



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This may be the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Tangen, Donna, Henderson, Deborah, Alford, Jennifer, Hepple, Erika, Alwi, Amyzar, Abu Hassan Shaari, Zaira, & Alwi, Aliza (2017)
Shaping global teacher identity in a short-term mobility programme.
Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 45(1), pp. 23-38.

This file was downloaded from: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/236406/>

© Consult author(s) regarding copyright matters

This work is covered by copyright. Unless the document is being made available under a Creative Commons Licence, you must assume that re-use is limited to personal use and that permission from the copyright owner must be obtained for all other uses. If the document is available under a Creative Commons License (or other specified license) then refer to the Licence for details of permitted re-use. It is a condition of access that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. If you believe that this work infringes copyright please provide details by email to qut.copyright@qut.edu.au

Notice: *Please note that this document may not be the Version of Record (i.e. published version) of the work. Author manuscript versions (as Submitted for peer review or as Accepted for publication after peer review) can be identified by an absence of publisher branding and/or typeset appearance. If there is any doubt, please refer to the published source.*

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2015.1119803>

Shaping global teacher identity in a short-term mobility programme

Tangen, D., Henderson, D., Alford, J., Hepple, E., Alwi, A., Hassan Shaarib, Z., & Alwi, A.

Abstract

This article explores the shaping of Australian and Malaysian preservice teachers' possible selves in a short-term mobility programme. With the theory of possible selves, individuals imagine who they will become based on their past and current selves. The focus of the research was on pre-service teachers' possible selves as global and culturally responsive teachers. The experiential learning through participation in the programme allowed participants to consider their future possible selves as teachers with a deeper understanding of diverse learners' needs and how they might strive to address these needs in their own classrooms. The scaffolding of reflections in the programme encouraged the preservice teachers to take on multiple perspectives, to step outside their comfort zones and in many ways to see the world from different eyes. The research found that through experiential learning in the short-term mobility programme both the Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers gained in positioning their cultural selves currently and as future teachers, suggesting that there is merit in utilising the theory of possible selves in future research in the area of shaping teacher identity.

KEYWORDS

Experiential learning; intercultural awareness; possible selves; short-term mobility programme; teacher identity

The theory of possible selves

This article explores the perceived possible selves of undergraduate pre-service teachers who participated in a short-term mobility programme. In particular, the research considers pre-service teachers' perceptions of their possible selves in relation to their becoming global and culturally responsive teachers. The theory of possible selves describes an individual's hopes and fears in relation to what they perceive they are able to achieve and become (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). An individual has an array of possible selves relevant to particular social settings which are derived from representations of the self in the past and imagined representations of oneself in the future, but these selves must be connected in some way with representations of one's current selves to make sense to the individual. For example, a student training to become a teacher may have had a favourite teacher in the past who inspired them to follow this career path. They then imagine themselves as such a favoured teacher in their future career and take action towards meeting this goal (enrol in teacher education). In imagining oneself situated in a desired future, possible selves function as incentives for behaviour and decision-making. Creating possible selves relies on one's level of self-knowledge but a self-knowledge that is not well-anchored in a social experience. Instead, this kind of self-knowledge represents specific, individually significant hopes, fears and fantasies and is the direct result of previous social comparisons against who the individual perceives they could become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are sensitive to situations that communicate new or inconsistent information about self and challenge the individual to continually reframe their trajectories for who they want to be.

Possible selves, as a theory has been used before in relation to the notion of shaping pre-service teachers' professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010). Due to their relative lack of teaching experience, the shaping of pre-service teachers' identities is highly susceptible to the influence of their contexts as they try to behave as the teachers they want to become and avoid behaviours of teachers they do not want to become. Identity itself is a difficult term to describe with little consensus on a single definition. It can be seen to be both internal and external to the individual (Flores & Day, 2006; Van Veen, Slegers, & Van Veen, 2005).

It is suggested that identity perspectives are not separate entities but rather interrelated and multifaceted. Furthermore, an individual's sense of identity is negotiated through reflections on lived experiences, although initially the process of shaping a teacher identity is based on the core beliefs and experiences a pre-service teacher brings to a situation (Walkington, 2005). These core beliefs are the link between current and future learning and in imagining one's possible self.

Tensions in such learning can be both a source of identity development and a block to identity formation (Alsup, 2006). For example, adopting pre-determined and rigid views of what it is to be a teacher can hinder pre-service teachers' understanding of a teaching and learning situation and may subsequently have them resist engagement in that situation or choose an unsatisfactory way to engage in the situation. Trent (2011), for example, found a tension for Hong Kong pre-service teachers who created barriers to their own future identity development. These preservice teachers perceived their possible teacher selves to be "mechanical, threatened and formal" in comparison to their perception of Australian teachers who they described as "autonomous, confident and relaxed." The pre-service teachers described themselves as being bounded by the constraints of cultural expectations in Hong Kong in terms of their teacher identity and what they perceived a teacher in Hong Kong does. They could not imagine how they could achieve the perceived freedom of Australian teachers.

