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TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING:

CONTRASTING AND COMPLIMENTARY APPROACHES
FOR INTERCULTURAL CHANGE



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ACRONYMS

ACARA	AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING AUTHORITY
EALD	ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT
ICU	INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING
NAIDOC	NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDERS DAY OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE
PD	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
STEM	SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS
TFH	TOGETHER FOR HUMANITY



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This report presents findings from an evaluation of two distinct approaches utilised by Together for Humanity in their ICU PD programs for teachers.

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MAIN MESSAGES

- This report presents findings from an evaluation of two distinct approaches utilised by Together for Humanity in their ICU PD programs for teachers. The first approach involved traditional training for integrating ICU in the curriculum. The second approach, documented in the report as a case study, prioritised fostering positive cultural change to diminish prejudice and discrimination within the school, to be followed at a later stage by the integration of ICU into the curriculum.
- The ICU PD programs produced a significant outcome, as many teachers reported improved understanding of ICU upon program completion compared to their initial understanding. The success of the PD was reflected in teachers' increased confidence in teaching ICU.
- The ICU PD programs increased teachers' awareness of and attunement to diverse cultural perspectives among their students. Teachers believed that this heightened awareness translated into their better understanding of the varied learning styles and assessment needs of their students and facilitated more inclusive teaching practices.
- Teachers positively valued the opportunity the PD gave them to collaborate with colleagues, either from their own school, with local schools in their area, and/or culturally diverse schools. Shared exchange of ideas and collaborative efforts in developing effective practices were enjoyed by teachers. These collaborations, enabled by the TFH PD programs, support the development of 'communities of practice', an important element for the sustainability of change and ICU PD learnings.
- Teachers expressed a need for increased emphasis and inclusion of interactive practical scenarios that specifically address difficult topics and provide guidance on how to navigate tough conversations that come up with students in the classroom or in the school grounds. These activities were identified as highly valuable by teachers.
- Teachers participating in the traditional ICU PD gained fresh approaches to teaching ICU from the PD. They particularly appreciated the diverse range of simple, impactful strategies requiring minimal resources that they could readily implement in their classrooms. A number of teachers expressed their intention to immediately implement some of these strategies in their teaching practices.
- However, despite teachers in the traditional ICU PD recognising the value of teaching ICU in the curriculum, there appeared for many to be a notable disconnect in terms of linking teaching ICU with challenging instances of prejudice and discrimination at school. Further, some of the teachers expressed reservations regarding the priority they would assign to teaching ICU in the classroom due to competing curriculum demands and time limitations. Notably, some of these attributed their hesitation to their perception that racism, prejudice, and discrimination was not prevalent within their school.
- The motivation of those teachers participating in the case study PD to prioritise embedding values and practices of ICU significantly increased when their students shared their viewpoints that revealed many everyday experiences of prejudice and discrimination. These students' perspectives informed teachers' understandings of the need to embed practices and values of ICU at a whole-of-school level.
- Key to developing effective school cultural change was its early focus on both students' and teachers' perspectives on what needed change and teachers subsequent codesign of the ICU program with TFH facilitators.
- The case study findings show that ICU teacher training grounded in the school context and driven by teacher and student feedback is highly effective. It gives teachers the skills, resources, and confidence needed both to address problematic behaviours in the school and to tackle difficult conversations as part of the curriculum. The integration, flexibility, 'tailor-made', and hands-on learning aspects of this approach are unique and should be aimed for wherever resources and circumstances allow.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIFAITH BACKGROUND

The Australian Government's (2017) statement on multiculturalism, *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful*, declares, 'Australia is the most successful multicultural society in the world' (p. 3). Just over one quarter of all Australians were born overseas, and half were either born overseas themselves or have a parent who was. However, it was founded on the dispossession and genocide of First Nations peoples who continue to suffer intergenerational trauma caused by these actions and unacceptable disadvantage across a broad range of indicators, including in education, employment, and life expectancy.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) reports that 3.2% of Australians identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and they speak 167 Indigenous languages. While a growing number of Australians report no religious affiliation, of those who are religious, Christians remain the biggest group at just under 44%. The five largest other religions are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Judaism.

Despite this diversity, the Mapping Social Cohesion report (Markus, 2021) found Australians hold a steady hierarchy of prejudice towards ethnic and religious minorities. Over 40% consistently report negative views towards Sudanese, Chinese, and Iraqi people. In relation to faith groups, 'As in past years, and by a substantial margin, the highest negative response was towards Muslims, at 32%' (p. 62). Negative attitudes towards other faiths were Christians (13%), Sikhs (12%), Hindus (10%), Jews (9%), and Buddhists (4%). Shirodkar (2019) report that

of more than 11,000 Australians tested for implicit bias against Indigenous Australians, 75% were found to hold it, with about a third doing so strongly. These attitudes mean racism and religious bigotry is an ongoing, everyday issue for racially, ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse Australians (Mansouri, 2022).

RACISM AND AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Incidents of racism and religious bigotry aimed at Australian schoolchildren that have attracted media attention include Muslim schoolgirls being asked to leave a Perth careers expo after other attendees complained their presence was 'making them feel uncomfortable after what happened in Manchester' (Foster, 2017, para. 2), non-Indigenous students using racial slurs to refer to Indigenous classmates (Bamford, 2021), African students subjected to the use of the n-word and 'the heartbreaking tyranny of low expectations' from teachers (Lloyd, 2022, para. 33), and a Jewish student in Sydney 'being stuffed into a locker and sprayed with deodorant to simulate a Nazi gas chamber, while other students laughed and filmed the incident' (Fitzsimmons, 2022, para. 4).

Racism has a profound impact on Indigenous students, the effects of which include 'school withdrawal, deidentifying as Indigenous, emotional distress and internalisation of negative beliefs about Indigenous intelligence and academic performance' (Moodie et al., 2019, p. 274). In one study, almost 20% of Indigenous students reported experiencing racism perpetrated by teachers (McGowan,

2019). Eighty seven percent of African students in another study said they had faced discrimination at school, with 80% naming students, two thirds teachers, and 21% principals as perpetrators (Lloyd, 2022). Dunn et al. (2015) report that 55.3% of Australian Muslims experience racism in an education setting compared to a national average of 17%. There is little research on how it impacts children and their learning or on teacher knowledge of Muslim students and how prepared they feel to teach them (Abdalla, 2020).

However, research on the impact of similar experiences directed at LGBTQ+ students is instructive. A Western Sydney University study found that 90% of such students were subject to homophobic language, almost one third on a daily basis. Only 6% said teachers always intervened when they heard these comments, and some were made by teachers. The degree to which teachers challenged homophobic comments was found to directly correlate to students' perception of their academic capability (Visontay, 2021).

Charles Sturt University academics studying Islamophobia argued for prevention strategies in schools after they found anti-Muslim abuse starts 'for children in pre-school years, when they were accompanied by their identifiably Muslim parents. This continues in school years through multiple perpetrators in the school environment, such as school peers, teachers, school administration, other students' parents or other adults targeting Muslim students on the way to school' ('Islamophobia continues in Australia: 2019 report', 2019).

Mourad (2022) found 10- to 12-year-old Muslim students at three Sydney primary schools connected Islamophobia to visible markers of difference including the hijab, their names, and the Arabic language. She notes that the media and politicians have created a focus on Muslim youth in schools that goes beyond their 'educational achievement to issues of national security and hostile identity formation' (p. 3).

Muslim youth in Victoria reported feeling helpless to address bullying and name-calling and angry 'over how they are depicted by their teachers and non-Muslim peers when discussing issues related to Islam, the Middle East and terrorism' that led many to avoid participation 'due to fears of being seen as validating acts of terror' (Bedar et al., 2020, p. 4.) Some argue this fear is not unreasonable given an expectation, reinforced by government policy and training, that teachers report students suspected of holding extremist views to authorities (Abdel-Fattah, 2019; Briskman & Latham, 2020).

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN SCHOOLS

The Australian Curriculum sets 'expectations for what all young Australians should be taught, regardless of their background or where they live' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2022a). Alongside more traditional educational goals such as numeracy and literacy, it now includes intercultural understanding (ICU) as one of seven General Capabilities to be incorporated by both public and private schools (ACARA, 2022b). It is seen as essential to successful participation in an increasingly diverse Australia and interconnected world.

ACARA currently defines the three key elements of ICU as reflecting on culture and cultural diversity, engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity, and navigating intercultural contexts. It expects ICU to be woven into subject areas from Foundation to Year 10 and defines goals for each key element as students progress through their schooling. According to the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2022b),

Intercultural understanding encompasses the behaviours and dispositions that students need to understand what happens and what to do when cultures intersect. Through learning to value their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others, young people are supported to become responsible local and global citizens. They are equipped for living and working in an interconnected world. (para. 1-2)

However, whether schools successfully teach ICU has differing implications for minority students and those from the dominant Anglo Celtic background. Minority students at schools who do not value ICU can suffer racism, including of low expectations (Moodie et al., 2019; Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009), with potential consequences of lifelong disadvantage. Racism can lead to disengagement from education and mental health issues including depression and anxiety (Bamford, 2021; Moodie et al., 2019). For students in the cultural majority, an ability to navigate cultural differences is 'the icing on the cake'—a failure of schools to embrace this capacity does not impact their lives to the same extent.

Students are not assessed against nationally set capabilities in relation to ICU, and states and territories choose whether and how to incorporate them into their curricula (Davies, 2022). They do so in contexts that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) reports vary widely in respect to diversity. For example, Victoria and the Northern Territory are among the most diverse states in terms of the number of people who speak a language other than English at home and who identify with a non-Christian religion, while Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia have less diverse populations.

Table 1: Australian cultural and religious diversity by state and territory

PERCENTAGE	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin	3.4	1	4.6	2.4	3.3	5.4	26.3	2
Born overseas	29.3	30	22.7	24.1	32.2	15.3	15.3	18.7
Speak only English at home	67.6	67.2	80.5	77.6	75.3	86.1	57.3	71.3
Non-Christian religion	12.1	13.1	5	7.8	8	4.5	8.7	12.1

Table data sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022).

A Review of Australian Educational Policy and Curricula for Intercultural Understanding (Hale, 2021) found that states and territories incorporated ACARA's ICU General Capability into their own curricula to very different extents:

Victoria and the Northern Territory are the two most proactive jurisdictions in developing Intercultural Understanding in their education sectors. New South Wales and South Australia follow, then Queensland, with Tasmania and Western Australia appearing to have minimal focus on this Capability, both in policy documents, reports, and curricula. (p. 41)

WHY TEACHERS ARE KEY TO CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Students are more likely to experience racism at school than anywhere else (Dunn et al., 2014) and more likely to report racist incidents to teachers than other authority figures (Greco et al., 2010). Teachers are recognised as being the most important influence on student achievement in schools, accounting for about 30%, while the school as a whole and principals contribute another 5% to 10% (The Smith Family, 2016). Teachers have a significant impact both on individual student's ICU (Walton et al., 2013) and on reproducing social relations (Tualaulelei & Halse, 2022).

Teachers skilled in ICU can address racist incidents and hold high academic expectations of culturally diverse students (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009), thereby creating an optimal learning environment for students in cultural minorities. A failure to do so contributes to educational disadvantage, while high learning expectations for all students and an emotionally nurturing environment are critical to all students achieving their potential (The Smith Family, 2016).

The most disadvantaged learners in Australia are those of low socioeconomic status, those who live outside urban areas, and Indigenous students (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019), categories that often overlap. Less than 60% of Indigenous students completed Year 12 in 2019, and the proportion at or above minimum reading and numeracy standards decreased across all year levels in the decade to 2018 (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2020).

Most racism experienced in education settings is less dramatic than the incidents highlighted in the media but more constant, a factor that is more likely to lead to 'particularly morbid effects on personal well-being' (Dunn et al., 2015, p. 27). When held by teachers, these negative attitudes can impact students through 'latent racism, unconscious bias, and unrecognised cultural prejudice' and by making them 'less likely to enact intercultural education in their classrooms' (Tualaulelei & Halse, 2023, p. 749) or attend professional development (PD) on the issue.

WHY TEACHERS NEED TRAINING IN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The cultural demographics of Australian students and teachers are mismatched. Most primary teachers are of an Anglo Celtic background, although 41% 'work in schools where at least 10% of the students have a migrant background' (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Indigenous Australians make up 5.8% of primary school students but only 2.1% of primary teachers. Fewer primary teachers were born overseas or speak a language other than English at home compared to the general population (Tualaulelei, 2021). This means teachers are less likely to have knowledge gained from lived experience of issues related to ICU.

Teachers are broadly supportive of cultural diversity, intercultural education, and challenging racism (Forrest et al., 2016). However, Dunn et al. (2014) found that teachers were less likely to see racism as a problem in Australia than other Australians, and only half thought it was an issue in schools.

Many teachers also feel they lack the skills and knowledge to implement intercultural values at school. In the latest OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (2020), just 58.7% of lower secondary teachers said teaching in multicultural settings was included in their formal education, and only 27.1% felt well or very well prepared to do so. Early career teachers do not feel equipped to support culturally and linguistically diverse learners and Indigenous students (Mayer et al., 2017). Experienced teachers may also be hesitant to introduce discussions that can sometimes be fraught and confronting (Tualualelei & Halse, 2023).

A study that reviewed the literature on racism in Australian primary schools (Yared et al., 2020) found students wanted to discuss race and were capable of doing so, but teachers tended to avoid the topic due to a lack of confidence and competence. It found this avoidance manifested in White normativity, colour blindness, and silencing in the classroom through actions such as diverting conversations from the issue. It argued this approach could contribute to the development of racial prejudice in children:

Lack of dialogue about race does not challenge the status quo or assist children to think about their views before they become ingrained and attitudes towards race are established. It also does not afford minoritised children the space to explore their experiences of racism or racial bias. (p. 1525)

The study found that acknowledging and discussing racism could encourage prosocial views in children and suggested the following interventions to increase teacher confidence and motivation to do so: supportive school leadership and teacher training (both pre- and in-service, possibly including undertaking implicit bias tests); mandating such competencies in departmental policy; and emphasising the positive outcomes of student discussions about race and the dangers of avoiding them. It also recommended research into how students could best be engaged to discuss their ideas and experiences of racism.

