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Engaging in Deep Cultural Learning Through the Intersection of Multiple Contexts

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Abstract: The type of learning that takes place in teacher education courses typically results in pre-service teachers developing a mixture of knowledge, skills and values that enable them to become effective teachers in schools in the future. During their journey to become qualified teachers, pre-service teachers typically engage in coursework and experiential-based learning.

By engaging in coursework experiences, an overseas practicum and an overseas study tour, students experienced a range of reflection-promoting activities and contexts during which they broadened and deepened their understanding of cultures other than their own.

Using a cross-case analysis approach, the data gathered in these three cases were evaluated using an experiential learning theoretical framework. This article reports on findings from three separate but related studies in which students' learning about cultures other than their own was analysed and used to provide a set of practical recommendations for teacher education courses and programs.

Introduction

> Who cares about information. I can Google that any time I want.
> All I care about is the experience.
> (Student 2, Overseas Tour diary comment)

This article reports on the nexus of three case studies that, as a research triptych, sought to understand students' emerging understanding of cultural awareness across a pre-service teaching program at one tertiary education institution. The nexus of these three case studies was analysed using a cross-case analysis research approach (Stake, 2005a) to establish commonalities between the positive and negative outcomes of the three cases. As such, the nature of the nexus was exploratory, comparative and diagnostic. What began as a post-accreditation debriefing lead to a formalised inquiry into what was happening in our courses as a whole, and what could happen as an optimal learning experience. In many ways this investigation became an amalgam of responsive evaluation (Stake & Abma, 2005) and a reflective process of possibility thinking. As such, the overall focus of the investigation cut across the on-campus and off-campus learning experiences of 210 students enrolled in early childhood, primary and secondary teacher education programs. Students' experiences of cultures other than their own were tracked throughout three different case studies.

The Quality of Learning in Teacher Education

In the past three decades, graduates from university teaching programs in developed countries have become increasingly global in their personal outlook and increasingly mobile in their personal and professional lives (Proctor, Rentz, & Jackson, 2001). Despite this shift in new and young teachers' world views, their post graduation teaching practice and the 'world traveller' profile of the more recent teacher generations (Mills, 1997), it has become increasingly apparent that the curricula at the tertiary level is not providing students with a teaching perspective that is flexible enough to be transferable from the Australian perspective to a more global outlook (Rivzi, 2007). This situation has become increasingly scrutinised and pressurised with recent reforms in teacher education calling for rapid change and reform (House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007; Hudson & Hudson, 2011; Ramsey, 2000). It would appear that teacher training institutions need to institute more innovative classroom experiences for pre-service teachers. This position has gathered increasing political and academic voice (Reynolds, 1995; Roehrig & Luft, 2006), resulting in new ways of conceptualising the complexity of the work of teachers (Fives & Buehl, 2008).

The authors contend that one of the ways to enhance both the quality and range of experiences for pre-service teachers involves a combination of local classroom experiences and those gained in overseas contexts. This approach is aimed at enabling teacher education students to gain a comprehensive understanding of their own culture and the cultures of others. This study intends to add to the research base dealing with cross-cultural and placement of pre-service teachers in schools, especially those who ultimately work in diverse populations incorporating varied cultures. Unless pre-service teachers' experiences are carefully guided, facilitated and mentored, there is a risk that they may develop negative cultural understandings, stereotypes and perspectives (Sleeter, 2008).

Thus, the processes that teacher education students in this particular institution engage in during their preparation for the teaching profession is characterised by both theoretical and practical learning experiences. Typically, students enrol in a range of coursework and professional experience subjects in which they develop knowledge, skills and values that enable them to operate as effective and reflective practitioners within educational institutions. In addition to the relevant pedagogical theories of learning, such as the principles associated with experiential, transformational and intercultural learning, designers of teacher education degrees are further guided by the newly developed Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2012) as well as the graduate attributes and learning outcomes outlined in the institution's course documentation that are currently accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Theoretical framework of the study

The theories associated with experiential learning provide the theoretical framework by which the case studies were interpreted and evaluated. To enable the affordances of Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2002), teacher education degrees often incorporate a "holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop" (Kolb et al., 2002, p. 2). As such, Kolb's work (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 2002) provided a lens through which the multi-dimensional aspects

of students' experiences across the three case studies could be evaluated, especially in terms of the way in which they appeared to transform as a result of engaging in activities that provided them with multiple opportunities to engage in deep reflection (individual and collaborative) about their own culture and the cultures of others. Mezirow (2000) provided further insight into how to analyse the students' holistic experiences by offering a frame of reference that "encompasses cognitive, conative, and emotional components, and is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view" (pp. 5-6). The components and dimensions suggested by Mezirow provided a structure by which to analyse the holistic nature of the students experiences in each case study setting.