This article describes the imagined possible selves shaping a group of 10 Australian and 12 Malaysian pre-service teachers' as culturally responsive teachers through their participation in a 2-week short-term mobility programme, the Intercultural Capability for Student Teachers (ICST) programme. A social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998) underpins the design of this qualitative research as the concepts of identity and possible selves consist of negotiating meanings of individual's experiences in social communities, such as those found through international engagement in a study tour.

Revealing possible selves through a short-term mobility programme

One reason to undertake study abroad is to have one's preconceived notions challenged. Through participation in a short-term mobility programme, pre-service teachers have an opportunity to reflect and reconsider their own beliefs systems about how others in the world operate (Dunkley, 2009; Wessel, 2007). Furthermore, with increased diversity in today's classrooms, pre-service teachers must be presented with opportunities to consider how their own positioning within a culture shapes their possible selves as teachers which, subsequently, shapes how they perceive they will relate to working with a diverse group of learners in the future (Malewski, Sharma, & Phillion, 2012; Santoro, 2014). Studying abroad has the potential to both enlighten pre-service teachers about others and, equally important, raise awareness about oneself and one's own cultural and pedagogical knowledge. Such experiential learning allows pre-service teachers to regularly negotiate and make sense of multiple, intercultural meanings as they are met with different values, behaviours, politics, language, and dress than what they have come to know as the norm in their own worlds. Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) describe these encounters as "disorienting" experiences that create "disequilibrium" where one must discard old ideas and habits in order to adapt to new ways of thinking and behaving.

In exploring the range of elements of intercultural competence, Bennett's (2004) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) identifies six distinct kinds of experiences along a continuum from "ethnocentrism" (the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality" which includes: denial, defense, and minimisation) to ethnorelativism (the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviours as just one organisation of reality among many variable possibilities which includes: acceptance, adaptation, and integration) (p. 62). At one far end of the continuum is denial (ethnocentrism) where the individual experiences their own culture as the only one that is real, where there is a disinterest in other cultures and where the individual may act aggressively to avoid

or eliminate a difference if it impinges on them. Defense is when an individual sees the world as “us” and “them” where one’s own culture is superior and other cultures are inferior. Individuals from the dominant cultural group who experience defense may perceive their culture is under attack by others and complain about immigrants (e.g., they are taking our jobs) whereas those from the non-dominant cultural group may band together to preserve their cultural identity and counteract the efforts of the dominant group to impose their culture on everyone. Minimisation occurs when individuals experience their own cultural worldview as universal (e.g., expecting that everybody wants to, or would if they could, live the way you do as it is the best way to live). Minimisation can mask recognition of one’s own culture in favour of a “melting pot” approach without acknowledgement of the effects of cultural contexts on individuals and their development. Minimisation is a transition stage along the continuum leading towards ethnorelativism.

Acceptance occurs when one’s own culture is experienced as just one of many equally complex worldviews and where one is adept at identifying how cultural differences in general operate in a wide range of human activities. With adaptation, the experience of another culture yields in individuals’ perceptions and behaviours appropriate to that culture. Integration is a state in which one’s experience of self is expanded to include movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. Bennett’s model provides an additional element when considering pre-service teachers’ possible selves as experienced through engagement in a short-term mobility programme.

Students have described that one of the most important benefits of taking any studies overseas is the exposure they have to different cultures and languages. Some may have an interest in living overseas in the future and see this exposure as helping them in planning for such a future, while others describe that engaging in an international component of their course is an enhancement for future job prospects (Doyle et al., 2010). The advantages cited by students mirror those of government and university boards who describe these experiences as improving students’ global and intercultural competence, preparing students to compete in global markets and in supporting the internationalisation of university campuses and curriculum (Molony, 2011). As student interest in studying overseas is varied, so too are the kinds of programmes on offer from short-term tours of fewer than 8 weeks to longer engagements of various time frames up to two years (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). In many programmes, students receive academic credit for participation. Programmes may be determined by the time availability of both staff and students in relation to whether travel is during or after semester in both the home and host institutions and who is organising the programme (the students, faculty members, university staff) (Commins, Chuthai, & Travichitkun, 2010). The benefits of short-term mobility programs are the relatively low costs in comparison to long-term programmes and the flexibility of meeting university course requirements and teaching responsibilities (Marx & Pray, 2011). A concern in regard to short-term mobility programmes is in determining how much students can positively gain through participation in a short programme (Commins et al., 2010) and in this we can consider the DMIS (Bennett, 2004) model in relation to the growth that occurs for participants in short-term mobility programmes. We posit in this article that there is a lot that students can gain through participation in a short-term mobility programme, and these gains are described below.

