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International Service-learning: Possibilities for developing intercultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogies

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International Service-learning: Possibilities for developing intercultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogies

Globalisation and human mobility have contributed to increased student diversity in Australian schools and globally. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs are under pressure to prepare pre-service teachers (PST) who can respond to the educational and cultural needs of diverse student cohorts. International study tours and service-learning programs are conceived as means for developing interculturally competent 'classroom-ready' teachers. This paper reports on a New Colombo Plan water safety/swimming program designed and delivered by pre-service teachers in a rural Fijian community. Findings indicate that immersion as 'other' was important for building empathy and appreciation of the lived realties of linguistically and culturally diverse Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian children. Additionally, findings reveal various ways by which PST enacted cultural competence in teaching the water safety/swimming program. Where international service learning is not always be an option, we argue for multiple opportunities for PST to work with children within diverse communities and cultural life-worlds. At stake is the potential of ITE programs to enable the development of pedagogical practices for meeting the cultural and educational needs of all children We believe these calls have relevance for ITE educators and their programs in Australia and the broader Asia-Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: international service-learning, intercultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogies

Introduction

Globalisation and increased human mobility have led to Australian universities prioritising the preparation of 'global-work-ready' graduates (Neilsen & Weinmann, 2020). Globalisation and human mobility have also contributed to increased student diversity in Australian schools and internationally (Parr et al., 2017). Meanwhile, a student/teacher diversity gap has emerged (Hepple et al., 2017), with many teachers feeling ill prepared to meet the needs of diverse student cohorts (Warren, 2018).

Reflective of these concerns, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has identified valuing and catering for the learning needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds as a standard for classroom-ready graduates (AITSL, 2011). ITE programs are, hence, under pressure to prepare educators who are responsive to the diverse educational and cultural needs of all students (Santoro & Major, 2012; Santoro, 2014).

For ITE programs, tensions emerge around providing expansive pre-service teacher (PST) experiences whilst negotiating accountability requirements, such as AITSL standards that bear a potential to limit educative purposes and practices (Cochran-Smith, 2021).Within this context international study tours, and practicum are conceived as a means for developing interculturally competent, 'classroom-ready' and 'global-mindset' teachers (Hepple et al., 2017; Lang et al., 2017; Neilsen & Weimann, 2020).

Research into international programs has identified challenges experienced by PST (see Power et al., 2017; Boyd et al., 2019), shifts in orientations (see Lang et al., 2017) as well as professional and personal development (see Hepple et al., 2017; Power et al., 2017; Boyd, et al., 2019). Our paper enters and contributes to this discursive field by, investigating PST engagement with intercultural competence (Bennett, 2014) and culturally responsive pedagogies (CRP) (Gay, 2002) through a NCP service-learning program. Its contribution extends to noting implications for ITE.

In the remaining sections of the paper, we address NCP service-learning, conceptual framings of intercultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy. We then provide an outline the research project, before discussing our data with links to our theoretical perspectives. We conclude in arguing for multiple opportunities within

ITE that disrupt normative thinking and practices in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity.

NCP for capacity building

Since 2014 the NCP, as a 'signature' initiative of the Australian Government, has sought to raise engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. A key premise is that overseas experiences within university education contribute to developing personal and professional skills that enable graduates to contribute domestically and regionally (Hepple et al., 2017; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 2019). Perceived transformational possibilities include deepening cultural relationships, challenging culturally-based beliefs as well as building intercultural competence (Boyd, et al., 2019). As a consequence, Australian undergraduates have been supported to study and/or immerse themselves in mobility and service-learning programs within the Indo-Pacific region (DFAT, 2019).

Service-learning is an established, albeit, heterogeneous practice within ITE that incorporates teaching and learning experiences conducted within community settings, outside traditional university classrooms and life experiences of PST (Power et al., 2017). Key conditions include merging academic, experiential learning and assessment tasks with the delivery of purposeful activities aligned to specific community needs and priorities (Parr et al., 2017; Salter & Halbert, 2019). Authentic learning experiences situated within real-life contexts bear potential for developing knowledge, understandings and strategies for effective teaching in superdiverse classrooms (Power et al., 2017). Put simply, argument is made that service-learning in ITE focused upon inclusivity, recognition and respect for diversity can transform practices (Iyer, et al., 2018).

