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Preparing early childhood educators for global education: the implications of prior learning

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This paper outlines the increasing cultural diversity of Australia's education settings and explicates the global education movement and the new Australian Early Years Learning Framework. It discusses the implication of these factors for early childhood education practice and early childhood teacher education. The key research question considered in this paper is what prior learnings do early childhood educators utilise to consider global education? Data are presented on a research project that explores the prior learning of pre-service early childhood educators at a major Australian university. The paper shows that, unlike primary and secondary pre-service teachers, most early childhood education pre-service teachers have significant professional experiences in educational settings. These prior experiences have a significant impact on pre-service early childhood educators' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes in the area of global education and align strongly with the global education curriculum movement and new national curriculum.

Keywords: early childhood education; global education; prior learning; Australian curriculum; pre-service early childhood teacher education

Introduction

Teacher beliefs and their origins have received considerable research attention in the last 20 years (Hoy, Davis, and Pape 2006). A number of studies have explored both explicit and implicit knowledge beliefs of pre-service, novice and experienced teachers (Levitt 2001). In seminal reviews Richardson (1996) and Borko and Putnam (1996) overviewed three areas influencing knowledge and beliefs about teaching; personal influences (encoded images and metaphors); schooling (based on experiences at school); and formal knowledge developed in teacher education programmes. However, this research has neglected the backgrounds of early childhood educators, many of whom have significant professional experiences in early childhood education settings prior to attending formal teacher education courses.

For example, Pajares (1992) proposed that many teacher education students are strangers to the professional world they hope to join. Whilst true of primary and secondary teachers, this conclusion was not based on investigation of the professional experience of early childhood educators. In Pajares's view primary and secondary teachers 'simply return to the places of their past, replete with school memories and preconceptions of days gone by... that remain largely unaffected by higher education' (Pajares 1992, 311) and then ignore the teaching repertoires promoted in teacher education. However, early childhood education pre-service teachers often have

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significant experience in early childhood settings, significant knowledge and confidence in working with young children and strong ideas about pedagogy and practice.

This is particularly significant because a number of studies in the area of teacher beliefs about cultural and social inclusion, for example, Avramidis et al. (2000) showed that practising teachers with experiences of inclusion ‘generally express support for inclusive education’. Hoy, Davis and Pape (2006, 723) report that ‘Lieber et al. (1998) found preschool teachers believed that inclusive settings provide opportunities for social development and friendship for both disabled and non-disabled students’. The source of this and other early childhood teachers’ beliefs in prior professional experiences before enrolling in teacher education have received little research attention in the literature.

This paper explores the prior learning of pre-service early childhood education students in the area of global education, a new curriculum initiative in Australian schools. This exploration of prior learning of early childhood education pre-service students is framed by the development of a new Australian national early childhood curriculum framework that incorporates aspects of the Australian global education movement. The development of a global education curriculum movement in Australia and the new Early Years Learning Framework have themselves been formed by an increasing diversity in the Australian student population and the development of educational initiatives to assist teachers to manage this diversity.

The paper outlines the increasing cultural diversity of Australia’s education settings; explicates the global education movement and the new Australian Early Years Learning Framework; discusses the implications of these for early childhood practice and then presents data on a research project that explores the prior learning of pre-service early childhood educators at a major Australian university.

Early childhood education and the increasing cultural and social diversity of Australia

Australia currently has the fastest growing population of any OECD nation (Australian Treasury, 2010). The major contributor to this population expansion is immigration. Australia conducts the world’s leading immigration programme on a per capita basis, admitting over 278,000 new immigrants between mid 2008 and mid 2009, more than 2% of the Australian population of 21 million. Australia’s medium term immigration target is 230,000 per year. The 2006 Australian Census showed that over 22% of the Australian population was born overseas, the highest proportion of any OECD country; and almost 14% of the Australian population was born in a non-English speaking country. Within the Australian population, 16% speak a language other than English at home. These data provide some insight into the way that Australia’s education system is shaped by the need for educational programmes to foster tolerance of, and respect for, difference.

