpretations of multicultural education include civic and moral objectives, as well as recommendations for school curricula, pedagogy, and other significant aspects of schooling to create inclusive and equitable education for all students. These efforts have been understood as necessary for educational and social progress. Schools and teachers must be responsive to cultural diversity. At the same time, students must also have educational experiences that help them to grow in their knowledge and value of cultural diversity. For example, the development of empathy and skills to thrive in a culturally pluralistic society are an important and necessary part of education (Banks and Banks, 1997^[22]; Banks et al., 2001^[23]; Banks, 2006^[20]). According to Banks et al. (2001^[23]), academic knowledge and skills alone will not guarantee students the ability to participate fully and actively in society; learning how to interact positively with people from different backgrounds is also essential, especially in light of increased migration and globalisation in the 21st century.

Multicultural education has been conceptualised as tied to "citizenship education" (Banks, 2001^[24]), which includes supporting students in developing the knowledge and skills to live in a culturally diverse society, as well as maintaining all citizens' rights to their cultural communities and a shared national culture. On an international level, multicultural education's variable definitions and implementations may be understood as bound up in varying ideologies related to national identity and citizenship. Histories of immigration, contemporary policies on migration, redress for Indigenous groups, global economic goals and labour market outcomes, and systems for educational standards are just a few of the ways countries differ that may contribute to their varied approaches to multicultural education.

Common issues related to diversity and inclusion in education

Scholars have examined three common challenges in preparing teachers to address diversity in ways that create more inclusive and equitable education. In order of frequency and priority, these challenges are related to curriculum and instruction, institutional support and socio-political context (Gorski, 2016^[25]). A discussion of each challenge is provided in more detail below.

Teacher diversity and orientations

One key challenge and area of research on growing the knowledge and skills for teaching in diverse classrooms has been the diversity of the teacher population. Many studies have documented the need for more teachers from diverse backgrounds in general, and teachers from racial and ethnic minoritised groups, in particular (Quiocho and Rios, 2000^[26]; Villegas and Lucas, 2004^[27]), especially as research indicates students from historically marginalised groups achieve better academic and social outcomes when they have access to teachers from a similar group (Wells and Cordova-Cobo, 2016^[28]). For example, in a study of teachers of colour (TOCs) in South Africa, the teachers' personal experiences related to language, race and migration shaped their social justice pedagogies and teaching practices (Perumal, 2015^[29]).

Other studies of TOCs also indicate their greater attention to diversity and issues of social justice, including supporting students from historically disadvantaged groups (Philip, 2014^[30]; Quiocho and Rios, 2000^[26]; Villegas and Davis, 2008^[31]). Diversifying the teacher population is a need in many different national and local contexts, yet this reform alone does not necessarily create more inclusive and equitable schools. All TOCs cannot be assumed to be focused on issues of inclusion and equity in education. Moreover, all teachers need to reflect on their biases and beliefs about themselves and others (Kim and Cooc, 2020^[13]; Milner, 2010^[32]). Teaching for diversity, inclusion and social justice is the work of not only TOCs and teachers from other disadvantaged groups, but an essential responsibility of all teachers in any school context.

Encouraging teachers' reflections on their own biases and orientations, as well as critical examinations of historical and systemic issues of equity and inclusion, follows a view of multicultural education as challenging the nature of school curriculum. An underlying question for teachers' development of the knowledge and skills for teaching in diverse classrooms is, what is the purpose of education?

Multicultural education's varied definitions and implementations internationally are largely related to differences in national purposes for education. Studies show its take-up as serving political purposes, such as to assimilate immigrants in Spain (Aguado-Odina, Mata-Benito and Gil-Jaurena, 2017^[33]) or ethnic minority groups and Indigenous peoples in Taiwan (Liu and Lin, 2011^[34]). Within educational policies and programmes that promote inclusion, immigrant and ethnic minority students may still be seen as cultural "others", especially in countries that have prioritised national homogeneity or ethnocentrism, as described in studies of multicultural education in Japan (Okubo, 2017^[35]) and South Korea (Mo and Lim, 2013^[36]). Çelik and colleagues (2017^[37]) detailed the challenges of multicultural education in Turkey as a centralised educational system that has historically promoted a monocultural national identity. Their study highlights how national curriculum and policies marginalise ethnic, linguistic minorities or recognise minorities' rights to maintain practices related to their cultural backgrounds only in particular schools, such as the permitted use of minoritised languages in private schools.