This paper reports on a NCP funded water-safety/swimming, service-learning program for children from a rural Fijian community situated within and framed by linguistic, religious, cultural and material diversity. Specifically, the paper explores immersion and participation in this program, engagement with intercultural competencies and confidence in applying CRP approaches.

Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence signifies dispositions and capabilities required to interact appropriately and effectively within community and cultural contexts of shared principles, ideals, and behaviours (Bennett, 2014, Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). It is reflected in capacities of perspective-taking, relationship-building and empathy, together with affective dispositions towards curiosity, tolerance, open-mindedness and cultural humility (Bennett, 2014; Dervin, 2016). Intercultural competence comprises more than knowledge and facts about a target culture, which paradoxically can work to perpetuate rather than diminish stereotypes and prejudices (Bennett, 2014).

Advocates contend that within the education field intercultural competence can only be developed through interactions with young people, their families and communities in real-life culturally mediated contexts (Dervin, 2016; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Given this, we were interested in how immersion in a community-based water-safety/swimming program provided opportunities for PST to enact affective, behavioural, and cognitive capacities reflective of intercultural competence.

We were also interested in pedagogical practices that might demonstrate application of intercultural competencies in delivering the water-safety/swimming program. In giving form to practices underpinned by intercultural competence we turned to culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). In this we acknowledge the importance

of intercultural competence to CRP but also understand that each is a separate theoretical construct (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

CRP mobilises the proposition that all curriculum and pedagogies are culturally-based (Gay 2002). Rather than designating instructional procedures, CRP signposts teaching approaches that draw on children's cultural resources to enhance engagement within specific educational contexts (Morrison et al., 2019). The aim is to support engagement and learning whilst building children's capabilities and cultural identities (Warren, 2018).

Robinson, Borden and Robinson (2013) argue that teaching *for* cultural diversity is possible when teachers understand children's day-to-day cultural landscapes. This entails valuing the knowledge and practices of children and their families, holding, and communicating high expectations for all, whilst using culturally mediated approaches (Thaman, 2009; Nabobo-Baba, 2012).

Swimming and water-safety programs encompass specific cultural understandings and practices. In Western nations such as Australia, programs tend to privilege Anglo-Saxon middle-class cultural norms (Savage & Franklin, 2015). At issue are pedagogical practices and relationships that normalise deficit assumptions about the engagement, participation and abilities of linguistically and culturally diverse participants (Golob et al., 2013; Savage & Franklin, 2015). Our interest was in PSTs' application of CRP in a purposefully designed and culturally informed water-safety/swimming program.

Community-designed swimming/water-safety program

The program was conceived by the authors who accompanied and lead participating

PST on the tour. Two of the authors had previously worked in the community over a three-year period. Pre-trip workshops were purposed around fostering respect and open-mindedness towards the cultural resources, children would bring to the water-safety/swimming program.

Context, culturally informed behavioural, dress and communication conventions, as well as basic levels of communication in Fiji-Hindi and Bauan dialect were addressed. PST were informed that the water-safety/swimming program was specifically developed in response to the recent drowning of a child in the community and the inability of adults to rescue him. This drowning framed the significance and meaningfulness of the water-safety/swimming program for PST participants and the community.

The semi-rural, cane-farming community comprised residents who were mainly Indo-Fijians[1] (whose first language is Fiji-Hindi) but also *iTaukei* (Indigenous) Fijians (whose first language is one of a variety of *iTaukei* dialects and/or the Bauan dialect colonially designated as the Fijian language). In this community, bordered by the sea, fishing from small craft is common and incomes are low. According to some community members, their forebears could not swim, so they and their descendants had not been assisted to learn.

