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Developing preservice teachers' intercultural understanding and capability through wider field experience/service learning in Peru

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Abstract

Teaching the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding is an Australian government mandate, but an ongoing challenge for teachers, many of whom may have little or no experience dealing with the teaching of intercultural understanding and lack confidence to embed this focus in their classrooms. Hence, teacher preparation is a priority to enable this mandate to be fulfilled. This research project reports on the development of intercultural capability as a result of a short-term overseas Wider Field Experience undertaken by preservice teacher education students attending a regional university in Australia. The results were analysed according to two published frameworks. Survey results and qualitative analysis from 22 participants indicated that the wider field experience enhanced preservice teachers' intercultural capability and their readiness and ability to teach this priority upon graduation.

Keywords Preservice teachers · Intercultural capability · Wider field experience · Peru

Introduction

This paper investigates the need to develop preservice teachers' intercultural capability and their readiness and ability to teach this priority upon graduation. Globalisation has been a driving factor in world economic, political and financial spheres and increasingly in the education sector. Due to increased connectivity and

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communication the world has become 'smaller' and more diverse, and many future employees will be expected to interact with the global community at some stage in their careers, working with different languages, ethnicities and nationalities (Zhao, 2010). People within the same country are also faced with cultural diversification on a large scale, including Australia where there is a large multicultural population. For example, teachers are increasingly expected to adapt curriculum and pedagogy for students with diverse cultural backgrounds (Santoro, 2014). With this rapid global diversification and existing cultural variations within countries, it is essential for individuals, including teachers—the focus of the research presented here—to develop the ability to engage on both a national and global level. Terms and concepts often used to describe these abilities include 'intercultural capability', 'global competence' and 'global citizenship'.

Based on the literature, intercultural capability or competence essentially combines the following knowledge, skills and attributes:

- Open-mindedness (Hunter et al., 2006; Stemler et al., 2014; Wilson & Dalton, 1997; Yashima, 2010);
- empathy (Gacel-Avila, 2005; Stemler et al., 2014; Watson & Wolfel, 2015); interconnectedness (Duncan, 2010; Zhao, 2010);
- cross-cultural awareness (Becket & Brookes, 2012; Hunter et al., 2006; Watson & Wolfel, 2015);
- cross-cultural interaction (Becket & Brookes, 2012; Deardorff, 2006; Hunter et al., 2006; Morais & Ogden, 2010; Santoro, 2014; Watson & Wolfel, 2015) and
- adaptability (Becket & Brookes, 2012; Stemler et al., 2014; Watson & Wolfel, 2015).

The Australian Curriculum mandates the inclusion of the teaching of the General Capability (GC) of Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, 2010) throughout each Learning Area but despite this mandate, the explicit teaching of the General Capabilities may or may not occur, based on whether teachers find opportunities within activities or lessons. Because the GC is not an identified Learning Area in its own right, there is a danger that the GC might never be explicitly assessed. As assessment is a major driver, if the GC is not assessed, then there is a possibility it will not be taught.

Skourdoumbis' (2016) study of four Victorian secondary teachers suggested that teachers asserted their own professional pedagogic authority in regard to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Skourdoumbis (2016) concluded that teachers are equivocally left to address how the General Capabilities will be implemented, interconnected, explicitly taught and assessed. The international experience seems highly similar as Voogt et al. (2013) concur that different approaches for curricular integration of twenty-first century competencies, such as Intercultural Understanding, are problematic.

Additionally, how teachers enact the teaching of Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, 2010) will be dependent upon their own experience. Research shows teachers are often unsure of how to approach topics of difference and carry with them unconscious bias and assumptions (Yoon, 2012). Further, there is likely

increased distance between teachers and students where ethnic differences exist (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015), which has implications for equitable student access to learning opportunities (Willis, 2019).

Notwithstanding, Intercultural Understanding has been identified as a General Capability skill so we cannot leave the teaching and learning of it to chance. Workforce mega-trends identify the need for schools to prepare twenty-first century learners with an effective skillset, mindsets and aptitudes for an ever evolving, dynamic workforce (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016a, 2016b). Our next generation, the current young people, need to be equipped with transferable twenty-first century skills that will help them navigate as innovative contributors in the future workforce (Torii & O'Connell 2017). These students will become Australia's greatest resource (Davies et al., 2011; The Foundation of Young Australians FYA, 2017).

It is commonly known and accepted that equipping students with twenty-first century skills is both an economic and social imperative (Voogt et al., 2013). Research on student performance in these skills, teaching methods and professional development for teachers in relation to these twenty-first century skills is scarce. While the data from school-based initiatives are insufficient, the data from the workforce are abundant, as it is driving the Australian Government's educational agenda to transform education (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016a, 2016b). In particular, education needs to target "resources that support students' development of twenty-first century skills…" (Digital Education Advisory Group, 2013, p. 7).