Assimilationist objectives to education frame cultural diversity as a phenomenon to be managed, rather than as a strength and asset. However, citizens who have opportunities to maintain ties to their community cultures and languages are more likely to identify with the nation-state than those who are denied these ties (Banks, 2004^[38]; Kymlicka, 2004^[39]). Embracing cultural diversity in education is also necessary for changing exclusionary views of who holds knowledge and expertise. For example, reforming education to value the diverse cultural and linguistic resources that students bring into classrooms requires challenging

narrow models of literacy learning that recognise only one language and written alphabetic systems as evidence of advanced, literate individuals or societies (Kim, 2020^[40]).

A related challenge to teaching in diverse classrooms is standardised curriculum, which may only feature the perspectives and interests of the dominant group. Standardisation does not usually allow for the building of curriculum and pedagogy based on the cultural frameworks, strengths and experiences of students especially from marginalised groups (Sleeter and Carmona, 2017^[41]). Furthermore, as curriculum scholarship has stressed education's role in issues of power within economic, political, and cultural systems (Apple, 2004^[42]), teaching in diverse classrooms requires examinations of what is being taught, as well as how and why. In a critique of curriculum standardisation, Sleeter and Carmona (2017^[41]) emphasise that there is no single “how” of multicultural curriculum. They propose teachers approach multicultural curriculum design through a guiding framework, comprised of the following questions related to the purposes of curriculum and instruction:

1. What purposes should the curriculum serve?
2. How should knowledge be selected, who decides what is most worth teaching and learning, and what is the relationship between those in the classroom and the knowledge selection process?
3. What is the nature of students and the learning process, and how does it suggest teachers should organise learning experiences and relationships?
4. How should curriculum be evaluated? How should learning be evaluated? To whom is curriculum evaluation accountable?

Textbook analyses have documented ethnic stereotypes, misinformation (Gay, 1983^[43]) or the absence of many already marginalised racial and ethnic groups (Brown and Brown, 2010^[44]; Stanton, 2014^[45]; Noboa, 2013^[46]) and sexual minorities (Macgillivray and Jennings, 2008^[47]). Revisions to required curricular content, drawing from research and theories that have grown in fields such as disability studies, gender and women's studies, ethnic studies, and Indigenous studies, are a major need in diverse classrooms. Teacher competencies for critical teaching in diverse classrooms does not require demonstrated knowledge in all of these fields but could include developed skills in critically analysing curricula for issues of cultural representation and omission.

Institutional support

In addition to focusing on what type of training teachers need to succeed in diverse classrooms and what the curriculum should be for local schools, scholars have examined why educators may have difficulty implementing multicultural education practices. Research indicates that the extent to which teachers engage in critical approaches may depend on the level of perceived support from their institutions. In a study of teacher educators who teach multicultural education courses in Canada and the United States, Gorski and Parekh (2020^[48]) found those who adopted conservative forms of multicultural education that focused on diversity but not inequality tended to perceive greater institutional support for their classes. In contrast, teacher educators who employed a more critical approach that addressed inequality more directly reported, on average, less institutional support. Although no causal links can be drawn between multicultural education implementation and institutional support, it is likely that teachers working with institutional leaders who support multicultural education will engage in more critical classroom practices. It should be noted that while this research focuses on educators preparing future teachers, the results apply to teachers in schools. The lack of supportive school leaders who understand and show commitment to multicultural education is likely to impact the extent to which teachers engage in diversity and equity issues. Other institutional factors, such as time, collaboration with other teachers, national standards, and alignment across classes may also impact whether and how teachers approach multicultural education (Pollock et al., 2010^[3]).