More broadly, organised swimming lessons are generally unavailable and costly in Fiji, which has one of the world's highest drowning rates (Soko, 2014). These conditions echo findings from Golob et al. (2013) who note that cultural factors, inaccessibility, and prohibitive costs can be impediments to learning to swim. Given these concerns we worked closely with community elders in planning the location,

[1] Generally, descendants of labourers indentured to British colonisers

transport logistics, distribution of modest swimwear and program recruitment. We turn next to outline of our research into this program.

Design and Methodology

The qualitative research investigated PST engagement with intercultural competence and CRP whilst working with children in activities that would not normally form part of cultural/home experiences. The specific focus was on PST's pedagogical, relational and communication practices during a water-safety/swimming program. The research focus extended to capacities to support and engage culturally and linguistically diverse children in future educational settings.

Post-program reflections, meaning making and accompanying university course reports of eleven PST in the third or final year of a four-year Bachelor of Education program (primary or early childhood) at a large Australian university were central to this research. PST had completed at least three teaching-practicum experiences and had some, albeit varied, exposure to pedagogical practices and curricula for diverse learners. Reflecting typical teacher staffing in Australia's schools, nine were female and two were male. One of the eleven participants was of Indo-Fijian background, spoke Fiji-Hindi and was familiar with Indo-Fijian cultural expectations and practices. All were AUSTSWIM-qualified instructors, albeit with varied levels and amounts of instructional experience.

Ethics approval was gained from our university's Human Ethics Research Committee, prior to commencing the investigation. We assumed a socially critical standpoint, which entailed considering practices and experiences through the framings of intercultural competence and CRP. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in pairs or groups of three at the conclusion of the program. Interviews, as

purposeful conversations (Burgess, 1988), were approximately 60 minutes in duration and designed to allow participants to speak of and for themselves about experiences, practices and perceptions. Question themes addressed impact or influence of context, immersion in culture, pedagogical practices, and adaptations as well as approaches to working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. Researcher observations and fieldnotes provided prompts to expand interview conversations. PST's post-program reflective report writing provided additional data. Our aim was to develop rich accounts of participants' experiences and perceptions (Basit, 2010).

Data were read through literal, interpretive and reflexive lenses to determine meaning or significance (Basit, 2010). Initial readings focused on key story lines within participants' narratives. A second reading focused upon discourses or choice of words and how these were used. Readings were shared and discussed to identify broad themes. We also carried out reflexive reading to clarify our positionings and views during the data collection and interpretation stages (Patton, 2002). Here we acknowledge that our subjectivities are informed by the discursive and cultural resources of our life-worlds as white Anglo-Saxon academics. Our engagement with intercultural perspectives and CRP is informed by our commitment to enacting socio-critical practices.

In the next section, we discuss our data through the themes, Intercultural Sharing and Reciprocity, Towards Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Orientations Around Culture. It is important to note that this study was conducted with a small cohort of participants, hence, we make no claims for empirical generalisability. Rather, we present our readings of data with aims of providing insights and connections for others working with PST in developing intercultural competence and CRP.

Intercultural Sharing and Reciprocity

Participants brought a range of dispositions and experiences to the NCP project. Taylor, for instance stated that he 'had no idea what the culture was going to be like' but intended 'to adapt' and work with existing capabilities. Others, like Lara declared aspirations of 'giving' to 'others we would never normally come across.' Alex, who had previously volunteered in developing countries, welcomed another opportunity to 'take something new on board'. It is hard to argue against 'adapting', 'giving' and 'personal growth', however, as Neilsen and Weimann (2020) caution, such intentions can mask deeply sedimented binary notions of self as opposed to 'other'.

Immersion as 'other' was a deliberate feature of the NCP project, purposed around unsettling normative notions as well as building appreciation of the daily realities of linguistically and culturally diverse children. From Hare Landa, et al. (2017) we were aware that immersion was insufficient without mutually beneficial experiences purposed around a specific community-identified need. As established above, the water-safety/swimming program was designed in response to a specific community need that informed PST participation.