In primary and secondary education, Australia’s education system has developed some unique responses to this increased diversity in the school population. These include the opportunity for primary and secondary student immigrants to attend intensive English schools and classes for considerable periods at the commencement of schooling; and a global education initiative developed by the Australian government and designed to promote culturally inclusive, sustainable education based on universal principles designed to promote social and cultural harmony.

In early childhood education, the non-school based nature of much early childhood practice has limited the development of both institutional and curriculum initiatives in early childhood education to support this growing diversity in the population.

In response to growing social and cultural diversity, Australia has redefined its national goals for the education of all children. In late 2008 Australian federal and state governments developed new national goals for schooling, to ensure that 'schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity' (Council of Australian Governments [COAG] Melbourne Declaration, 2008).

These national educational goals have been redeveloped to support and guide the development of a new Australian national curriculum agreed to by all Australian governments. Prior to 2008, curriculum had been the constitutional responsibility of Australian state governments. However, a national curriculum is being developed for implementation in 2011.

A new Australian curriculum in early childhood education

Whereas the notion of early childhood education had previously been described as contested (Woodrow 2007), the new National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF – Belonging, Being and Becoming) component of the National Curriculum (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009) is redefining early childhood as 0–5 years in Australia.

Prior to the development of this National Curriculum, curriculum in early childhood education had been fragmented and contested. Different state curricula, different years of schooling entry and varied teacher accreditation and qualification frameworks contributed to diverse early childhood education curricula and practice in each state. Although most state early childhood education frameworks promoted goals of social inclusion, approaches to tolerance, diversity and inclusion were fragmented in the curriculum in each state.

EYLF (Belonging, Being and Becoming) has been designed to stand alone in relation to primary education, with clear distinctions between ECE (0–5) and primary schooling. Accordingly, the aim of the EYLF is to improve quality education in the early years and promote a seamless transition into primary school. This early childhood education initiative is a key priority of the Australian National Curriculum. Although early childhood education can take place in a variety of settings – from childcare centres, kindergartens, family day care providers and preparatory classes (which reflect the diversity of early childhood settings in the different Australian states) – the EYLF (Belonging, Being and Becoming) is to be implemented for all Australian children 0–5.

The national goals in the area of social cohesion and respect for diversity articulated by all Australian governments (COAG Melbourne Declaration 2008) also feature prominently in the development of the EYLF. One outcome in the EYLF specifically relates to children's connection and contribution to their world. In terms of diversity these curriculum outcomes are set out in Table 1.

In terms of environmental sustainability the curriculum outcomes are set out in Table 2.

The Early Years Learning Framework is guided by an early childhood learning community of practice that supports the premise that the most effective way for

Table 1. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

Children respond to diversity with respect	
This is evident, for example, when children:	Educators promote this learning, for example, when they:
Begin to show concern for others	Reflect on their own responses to diversity
Explore the diversity of culture, heritage, background and tradition, and that diversity presents opportunities for choices and new understandings	Plan experiences and provide resources that broaden children's perspectives and encourage appreciation of diversity
Become aware of connections, similarities and differences between people	Expose children to different languages and dialects and encourage appreciation of linguistic diversity
Listen to others' ideas and respect different ways of being and doing	Encourage children to listen to others and to respect diverse perspectives
Practise inclusive ways of achieving coexistence	Demonstrate positive responses to diversity in their own behaviour and in conversations with children
Notice and react in positive ways to similarities and differences among people	Engage in interactions with children that promote respect for diversity and value distinctiveness
	Explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of each child within the context of their community
	Explore with children their ideas about diversity

Source: DEEWR (Early Years Learning Framework 2009, 29).

Table 2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment	
This is evident, for example, when children:	Educators promote this learning, for example, when they:
Use play to investigate, project and explore new ideas	Provide children with access to a range of natural materials in their environment
Participate with others to solve problems and contribute to group outcomes	Model respect, care and appreciation for the natural environment
Demonstrate an increasing knowledge of, and respect for, natural and constructed environments	Find ways of enabling children to care for and learn from the land
Explore, infer, predict and hypothesise in order to develop an increased understanding of the interdependence between land, people, plants and animals	Consider the nature of children's connectedness to the land, and demonstrate respect for community protocols
Show growing appreciation and care for natural and constructed environments	Share information and provide children with access to resources about the environment and the impact of human activities on environments
Explore relationships with other living and non-living things and observe, notice and respond to change	Embed sustainability in daily routines and practices
Develop an awareness of the impact of human activity on environments and the interdependence of living things	Look for examples of interdependence in the environment, and discuss the ways the life and health of living things are interconnected

Source: DEEWR (Early Years Learning Framework 2009, 31).

young children to learn is in a play based pedagogical environment, supported and facilitated by teachers trained in the early childhood field. The Early Years Learning Framework then, not only sharpens the focus of intended learning outcomes, but presents these outcomes in a framework of principles, practices and pedagogy.

