

## **Transformation Abroad for Culturally Responsive Teaching: research during a pandemic.**

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Pre-COVID increases in global mobility have necessitated the need for the fostering of intercultural understanding in schools to avert indications of the increase in misunderstandings and even racist movements as a reaction to growing diversity. The increased diversity in classrooms offers an opportunity to embrace beliefs that recognise its strengths. However, teachers worldwide report a lack of preparedness to teach the growing diversity in their student cohort. International study tours can provide pre-service teachers with the necessary immersion combined with guided reflection that has been shown to facilitate intercultural competence under carefully scaffolded conditions.

This presentation will outline a research project at an Australian university which aims to examine the link between immersion experiences during teacher education and culturally responsive teaching in Australian schools. This research takes a longitudinal, mixed methods approach. Transformation and culturally responsive teaching theories are combined in the research design.

When faced with the lockdown in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research design was adapted to shift online. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups using photo elicitation were held on Zoom with 22 pre-service teachers who had travelled to China on a faculty led tour. Although this shift in methods was complicated and time consuming, it also afforded new opportunities and advantages. This presentation will outline the results of Phase 1 where all participants reported that their immersion experience in China was transformational and would improve their culturally responsive teaching. The preliminary findings of Phase 2, involving classroom observations and collaborate interviews will also be outlined.

This research will inform teacher education and classroom teaching in Australia. There is a need for a wider understanding of how the beneficial effects of teacher training translate to culturally responsive teaching and ultimately better outcomes for students. Participating in international experiences can enhance student teachers' believed competencies as future educators in a variety of ways. The power of experiential learning on intercultural competence has been confirmed by the existing literature, however, the question of whether the positive effects last in the long term and are translated into culturally responsive teaching has had little attention globally and none in Australia. As the development of intercultural competence is fluid and lifelong and the evidence of previous experiences is built upon, research exploring the longitudinal effects in the form of classroom observations, specific to the unique Australian context, will add important information to existing knowledge.