Socio-political context

Schools are embedded within larger social and political institutions that can directly influence how teachers view and prioritise multicultural education. For example, Gorski (2016^[25]) reported challenges that some US teacher educators faced in practicing multicultural education within a conservative Christian context in which pluralism may be viewed as a threat. Other teachers described how the standards and accountability movement in US schools leaves less time to focus on equity concerns. In South Korea, the prevailing focus on Korean ethnic identity marginalises a growing population of ethnic minorities and immigrants (Kim and Choi, 2020^[49]). Critiques of South Korean textbooks point to the ethnocentrism and cultural homogeneity that distort views of multicultural families (Hong, 2010^[50]; Jho, 2014^[51]). Although the Korean government supported multiculturalism as a major political and educational agenda in 2006, research shows that training is still lacking (Mo and Lim, 2013^[36]). In Singapore, multicultural education has emphasised food festivals, where different cultures may be superficially celebrated, and highlighted the advantages of diversity for national cohesion and economic development (Bokhorst-Heng, 2007^[52]). Canada has focused on human rights and equality but also view multiculturalism in terms of economic advantages. The socio-political contexts in these countries may strain efforts to adopt more critical approaches to multicultural education.

Teacher education for diverse classrooms

The views, values and prior experiences that teachers bring to their work in diverse classrooms is a critical component of assessing their understanding of what has been discussed as “critical multicultural education” (Sleeter, 1995^[53]; May, 1999^[54]). As a critical race theory focus on systems of inequity and racial privilege has also become an emphasis in multicultural education (Hernandez-Sheets, 2003^[19]), some teacher education research emphasises a need for teachers to develop an “ontological understanding of what constitutes diversity with respect to one’s own identity within White supremacy” (Matias and Aldern, 2019, p. 39^[55]).

A review of international teacher education research about cultural diversity identified Whiteness as “an engrained and unexamined area in the discourses produced for teacher education” (Fylkesnes, 2018^[56]). For example, in a study of Norwegian teacher education policy and curriculum documents that promote social justice, Fylkesnes (2019^[57]) found discourses of racial othering and exclusion. Her study, and others in recent teacher education research, identify the colonial legacy of race and racism in different national contexts as an embedded and critical component of education for cultural diversity. Such studies suggest teacher education research and discussions of cultural diversity must critically examine social structures and ways of being that reproduce a hierarchy of racial groups.

Multicultural education is therefore not only about pedagogical strategies and curriculum for teaching in diverse classrooms, but issues of power, inequalities and equity (Sleeter, 2018^[58]). Without attention to these issues, teacher preparation for diverse classrooms contributes to a neoliberal approach to multiculturalism and education (Kymlicka, 2013^[59]). Training programmes and experiences that aim to help teachers work with culturally diverse students can reproduce a view of diversity as something to be recognised and managed (Sleeter, 2018^[58]). For examples, studies of short-term teaching abroad programmes for pre-service teachers have found some reinforced racial superiority, as well as stereotypes and deficit views of culturally different peoples (Klein and Wikan, 2019^[60]; Marx and Pray, 2011^[61]; Santoro, 2014^[62]).

Preparing teachers to work with culturally diverse students must move past the goals of responding to diversity through cultural sensitivity and tolerance; instead, teacher education for diverse classrooms requires critical examinations of teachers’ own dispositions and historical and structural systems of inequalities, such as the ways in which classroom expectations and testing systems privilege particular types of knowledge usually associated with already advantaged groups. Supporting teachers’ critical

examinations and self-reflections regarding biases can help to mitigate deficit views of students from marginalised groups and superior notions of teaching them as charitable work.

Critical, asset-based approaches to multicultural education for teacher development and student learning are centrally concerned with changing educational systems. Such an approach to teaching in diverse classrooms can be a revitalisation and reclaiming of epistemologies, histories and cultural practices that have been disrupted and displaced by colonisation (McCarty and Lee, 2014^[63]). Critical approaches to multicultural education are sensitive to whose knowledge and ways of understanding the world are valued in schools. For example, approaches in North America might involve the teaching of Native American literature in US classrooms (San Pedro, 2017^[64]) and the centring of Indigenous communities' frameworks of knowledge and practice, such as the valuing of elder pedagogies and practices (Holmes and Gonzalez, 2017^[65]).