As a result, the key outcomes are to be presented in a play based pedagogy that emphasises principles, pedagogies and practices that promote social cohesion, tolerance and diversity. This curriculum, with its linked intended outcomes and play-based pedagogy, presents new challenges in both early childhood teacher education and wider early childhood education teacher professional learning.

The global education initiative in Australia

In primary and secondary education, a global education professional learning programme was developed by the Australian government. This programme was designed to promote:

... the development of positive values and attitudes based on a strong sense of identity and self esteem, and encompassing caring for others, recognising responsibilities, a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all people and an appreciation of diversity and difference. It also encourages and empowers learners to translate their knowledge, skills and values into a preparedness to participate actively in community life. At the same time it is vital that students develop a realistic awareness of how effective such action and participation will be. (Global Perspectives Curriculum Corporation 2002, 4; <http://www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au/globaled/page1.html>)

The programme aimed to provide teachers in training with global education resources that are linked to their state curriculum and subject area specialisations. The programme also developed considerable resources for professional learning for teachers in schools. These consisted of sample units of work, lesson plans, case studies and subject matter materials that aligned with state curricula. The professional learning programme was funded in each Australian state and provided significant resources to assist teachers to achieve global education outcomes. This is the essence of early childhood education (ECE), where teachers strive to incorporate tolerance, understanding and acceptance of differences into the learning of the young child.

Research on global education subject matter and prior knowledge

Previous studies (Horsley, Newell, and Stubbs 2005; Bliss and Horsley 2005; Horsley and Costley 2008; Power and Horsley in press) had shown that pre-service teachers' understanding of global education reflected their subject teaching discipline, and undergraduate subject specialisations such as music, history, geography.

This recognition of teachers' prior knowledge is an important element when considering the successful implementation of curriculum changes, such as the inclusion of global education in subject matter.

The research found that, when new teachers tried to include global education in their teaching, they relied heavily on their undergraduate knowledge and disciplines to make meaning of the new information and transform it into new global knowledge and skills. Their understanding of global education was based on their prior knowledge, and this influenced the dissemination of knowledge and skills in their teaching, including their skills, attitudes and knowledge of global education. This research concluded that pre-service teachers' disciplinary knowledge and perspectives dominate their curricular choices, the use they make of declarative knowledge and, to some extent, their pedagogy. All disciplines work with a framework of fundamental

concepts and procedures that separate and distinguish one discipline from others. Accordingly, Power and Horsley (in press) note that 'Global education can be extended from or added to these existing frameworks, be incorporated into aspects of them, or stand outside them'.

For example Horsley, Newell and Stubbs (2005) showed that history teachers' incorporation of global education into their knowledge base was dependent on their history specialisation. History teachers who majored in twentieth-century historical and national development tended to view global education as a sub-set of the growth of political rights development. Historians majoring in the development of the third world interpreted global education as an extension of aid in the third world and social justice internationally. Geography teachers saw global education as a component of geography dealing with globalisation. For these groups of teachers, global education was seen as an extension of the existing knowledge schema, albeit of different components. However, viewing and incorporating global education through these existing disciplinary lenses meant that the global citizenship ideas of the programme were neglected, as they could not be incorporated into the existing disciplinary schemas.