The ICST programme

In the ICST (Intercultural Capability for Student Teacher) programme described in this article, students in both Australia and Malaysia were enrolled as Bachelor of Education students. The programme was delivered jointly by staff at a large Faculty of Education in Brisbane Australia and an Institute of Higher Education in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The programme had Australian pre-service teachers travelling to Malaysia for a two-week programme. Staff at both institutes co-wrote the curriculum for the programme which, for the Australians, included three briefing sessions before departure. The first session briefed the pre-service teachers on the logistics and administration of

the programme; the two subsequent briefing sessions were delivered to raise pre-service teachers' intercultural awareness and responsibilities while in Malaysia. The Malaysian staff also held briefing sessions with their pre-service teachers on intercultural awareness and their students' responsibilities within the programme. The programme in Malaysia included language immersion sessions with the Australian pre-service teachers learning Bahasa Malay (at a beginner's level), sessions on intercultural conversations, Malaysian history lessons, and the Australians attending regular lectures with their Malaysian peers. The programme also included a daytrip to the UNESCO heritage city of Malacca (Melaka) and another visit to the Islamic Museum in Kuala Lumpur. Salient to the programme was having the two groups of pre-service teachers conduct observations in both primary and secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur; the Australian pre-service teachers then used this newly acquired knowledge to develop and present a lesson to a class of primary school students in a local school in Kuala Lumpur.

An essential component of the programme was the pairing of Australian pre-service teachers with Malaysian pre-service teachers in a buddy system. There were equal numbers of pre-service teacher buddies from both institutions, with the Malaysians having two extra participants as team leaders. The two institutions have a history of intercultural exchange, initiated in a larger but separate exchange programme (now completed). In the completed programme, approximately 120 Malaysian students studied part of the Bachelor of Education (TEFL) degree at the university in Brisbane as part of a twinning programme. Many of the staff who worked in the earlier twinning programme also worked in coordinating the current short-term mobility programme. This established collegiality between the staff at the two institutions was of great benefit in the cooperative venture of the short-term mobility programme.

Research method

Participants

In 2014, 10 Australian and 12 Malaysian pre-service teachers participated in the ICST programme. An invitation was sent out to all Australian students studying in two targeted subject areas: English-as-an-additional language/dialect (EAL/D) and History curriculum, to apply for a position in the government-funded Overseas Short-term Mobility Programme (STMP). Once applications were received, they were assessed against a formal selection process with 10 students being chosen from the pool of applicants. Six of the participants were students in EAL/D and four were students of History Curriculum. All the Australian applicants for the 2014 programme were females. The Malaysian pre-service teachers either applied for the programme or were encouraged to participate by their lecturers. There were three male and nine female Malaysian participants. All Malaysian participants were studying to become English teachers, and were in Semester 6 of their programme. In this article, the Australian participants are identified with an "A" (e.g., A1 = Australian participant 1) and the Malaysian participants identified with an "M" (e.g., M1 = Malaysian participant 1).

Data collection and analysis

Upon receiving ethical clearance to conduct the research, data were gathered from the Australian pre-service teachers through reflective video diaries and written assignments to satisfy the assessment requirements of their coursework. Data were also gathered from a Facebook page that the Malaysian pre-service teachers were encouraged to set up by their lecturers and through focus group interviews completed in Malaysia with both groups before the Australians returned home. Individual interviews with the preservice teachers were also conducted.

Inductive, thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Simons, 2009). With inductive analysis, themes are strongly linked to the data itself rather than being theoretically driven; this allows for coding of data without fitting it into

pre-existing themes. Data from the focus group interviews in particular are reported on in this article as it was a common data collection technique used by both the Australian and Malaysian researchers, in the same setting with fairly even and compatible results for analysis. Focus group interviews included such questions such as: What were the advantages/disadvantages of participating in the programme? How valuable do you see the buddy system? Please describe an intercultural critical incident you have experience during the programme. How has participating in the programme developed your intercultural capacity as a beginning teacher? The same questions were asked to both the Malaysian and Australian pre-service teachers.

