

## Original Paper

# Critical Challenges of Cultural Competence Professional Development

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### Abstract

*Driven by increasing inequities in health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people, cultural competence professional development has become more commonplace in many organizations. There are hundreds, possibly thousands, of cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, or cultural competence professional development workshops held throughout Australia each year. However, there is an uncertainty about whether some professional development approaches improve one's knowledge, skills and attitudes towards diverse cultures. This article presents one of the key findings of a doctoral study which explored early years educators' understandings of cultural competence and presents several viewpoints towards professional development. This article calls for approaches to professional development that move beyond passive transmission modes of learning towards localized, participatory models that encourage engagement with local community to privilege a diversity of voices and that also inspires critical self-reflection.*

### Keywords

*early childhood education, professional development, training, cultural competence, reflection, cultural humility*

### 1. Introduction

In 2009, the Commonwealth of Australia released the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia (Australia Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (AGDEEWR), 2009). The framework was designed to contribute to the Council of Australia Governments (COAG) aim to “improve outcomes for the majority of children but specifically Indigenous children” (COAG, 2009, p. 13). Adding to this, a cumulative body of research-based evidence has supported a call for the provisioning of professional development and support for early

childhood educators (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). Part of this reform requires that educators develop their cultural competence. It is encouraging that there is an interest in cultural competence professional development, however, despite its frequent use by writers and researchers there is a degree of uncertainty that surrounds the term “cultural competence” (Harrison & Turner, 2011; Sinclair, 2019a). There is also a general assumption that there is an entity of cultural competence which is knowable and a “truth” to be defined and described which is located in its expert-defined specification of “competence”. Therefore, it can be expected that professional development centred on cultural competence leads to “training inadequacy and thus, feeling[s] of unpreparedness’ for educators” (Szelei, Tinoca, & Pinho, 2019, p. 2).

Educators’ perspectives towards cultural competence professional development is the main concern of this paper, which focuses on the findings from a study conducted with a group of educators’ in South Australia. The paper comprises four sections. The first section of the paper highlights some of the challenges of cross-cultural professional development. Second, the research question and design of the research is briefly explained. This is followed by a discussion of the findings in terms of how educators perceive professional development in cultural competence. In light of these findings and other supporting literature, the concluding section of the article considers whether cultural competence professional development is effective in effecting change in individuals and highlights further areas for research which might be important both for a national and international comprehension of the issue.

## **2. Review of the Challenges of Cultural Competence Professional Development**

Cultural competence has become a prominent discourse in health, education and social work including within professional practice, codes of ethics, and organizational policy (see Australian Association of Social Workers, 2015; AGDEEWR, 2010) and tends to consist of general checklists or accreditation requirements such as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Burgess, 2019) and the National Quality Framework (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018). Both the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the National Quality Framework provide a national approach and encourage continuous improvement in education and care services across Australia. However, how one defines and applies cultural competence continues to be an issue of debate (Azzopardi & McNiell, 2016; Bainbridge, McCalman, Clifford, & Tsey, 2015). Primarily used within the health care field, the most common definition of cultural competence has been provided by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) who define it as: “a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Cross et al., 1989, p. 189).

Cross et al. (1989) situate cultural competence on a six-component developmental process with cultural competence as the fifth component and cultural proficiency at the highest level of development. Morris (2010) critiques the cultural competence continuum presented by Cross et al. (1989) determining that

the six-stage continuum “resembles a linear and sequential actualization of higher states of competency” that leaves culture open to interpretation. The EYLF, on the other hand, states that culturally competent educators “respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences” (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 21). The concern here is that when terms such as “cultural competence”, “competencies” and “diversity” are cited in terms of “educational missions” it becomes a way of “imaging organisations as having certain attributes” (Ahmed, 2009, p. 44). Yet, culture and diversity are individually and socially constructed phenomena that are ever-evolving (Dean, 2001). Further to this, it is acknowledged in the EYLF that cultural competence is an “evolving concept and our engagement with it will contribute to its evolution” (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 21).