Power and Horsley (in press) found that music pre-service teachers had limited experience of the key global education values and attitudes of sustainability, peace building and conflict mediation. Their undergraduate music training provided significant prior learning in the understanding of diversity and difference, and their interaction with the social emphasis at the core of global education significantly exceeded other pre-service teachers, whose undergraduate study came from other disciplinary schemas. Prior music knowledge emerges in their subject discipline area and has been shaped by the music learning practices they experienced. The research demonstrated that global education is additive to the pre-service music teachers' current disciplinary shared understandings. As a result, the research suggested that professional learning for music teachers about global education would need to explicitly develop connections between the knowledge, skills and attitudes of global education and the way that music education can promote global education.

Horsley, Newell and Stubbs (2005) found that primary pre-service teachers' prior education knowledge was framed by the multi-disciplinary nature of their undergraduate study. Mintrop (2004) argues that primary teachers cannot refer back to a well-defined and uncontested body of disciplinary knowledge in framing their teaching. Whereas secondary subject teachers draw on their disciplinary knowledge (and thus have contrasting conceptual paradigms to explain human behaviour), primary teachers draw on multi-perspectivity. Primary teachers' content knowledge is less deep but broader, developing a multidisciplinary perspective as a lens of analysis. Horsley, Newell and Stubbs (2005) argued that this primary multidisciplinary lens was fragmented but that it aligned to the pedagogies used by primary teachers as they transformed global information into global knowledge and skills for their students. Implicit in the primary pedagogy is the focus on student inquiry as an underlying pedagogy. For primary pre-service teachers the idea of studies of society and environment, and especially environment, was seen as the basis for a pedagogy that acted to integrate global education, and to integrate global knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Early childhood pre-service teachers do not usually come from a background of a strictly aligned discipline, but rather experience a holistic approach to children in their prior education experiences. In particular early childhood educators' prior learning and educational experiences incorporate a "listening pedagogy", which recognises

and celebrates young children as active and powerful agents in their own learning and development' (Egan 2009, 44). More specifically early childhood pre-service teacher education students have significantly different backgrounds from other teacher education students. Many early childhood educators have prior experience in the early childhood community of practice, prior to undergraduate education.

As a result, it was hypothesised that pre-service early childhood educators' responses would differ markedly from those of secondary and primary pre-service teachers who integrated global education knowledge and attitudes into existing disciplinary frameworks.

Prior learning in early childhood

Early childhood education students are unique in that they often have experience in the profession prior to undergraduate early childhood education enrolment (Bauer 2009). Early childhood education undergraduate students often come to university from a childcare employment background. For a significant proportion, university study is aimed at gaining qualifications to move from childcare settings to the school system or to more senior management roles in early childhood education settings.

At the university campus included in this study, the majority of students were mature candidates, many of whom had a previous career in some aspect of early childhood, or a parenting background before entering study with life skills, but possibly without matriculation qualifications.

Some early childhood undergraduate students enroll on finishing secondary school, but many have undertaken early education and childcare courses in technical and further education (in Australia known as Tafe).

Early childhood education pre-service undergraduates then, display many of the characteristics of an early childhood education community of practice, prior to the development of early education formal education qualifications. For example, many of the early childhood undergraduates have significant experiences with very young children as parents, as childcare workers and assistants. Early childhood education pre-service undergraduates present with a strong professional identity, *the early childhood identity*, developed through employment and experience in early childhood contexts (Bauer 2009).

The cultural practice approach (Rogoff 1998; Rogoff, Matusov, and White 1996) extended Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory by exploring how individuals become members of a community of practice through collaborative practices. Common understandings and goals are developed through group activities and 'more established members assist the less established in their mastery of community practices through joint involvement and collaboration' (Lave and Wenger 1991).

For many early childhood educators, this community of practice and early childhood identity precedes undergraduate study through prior experiences in the wider community of practice. This has direct links to the philosophies and identities of early childhood educators, which in many cases is developed prior to their undergraduate study, and contributes to a cohort where each undergraduate member assists each other in achieving goals and shared understanding.

Rogoff (1998) argues that individuals that share the goals of the community of practice undergo identity change as they move from the periphery of the group to the core of the community of practice as new situations and learning take place. Therefore,

the inclusive practice and promotion of tolerance that encompasses early childhood educators espouse aligns well with the community of practice and global education attitudes that include tolerance and equity; counteracting stereotyping attitudes with positive classroom practice; understanding links between development, peace, cultural diversity, human rights and sustainability; and receptivity and empathy towards other cultures (Power and Horsley in press).