Findings

The two major themes derived from the data and presented in this article are cultural awareness and forming friendships. Cultural awareness involves becoming aware of one's cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Increasing cultural awareness requires an individual to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences. The subthemes, identified from the theme of cultural awareness, included: positioning of self in culture, self-confidence, and cultural clashes. These subthemes were then analysed in relation to shaping possible selves as teachers, drawing on Bennett's (2004) DMIS to consider the effects of self-perceived intercultural growth that occurred through participation in the programme. It is not our intent to compare levels of intercultural competency between the two groups of participants as any comparison would be artificial. The theory of possible selves considers the perceptions of individuals within each group and both groups demonstrated a range of competency across the DMIS spectrum; however the range generally fell within the stages of minimisation and acceptance for both groups, depending on individual's personal backgrounds and personalities. Participants in both groups could be identified as being in the transitions stages between minimisation and acceptance. In this, the participants are moving from an ethnocentric perception to an ethnorelative perception of their possible selves as teachers.

"Forming friendships" was another important theme from the data with friendships formed not only interculturally across the two nations but also with peers within the same country groups. While these themes were consistent for both groups, they varied in kind and the level of importance with the forming of friendships the most noted theme for the Australians and cultural awareness the most frequently mentioned theme by the Malaysian pre-service teachers. Elaboration of the findings follows. The two groups of pre-service teachers described positioning of self in culture both as an awareness of others but also an awareness of their own cultural self. The groups differed in overall perspectives in this category as the Malaysians were positioned in the roles of both hosts to the Australians and as ambassadors of Malaysia, for example:

What I actually gained from the programme was cultural awareness. In one sense awareness about our own culture because when you are interacting with foreigners you need to know about Malaysian culture. (M1)

It is not surprising that this theme was important to the Malaysians. Being so placed they were challenged at times by the questions the Australian pre-service teachers posed about Malaysia but found, on the whole, that these challenges strengthened their appreciation for their own culture and sense of identity:

This experience has renewed my appreciation for Malaysian culture. . .that was one of the most profound things. . .I could experience my own culture through someone else's perspective. (M5)

The two comments above illustrate the transitioning stages of intercultural awareness from minimalisation to acceptance; both pre-service teachers describe their awakening to the possibilities

of other cultures and, in doing so, gained an awakening about their own cultural selves. This was a common theme from both groups of participants. The Australian pre-service teachers also described positioning of self in culture but this awareness grew out of what Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) described as “disorienting” experiences which were largely from the Australian’s ignorance about Malaysian culture and cultural habits:

I kind of came over expecting English is compulsory in all the schools. I kind of assumed that most people would speak good English but obviously I’ve seen now that it’s not that simple. (A6)

My only thing was the protocol, especially how to approach like the principals and stuff. Like there was one school I was at and I was at the front of the group and I just kept getting introduced. . .and I would put my hand out and I’m like shaking it, you know. I don’t know what was proper. (A5)

There is a definite protocol around hand-shaking in Malaysia: with some people it is acceptable while with others it is not done, especially with women shaking the hands of men. Knowing in which situation hand-shaking is appropriate is not generally such a finely nuanced habit in Australian culture. However, these kinds of confronting situations were not discouraging for the Australians. On the contrary, they used them to strengthen their understanding of Malaysian culture, describing that the programme provided them with opportunities to learn about the “ins and outs” of an Asian culture because they felt fully immersed in that culture. Furthermore, the Australians related these situations to their possible future selves as teachers:

You can’t really be Asia literate without being through Asia. I feel like maybe that’s a broad thing (to say) but I can read all this stuff about Asian countries. . .this is my first time in an Asian country and how am I to teach it just from a book? And now that I’ve experienced it I can go back to Australia and tell all my experiences here and become Asia literate. (A9)

I think it is important for pre-service teachers to travel abroad. It kind of demystifies the “other.” I think travelling to a Muslim country as well has been really great, like I feel more confident to be able to engage with Muslims in my school community and in Australia in general. (A10)

The Australian pre-service teachers were not alone in describing their ignorance of the other’s culture. The Malaysian also described new learnings about Australia:

I did notice the cultural differences and we both can learn from each other. For instance, I always thought American people celebrate Christmas in winter and was quite shocked when I learned Australian’s celebrate Christmas in summer. I think we are so exposed to American culture that we did not know about other cultures. (M6)

This is an interesting observation for two reasons: one, Christmas is celebrated at the same time all over the world. However, because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, summer occurs when it is winter in North America, which is in the northern hemisphere. Second, it is interesting to note that both groups of pre-service teachers could relate more to American culture than the cultures of each other in spite of the fact that geographically they are closer to each other than either is to the United States. There are a number of social, historical, and political reasons why this occurs beyond the scope of this article to analyse; suffice to say, both groups learned more about each other’s culture and in the process learned more about themselves and their ability to interact interculturally through engagement in this short-term mobility programme. This process fits within Bennett’s (2004) description of the acceptance stage where individuals come to realise that their culture is one of many and each is as complex as the others.