Intercultural Understanding is one of these essential skills. "While the General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum priorities are laudable, we fear that the complexity of their implementation in schools' work programs, aligned with the heavy content focus of the national curriculum, may hinder their full realization" (Lingard & McGregor, 2014, p. 107). Teachers are perceived as being responsible for cultural and global education within culturally diverse classrooms, regardless of their experience or ability (Lee, 2011; Zhao, 2010; Phillion et al., 2009).

Research suggests that practising teachers may not be equipped with the skills to implement the Intercultural Understanding priority (Grainger & Christie, 2015). Nor are preservice teachers (Babacan, 2007; Grainger & Christie, 2015), yet preservice teachers are significant in terms of sustainability of the teaching workforce. Babacan (2007) argued that many preservice teachers are underprepared and ill-equipped for teaching about cultural issues and are unfamiliar with a range of cultures that will be encountered in Australian classrooms. As a result, many may not have the skills, nor the inclination, to change existing beliefs, and elect to work with what is familiar. Research on preservice teachers' intercultural understanding and capability is scarce. Grainger and Christie (2015) surveyed 71 soon-to-graduate undergraduate primary preservice teachers to find that very few were not confident in their ability to teach Intercultural Understanding upon graduation.

According to He et al., (2017, p.147), "a comprehensive study abroad program is one of the most effective ways to prepare multicultural and global teachers. However, in teacher education, most of the study abroad programs are designed for preservice teachers". Hence, the preparation of teachers during preservice experiences

prior to graduation becomes more crucial and the need for research that evidences the benefits is a necessity. Hence, the results of this study, presented here, are significant.

Hepple et al (2017) investigated the intercultural learning of 10 Australian preservice teachers participating in a short-term mobility program in Malaysia. Their findings confirmed that "participation in this structured mobility experience promoted critical professional self-awareness regarding cultural diversity; built trust and intercultural understanding through intensive interaction with Malaysian peers; and developed participants as more culturally responsive teachers" (Hepple et al., 2017, p. 273). Addleman et al., (2014) investigated 24 prospective teachers to identify transformative experiences to help them reflect on their assumptions and perspectives in order to better understand the culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse students. They postulated different transformative stages: triggering experiences (stage 1), followed by an examination of one's own frame of reference (stage 2) and leading to transformative change in stage 3.

There are many tools, inventories designed to measure the intercultural capability of students, resulting in a great deal of theoretical knowledge about intercultural competency, not only in the field of teacher preparation, but also across a range of scholarly disciplines. Spitzberg and Changnon, (2009) identified at least twenty competing models of intercultural competence. In terms of teachers' intercultural competency specifically, teacher preparation, which is the focus of this research, Byram's model (1997) is arguably the most recognised. As composed of cultural knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, attitudes and critical cultural awareness, Byram's (1997) model is discussed in the literature review below.

In addition, framework, and specifically related to the Australian context of national curriculum, is the intercultural capability framework developed by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), which informed the development of the Australian Curriculum: Languages Learning Area. Scarino's and Liddicoat (2009) framework provides an obviously relevant framework for analysis when analysing the development of intercultural capability by prospective teachers (mainstream and Languages) of the Australian Curriculum.

This current study reports now on the results of 22 Australian preservice teachers' experiences teaching English in remote Peruvian classrooms, as part of a Wider Field Experience between 2018 and 2020. Data were gathered after the experience through survey research. This study employs the data to affirm the Byram framework as a valid framework for measuring intercultural capability. In addition, it analyses the Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) framework to confirm its claims as a valid intercultural capability framework. To our knowledge, this has not been done before. The Research questions were

1. To what extent did an international excursion to Peru influence Australian preservice teachers' perspectives and practices?

   a. How did preservice teachers describe their experiences of participating in the Peruvian excursion?

2. How did this international experience build intercultural understanding?

Literature review

In Australia, the focus on developing global citizenship has been prioritised in federal policy documents including the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Council of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019) and the inclusion of General Capabilities such as Intercultural Understanding in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2010). (Intercultural Understanding is capitalised in this paper when referring to the ACARA General Capability). For teachers, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2014) require teachers to be culturally sensitive as evidenced in Standard 1.3.

As a result of globalisation, graduating globally competent teachers with the capability of teaching intercultural understanding to students in classrooms is an Australian government imperative. One solution is to expose preservice teachers to learning experiences that develop such competency through intercultural exchanges in overseas classrooms. This can be achieved through study abroad programs, overseas practicum placements, teacher exchanges and more broadly, via Wider Field Experiences that involves a preservice teacher teaching in overseas classrooms. Wider Field Experience is also known as Service Learning and has become a major emphasis for Australian universities evidenced in increasing focus on the development of Graduate Attributes, due to the recent evidence of overseas learning contributing to a more globally competent cohort (Daly & Barker, 2010). A review of the tertiary sector identified 71% of Australian universities include cultural awareness and an international perspective as a key strategic and operational priority and hence, a key graduate attribute (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009; Premier & Miller, 2010).