Teacher education for diverse classrooms includes questioning dominant educational norms and recognising the effects of colonial histories in schools. This decolonising approach involves inviting the guidance of local communities that might otherwise not be reflected in the school curriculum or partnering with ethnic and cultural studies departments (Dominguez, 2017^[66]). In a community-based or "power-sharing approach" (Bishop et al., 2009^[67]), teachers learn to co-construct curriculum and instruction with the communities they serve. For example, a large-scale study of this approach found a positive impact on the educational experiences of Māori students (Meyer et al., 2010^[68]).

Measuring competencies for teaching in diverse classrooms

Previous studies have developed instruments to examine how teacher educators approach designing courses on multicultural teacher education for pre-service teachers (Gorski and Parekh, 2020^[48]). However, these instruments can also be adapted to survey current teachers about their attitudes, knowledge of multicultural education, and skills related to teaching in diverse classrooms. The following are examples of each competency area.

Measuring teacher attitudes

Gorski's (2009^[69]) typology of five approaches to multicultural teacher education can serve as an initial self-assessment of how teachers understand their role or view of teaching in diverse classrooms. Each approach can be converted into Likert-scale items to measure the degree to which teachers may report expertise. Table 4.2 summarises Gorski's approaches to multicultural teacher education.

Table 4.2. Measuring attitudes towards teaching multicultural education

In my teaching, I aim to...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. ...work effectively with diverse student populations by studying the cultures, values, lifestyles, and worldviews of individual identity groups and teaching them to adjust to the education system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. ...develop awareness of and sensitivity towards diversity, particularly through an examination of my own biases.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. ...acquire the knowledge and practical skills necessary to implement multicultural curricular and pedagogical strategies that engage the diverse learning styles of all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. ...examine the systemic influences of power, oppression, dominance, inequity, and injustice on all aspects of education and student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. ...challenge and change current social injustices and prepare students to do the same.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Adapted from Gorski (2009^[69]) typology of multicultural teacher education approaches.

One advantage of the above items is that respondents can ascribe to multiple approaches and attitudes toward teaching about diversity and equity that are not necessarily contradictory. For example, a teacher may feel strongly about learning the cultures, histories and views of different student groups (Item 1) and developing an awareness of individual biases (Item 2). Another advantage is that teachers who disagree with all items might be considered as misaligned in attitudes towards teaching diverse student populations and addressing social justice. Lastly, although each question captures one of the five approaches to multicultural education in Gorski's (2009^[69]) typology, additional questions can be added to provide more concrete examples. For instance, Item 1 can be separated into one item about learning the backgrounds of different student groups, and another on teaching students to adapt to the education system. Another possible use of the items is for researchers and teacher educators to better understand teachers' conceptual understanding of and goals for teaching diverse classrooms. Items 1 and 3 focus on seeking curricular knowledge and an understanding of students from different cultural backgrounds. Items 2, 4, and 5 focus more on underlying issues of bias, equity, and justice that help to identify teachers' beliefs and educational philosophies.

Measuring teacher multicultural content knowledge

Gorski's (2016^[25]) study of professional learning and the supports that multicultural teacher education faculty desire highlighted the role of different dimensions of diversity and multicultural content knowledge. For example, educators mentioned a lack of knowledge around how to think of disability as related to barriers created in society rather than medical conditions to support students with different learning needs. The list of multicultural content knowledge in Gorski (2016^[25]) can be adapted into survey items that ask teachers about their familiarity or understanding of each dimension in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Measuring teaching content knowledge in multicultural education

In my teaching, I have knowledge in...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Religion and religious oppression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Sexual orientation and heterosexism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Race and racism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Language and linguicism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Disability and ableism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Class and economic social injustice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Gender and sexism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Indigeneity and ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Adapted from (Gorski, 2016^[25])

It is important to distinguish between having knowledge of particular identities or oppression and having specific skills and experiences beneficial for teaching students from marginalised backgrounds (see further below), although teachers who possess an understanding of each identity-specific dimension of oppression are more likely to teach marginalised students in culturally responsive ways. Another limitation is the self-reported survey items do not capture *degree* of understanding and specific content knowledge in each dimension. In other words, teachers may have a general awareness of each identity and select “agree” or “strongly agree”, without possessing a critical understanding of each topic's historical context or how it manifests in society.