The pre-service teachers, in describing their growing awareness of self, were able to acknowledge that this process was enhanced through their engagement in the programme. For example, feelings of gained confidence both personally and in relation to their future teaching selves were evident for both the Australian and Malaysian preservice teachers. The Malaysians expressed a raised confidence in speaking English and in taking more risks in meeting and interacting with people:

I was quite nervous and I had to take people to different places and I have become more confident in using the language. English is not my first language and I have to use it throughout the programme and at the end of the programme I will be more confident with the language. (M4)

My confidence level is increasing from day-to-day. Initially most of us are shy and tend to be reluctant to talk because they [the Australians] may not understand us. But once you relate with them, they put you at ease by saying your English is good. I think that has boosted my confidence. (M6)

The Australians also expressed how participation in the short-term mobility programme had affected them, describing:

It has changed my beliefs and I am a different person since I landed here. . . I just see the world differently. (A5)

One Australian described that:

I believe that I greatly underestimated the impact this experience would have on me (A6).

Many of the pre-service teachers also described how being in the programme changed their thinking about their future teaching in ways they had not thought about before:

I want to be able to teach students about the region and to ignite within them a desire to also experience and explore Malaysia as it has ignited within me. (A1)

I think it made me realise and empathise with how students in my classroom might feel if their English is not their strongest language. (A6)

As part of the programme, the Australian pre-service teachers had to attend lessons to learn Bahasa Malay (beginning level) and then speak a short passage in the language within a social context (buying a piece of fruit at a local market using only Bahasa Malay). The Australians found this very difficult and confronting. As participant A6 above indicates, through this experiential learning she can now appreciate how difficult it can be for children in Australian schools who do not have English as a first language. Although the programme was only 2 weeks long, the organised activities allowed both groups to observe new teaching techniques. For example, one Malaysian preservice teacher described a new way to use a Big Book in her class:

I have learned a lot of new things and I hope this knowledge I can use in my classes. . . another thing I find interesting is when I went to the school with [Australians] for intercultural storytelling. The way they present the Big Book is a new experience to see how people use the Big Book and teach. So maybe I will use this new experience in my next practical lesson. (M6)

Big Books are a common artefact in Australian primary school classrooms, used in teaching literacy. Participant M6 above described how the Australian pre-service teachers identified specific words in the Big Book they were teaching to the class, and in doing so used the book to teach the children

vocabulary before reading the story. While this is a regular approach to teaching for the Australians, this technique of using a Big Book for vocabulary building was new to participant M6 and one that she would consider using in her own teaching practices. The Malaysians also described more global benefits to their future teaching gained through participation the programme:

You realise there are actually more things in this world and you think it would be nice to bring that kind of experience and feeling to your own students and explain to them there is actually more to this world than what we live. (M5)

While there were many positives expressed about the programme by both the Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers, there were also incidents that we could describe as a cultural clash. A cultural clash can be seen as a conflict arising with the meeting of different cultural values and beliefs. In one example, the Australians brought gifts of Tim Tams for the Malaysian buddies. Tim Tams are iconic chocolate Australian biscuits, but are not halal and so could not be eaten by the Muslim Malaysians, as explained:

There was a cultural class issue with presents like Tim Tams, which we cannot eat. The [Australian] students were offended when we explained to them we cannot eat Tim Tams. (M8)

Another incident during the closing ceremony:

. . .I was hugged by one of the [Australian] students in front of everybody and this is not our culture and religion. After that ceremony we explained why I couldn't hug the student. (M14)

It should be noted that the above speaker is a male Muslim Malaysian pre-service teacher; therefore, such physical contact with a female foreigner was culturally inappropriate. For the Australians, the cultural clashes occurred generally due to their lack of knowledge about Malaysian culture which, at times, lead to embarrassment on both sides and had to be discussed to find a common ground of understanding. Being placed as the "other" in Malaysian culture was often mentioned by the Australians:

You have an ESL student in your class. It's hard to . . .know how to make that strong connection or know how to teach them because you've never experienced it. You've grown up in . . .Australia where it's English and you speak English, the dominant language and then you come here, to Malaysia, and you're the one who is speaking a foreign language and it's a bit of a cultural shock. (A7)

Incidents of cultural clashes were able, on the whole, to be resolved because of the friendships formed between the two groups of pre-service teachers. A cornerstone of the ICST programme was creating a "buddy system" between the Malaysian and Australians. The Malaysian pre-service teachers initiated interactions with their Australian peers by creating the Facebook page. The pre-service teachers were encouraged to introduce themselves on Facebook before their actual face-to-face engagement in the programme. Therefore, the participants knew a little about each other before actually meeting in person. This online space was utilised extensively during the programme as well, primarily as a means of social contact at the end of each day's activities. These interactions added depth to the intercultural exchanges, particularly for the Australian pre-service teachers who did not know the environment and had to rely on the hospitality of the Malaysians to take them to restaurants and shopping centres in the evenings.