Building on previous ethnographic research in the community (see Harris et al, 2021), the authors negotiated recruitment utilising existing networks and connections. Community elders were consulted in co-constructing and communicating a vision about how the program would work to meet expectations and preferences of families and the community. PSTs were introduced by a process of home/compound visits and *baat chit*[2] in which the water-safety/swimming program was outlined. Consent was negotiated with families and free-of-cost equipment such as swim wear and goggles provided.

[2] *Baat Chit:* conversation, discussion (Fiji-Hindi)

These initial visits, as evident in the following excerpt from Lara and Alex, prompted feelings of surprise and even discomfort.

> I felt … a bit intrusive … I'm a white person, … I need you to speak my language because I don't speak any other language. … I didn't really know how to show appreciation for their culture to start with. (Lara)

> I didn't realise quite how many Indian-Fijians there were. … I almost didn't feel like I was in Fiji, … it took me a couple of days to readjust, … knowing when it's appropriate to greet someone with 'Bula' and when it's appropriate to greet a southern Indian [heritage] family. (Alex)

Lara, for instance, questioned participants' privilege as white English-only speakers in a colonised, materially poorer, multilingual setting. She and Alex wanted to show cultural respect yet as the above excerpts indicate felt they needed to learn more about the nuances of families' cultures and languages.

For some, tensions emerged when they noticed material circumstances whilst trying to avoid deficit framings of families. Experiences of tension and, hence, emotional discomfort may, according to Zembylas (2018), be necessary for disrupting normative understandings. Casey, in the excerpt below, engages with such tensions to appreciate family visits as opportunities to interact with the children and, hence, strengthen her planning and teaching.

> Seeing how different families lived opened my eyes … it did help to interact with the children because you knew what they were coming from .. their background and how to relate … it was important to see … their living conditions …how they learn … what they are learning. It really helped with structuring and assisting the children throughout lessons and planning. (Casey)

Casey's reflection indicates an interplay of affect, curiosity and cultural humility, which as noted by Bennett (2014) and Dervin (2016) are important for intercultural competence.

Immersion in the community included shared meals in family compounds. This collaborative undertaking was negotiated with community elders and incorporated funding from the program and meal preparation shared amongst families. For participants, this arrangement provided opportunities to develop relationships and learn about cultural practices around food, communal living, dining practices and hosting guests. Bella's reflection below gives evidence of tensions around familial cultural practices, whereby guests and elders are served before family members.

> Their culture is that they put everyone else first. When we'd go for … dinners … there would be 14 of us…, eating their food, and they wait … have less at the end and it's not as warm as it was when we ate it and … they're happy to do that. (Bella)

Whilst Bella expresses disquiet, she also recognises the generosity of the families as a cultural strength. Jamie similarly reflects that the families were 'welcoming and generous … you could see … what we were doing was really important to them'.

Culture is a dynamic construct, comprising multiple, changing variables (Bennett, 2014). The following excerpts exemplify participant understandings about how schooling can shape cultural practices and beliefs of communities.

> Parents…. expected their children to do well… viewed us as teachers in the classroom, so they had to show respect to us, … the children were very respectful. (Bella)

> Visiting … and learning how the school structure worked…, "if you're being silly we're out, this is what's happening," … the type of schooling that they were used to, being consistent with that was beneficial. (Lara)

When Bella's reflection is read with Lara's, there is a sense that Fiji's colonial and Christian missionary past continues to haunt schooling practices. Importantly, curriculum, structures and pedagogies of Pacific Island Nations' schooling have been problematised for being Eurocentric, culturally undemocratic and unsympathetic (Thaman, 2009; Nabobo-Baba, 2012). When the logic and practices of colonialism continue to haunt schooling systems, ways of knowing, being and doing of Indigenous and non-European-background students are marginalised (Moodie & Patrick, 2017). From the excerpts above, it seems that participants were unaware of the deeply sedimented complexity around Fijian cultures, schooling and colonial history. They did, however, as exemplified in this excerpt from Alex, seem keen to be culturally respectful and inclusive.