The construction of the courses and experiences within the three case studies reported were further informed by the theoretical principles of learning that enabled students to experience and reflect on the type of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2008) that often led to them "changing as a person" (Marton, Dall'Alba, & Beaty, 1993, p. 277). The significance of their learning (Chick, Karis, & Kernahan, 2009), which was recognised by the students during or after their experiences (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 2002), was identified as both multicultural (Fink, 2003; Hutchins, 1996; Kilgour, 2013) and socio-cultural learning (Berkhofer, 2008; de Groot, 2009). These aspects of transformative learning were aligned closely to the multidimensionality offered by holistic experiential learning theories. The three case studies outlined in this article provide examples of a holistic model of learning within on-campus and off-campus components of the teacher education courses. Just as Kolb's theory of experiential learning suggests that knowledge is constructed through the processes of transformative learning experiences, so too the three research studies described in this article have drawn on this theory to design their learning activities and resources. While providing opportunities for students to construct cognitive understanding of their course materials, the studies mentioned below enable students to also development the social, emotional and spiritual aspects of their learning, in line with the institution's learning mission.

Although embryonic in focus and findings, the emerging research, focussing on overseas teaching experiences and in-class multicultural learning experiences for pre-service teachers, suggests that the short term encounters offered by several universities in Australia have the potential to produce major shifts in pre-service teachers' personal and professional identities. While these changes in awareness and identity are brought about by several critical factors, the pivotal element appears to be immersion in the context, and the ensuing experience of culture shock. The latter needs to be carefully managed so that the effects of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1956) have the potential to produce an increased responsibility. The most effective means of managing the process appears to be one of supported reflection, social interaction and provision for emotional unpacking and sharing. The implementation of these activities in on-campus and off-campus programs has culminated in a rich set of student learning experiences that have been characterised by holistic development across many aspects of learning including cognitive, social, emotional, personal and spiritual. These experiential learning activities are particularly transformative (Mezirow, 2000) in their nature in that they impact various aspects of the pre-service teacher's development.

Drawing on the long held research position that pre-service teachers' teaching praxis becomes more highly developed when their course materials connect their personal and professional learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006), these tertiary course experiences individually sought to draw on the institution's explicit aims of:

- preparing graduate teachers within a holistic framework, incorporating opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual learning;
- providing sustained engagement in activities that immerse pre-service teachers in cultures other than their own;

- providing opportunities for guided reflection of the students' own ideas and the ideas of others; and
- enabling pre-service teachers to encounter moments of cognitive dissonance during which their previous ideas are challenged and, in some cases, reconstructed.

The experiential learning focus of the theoretical framework of the study is supported by a case study methodological approach.

The Research Studies

The study was designed using a case study approach (Stake, 2005b) to investigate the commonalities and variations across the three cases presented. Each of the cases were bound by either an on-campus course, Case Study 1, or an overseas experience, Case Study 2 and 3 (Silverman, 2013). The natural settings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 2013) of each of the three research studies offered authentic contexts of situated cognition (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) and cultural education (Bergsteiner & Avery, 2008; Hutchins, 1996; Kilgour, 2013). Further details about the context of each case study have been described below in Table 1.

The three cases presented in this article illustrate how specifically designed teacher education course components can provide scaffolded opportunities for pre-service teachers to enable them to become effective teachers in schools in the future. The three related but distinct research projects described provide examples of teacher education students engaging in coursework and experiential based learning during in-class, on-campus activities as well as off-campus, overseas experiences. In each case, learning experiences, learning and assessment activities, and course resources were purposefully designed to challenge and develop pre-service teachers' knowledge, skills and values about their own and others' cultures. This collection of case studies incorporated a range of research strategies which involved gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, typically including both pre- and post-experience data collection points and, in some cases, data were also gathered during the experience (see Table 1 for further details).