Early childhood educators: characteristics and prior knowledge

We propose that this *early childhood identity* determines and provides a framework to explain the results of the research in early childhood educators' prior learning presented in the next section of the paper. This concept of an *early childhood 'mindset'* is nascent in the literature, in reflections on Reggio Emilia (Hertzog 1999, 2001); projects (Chard 2001); curriculum (DEEWR and EYLF 2009); and developmentalism (Stone 1996).

The socio-cultural context, previous employment and family background of early childhood education undergraduates influence their approaches to teaching and learning in the early childhood curriculum. The inclusion of global education places another curriculum dimension on the pre-service teacher which will need to be considered in the National Curriculum.

Curriculum reflects and shapes this 'mindset' as an interactive process to develop skills, attitudes and knowledge in early childhood environments. The *early childhood education 'mindset'* promotes the role of play over explicit teaching and learning. The early childhood education 'mindset' espouses using play as the medium of explicit teaching. The curriculum is a representation of this 'mindset' in that curriculum documents are open-ended to allow creativity of content for 0–5-year-olds and focus on social/emotional development.

The early childhood education 'mindset' is integrative because it is based on the individual capabilities and capacities of each child, providing one-on-one teaching in a group. The early childhood education 'mindset' provides total inclusion, and provides an equal space and acceptance of each child (Hertzog 1999), irrespective of background characteristics. The early childhood education 'mindset' reflects hands-on, play based, investigative teaching with explicit teaching linked to children's prior knowledge and interests in learning and woven through play-based pedagogy.

Research method

Early in 2008, a cohort of 65 teacher education students entering the Bachelor of Early Childhood at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) responded to a survey on global education during their orientation programme. They were provided with a definition of global education and a short introduction to global education materials (Global Perspectives 2002). For many of the Bachelor of Education students this was their initial attendance at university. The survey had been designed to provide specific data about prior learning about global education (Horsley, Newell, and Stubbs 2005). It had previously been administered to over 600 secondary pre-service teachers and 150 primary pre-service teachers from three Australian universities (Horsley, Newell, and Stubbs 2005; Bliss and Horsley 2005; Horsley and Costley 2008; Power and Horsley in press). The survey was designed to capture the schemas of disciplinary

thinking that provided existing disciplinary cognitive structures for considering the new subject knowledge of global education. The survey was designed to explain and predict how pre-service teachers incorporated the major concepts of global education into existing disciplinary schemas.

Whereas all previous participants had completed or had almost completed undergraduate degrees, the 65 Bachelor of Early Childhood students were at the commencement of their undergraduate study. It was hypothesised that their disciplinary schemas had not yet had the opportunity to develop. More importantly it was hypothesised that the students would exhibit a professional identity and community of practice that their learning from prior employment and educational experiences (particularly their early childhood employment and Tafe study) had influenced. Many of the participants gained entry to the Bachelor of Education through completion of Tafe diplomas and Advanced Diplomas of Children's Services. Completion of these Tafe diplomas articulated into Bachelor of Education EC courses.

As a result, it was hypothesised that:

- the students' prior learning would contrast significantly with previous surveyed groups who had completed undergraduate study;
- that their prior employment experience and community of practice membership would provide the structure of their prior learning;
- that their well formed professional identity would reflect this community of practice; and
- that the discourse provided by Tafe study would dominate the early childhood education pre-service teachers' responses.

It was also hypothesised that major gaps in global education knowledge, skills and attitudes would be identified by the students' responses to the survey.

Three survey questions overviewed pre-service early childhood education students' understandings of global education:

- What are the major understandings and concepts of global education?
- Which skills are important?
- What attitudes and values are fundamental to developing a global perspective?

Additionally, with regard to their prior learning, the pre-service early childhood teachers were asked about:

- Observation of global education.
- Incorporation of global education values and attitudes: tolerance and equity; counteracting stereotyping attitudes with positive classroom practice; understanding links between development, peace, cultural diversity, human rights and sustainability; receptivity and empathy towards other cultures.
- Experience in university curriculum of content about globalisation and interdependence; identity and cultural diversity; dimensions of change; social justice and human rights; peace building and conflict; sustainable futures.