Cultural competence is commonly conceptualised through a broad range of definitions (see Dean, 2001; Harrison & Turner, 2010) as an approach that “limits its goals to knowledge of characteristics, cultural beliefs, and practices of non-majority groups” and the development of skills and attitudes related to “empathy and compassion” (Pon, 2009, p. 783). Kowal, Franklin, and Paradies (2013) additionally assert that many diversity professional development schemes relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is likely to involve awareness-raising approaches delivered as an add-on or isolated one-off workshop (Kowal, Franklin, & Paradies, 2013). However, this is problematic as focusing on the characteristics of specific cultural groups can reinforce essentialist racial identities in several ways and further give participants a false sense of “cultural knowledge” (Kowal, Franklin, & Paradies, 2013) that promotes “mastery” of minority cultures. Those who believe they have such mastery are in danger of understanding others on a superficial level (Kowal, Franklin, & Paradies, 2013, p. 320). Adding to this, there is a dichotomy between what constitutes cultural competence and assertions that cultural competence is an attainable measure (Kumas-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007, p. 548).

Bowes, Kitson, and Burns (2010) identify in their research that cultural competence professional development is important to enable non-Aboriginal staff to effectively engage with Aboriginal children and families. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), the national peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, also affirms that within early childhood settings, educators’ participation in “cultural competence training is an important commitment” (SNAICC, 2012, p. 9). However, a review of the literature about cultural competence professional development is fraught with issues. In their review of cultural competence in the delivery of health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Bainbridge et al. (2015) suggest that although professional development in cultural competence: “might be expected to impart knowledge upon which behavioural change will develop, it has generally not been enough when it is delivered in isolation or rapidly delivered over short timeframes” (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p.3).

Ranzjin, McConnochie, and Nolan (2009, p. 10) also situate short professional development opportunities as impractical. They affirm: “One-or two-day workshops or intensive short courses

simply don't provide sufficient time" and is the least effective way to "excite learning and change in teachers" (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 196). Fredericks (2008, p. 83) also affirms that one-off workshops do not provide enough of an incentive for individuals to "change their practice or ... reflect on their ideas within their normal modes of operation". Brown (2004, p. 325) extends this concern by suggesting that isolated one-off workshops provide opportunity for some educators to "enter and exit stand-alone cultural diversity courses unchanged, reinforcing their stereotypical perceptions of self and others in the process". In the same manner, Kumagai and Lypson (2009, p. 783) state that focusing exclusively on the cultural mores of nondominant groups threatens to turn cultural awareness and competency professional development into cultural "safaris" where it is an approach that restricts its "goals to *knowledge* of characteristics, cultural beliefs, and practices of non-majority groups, and *skills* and *attitudes* of empathy and compassion" (Pon, 2009, p. 783). Conversely, Cooper, and Boyd (1997, p. 2 cited in Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 197) state that "two months after teachers attend a one-off workshop, only 16–20% of them" have enacted change. Adding to the fact that one- or two-day workshops just don't provide adequate time to incite individuals to reflect and change their practice, but it is also very difficult to assess the effectiveness of these types of professional development. Kowal, Franklin, and Paradies (2013, p. 320) affirm that professional development workshops are most often evaluated not by their effectiveness, but by the numbers of people who are "trained" and evaluated by the short sentence or two provided by participants on feedback sheets. This type of feedback is not active evaluation and should not ever be used to establish the effectiveness of professional development.

### 3. Research Questions

This article is part of a research project that aimed at understanding South Australian early years educators' understandings and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence (Sinclair, 2017, 2019a). There were two main research questions:

- 1) What are educators' understandings and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence as outlined in the EYLF?
- 2) How do educators describe their proficiency with cultural competence?