Consultations with Muslim students and other community members have found 'significant room for improvement in Australia's education sector, in terms of fostering cultural awareness among teachers and school administrators and equipping them with tools to build trusting relationships with diverse students' (Bedar et al., 2020).

For teachers who qualified and registered prior to ACARA developing the General Capabilities in 2010, PD, which can be ad hoc and piecemeal, may be their only training in ICU. However, even experienced teachers can find it difficult to change long-term behaviour and incorporate intercultural knowledge into everyday practice (Lobytsyna et al., 2021).

Australian state governments are responsible for teacher training, registration, and, as a major employer, the ongoing PD of teachers (along with private school employers). Both national and state resources, including learning continuum documents developed by ACARA and state education departments, are not always used by teachers, can be differently interpreted (Tualualelei & Halse, 2023), and change over time.

For example, neither of the current Australian or Victorian Curriculum documents on intercultural capability use the word racism, and Version 8.4 of the Australian Curriculum, used between January 2018 and Term 2, 2022, did not even mention bias or discrimination. Tualualelei and Halse (2023) argue this limits 'opportunities to explicitly address these issues during class time ... tacitly allowing teachers to ignore these issues' (p. 10).

Although ICU is included as a General Capability, there appears to be little expectation that teachers demonstrate having taught it or that they assess and report on student progress in relation to it (Tualualelei & Halse, 2023). It is also sometimes seen by some teachers as specific to particular subjects, such as languages (Davies, 2022).

Tualualelei and Halse (2023) argue that without whole-school support, even teachers positively inclined to promoting ICU come under pressure from neoliberalism to stick to elements of the curriculum seen as highest in 'direct market value'. They say school and policy structures that encourage this include frameworks that prioritise other parts of the curriculum, including through pay incentives. The Review of Australian Education Policy and Curricula for Intercultural Understanding (Hale, 2021) concluded:

Across Australian educational jurisdictions generally, there appears to be limited resources in assisting teachers to achieve ICU in their classrooms and/or extra curricula activities. There is a gap between policy and in situ learning tools for achieving ICU in Australian schools. (p. 41)



It is near impossible to quantify the number of intercultural training courses for teachers in Australia, let alone globally.



NON URBAN SETTINGS

Rural Australian communities are often predominantly 'white' but can include Indigenous Australians and increasingly refugee/migrant communities who are being encouraged by immigration policy to settle in such areas. However, 13 years after Ayalon (2004) posed the question 'Why is rural education largely missing from multicultural education textbooks?' Forrest et al. (2017) contend that that situation has not changed.

They argue teachers in nonurban schools tend to embrace ethnic diversity more than their local communities because they are taught to do so in preservice training and ongoing PD. Teachers are also subject to policy directives from education authorities.

However, reporting on a program that aimed to increase ICU in New South Wales (NSW) city-based and country schools through student exchange, Sharples and Dunn (2017) found country school students had more than double the chance of being subject to racism and bullying than city students.

The average performance of students living outside urban centres of Australia is 8 months behind students living in cities (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019). They are less likely to finish school or go to university (Sullivan et al., 2018) because there is a higher rate in these areas of 'school and student contextual factors associated with educational disadvantage' (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019, p. xx).

Rural principals report that one factor impacting learning is teacher shortages (Sullivan et al., 2018). Another is that the difficulty posed by geographic isolation can make it harder to

access resources and PD due to the time and money involved in travel, the lack of local relief staff, and a lack of reliable internet access. Peer support is also limited by low staffing levels and high staff turnover (Macdonald et al., 2021).

The Independent Review Into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (Halsey, 2018) suggests several ways to increase the PD capacity of nonurban schools. These included delivering PD to clusters of small schools, partnering with specialist providers, and enhancing information and communications technology capacity.

APPROACHES TO TRAINING TEACHERS IN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

There appear to be two broad pathways by which teachers learn about ICU. Experiential approaches are a hands-on method whereby teachers undergo personal transformation through lived experience. Instructional approaches involve the more traditional delivery of information, tailored to specific audiences and circumstances.

Experiential paths include completely immersing teachers in unfamiliar cultures (usually overseas placements during teacher training) to give them lived experience of being in a cultural minority and undergoing teacher training placements in schools with a high degree of diversity.

Lobytsyna et al. (2021) argue that preservice teachers who spend more time at culturally diverse schools are more confident and positive about teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. Forrest et al. (2016) found that Australian teachers' knowledge about how best to implement ICU was positively influenced by the cultural diversity of the school. While not specifically designed to train teachers, it can be argued that teachers involved in schoolwide ongoing partnerships with culturally diverse schools, whether locally or overseas, also acquire practical cultural navigation skills through lived experience.

Leggett (2020) argues that the personal transformation these experiences promote adds a new dimension to teacher education. She describes a program where trainee teachers learn ICU through a 2-week study tour to Italy, the aim of which was to send them 'venturing out of their comfort zones into unknown worlds'. Participants recorded feeling 'culture shock', 'a strange sensation', 'like a fish out of water', lost, fearful, and confronted. Leggett argues this discomfort enabled the transformational learning needed to 'develop appreciation and knowledge towards children and families from diverse communities whom they may care for and teach' (p.53).

Jin et al. (2016) report a similar transformation in the confidence and intercultural skills of teacher trainees who taught in Chinese

schools for 3 weeks. One participant noted, 'The change of environment has changed me for the better for the rest of my life both socially and professionally' (p. 32). Victoria's Women in School Leadership program, in which female Victorian school principals complete country exchanges in India to increase their intercultural skills, is another experiential approach to ICU (Jin et al. 2016).

Overseas placements are expensive and logistically difficult, making them an option available to a limited number of teachers/trainee teachers. Taking part in some kind of in-service training is much more common, with almost all teachers and principals completing at least one PD activity annually (OECD, 2020) However, Sue et al. (2009) argue that training educators to confidently manage discussions of race should also involve interracial interaction:

Comfort in facilitating difficult dialogues on race requires a strong experiential component that cannot be simply achieved through in-service training or classroom experience. Achieving this goal necessitates 'lived reality,' such that experiences outside of the classroom involve interaction and dialogue with people (a) who differ in race, culture, and ethnicity and (b) in real-life settings and situations (minority communities, public forums, integrated neighbourhoods, etc) ... education and training must provide opportunities for true interracial interactions that often produce discomfort in educators. (p. 189)

Other recommendations to promote the successful implementation of intercultural education in schools include a whole-school approach, including administrative staff who are often a first point of contact; ongoing PD (Tualaulelei & Halse, 2023); integrated, long-term, multi-strategy, evidence-based interventions appropriate to the skill level of participants and the ethno-racial make-up of the school (Greco et al., 2010); the development of skills, knowledge, and insight into the factors outside school that influence students' thoughts and actions in relation to diversity (Halse et al., 2015); the recognition by teachers of their own racial biases and the development of skills to facilitate discussions that can evoke significant emotion (Sue et al., 2009); in-depth comprehension of ICU in the Australian Curriculum, consistent cross-cultural engagement by the school, self-reflection by teachers and students, and the development of local and international staff discussion networks on ICU (Asia Education Foundation, 2015).

The AITSL report on Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce (2020) outlines minimum requirements for cultural safety at schools, which could also be adapted to other culturally diverse contexts. They are to:

acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures through presentation and representation; have a strong capacity to build mutually trusting and respectful collaboration with the local community; understand and respond to the individual needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and these students' wider families and communities; ensure the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is a strong focus in strategic planning; set high expectations and provide leadership opportunities; promote a shared understanding and anti-deficit and anti-racist thinking; engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. (p. 23)

It is near impossible to quantify the number of intercultural training courses for teachers in Australia, let alone globally. There appears to be a reasonably high turnover of them with programs referred to in the literature, including the US REST-KIT (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009), Australian ERIS (Wertheim et al., 2010), and PREEpared (Anderson et al., 2019) programs, now unable to be located by internet searches. In Australia, single-session training has been offered by myriad organisations including Cultural Infusion (not-for-profit nongovernment organisation [NGO]), Bangarra Dance Theatre (Indigenous dance company), Islamic Museum of Australia, and Foundation House (refugee support agency).

In describing a Greek teacher PD program on intercultural education, Hajisoteriou et al. (2019) note that as in Australia, most literature on such initiatives fails to explain, 'explicitly and in thorough detail, the content and format of such programmes' (p. 167). Nine pages of their article is devoted to thorough description of how teachers were taught to challenge stereotypes. This included designing and implementing interventions in their schools while communicating with course coordinators and presenting their results as a course assignment. However, they also highlight another common dilemma with such programs, noting, 'It is rather difficult to assess our intervention in terms of its effectiveness in stereotype deconstruction' (p. 183).

The dearth of evaluations in relation to ICU and the difficulty in assessing their long-term impact is part of a much broader issue. A Smith Family (2016) report on improving educational disadvantage in Australia noted that despite billions of dollars being spent on such programs annually, it was unclear how effective they were 'because few have been evaluated, and fewer still have been evaluated with student outcomes as a focus' (Rorris et al., 2011 cited in The Smith Family, p. 18).



Given that attempting to deliver ICU without adequate care and skills can actually make things worse for minority group members, effective teacher training in this area is of the utmost importance.



Some teacher ICU education that has been evaluated has been delivered with partners including universities and specialist providers. Examples include the BRIDGE (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) Program (Asia Education Foundation, 2015) and the Doing Diversity: Intercultural Understanding in Primary and Secondary Schools Research Project (Halse et al., 2015).

The BRIDGE Program is a PD program managed by the Asia Education Foundation that builds Australian teacher capacity in ICU through the development of cross-country school partnerships. It connects 226 Australian school communities with others in Indonesia, Korea, China, Thailand, and Malaysia and includes in-country visits, webinars, school visits, home stays, and a web-based ICU toolkit for teachers. Evaluation has found it successful at supporting intercultural engagement, although one deficit noted was 'many BRIDGE schools do not yet see the challenging of cultural stereotypes and prejudices and/or the negotiation of cultural differences as being central to intercultural understanding in education' (Asia Education Foundation, 2015, p. 25).

The Doing Diversity project collaborated with 12 diverse Melbourne primary and secondary schools over 3 years to examine the factors promoting ICU. It delivered 3 days of PD to principals and intercultural capability coordinators, and schools were asked to complete Together for Humanity's (TFH's) online intercultural capability modules. Some staff also attended face-to-face workshops, developed interschool networks to share intercultural knowledge, and participated in interschool visits. A project website provided shared resources. Evaluation found the greatest improvements in ICU 'in schools where staff actively participated in professional development, particularly the TFH online, professional development modules' (Halse et al., 2015, p. 7). It recommended continuous PD for teachers to maintain ICU in schools because this can diminish over time through staff turnover.

Given that attempting to deliver ICU without adequate care and skills can actually make things worse for minority group members (Sue et al., 2009), effective teacher training in this area is of the utmost importance.

METHODOLOGY

A phenomenological qualitative research methodology was utilised, drawing primarily on individual semi structured interviews. This approach offers a level of detail and rich, in-depth data ‘into the lived experiences of participants offering nuanced accounts that are more specific to the situation than quantitative data’ (Watkins et al., 2018, p. 10). Central to a qualitative approach is its commitment to researching the phenomenon of focus from the frame of reference of the research participants (Renjith et al., 2021), in this case teachers’ perspectives on the TFH PD to increase their capacity and preparedness to integrate ICU ‘on the ground’ in their classrooms.

SITES

Site 1 was a cluster of four regional NSW central schools catering to students from Kindergarten to Year 12. They participated in a 1-day teacher PD program early in 2021. The schools are located in the Western Riverina, which is part of an agricultural hub and includes the city of Griffith, and surrounding townships of Darlington Point, Leeton, Carrathool, Hillston, Narrandera, and Jerilderie. These schools self-describe as having small cohorts of predominantly White and some Aboriginal students and very few from other diverse cultural backgrounds.

Site 2 was a public primary school in Sydney’s Macarthur region, located in a new Camden housing estate. Their PD took place after school over three separate days in 2021. This school is relatively new, and the student cohort is from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Site 3 was a public secondary school located in an inner southern suburb of Sydney with a diverse student cohort. It participated in PD after school over two separate days in 2021.

A predominantly Caucasian Brisbane high school also participated in the PD for three after-school sessions during 2021 and 2022.

All six schools in NSW are operated by the NSW Department of Education, and the school in Queensland is operated by Queensland Department of Education. The schools in NSW self-selected for their staff to undertake the PD program conducted by the Together for Humanity Foundation. The school in Queensland chose to participate in the PD program after being approached by TFH.

PARTICIPANTS

Thirty-one teachers who completed the face-to-face PD program took part in individual semi structured interviews with a member of the independent research team. Each interview took approximately 15 min to 20 min. Demographics for this cohort are reported in Table 2.

Gender	Female	26
	Male	5
Time since teaching qualification	Not stated	1
	Less than 10 years	9
	Over 10 years	19
School type	Primary	5
	Combined K-12	17
	High school	9
Time at current school	Not stated	7
	Less than 1 year	1
	1-3 years	5
	4-10 years	10
	Over 10 years	8
Teaching positions	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs	1
	English	5
	Geography	1
	History	1
	Mathematics	2
	Physical education	2
	Primary	5
	Principal	2
	Assistant principal	1
	Special needs support	4
	Undisclosed	5
	Visual arts	1
Ethnicity	Aboriginal	2
	Arabic	1
	Australian	18
	South Pacifica	2
	European	7
	Eurasian	1
Language spoken at home, other than English	No	26
	Yes	4
	Language	Arabic Fijian Greek Italian
Faith/religion or neither	Not stated	6
	No	11
	Yes	14
	Faith/religion	Christian Catholic Orthodox Spiritual

DATA COLLECTION

Individual semi structured interviews with teachers occurred on site or online either during or after the completion of the PD program.

