

## Cultural contrasts in the classroom: Preparing international pre-service teachers for professional experience

Tracey Muir, Greg  
Ashman, Megan Short,  
Alison Jales & Marion  
Myhill

University of Tasmania

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## Overview of presentation

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Professional Experience
- ▶ The project
- ▶ The workshops
- ▶ School visits
- ▶ Student feedback
- ▶ Conclusions and implications

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## Background

- ▶ Increasing number of international (and CALD) students
- ▶ Face academic, linguistic, cultural and social challenges
- ▶ Professional Experience poses additional challenges
- ▶ Engaging in conversations with teachers, students and parents
- ▶ Differences in classroom 'norms'
- ▶ Behaviour management, teacher 'presence' and initiative (commented on by colleague teachers)

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## Professional Experience

- ▶ (Practicum or Field Experience)
- ▶ B. Ed – 85 days; M. Teach – 70 days
- ▶ 4 different placements varying in length throughout course
- ▶ Links between theory and practice
- ▶ Assessed against TRB graduate standards
- ▶ Demonstrate current professional knowledge and understanding in teacher practice
- ▶ Understand the importance of, and demonstrate a capacity to, develop effective relationships within the school and pre-service communities

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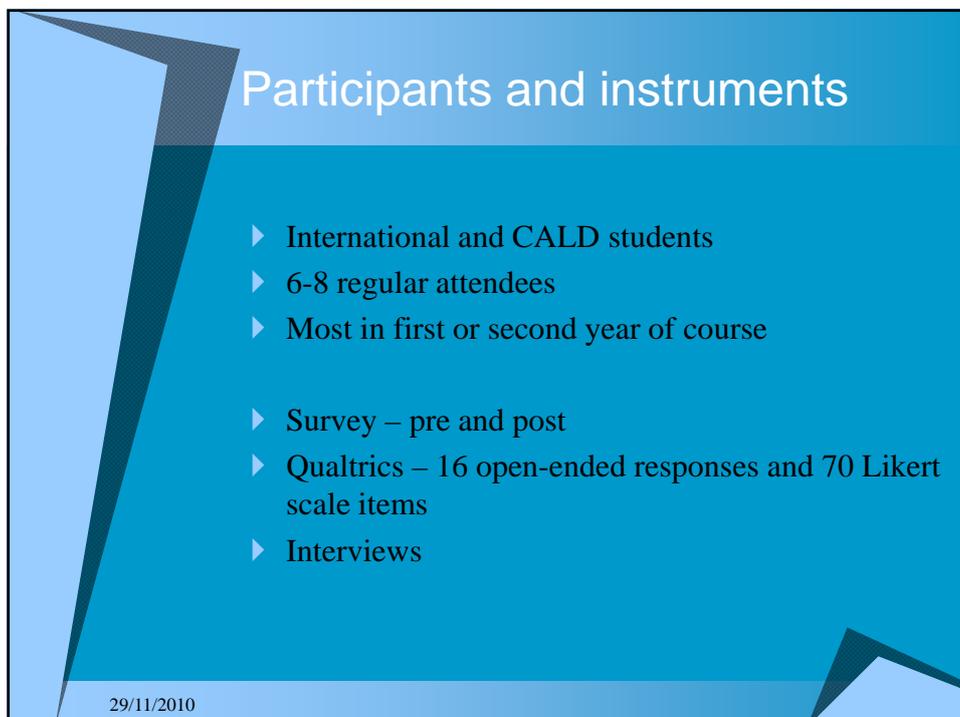
## The project

International pre-service teachers on the Launceston campus were invited to participate in a series of workshops, facilitated by skilled mentors, designed to provide the participants with the communicative, pedagogical and cultural understandings necessary for the undertaking of a successful Professional Experience

