

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN SUPERDIVERSE SCHOOLS: INSIGHTS FROM AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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ABSTRACT

How to coexist with diversity is one of the biggest problems democracies face. Growing worldwide migration and globalization have brought new possibilities and difficulties for schools to embrace and learn from superdiversity. However, superdiversity and democratic education are not specifically highlighted in the present policy frameworks and instructional approaches. This research investigates the responses of twenty-four teachers (n = 24) from four superdiverse secondary schools in Aotearoa, New Zealand, to the increasing levels of cultural, linguistic, and religious variety in their classes. The paper shows how Dewey's philosophy of learning by living together with difference, prioritizing shared interests, and developing a socio-political awareness of inequalities provides important insights for democratic education by looking at empirical evidence from teacher practices. The research serves as an example of how crucial it is to acknowledge the complexity of relationships in superdiverse situations and the important role educators can play in fostering inclusive classroom environments where democracy may be experienced and learnt. It also emphasizes how educators themselves may go on a path to create pedagogical methods that are more inclusive, justice-focused, and supportive of Indigenous and ethnic minority communities in their classrooms.

KEYWORDS Democratic education; superdiversity; Dewey; multicultural; culturally responsive pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges facing democracies is how to live together with difference. Dewey emphasised this inter-relatedness when he described democracies as 'more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' (Dewey, 1916/1963, p. 87). This focus on how we might live together amongst conditions of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is a vital aspect of democratic education, and arguably more important now than ever. The growth of globalisation and international migration has presented nations with growing opportunities and challenges related to increasing diversity (Banks, 2015). In addition, tensions from increasingly polarised communities and growing social and economic inequalities, particularly post Covid-19, present further threats to democracy, with the potential for fragmentation and division (Giroux, 2021). Educational institutions are uniquely positioned as they are often the first port of call for new migrants who experience first-hand in such places both inclusionary and exclusionary practices and pedagogies (Malsbary, 2016) as well as potential forms of democratic education (Apple & Beane, 2007; Biesta, 2011; Dewey, 1916/1963). In many ways, teachers are the 'face' of the type of democracy children reside in, yet rarely are these 'caretakers of democracy' the focus of democratic education policy or research.

In this paper, I examine how teachers worked to embed democratic education in the context of superdiverse schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Superdiversity refers to 'a complexity of linguistic, religious, and social and cultural diversity' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 2) that offers a

powerful counter to simplistic conceptions of ethnic groups as bounded entities (Song, 2023). Understanding the complexity of diverse groups requires more than single groups studies as diversity is informed by a myriad of processes, practices and phenomena in the local context of reception (Malsbary, 2016). Drawing on Dewey's ideas of democracy and education, my study employed a focus on 'individuals-in-interaction' and 'individuals in-context' (Dewey, 1916/1963) as I examined how members of educational communities lived and learned together and developed new skills to respond to growing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic plurality. Dewey believed that children are not born with abilities to think and act democratically and therefore associating and communicating with others school and society plays a vital role in promoting democratic beliefs and habits (Abowitz, 2017). While some nations, such as those in Scandinavia, see a close alignment between education, the inclusion of diverse groups and a social democratic welfare model (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006), for many others this is not explicitly foregrounded (Chan, 2020). Examining the beliefs and pedagogical practices of teachers in the context of superdiverse school communities in Aotearoa New Zealand through Dewey's philosophy of education for democracy offered a chance to gain deeper insights into democratic education within superdiverse schooling contexts.

The paper begins by examining Dewey's understandings of democracy and the broad direction of education he proposed to enhance and preserve the democratic potential of society. I then describe the context of recent rapid demographic shifts in New Zealand and previous research on superdiverse schools and how I explored these as sites for democratic education. I then outline the methodology through which four case study schools from some of New Zealand's most diverse communities were recruited and the strategies employed to observe and interview teachers in

these schools. Through an analysis of teachers' beliefs, pedagogical practices and experiences, I examine some the challenges, tensions, rewards and reflections that they faced when seeking to equip students for superdiverse democracies.