While the intentions of each research project was focused on the students' understanding of cultural issues, all cases also aimed to enable pre-service teachers develop their learning in a holistic sense - encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual learning experiences. To comprehensively analyse the three sets of data from each case study, case-based analysis methods were employed to interrogate each of the individual cases, as well as cross-case analysis (Stake, 2005a) which was employed to analyse the data holistically across the three cases. To further substantiate the cross-case analysis of "convergent, inconsistent and contradictory" evidence that emerged from the case studies, the analyses were also triangulated (Mathison, 1988).

Theme	Case Study 1	Case Study 2	Case Study 3
Mode and site of research	On-campus coursework unit	Overseas History tour	Overseas practicum
Total no. of participants	119	21	30
No. of female participants	79	11	18
No. of male participants	40	10	12
Age group of participants	20-46	19-38	19-26
Voluntary or mandatory participation	Every student was given a survey to complete in class.	Voluntary	Voluntary
Reflection mode	The survey was itself a reflection with the students identifying what they thought would be the most significant issues they would face when teaching a multicultural class.	Reflective journal Post-tour survey including reflective questions	Daily reflective journal Post-PEX survey including reflective questions based on Sense Making
Data collection methods	Pre and post course survey	Pre and post tour survey Student Evaluation Questionnaire (SEQ) Reflective journal by students and lecturer	Document analysis re reflective journals/post survey Semi-structured interviews
	Methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1970)		
Data analysis methods	Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank t-test for non-parametric data	Constant comparative method of analysis used to code and triangulate data	Constant comparative method of analysis used to code and triangulate data
	Cross-case analysis (Stake, 2005a) and triangulation of convergent findings to increase their validity (Mathison, 1988)		

Table 1: Details of Case Study 1, 2 and 3

Case Study 1: Learning Experienced During an On-campus Coursework Unit

Courses preparing teachers for the multicultural classroom are most effective when they require students to think about diversity. As Willis (2000) points out, broadening students' ideas on the interface between culture and society should really precede the learning of teaching techniques in the multicultural classroom: "... not for glamorized ideas of tolerance, but something much more important, respect for one's self, one's culture, and the culture of others" (p. 276).

When confronted with these ideas, many students take on the concepts involved in the subject and voice a change in attitude that lasts even after the initial feelings of indignation have subsided. Kernahan and Davis (2010) researched a group of 119 students in a class on diversity and did a pre and post survey of their beliefs with regard to racial issues. After a year it was found that some of the stronger feelings of students had softened somewhat, "... this is balanced by increased feelings of comfort with racial issues and an apparent increase in interaction with those of other races" (p. 41).

The first case study reported in this article (Kilgour, 2013) measured the amount to which pre-service teachers' attitudes to cultural and multicultural issues can be impacted over a single semester of classes designed to deal with cultural values, understanding and acceptance. The study of multiculturalism is important for pre-service teachers for several reasons. New teachers will need to grapple with issues of multiculturalism in order to be understanding of their students and create an environment of tolerance. Finally, there is a curriculum requirement issue here. The Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) requires that multicultural studies and

Indigenous education be included in both the primary and secondary curriculum of each learning area. It is therefore also a requirement in teacher training.

Similar findings to that of Kernahan and Davis (2010) were identified in Kilgour's (2013) study which involved students completing the same survey in the first week of the semester and then in the last week. Most of the students were within the ages of 20-30 years old, with the rest ranging up to 46 years of age. Two thirds of the cohort was female. This survey was administered to measure if there had been a change in the way students were seeing issues in teaching multiculturalism. The survey required the students to nominate three factors that they believe would be issues when teaching classes of numerous ethnic backgrounds including Indigenous students. The answers the students provided were categorised as either physical factors (such as dress, language, food); values (such as racism, prejudice, sensitivity) or beliefs/traditions (such as customs, religion, family roles). A Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank t-test for non-parametric data was also taken, comparing the top ten responses at the beginning and at the end of the course.