The literature reveals that university students who participated in overseas study experiences developed openmindedness as a result of the overseas experience exposing them to another culture (Dixon, 2015; Hadis, 2005; Clarke, Flaherty,); they developed empathy (Dixon, 2015; Metcalf, 2010; Phillion et al., 2009); interconnectedness with the greater outside world (Forsey et al., 2012); cross-cultural awareness (Dixon, 2015; Rexeisen, 2013,) and adaptability (Hadis, 2005; Phillion et al., 2009; Stebleton et al., 2013).

Specifically relating to the development of global citizenship in practising teachers participating in overseas learning experiences, the literature revealed similar results. That is: increased open mindedness (Kissock & Richardson, 2010; Zeichner, 2010); empathy (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Kissock & Richardson, 2010; Medina et al., 2015); interconnectedness (Wang et al., 2011); cross-cultural awareness (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Jacob et al., 2010; Kissock & Richardson, 2010; Willis, 2019, 2021) and adaptability (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Kissock & Richardson, 2010; Zhao, 2010).

The literature in regard to preservice teachers reveals heightened understanding of their own predjudices and the way they viewed people (Medina, Hathaway and Pilonieta 2015; Lee, 2011; Stachowski and Mahan 2009; Quezada, 2004,

Bryan and Sprague 1997; Lu & Soares 2014); empathy towards speakers of languages other than English (Medina et al., 2015; DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Lu & Soares 2014; Santoro, 2014; Johnson et al., 2015); interconnectedness (Knutson & Gonzalez, 2010); cross-cultural awareness (Medina et al., 2015; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Cunningham & Katsafanas, 2014); cross-cultural interaction (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Medina et al., 2015) and heightened adaptability (Jacob et al., 2010; Knutson & Gonzalez, 2010; Lu & Soares 2014; Santoro, 2014).

As noted previously, the work of Byram (1997) is one of the most recognised frameworks for measuring intercultural capability. Byram uses the word competence in his work. There are five essential 'elements' relating to intercultural competence for teachers as discussed in Byram's model (1997).

1. Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in their own country and in those with whom they are interacting
2. Skills of interpreting and relating: Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events in their own language
3. Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and its practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real time communication when interacting
4. Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend judgement, disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about their own
5. Critical Cultural Awareness: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures and countries.

There are similarities between Byram's (1997) elements and the key ideas of the Intercultural Understanding General Capability in the Australian curriculum: recognising cultural and developing respect, reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility, and interacting and empathising with others (ACARA, 2010).

Directly related to the Australian Curriculum is the work of Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) and Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) who developed a framework for intercultural language teaching and learning. Although the framework is directed at teachers of Languages, the same framework can be utilised by mainstream teachers to fulfil the Australian Curriculum mandate of embedding the General Capabilities into all Learning Areas. According to the framework, the development of intercultural capability involves sequenced stages, identified as noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting. This is represented in the figure below (Fig. 1).

Smolcic & Katuncih (2017) conducted an extensive review of the literature to identify learning outcomes that have been documented in the research to develop teacher interculturality. They reviewed stand-alone courses or professional development programs, international study tours, overseas student teaching and cultural immersion programs and field experience. Their meta-analysis (pp. 51–53) identified seven intercultural learning/understanding outcomes:

Fig. 1 Interacting processes of intercultural learning (adapted from Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009)
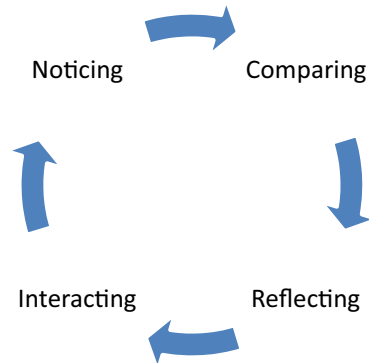
1. Heightened culture-general knowledge, awareness of specific cultural ways of being, and differences and similarities between cultural groups.
2. Enhanced awareness of the role of culture in teaching, school structures and educational systems
3. Increased cultural and societal self-awareness when participants understand cultural differences vis-a-vis their own through self-reflection resulting in a re-examination of beliefs and cultural stereotypes
4. Developed socio-political awareness and a critical consciousness (gaining a better and more concrete understanding of how to recognise privilege related to class, race, ethnicity, or gender)
5. Increased understanding of the process of second language learning
6. Acquired and demonstrated skills and attitudes that support cross-cultural interactions
7. Heightened awareness of personal growth (related to intercultural and global competence, a deepened interest in international teaching and/or travel, increase in qualities such as self-confidence, independence, risk-taking and maturity, increase of empathy for others leading to an overall change in one's self-awareness and a desire to reorient one's own perspective).