Dewey's philosophy of democracy and education and superdiverse schools

Understandings of democracy in this paper are interrogated through Dewey's philosophy of education. Dewey's writing in the early twentieth century responded to a diverse, changing society when millions of European immigrants were arriving in American (Abowitz, 2017). At this time, schools emerged as an important site for learning about democracy and valuing the diverse contributions of every child. These philosophies still hold significance for today's democracies which continue to be marked by growing pluralism and differing ideas and ways of life. Dewey did not set out to propose a theory of democratic education in the way we understand it today (Quay, 2016). Instead, Dewey was more interested in the relation between democracy and education, and only in one place writes specifically about democratic education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/1963) offered a philosophy which would draw together four developments which he believed contributed most significantly to the ebbs and flows which marked American society—the growth of democracy, the development of the experimental method in science, evolutionary ideas and industrial reorganisation. Importantly, Dewey saw democracy 'as a form of community life that was growing, changing, and education should grow with it' (Quay, 2016, p. 1016). In this way, Dewey's quest for democracy can be understood as a dynamic interplay between education and society rather a static set of rules or programmes for schools (Mitchell, 2018; Quay, 2016).

For Dewey, a key purpose of education is for 'the social continuity of life' (Dewey 1916/1963, p. 2), which includes how beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, misery and practices are recreated. One of the primary ways to do this, Dewey believes, is through developing a curiosity and interest in others—so that 'each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own' (p.9). Putting in place an education for democracy therefore includes learning from others and sharing interests. Dewey's philosophy of education and democracy is established upon a belief that our greatest potential for sustaining a democracy is founded upon the lessons we learn by living alongside each other, and all the differing options, social classes and cultural expressions that involves. While Dewey doesn't speak directly about superdiverse contexts, he argues this attention to others 'is equivalent to breaking down those barriers of class, race, and national territory which keep men [sic] from perceiving the full import of their activities' (Dewey, 1916/1963, p. 87). His philosophy of education for democracy is founded on an implicit understanding of living in plural societies with encounters with difference and otherness and the need for an education toward intercultural and inclusive understandings and dispositions of empathy, and humility (English, 2016; Waks, 2017).

Superdiversity and teaching for democracy in schools

Studies of superdiversity emerged around the turn of the century in response to urban neighbourhoods characterized by considerable diversity of immigrants. Vertovec (2007), a leader in this field, argues that the explanatory power of extant theories of migration are compromised by the ever-changing landscape they seek to capture and the 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 2). Studies emphasizing a superdiverse approach are

critical of single group studies and argue that these are oversimplified and often essentialising of ethnic groups. In contrast and employing an intersectional lens, a superdiverse approach examines the complex interactions between ethnic groups alongside aspects of social class, legal status, country of origin, age, gender (Malsbary, 2016; Vertovec et al., 2024). In a schooling context, such studies have emphasized 'multiple levels and intersections of complexity' (Song, 2023, p. 2) and the implications of these for a 'shared civic culture or economic outcomes' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 2). In this way, superdiversity approaches contribute insights into democratic education and the importance of understanding pluralities of affiliation and inequalities in rights, representations, resourcing and pedagogical approaches experienced by different groups (Chan, 2020). Studies, such as Redman's (2014) in Los Angeles, reveal how in the absence of such an approach, teachers can make superficial interpretations of superdiverse students' culture.

Rapid demographic change through immigration in recent years in New Zealand has led to growing levels of superdiversity, to the extent that it has the fourth most foreign-born residents in the OECD—with 26.8% of the population born overseas (OECD, 2023). Schools and early childhood centres inevitably are the first to feel the impact of changing demographics and growing diversity (Cardno et al., 2018; Mitchell, 2018). New Zealand's settler colonial history and the presence of the Indigenous Māori (tangata whenua or people of the land) alongside more recent settler and immigrant communities renders a particular complexity to the politics of identity and the idea of the nation (Bell, 2017; Chan, 2020; Spoonley, 2015). Previous studies in New Zealand examining effective teaching in superdiverse school classrooms and early childhood [ECE] centres have noted increasing levels of complexity for teachers (see for

examples, Cardno et al., 2018; Chan, 2020; Chan & Ritchie, 2020; Wood et al., 2021), and new complex patterns of inequality, prejudice and differential power relations driven by migration (Chan, 2020; Salahshour, 2021) and fresh challenges for democratic education (Mitchell, 2018). While appropriately, there are some policies and guidelines to support Indigenous and Pacific students, there are few policies to address the complexity of ethno-linguistic, religious and social class dimensions and neither is there training or resourcing support for teachers to do so (Salahshour, 2021). In the following Section 1 outline the empirical study this paper is derived from.

