

## **A Multicultural Muddle: Is Social Cohesion the Answer?**

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New Zealand like a number of other countries is facing significantly increased levels of cultural diversity as a result of immigration and the mobility that is apparent in contemporary globalisation. As with countries like Australia and Canada, the number of immigrants accepted as permanent residents is far exceeded by temporary residents, including those involved in education. While there is considerable recognition that institutions, including those in education, need to recognise the diversity that is characteristic of contemporary societies, the nature of the diversity dividend is still unclear. The policy goals tend often to be inadequately articulated and the implementation of these goals is often dependant upon committed and aware individuals rather than encompassing an organisation or community in a broader and more effective sense. One of the policy initiatives that has emerged, particularly in Canada, has been concerned with social cohesion. The question in a New Zealand context, as it must be elsewhere, is whether this is a suitable high level policy goal which will provide benefits to educational organisations and their various student communities. This presentation takes a critical look at social cohesion and offers some suggestions in terms of strategies and the desired outcomes of any social cohesion agenda.