> Of the 10 kids, … 7 or 8 of them were indigenous Fijians. … we had … Indian-Fijians as well. …and were trying to swap between 2 mindsets …wondering what's culturally appropriate for you…and you? (Alex)

Alex expresses a willingness to recognise and better understand cultural variances for both *iTaukei* (Indigenous) and Indo-Fijians. In the following excerpt she reflects on gendered negotiations inherent within cultural expectations and practices.

> …. trying to mix male and female together we … need a better understanding of culture and how that works. … when Kriti joined us, she didn't want to do rescues with the boys because she didn't want to be that close to the boys. … She couldn't wear particular bathers - so first couple of days she was swimming in her dress, because the bathers that we had provided her weren't culturally appropriate… she was too nervous and shy to ask for ones that were. (Alex)

We turn next to explore how such negotiations around cultural understandings and resources materialised in pedagogical practices and relationships.

Towards Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

The water-safety/swimming program was conducted at a beach and resembled river/beach-based Australian vacation swimming programs that address water-awareness, water-safety, water-confidence, and water-skills (VACSWIM, 2019). The specific beach environment presented pedagogical challenges not found in the relatively stable and predictable pool environments familiar to our participants. Unlike picture postcard impressions of Fiji, the community's beach formed part of mangrove flats, was highly silted and subject to strong tides. Community consultation about tides and weather informed decisions regarding appropriate areas and times of day for lessons. The cultural authenticity and relevance of the beach location are noted in this excerpt from Ambar.

> You have to give real world context to what you're teaching …. kids are not going to have access to a pool … now or in the future… they're all going to have access to the beach … we have to connect to …. what they are exposed to… a beach. (Ambar)

In line with CRP guidelines outlined above, Ambar identifies the importance of connecting to students' life-worlds and, hence, providing culturally meaningful and purposeful water-based learning experiences. The following reflection from Alex provides a specific example of cultural connection to this beach environment. She explains how her students' cultural and water literacies informed practices within lessons.

> Kids were squealing about the mud being thick between their toes… our fishing family children went, "No this is wonderful. This is where you catch fishing bait." They were scooping up handfuls of mud, shaking it out and showing us, shrimpy things [*ura ivi* in Bauan dialect] … it was interesting to see the dynamic between kids that knew the water … Nete and Joni …. knew the surf, ... waves, …which

> way currents were going, … Kiash and Kitri … knew fishing, … the mud, …the tides. (Alex)

Echoing recommendations by Thaman (2009), Alex together with Lara used purposeful questioning to bring culturally informed ways of knowing and doing into their lessons. In the following excerpt Lara reflects on the positive impact of CRP informed approaches that foreground and value aspects of children's culture.

> Kiash and Kitri were proud about their family being fisherman and them knowing stuff, … we asked them questions, … they were so happy to show us how and explain how mum and dad fish. (Lara)

They further trialled culturally relevant reference points to enhance the meaningfulness of activities.

> I asked the kids to do mushroom floats and they looked at me like I was mad. It was making it relevant and giving them something they could identify with …so we're going to float like coconuts… sidestroke … pick the mango off the tree and put it in the basket. (Alex)

Communication strategies were essential to participants' CRP approaches and pedagogical relationships. Reflective of the colonial underpinnings of Fiji's schooling system, English is the formal language of education. Where Fiji-Hindi or one of a variety of *iTaukei* dialects comprised first or home languages, years of schooling completed influenced children's comprehension of English language instructions and communications. In response to this cultural and linguistic landscape, the program integrated assistance from local teachers, community members and older siblings who repeated instructions in home languages when necessary.

Ambar, reflecting on his teaching routines, indicates he communicated in English, Fiji-Hindi and embodied demonstrations.

> I would do one sentence in Fijian Hindi and one sentence in English… so I am speaking to my whole audience… I would model after that as well … using body language … to reiterate our points. (Ambar)

Ambar's experiences as a migrant child in Australia's monolingual schooling system are significant to his valuing of cultural and multilingual educational identities. Ambar explains:

> I was once an EALD student … speaking a different language in home to school … I understood the struggle … how you wanted the whole school context … to get behind you and… your culture … it's so important… that culture gets promoted and it doesn't just get … hidden. (Ambar)

Others, as Alex reflects below, drew on the multilingual and teaching skills of older students to repeat instructions in younger students' home languages.