Individual semi structured interviews, while allowing researchers to compare responses to the same set of questions, also provide flexibility to participants and researchers to explore new information related to the research area (Adams, 2015). This approach enabled teachers to raise and discuss concerns of key importance to them in relation to the ICU PD in their particular school environments.

Teachers were invited to share their experiences of and insights into the training. Prompts included teachers' reflections of the strengths and limitations of the program, topics covered, hoped-for benefits, value in tying the program to curriculum, perceived program impacts (self, relationships, school communities), and suggested improvements. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were taken across program delivery and interviews, including notations of nonverbal data (e.g., body language, connections, teacher participation) and contextual observations.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research team conducted a thematic analysis of the data using NVivo 12. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide, the material was read repeatedly with the aim of identifying themes, patterns, categories, and case examples from the raw data. Thematic analysis is common practice in qualitative research as a means of developing thick descriptions of key themes derived from the analysis. The literature, interview data, and field notes allowed triangulation of the data sets and the further development of a comprehensive understanding of the scope and impact on practice outcomes for teachers, their students, and the overall school communities.

ETHICS

Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics, NSW SERAP Department of Education Ethics Committees, and Queensland Department of Education approved this research.



Individual semi structured interviews ... enabled teachers to raise and discuss concerns of key importance to them.



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

BASELINE SITUATION IN SCHOOLS

At the beginning of the PD program, some teachers voiced uncertainty and lack of knowledge about what ICU entails and how they could teach it effectively. This teacher, for example, expressed a lack of confidence and understanding of both what ICU means and how it should best be taught:

That's tricky. So individually? Or as ... I don't know if this is going to sound right, you have to build your skills to do it, to be able to [teach ICU]. Yeah, that is tricky.

Teachers described frustration with the limited guidance available:

I don't know. I've read what I have to do in the syllabuses that I teach. And, I try and do that to the best of my ability and hope that I'm doing it right. But, there's not a lot of guidance.

Some teachers found it hard to tie ICU's abstract language to practical classroom applications and to experiential material that really matters for students:

When you've got a syllabus document, you've got your outcomes and then they unpack each of those outcomes and they say, 'Right, some of the things that you might expect to see or things that you might be able to do to teach this outcome, it's all there.' And then, you get to inclusiveness, diversity. And, it's a paragraph it's about that big with lots of gobblede-gook.

For others, ICU was viewed as primarily learning about and understanding other cultures, reflecting a more passive approach to ICU:

[ICU is] just understanding other cultures, right? And understanding the practices in which other cultures value, and just being respectful of that and mindful of that and learning about that.

Underscoring these teachers' comments, a recent report found that while teachers may acquire information about teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds through their own teaching experiences, this is an unreliable replacement for professional knowledge. The report also found that although PD opportunities are available, teacher comments suggested there are gaps in the critical interrogation of ICU and its application across different teaching contexts (Watkins et al., 2019, pp 53–54).

A limited grasp of what ICU involves and how to teach it effectively makes it challenging for teachers to implement ICU in their curriculum and develop a coherent approach. Without clarity in their understandings of ICU, teachers may be hesitant to implement it in their curriculum.

Teachers also spoke about the cultural diversity activities being conducted in their schools prior to their participation in the TFH training. Many stated that they wished such activities could be conducted with greater consistency. They felt that having specific teachers as their drivers jeopardised the activity if those teachers later moved schools. Particular examples included a wish that

events that showcase different nationalities, such as Harmony Day or mini-Olympics, take place annually. They expressed frustration that teachers were so stretched for time and resources that such activities often fell by the wayside. One teacher said:

We've done Harmony Day; we did it once or twice in 13 years. The kids really enjoy it. We did dancing and singing, a whole day of activities, kids were divided into groups and you choose a culture and you do stuff related to that culture. To celebrate that every year would be good.

NAIDOC Week was observed with greater regularity and consistency in many schools. Teachers saw it as something that should also be marked annually, although with their limited resources, some said they could only include guest speakers on a biennial basis:

We always have NAIDOC Day. Every second year we try and get somebody around, maybe an artist or somebody who works in education comes out and tells the stories, to share with the kids their culture.

Another teacher also emphasised the importance of connecting families with broader social support:

It's building relationships with the families of different cultures for them to feel that they can talk to you. We found there were quite a few cultures that didn't find friends from that culture. So we used to try and match them together. It was almost like dating, match them together with another family that speaks that language, so that's continued on within the community.

One teacher described involving a grandparent with limited English in a school program and hoped such activity could be more formalised within the school community:

Doing playgroup, we had a grandma that used to come, and it was her way of learning English. We'd give her a few words every day and she'd teach the younger children a word in her language.

Diverse cultural expression was also celebrated through a regular visiting musical program in another school. An international school partnership was formed between a rural-based school with one in Korea, auspiced by the Korean Partnership Program and the University of New England. Some schools reported engaging in interschool visits in the interests of promoting and celebrating cultural diversity.

Some other programs that had already been implemented by schools included displaying different national flags,

commemorating Anzac Day, and looking at it from the perspective of a Turkish teacher, as well as sharing varying types of food from different cultures in a geography class.

Teachers expressed the intention and motivation for them undertaking the TFH PD to help promote a sense of belonging among their students and to help build an inclusive school culture. One said:

We're trying to help our students to think for themselves, to perhaps alter the attitudes that they come from home with, so that they can be kinder to each other. I find a lot of our kids are very cruel to each other and to some teachers. So I think being able to help them conquer that is important.

Another noted that this was particularly important to counter the social isolation felt by families who recently settled in the area:

Most people live away from their families and their cultural groups. And I think us being able to create an inclusive and not judgemental learning environment in our schools can only have positive outcomes.

A kindergarten teacher observed that these outcomes were not only emotional, saying, 'If they feel happy and supported, and loved, then they learn.' Another teacher expressed how she tried to create a sense of belonging with her students:

I often refer to the kids, 'We're not just a school, we are a family.' And they are part of my family when they come to school. So, it's really a strong partnership and connection.

“

If they feel happy and supported, and loved, then they learn.

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I'm from an Anglo Saxon background and often I fall into that trap as well of 'I don't have a culture myself.'



CHALLENGING CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS

The PD led to important outcomes for both metropolitan and rural/regional teachers, including the recognition of implicit bias and development of perspective-taking skills. Teachers valued having biases revealed and recognised the centrality of this for ICU and their capacity to build an inclusive, culturally responsive, and equitable school learning environment to best support all their students.

The PD interactive scenarios were seen to be particularly useful in prompting self-reflection. This teacher, for example, observed the importance of having bias uncovered for gaining insights into how their understandings of racism's impacts can influence interactions with students:

It was helpful hearing [Facilitator 1] talking about [ICU] scenarios from her perspective and then what her students would be feeling or seeing or—and then having [Facilitator 2] also putting scenarios of how would you feel, and putting us on the spot. We forget we don't understand. Unless you really experience any prejudice or racism, I don't think people will really realise what damage it can do.

Developing awareness of one's implicit cultural bias and the impact that can have on students was highly valued in both city and rural/regional schools. Given the low-diversity nature of the particular rural/regional schools (as identified by the teachers) and their geographical localities, several teachers admitted that prior to undertaking the PD, they were oblivious to the existence of their own 'culture' since white culture is so normalised they failed to recognise it as a distinct cultural entity, as evidenced in this teachers statement:

I'm from an Anglo Saxon background and often I fall into that trap as well of 'I don't have a culture myself.' But just hearing those different things [in the PD], like even though we are from that monocultural background we do have our own different culture within our own culture. That was, like, 'Oh, that makes a lot of sense.' And how that does impact, like just simple things, in your everyday classroom.

Following the ICU PD, some teachers were surprised to recognise they were less inclusive than they had believed themselves to be. Referring to a training activity, a Bingo-style game in which they ticked off intercultural awareness and inclusiveness activities implemented in their school, one commented:

We could only tick off one at our table, and even if we, this year, aim to tick off a couple more and work towards completing all of them. That opened up my eyes, and I was like, 'Wow, we are not as culturally inclusive as I thought.' I thought we were doing a good job, but after coming here, [I realised] we aren't, and it needs to be fixed.

Another made a similar point:

It feels like we don't have anyone batting for the EALD [English as an additional language or dialect] kids. I'm always batting for the Aboriginal kids and making sure that they're getting what they need. But maybe there's no one in the EALD kids' corner, and there needs to be. We were saying we don't really do Harmony Week, our canteen isn't very good at catering for other cultures. We have a lot to learn, but we need someone to drive that.

Assumptions by some teachers, particularly those from regional/rural schools, that being well travelled or living in a culturally diverse city necessarily provides greater ICU were also challenged by the PD, as a teacher disclosed:

It's revealed a bit as to how lacking some of my colleagues are in terms of their own intercultural awareness. I think up until this point, I had assumed that they had quite a high [intercultural awareness] comparatively to the rest of the community population ... because they've had the opportunities to travel, to go to big cities and live there, or they come from cities like that, sizeable places where they can engage with different cultures ... rather than just on the surface level.

Some teachers found it problematic that not all their colleagues were sufficiently well informed on ICU and cultural diversity within schools. They valued conversations around ICU to help promote and foster respect and understanding between staff, as well as enabling them to talk to students about complex situations. One said:

It's opening up everyone else's eyes. So having the majority of the staff here to be able to get them to think outside of their own beliefs and judgements and to be open to that cultural diversity.

Through the PD, teachers gained crucial ICU insights, including perspective taking, that led them to realise the potential misinterpretation of the underlying dynamics or causes of their students' classroom behaviours due to a lack of ICU expertise. As this head teacher implied, this can lead to teachers making misplaced responses, potentially negatively impacting students' sense of belonging, social inclusion, and learning experiences:

Being able to empower my staff to have the conversations in class, to look at things like the underlying values instead of behaviours, those kind of things. And we've started this journey at the beginning of the year, looking at poverty and how poverty affects students, and this [PD] just builds on it again. I just would really like people to stop looking at behaviours and start looking at why those behaviours are there. That would make my job a lot easier, especially with the wellbeing part, because if a child is acting up, there's a reason.

This teacher reflecting on the ICU PD remarked:

For me it [the PD] was a reminder that each of our students has a unique history, cultural background and issues.

It might be concluded that ICU PD may have a range of indirect effects, including reducing discipline problems or handling them differently and potentially reducing teacher attrition (Karp, 2023).

Many teachers reported that perspective taking and empathy were stimulated through PD group activities, especially through being witness to presenters' personal stories and so coming to appreciate the presenters' points of view. Here, a rural teacher described how she learned from the experiences of one of the PD presenters who explained her feelings and experiences as a female Muslim school student in a low-diversity school:

It was interesting to listen to the lady who was presenting and talk about how she felt when she was at school in Perth. That was a school that didn't have Muslim students and they were one of the first Muslim families with headscarves. She was saying how she

overcame all those things and how it made her feel, coming in wearing a headscarf into a society and a community that weren't used to it.

A teacher from a minority ethno-cultural background used their own experience to illustrate as problematic the need to 'fit in' with the majority in the spirit of 'sameness'. This teacher described feeling pressured in a previous school to conform to the majority. Instead of embracing individual uniqueness and finding ways to accommodate people's differences, the teacher's school colleagues prioritised conforming to accepted practice rather than embracing cultural diversity in the school setting:

I'm from X country. Here [in Australia], it's certainly a different culture and you have to adapt to this Australian way of life and ... learning to adapt is quite a hard thing. But ... you get to know what to do and what to expect. I remember when I first started teaching over here ... For example, looking somebody in the eye in the X culture you're not allowed to do because it disrespects your elders. It took me many years to be able to look at somebody in the eye and then speak to them. When I went to Y school, [I] was the minority—the majority were white teachers. I was the only one that was different in any way. When I speak—I used to look down and then they said, 'You've got to look at us.'

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That opened up my eyes, and I was like, 'Wow, we are not as culturally inclusive as I thought.'

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The sentence starters and guide to dialogues provided during the course were really valuable to me



Understanding the perspective of 'others' and being able to empathise with that was fostered, for some teachers, through active engagement with 'belongingness' activities:

One of the activities we had to do, we had ... something on our forehead and ... [the facilitator] said, 'Find your team.' And we had to try and find it without talking. That was a fun activity. In the end we worked out we were all supposed to be together because we had different colours and we went by colours, then we went by numbers and then we went, 'Hang on, no, we're all supposed to be a team.' So it didn't matter what colour we had, what number we had. That was good to see that. To start with, one person was by themselves and we're sort of pushing them away. So then we talked about how that person was feeling and related that to people in the classroom, if they only had that one nationality, how they might feel. That was really interesting to do.

Some teachers described experiencing a renewed appreciation for keeping in the foreground that students from diverse cultures may have different ways of learning and the ICU implications this has, for not only teaching but also assessment:

Just having teachers be a bit more mindful in terms of the children they are teaching, that not everybody learns the same way. And teachers know that, they're not silly. They know how to incorporate things for the curriculum. But I think also understanding that even though they all learn differently, there's different ways to assess learning. Teachers do know that, but this [PD] clarified it a little bit more.

Teachers, particularly rural/regional teachers, highly valued learning methods and strategies that promoted ICU in predominantly low-diversity schools:

The biggest thing for me [about the PD] was working out how to help with cultural understanding for kids in these settings that we find ourselves in—these monocultural settings. Diversifying their understanding and experiences even though we don't have access to lots of different cultures for them to see for themselves all the time, but different ways of doing that for them.