This review points to the evident need to better furnish preservice teachers with opportunities to develop intercultural understandings and capabilities. Therefore, this study investigates the efficacy of international exchange for the development of preservice teachers' Intercultural Understanding/s.

Method

The research sought to gather data about preservice teachers' Wider Field Experiences (WFE) overseas, in particular regarding the development of an intercultural capability. Survey research was conducted using Survey Monkey™ software to collect demographic data and free text responses to questions about the experience (see Table 1 below). The participants were students who had travelled

Table 1 Participants' demographic data

Item number	Item	Range of responses
1	Education program	Bachelor of primary education: 17
		Bachelor of early childhood education: 1
		Other: 4
2	Sex	Female: 19
		Male: 3
3	Age range	20–25: 15
		26–35: 1
		36–50: 4
		51 or older: 1
4	Previous international travel experience	Yes: 90.9%
		No: 9.1%
5	Number of previous international travel experiences:	Once: 1
		Twice: 4
		Three times: 3
		More than three times: 13
6	Previous international destinations (for the 91% of participants who have previously travelled):	Asia: 9
		USA: 3
		Europe: 3
		Oceania: 3
		Other: 3
7	Reasons for previous travel:	Tourism: 17
		Business: 0
		Study: 2
		Education: 1
		Other: 1
10	Has this experience deepened your intercultural understanding?	Yes: 100%

Table 1 (continued)

Item number	Item	Range of responses
12	After your WFE travel, do you plan to travel again:	Yes: 22
		No: 0

overseas to complete WFE in Peru in late November in 2017, 2018 and 2019. A total of 22 preservice teacher education students nearing graduation participated in these experiences. See Table 1 below for participants' demographic data. The experiences were self-funded. The experiences occurred in Urubamba, Peru, in remote, rural locations in the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Preservice teachers taught English for 10 days 5 h per day in Peruvian classrooms. None of the preservice teachers had TESOL qualifications or language- or culture-specific training other than pre-departure inductions in Australia. Preservice teachers were accommodated in dedicated hostels and enjoyed free time over two weekends, travelling privately to local tourist sites. Participation in the two-week experience was voluntary. Some preservice teachers arrived prior to the official program and some stayed beyond the official two-week Program to travel to tourist sites. Ethics clearance was received University of the Sunshine Coast Human Ethics Committee, approval number A181137. Descriptive statistics were calculated using Survey Monkey, and qualitative data were analysed in two rounds, first in Leximancer™ software for inductive concept coding and second in NVivo™ software for emergent theme coding. The Leximancer content analysis showed the main concepts that emerged in participant responses and how these are connected to one another (Fig. 2). This is important in this study as it was found that cross-cultural experiences were directly related to learning and growth in the area of teaching strategies and appreciation of the role of education. The top six words in the Leximancer analysis were: students, teaching, experience, culture, education and language.

NVivo™ analysis further investigated the relationships between concepts through a process of emergent coding and theming. Fifteen codes and sub-codes were identified in the first round of coding, but this was later consolidated to an inventory of nine codes and sub-codes in the data reduction process (Fig. 3). Codes were only kept if they had more than three references; a process of frequency checking determined the number of mentions of a code across the survey questions (Miles et al., 2015). The top five NVivo codes were: cultural experiences and capabilities (23 references), pedagogy and teaching strategies (19 references), the importance of education (11 references), communication (10 references), and teaching English as a second/additional language/dialect (10 references). English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) is also referred to as ESL (English as a second language) in the data.) At this point the alignments between the Leximancer analysis and the NVivo coding became apparent, and the researchers saw the opportunity to more closely analyse the relationship between cross-cultural experiences and the development of teaching strategies. As a result, the codes were organised into a chart (Fig. 3) to illustrate the relationships between them. These codes were colour coded according to the focus of Research Question 1: To what extent did an international excursion to Peru influence Australian preservice teachers' perspectives and practices?