The 65 early childhood education pre-service teachers represented diversity in their own cultural backgrounds, with vastly different cultural and social heritages.

The survey responses of the 65 early childhood education pre-service teachers were subjected to content analysis, based on the application of codes that had been identified and described from literature on global education.

The data were analysed by the lead author who had conducted four previous studies using data from the same survey. Individual summaries of the key responses and ideas were made. These responses were then compared to the key global education concept codes in the global education survey instrument.

Results

The early childhood participants in the global education survey responded to a series of questions that indicated the level of prior knowledge and understanding of this area.

What do you see as the major understandings, concepts and subject matter of global education?

The responses can be described as reflecting three major and separate clusters of understandings, concepts and subject matter.

The largest cluster, 46% of respondents, noted diversity and culture from a multicultural perspective as the major understanding and subject matter. This major cluster reflects the concept of respecting and valuing the diversity of the students in the classroom. Typical comments included: *an approach that incorporates different cultures and views into education; diversity and the contribution of different cultures, values and beliefs systems*. This reflects understandings gained in a Tafe course entitled, 'Working effectively with culturally diverse clients'.

Global education was seen by 23% of respondents as an object of study; the diversity of languages, cultures and beliefs that students must be aware of so that they have a complete understanding of the global world we live in. Some responses were – *building on their knowledge to build a better future; teaching children from a young age about responsibility, independence and sustainability such as environmental, recycling, etc.* Because this cluster covers study of the world, many responses include sustainability as a feature of global (world) study. Five responses used the key word – sustainability.

Curriculum and pedagogy was a consideration for 29% of respondents. Global education is seen as being related to the topics of study reflecting curriculum topics. The cluster also included a variety of statements about children's growth and learning, such as – *providing a broad range of ideas, resources and activities to build on children's understandings; creating an awareness of global education – introducing it at a younger age*. These two categories reflect topics studied in the Tafe course 'Implement and promote inclusive policies/practices' and prior knowledge of ECE.

The predominance of these responses including the keywords of diversity, sustainability and knowledge give some indication of the backgrounds of the respondents. Links can be made to prior ECE study at Tafe, high school graduates, mature students and parents.

Which skills do you see as being important?

The second category that attracted 65 responses related to the skills required for global education.

Responses reflected two significant clusters of equal size. Thirty per cent of responses identified diversity espoused as tolerance, and diversity as an understanding as a key skill for global education. Fifteen per cent of the responses identified diversity only. The other 25% of responses listed diversity in clusters with communication. This follows the identification of diversity as a key cluster in global education knowledge. Comments such as – ‘children being aware of what other cultures bring to us and welcoming the diversity’ and ‘knowing different languages and being able to teach children about different diversities of culture; different ways of learning and different ways of teaching children’.

The other 40% of respondents reflected communication, stated as being able to express views and communication skills. Only four responses identified communication on its own as a global education skill. Most responses listing communication contained a variety of other skills in ‘skill nests’ that included empathy and literacy skills, worded as ‘being able to speak out and being heard’.

Twenty-five per cent of responses reflected a ‘social skills’ termed cluster, where social skills were mostly expressed as cooperation, independence, social interaction and everyday life skills. These were connected to a wide range of other skills: ‘social interaction, independence, [ability] to express themselves’ give an indication of the comments received.

Twenty-one per cent of responses reflected literacy and critical literacy skills mostly in relation to communication and empathy. Attitudes and values fundamental to developing a global perspective were included. Responses such as ‘communication skills, critical literacy skills, ability to express views’ were typical in this category.

Which attitudes and values are fundamental to developing a global perspective?

Fifteen per cent of respondents provided no response to this question, an indication of their difficulty in identifying appropriate attitudes and values fundamental to a global perspective. In addition, participants wrote less and identified fewer examples compared to their responses to other questions. As well, fewer responses clustered and nested ideas and concepts compared to responses for the previous two questions.

Fifty-six per cent of responses that were completed identified diversity expressed as ‘respect’, ‘unbiased’, ‘equality’, ‘culture’ as the major cluster of fundamental attitudes and values.