Having such skills and confidence, gained from the PD, to move beyond the 'safe' in conveying ICU meant teachers felt more able to engage with tough issues, deconstruct barriers, and diminish students' fears. One teacher commented:

The sentence starters and guide to dialogues provided during the course were really valuable to me, and just having that opportunity to discuss how to talk to students when they say offensive things.

After completing the ICU PD, this teacher felt empowered by a deeper understanding of how to initiate constructive conversations around contentious topics and establish clear boundaries:

I am a teacher with a better understanding of how to discuss controversial issues and set boundaries at the beginning.

A head teacher observed:

It [PD] will help the teachers that just need to [have] confidence to go outside their comfort zone. And that's my big thing with my staff, I'm hoping they'll go out of their comfort zone. They might be afraid to give it a go, we tell the kids every day just give it a go. But the teachers won't sometimes, because they're afraid of being judged, they're afraid of what the repercussions may be. If they don't do it right, then are they going to get slammed by parents? Are they going to get slammed by the department, the principal, executive. So hopefully [the PD] will give them the confidence to go out of their comfort zone, and be that risk taker. Do what we tell the kids to do, have a go.

The PD enhanced teachers' ability to recognise the environmental conditions that are vital prerequisites, ongoing essentials, and longer term benefits of integrating ICU into curriculum:

Students with disabilities, students who have problems ... need to feel safe so that they can access the curriculum because if they don't feel safe, they don't want to learn, they don't want to be in their class because they know the other kids are saying things about them.



what's the most important thing? Why are we here? It's to make those students the best they can be.



In the absence of experiences and feelings of security, students are compelled to monitor their environment for potential risk or intimidation, which hinders their ability to explore and learn. TFH PD assisted teachers to appreciate environmental conditions such as safety, inclusion, belonging, and trauma-aware perspectives that helped teachers to construct with their students a secure learning environment, as these two teachers pointed out:

The Together for Humanity program isn't just about cultural differences. We have a lot of differences in our sexualities. There's gender bias, there's religious bias, there's a whole heap of different biases. Being educated to recognise those differences makes it easier to be inclusive with your curriculum because you have a better understanding of where some kids are coming from ... if you know about these things and you can plan ahead, you don't have to know the students to be inclusive.

You're meant to look at both sides of the story. You don't know what baggage they're [bringing] ... I know with our group of kids that most of them are bringing a pretty big bag. It's a lot to unpack.

Teachers also saw the advantages of cultivating ICU not only for their students but also for their families and communities, ensuring that students and their families are not alienated from curriculum content by having, for example, a 'white' point of view, which may be different to their own, imposed on them. Teachers appreciated that incorporating ICU in their teaching could enable students and their families and communities to see themselves represented in the school curriculum:

A lot of the kids in my class don't identify their Aboriginal roots. But that doesn't mean they're not taking those stories home and someone's being offended by the fact that I've done something that's very white and have not thought ahead and thought, well, maybe this might be a bit offensive to some people.

In summary, the ICU PD had a positive impact for teachers in both city and rural areas, helping them to gain crucial ICU insights and skills to build inclusive learning environments. As reported in the following chapter, a majority of teachers underwent a shift in their understanding of ICU throughout the course of the PD workshops; they described an improved comprehension and increased self-reflection regarding ICU concepts and practices.

EXAMINING TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FOLLOWING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

[I got] a better understanding of intercultural understanding and ways that I am able to use that with children in the classroom. (Teacher on completing the ICU PD)

Teachers expressed gratitude to TFH for providing an external source of recognition of the issues that confront them and for helping guide their school community towards a deeper awareness of ICU. One commented,

Sometimes you need professional learning opportunities like this, to remind staff of what is really important for our kids and our school. It is our students. You can get tied up with your programming and discipline, but ultimately, what's the most important thing? Why are we here? It's to make those students the best they can be.

Undertaking the PD saw a shift in teachers' confidence regarding their understandings of ICU and capacity to effectively unpack elements of ICU. However, teachers also varied in the emphasis they placed on particular components of ICU, as described below. These variations may reflect teachers' prior experiences and exposure to ICU, such as their teaching context (e.g., culturally diverse/low-diversity schools or subjects they teach) as well as their personal beliefs and values.

Mutually Responsive Cultural Learning

For some teachers, the core of ICU centred on mutual cultural learning and exchange that emphasised reciprocity and valuing the contributions of others from diverse backgrounds. These teachers emphasised awareness of the importance of being open and empathetic to different cultures in order to learn from others, to develop non-judgemental cultural awareness and expand knowledge. This teacher's perspective exemplifies this point of view:

ICU is about understanding that we, as a nation, are a nation of different people from different cultures, from different walks of life ... and we need to accept everybody for who they are. We need to learn about their cultures and expand our knowledge and not judge.

Reciprocity and embracing differences in order to grow as individuals and groups within diverse cultural settings was central to a number of these participants' conceptions of ICU. These views cohere with recent research reconceptualising social integration as a genuinely two-way process of social and cultural exchange (Klarenbeek & Weide, 2020). This teacher explained,

[ICU is] thinking about other people's perspectives on life and ... realising that whatever culture you're from, you're not the only culture possibly that's in the area. Being happy to accept differences. They've got different beliefs and different experiences. And if you can use those experiences to learn, well, that's a good thing for you.

Acceptance of others different to ourselves enables a positive and respectful interaction between people from diverse cultures in this teacher's perception of ICU:

[ICU is] raising awareness of the broader society so in terms of the different cultures you would encounter in the workplace or outside of the school environment and being able to interact with them in a way that's respectful to both yourself and to them.

ICU, for these participant teachers, was understood as more than raising awareness of diverse cultures, expanding personal knowledge about these cultures to foster acceptance and respect and being able to showcase such ICU within the wider community, outside the school setting. Thus, ICU nurtured in school settings was confidently perceived by these teachers as positively fostering social wellbeing both within and beyond the school setting.

A Focus on Empathy and Shared Humanity

A somewhat different emphasis, that of shared humanity, while at the same time acknowledging and accepting difference, was accentuated by other teachers in their understanding of ICU. For these teachers, everyone—despite differences such as skin colour, ethnicity, religion, and culture—is understood to share being human and have feelings such as fears, love, and insecurities. They aimed to integrate ICU into their teaching from an empathic standpoint, finding common ground, explaining ICU as this teacher did:

... trying to get kids ... to develop an understanding that ... It doesn't matter where you come from, what you look like, what colour skin you are. Everyone has the same feelings on the inside.

“

Ramadan is not so different to Lent, they have similar values, it's just the perspective is slightly different.

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Another teacher observed:

Muslim people aren't terrorists, they're not out bombing things. Ramadan is not so different to Lent, they have similar values, it's just the perspective is slightly different. Same with Jewish people. Right up until the New Testament, it's all the same story.

Building empathy towards other cultures and religions was seen by a number of teachers as one of the most important outcomes of the ICU PD. This teacher noted:

We still see people being judged over their skin colour, or the way they speak, or their beliefs. And I'm hoping that when we start talking about the beauty of those different cultures, that people start to feel, 'Wow, we're so lucky to have all this. I can talk to someone who comes from this background about something that I'm really interested in.'

Recognition of the importance of empathy for ICU has support in research on reducing prejudice and discrimination (Bobba & Crocetti 2022). These teachers aimed to nurture an understanding in their students that despite individual diversity (such as skin colour, religion, and cultural practices), recognising a shared humanity enables connections to be built across what otherwise might be seen as divides and fosters a sense of common identity. They aimed to help students develop an awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity in a practical and transformative manner rather than through simplistic or token acknowledgment of concepts related to cultural diversity:

I think it's about developing empathy and understanding, trying to stamp out racism. I think for generations and generations, it's been very inbred, that racism, and just trying to get kids before they develop that, to try and let them develop an understanding that everyone feels the same.

Further, through empathy, teachers considered students' perspectives and tried to understand their points of view, creating a sense of understanding and acceptance.

As this teacher commented:

I think it [PD] was just a reminder that sometimes you expect a certain level [of understanding] and you forget that the kids haven't got that.

Putting oneself in others' shoes and being able to understand others' different viewpoints was reflected as central to ICU by many participant teachers who defined it as:

Being sensitive to other people's needs.

Trying to build resilience and caring and empathy in our students.

Introducing the concept of shared humanity could even be seen as extending, or naming the ground for, the ACARA ICU definition. A hesitancy and discomfort with the terminology of 'tolerance' was expressed by some teachers. The concept of tolerance has been critiqued for its focus on reciprocal non-interference with others over interconnectedness and mutual engagement—that is, leaving people free to pursue their needs and interests provided that they do not infringe on others (Brown, 2014). Some teachers did not see prejudice and tolerance as mutually exclusive concepts: When someone is willing to 'put up with' something, they do not discriminate but can still remain intolerant in thoughts and beliefs. Wittenberg (2014) gives the example of 'I do not like the colour of your skin but I will still serve you not to lose your custom' (para. 5).

Living with diversity can require tolerance, some teachers said, as although not as preferable as acceptance, it is a better alternative to experiencing discrimination. Tolerance, understood as not imposing our own ways and values onto 'others' different to us, is reflected in this teacher's ICU perspective:

I don't want to say the word ... tolerant is probably not the right word either, but ... I probably should say tolerant ... I don't want it to sound like you're made to do something, but in one way you are, because it makes you sit back and go, hang on a second. We're not the only ones here. I didn't make the rules, somebody else did.... it teaches you, don't push yourself on somebody else.

'Treating Everyone as Equal and the Same'

Treating everyone equally without exception was expressed by one teacher as their continuing approach to ICU and difference. The teacher gave an example from their school's swimming carnival:

Everyone is included, regardless. So for instance, our swimming carnival, it's K to 12. Everyone does a lap, everyone, and the Year 12s will get in and help the little ones and so forth. We have a student that has cerebral palsy, he's included in it. He gets in and he does it. We don't discriminate, everyone's equal. We're on an equal playing field.

In this example, the teacher and students at the carnival acknowledge this student's difference and see their courage and participation supported; thus, inclusion is demonstrated emerging from and within the school community as a result. However, where difference is not recognised, treating everyone as equal without regard to their different individual and contextual starting points may perpetuate inequality rather than promote true equality among diverse students. This approach can inadvertently exacerbate discrimination, as the needs of those students with different or particular needs can become invisible and so find their needs unaddressed when treated the same as others—for example, students of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds with different needs related to clothing, food, and prayer. As Watkins et al. (2019) point out, students from immigrant backgrounds 'are often faced with the dilemma of in/visibility' (p. 8); while they may draw attention for various reasons, they may lack necessary support and their particular needs often go unnoticed.

Teaching ICU in low-diversity schools

The uneven distribution of resources across schools, influenced by social, geographical, and cultural contexts, shapes the opportunities available for teachers to implement ICU praxis.

Teachers based in schools in rural and remote areas of NSW reflected on the cultural homogeneity that characterised their school community and the impact this was having on the perspectives of the students in their schools. Many teachers reported anxiety among students towards exposure to other cultures within different contexts and indeed at the prospect of travelling to metropolitan centres for further study. One said:

These kids rarely go away on holidays. It's almost like growing up in a bubble and being completely terrified of what's outside that. And rather than take a risk and go outside that bubble, they will happily sacrifice aspects of their life to sit and be comfortable. It's hard to make them become risk takers.

Another observed:

We have a lot of problems with kids who don't value other cultures because they don't come in contact with other cultures. We have no other religions represented. We have no students that speak another language at home. They have a lot of stereotypes that are very hard to dispel because you only know what you see on the TV. At a school where you have a lot of different cultures, I think, it would be a lot easier to find common ground.

Some described their communities as being predominantly Anglo-dominant, with an often small number of Indigenous students. One teacher said, 'We don't have a problem with open racism, but there is an undercurrent in the town.' Their hope was that ICU education could ultimately transform such communities:

We can only start this change by educating the kids. Hopefully those students would be able to go home and educate their parents. And they will be the change that we would love to build in our community.

Teachers in low-diversity schools, particularly, expressed a greater sense of responsibility to become the 'experts' in ICU practices. For this teacher from a regional school, ICU entailed learning about the 'other' and their differences and ensuring that students also understood these differences:

[ICU is teaching] how things are done differently to how we do things, and just making sure that students have that understanding.

The responsibility to be the primary bearer of ICU knowledge and become the 'expert' about diverse cultural perspectives and traditions places an extra burden on teachers:

I think a lot of the time, especially in X minority cultural group background, that they do a lot of things that I didn't know. It would have been good to have that understanding prior to coming here [current school], so then you can actually teach children, 'Well, no, they wear these specific pieces of clothes and this is what it means', especially with Anglo children, they just don't know. They don't know because they're not exposed to it. And if they're not exposed to it, then they're not going to know. And anyone different will be, 'Well, why are you like that? You are different.' If they don't know, they don't know. And that's why it's important to be teaching it to them.

This kind of approach can inadvertently carry a risk of maintaining and reproducing a dichotomy of 'us and them'.

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We don't have a problem with open racism, but there is an undercurrent in the town.

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In certain situations, it could intensify existing stereotypes and racist ideologies held about culturally diverse people and solidify the idea of 'us' as ideal (Colic-Peisker et al., 2016).

Teachers reported, however, that their participation in the ICU PD program would help them to counter the prevailing monocultural mindset within their school community by presenting an outlook of inclusiveness. Some teachers in low-diversity schools planned to use literature to try and increase student agency and help change their students' perceptions of the wider community:

One of these novels talks about moving from the country to the city and that's exactly what we want to encourage some of our kids to do. Particularly, those that are university minded have all these fears, other cultures being one, and the stereotypes associated with what they've heard but never encountered.

Teachers believed the PD would assist them to cultivate a sense of inclusiveness instead of retaining the concept of 'other' when their students encountered people seemingly 'different' to themselves, as these teachers stated:

We've spent a long time trying to build resilience and caring and empathy in our students. And it's nice to come to a program that will give us the tools to make that happen in a more organised way.