### 4. Methods

Procedures throughout the study were guided by protocols as outlined in ethics applications to both the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department for Education and Children's Services Ethical Conduct Unit. A mixed methods approach was chosen to allow a deeper insight into educators' understandings and perspectives of cultural competence. The study had two main methods; (1) Q methodology (see Sinclair, 2019b), and (2) an Indigenous methodology of yarning (see Sinclair, 2019a). Q methodology works to capture and reflect the richness and complexity of various points of view through the Q sort technique of Q methodology (see McKeown & Thomas, 1988). This technique involves the rank ordering of a set of statements from most agree to most

disagree thus highlighting a diversity of perspectives and viewpoints. Second, using an Indigenous research method of yarning provided a holistic context for individuals to reflect on their personal experiences, understandings and perspectives of cultural competence (Sinclair, 2019a) and further allowed “maximum flexibility in exploring any topic in depth and in covering new topics as they arise” (Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte et al., 1999, p. 121).

Overall, twenty-seven early childhood educators participated in the study. Data were analysed using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2011). Analysis started with open coding which then were synthesised into categories corresponding to the two research questions. Consequently, one of the key themes centred on cultural competence professional development. For the purposes of this paper, findings and analysis of educators’ perspectives on cultural competence professional development is explored.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research point to the idea that people can develop cultural competence if they start from “a place of not knowing; be open to possibilities; incorporate principles of respect, reciprocity, trust and understanding” (Sinclair, 2019a, p. 7) to navigate diverse understandings of cultural competence. This paper highlights a commonality between most participants lack of confidence towards cultural competence professional development and which can be equally applied to other training labels including cultural awareness and sensitivity. The following narratives illustrate these reservations. For instance, Joan explained her concern about cultural competence being viewed as a short-term agenda. Joan reflected that:

*“Part of the constraints is about my thinking and some of my staff in the past; thinking with a short-term agenda about cultural competence that even if we started at the beginning of the year with a focus on cultural competence, we would have this idea in our heads that by halfway through or by the end of the year we would have ‘done’ cultural competence”* (Joan).

Other research substantiates Joan’s claims that thinking with a short-term agenda is not constructive to the core purpose of developing cultural competence. Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998, p. 119) verify, insisting that simplicity “is an inadequate and potentially harmful model of professional development”. For Joan, developing cultural competence must entail a journey characterised by learning and re-learning. Joan further reflected that:

*“Cultural competence is actually a journey, a process, over a long period of time. And when we get to that point where we think ‘ok I know it all’ then we are probably at that point where actually we don’t know it all, just the fact that we think like that tells me something”* (Joan).

This is supported by the EYLF which advocates a process of undertaking a journey as “critical to the development of cultural competence” (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 21). Adding to this, cultural competence professional development should ideally deepen and complexify educators thinking about cultural competence and its intents and create some form of transformation that impacts on educator’s pedagogy.

Personal transformation requires that educators undertake a journey of critical reflection. Critical reflection is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy to explore our professional practice. Critical reflection involves exploring multiple perspectives, making clear the links between theory and practice, and making purposeful changes to practice (Sinclair, 2019c, p. 22). The EYLF supports the view that critical thinking and reflection are important practices to undertake with the aim to “develop new insights into what we do and why we do it” (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 7). Another participant, Mary shared how her own critical reflections on her own understandings of culture had an impact on her professional practice. Mary demonstrates in the following extensive narrative how attending some professional learning challenged and changed her thinking to develop new understandings:

*“I was also able to further my personal journey towards growing cultural competence when I became involved in a professional Learning journey with other colleagues. This was a great opportunity for me to learn more both professionally and personally. As a result of attending this professional learning, I have come to realise that growing cultural competence is not only about building respectful relationships with Aboriginal children, families and community. It is also about understanding more about ‘Aboriginal ways of being’, such as the depth of their connections to the land and connections with each other. It is quite elaborate learning about family connections and I still don’t quite know how the families interrelate but certainly am looking forward to learning more. As a leader, I am now more focussed on questioning how certain values, beliefs and life experiences have influenced my practice”* (Mary).

This type of critical reflection has potential to disrupt normalised ways of thinking and practices. Mary’s narrative demonstrates the power of critical reflection and the important role it plays in self-transformation. Perhaps a more effective way to consider the notion of transformation is to consider the words of poststructuralist thinker Michael Foucault who states, “as soon as one no longer thinks things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes very urgent, very difficult and quite possible” (Foucault, 1988, p. 155).