Thirty per cent of respondents identified attitude, expressed as ‘positive attitudes’, ‘self esteem’ and ‘an open mind’ as the second major cluster of fundamental attitudes and values in developing a global perspective.

Sixteen per cent of responses were linked to teaching, learning and knowledge. This reflects the Tafe context and background of many participants, entering tertiary study from a platform of study in the Advance Diploma of Children’s Services.

Have you observed global education in your previous undergraduate degree or been shown materials and resources developed by AusAid?

In the past decade the Australian Government and state curriculum authorities have developed, published and promoted:

- Background materials on global education (<http://www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au/globaled/page1.html>).
- Sample units of work and lesson plans.
- Professional learning programmes.

These materials have been used widely in schools and are a significant resource for teachers.

A part of the survey sought to ascertain if the early childhood pre-service teachers had accessed or observed these rather ubiquitous materials. The respondents indicated that their knowledge of global education was limited, but were keen to know more. Tafe ECE courses include material that is perceived to be closely related to the knowledge, attitudes and skills of global education.

The survey was preceded by a short talk on the reasons for the survey and the new global education movement and curriculum. As well, the global education statement was provided to the survey participants.

This introduction raised significant anticipation. Twenty-two per cent of the sample made general comments in the part of the survey that asked for free comment. The responses were clustered into three discrete concept nests.

Forty-two per cent of general responses referred to interest and a desire to learn more about this area.

Thirty-eight per cent of these general responses indicated that this was their first day of university study and they were unable to respond properly. Reflecting on these responses, it is likely that these respondents had joined this course without any prior Tafe experience or further education, i.e., directly from school or after an extended absence from school.

The remaining clusters of responses referred specifically to experiences and courses in Tafe, and framed their responses in terms of children's learning of global understandings and perspectives.

The results are shown in Figure 1.

In terms of observation of global education prior to the survey 51% of respondents indicated prior observations. This reflects the penetration rate of educational materials in Institutes of Tafe, schools and universities.

In relation to using materials specifically developed by AusAID for global education, only 8% of respondents indicated that they had accessed AusAID global education resources.

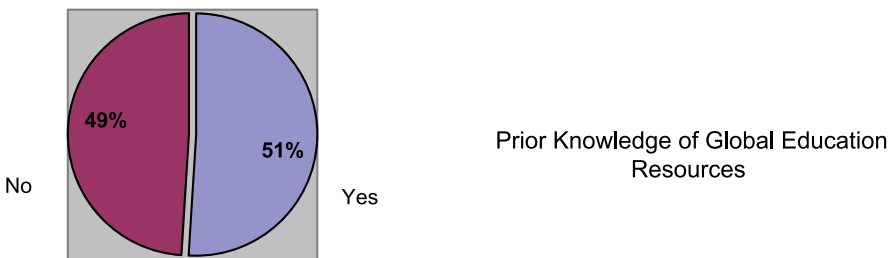


Figure 1. Observation of global education in schools.

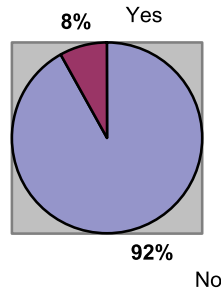


Figure 2. Accessed AusAID materials.

The survey provided the respondents with the opportunity to indicate the extent to which their undergraduate level or prior teaching experience had incorporated:

- A commitment to promoting values and tolerance.
- Recognising stereotypical and ethnocentric attitudes.
- Understanding the links between peace, cultural diversity, human rights and sustainability
- Receptivity towards and empathy towards other cultures.

Sixty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that their university or prior teaching experience had not incorporated those aspects of globalisation. However, this reflects the fact that 43% of the respondents indicated no prior attendance at tertiary study. Only 18% of respondents indicated that their prior study had, to some or great extent, incorporated these aspects of global education values and attitudes.

The survey provided the respondents with the opportunity to report whether (and to what extent) their university study provided content and subject matter in the areas of:

- globalisation and interdependence;
- identity and cultural diversity;
- dimensions of change;
- social justice and human rights;
- peace building and conflict; and
- sustainable futures

Fifty per cent of respondents indicated that their university study provided no content and subject matter in these nominated content areas. However, this reflects the fact that 43% of the respondents indicated no prior attendance at tertiary study. Thirty per cent of respondents indicated that their university study had included these global content areas to some, or great, extent. Twenty per cent of respondents indicated that their university study had included this nominated content to a small extent.