Thus, another approach is to ask directly about critical content knowledge. Table 4.4 presents potential items adapted from Dyches and Boyd's (2017^[70]) research on social justice pedagogy and content knowledge. For example, Item 1 asks teachers about their knowledge of critical theories, such as feminist

theory, disability studies, and critical race theory. Similarly, Item 2 focuses on how and whether teachers understand the distinction between dominant narratives and counter narratives in the curriculum.

Table 4.4 Measuring teaching content knowledge

In my teaching, I understand...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. ...how to apply critical frameworks, such as feminist theory, disability studies, critical race theory.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. ...how to identify dominant narratives and include counter-narratives in the curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. ...how to analyse routine practices that seem neutral but can perpetuate inequality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. ...how to model social justice knowledge into practice and empower students to be agents of change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Adapted from Dyches and Boyd (2017_[70])

One caveat in any measurement of knowledge of any or all of the topics is this does not mean the teacher knows how to apply it in ways that help to make curriculum and instruction more just and supportive of students from marginalised backgrounds. In addition, one trade-off of asking about specific knowledge within each dimension and the extent to which teachers apply that knowledge in their teaching is that the survey becomes longer. This also does not account for the possibility that respondents may report understanding certain terms (i.e. critical race theory) but only superficially. Despite limitations such as this, and an absence of more formal multiple choice-like assessment of content, the below items may assist in measuring awareness of identity and marginalisation across multiple areas.

Measuring teacher pedagogy and practices

The final competency area for teaching in diverse classrooms focuses on pedagogies and practices to increase student engagement and learning. Among teachers who do receive training in multicultural education, part of the challenge is translating critical theory into classroom practice (Morrison, Robbins and Rose, 2008_[71]). Table 4.5 provides examples of skills that researchers have documented in studies of culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom (Meyer et al., 2010_[68]; Savage et al., 2011_[11]).

Table 4.5. Measuring pedagogy in multicultural education

In my teaching, I have expertise in...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Facilitating complex conversations about politically and emotionally charged equity and social justice issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Identifying and sequencing readings and learning activities that cultivate deeper conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Engaging students who resist conversations about diversity and equity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Incorporating the cultural identities and daily lives of students into curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Teaching students how to reflect on their own identities, biases, and prejudices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Preparing students to identify and assess systemic inequities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Developing relationships between school and the communities of students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Engaging students in social justice work through course materials and service in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Adapted from Gorski (2016_[25]) and Morrison, Robbins and Rose (2008_[71])

The items capture Gorski's (2009_[69]) typology of conservative, liberal and critical approaches to multicultural education:

- **Conservative approaches** tend to focus on teaching the “other” and assimilating the identities of students into the school system.
- **Liberal approaches** emphasise cultural understanding and multicultural competence.
- **Critical approaches** examine sources of inequality and ways to address social change.

Teacher pedagogy and practices for diverse classrooms range from facilitating difficult conversations about system inequalities, particularly among students who may resist such discussions, to developing activities that incorporate and build on the cultural backgrounds of students. In asking teachers to report about these practices, there are also certain assumptions that makes interpretation difficult. For example, Items 1, 2 and 3 emphasise practices that promote open conversations about social justice and inequality. However, discussion and debate formats may not be a common method of instruction in some countries.

The items also assume that greater insight into an issue, such as inequality, can be arrived at from frequent discussion. Whether these items capture critical multicultural education pedagogy of individual teachers or different models of instruction across countries is unclear. Similarly, Items 7 and 8 asks about teacher practices related to the community with the assumption that social change begins locally. The questions also assume schools have strong relations with local communities. Teachers who work in such schools may have expertise in engaging with the community and would respond differently to those questions than teachers in schools without a strong community connection. These items are still of interest in certain contexts but should be interpreted with the limitations in mind.

Particular challenges and decisions for an international survey

Developing an international survey of self-reported teacher attitudes, pedagogy and content knowledge for teaching diverse classrooms poses certain challenges (see Table 8.1 in Chapter 8 for the main takeaways from this chapter for TALIS and the TKS assessment module). As discussed below, the challenges are related to the topic itself, the local cultural context (national, regional or district), and possibly some combination of both.