In a similar study, Szelei, Tinoca, and Pinho (2019) describe context-based professional development for cultural diversity in a school cluster and discuss how it supported change for justice and equity. One of the key findings in their study was that some educators were aware of the importance of critical reflection on “self, knowledges and practices in relation to cultural diversity and student learning” but current professional development is yet to respond to this need (Szelei, Tinoca, & Pinho, 2019, p. 13). A stance that interrogates what we know and how we have come to know is a critical underpinning to learning and, thereby, we become more self-reflective in our approaches to understanding cultures and multiple and competing discourses (Sinclair, 2019b, p. 8). Through critical reflection and an openness to change, it becomes possible for educators to participate in generating new knowledge about their practice (Hewes, Lirette, Makovichuk, & McCarron, 2019, p. 41). For Mary, attendance at a professional development session validated a shift in her understandings of cultural competence as

being centred on relationships.

Joan expressed her view on the lack of support and the lack of opportunities to develop relationships and network with other educators, stating that:

*“I think it’s really good that EYLF has a focus on it [cultural competence] as one of the principles and practices in the EYLF ... I don’t think the department is doing much to really support that... we don’t discuss cultural competence ... and then broaden or share this with educators in the field”* (Joan).

The EYLF maintains that “culturally competent educators will continue to reflect on practice through professional learning and side by side discussion with communities and families” (AGDEEWR 2010, p. 28). It is important for educators to learn alongside Aboriginal communities and families instead of relying solely on dominant perspectives. One of the constraints identified in this research is centred around lack of support, in that, education sites are left with the task of engaging with Aboriginal families and communities without appropriate support. Mary describes the difficulties she faced in terms of lack of networks and community support available to co-construct and broaden understandings of cultural competence. By way of an example, Mary shared that:

*“It is difficult to access relevant quality resources, materials and information and local knowledge, its actually very sad that it is so difficult to access local knowledge. We have had many difficulties trying to get Aboriginal members from the local community to come into our centre and share their knowledge”* (Mary).

Mary shared the difficulties associated with connecting to local sources. The EYLF suggests educators consider the extent to which they “know and value the culturally specific knowledge about childhood, children and learning that is embedded within the community in which they are working” (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 27). This requires educators to take time and opportunities to consult with Elders, family and community members “to share culturally valued ways” in early childhood programs (AGDEEWR, 2010, p. 28). Research identifies that when educators engage with their local Aboriginal communities, authentic partnerships have an opportunity to develop (Bainbridge et al., 2015; Burgess, 2019). By way of example, Szelie, Tinoca, and Pinho (2019, p. 3) in their study of context-based professional development for cultural diversity found that when student voices were involved in the design of the content and delivery of teachers’ professional development, it supported teachers to better understand what ‘responding to diversity’ actually meant and was able to change practices in ways that was meaningful to students (Szelei, Tinoca, & Pinho, 2019, p. 3). This idea of including voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities is applicable for designing and delivering professional development on cultural competence. Taking time to have a conversation with students and communities is of upmost importance and is itself a form of professional learning. Ruth shared her perspective, stating that:

*“Put me in a different context and I am beginning, so you don’t ever reach a level of proficiency ... it again should be seen in context of my community ... I recognise that I have developed knowledge but even I am still learning even when I continue to connect with community, I’m still learning”* (Ruth).

Ruth acknowledged that she is still learning and in a different context she would potentially be beginning her learning. June had a similar view, stating that:

*“Being culturally competent in one context is not the same in another context. I believe that it is a two-way learning approach and should not be seen as an imposition. All educators should undertake some form of professional learning in order that they expand upon their knowledge”* (June).