Data analysis

The results confirm the hypothesis that the social and cultural diversity knowledge and skills at the heart of global education are already well developed in the prior learning of the early childhood pre-service students.

These global education knowledge and attitudes have been developed in the pre-service students' prior learning in their communities of practice. The responses of early childhood pre-service students almost mirrored the knowledge and skills developed in the global perspectives document, the core of the global education curriculum.

Whereas secondary and primary teachers responses showed global knowledge and skills were related to their previous disciplinary studies and described in ways which added global education knowledge and skills to previous subject disciplinary schemas, early childhood pre-service educators used their prior experiences in early childhood settings and children's diploma Tafe study as the basis of their responses that completely aligned with the global education curriculum.

The core of global education knowledge and skills are already ingrained in the thinking of early childhood pre-service educators. The results and analysis of the survey indicated that there were commonalities in the thinking of the 65 participants. In early childhood the terminology and discourse underpinning the global education curriculum is not commonly used. Specific language such as tolerance, cooperation, and sharing, is a discourse more commonly used in early childhood practice. These are the terms used by the pre-service teachers as they respond to the survey.

These ideas align (correlate almost 100%) to the main themes in the global education curriculum but are expressed in different ways (reflecting early childhood practice). Unlike primary and secondary teachers who describe university courses and specific content as reflecting global education; early childhood educators describe global education knowledge and perspectives as representing social processes related to working with young children. This contrast of discourse in relation to the terminology of global education between primary, secondary and tertiary pre-service teachers is most marked.

At the same time it is possible to identify gaps in the wider knowledge of other aspects of global education. Early childhood educators are not aware of the materials available to support global education. Early childhood educators, lacking university discipline study are not able to identify background content knowledge in the areas of social change and globalisation. Compared to primary and secondary pre-service teachers they are less likely to identify content in the areas of human rights, social justice and peace building. However, they are much more likely to report on social processes that enshrine and promote tolerance of social and cultural diversity through their teaching.

These findings make it possible to reassess previous studies about global education initiatives. Previous studies by Bleicher and Kirkwood-Tucker (2004) found that pre-service early childhood teachers with a science or social studies background had no, or negligible, knowledge gain in global education, even after participating in a course of study on this topic. It was indicated that 'changing attitudes to global perspectives takes some time' (Bleicher and Kirkwood-Tucker 2004, 122).

It is our contention that the interventions and treatments conducted in the Bleicher and Kirkwood-Tucker (2004) study were not informed by insights of the analysis of prior learning of the early childhood pre-service teachers involved.

Our conclusion is that pre-service early childhood teachers do have understandings and knowledge of global education. This is inherent in the early childhood education 'mindset' which has been developed through prior experiences in employment and childcare, a mindset that reflects prior learning through participation in the community of professional practice in early childhood education settings.

The Bleicher and Kirkwood-Tucker (2004) study intervention did not proceed on the basis of identifying the gaps and limitations in the early childhood education

pre-service teacher knowledge and understandings. We hypothesise that the early childhood mindset allowed students to develop units of work in global education, but their lack of content knowledge prevented them from making actual learning gains.

Conclusion

The data and analysis presented in this research give credence to the premise that early childhood educators are unconsciously espousing the elements of global education developed through prior professional learning. It is our contention that this Australian experience may apply to early childhood educators in other OECD countries.

Such elements of diversity, tolerance, cooperation, communication and sustainability are common components in early childhood classrooms and reflect the underlying philosophies of early childhood educators, often pre-empted by their prior knowledge or personal disposition regarding their view of tolerance and social and cultural diversity.

The implications for global education professional learning programmes are clear. Global education discourse and terminology need to be developed in relation to the discourse underpinning early childhood education community of practice. As well, professional learning opportunities need not be targeted at the attitudes and social process at the heart of global education knowledge and skills as in primary and secondary global education professional learning. Rather global education professional learning for early childhood educators needs to be targeted at specific gaps in content knowledge.

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