It was very easy to see how it [ICU] slots into the primary curriculum. We're almost a monocultural school. So it was really interesting to see how we can diversify the cultural understandings for our kids even in those settings, different activities to expose them and develop understanding for them. That was something I've definitely taken home from here.

Empowering Students to Share Their Diverse Cultures, Learning From Each Other, Sharing Connections

Some teachers, following the PD program, took the view that students from minority groups could be empowered to share their cultures and so other students could learn and understand directly from them. This proactive approach is made more possible for teachers in high-diversity schools. It opens up opportunities for active learning and can foster forming connections and empathy. This position resonated with teachers who included the importance of fostering genuine dialogue about their own position and others' in their understanding of ICU, as this teacher implied:

[ICU is] embracing and understanding the different cultural diversities that we have on this planet.

Direct student-to-student connection, communication, perspective taking, and embracing differences and similarities can also disrupt stereotypes in the classroom that position those from minority groups as lacking valuable knowledge and as 'unqualified' (Lopez, 2013).

Within culturally diverse metropolitan contexts, teachers reported situations in which their students spoke confidently and comfortably about their heritage and customs. These included activities implemented as a direct result of participation in the ICU PD training, including Harmony Day events and by simply saying 'good morning' to each other in different languages. This teacher observed:

In Harmony Week, we were talking about different head covers. I have a Muslim student and she was able to stand up and talk about it, and she was so proud. I thought this was just a magic moment. Because she wasn't able to talk about her religion before. I [value] having those talks with the students, just making them feel they are accepted for who they are.

Reflecting on their current school's experience, this teacher illustrated their understanding of ICU as involving diverse students' participation on an equal footing in respectful conversations:

Each year, we get connected to a school over in Korea, and my secondary students have video conferences and we share a range of different topics. They ask questions of each other. The kids just love it.

Embracing both similarities and differences, these students can observe the shared humanity between themselves and the Korean students. The fact that the students at this school welcome and enjoy this experience is an indication of how intercultural dialogue can promote shared realities in understanding while also celebrating differences (Maine & Vrikki, 2021).

Supporting students' different cultural expressions, a number of teachers concurred, is beneficial in empowering students to have a voice and celebrate their unique cultural backgrounds within a multicultural setting. This teacher consciously made this point:

I'm more mindful about these children have a voice for their culture, so everybody can join in with their culture as well. Obviously because of the area that we're in, not to be afraid of that culture, but to really learn more from that culture in the classroom would be amazing, especially the story side of things and music and that sort of thing. And not be scared to share their culture or not to hide behind or be afraid of expressing it.

Following the PD, most teachers emphasised dismantling stereotypes and normalising diversity: They expressed a nuanced understanding of ICU. While recognising diverse cultural contexts, the teachers resisted broadly categorising groups of people. This teacher, for example, emphasised the importance of recognising diversity within diversity, stating:

With the Aboriginal kids ... you have such a massive range in the kids who have no cultural experience of their own culture, and some kids who are very attuned and have had their culture passed down to them. Then you have kids who have their culture passed down to them, but—because we're in Wiradjuri land here; they're not Wiradjuri—[they are] from a different area. You can't just bundle them all into, oh, well, they're Aboriginal therefore they know or they feel ... one thing. It's different depending on who they are.

Accounting for the wide diversity that may occur within cultural groups enables stereotypes and stigma to be dismantled. Diversity becomes normalised. The normalisation of diversity as a focus of ICU was linked with diminishing racism by one teacher, who observed, 'ICU is about trying to stamp out racism.'

In sum, at the completion of the PD course, the majority of teachers distinguished a range of elements of ICU. No matter which components of ICU they gave prominence to—connecting, engaging with, and learning from people from diverse cultures; recognising commonalities, differences, and a shared humanity; normalising diversity; erasing racism; fostering respect and dialogue with all on an equal footing—ICU was generally recognised by teachers as requiring changes in social relations.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

This section examines the operational processes of TFH's face-to-face teacher PD program through four dimensions: program activities, stepping out of personal comfort zones, program duration, and program timing.

Activities

Research by Garrido et al. (2020) point out that teacher training in ICU requires a balance of theory, hands-on activities, and interactions in which teachers immerse themselves in intercultural activities. Not all teachers involved in the TFH PD experienced the balance of theory, activities, and interaction in the same way. For a few, there were too many interactive elements, and they felt pushed out of their comfort zones. Most stated there were not enough interactive elements; they desired more, particularly strategies tailored to their specific school contexts and further interactive input on how to engage in difficult intercultural conversations with students.

The PD's emphasis on the importance of the core values of ICU was valuable for teachers, and many saw how they could readily apply these in the classroom. As one teacher outlined:

Looking at values is pretty important, because particularly in the senior years, it comes up a lot when you're reading a text. What are the values being conveyed in the text? That's definitely something I could see myself using.

Another echoed:

Well, I think they [core values discussed] will link in very well, especially with resilience and respect being the main ones ... We've just integrated that [core values] as well, which is what we're implementing [in class] at the moment.

Many participating teachers felt that if they were well versed in ICU, they would be able to impart these values to their students, creating a community of mutual respect where everyone felt valued and appreciated, as this teacher noted:

The fundamentals that they're [TFH] getting to about core values and respect and people's beliefs and everything being inclusive, is exceptionally important. It's telling us what we should already know. If we don't understand those core values and students need to be included, then there's a big problem.

Teachers also commented on how the course encouraged them to explore stereotypes and biases that may exist within their own cultural norms and practices. This reminded them of where their students were in terms of understanding and promoted teachers' respect for the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and practices of their students. One teacher pointed out:

Yeah, I think just that reminder of how difficult it is for kids, that you just do need to realise that it can be a massive shift for them. Even if they're not from a different cultural background, depending on socioeconomics, when they come in in kindergarten you have so many different expectations on the kids.

Most teachers were positive about the various hands-on activities requiring interaction with others as it helped them stay focused during the training session, as this teacher emphasised:

They were fully aware of any times where we mightn't have been as engaged, and they took that time to stop and do something a bit more hands-on that was still teaching us about the area that we were focusing on. There was lots of interaction, there were also times we'd just sit and take in the theories and information. So I don't really think I would do it any differently.

Keeping things interesting helped keep people focus on the training session and stay engaged throughout, as this teacher pointed out:

Everybody at my table has been very much engaged the whole time. Sometimes when you come to these events people are on their phones or they've got their laptops doing emails. Everybody was focused so it seemed to be quite a good measure of the room and what people needed.

However, a number of teachers expressed a need for more school-context-related interaction and even more hands-on activities. They suggested less emphasis on 'being talked to', as one teacher stressed:

A lot of the time, I think they were just talking at us. The engagement sessions, everyone was up and engaged and talking, and then we all sat down. It might've just been the presenter, we were all pretty tired here that day, but I was especially sitting at the back, zoning in and out. It didn't really apply to my school context.

Reasons for teachers' mixed feelings towards the level of hands-on activities and interaction in the PD program may relate to there being, for some, a missing connection and sense of practical relevance to their school context, teachers' diverse learning styles, their existing ICU knowledge and skills, their personal circumstances during the training session (e.g., stress, tiredness), and their physical location within the room in which the training session occurred.

Stepping Out of Personal Comfort Zones

There are numerous ICU teacher development programs both in Australia and globally (see section in Introduction, Approaches to Training Teachers in Intercultural Understanding). However, there remains a lack of understanding of what constitutes good in-service program delivery, particularly as there is limited understanding of what types of program activities most effectively promote ICU. Teachers understandably have varying comfort zones, experiences, and opinions related to ICU PD.

One teacher found the interaction and hands-on activities challenging, explaining that the training session pushed her out of her comfort zone by requiring her to interact with people she didn't know:

I don't like a lot of the mixing, but other people learn like that. I like to get up and stretch, I do feel quite uncomfortable talking to people I don't know, but that's my own insecurity. I know in class, some kids just do not like doing it, so I would never make them do it. They would have the option of going to do something on their own, because it does make some people feel really uncomfortable.

This particular teacher highlighted one critical aspect of intercultural learning—communication and connection with others. Clearly a difficult encounter for some, the ability to move out of one's comfort zone to connect, communicate, and empathise with others is nonetheless an important skill for the purpose of increasing intercultural knowledge and connectedness.

This can be confrontational for those who have little intercultural experience and who may feel uncomfortable connecting with others who are unknown. Connection is an important part of learning about people who may be different to ourselves, and thus, ICU PD that involves connecting and communicating with others may help overcome some of these discomforts. As teachers are often perceived as role models by their students (Lumpkin, 2008; Tualalelei & Halse, 2023; Walton et al., 2013), teachers who struggle with connecting and communicating with others may have difficulty modelling and instilling these skills in their students. Intercultural training sessions designed to help teachers build confidence in connecting and communicating with others can consequently be of benefit in equipping teachers with skills fundamental to a range of teaching and role modelling beyond ICU.



Everybody at my table has been very much engaged the whole time.



Duration

Duration of the PD sessions was reported to be suitable for the time that teachers at participating schools had available. Most teachers were satisfied with the 1-day or after-school teacher PD.

One teacher who completed the 1-day course said, 'I think one day's enough.' Another commented, 'Look, I quite enjoyed the day course,' while another illustrated how a 1-day program, or half-day program, fit in well with teachers' busy schedules:

In terms of the length, we thought it was perfect. Doing workshops after a school day can be, not off-putting, but just teachers are very tired after a day. And that length of the workshop was just perfect.

Some schools ran after-school sessions because that was all they had the capacity to do; one teacher emphasised this by saying, 'Other schools could get maybe their staff [time] off for the day, we just couldn't.' Nevertheless, some of these teachers would have preferred day sessions if possible. One said:

We did have two sessions and it was from 3 to 4.30 or 3 to 5. I think in future it might have been more beneficial to have it on the one day, maybe staff development day where we're all together, doing a PL [professional learning].

Some research finds that teachers may already be overworked and stressed, having little time to dedicate to nonteaching matters (Fox, 2021). This impacts teachers' availability and appetite for PD training sessions that fall outside work hours or take what teachers feel is too much time from their work hours. Based on teacher feedback, it appears that intensive 1-day training programs can best address these obstacles.



I think it's really good as an introduction and it's been fantastic pulling staff together, getting them interested.



Timing

While teachers preferred a short 1-day face-to-face teacher ICU PD program, it was seen by a number to be of more benefit if delivered early on in the school year, as this teacher explained: 'Because I think you're starting the year off fresh with that concept in mind.'

This timing also allows teachers to both plan for and implement knowledge and skills learnt during the program into their teaching throughout the school year.

While a 1-day training session, especially delivered at the beginning of the school year, was deemed achievable for often overburdened teachers numerous teachers mentioned that it would be beneficial to have a follow-up program to evaluate how well the different intercultural teaching methods were implemented and to refine and further improve on them. One commented:

There needs to be follow-up to see how things are going or what have people done. There's so many professional learnings we do and it's never followed up or they hardly follow up to see if you do what you're supposed to do and how effective it was.

Another teacher stated:

I think it's really good as an introduction and it's been fantastic pulling staff together, getting them interested. And then, I think, the follow-up would be important.

Consistency and efficacy of training is however dependent on a range of variables including teachers' absorption of intercultural knowledge and skills during the training, intercultural teaching opportunities during the school year, teachers' existing workloads and stress levels, and available resources, including perceived constraints in the contemporary neoliberal education environment (Tualaulelei et al. 2023). Teachers may also experience confusion about how to best implement intercultural knowledge in classrooms and school settings (Tualaulelei et al. 2023). Therefore, follow-up sessions as suggested by the PD participating teachers would provide opportunities for schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their intercultural teaching methods and locate any gaps in delivery.

Follow-up sessions would also allow more precise contexting of ICU PD to the specific school environment given that different schools have different levels of resources and intercultural capacity. These sessions would allow the school to tailor the implementation of ICU to their unique needs and setting, as this teacher stressed:

I would definitely be interested in learning more. Free access to more resources, all those things. But I suppose if there was a follow-up time where you came into our school and saw how there's been opportunity to put these into practice and observation time and what else we could do next. That would be good, to help us in our own context, because we did have a range of different schools here today and we've all got different things going on and different levels of where we're at with trying to achieve this goal.

Many teachers were keen to have programs developed by TFH that they could effectively and immediately implement in their classrooms, expressing how 'time poor' and under resourced they were. Teachers felt they were given little time to help bring about any transformative change in ways of thinking and acting around cultural diversity. One said:

We're pressed for time and we have to shove the information down the kids' throats. It leaves little time to do things in depth. We're constantly challenged by extracurricular activities that take up time in the classroom.

While teachers preferred face-to-face training and follow-up, some stated that if this was not available (e.g., especially in rural settings), they would like online follow-up sessions to ensure successful ICU implementation, discuss changes, and better tailor implementation methods to their school context:

I think it would be great to have that opportunity. Even if it's not face-to-face, maybe online, I think follow-through would be fantastic.

In sum, while teachers were satisfied with a 1-day training program, particularly considering their very busy and overloaded schedules, they were simultaneously aware of potential challenges to implementing intercultural teaching in their school settings. Therefore, they suggested tailored follow-up sessions and freely available intercultural resources as beneficial for them to confidently implement and further develop the foundational intercultural knowledge and skills gained in the initial teacher ICU PD program.

TEACHERS' NARRATIVES ON INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FOLLOWING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers acknowledged the importance, effectiveness, and relevance of integrating ICU into the curriculum. Both primary and high school teachers recognised ICU's significance as extending beyond the curriculum, thus reinforcing its value in the curriculum. They believed that incorporating ICU in the curriculum not only helps equip students with the skills and knowledge to navigate diverse cultural contexts at school, but also empowers them to thrive in their lives beyond school.

[ICU is] definitely more effective if it ties in with the curriculum.