When educators fail to engage with and build on existing Aboriginal community strengths and focus on deficits, the status quo is maintained in terms of curriculum and pedagogical choices. Furthermore, it is not good practice to design cultural competence professional development or use individualistic pre-packaged approaches that have been “developed outside [of] ... Country and context because that would undermine local Aboriginal ways of doing and being. We cannot rely on past successes created and applied in different contexts to inform ... future success” (Kennedy et al., 2019, p. 154). Curtis, Lebo, Cividanes, and Carter (2013, p. 13) state that professional development in the early childhood field has been “dominated by short, fragmented one shot workshops on a variety of topics delivered by experts who offer strategies and techniques outside the context of the daily teaching and learning with children”. Curtis and her colleagues call this approach “drive through professional learning” (2013, p. 13). Therefore, designing and delivering cultural competence professional development should exist within a network and community that is founded on principles of reciprocity and which evolves as contexts change. Mac Naughton (2005, pp. 200-205) also proposes challenging the individualistic nature of some professional development by advocating for professional learning community clusters as spaces to stretch thinking beyond the ‘regimes of truth’ that currently construct our understanding of topics.

Mac Naughton (2005) equally confirms the value of professional learning communities specifically when there is shared understanding between all participants of the purpose of the learning. Professional learning communities are essential in terms of improving professional practice and positively influencing educators’ pedagogy through critical reflection. Professional learning communities are spaces where educators’ can critically reflect on multiple epistemological and ontological positions but also bring together diverse perspectives to broaden understandings. In this way, professional learning communities can “build partnerships among diverse stakeholders that support transformative change” (Bjartveit & Kinzel, 2019, p. 80). Martin-Kniep (2008) describes professional learning communities as “forums in which participants embrace the privilege and responsibility of learning individually and collectively” (p. 6). Mary provides an example of this collective learning and reveals that:

*“I am hoping that as the leader I am creating learning opportunities for our team to reflect upon their practices, for example, staff have said, ‘I actually found that this was impacting on my practice’, and ‘I feel we need to do more of that, how can we access that?’. Through developing shared understanding and processes we are relating as a team and as a result we are able to demonstrate that we really want to learn and grow and engage and be able to provide a quality culturally competent program at our centre”* (Mary).



Mary demonstrates positioning herself and her staff team in a space of encounter where their thinking and ways of doing potentially begin to disrupt normalized practices, and lead to new ways of doing. This is the core of our work, being critically reflective practitioners and disrupting normalized practices. Professional learning communities provoke critical thinking about ways to mobilize dialogue about difference and diversity and action in the field (Bjartveit & Kinzel, 2019, p. 82). Furthermore, professional development opportunities that are taken as spaces of encounters and that challenge us to think more critically can create a shift in thinking that causes a “crisis in thought” (Dahlberg & Moss 2007, p. 123). As we encounter this space we struggle with concepts and meanings but then move to a new way of doing that produces new understandings and new opportunities.

Participants also felt that more support was needed in developing a coordinated systemic approach to the delivery of cultural awareness and competence professional development. By way of example the following two comments made by Jillian and Jodie. Jillian reflected that:

*“Most cultural awareness and cultural competence training that I have undertaken has been ad hoc and somewhat haphazard. I would appreciate a systematic approach so that my understanding could grow”* (Jillian).

Similarly, Jodie stated that:

*“If only there was more support from leaders and the system around how we begin this journey towards growing cultural competence”* (Jodie).

It has been identified in the literature that professional development can at times be “patchy, ad hoc and lacking in cohesiveness” (Ma Rhea, Anderson, & Atkinson, 2012, p. 8). Furthermore, Furlong and Wight (2011, p. 39) also argue that cultural competence cannot be entirely behaviour-focussed nor delivered as an “add-on” or isolated one-off workshop as an outcome to be achieved. Bainbridge et al. (2015) suggest that although professional development in cultural competence: “might be expected to impart knowledge upon which behavioural change will develop, it has generally not been enough when it is delivered in isolation or rapidly delivered over short timeframes” (Bainbridge et al., 2015, p. 3).

Cultural competence is more than academic knowledge; it is, amongst other concerns, to do with attitudes and critical self-reflection. It is further recommended by Hill, Bacchus, Harris, and Biles (2016, p. 6921) the first step for educators in developing their own cultural competence is recognising how their personal worldviews, perspectives and knowledges are entrenched in a particular cultural and racial identity and history. Therefore, critical reflection is a vital component of developing cultural competence as it requires individuals to critically self-reflect on their own attitudes, values and behaviours.