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to find and recruit superdiverse schools, I used demographic data available on the Education Counts (Ministry of Education, 2018) and Education Review Office (Education Review Office, 2018) websites. I created a list of schools that could be described as superdiverse, due to the extent of both historic and contemporary immigrants in their communities and their complexity of languages, religious affiliations and social classes. Four such schools agreed to participate, and all had fewer than 50% of Pākehā European-origin students attending. Three schools were in Auckland (South, North and West College) and one in Wellington (East College). Two of these school (North and West Colleges) were in wealthier suburbs and had experienced very recent and rapid immigrant growth from East and South Asia to their communities in Auckland. For example, North College which had 80% Pākehā European students ten years earlier, now had 49%. The other two schools, South College and East College, both in poorer working-class communities, had a more than 30 years of experience of migrant communities, with historic and more recent Pacific Nations and South Asian migrants settling in these suburbs.

All schools had a strong focus on cultural inclusion in response to growing ethnic diversity and offered professional development for teachers on culturally responsive pedagogies primarily for Māori and Pacific students—although this varied in content between schools. Human Ethics permission [university removed for review] HEC# 25149] was granted to the study and all participants signed consent forms.

I was assigned one contact teacher to work with in each school and through this teacher gained access to different classes where I invited student participants. A total of 180 young people participated in the study across the four schools, representing considerable levels of cultural and linguistic diversity (see Table 1). For instance, 106 (or 59%) of participants were multilingual and 30% of participants born overseas. Whilst these students were not the focus of this paper, strategies such as self-directed peer focus groups (Wood & Ristow, 2022) and

Table 1. Some characteristics of teacher participants and the four case study schools.

School	Teacher participants	Years of teaching (years)	Ethnicity of teachers	No. of student participants	% of 1st-generation participants (migrated before 14 yrs)	No. of different languages spoken by participants (% multi-lingual students)
West College	5	3–15+	Pākehā 4 British 1	28	(6/28) 21%	9 (24%)
South College	5	2–30+	Pākehā 5	53	19/53 35%	20 (77%)
North College	10	2–15+	Māori 3 Pākehā 4 Fijian Indian 1 South African 1 Scottish/ Chinese Pākehā 1	63	20/63 49%	21 (51%)
East College	4	2–30+	Pākehā 3 American NZ 1	36	9/36 25%	19 (28%)
Totals	24		24	180		

photo elicitation were used to explore their experiences which helped to confirm patterns observed in the teacher data in this paper.

Teachers of these students and others in the school (n = 24) opted into the research and agreed to join a focus group with others either before or after school. The ethnic composition of the teachers' (predominantly Pākehā) did not reflect the students' ethnic diversity well, which is a persistent issue in superdiverse schools many countries (see Rowan et al., 2021). They taught in multiple disciplinary

fields, including social sciences, science, English, theatre, graphic art with between three and thirty years of teaching experience (Table 1). Focus groups were chosen to allow for group interaction and dynamic interactions to shape understandings and varied in size, with one large focus group of 10, but most between four and five (see Table 1). In these focus groups, teachers reflected together on how they and their schools had adapted their pedagogy and practice to respond to superdiverse students in their classrooms. I also conducted classroom observations (two to seven days) in each school. Data were analysed initially by comparing responses to the semi-standardised interview questions and then through a process of internal (school-based) general inductive data analysis to elicit the main themes (Patton, 2015). I analysed teachers' responses within and between each case study school guided by concepts and ideas from Dewey's philosophy of democracy and education—such as looking for moments of 'shared interest' and points of unity, examples of how teachers navigated 'associated living' and difference and how they prioritised democratic learning.