The types of on campus class experiences that appear to bring about a paradigm shift are: role playing poverty and minority group scenarios, lectures from indigenous elders, viewing of the Jane Elliot Australian Eye DVD (2004) on racism, panel discussions on key issues in tutorials. Regular student evaluation questionnaires have indicated that these learning experiences have brought about attitude changes. The study by Kilgour (2013) sought to put definition to the types of attitude changes that were adopted.

Case Study 2: Learning Experienced During an Overseas study Tour

The focus of the second case study reported in this article was a History tour, encompassing visits to history sites from ancient to modern times in Spain and France in the European autumn of 2010 (Reynaud & Northcote, 2011). The research around the tour was generally based on a holistic, qualitative phenomenographic approach (Marton, 1986) seeking to understand how the tour experiences influenced students' development across a spectrum of intellectual and personal aspects. Processes and outcomes were correlated to identify the best processes. There were 21 students enrolled in the tour. The students comprised an even mix of genders and came from varying ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, and half were between the ages of 19-25, with the rest ranging up to 38. Only two of the students had not travelled overseas before.

Pre-tour classes covered the history of the sites to be visited, followed by workshops on cultural, social and language training, to maximise the cultural engagement during the two-and-a –half week trip. Students also co-created a code of conduct before the tour began. The trip included a total of four and a half days of unscheduled time, where students could experience the culture on their own initiative.

The research instruments began with a pre-tour survey which identified how intellectually and emotionally engaged the students were with History, and how the discipline interacted with their professional, personal and spiritual development. The questionnaire asked students to anticipate the expectations, challenges and outcomes of the tour. Once on tour, a reflective journal was updated each day by the students. At the end of the tour, all students completed a retrospective questionnaire adapted from the pre-tour survey which covered the same expectations, challenges and outcomes, to measure how well the tour matched its expectations and to what degree unanticipated learning had occurred. Additional data was provided by the institution's end-of-semester Student Evaluation Questionnaires. Also included were observational data from the accompanying lecturer of the daily events and how they impacted on students.

The study took a snapshot of qualitative data, although introductory questions gathered basic demographics on the group. Coding and triangulation of this data produced patterns of responses before, during and after the trip in both professional and personal development . The findings and recommendations that emerged from the studies helped identify the most learning-effective elements of the tour, and the nature of the learning that occurred.

Case Study 3: Learning Experienced During an Overseas Practicum

The third research component of this project resulted in a spectrum of experience for second year pre-service teachers. These students comprised a mix of 12 males and 18 females, and were aged between 19-26. All but eight students had travelled overseas previously. The site and 'inner sight of experience' that formed the stages for the 30 students forming the research cohort was in an orphanage school several kilometres outside of Siem Reap, Cambodia. The school is situated amongst the rice paddies of a poor rural community and, while serving the school aged orphans of the school itself, also provides education for children in the surrounding villages.

The pre-service teachers were placed in classrooms representing the broad spectrum of second language learners and grade levels of this educational spectrum. Depending on their speciality, they taught in primary and secondary schools that were founded by a Christian community. Typically, this teaching experience became an immersion process with the regular classroom teacher leaving the room either for the entire three weeks of the program, or for extended periods, leaving the pre-service teacher with responsibility for teaching the class. Thus, they had to take responsibility for the planning and pedagogical approaches with large class sizes, in rooms that had little or no resources. The expectation was that they would begin or at least attempt to implement the pedagogy that they had experienced in lectures and domestic practicums, while simultaneously grappling with their personal understanding of the teaching-learning nexus in multicultural and multiethnic classrooms.

These classrooms had no air conditioning or fans, featured blackboards that were sometimes damaged, and were located in a school culture that was exam based. It goes without saying that these classrooms initially became 'sites of struggle', indeed psycho-emotional struggle, as these second year pre-service teachers strove to teach in the hot and humid conditions, learned to teach and learned about teaching.

> At first it was just a grind. The heat, the sweat, no relief and no resources. I felt like I was going to melt physically and emotionally. It was like nothing I had ever experienced. I've travelled a lot but living and working in this was really different. I've had to dig deep and it started coming back, all the things we were told. I learnt so much about kids and teaching, and even more about me, but I needed much more help.
> (Student R, aged 19).