> Because of her English, she was helping younger kids … repeating what we were saying in [Fiji] Hindi … helping us with repetitive instruction … it meant that they really understood. (Alex)

Repetition, consistency in language and terminology across lessons and avoidance of slang or abbreviations were commonly identified as key instructional practices. Participants also noted the importance of short clear instructions accompanied by embodied gestures, and/or demonstrations.

Reflecting CRP guidelines around valuing culture (Robinson et al. 2013), Jamie, in the excerpt below, suggests pedagogical relationships of mutual respect can counter binary constructions of self and 'other'. She recognises that whilst she has knowledge about swimming/water safety, the children bring valued cultural knowledge and resources to her lessons.

> Not putting them in a deficit position is really important. … it's not, we're from a Western society, we know everything, we're here to help you and save you. It's more … we work together and collaborate. We can share our knowledge and you can share your culture with us. (Jamie)

Others identified the importance of routines and consistency in pedagogical practices for building successful learner identities. As exemplified by Bella's reflection below, they also believed it was important to recognise children's capabilities in progressing learning and success.

> We'd work on the same thing for two or three days … which was important for such little ones … who weren't confident in the water. … they were starting to build their confidence so it was important to do the same thing …so they could really shine in that task. (Bella)

For Jamie, open communication, mutual trust, listening and acting on student input promoted culturally respectful pedagogical relationships. As she reflects, ensuring that children felt safe contributed to their participation and success.

> I said … if you … don't feel comfortable … let me know and I'll change it, … find another way. … Trust had to go both ways, I had to trust the children would… listen and respond … they had to trust I was going to keep them safe and not let them be uncomfortable in the water. … By the end we had a really good connection … they were comfortable in the water and the progress from when they started to when they finished was amazing. (Jamie)

In summary, a range of pedagogical, communication and relationship practices exemplified participants' engagement with and application of CRP approaches. We turn next to explore perceptions about personal and professional impact of the project.

Orientations Around Culture

Participants' reflections about the NCP project addressed changing perceptions,

realignment of practices and construction of culturally responsive teachers. Some expressed confidence and enthusiasm for learning in and about culture and highlighted opportunities for professional and personal learning. Taylor, in the following reflection, gives an indication of both personal and professional learning.

> I thought before this trip I was okay…. a good understanding of Aboriginal cultures … of Asian cultures, …stepping outside of my own culture has made me realise… actually I don't really know that much at all. (Taylor)

Taylor's re-positioning of himself highlights the significance of immersion in the context of children's life-worlds and working with them over an extended time. Re-positioning as a learner was evident in Elyssa's reflection that 'it's a learning curve for us because we're in their world…. We're the ones learning.' For Casey re-positioning was framed by the reappraisal of how she had previously worked with children for whom English is an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). She reflected that she had not 'in the past … catered for them as much in the classroom as … I should'.

Some, as exemplified in the next excerpt from Taylor, paired reflections around re-positioning with a commitment to breaking down barriers between children, their cultural life-worlds and schooling.

> it's given me a lot more ... empathy for new arrival children… whether … immigrants or refugees … I'm going to be a lot more conscious - are they understanding me? … how can I help them? … understand what … I am trying to communicate … to teach them but also what … they know, what they can tell me that I might not understand or realise? (Taylor)

Taylor's reflection indicates he is working within the terrain of affect in emphasising with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Jamie's reflection below also signals emotional commitment in the form of taking personal responsibility for learning, changing, and adapting ways of working with the cultural and linguistic resources

children bring to class.

> I need to adapt my learning to … children from different backgrounds …. how I can change … my lessons or ideas … incorporate aspects of different cultures or languages to support children rather than … you do it this way because we're in Australia. (Jamie)

Some, like Elyssa, committed to future practices that ensure children's cultures actually 'come into the classroom' and are 'with them throughout the day' rather than being left at the classroom door or at home. Such calls echo recommendations to value and recognised the cultural practices of children and their families (see Thaman, 2009; Warren, 2018).