Focus on developing participants' expressive communication skills

Site visits to classrooms

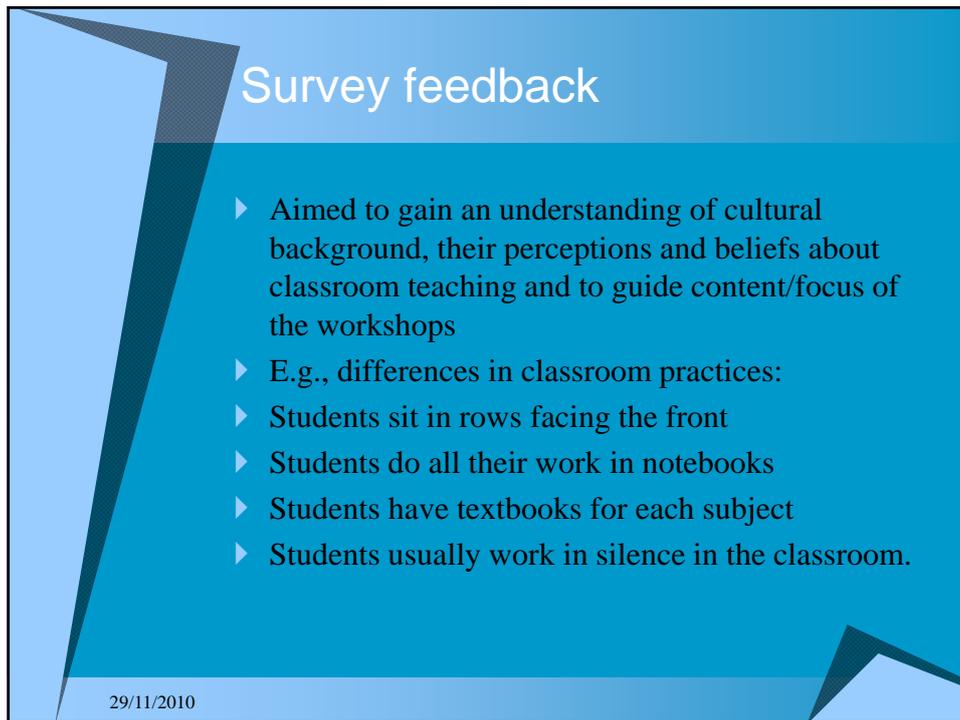
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## Participants and instruments

- ▶ International and CALD students
- ▶ 6-8 regular attendees
- ▶ Most in first or second year of course
  
- ▶ Survey – pre and post
- ▶ Qualtrics – 16 open-ended responses and 70 Likert scale items
- ▶ Interviews

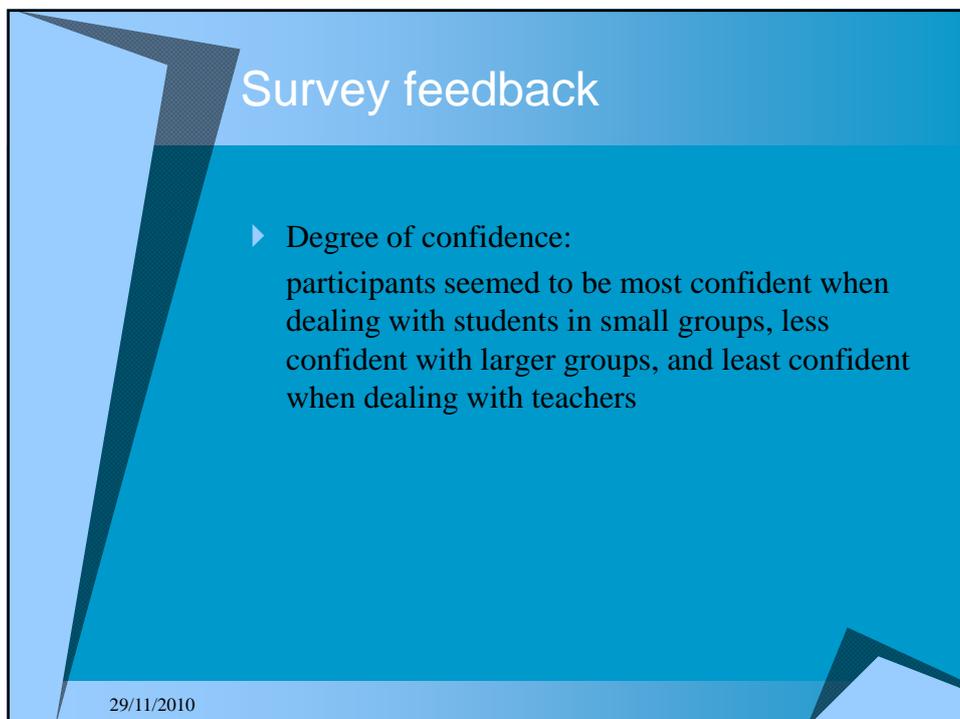
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Survey feedback