However, these students were not left without support during this experience, which had two focal elements: the creation of some degree of peer sharing and in-class supervision. While positive outcomes were seemingly achieved by all participants, it was those who embraced the culture who encountered less culture shock than others. The possibility of culture shock was alleviated to a much larger degree by those who engaged in socio-emotional sharing by working collaboratively through each day. By sharing the highs and the

lows of the experience these beginning teachers worked their way through a personal challenge of understanding who they were as well as their strengths and weaknesses. While having to prepare lessons each day, establishing a sense of who they were, and what they believed enabled the commencement of a threaded process in which their lessons became more attuned with a sense of what they believed about children's learning. More importantly, through this collaborative peer sharing process and the mentored in-class supervision, the links between learning and learning language became melded into a focused perspective.

> I don't know how I'm going to live without my friends, sharing what happened in the room each night. We cried at first, but then it became laughter as we shared how we felt, then lessons, ideas and … everything. I learned more from my friends on this prac, and about the kind of teacher I want to be, than any lecture back at uni.
> (Student F, aged 21)

As will be further elaborated on in the next section, and as a segue into the overall findings of this projects, these specific contexts 'professionally enabled' these students in regard to how to develop meaningful relationships with the students and incorporate pedagogy such as critical questioning, group interaction and critical awareness as opposed to rote learning, also forced these pre-service students to develop a deep professional sense. They came to understand what worked for them in reference to their university courses, by incorporating the theory from their lecture settings, into understanding from actual practice.

Findings from the Three Case Studies

Across the three case studies presented in this article, students engaged in an on-campus course, an overseas teaching practicum and an overseas study tour. During their overseas practicum experiences, students taught in a range of situations within cultures that were not familiar to them. Students who enrolled in an on-campus course that focused on cultural education experienced challenges to their current cultural conceptions and were encouraged to incorporate a wider understanding of multiple cultures into their current cultural perceptions. Overseas study tours aimed to create learning experiences in history and culture in a culturally-embedded and authentic way that offered the potential for transformative integrative cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development. Overall, the course and course experiences, cited in each of the case studies, aimed to prepare graduates who are able to "understand and respect cultural differences in people" and "possess high ethical standards including an orientation to service" (Avondale College of Higher Education, 2014).

The findings from these three culture-focused research studies were drawn together to provide a set of practical recommendations for use in teacher education courses and programs. In many cases, their experiences were holistically significant, as they reported changes in themselves beyond an extension of their cognitive appreciation of culture.

As for the first study by Kilgour (2013), Table 2 gives information as to the issues students envisaged when teaching classes with multicultural students. The table also shows how the issues were categorised into themes and how their responses changed as a result of the unit of study.

First class of semester	Theme		Last class of semester	Theme	
Language	physical	63	Prejudice	values	37
Religion	beliefs	58	Language	physical	32
Racism	values	37	Stereotyping	values	22
Traditions	beliefs	23	Sensitivity	values	20
Beliefs	beliefs	22	History	beliefs	18
Dress	physical	22	Learning styles	physical	17
Background	beliefs	21	Teacher education	physical	16
Learning style	physical	16	Customs	beliefs	15
Family roles	beliefs	15	Racism	values	14
Discipline	physical	15	Ethnocentrism	values	13

Table 2: How students rated classroom factors in a multicultural course

The results of the survey in this study, the research by Kilgour (2013), showed that when each theme was weighted by the number of responses and its ranking, there was an interesting shift in the appearance of the themes (see Table 3). This was based on the 10 most frequent responses from the cohort of 119 students.

Theme	Start of Semester (weighted value)	End of Semester (weighted value)
Values	296	727
Physical	803	437
Beliefs	768	153

Table 3: The scaled importance of each theme before and after the course

By using the Wilcoxon matched pairs signed rank t-test for non-parametric data, it was found that the responses before and after the course was studied were significantly different ($P < 0.05$) with a P value of 0.0039. This result was enough to indicate the large shift students made during this course of study. Specifically, the following changes were noticed when the students' responses to the before course survey were compared to the post course survey:

1. *Prejudice* replaced the *language* barrier as the issue at the top of the anticipated list by students. In fact, even though *language* ended up the second most significant issue to the students, its response rate halved as a result of studying the course.
2. The issue of diversity of *religion* dropped out of the top ten perceived issues as a result of the study.
3. *Dress* also dropped out of the post survey.
4. Philosophical ideas such as *prejudice, stereotyping, sensitivity* and *ethnocentrism took over from more pragmatic themes such as religion, dress, family roles* and *discipline.*
5. *Teacher education* appears as a feature or change agent in the second survey where it had not appeared before.