Others, as exemplified in the next excerpt, problematise cultural tokenism, typified by one-off cultural evenings to suggest practices that enable and encourage parental input.

> You think you are covering everything in one cultural night whereas you have to go beyond that …. it starts with…. breaking down barriers where parents might be shy to come in and express their opinions around the Australian education system and … give input about how their child … what their children brings to the table in terms of the strengths and weaknesses. (Taylor)

In some respects, Taylor mobilises nascent calls for practices that in the words of Morrison et al. (2019, p. v) 'actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences of students' and, we would argue, families and their communities, no matter cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Whilst these examples provide a sense of hope around developing critical cultural orientations and practices, participants did not respond homogeneously. As exemplified in the excerpts below, some centred their own experiences in reflections about the project.

> ‘Water is part of my life; the swimming part was not my problem at all whereas they’re …please hold me...they’ve known children who’ve drowned… I haven’t known anyone who’s drowned. (Lisa)

> I was trying to teach about water-safety… there was no reaction…do they not understand because of language…or not care? (Delia)

Lisa’s and Delia’s reflections suggest they privilege familiar knowledge grounded in their life-worlds over ‘othered’ knowledges and ways of being. Problematically, such understandings can reinforce settler/colonial notions of ‘white’ English speaking teacher/educator superiority and, concomitantly, marginalise the knowledges of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Neilsen & Weinmann, 2020). Lisa and Delia’s reflections also raise questions regarding meaningful support, encouragement and opportunities in their ITE program to problematise normative understandings about culture, race and education.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored engagement with intercultural competencies and adoption of CRP approaches by eleven PST participants in a NCP funded service-learning water-safety/swimming program. Whilst we make no claims for generalisability, we believe connections can be made for others preparing PST to work with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

General findings reveal the significance of purposeful collaboration with community leaders to design a water-safety/swimming program to meet authentic community needs, expectations and cultural protocols. Program recruitment activities, community meals and design of the service-learning program proved significant in developing participants’ appreciation of the culturally mediated strengths of the community’s children and families.

At another level, findings reveal that most participants negotiated feelings of discomfort as they confronted taken-for-granted assumptions founded in their own life-worlds and cultures. For many, these tensions prompted perspective-taking around the cultural landscape of the children's lives. Emergent perspectives materialised as intercultural competencies that informed CRP approaches. Examples include making pedagogically specific and deliberate connections to children's life-worlds, foregrounding aspects of culture and incorporating meaningful cultural references. Building trusting, open and respectful relationships, using inclusive linguistic practices, gestures and embodied demonstrations to communicate were also found to be important.

Whilst participants did not engage with and adopt these practices homogeneously, key points of learning around CRP and implications for future practices emerged. For some, learning was linked to unsettling normative Eurocentric understandings about culturally diverse children and their capacities to be successful learners. This in turn led to commitments to adopt CRP approaches that centre knowledges, practices and ways of being of the diverse children they might teach in the future.

Our participants embodied, to varying degrees, affective, cognitive and behavioural capacities around intercultural competence and CRP. However, we cannot make claims that immersion in one international service-learning program guarantees robust and strongly developed capacities and practices. As similarly found by Neilsen and Weimann (2020), participation alone is insufficient without supportive mechanisms for confronting and engaging with deeply sedimented logics of colonialism, which marginalise ways of knowing, being and doing of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In times and circumstances when international service-learning may not be an option, we argue for multiple and varied opportunities for PST to participate in authentic service-learning programs with children in their diverse communities and cultural life-worlds. Following Neilson and Weimann (2020), these experiences require concurrent engagement with theoretical framings such as settler/colonial grammars (Moodie & Patrick 2017) and/or CRP. At stake is the potential of ITE programs to counter the supposed standardisation of teaching whilst supporting PST development of pedagogies for meeting the cultural and educational needs of all children. We believe these calls have relevance for ITE educators and programs in Australia and the broader Asia-Indo-Pacific region.

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