- ▶ Aimed to gain an understanding of cultural background, their perceptions and beliefs about classroom teaching and to guide content/focus of the workshops
- ▶ E.g., differences in classroom practices:
- ▶ Students sit in rows facing the front
- ▶ Students do all their work in notebooks
- ▶ Students have textbooks for each subject
- ▶ Students usually work in silence in the classroom.

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Survey feedback

- ▶ Degree of confidence:  
participants seemed to be most confident when dealing with students in small groups, less confident with larger groups, and least confident when dealing with teachers

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## The workshops



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## Reading aloud

- ▶ *The focus on pronunciation and the skills of reading to a group (Workshop 1)*
- ▶
- ▶ *Reviewing what's important when reading aloud; practising reading aloud (Workshop 1)*
- ▶
- ▶ *Strategies for pronouncing difficult words – fly, really (Workshop 1)*

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*Although I still have a lot to learn and improve, I find reading aloud is enjoyable for both audience and reader as both engage and share the story. I would like to improve more so that I can be confident in front of students ... I am sorry for taking up a lot of time myself, but the session was very useful and helpful and I thank you for giving these opportunities to us.*

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## School visits



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## Sienna's perspective

- ▶ *It's not simple, but I think there are similarities and differences between Australian teaching and learning and in my country. And also there's a different point of view because I saw teaching and learning when I was a student so it's kind of a bit different now...I didn't notice some things when I was a student but now I'm getting to know how it is for teachers and it's not very clear cut.*

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- ▶ *When I was a student I used to think that teaching is just lecturing or explaining things but when I came here and started to study about teaching and learning it changed and also I remembered different strategies that my teachers used when I was as student and now I notice that how important it is to have small group activities. I remembered later that it's a part of teaching and that it's not always explaining... it's a mixture of a lot of things that I know.*

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*I don't think it's culture or language and one thing is better than another – if you're able to observe, then you do notice what is good about a culture...going over what it means, you are constantly comparing a way of doing . I don't always evaluate. I might notice differences, but then this is something that I am missing then this is something that I have to learn. For example, my colleague teacher told me to call her by her first name, rather than Mr or Mrs, but for me, coming from a country where we don't call teachers or older people by their first name, for me this is scary and I don't want to be rude, but in Australia it is kind of strange to call someone Mr or Mrs if you want to be friendly. I have to adjust. Sometimes it's hard for me and I feel bad if I have to call a teacher by their first name.*

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## Conclusions and implications

- ▶ International and CALD pre-service teachers face quite specific, issues
- ▶ Many of these relate to the Professional Experience component of the program, where there is a particular emphasis on English oral communication skills and a highly detailed understanding of the local school and classroom culture
- ▶ 'Vulnerable' in Tasmanian classrooms

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## Conclusions and implications

- ▶ While diverse in background, face similar challenges in terms of adapting to teaching in an Australian classroom
- ▶ Feedback about the value of the workshops positive and recommend the continuation of program

### Challenges:

- ▶ Non-attendance from some students
- ▶ Establish a group of supportive colleague teachers/schools
- ▶ Provide program on all 3 campuses (if required)
- ▶ How to cater for on-line/distance students

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## Questions and comments



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