The conclusion reached from this case study was that lecturers can make a significant difference to the way students think about multicultural and Indigenous issues. This can be achieved over just a 13 week semester if the students are challenged to think beyond the mandated knowledge and technique level for working with multicultural and Indigenous students in schools and to think more about their own beliefs, attitudes and cultural sensitivity.

Findings from the second case study, the overseas History tour, contributed to our understanding of how an off-campus course experience influenced pre-service teachers'

cultural understandings. The study identified the key elements of a successful History tour. Firstly, the pre-tour History classes were vital in providing a platform for an enhanced engagement with the tour destinations. The students' ability to engage with the local cultures was also significantly enhanced by pre-tour classes in language, social expectations and culture:

> I would not have learnt as much on the tour had it not been for lectures and presentations before the tour informing me about the significance of sites and places, and an overview of French History.
> (Reflection Journal, Student C)

> [Highlight:] Being encouraged to absorb different cultures, not just observe them. E.g., finding our way through foreign cities on free days.
> (Post-tour Survey, Student 20)

Secondly, the code of conduct, that was co-constructed and shared with students as a guide before and during the tour, was vital in negotiating expectations and behaviour from tour-fatigued students in foreign places.

Another key finding was the value of planned free time, allowing students to recover from fatigue, absorb experiences and integrate them into their existing knowledge and experiences. Spending as much time as possible in one hotel location was also an important element to reduce stress and enhance the capacity of students to "know" a place which was previously alien.

The study showed how effective the tour was in helping students to develop an integrated intellectual, emotional, personal and, in some cases, spiritual connection to History. No longer was it a dry, cognitive exercise around distant events mediated through textbooks. Instead, it had a dynamic emotional and tactile immediacy which stayed with them post-tour. In their own perception they had grown in self-awareness, in aesthetic appreciation, in sensitivity to differences in others both past and present, and in a more rounded and complete understanding of events of the past, as well as having a higher drive to continue their own learning experiences. Effectively, the students had forged an entirely new and transformed relationship with History which affected not only how they learnt it but also how they communicated it. This was evident in the ways in which students from the tour personally connected to post-tour current events in locations they had visited.

In the third case study in this article, researchers tracked students' learning experiences during an overseas professional learning experience (Chinnapan, McKenzie, & Fitzsimmons, 2014, submitted; McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, Matthes, Hinze., & Bruce, 2013). The key outcomes of the supported overseas professional experience were related to the alignment between personal ideology and how children learn, and personal practice. Although short in duration, the process of immersion and supervisory feedback provided the mechanisms through which pre-service teachers learn to believe themselves capable of teaching. Overcoming the often difficult classroom conditions helped students to develop their professional identity. From this basis, they acquired a sense of being able to take risks, through which they developed a heightened understanding of what they could achieve by transforming their learning at university into personal teaching strategies. In essence this personal achievement and belief in themselves provided the confidence to tackle learning spaces without a reliance on the typical resources found in the teaching situations in the students' home country. The pre-service teachers came to realise that they could develop engaging learning situations grounded in hands-on experience with minimal resources.

More importantly, the experience challenged their poorly developed sense of cultural awareness, and through the immersion in an actual cultural site vastly different to that previously experienced, provided telescopic and magnified awareness. In tandem with the responsibility of actual teaching they were able to test these new cultural understandings *in situ*. They were not left to their own devices in this area, but received constant feedback from their peers and supervisors so that the information provided through their university experiences was challenged and optimal learning strategies came into focus.

Cross-comparison Analysis of Combined Findings

For the pre-service teachers who participated in each case study outlined in this research project, the quality of their cultural learning deepened as a result of participating in these experiences. At the beginning of their experiences, the pre-service teachers typically viewed cultural issues from a surface point of view or a perspective that focused on cultural differences, especially those that were visually perceptible.