I think it [ICU] is going to be very helpful for them [students] to understand ... it's not just the curriculum, it's a skill they need for everyday life as well.

Interpersonal relationships and ... getting along with everyone, that's a very important part of life anywhere, wherever you are in the world.

Teachers Reveal Their Obstacles to Integrating Intercultural Understanding in the Curriculum

At the outset of the PD, teachers identified obstacles they experienced to integrating ICU in their classrooms. In the following excerpt, a principal expresses uncertainty about how to consistently incorporate ICU into classrooms rather than just at special events and themed activities. This may be due to lack of guidance around how ICU can be incorporated within existing curriculum as well as a lack of a concrete plan for effective implementation:

Trying to interweave that [ICU] into the everyday teaching of our teachers and classes, whether that happens is a real question mark ... How do you implement it other than having a focus on a week or something and saying, 'Yeah, we're going to do it on this and then we're going to celebrate it.'

Some teachers, from both primary and high school settings, stated their belief that there was more flexibility to integrate ICU in primary school settings than in high school settings. Teachers reported that primary school teachers exercise greater control over curriculum and can place more emphasis on fostering social skills alongside academic learning:

Secondary teachers probably have a bit of a different perspective than primary teachers. They're not as curriculum-driven as secondary teachers are. I think it might be easier ... to work [ICU] in primary than a high school. [In primary school] we are more about building those relationships, and realising that it doesn't matter if the kids learn maths today, if they feel like they're loved and supported, then they're going to pick that up anyway.

A high school teacher commented on the difficulties of balancing ICU with academic learning objectives given time limitations:

I think it [ICU] works very well in primary classrooms. Applying ICU activities into a secondary classroom would be eating away at time that could be focused on the curriculum.

However, a majority of high school teachers still regarded ICU integration in the classroom as important, as this high school teacher observed:

Not enough teachers do it [ICU]. I see it as something that needs to be integrated not taught separately ... that's really important. With English and the flexibility and the fluid nature of English as a subject, it makes for an excellent vehicle to integrate [ICU], as opposed to teaching it as a standalone ... I think that's ... an opportunity.

Teachers generally expressed more confidence in linking ICU with arts and humanities subjects, as opposed to STEM subjects. This may be because three of the seven capabilities developed by ACARA—Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding—are seen as being more relevant to ICU and arguably are easier to integrate into such areas as English, history, and geography, where there is more flexibility.

The freedom to select texts which we can use, I think that opens up, this sort of stuff [ICU] ties ... best in with English.

A number of teachers, at the outset of the PD, expressed the need for more information on how to incorporate ICU into STEM. A teacher explained the problem this way:

To be honest teachers now are just, you know, everyone is asking, well, how's that [ICU] going to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes? So that's how it's all become rather than the celebration and understanding of diversity.

Interestingly, STEM practitioners have recognised that intercultural skills, often more than technical skills, are of tremendous value. Ghasemi Mighani et al. (2019, as cited in Starr et al., 2022) reported that intercultural skills were listed as very important or important by 90% of surveyed STEM employers.



we were thinking about more activities that we could do that we hadn't really thought about before.



Teachers Identify Key Components of the TFH PD Program That Empowers Them to Integrate ICU into the Curriculum

Many teachers praised the PD course for providing a platform that fostered constructive conversations and facilitated exploring ways to integrate ICU into their teaching curriculum:

You can have all the school staff meetings you like, and everyone says, what do you think about this? Or give me an idea and you get three words out and then someone goes, 'Oh yeah but have you ...' It just gets lost. But when it's in a setting like this, everybody sits there and takes notice.

The PD course gave me time to reflect on what I'm doing and why I should do what I am doing. Without the course I would have stuck to what I was doing without the reflection.

The PD program, according to teachers, goes beyond the confines of what is already known and has possibly even become tiresome; it promotes innovation and creativity:

I think the way they [TFH] explained things, we were thinking about more activities that we could do that we hadn't really thought about before. So that was really good. It is more effective when we got together as groups and really thought about the events that we could put forward for school.

Said another:

Things get brought up [here] that don't normally get brought up.

Teachers valued the practical examples given in the PD of how teachers can effectively integrate ICU into their classrooms; this particularly assisted teachers for whom ICU was a new concept, with tools and knowledge to impart ICU to their students, as these teachers reported:

Well, it [PD] gives us examples of how teachers can intertwine that [ICU] into their classrooms with the concepts. Because a lot of the time teachers might not be as familiar with the curriculum itself, let alone a new concept. A new concept needs to be taught to teachers about how they can teach it to children.

Participating in TFH PD provided teachers with some strategies to discuss ICU and cultural diversity confidently with students. As this teacher stated:

Being able to have the conversation with students. Something that frustrates me was comments that students make without thinking and learning how to counteract that, talk to them. I think that's probably one of the most helpful [skills addressed].

Some teachers explained that while addressing cultural diversity was challenging, they saw these conversations as essential for creating a safe and welcoming classroom environment. As this teacher concluded:

I think it's really important that the teachers understand these concepts [ICU]. You've got to make it a priority. If we weren't discussing it, we weren't spending time on it, then it wouldn't be getting any better. So, every time you can do something, where it becomes a conversation for the staff and for students, then that's definitely helping.

Many teachers noted interactive approaches that could be readily implemented with students surpassed passive listening in assisting them to maintain connection and engagement with the PD ICU material, as these teachers affirmed:

I like that it's interactive and it's real. So, even the little activities, teachers can see 'I could do that in my classroom'. Teachers are a very hard group to work with and I can say it, because I am one. They are time poor and if you can give them something out of the professional learning that they can walk back to the classroom and implement straight away, you've had a win, I think.

I think what they're [TFH PD] doing is great. The information is relevant. The activities, getting people to interact, which is real, rather than just let's sit and listen. And they're being pushed outside their comfort zones. If you want people to grow, they need to be pushed outside - they need to interact with others. They need to share about themselves.

ICU's alignment with curriculum gives legitimacy to teachers taking time to undertake ICU PD. Teachers appreciated the opportunity the PD training gave them to sit down together and focus their attention on cultural diversity in their schools. Teachers reported that, otherwise, in their working lives they were too pressed and time poor, had too much to cover in the syllabus, and had 'too much in their heads'. They found it hard to distinguish the 'signal from the noise':

I think it's [PD forum] effective because it makes everybody sit, like a student in the classroom and pay attention to what you've been told. Getting the teachers together to discuss their ideas ... makes other ideas come true for other teachers. So just finding out what one teacher's doing and then sharing that with another teacher and then coming together as a school helps make it all happen.

Considering the workload and time restrictions that teachers experience (Fox, 2021), reflective conversations and effective planning for intercultural teaching implementation may not be possible during normal workdays. Therefore, training opportunities such as TFH's face-to-face teacher PD may provide a break from daily work expectations for the benefit of whole-of-school ICU development through teachers' connections, critical conversations, and PD.

As teachers, we're very time poor. Having the time to sit and bring our ideas together, thinking about our diverse students and how to make them feel included and valued for who they are and what they bring, that's very valuable.

Teachers highly valued specific assistance available from the facilitator at points in the PD program. This enabled detailed matching with each teacher's needs such as providing tailored assistance with specific strategies and planning. This also created a safe sharing space for teachers who may not be confident to communicate in the larger group about what they required to enable their ICU work, as this teacher attested:

I've enjoyed talking one-to-one to [facilitator] about activities in the classroom. [Facilitator] just keeps coming up with all lots of different activities, 'Oh, you can do this, you can do that.' And yeah, they've just got so much information that they just keep telling us, 'Do this activity, do this activity.'

Hence, the information provided here by the PD program is not overloading but, in the context of interactive activities, is regarded as adding value. Some teachers felt heard and empowered by an individual approach from the PD facilitators who actively listened and responded, as this teacher observed:

I've been really impressed with [PD] ... that may be just because it's my first experience with it, that I didn't have many expectations when we started the conversation. But I think every phone call, every Zoom call I've had with these guys I've finished really energised and excited about what's happening.

Teachers involved with STEM subjects expressed more confidence at the completion of the PD about their preparedness to integrate ICU into STEM. This teacher described seeing it as possible to integrate ICU into STEM rather than seeing ICU as an 'add-on':

So as a maths teacher I might go, 'Oh, how do I put cultural diversity into a maths classroom?' But you can, it's just knowing how to do that, and that was sort of where we were coming from. Things like English and history and geography, they're easy ... but science might be more difficult ... it's not, actually ... I think you can do it for everything, but it's just [being given] the confidence on how to build that diversity into the programs.

And another said:

I can tie this in as a multicultural unit whilst at the same time, you know, literacy and multiculturalism and weave them together ... I try and weave thematic things into skills rather than just teach literacy for the term.



How do I put cultural diversity into a maths classroom? But you can, it's just knowing how.





We need practical activities that we can take back into the classroom.



Teachers Constructive Feedback to Build on the Strengths

Teachers valued the PD interactive scenarios and expressed a desire for more of these. This style of learning effectively engaged many, promoting critical thinking and encouraging application of their learning to solve the problems presented in the scenarios:

There's got to be little scenarios that have to happen more. They did have some, but I think more scenarios need to be given.

A number of teachers wanted activities that delved more deeply into scenarios considered difficult or stereotypical and receive more training in being able to professionally and respectfully discuss these topics:

I want to see more training in the difficult situations. I feel this has been a very good course, but perhaps go a little bit deeper.

I want to be able to answer the hard questions. I want to explain that if children go travelling with their parents or themselves later on, they need to be responsible, they're a guest in another country, these are some issues that you might be confronted with. How are you going to deal with that?

Hammer and Schanke (2018) demonstrate that emerging classroom conversations that are based on stereotypes, prejudice, or racism can be effective starting points for teaching intercultural competence. The ability to professionally and respectfully engage in conversations about difficult topics, that one might not necessarily agree with or completely stand against, is a critical skill for teachers.

Some teachers felt quite strongly that they already had knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity through university training or by living in multicultural centres. They therefore suggested less focus on educating teachers and more on showing them how to teach the concepts to students and on providing practical activities they could use in the classroom with them. One explained their desired PD focus:

Here it is. These are things which you are already familiar with, but we'll build on some of the knowledge and this is how you can deliver it in your classroom.

Teachers suggested a program that not only 'teaches the teachers about intercultural understanding', but teaches teachers to be facilitators of ICU in their classrooms, as this teacher expressed:

I would be more interested in someone standing up and going, 'This is the program and this is how you're going to teach it to your students.' At times, it feels a little patronising because we're already teachers. And we are already familiar with this but I'd love to be able to box it together as a unit of work to be able to then administer and deliver it to the kids. I found it a little too basic and simple, to be delivered to people that are already university-trained and reasonably familiar with this side of things. I'd love to get more of a practical side to it, not to teach us about the content, but more to teach us how to be facilitators of the content.

Said another:

It would be most useful to have more practical activities we can take home with us. We need practical activities that we can take back into the classroom. I would say 99% of teachers carry the values anyway. We are all conscious of differences in ethnicity. How can we best transfer these ideas to the kids?

Teachers also recommended expanding the PD content to provide for a broader age range and offer more information on how to teach ICU to younger students in particular. These teachers advocated for wider age-appropriate content to upskill and increase teacher confidence in supporting the various year classes they teach:

I think teachers need to work with people that are not just in their stage or grade, just so that they can see what it would be like if they came down to kindergarten or they were going up to Year 6, it's just getting a variety of ideas so that no matter where they go, they know how to support those children.

A lot of the resources given were aimed towards high school, Stage 3, even Stage 2 kids. I did feel like there was a lack for infants in K-2 especially. So maybe even just colouring pages, I don't know, but they've got to have something. I think for infants, it's not really as effective. To have the infants' teachers teaching or modifying those Stage 3 ones, it's still not going to be as effective.

Engaging and collaborating with students' families to promote ICU was seen, by many teachers, as a priority. They believed this would assist in creating a more supportive learning environment as when families demonstrate a shared commitment to promoting cultural acceptance, children are more likely to feel supported in understanding and embracing ICU; additionally, ongoing conversations are fostered. This collaboration with families can, furthermore, help schools align their curriculum with the diverse ICU needs of their students. This teacher's observation was typical:

We would benefit a lot from something to just educate the parents about being inclusive. Because kids are not born racist, or born bullies, they learn that from what they hear, and how parents talk about different cultures.

Feedback also included requests for further training, feedback on an individual school's progress after the initial training (as opposed to the original multi-school training), and, as noted, appeals for 'ready-made' programs that teachers could implement in their classrooms.

“

I'm starting as of tomorrow, that's how simple some of the things were that they shared with us.

”

SUSTAINABILITY

Short-term plans to implement PD learnings

Most teachers on completing the PD reported they had some immediate plans to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives in their curriculum; similarly, the majority expressed that they now had increased resources with which they could cocreate, with their students, a diversity-respectful classroom. Teachers from culturally diverse schools stated they were keen to implement strategies, gained from the PD, to further connections with culturally diverse families. This teacher observed:

Ideas have been thrown around what we can do multiculturally. It's always been there, but because we've had that [TFH PD program], it's brought it more forward and we are putting it into action more than just talking about it.

Following the training, teachers stated their intention to implement some of the suggested activities and exercises in their classrooms immediately. They were also eager to explore further options for increasing ICU in their students through follow-up training and online resources. This teacher stated:

There was a lot of good information that I can take into the classroom with me. I'm starting as of tomorrow, that's how simple some of the things were that they shared with us. But I definitely would be interested in learning more as well and following up with some of the things they have online.

Teachers appreciated the simplicity of many of the activities and exercises that did not necessarily require a lot of resources, as this teacher commented:

Some of the things are quite easy, hands-on things without needing really any resources. Some of the activities they had were in the booklet. So I just wrote in my own notepad so I could keep that blank and I can reuse it.