To move the data from concrete descriptions and experiences to conceptions and abstractions (Punch & Oancea, 2014), the data were analysed in light of Scarino and Liddicoat's (2009) model for intercultural language teaching and learning, with a particular focus on the verbs noticing, comparing, reflecting, interacting. The data
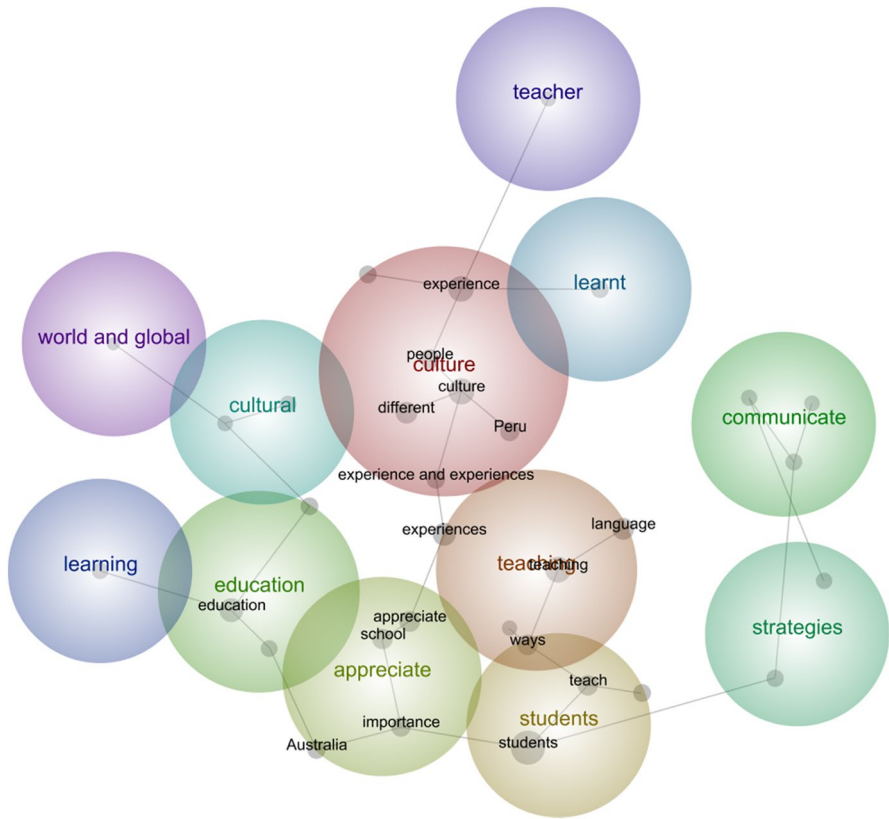
Fig. 2 Leximancer analysis of qualitative data

codes were further analysed with a renewed focus on active verbs, looking for the actions that preservice teachers took in their cross-cultural teaching experiences.

Results and findings

The survey was returned by 22 (n) participants. This represented 95% of the cohort who travelled to Peru. The majority of the participants (77%) were preservice teachers for the Bachelor of Primary Education program at the university. Demographic details are outlined in Table 1. The survey group comprised 19 females and 3 males. This ratio is typical of the teacher workforce. The majority of participants were between the ages of 20 and 25 (71%), and more than 90% had previous international travel experience. Of those who had travelled, most had travelled more than three times (62%). The most common reason for past international travel was for tourism, with Asia being the most popular destination. This is not surprising, given
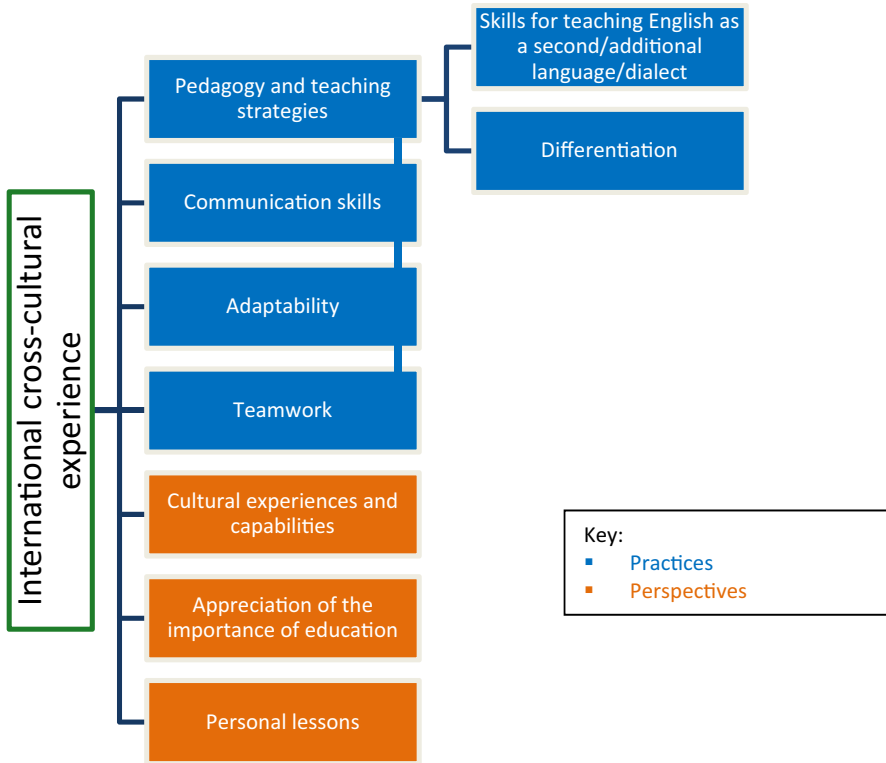
Fig. 3 Organisation of codes and sub-codes

Australia's proximity to Asia. All participants indicated they planned on travelling again in the future.