There is an increased focus today on the need to provide teachers and pre-service teachers opportunities to develop intercultural awareness as an essential dimension to participating fully and productively as global citizens in the 21st century (MCEETYA, 2008). Opportunities to engage with

other cultures are now increasingly conducted in virtual environments (McCloskey, 2012) as was the case with the pre-service teachers in our study. In spite of their initial engagement online, however, the Australian pre-service teachers all commented that they had not anticipated the extremely warm hospitality they encountered from their Malaysian peers face-to-face once they arrived in Malaysia. The Malaysian pre-service teachers went out of their way to ensure that the Australians experienced as few barriers to engagement in the programme as possible. While it would have been impossible to remove all barriers, and indeed that was not the expectation that the Malaysians were meant to fulfil, both groups of pre-service teachers described that their intercultural buddies really made the programme worthwhile for them:

They all have this beautiful insight into their own cultural heritage which we have been able to draw upon so I think that's been invaluable. (A5)

I think it was a very good experience for all of us. Even though they are people who are quite different and a world apart, there are a lot of similarities with them and you can actually find yourself in them. (M3)

An unexpected consequence of the programme was that the two groups found new friendships within their own country groups. For example, one Malaysian pre-service teacher described:

. . . I am usually quite shy. Friends from classes, I don't mingle with them much so when I was communicating with the [Australians] student I could mingle with them [Malaysian peers]. (M4)

This observation was echoed by the Australian pre-service teachers:

I think of all the things I have learnt on this trip, probably the most important thing towards my intercultural awareness is that friendships and relationships. . . enable us to ask the questions we wouldn't normally ask of each other and in doing so, become more culturally aware of each other. (A5)

The Australian pre-service teachers described that their buddies were "awesome" in helping them to get the most out of their trip:

I think without them we would have had more cultural clashes and having the buddies has helped us overcome that. (A8)

We would have struggled without them. (A9)

The buddy system proved to be a valuable component for both the Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers not only for their personal growth but also in their greater understanding of teaching in a regional and global sense:

It's been an intense cultural exchange. We have learned a lot from them [the Australians]. . . we have learned about their culture and about how different we think they are. But actually there are a lot of similarities. . . not only their culture but their education system. And the more you get to know them, actually you can find a lot of similarities between what they are experiencing and what we as Malaysians are experiencing. (M5)

This view was mirrored by the Australian pre-service teachers:

This experience has not only broadened my horizons in teaching but also my perspective of the Asian region and the world around me back in Australia. The programme allowed me to embrace diverse, international teaching, and curriculum practices as well as become an Asia literate teacher. . . it has

enriched my knowledge and understanding of Malaysian culture and its people and the importance of integrating Asian literacy within my future classroom. (A8)

The challenges both groups of pre-service teachers described align with Markus and Nurius (1986) notion that new situations cause people to reframe their trajectories of possible selves for who they want to be, and this was certainly the case with the participants in the ICST programme.

Discussion

Increasingly institutes of higher education advocate for students to have opportunities to travel abroad to learn about different cultures and to enhance their intercultural capabilities. Research suggests that students who undertake study abroad gain in global awareness and open-mindedness towards different cultures and are more focused on what they want to achieve in life (Daly, 2011; Molony, 2011). Alfaro (2008) suggests that international experiences can be a “catalyst” in having pre-service teachers develop a global perspective and, in the process, learn more about themselves as culturally aware teachers. The findings in the current study support this research. Both the Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers described many instances where they learned about each other’s cultures, their own cultures, and about themselves, much in line with Bennett’s (2004) DMIS stage of acceptance. They were able to interpret this learning to imagine their future possible selves as teachers, which for some indicated a further movement on the spectrum into the stage of adaptation where they could take their new perspectives of another culture in considering their future students. For example, participant M5 said that having to describe Malaysian culture to the Australian pre-service teachers was challenging for her but that this experience made her look at Malaysian culture through different eyes so that she felt that she had learned more about her culture and herself that she would not have done had she not been in the programme: *. . .it was like looking outside your window and realising you have very nice scenery outside; you have new knowledge, but now you have the experience as well (M5)*. In this, the pre-service teacher indicates a movement into ethnorelativism (Bennett, 2004) where she is able to consider the complexities of her own culture in relation to and as a part of the many variable possibilities of culture.