Living and learning together

Dewey's understanding of democracy and education is strongly centred on 'associated living' in community with others. Dewey's belief in democracy as 'a conjoint communicated experience' invites wide participation in social groups and he argues that such interactions are improved and made more intelligent by the exchange of diverse viewpoints (Abowitz, 2017). Participating schools provided multiple examples of how they were 'making space' for different ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups and as part of their encounters with difference and 'otherness'. For example, all four Colleges celebrated cultural language weeks (e.g. Māori, Samoan, Niuean languages etc) and most had cultural nights where one group's

cultural food and performance was the focus. At North College for instance, they already had Māori, Pacific, Chinese, and Korean Nights and the Filipino and Indian students had requested their own night of celebration and cultural performances as well. While a focus on food and festivals can be quite tokenistic or 'lazy multiculturalism' if this is all schools do (Watkins & Noble, 2019), students at the schools spoke very highly of such events as they gave opportunities for profile and representation (Wood, 2022). Teachers also described how practices such as ethnic group language weeks could be deepened if they used them to profile students' linguistic knowledge and affirm cultural strengths, as Miriam (South College) described:

For about a term I was putting up different words for the week, and when it was Cook Island week, or when it was Samoan week I would put things up. And the conversations that started – it was awesome. It really did build on the relationship you had with those kids and recognised their knowledge. Whether they're experts or not, they've got some degree of knowledge more than you, and they can share that with you.

Cultivating empathy and imagination through encountering difference and the unexpected is one of Dewey's key principles for building democracies (English, 2016). For the two schools with the most recent new waves of migration (West and North College), gaining new knowledge about diverse religious and cultural practices also led to increased empathy and this was a key part of learning to live and learn together. One teacher from West College commented on how Ramadan and Eid were now 'part of the life of the school', and that she and other teachers worked hard to take into account students' levels of hunger and tiredness and adapt their teaching and show empathy where possible.

One further approach teachers employed to build a shared and more democratic community was by adapting curricula focus and assessment choices in order to value different ethnic groups, their languages, knowledges and worldviews. Teachers in all schools described how they had opened up their programmes and assessment to include concepts, ideas, philosophies and contexts of diverse ethnic groups. For example, at North College they had encouraged students to incorporate artistic designs from their own diverse cultural backgrounds into a formal design assessment. At East College the team of social science teachers were questioning how they might include more ‘multicultural information’ in their research projects and were working on how they might assess such contributions. Other teachers discussed how they looked to affirm students’ cultural knowledge and experiences as these were ‘a resource’ (East College) in contexts such as religion and social studies as ‘they’ve got so much to draw on’ (Kelly, South College).

Focusing on unity not only diversity

A key plank of Dewey’s (1916/1963) idea of democracy rests upon his idea of reciprocity of shared interests. He refers to how education has a tendency to encourage elite groups and ‘gangs’ whose exclusiveness brings in an ‘antisocial spirit’ (p. 91). In contrast and in pursuit of greater and more equal connections, Dewey speaks of the importance of participating in shared experiences with common interests—in order for a community to ‘receive and take from others’ (p. 84). While there was much talk on diversity and emphasising difference, only a handful of the more experienced teachers spoke of the importance of seeking unity. Previous research in New Zealand has established a reluctance to assert nationalistic narratives in the fear that these may sound exclusive (Milligan et al., 2011). However, as Banks (2015) asserts, unity without diversity reinforces homogeneous

nationalistic notions of inclusion and citizenship—while diversity without unity leads to splintering of groups and fragmentation of the nation-state. Citizens in a diverse democratic society should be able to maintain attachments to their cultural communities as well as participate effectively in the shared national culture (Kymlicka, 2016).

The tension between homogenising and diversity narratives was expressed perhaps most clearly by the South College teachers. While all of these teachers were Pākehā, collectively they were some of the most experienced, with one teacher having taught at South College since 1966, and the others with 11 or more years at the school. South College participants opened up about some of the difficulties they had between ethnic rivalries in the schools at times and how they saw the need to bring ethnically diverse students together through addressing common themes, or in Dewey’s words, ‘shared concerns’. When I was observing in one teacher’s class, Miriam (15 years teaching experience) spontaneously talked about how it concerned her that ethnic differences are celebrated in New Zealand, but how little attention was given to what we have in common. She explained how she found ‘times to work on things together which everyone can relate to and identify with, so we can ‘connect’—even with all our differences’. Catherine, an English teacher, described how she attempted to do this through effective text selection so that they could connect around shared geographic, social class and racial experiences:

I found this year, [that] if you can create something that you can kind of all join in on together, it builds connection and belonging. So, with one of my classes, we looked at the poem ‘Bred in South Auckland’², which is written by a Pākehā poet, but it kind of talks about cultural stereotypes. He also previously went to our school.