Teachers reported that providing them with hands-on activities that promote cultural awareness encouraged them to incorporate these activities into their curriculum to promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom:

Artwork ... would be interesting. The course has got a lot of interesting ideas that you could take back and implement.

Another noted:

I'll have a look at some of the online materials. And see if there's some things we can introduce within our classrooms.



I think that's important, the ideas you get and to think back on what you've done before and haven't practised.



Teachers valued activities that were interactive and fun for students, providing opportunities for students to work together on collaborative projects and further promote cultural understanding and teamwork in the classroom. This teacher emphasised the importance of linking fun with activities that embrace other cultures:

It is a lot of fun. I think that's important, the ideas you get and to think back on what you've done before and haven't practised. Maybe go back and say, 'All right, maybe we should do that again.' Something that isn't really difficult that is really talked about every day.

Offering students time to explore their understandings of ICU was seen as important, as this teacher reported:

We integrate these sorts of activities into our classroom. I've done one of the activities that was being done in there, where we have to go to different sides of the room to give our opinions on things. To really give kids time to explore these ideas and what it means for them, the time to give their opinions, to have their minds changed, to discuss and develop.

Despite holding a university degree in teaching, teaching preparedness and implementation in the 'real world' is contextually unique and challenging in its own right (Romijn, et al., 2021). Thus, many teachers found the inclusion of specific intercultural facilitation skills that teachers could take away with them to implement in their school settings beneficial, as this teacher described:

Some of the activities, [the facilitator] mentioned to me in the smaller group so they weren't really mentioned in the PL [professional learning] one, but in one of the sessions, we sat down and started to plan as a team and [the facilitator] walked around and helped some of the teachers do some ideas then, so I think they've included some of those ideas in the unit as well.

Teachers appreciated having effective strategies for incorporating ICU for students with special needs, as this

teacher explained in relation to her students, in this case, incorporating ICU into numeracy and literacy through conversations:

With the kids I teach we do a lot of talk because my kids struggle with literacy, numeracy. So when we're doing stuff, we do talk about it rather than write about it. It's easier if you can't read and write. So I think being able to help them with their conversations and help them with some of the attitudes to other people.

To counter expressions of racism and practices of exclusion among the wider community, teachers explained that the PD reinforced that schools can become a locus of support for recent migrant families who experience culture shock and feelings of ostracism. It could be a place where families can receive reassurance over simple yet fundamental practices, such as the permissibility to speak their own languages on the street. The school could act as a place that provides support for families who have moved into a new and unfamiliar environment. Teachers spoke about learning from the PD training the importance of their informal engagement with parents and grandparents at the school gate during drop-off and pick-up time in creating a connection between school and home. One observed:

Those families come to the gate and then they disappear. They don't interact. So making a real effort to interact and finding out how their families are doing and how they're doing.

Teachers were keen to forge and foster ongoing connections and relationships with family groups. They recognised the importance and value of parent and family involvement in their students' schooling, both in helping to achieve academic success and in helping them to be socially at ease among diverse peers. The connection between school and home is a relationship that TFH recognises as having a potentially significant impact on the increasing effectiveness of their programs. Some of the challenges reported by teachers preventing the development of meaningful relationships with culturally diverse families were feelings of marginalisation the latter were experiencing, caused by various factors including an inability to speak English, encounters with racism from the local population, and work commitments. A teacher from one school described:

[feeling] worried that some of the nationalities weren't comfortable coming into the school. So that's why we thought we'd try and upskill and try and help the parents feel welcome.

One teacher explained a simple way to facilitate this suggested by the PD training:

The footage that they showed us, the welcome sign that they put up in the school at the start of year instead of welcome in one language you could put up all the languages you've got around the school saying welcome.

Related immediate activities schools were looking to implement included a 'welcoming parents to kindergarten orientation'. This would see parents who already had children in the school welcome new parents and children in their own languages and answer any questions they had that they might not understand in English. A teacher explained the thinking behind this:

Just an informal talk so they can come and say, 'How do I order my kid's lunch? What do I do if my child's late? What do I do if my child's sick?' So it was just getting them to develop a relationship with the school and to develop that they were respected in their language and welcomed into the school, trying to give them some people they could always go back to and ask questions.

TFH funding played a crucial role in supporting sustainable options for schools undertaking the ICU PD as an element of their TFH Intercultural Understanding Partnership (ICUP). This principal reported that the funding enabled them to 'buy space' to be off class to come together, plan, and assume an ICU 'driver' role, otherwise difficult to achieve without this necessary resource:

I think they're [TFH PD] effective but it's also about giving teachers and the school the opportunity to implement it. The biggest thing is having funding [provided by TFH] so I can get teachers to be drivers, able to drive it and then filter it down to the [other] teaching staff. Without drivers you're not going to get anything.

Funding supplied by TFH has allowed for the implementation of myriad programs and activities in schools that were facing challenges around inclusivity. It has enabled them to focus on building programs that counter negativity and promote multiculturalism and to free up teachers' time to be able to engage in targeted programming that they would otherwise not have done. One teacher explained:

That funding has helped us do the whole unit for next term, so we wouldn't have been doing the unit for next term. That's given us the drive to do it and the capability to do it, and we wouldn't have done the meet-and-greet, so multiculturalism would've gone under the radar. It wouldn't have been pushed up to the forefront, which it is at the moment. We would've been focusing on other

things, but this has given us time to get the teachers off class and plan, and given us a driver to go for it.

Others made a similar observations:

It's a program that gives us the opportunity to get together as a school and to really evaluate where we are and how we support our diverse community. The funding, that's just given us the opportunity to get our teachers off and to plan. Without the funding, we wouldn't have been able to get the teachers to plan those units. I spoke to a couple of the teams that were assigned or volunteered, and they are super excited about the way they are planning to deliver these units, so I'm very excited.

To overcome challenges of sustainability, teachers suggested ongoing follow-up between TFH mentors, and participating schools could provide opportunities to uniquely tailor these facilitation skills to the given school setting. They believed this would increase PD efficacy and assist making timely changes and responses to any emerging challenges, as this teacher requests:

It would be great to have a facilitator from TFH to follow up how we are going putting these in things into action in the classroom and discuss any problems we are having.

Long-term plans to implement PD learnings

Embedding change in school processes and systems is vital for sustainability. In this section, the ICU PD outcomes teachers and schools intended to embed in ongoing school processes and systems are identified.

At a 'whole-school level', many teachers reported that the PD fostered collaboration to work on effective strategies to integrate ICU into lesson plans and activities schoolwide. This school, as an outcome of the PD sessions, had developed a plan for a holistic ICU approach for curriculum in their school, as the principal explained:

After doing the TFH PD program, we are asking our teachers to ... not only tie ICU into science and history, geography, but also tie in literacy and tie in numeracy as well. So we're asking them to tie everything into this theme, so it's just all integrated and all gives that deeper meaning of learning for the kids. We're not going to just focus on one subject, I haven't seen the units that the teachers are writing, but I've talked to a few of them and ... they're going to be looking at books and myths, and so it's tying everything together with that theme of [intercultural] understanding.



I think taking that multicultural platform to learning will help children make meaning of what's going on.



Another school proposed to implement a schoolwide activity that involved each class taking on a particular country, learning cultural facts about it, and then presenting their findings to the school community. The activity would culminate in a community feast and celebration for parents, other family members, and friends to come together to enjoy. In kindergarten, activities inspired by the TFH program include singing as well as using maps to look at Australian landmarks. A focus would also be on Aboriginal Dreamtime stories, studied through the prism of art and pictures.

With the support from TFH, schools now have the capacity to introduce activities and events such as teaching about different countries that are related to families of students in the school. One idea being put into practice was referred to as a 'multicultural showcase day' and plans for this type of event were being touted by several schools who were eager to implement it. This teacher explained the event planned for their school:

We found that we have 50 different countries that our students come from. We can't teach about all of them, so each teacher chose a country, and they are going to focus on that country for a whole term, learn about the geography, famous people, maybe a famous refugee, language, maybe art and music. In Week 9, we will have the event to celebrate all this learning.

The event planned would see students visit each other's classes to learn about the different countries, and then later in the day, parents would come into the school, receive a special passport that they could then have stamped each time they visited another country/classroom where the students would perform cultural activities, such as dance or recite a poem, unique to that country.

Year 6 is doing South American countries. They've added in research behind what we're doing and why. We're getting a lot better at being more mindful of other cultures and how we can promote that within the school. We have our religion classes and our antibullying programs already. But I think taking that multicultural platform to learning will help children make meaning of what's going on.

Parents would also be invited into the school for an open day so they 'can come and see all the multiculturalism that they've been doing in the classroom'. It was also suggested that some parents be asked to come in and speak about their countries in order to cultivate respect for other cultures in the school community.

The institution of a yarning circle in some rural schools, connecting with NAIDOC Week, was also explored together with the possibility of an experiential program to understand native bushland and local plants.

I just thought of a girl that we did have a NAIDOC thing with, to teach a few lessons about plants, go out and find some or bring some plants. I know there's plants you can use as soap, I found some along the creek. Why can't we have a school excursion and take somebody like that out, go to the bush?

Mercado and Espinosa (2019) found that effective teacher education needs to be informed by teachers' own reflections of their current contexts. Conversations arising during the TFH PD program allowed for teachers' deeper reflections as well as understanding of other colleagues' contexts and thus fostered collaboration across subjects and schools. Such opportunities fostered effective planning forward towards collaborative intercultural teaching, as this teacher observed:

We work across all subjects so it's really easy to see how ICU can fit into so many different topics or use it as an overarching unit or a theme for a couple of weeks of learning or a term of learning.

Rural and regional schools found opportunities to collaborate with each other in their region, as this teacher described:

We were at three or four different tables. So, we were all planning our own separate little events. I went around and took photos of what might those be. Tomorrow, while it's fresh in everybody's head, we will try and combine those into a big plan. Because we're isolated it's difficult to get people out there [our school], but you can bring people in there [Satellite town], so we can actually plan those things and budget for them [future activities].

Professional Development Enhanced Teacher and School Capacity for Building Wider Community Collaboration and Partnerships in Intercultural Understanding

The school has just done a new plan for the next 4 years and immersed in our school plan is those community partnerships, even though we haven't got a broad range of cultures - and to me that's about cultural inclusivity.

Another approach to help foster inclusivity included making connections with other schools, facilitated by TFH. A rural school was looking into forging a relationship with an Islamic inner-city school to promote understanding and recognition of cultural diversity. One teacher said:

It's not just about the kids learning about the Islamic part. It's also that these kids come from inner-city Sydney, which is completely different to the life our kids live, it's cultural in a much bigger sense. Making those connections and seeing how other people live and how things are different, just that wider appreciation of what we have, and what you could have if you decided to move into the city when you finish up here.

The possibility for rural-based female school students to receive guidance from metropolitan-based mentors was also discussed with TFH. One teacher explained:

I've been talking to them about girls' leadership and connecting. We've got some girls who have great potential, but because we're in a small community, it's really hard to connect them with mentors in diverse careers that these girls are looking at. So being able to connect these girls with someone who might live in Melbourne and work in biochemistry or something like that.

TFH also provided a connection between the Sydney Jewish Museum, which focuses mostly on the Holocaust, and a rural-based school to offer them an experiential quality to their studies that they had been learning through reading *Maus*, a graphic novel about the Holocaust. A virtual tour of a synagogue and making connections with Sydney-based students studying Jewish Studies were also ways teachers were now exploring to educate rural students about other faith communities with whom they had no prior relationship or experience. A teacher said:

Our kids have had nothing to do with the Jewish faith. We're looking at the Jewish Holocaust Museum. I've been talking to them about visiting. Because we're reading *Maus*, and one of the characters from the book is actually one of the survivors that speaks there. That's an amazing connection for my kids to have, to see that the book is real. When you can narrow it down to, this happened to this person, it makes it a lot more relevant for the kids.

A recurring theme that emerged from many teachers' responses was the importance of food acting as a unifying force that brought together parents of different cultural backgrounds. This was a suggested activity within the TFH teacher training program that could be embedded within ongoing school activities, drawing in the wider school community. One teacher said:

We're thinking about doing a cookbook and getting different cultures to pass on recipes.

These collaborations, enabled by the TFH PD programs, support development of 'communities of practice', an important element for the sustainability of change and ICU PD learnings.

Summary

Overall, teachers overwhelmingly recognised the importance of integrating ICU into the curriculum and its relevance for students' lives beyond school. Teachers identified key components of the TFH PD course that empowered them to integrate ICU into curriculum, such as providing a platform for constructive conversations and collaborations, promoting creativity and innovative ICU practices, and offering numerous practical examples of how teachers can effectively integrate ICU in their classrooms.

However, as stated earlier, a noted weakness in teachers' ICU conceptions was its applicability to challenging racism in the school and other local environments. At the conclusion of the ICU PD, it was found that only one teacher explicitly connected ICU with the goals of prejudice reduction and combating racism. Teachers also named a lack of time and competing demands in the curriculum as factors that could impact how much time they allocated to ICU. This teacher's hesitancy, while affirming the importance of ICU, was illustrative:

Even though cultural awareness is part of the curriculum, it's one point of many. So balancing that, I think in order to use what we're learning inside the program, as a secondary teacher, it would be on a whole-school level, or a pastoral care level, or wellbeing level, but not necessarily in the classroom.

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We're thinking about doing a cookbook and getting different cultures to pass on recipes.

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Lots of children were reporting that things just get swept under the carpet.



Notably, some teachers attributed their hesitation to their perception that racism, prejudice, and discrimination was not prevalent within their schools. It might be speculated that where teachers are not directly witnessing incidents of racism, they may acknowledge the value of ICU but not elevate it as a key priority within their school. One teacher, for example, commented:

Well, I must say I haven't seen any racism from the kids in the playground.

However, recent research finds that many students from refugee backgrounds, for example, describe ongoing experiences of racism in their schools, which is not always identified by staff (Watkins et al., 2019, p. 8). In the following section, we focus on a case study of a high school where the teacher ICU PD began as the starting point for listening to students' experiences of prejudice and discrimination and what they believed was needed for change to happen.