Qualitative responses were collected in Survey Items 8, 10, 11, 13 and 14. Participants had the opportunity of responding to a range of open-ended questions that were designed to elicit their perspectives of their experiences and learnings. Participants were encouraged to answer all questions but none were required to complete the survey. The qualitative survey items are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Open-ended survey questions

Item number	Item
8	Where did you travel to and what have been the benefits of participating in the WFE experience?
10	Has this depended your intercultural understanding (100% yes) and in what way?
11	How will the experience assist you when teaching upon graduation?
13	What lessons will you apply from your WFE experience?
14	Other comments

Prior to the presentation of results it is pertinent to describe the structure of the teaching program operating in Peru. Participants worked in teams of three or four, rotating through different classes of different ages on a daily basis for two school weeks, Monday to Friday each week from 8.30 am to 3 pm. Participants were tasked with teaching English, essentially to primary aged Peruvian students from years 1–6. The curriculum was flexible, but designed around daily topics of relevance and situation based. Topics included: Greetings and Introductions; Numbers; Family; Colours; Body Parts; Animals; Food; Sports and Abilities.

To address the research questions, qualitative data are presented in three main sections according to the organisation of data depicted in Fig. 3: cultural experiences and capabilities, practices and perspectives.

Practices

This category comprises four codes and two sub-codes: pedagogy and teaching strategies (including EALD skills and differentiation), communication, adaptability and teamwork. These codes and sub-codes were interrelated in the data (as shown above in Figs. 2 and 3). It is clear that international cross-cultural experience in Peru catalysed the development of professional skills and practices in ways that preservice teachers had not envisioned prior to teaching in Peru.

Pedagogy and teaching strategies

Data showed a strong link between the international cultural experience and realisations about effective teaching strategies. This code was populated by 19 references represented by the following student qualitative comments and related to relationship building, non-verbal communication due to a lack of teaching resources,

> The lessons I will apply from the experience are how important it is to create relationships with students and form a routine.

> It will encourage me to use interactive and visual educational techniques, not just verbal communication.

> Being in the classroom in Peru, we had minimal access to resources, a strong language barrier and no access to technology, therefore we had to be extremely creative in the ways that we could engage the students.

These comments demonstrate how preservice teachers gained knowledge (lessons), developed skills (interactive and visual teaching strategies), and adopt dispositions (attitudes) of creativity through these experiences (Byram, 1997).

EALD skills

Within the pedagogy and teaching strategies code, the sub-code EALD skills comprised 10 pieces of data. As the following excerpts demonstrate, there was a link between international experience and realisations about effective teaching strategies broadening linguistic perspectives. These data presented here accord with Byram's (1997) skills elements of intercultural competence and Smolcic and Katuncih's (2017) intercultural outcome of increased understanding of the process of second language learning.

> Having the opportunity to teach students that have little to no English, I realised that explicit and clear instructions is very important.

> I (now) have first-hand knowledge on strategies to incorporate ESLD students and also how to cater for students with what is relative to them (not teaching a city child about something with examples of farm life).

> I can now utilise my experiences with ESL students in my future practices. For instance, I have a job in Aurukun Australia and 100% of the students are ESL.

> Communicating with children and teachers to hear English in a different accent for phonemic awareness. Motivating children to learn English to improve their future job opportunities.

> Breaking a Monolingual mindset, and challenging my comfort zone in teaching in western education.

Evidently, there is a synthesis of skills, knowledge and attitudes (Byram, 1997; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017) in these excerpts, showing that the development of Intercultural Understanding is a multi-faceted phenomenon.

Differentiation

Differentiation is a very present need in an EALD classroom, and international experiences made this real for preservice teachers. This sub-code comprised seven references and is represented by the following three comments.

> During the lessons we differentiated the teaching through developing 3 rotations. The three rotations allowed for me to alter my teaching to suit the ability of the students.

> To be aware of students' differences and how to recognise these differences as strengths.

> This experience has shown me that when teaching, instructing and demonstrating to students, the way in which I communicate must be broad, so that the diversity amongst my audience is catered for.

Again, data in this code demonstrated how intercultural experiences catalysed the development of preservice teachers' awareness and skills (Byram, 1997).

Communication

Ten references to communication were revealed, relating to diversity, language barriers, non-verbal skills:

> In bridging the language barrier, to get my message across and engage learners, I have become more expressive and animated as a teacher. I have developed in the art of performance.

> I have learnt the importance of non-verbal communication when communicating with school students. I have also learnt to not rely on my voice and aural [sic] commands when instructing students.

Communication is an important intercultural skill (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009) and this experience has provided preservice teachers with the opportunity to practice and develop their skills of interaction.

Adaptability

This code revealed eight references, focussing on the impact of the environment and the consequent need to adapt:

> Peru taught me to think on my feet and be confident in my decisions and abilities.

> I learned how to adapt personally and professionally in a challenging environment.

One preservice teacher explained the need to get out of a comfort zone, which is included here as an indication of a willingness to adapt to new situations:

> Get out of my comfort zone and make friends.