Which multicultural teacher education approach to emphasise?

Decisions about education and schooling in every country are not politically neutral acts. The same can be said about decisions related to multicultural teacher education in schools and which aspects to measure among teachers. As an example, Table 4.6 presents all the diversity and multicultural-related questions from the most recent 2018 TALIS teacher questionnaire.

Table 4.6. TALIS 2018 diversity questions

Self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms: <i>In teaching a culturally diverse class, to what extent can you do the following?</i>	MTE Approach
a) Cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom	Conservative
b) Adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students	Liberal
c) Ensure that students with and without a migrant background work together	Liberal
d) Raise awareness of cultural differences amongst students	Liberal
e) Reduce ethnic stereotyping amongst students	Liberal
Diversity-related practices: <i>In this school, are the following practices in relation to diversity implemented?</i>	
a) Supporting activities or organisations that encourage students' expression of diverse ethnic and cultural identities	Liberal
b) Organising multicultural events (e.g. cultural diversity day)	Conservative
c) Teaching students how to deal with ethnic and cultural discrimination.	Conservative
d) Adopting teaching and learning practices that integrate global issues throughout the curriculum	Liberal

Source: (OECD, 2018^[2])

Using the Gorski (2009^[69]) typology, the authors coded each item in terms of conservative, liberal and critical approach. To be clear, the items are helpful in measuring different dimensions of teacher pedagogy and practices in diverse classrooms, and also to provide meaningful cross-country information. However, of the ten items coded, most were liberal or conservative views of multicultural education, with none addressing the critical approach. That is, none referenced teaching practices that address social justice, equity or oppression.

Whether teachers adopt more critical practices is less important than whether the questions are included to measure the range of possible multicultural education views. Future surveys may need to consider whether to emphasise certain dimensions of multicultural education or provide a balance of questions. One advantage of including more questions about critical multicultural education is a better understanding of whether teachers are aware of its existence. The questions may also foster discussions across countries on how multicultural education relates to issues of equity and social justice.

Cultural sensitivity and local context

One challenge with any international self-assessment of teacher knowledge is that certain items may go beyond declarative-conceptual knowledge (König, 2015^[72]) and are not free of cultural context. For example, although multicultural education focuses on diversity and varied dimensions of inequity and oppression, the emphasis in the United States tends to be on racial inequality. Teachers in South Korea and Chinese Taipei, in contrast, may view diversity in terms of migration trends, such as the large number of recent ethnic minority immigrants from other Asian countries. In New Zealand, teachers may consider diversity in relation to local Indigenous groups. Although each national example fits under the broader umbrella of diversity and equity, one concern is whether respondents may view multicultural education questions only in terms of race or ethnicity (or another dimension) despite the local diversity and intersections across dimensions of diversity. Providing a list of many cultural dimensions (e.g. race, ethnicity, language, gender) in the stem of the question or survey may help to mitigate confusion about what diversity represents.

A separate but related issue is the extent to which specific concepts in multicultural teacher education may transfer across different cultural contexts, even if translated into the local language. For example, the critical component of multicultural teacher education highlights specific theories related to cultural diversity, such as feminist theory and critical race theory, which may be less widely read in some countries. More importantly, what does it mean to ask about social justice efforts in teaching when the historical and political context has not aligned with those movements? A similar issue arises when asking teachers about special needs education, given that disability can be a culturally and socially-specific construct. For example, teachers in countries that adopt a more medical model of disability may focus on physical impairments in special education, rather than behavioural or cognitive challenges.

Although international surveys of teacher knowledge in multicultural education should be aware of these issues to improve reliability and reduce bias in the questions asked, the challenge is in how to interpret the results and make inferences about countries. Broad questions about prior training and current professional development needs in multicultural education, such as those in Figure 4.2, would appear to avoid some of these issues. In contrast, inferences about attitudes and content knowledge, in particular, may need to be summarised with caveats and the local context in mind. Another approach is to group results by similar geographic region or economic context, rather than focus on individual countries. The goal is to summarise what teachers know, while acknowledging the limitations in the instruments and differences across countries.