This eagerness to pass on these new feelings and knowledge to their future students was expressed by all participants in the programme. Both groups of pre-service teachers described that they could imagine how their experiences in the programme would be useful for them to draw on in their future teaching practices. One Australian pre-service teacher, for example, imagined connecting her future class of students with a possible similar class of students in Malaysia, while another felt inspired to want to teach abroad in an Asian country once she completed her studies. These sentiments were mirrored by the Malaysians; for example one Malaysian pre-service said: *. . .you think it would be nice to bring that kind of experience and feeling to your own students (M5)*. Describing how they had gained in personal confidence was interpreted by the pre-service teachers as thinking how they could use these new perspectives as practising teachers. Participant A9 described that before the programme she had felt anxious about the prospect of teaching students who have EAL/D but being in the programme changed her view of her possible teaching self. She stated that she now felt more confident that she would know good teaching strategies because she was now able to empathise with some of the experiences of these students. For example, she and the other Australians appreciated the position that they were the minority group in Malaysia having to negotiate their everyday experiences as their future students new to Australia will have to do.

While the pre-service teachers in both groups gained a greater understanding of pedagogy in the others’ cultures, they appeared to use this knowledge to gain a better understanding of the possibilities for their own future teaching. When applying for the programme, the Australian pre-service teachers identified that they were interested in participating to learn more about Asia (as future history teachers) and teaching diverse learners, in particular learners who have EAL/D. These

pre-service teachers were often confronted with little or no knowledge of the culture and language of Malaysia. As described above, these experiences allowed them to consider the struggles some of their future students will face, and to consider how they might manage learning for these students. The Malaysian pre-service teachers, on the other hand, largely volunteered to join the programme imagining that they would have opportunities to improve their English and gain experience interacting with native English speakers, to enhance their training as future English teachers in Malaysia. They described that their participation in the programme helped them to gain more confidence in speaking English and that they felt they would be able to carry this confidence into the classroom.

Embedded in the programme were many opportunities for both groups of preservice teachers to reflect on their daily interactions. Reflection on one's experiences in such a programme has been described as highly beneficial for students (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Hamman et al., 2010; Trent, 2011; Walkington, 2005). This article has described many instances of where the pre-service teachers reflected on the challenges and changes to their thinking as a result of participation in the programme. Through reflections, the pre-service teachers were able to better interpret their present circumstances in forming their current identities and how these understandings helped to shape their future possible selves as teachers. Completing daily reflections encouraged the pre-service teachers to take on multiple perspectives, to step outside their comfort zones in many ways and to see the world through different eyes. The feedback we have had from both groups of pre-service teachers suggests that they have appreciated the opportunities to not only think outside the box in a global sense but be physically outside the box through their many experiences shared in the programme.

The sharing of cultures, ideas, and perspectives worked well in the current short-term mobility programme because of the strong friendships formed, both face-to-face and online. All participants commented that having peer "buddies" was critical to the success of the programme. There was a concerted effort by the academics in both the Australian and Malaysian institutions of higher education to organise the buddy system as an essential element of the programme. This kind of ready-made connection for students in such a programme is not the norm, indeed, reports on study abroad suggest that it is generally the students' responsibility to find their own funding, placements, and friendships overseas and, as a result, participation rates in study abroad have been traditionally low (Daly & Barker, 2010; Doyle et al., 2010). We could speculate that some young people might find the prospect of travelling overseas alone to study for any length of time in an unfamiliar environment, culture and language daunting without some kind of support. We contend that initiating an online buddy system provided a needed structure to the programme that allowed both groups of pre-service teachers with opportunities to interact in a variety of ways, both in the formal programme and through unorganised social interactions. Nobody felt left out as groups expanded or contracted according to people's needs, interests, and availability. The buddy system was particularly beneficial for the Australians. Being in a short programme of only two weeks does not allow much time for seeking out friendships nor to fully immerse oneself in a new culture. Having a buddy system embedded in the programme ensured that everyone was included. Indeed, intercultural communications continued via Facebook and WhatsApp (an invitation only mobile phone app for group conversations) after the Australians returned home.

Conclusion

There are limitations to our programme, for example, due to our funding restrictions we were able to include only ten Australian pre-service teachers in the programme. However, we contend that this kind of programme is needed for many more students, particularly for those who do not have the financial means to travel overseas otherwise. We consider that short-term mobility programmes are beneficial for pre-service teachers in considering their possible selves as teachers, not only in the

present but also as future teachers. Although participation in the ICST programme has completed for these preservice teachers, many of the programme participants have maintained informal contact through social media and this has served to continue the friendships made and has further enhanced their sense of global responsibility. For example, one of the Malaysian pre-service teachers posted on Facebook and WhatsApp a description of the devastating flooding that occurred in Malaysia in late 2014. In response, the Australian cohort set about fund raising to buy school supplies for schools affected by the floods. They did this, they described, because of the friendships that they had formed and because they truly believed that if such a natural disaster occurred where they were teaching in the future, their Malaysian friends would help them out. This response from the Australians is one example of the possible effects to be gained through engagement in a short-term mobility programme.