This code demonstrates how intercultural experiences catalyse personal and cultural awareness (Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017) so that preservice teachers recognise the need to adapt, change and in some instances be willing to do challenging or uncomfortable things.

Teamwork

The final set of practices related to the development of teamwork and revealed eight references, focussing on the development of collaboration skills:

> From this experience, I put more value on working collaboratively with colleagues.

> I improved my ability to be an effective team member.

We were able to bond and connect with the things we saw and did in the classes.

Again, this code demonstrates how skills (particularly teamwork and collaboration skills) are developed through intercultural experiences (Byram, 1997; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017).

Perspectives

This category of codes comprises perspectives on cultural experiences and capabilities, the importance of education and personal lessons learnt. The category reveals that international cross-cultural experience, such as Peru, catalysed the growth and development perspectives (Byram, 1997; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017) amongst preservice teachers.

Cultural experiences and capabilites

Cultural capabilities are considered necessary in the professional growth and development of preservice teachers. This code showed that preservice teachers who experienced teaching in a foreign culture developed their cultural capabilities, as demonstrated in the excerpts below. This code was populated by responses from four open-ended survey questions and comprised 23 references, many of which reflect the Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) framework of developing intercultural capability (noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting). Due to the importance of these data in this question, the responses are further divided into two themes, broadening/expanding views and social justice in education, both of which connect with professional growth and global citizenship.

Broadening/expanding views and understandings:

I have also now had cross-cultural experience, and learnt the importance of learning from other cultures.

The benefits have been never ending. I am now a more cultured person and a more competent educator from this experience.

I had opportunity to connect and hear stories from local people.

It just broadened my vision on how other cultures operate, what they find important.

I was able to make deep connections with people from different cultures and learned about their history to better understand their way of life.

By visiting Peru I was able to experience the local culture in a way that was more meaningful. Rather than visiting for a holiday and only scratching the surface of the cultural experiences that the people and country have to offer.

You have to understand the culture to understand how to teach it.

Although there was not enough time to fully understand the Peruvian culture the experiences and learning opportunities presented in the classroom were mind-blowing with how well students enjoy and appreciate their learning opportunities.

Data in this code demonstrate the development of perspectives, awareness and intercultural understanding. These data accord with literature that shows that intercultural experiences catalyse personal development (Byram, 1997; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017).

Social justice in education

This experience cemented my want to be a global citizen and advocate for those who do not have easy access to education.

At these schools students had barely any resources and supplies yet managed to learn an incredible amount. When reflecting on this experience it is important to see how little these schools have and the significant amount students can achieve.

Evidently, preservice teachers noticed cultural differences and challenges, compared their new experiences in Peru with their previous experiences in Australia and reflected on the meaning of their interactions and experiences (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). The data in this code accord with Smolcic and Katuncih's (2017) work that view the development of global perspectives as an outcome of intercultural experience.

The importance of education

The second perspective focusses on the significance of education, globally but especially in a developing context as experienced by preservice teachers in Urubamba, Peru. It comprised 11 references.

It showed that education is a necessity for society and development regardless of circumstance.

Through being in a Peruvian school, I was able to reassess the importance of education. Their culture seems to put less emphasis on education but when the students are at school they excel in many areas.

It became very evident how much importance the teachers and students placed on school and how grateful they were to have student teachers there.

Arguably, these are important realisations for preservice teachers. Again, data from this code show the revelatory power of intercultural experiences for personal

and professional growth and learning (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017).

Personal lessons

For many preservice teachers, international experience teaches them about themselves. This final code comprised six references from the dataset. Participants revealed personal lessons they had learned about their own selves.

> It gave me the strength to take on the challenges ahead with an open mind. This is what I needed to cement my direction to teach in low socio communities.

> Peru taught me I have more strength (mentally, physically and emotionally) than I thought.

> It taught me to think on my feet and be confident in my decisions and abilities.

> It has increased my sense of self.

Similarly, Smolcic and Katuncih's (2017) work shows that personal growth is an outcome of intercultural experience. Social, emotional and cultural competencies are critical to the work of teachers (Willis, 2019, 2021).

Discussion

The research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent did an international excursion to Peru influence Australian preservice teachers' perspectives and practices?

   a. How did preservice teachers describe their experiences of participating in the Peruvian excursion?

2. How did this international experience build intercultural understanding?

In answering the two research questions, it was clear that the international excursion to Peru, even though the experience was relatively short lived, was a life-changing experience for many of the participants, evidenced in many of the participants comments identified in the results section above. The experience catalysed the acquisition of new knowledge, skills (interpreting, relating, discovering and interacting), attitudes and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). The results of this study reflect both Byram's (1997) framework describing intercultural capability and more recently Scarino and Liddicoat's (2009) intercultural learning model. During their experiences, participants moved through Scarino and Liddicoat's (2009) four phases as they commenced by *noticing* differences in cultural practices, *comparing*

fundamental beliefs about education, *reflecting* on their own privileged upbringings and environments through to the final phase of *interacting* with those processes, resulting in new learning and different perspectives.