Grade level appropriate questions

Up to this point, all examples of multicultural education and the potential survey items are assumed to be grade level neutral. Many scholars would argue that the task of measuring content knowledge and

pedagogies for teaching diverse classrooms is the same for primary and secondary education. Indeed, research shows that children are aware of and have conversations about discrimination, bias and inequality at an early age (Marcelo and Yates, 2019^[73]). However, the frequency of these discussions may be more common in the secondary level as students become more mature. Their critical thinking skills around these topics become a more urgent goal, which may affect how teachers rate their ability to conduct such discussions. Secondary teachers may also have more training to facilitate such discussions if that is the expectation. Thus, any difference in how teachers respond to self-assessment questions about critical pedagogies may be biased towards teachers in the secondary levels.

Although this limitation of the survey items should be acknowledged, it would still be useful to know if primary school teachers reported, on average, low levels of using critical pedagogies. This information could be used to identify teachers for professional development. Another option is to modify the survey items to include grade-specific questions for teachers that takes into consideration developmental differences in students and classroom expectations. For example, instead of focusing on open conversations about social justice issues, survey questions at the primary level may ask whether teachers implement activities that engage students with each other around these topics.

Going beyond self-assessments

It is important to note that all previous examples focus on self-assessments of teacher attitudes and knowledge rather than teacher assessments required for licensure or certification. All also assume a quantitative approach to measuring teacher attitudes and knowledge in multicultural education. König (2015^[72]) reviewed common quantitative methods to measure teachers' general pedagogical knowledge, including video vignettes (see also Chapter 5 for an overview of different assessment approaches). Video-vignette studies typically ask teachers to watch a short clip of a classroom situation as a stimulus followed by questions that measure their professional knowledge. One large concern with video-vignettes, particularly if involving questions about culture and diversity, is that a classroom filmed in one country may be interpreted very differently among teachers in another context (e.g. identifying and responding to slang).

Assessments tend to involve multiple choice response items, open-response items, or short-answer construct-response items (König, 2015^[72]). Although these assessments have been used to test specific knowledge (i.e. what is intrinsic motivation), they can be adapted to assess multicultural education skills. One consideration for future assessments is whether to include more open-ended items about multicultural education knowledge. Due to time and cost considerations for teachers in completing the assessment, and also raters who would have to score or code each open-ended response, which would involve creating scoring standards, the self-assessment examples in this chapter all involved short Likert-scale questions. A combination of written vignettes about specific teaching scenarios, followed by questions with multiple choice or Likert-scale items, may be one approach to ask more in-depth questions about multicultural education skills, without overwhelming time and cost burdens.

Conclusion

The confluence of growing student diversity, widening inequality in academic and social outcomes, and concerning levels of teacher preparation across the world pose significant issues for schools in the 21st century. However, critical approaches to multicultural education hold promise for teachers and students. This chapter concludes with several implications for education policy and practice, and recommendations for future research (see Table 8.1 in Chapter 8 for the main takeaways from this chapter for TALIS and the TKS assessment module).