This article focused on pre-service teachers' perceptions of their possible selves as global and culturally responsive teachers with reference to Bennett's (2004) DMIS model of intercultural competence. Further research using this model or other models, such as Deardorff's (2007) model of intercultural competence is needed in order for teacher educators to better prepare pre-service teachers for needs of 21st century students. The research findings indicate that through the experiential learning of engagement in such an international programme, both Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers gained in positioning their cultural selves currently and as future teachers. Their theory of possible selves provided a new way to consider the developing cultural awareness of pre-service teachers. To date, little research has been done utilising this theory, but the current project suggests that there is merit in using it further in this area of teacher education.

References

- Alfaro, C. (2008). Global student teaching experiences. *Multicultural Education*, (Summer), 10–16. Retrieved from eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ809071.pdf
- Alsup, J. (2006). *Teacher identity discourses. Negotiating personal and professional spaces*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175–189. doi:10.1080/03057640902902252
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (2nd ed.). (pp. 62–77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2008). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Commins, T., Chuthai, P., & Travichitkun, R. (2010). Study tours: Enhancing the international mobility experience. *Asian Journal on Education and Learning*, 1, 44–54.
- Daly, A. (2011). Determinants of participating in Australian university student exchange programs. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 10, 58–70. doi:10.1177/1475240910394979
- Daly, A., & Barker, M. (2010). Australian universities' strategic goals of student exchange and participation rates in outbound exchange programmes. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32(4), 333–342. doi:10.1080/1360080X.2010.491107
- Deardorff, D. K. (2007). Assessing intercultural competence in study abroad students. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and studying abroad: Research and practices* (pp. 232–256). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Donnelly-Smith, L. (2009). Global learning through short-term study abroad. *Association of American Colleges and Universities*, 11(4), 12–15.
- Doyle, S., Gendall, P., Meyer, L. H., Hoek, J., Tait, C., McKenzie, L., & Looiparg, A. (2010). An investigation of factors associated with student participation in study abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14, 471–490. doi:10.1177/1028315309336032
- Dunkley, M. (2009). What students are actually learning on study abroad and how to improve the learning experience. In 20th ISANA international education association conference proceedings. Retrieved from http://www.proceedings.com.au/isana/docs/2009/paper_Dunkley.pdf
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multiperspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219–232. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002
- Hamman, D., Gosselin, K., Romano, J., & Bunuan, R. (2010). Using possible-selves theory to understand the identity development of new teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1349–1361. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.03.005
- Malewski, E., Sharma, S., & Phillion, J. (2012). How international field experiences promote crosscultural awareness in preservice teachers through experiential learning: Findings from a six-year collective case study. *Teachers College Record*, 114, 1–44.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954
- Markus, H. R., & Ruvolo, A. P. (1989). Possible selves: Personalized representation of goals. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology* (pp. 211–241). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Marx, S., & Pray, L. (2011). Living and learning in Mexico: Developing empathy for English language learners through study abroad. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 14(4), 507–535. doi:10.1080/13613324.2011.558894
- McCloskey, E. M. (2012). Global teachers: A model for building teachers' intercultural competence online. *Scientific Journal of Media Education*, 38, 41–49.

- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2008). The Melbourne declaration on agreed goals for schooling. Melbourne: MCEETYA.
- Molony, J. (2011). Curricular and extra-curricular programs supporting improved international learning mobility experiences: An emerging trend in Australia. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 21, 211–235.
- Santoro, N. (2014). 'If I'm going to teach about the world, I need to know the world': Developing Australian pre-service teachers' intercultural competence through international trips. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 17(3), 429–444. doi:10.1080/13613324.2013.832938
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Trent, J. (2011). Learning, teaching, and constructing identities: ESL pre-service teacher experiences during a short-term international experience programme. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 31(2), 177–194. doi:10.1080/02188791.2011.566997
- Trilokekar, R. D., & Kukar, P. (2011). Disorienting experiences during study abroad: Reflections of pre-service teacher candidates. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 1141–1150. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.06.002
- van Veen, K., Slegers, P., & van Veen, P. (2005). One teacher's identity, emotions, and commitment to change: A case study into the cognitive-affective processes of a secondary school teacher in the context of reforms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 917–934. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.004
- Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1), 53–64. doi:10.1080/1359866052000341124
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Wessel, N. (2007). Integrating service learning into the study abroad program: US sociology students in Mexico. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(1), 73–89. doi:10.1177/1028315305283306