Participants gained extensive knowledge of Peruvian social groups, particularly the education system, which led them to an examination of and reflection on their own socio-cultural beliefs and practices after comparing with those they experienced in Peru, none more evident than the value of education. Findings show that international experience heightens an appreciation for the role of education in society. Such an appreciation is many layered and may include increased social-political awareness and development of a critical consciousness (Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017). An appreciation for the role of education in society may be viewed as an intercultural learning outcome, similar to the learning outcomes identified by Smolcic and Katuncih (2017).

Preservice teachers developed a whole variety of important life and vocational skills, enabling them to both interpret and explain Peruvian and their own cultural practices and beliefs, to interact and collaborate with each other as peers, during team teaching situations and with Peruvian interlocutors, and to discover and re-examine core values and attitudes about pedagogy and ideology. These learnings were a result of their interactions during experiences in and out of the classroom. This facilitated enhanced critical cultural awareness (Becket & Brookes, 2012; Hunter et al., 2006; Watson & Wolfel, 2015), thereby fulfilling the major objective of the Wider Field Experiences in which they participated.

Specifically, preservice teachers learned the value of non-verbal communication, something they were unappreciative of prior to Peru, due to the fact of having to communicate with students whose first language was not English, and a low level of proficiency. This encouraged them to appreciate the importance of gestures (which are often underused), the significance of modelling, tone of voice and the value of teaching resources, especially technology related, of which there were few in Peru.

This new learning generated by the Wider Field Experience resulted in greater flexibility, increased open mindedness, greater creativity, enhanced confidence mentally, physically, professionally and emotionally, to be able to adapt and deal with unexpected challenges upon their return to Australian classrooms and to be able to effectively differentiate teaching to meet different student needs. Some identified a changed teacher presence, greater animation, more energy and more expressive behaviour when interacting with students.

Skills of team teaching, collaboration and team work were common themes as preservice teachers worked in teams in Peruvian classrooms, rotating through different age groups on a daily basis, something that many had not experienced prior to Peru. This presented many identified frustrations and challenges but resulted in a skill set that had not existed prior to Peru (Byram, 1997). Preservice teachers noted the importance of teaching outside of four classroom walls as many of the lessons were conducted outside. Findings from this study accord with literature that shows that teamwork during international experiences catalyses maturity and self-awareness (Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017).

In terms of global citizenship, a major aim of the Wider Field Experience, many noted the challenges students from developing countries such as Peru faced

accessing education, a taken for granted value in Australia. Some noted that as a result of the experience, they had become advocates for those students with difficulty accessing education, both domestically and internationally. Despite these significant disadvantages, participants wondered at the ability of Peruvian students to learn so much, not only what they learned but the value Peruvian society places on education, especially the ability to speak English. These outcomes reflect the key ideas of the Intercultural Understanding General Capability in the Australian Curriculum: developing respect, interacting and empathising, and taking responsibility (ACARA, 2010) and accord with literature that show that intercultural experiences catalyse awareness (Byram, 1997; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Smolcic & Katuncih, 2017).

All of these issues were exacerbated by the fact that the participants were tasked with teaching English, none of whom had had any formal training in TESOL, other than informal pre-departure induction sessions. This also resulted in participants gaining a newfound respect for teachers of English in Australian schools and appreciating the fundamental importance of communication for all learning.

Conclusions and future opportunities

The results of the research presented here indicate that even short-term Wider Field Experiences can be life changing in terms of developing intercultural capability in students. In terms of the findings, the results indicate the applicability of the Byram (1997) framework to this study, which is not surprising, but more importantly, it evidences the efficacy of the Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) framework for evidencing preservice teachers' developing intercultural capability. To our knowledge, this has not been demonstrated in empirical research prior to this study. This is significant given the focus in the Australian Curriculum and the importance of preservice teachers to be prepared to teach the Intercultural Understanding General Capability mandate. It points to an increased responsibility on tertiarty providers to enable such experiences for preservice teachers prior to their graduation.

Shortcomings of the study are clear: a small number of participants ($n = 22$) and an overwhelming majority of female participants, although as stated above the gender proportions are typical of the teaching workforce. Hence a larger dataset is required to enable full confidence in these results. Equally significant is the question of sustainability. Will the impact of these experiences translate long term in the classroom? In addition, is the impact felt differently by different groups of preservice teachers studying different education programs such as Early Childhood, Secondary or Primary?

Nevertheless, the efficacy of international Wider Field Experiences for the development of Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, 2010) in preservice teachers is salient. The development of Intercultural Understanding cannot be left to chance in a time of globalisation and internationality, and higher education providers and systems administrators should be affirmed in their decisions to make spaces in preservice teacher education programs for such initiatives.

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