Catherine described how this text provided a shared ‘sense of place’ that coalesced around ‘negative stereotypes of South Auckland’ which enabled them to assert a need for equality and inclusion and address issues of racism and stereotyping. These teachers from South College gave one further powerful example of a moment of unity following the horrific Christchurch Mosque killings where 51 Muslims were shot by a sole shooter while at worship on March 15, 2019. Catherine described how after this event, the senior students organised an assembly where ‘everybody stood in a circle and there was like two or three hundred students holding hands and then they said prayers in multiple languages., And it was like “wow, this is the kids’ doing”’.

This example from South College reinforces Dewey’s (1916/1963) philosophy of education for democracy which he believed included widening the area of shared concerns and liberating a greater diversity of personal capacities. As Kelly (East College) stated, as she became more at ease with superdiversity, she enjoyed ‘the challenge of trying to find other similarities between students and try to connect them’. Vicky (West College) also talked about how ‘difference’ between students was an important part of learning and that...

...difference isn’t scary, Difference is good, different is an opportunity to learn from somebody else’s culture, and I think the students gain so much from actually being exposed to all the different cultures, especially when they’re listening to the news.

Abbie, a teacher also from West College expressed the value of sharing a common humanity:

although they’re all different, [what they have in common is] getting bigger and bigger over time, and because of that, their relationship with each other is getting stronger. So, you know ‘ok we might be from this culture and

this culture, but your mum tells you to do the dishes just as much as my mum does!’ So, they’re able to go ‘well actually we are quite different but, we have far more in common than not’.

Abbie went on to describe a delightful friendship between Donesh from Iraq (Muslim) and Alisar from Ethiopia (Coptic Christian) and the joy that they demonstrated in mixing together. She concluded that ‘it’s wonderful, and it’s actually one of the reasons I bring both my children to the school’. This example reinforces Dewey’s belief in education as a site to realise ‘humanity as humanity’ (Dewey, 1916/1963, p. 95), recognising mutuality, not just difference.

Teaching for socio-political consciousness

One further aspect of learning for democracy in education in superdiverse contexts is the need to critique current unequal and exclusive structures in society which perpetuate discrimination and inequalities. Dewey (1916/1963) referred to the need for social justice and fairness through education by addressing social stratification and inequalities as well as breaking down the barriers of ‘class, race and national territory’ (p. 93). He explains that several things stand in the way of meeting this potential through education, including forms of education which discourage critical thinking (and lead people to continue in ‘false beliefs’ (p. 92) and individualistic tendencies, alongside nationalistic fervour which leads to personal development but not collective conceptions of education. Participant teachers at the two schools with the longest experience of superdiversity (South College and East College), talked about teaching with an increased level of socio-political consciousness. In the first instance, this involved a growing awareness of the unequal life experiences held by their students as a

result of differing levels of wealth and resources. For example, Sophie, from East College, referred to different students' holiday experiences:

Really disparate life experiences. I don't ask them what they do for your holidays anymore because, 'I went to France for my holiday', while for others it's 'I spent the holidays looking after my eight cousins, I've never been outside [our city]'.

She went on to outline how these socio-economic disparities impacted educational experiences—such as field trips to historical, art and geographic sites—and how East College worked to cover these costs for some affected students.

Teachers at South and East Colleges also spoke about a growing critical awareness they had of how European knowledge dominated the curriculum and assessment and how these excluded other forms of knowing and being. As Apple (1993) reminds us, a curriculum is never a neutral assemblage of knowledge, but instead reflects 'some groups' vision of legitimate knowledge' (p. 222). At South College they gave examples of how 'a circus' or stories from the Bible, or about 'Cinderella' were unknown to their students and how these tripped them up in formal assessment. This led teachers in turn to become more reflective about their role and the pedagogical changes they needed to make. This growing critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or 'mind frame shifting' as one East College teacher put it, encouraged teachers to adapt their pedagogy and curriculum to better reflect and include diverse students' knowledge within their teaching.