> The whole PEX [Professional Experience] was a shock. I realised how little I was exposed to in lectures, and how little I really paid attention. It wasn't that the lectures weren't good, I just couldn't connect to the content. And the domestic prac' was at my old primary school, so I just kept on believing teaching was the way I was taught. Terribly sheltered all round.
> (Student C, aged 20)

While their experiences were quite different, ranging from learning activities and assessment tasks in an on-campus course through to extended periods of travel and teaching in overseas locations, it was the sustained engagement across periods of time that appeared to catalyse some of the most valuable and holistic outcomes of these case studies. The all-encompassing experience offered by the situations created by each of the case studies enabled the students to gain maximum engagement through an ongoing experience, or "immersion of the senses" in a culture other than their own, as one student described it. While reflecting *in situ* gave the students an authentic sense of the value and depth of their own learning, the immediate nature of their situation further provided them with a setting in which to apply their newly developed knowledge and their recently refined attitudes and values. Students typically spoke of how they would apply their learning to new contexts, often without being prompted to do so. As one student reported, who had experienced two of the contexts reported in this paper:

> I stood in the classroom, with holes in the floor, holes in the blackboard and with very little chalk, and all I could do was think and deeply reflect. Not for long but I had to take a breath and pull what Peter K [Lecturer] had forced me to think about, and what was not working here. I had to think about what these kids really needed and how this could work. I had to take a risk, which I now think is what uni' should be all about. A blind risk but a risk that would make my kids learning 'for real', and you know .. for me as well. Me the teacher, and not a student.
> (Student E)

Because their learning experiences were not structured as an unrelated set of learning activities but a meaningful sequence of experiences, they were able to incorporate what they had learned into their developing sense of self. As such, their personal identity developed

alongside their professional self, which incorporated an increased understanding of other cultures. Their pedagogical understanding of the processes of teaching and learning was not dissociated from their sense of who they were as individuals.

Practical Recommendations

From the findings of the three case studies reported in this project, a number of practical recommendations for teacher-education course designers, administrators and lecturers have emerged, especially in relation to students' understandings of culture. These recommendations have implications for the way in which the on-campus components of teacher education courses are designed and the way in which future overseas study tours and professional learning experiences may be devised and organised.

Recommendations for the Design of On-campus Courses

As tertiary teachers, and particularly in teacher education programs, it is desirable to model teaching above the knowledge level of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, Englehart, Furst, & Krathwohl, 1956) and to challenge the students to set themselves up for their own teaching careers in the same fashion. There are certain elements of on-campus teaching that facilitate this process and some of the activities used in the three case studies enabled this process to occur. Engaging students to rethink cultural attitudes requires an interactive learning environment with robust and open discussion about the significant issues. As part of the various elements of the case studies presented in this paper, students were challenged to engage in activities and learning tasks designed to create cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1956). The types of tasks chosen to facilitate this are outlined in the table below, with an indication of whether or not these activities were used in each of the three case studies, with a tick indication of whether or not these activities were used in each of the three case studies, and a hash mark where the activity could be added as a useful activity (Table 4):

Recommended activities to promote rethinking of cultural attitudes	Case Study 1	Case Study 2	Case Study 3
Role plays - to put students in similar positions to those they are learning about	✓	#	#
Tutorial presentations - based on key aspects of a particular culture's positions, customs and traditions	✓	#	#
Panel discussions - where the panels are made up of students who are given specific cultural issues to address from varied perspectives	✓		#
Lecture forums - based on issues presented in newspaper stories, current affairs video clips and other current sources	✓		#
Introducing guest speakers - of cultural significance to the students	✓	#	#
Cultural workshops - to extend students understanding of the breadth of culture including social similarities and differences and language training.		✓	#
Reflective journal as an assessment task - to track beginning, developing and emerged cultural attitudes towards content of course	#	✓	#
Reflection-focused discussions - to engage students in critical questioning, group interaction and critical awareness of issues relating to particular cultures	#	#	✓
Peer support groups - to reflect on a personal understanding of a student's strengths and weaknesses in a collaborative support group.	#		✓
Participatory cultural experiences, such as meals, art, film, music, dance, literature	#	#	#
Use cross-disciplinary lecturers (International Studies; Cross-cultural Ministry; Ethno-musicology; Postcolonial Studies) to enrich classroom experience	#		#
Make use of the cultural diversity within the class to explore cultural differences and concepts of what is socially normative	#	#	#