Implications for education policy and practice

1. **Measurement and professional development.** Better measurement of teacher attitudes, knowledge, and practices in multicultural education can better inform teacher education programmes and continuing teacher support. However, identifying and understanding the scope of a problem is different from addressing it. Not only are professional development opportunities for teachers often sporadic and difficult to schedule, research shows some teachers may resist training around diversity and equity (Pollock et al., 2010_[3]). Professional development is often assumed to be high quality and effective for all teachers, yet short-term multicultural training experiences, for example, can be counterproductive. Efforts to better monitor the state of teacher preparation in multicultural education should be matched with similar efforts to improve and provide ongoing professional development. At the same time, the effectiveness of professional development opportunities and change in attitudes and skills over time can be assessed with better measurement.
2. **Unintended consequences.** Some approaches to multicultural education currently focus on critical pedagogies that support social justice. However, research also shows teachers adopting approaches less focused on social change (Gorski and Parekh, 2020_[48]). Although such approaches may be viewed as appropriate for certain contexts and better than no attempt at addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, there can be unintended consequences. For example, students' academic achievement may improve in the short-term but without a focus on social justice in the classroom, systemic inequities are never addressed and may become even more entrenched. Similarly, teachers may incorrectly believe that they are preparing students to critically engage in issues of diversity and inequity when the instruction may only be at a superficial level or reinforces harmful thinking about marginalised groups (Pollock et al., 2010_[3]). To avoid such consequences, schools may need to encourage and support teachers toward more critical approaches.
3. **Institutional and political support.** Supportive school environments play a key role in teacher satisfaction and retention (Grayson and Alvarez, 2008_[74]). Whether teachers adopt or embrace certain curriculum also depends on perceived level of support from school leaders and colleagues. Research shows that is especially the case for multicultural education; limited support or resistance can result in less critical approaches. One implication for policy is that school leaders should receive similar training in multicultural education as teachers, as well as preparation in supporting teachers and establishing a school climate conducive to these endeavours. Without institutional support (e.g. mentorship, professional development), teachers are still able to implement critical multicultural education in their classrooms, but extenuating efforts may result in adverse repercussions, including greater stress and burnout, disillusionment, marginalisation from colleagues, and lower job satisfaction that ultimately leads teachers to leave the profession (Borman and Dowling, 2008_[75]).
4. **Multicultural competence as 21st century skills.** Why some schools are less supportive of critical multicultural education is related to numerous historical and demographic factors. Scholars have more recently contended that the development of empathy and skills to navigate a culturally pluralistic society is important for all children. An emphasis on the role of multicultural education in preparing students for increased migration and globalisation may be effective in generating institutional support and persuading policymakers of its importance. Embracing such elements of multicultural education initially may also help schools and countries make an essential transition to more critical pedagogies. As multicultural education has its origins in supporting the learning needs of marginalised children and promoting social justice, it is important to bear in mind that multicultural education's focus on citizenship skills and social justice should not be mutually exclusive.

Implications for research

5. **More international and quantitative research.** Studies of multicultural education tend to be qualitative and conducted in a single country. Much less attention has focused on cross-country trends in multicultural education and teacher preparation that can provide meaningful information on how schools are educating children globally, e.g. PISA and TALIS. Developing and refining surveys of teacher knowledge similar to the questions proposed in this chapter should motivate more cross-country comparisons of multicultural education. The goal is not to evaluate or rank countries, but to understand the scope of the issue and identify the structural conditions and contexts where teachers successfully implement multicultural education.
6. **Success without institutional support.** Gorski and Parekh (2020^[48]) found a negative relationship between teacher implementation of critical multicultural education pedagogies and perceived institutional support. One possibility is teachers feel the need to respond more critically when there is less support. However, the finding prompts several new questions. First, are there cases where teachers apply more critical forms of multicultural education without institutional and political support? If so, what are the characteristics, training, and attitudes of these teachers that enable them to do so? How do they navigate and persist in less supportive environments? More qualitative research may be needed to understand the decision-making of teachers around which forms of multicultural education they implement, if at all.
7. **Diversity versus inequality.** Broad survey questions about supporting diversity and raising awareness of cultural differences serve multiple purposes, including establishing a record of current teacher perceptions and attitudes. These questions are sometimes framed in terms of skills and learning. However, future studies and surveys should ensure that more critical questions about teacher dispositions and practices related to addressing equity and social justice are included. Not doing so may present an overly optimistic or superficial view of multicultural education and teacher preparation across countries. Excluding such questions also ignores the topic of inequality in schools and may reinforce systemic issues.
8. **Student achievement and outcomes.** Research on multicultural education overwhelmingly focuses on curriculum design and teacher preparation. Fewer studies examine the relationship between multicultural education (including teacher preparation in this area) and student outcomes; even fewer explore this relationship empirically. Future studies using international surveys should analyse the extent to which self-reported teacher preparation in multicultural education is associated with student academic and social outcomes. Of interest is whether the relationship between teacher preparation and student outcomes differs across country contexts, whether student groups benefit differently, and mechanisms for improved achievement among different groups.

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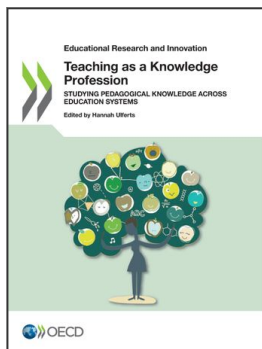
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