For teachers at East College this included a growing consciousness of 'white privilege' which they said they had thought a lot about in recent years. Their awareness of the injustices in New Zealand's history, including the stealing of Māori land, was a feature of recent

topics and all teachers interviewed were learning the Māori language. They were also more intentional about selecting contexts that exposed systemic inequalities. For Susan this included 'trying to teach about colonialism a little bit more in everything that I do now ... And being aware that it's actually through everything. And not being afraid to say you know what, that is unfair, that is unjust'. Diana illustrated this commitment to new ways of teaching by immersing students 'in the Māori world' by describing a recent field trip to a site of historical grievance for Māori. A tribal elder, with a full-face tattoo (tā moko) talked to the students about the history and encouraged them to ask questions without fear:

So they asked about his moko and there was this amazing moment and he described the process that he went through, and they were hanging on every single word ... And that was like magical. The best I have ever encountered is when you are so out of your comfort zone, you actually have to obey other people's rules and things like that.

These examples illustrate an attempt to democratise knowledge through curriculum choices as well a greater criticality about the intersection between ethnicity, class, religion, language and life experiences and the impact on students.

III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Dewey's notion of democracy is not prescriptive about a certain type of government or social organisation, as long as the two criteria of the ability to hold common interests and free exchange between different groups are met (Abowitz, 2017). His philosophy of democracy and education is founded on the belief that lessons about democracy are best forged in the immediate lived experiences of people in a changing and diverse society. In this paper I have considered how Dewey's understandings of democracy might usefully apply to a context of

superdiverse school communities in New Zealand. Such contexts are necessarily understood as communities of difference rather than sameness, and as such, form an ideal crucible for learning about democracy and the importance of navigating plurality and difference (Biesta, 2011). While an undesirable society sets up barriers to some groups' opportunities to communicate and participate (Dewey, 1916/1963, p.106), these four schools all went some way toward making provision for diverse groups in their schools, and were embracing opportunities to learn from living with difference.

In keeping with Dewey's conception of learning democracy through living, these four school communities exhibited several traits associated with Dewey's philosophy. In the first instance, they demonstrated a commitment to locate learning in 'our own vital lives and the flourishing lives of our communities' (Waks, 2017, p. 15). They all demonstrated significant attempts to build inclusive, empathetic democratic communities where diverse groups were welcomed, celebrated and encouraged. Dewey's priority on seeking shared interests and developing a socio-political awareness of inequalities were demonstrated to a greater extent in the two school communities with longer experiences in working with superdiversity—South and East College. Teachers in these two schools showed a journey of reflecting on how they might bring about a more equal and democratic education through a greater priority on unity, not only diversity, including embedding Indigenous and ethnic minority contexts and forms of knowledge and a stronger socio-political awareness. They exhibited many processes and practices that challenged the status quo in the name of democracy and democratisation (Biesta, 2011, p. 2) and were developing practices that sought to address racism, and social inequalities

With reference to multicultural education James Banks (2015, p. 97) states that 'diversity and unity should co-exist in a delicate balance in democratic multicultural nations'. Teachers at South and East College were well aware of this tension but were clear that a commitment to democracy necessitated honouring and supporting differences as well as sharing interests and common goals. While a focus on unity has not been a feature of much education in New Zealand in recent years—in the belief this may become nationalistic and exclusionary—these experienced schools showed considerable insight into the type of unity they focused on. For example, the choice of the poem, *Bred* in South Auckland, described by Catherine (South College), enabled students to share not only an affinity around their collective experience of growing up in those suburbs, but also to critique the negative stereotypes associated with these poorer multicultural communities. Dewey's philosophy of education and democracy helps to explain that unity does not mean homogenisation or assimilation but that immigrant and minority groups can retain important aspects of their languages and cultures as well as have full citizenship rights (Kymlicka, 2016).

The study provides significant insights into the role that teachers can play in building forms of community life and educational experiences where all group in superdiverse school contexts can live and learn in ways that build robust democracies. Importantly, the study also highlighted the importance of time and the process of becoming more culturally inclusive which requires ongoing learning (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). In keeping with Parkhouse et al. (2023), this study showed how teachers in the more experienced superdiverse schools had gradually refined and deepened democratic education over time. Both East and South College, with longer exposure to Indigenous and superdiversity, demonstrated deep critical insights into inclusive and justice-

oriented teaching practices, recognising the multidimensional character of diversity (Malsbary, 2016; Song, 2023; Vertovec et al., 2024) and therefore the need for nuanced pedagogical responses. This finding offers a hopeful, rather than judgemental position, as it demonstrates that learning (as Dewey hoped) is dynamic and unfolding and that dispositions for democracy develop over time.

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