Table 4: Recommended activities to promote rethinking of cultural attitudes

Case Study 1 illustrated how it is possible for 'home' on-campus learning experiences to expose students to cultural issues. Case Study 2 and Case Study 3 also incorporated some activities that could be used in on-campus courses to facilitate the rethinking of cultural attitudes, and have been incorporated into Table 4. The central role of reflective practices, both individual and collaborative, in these recommended activities promotes ongoing engagement opportunities for students to examine their prior and current cultural attitudes about their own culture and the cultures of others. Furthermore, there has to be intentional planning of learning sequences which facilitate interactive activities that will challenge students' thinking and attitudes.

Recommendations for the Design of Future Overseas Experiences

By way of introduction to this final section, and as a means of pulling the threads together from the previous, the following table (Table 5) summarises those aspects that would appear to have the potential to enhance the overall program within this tertiary context.

Recommendations for future reflective components to promote rethinking of cultural attitudes
Shift to a more reflective and problem based learning within the degree structures.
The development of social emotional learning as a core for each degree and overseas related subject.
The generation of an increasing understanding of teaching through authentic relationships across the degree structures.
Cross cultural workshops at critical times with the aim of exploring subject connections.
More focussed language modules within subject dealing with NESB and their relation to cultural experiences in domestic professional experiences.

Table 5: Recommended activities to promote rethinking of cultural attitudes

The outcomes of the case study investigations reported in this article revealed that, although having the best intentions, there needs to be a great deal more 'connectivity' amongst and between each of the courses in this institution. While individually there were

instances, and at time significant instances of professional growth, there appears to be an increasing professional awareness that greater personal pedagogical connections between personal beliefs, professional experiences and personal ideology could be achieved. There was also an apparent understanding that, with the deeper interpersonal relationship developed within programs, at some point there was a need to pull all the threads together into a comprehensive whole in the teaching spaces in order to maximise student learning about cultures other than their own.

More importantly, this would ensure maximum connection between personal learning, teaching and the subjects. This could entail the development of a single assessment task in the form of a conjoint assessment task between the subjects involved in this study. This task should, however, also become enmeshed in other subject areas such as those dealing with language and literacy, core curriculum areas and professional development subjects. Focus questions dealing with personal beliefs, theoretical perspectives and ensuing practical possibilities appears to be a cogent focus. Another possibility is that of a post-experience task that requires students to reflect on how their learning experience in the tertiary classroom applied to their personal experience.

The data also suggests that understanding the concept of teaching as being based on relationships, as opposed to a mere transference of information, should be a key ingredient in the mix of subjects. In particular, the concepts related to socio-emotional learning appear to be key elements of praxes that could represent a new and cutting edge approach to classroom practice based on an awareness of cultural understandings.

More importantly, the professional development subjects should become more focused on providing a learning web for students to explore in-depth their own personal beliefs about learning, while connecting this to actual practice and theories of learning about other cultures. This web of generating theory into practice should also become focused on developing a deep understanding of the intricacies of cultural awareness. Opportunities in this institution provide a broad experiential base which should be capitalised on.

Overseas travel learning experiences call for thorough preparation beforehand to maximise contextual knowledge. They require a disruption of the known, of the familiar, in order to provide a jolt in world view and experience, forcing the student to reassess previously-held ideas and beliefs. They also demand sufficient immersion time, especially of the students' own making, to allow students to absorb the experience, refashion ideas and integrate their learning about cultures other than their own into their sense of self.

Conclusion

The three case studies outlined in this article represent three research studies that investigated the impact of course and overseas experiences on pre-service teachers' learning. The experiences were designed to purposely impact students' understanding of cultures other than their own. In each project, the students were influenced by the range of experiences they encountered in on-campus and off-campus situations that challenged their world views of other cultures. While the students' reported experiencing in-depth challenges and successes that were pedagogical, cognitive, cultural, emotional and social, they also reported multiple examples of how the experiences provided them with time and opportunities to personally reflect on their understanding of their own culture and the culture of others.

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