## **6. A Decolonized Approach towards Cultural Competence**

Educators on the path to developing cultural competence critically reflect on their understandings through sharing knowledge and consolidating what is known through reciprocity and engagement with others. Adopting Indigenous methodologies of storytelling and embedding practices centered on

developing relationships and reciprocity not only provides a decolonized space for critical reflection but also are foundations for “developing and supporting professional learning communities” (Bjartveit & Kinzel, 2019, p. 84). Indigenous methodologies can open opportunities for engaging with learning through the process of inquiry and critical self-reflection (Styres, 2019, p. 35). In the case of this research, professional learning communities are thought to be most beneficial for educators. As educators explore cultural competence, awareness emerges that we are shaded by our own cultural values, experiences and understandings (Cave et al., 2012, p. 67). Therefore, as we disrupt regimes of truth, we realise that we can never totally see the world from the viewpoint of another, but we can be open to disrupt our present understandings to be receptive to other narratives through authentic encounters.

In comparison to cultural competence, the literature draws on cultural humility which calls for individuals to undertake “a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances ... and developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic ... advocacy partnerships with communities” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 117). The three main components of a cultural humility approach are summarised as self-reflection, assessment of power imbalances and developing relationships. Another fundamental core issue of a cultural humility approach is a continual journey as there is no endpoint or “ability to acquire ‘competence’, as one is always in a state of lifelong learning” (Nomikoudis & Starr, 2016, p. 71). Several writers (for example, Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Rajaram & Bockrath, 2014) have also considered cultural humility as more appropriate to address structural power disparities through inquiry processes such as professional learning communities (Rajaram & Bockrath, 2014, p. 87). This accentuates the role of cultural competence professional development in taking an approach that focusses on a “transformational view of change” (Burridge et al., 2009, p. 18). In essence, transformational types of professional development should typically involve processes that include discomfort, perhaps confronting what is unknown, facing provocations, followed by integrating new knowledges and skills. The process is further enhanced when the interrelated relationships between culture, power and social justice are considered in the design and delivery of professional development (Szelei, Tinoca, & Pinho, 2019). Professional learning communities that have focused discussions promote an ongoing process of learning about oneself and others and highlights that power does in fact and operate on, in and through dominant discourses. One of the concerns evident in the participants narratives is that concepts such as “cultural competence” and “diversity” training individuate difference to cover structural inequalities and does not necessarily evoke commitment to action (Ahmed, 2009).

In sum, cultural competence professional development was identified as ad hoc and inapt at enhancing participants understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence. Furthermore, participants did feel that more support was needed in developing a coordinated systemic approach to the delivery of professional learning. The findings also highlight how critical reflection is an important part of ongoing professional development and learning. Dean (2001, p. 624) recommends that a model

in which an awareness of one's lack of competence is the goal as it is nearly impossible to "become competent at the culture of another". Furthermore, as highlighted, participants felt that cultural competence professional development must address the structural origins of inequity and issues related to power and privilege that contributes to inequities (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009).

## 7. Conclusion

The research identified that participants held concerns with cultural competence focused professional development. This study also points to the fact that there are identified limitations with traditional modes of delivery of professional development. Most professional development was ad hoc and somewhat disorganised. Furthermore, participants felt that more support is needed in the developing of and delivery of professional development in this area. Listening to a diversity of narratives from Aboriginal Elders and community is critical in developing professional development to contextualise cultural competence and ensure a diversity of voices and perspectives are considered in informing the content.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that professional learning can be pivotal in enacting transformative pedagogies, however educators need time to encounter spaces to confront and challenge their own assumptions about cultures other than their own and which are at most times based on dominant discourses. This begins with creating spaces of encounters, such as professional learning communities, to encourage educators to become more critically reflective of the privileges and power associated with concepts that normalize practices and govern individual or groups of people. It was also noted that some of the terms we face, including the concept of "cultural competence" are appealing, however, does not necessarily challenge organisational culture (Ahmed, 2009, p. 45). This is vital in the journey towards developing cultural competence (AGDEWR, 2010) to challenge us to think more critically and create a shift in thinking to a new way of doing that produces new opportunities and equity for all.

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