Students can have different experiences to their teachers. Hearing about their students' experiences of prejudice and discrimination made a significant difference in the urgency of teachers' drives to incorporate ICU values and practices in their classrooms and at a whole-of-school level. Along with those of their students, teachers' experiences were also integrated into and informed the resulting collaborative TFH PD course. Rather than following a predetermined, curriculum-based approach to teaching ICU PD, the TFH PD team took a 'ground-up' approach that prioritised wider cultural change at a whole-school level, where implementing ICU in curriculum was viewed as a sequenced subsequent step.

The following case study chapter, read in conjunction with the previous chapters, captures some contrasting experiences of these two different approaches to teacher ICU PD. It suggests that prioritising a ground-up approach, which integrates students' voices and experiences as well as those of teachers, emphasising combating discrimination while focusing on whole-school change, proves highly effective in creating an inclusive learning environment.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO-DESIGNED WITH TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

Background

In 2021, students at a large, urban, predominantly White government high school in a middle-class area were involved in a racist incident that the broader community became aware of. TFH approached the school to ask how the event was being handled. The principal had alerted parents, condemned the incident, addressed all students, and suspended the students involved. However, some students felt these steps failed to adequately respond to the broader issue of a toxic culture of widespread racism and homophobia (in which both students and staff were implicated) and emailed the principal to say so.

The principal asked TFH to facilitate a student voice group to address the students' concerns. The students who had challenged the principal were representative of the school's demographics, being mostly White and included LGBTQ+ students. The school took them out of the classroom to meet with a TFH worker every second week so they could help steer how the school used TFH resources to address its culture. At the meetings, students described concerns including comments being made to minority students walking past groups of other students. The TFH worker described other issues:

Teachers would say, 'Can you please sit over there?' to a student that happens to be from a different culture and the whole class goes, 'Oh, miss, that's racist.' It's a real ugly half informed and careless approach to the need for sensitivity and embracing diversity and being kind. It's that privileged tone, 'I can take or leave it, because it doesn't really affect me.' These students were pointing that out, but they were also pointing out that the school leadership didn't have things in place that were changing that. Lots of children were reporting that things just get swept under the carpet. They obviously felt less and less safe.

The student group decided Years 7 to 9 students would benefit from awareness raising in large groups, while older students needed more intensive and challenging small-group work. They also recommended that teachers undertake PD.

In the Years 7 to 9 awareness-raising sessions, five TFH presenters engaged with all students in groups of two classes at a time. The presenters included a Christian Samoan, a Kenyan refugee, a Muslim Bosnian refugee, and a Christian transgender man. They emphasised they spoke for themselves rather than as representatives of a particular demographic and created a 'safe space' for dialogue. Key to this was making clear their expectations of both respectful questions and a lack of judgement of those asking questions. While these sessions were aimed at educating students, they also had a strong impact on the teachers who attended with their students. The TFH worker explained,

We just introduce ourselves with our particulars and say, 'What kind of questions does that stir up?' So, questions of our faith and the ability to sit next to someone of a different gender, the students were engaging with us. Teachers realised how many questions students have, how well they were able to formulate their questions respectfully, and how they loved engaging in these difficult topics, with us setting the trend of not teaching or lecturing but just going, 'Yeah, we're here.' I could definitely tell that impacted teachers.

They knew it was a presentation for the students and they would sit in the back with their laptops up. Every single time they would close their laptops and start looking up. They would say, 'Is that okay if I also ask questions?' They gave us feedback saying, 'Wow, it was interesting to give students just time to talk and ask really difficult questions but in a genuinely safe environment where no one was saying, "Oh, you shouldn't ask that. That's racist. That's homophobic."'

One of the teachers who attended a student session agreed that teachers were deeply impacted by the experience:

I thought the work they did with students was so powerful for teachers to be supervising students on the receiving end of it; they watched other educators talk about something. It was like PD for teachers just being in the room with the presenters and the students in front of them. I watched people's awareness of the issue improve. The presenters created a safe space, and they modelled the strategies for teachers in the room. For me, that alone was just fantastic. That had a greater impact for me personally. I've had more conversations about the sessions with the students with other teachers than I have about the sessions that we did as a staff body.

Some teachers were aware of cultural problems at the school, one saying:

I've heard from students, not necessarily since then but prior to that, there were some inappropriate things being said. There's a lot of students that recognise casual racism, students either use a coloured term or say, 'That's gay' and I've heard teachers say inappropriate things like that too. I think it was a bit of a wake-up call for some people to realise that we're not in a great space when it comes to our cultural attitudes.

However, many teachers initially believed the racist incident was a one-off, isolated event. A school leader noted:

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Teachers realised how many questions students have, how well they were able to formulate their questions respectfully

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Previous to this incident, no one was thinking about what our culture was in terms of being homophobic or racist in our school. And the more we dug with students, we found out that yes it was. We had more student voice; we had more student examples. That really helped us, a lot more people had their eyes and ears open to things.

Teacher Professional Development

The school planned teacher PD sessions for January 2022. However, they were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school used the delay to gather more information from both students and staff in surveys that almost all of them responded to. One session was held at the end of Term 2, and two were held in Term 3.

The sessions were made compulsory for all staff, including administration staff and grounds people, so more than 150 staff attended at least one session, with over 100 at each. They were held on afternoons either from the last period or after school and went for a maximum of 90 min. The TFH worker described how they approached the sessions:

We challenge the privilege from our own privilege because we have stronger permission and it's not an accusation but basically an invitation to join us on our own journey. We have an intentional gentle approach. On repeat we say, 'This is difficult. We are on a journey. We all make mistakes. We all need to learn to apologise, we all get this wrong all the time still.' That's sort of the tone we take.

At the first session, TFH presenters shared the results of the teacher survey and facilitated discussion of them. The TFH worker described the teacher survey, with the questions informed by student feedback:

Homophobia, but basically all discrimination towards anyone on the gender [sexuality] diverse spectrum, was one topic and then racism. Within each of those categories we asked questions related to knowledge, skill and attitude. Knowledge was pretty solid. But having the skill, the confidence, the attitude of will I step in. The hardest one would be if something happened in the staffroom.

What came out of that very strongly was a need to know how to enter a difficult dialogue whether with students or between staff. They are anonymous, these surveys; when you fill it out you don't know what your colleague's filling out. So it was really quite startling for them. There was a real sense of, 'This is not good enough.'

Differing views were expressed, with both the TFH worker and teachers observing that in general humanities, teachers seemed to embrace the training more than science and mathematics teachers, some of whom questioned the survey methodology and results. Some teachers noted that while allowing these comments to be explored helped to build trust and rapport between these teachers and the trainers, others felt it derailed the session to some degree.

The TFH worker also noted some teachers expressed thoughts such as:

'Oh, well, we'll basically be all on board with this, and we're all basically white, so there shouldn't be an issue.' You look at the Indian teacher in the background just going, 'Hello, am I invisible?'

A teacher confirmed that the expression of these attitudes had impacted some minority staff members:

Some of the minority at our school were offended by some of the comments that were made by the majority. Somebody made a comment about not understanding how hurtful or what the impact of silly comments could be on a minority group in our school, the insensitivity around that. A strength of the program was that I think those people did feel validated.

The TFH worker reported that simply discussing these issues as a group gave teachers more confidence to address incidents as they arose:

Even between Session 1 and Session 2, suddenly they were talking about, 'This happened in my classroom today and I stepped in,' rather than hearing it, being frustrated about it, and walking out thinking, 'Oh, I should have done something.' The staff turned towards the conflict and said, 'Hey, you guys, do you want to discuss this, because this doesn't have a very nice tone in my view.'

The second session focused on preparedness to respond to racism and homophobia, specifically the skills and knowledge required to do so and the dispositions most useful in broaching these topics. The TFH worker explained:

We stress that it's not behaviour management; you can't approach it by saying, 'Don't do that. That's against the school rules.' You ask them, 'Hey, I wonder why you said

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What came out of that very strongly was a need to know how to enter a difficult dialogue whether with students or between staff.

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that?', 'What's going on? How does it feel for you to be on the receiving end?' That challenges anybody to own it.

In the session, a TFH presenter shared an example of a failure or challenge in responding to an offensive remark. The session then broke into smaller groups where others were encouraged to share their own examples. A handout on how to respond to racist/homophobic remarks¹ was distributed and participants asked to reflect on which of these could have been useful in these and other situations. Finally, guidelines for creating safe spaces for dialogue were distributed in larger groups.² Discussion included the importance of acknowledging what has happened at the time incidents occur and choosing when to address them fully.

At the third PD session, the results of the student survey, which asked whether students had experienced or witnessed discrimination, were presented to staff by a school leader. The TFH worker described teachers' reaction to the data:

It was really clear. The percentages were outrageously high. Everyone had at some point seen or heard something discriminatory. It was just quiet. Once you see the figures you can't argue with them. It was anonymous, but they knew the grade level of students, so that was interesting as well; where does it start and where does it wrap up? Does it get better maybe when they're older or not? They realised this is not theory. This is a [school name] issue and we're [school name]. It's no one else; it's us. If change is going to happen, we will have to change.

A short video exploring the concept of privilege was shown ('What is Privilege', 2015). Teachers were asked to do an online test of unconscious bias ('Implicit Association Test'). The session then broke into smaller groups where these were discussed and,

¹How to Respond to Expressions of Racism and Bias, referred to by interviewees as 'sentence starters'; see Appendix A.

²See Chat Guidelines for Dialogue in Appendix B.

as requested in feedback from the previous session, there was more discussion and role play of how to respond to specific comments in a school context. Parts of the training had a strong impact on some participants, the TFH worker reporting:

We had them do the Harvard unconscious bias test and he was just shocked. For the next hour, honestly, he kept putting his hand up and going, 'Is this really me? Is it identifying my personality, like, I'm that guy? How can I teach students that they need to behave a certain way and look at me; I'm sitting here with unconscious bias.' And then to say, 'No, once we realise these things, the more you learn about yourself this can actually change and you can rerun the test in a year's time, and you'll probably be delighted that you have moved.'

Some teachers thought that doing the unconscious bias test in the middle of the session used up time while giving people a chance to check their emails. They suggested getting people to do the survey prior to the course or at the start of the session, although they recognised that this would not necessarily result in a higher completion rate.

A handout explaining how to make an effective apology was also distributed and discussed.³ Finally, a survey asking whether the 111 participants would be interested in the following workshops was conducted. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Numbers of teachers interested in attending future workshops by topic

POSSIBLE FUTURE WORKSHOPS	INTEREST
The lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds	48
Ways to include explorations of racism and homophobia in the classroom	54
Exploring facts and general information about racism and homophobia to broaden knowledge and understanding	47

Reflecting her interest in the first option, one teacher explained her desire to have conversations with people of other backgrounds:

I would have liked to explore some of the emerging groups a little bit more, particularly around Muslim faith within our community but also then look at the transgender and the sexuality stuff. A little bit more informational exchange, 'This is a community within your community, and this is the discrimination that they feel often.'

Another teacher suggested she would have liked to focus on prejudice about different groups separately:

Ours was very much intercultural and LGBTQI at the same time and I think because of the two sets of messaging, it maybe reduced the depth that we interacted with some of the work. I think separating the two out might be more beneficial, 'How could we address racism in this instance?' and then potentially doing another one about inclusion in the LGBTQI space. Because there was a lot of, 'Let's just describe current reality' as opposed to 'Where to next for us?' or 'What's going to be your takeaway from this? By the end of next week, what are you going to do with this information?'

On a practical level, and while recognising these issues were unavoidable due to the pandemic and natural disasters, teachers suggested having sessions closer together, early in the day and on student-free days would have been ideal.

Key Themes

Conceptions of Intercultural Understanding

Even though the teacher PD specifically challenged discrimination, prejudice, and racism, teachers seemed to see this as separate from the concept of ICU. They drew a distinction between curriculum content and the culture of intolerance identified at their schools, which some categorised as a behavioural issue. One teacher said of the ICU curriculum capability:

It's loose. It's just far too broad and because it's not prescriptive, it allows people to either leave it out, to brush over it or some schools might really dig down and really get into that. I think it's fair to say it's known about, but not always applied. A school gets to choose that journey and for us it's a journey we are about to start to make sure we are using that within the classroom.

³ 'How to Apologise'; see Appendix C.



It definitely has impacted my ability to interact with students when I'm seeing casual racism



A humanities teacher linked ICU to their teaching practice:

I look at that as every culture has a valid voice and a right to their own stories. If we're talking about the histories or texts from other cultures, we recognise the culture that it comes from and give a voice to those people. I always try to use appropriate language when dealing with things like that. I've had the privilege of working in schools with high cultural diversity, so that was a large part of my practice in my early years of teaching.

Another saw it as related to both appreciating diversity more broadly and about the cultural safety of students:

I think it's about perspective and listening to others and challenging our world view. Looking outside ourselves and giving students that outward-facing opportunity they wouldn't ordinarily get within their own home environment and exposing them to the diversity around them they may not have realised was there.... So, one is to make them feel safe to be in my room at my school and the second is to raise their gaze to what is outside the boundaries of our school and in our community and beyond, wherever that journey in life might lead them.

A teacher whose role included helping colleagues develop cultural competence reported that the PD had enhanced her capacity to do so. However, her comments also reflected conflicting ideas about whether dealing with prejudice within the school was a behavioural issue or a practical application of ICU:

For participating teachers, there was a lot of great feedback. It was, 'Oh, this is great. I'm so glad we're doing this. I'm sick of people in my staffroom saying X, Y, Z.'

I thought it was great, especially being able to talk to people about what I can support them with and where to get help and coming back to those resources such as the sentence starters and having that control in the classroom when kids are being inappropriate. From a behavioural level, it has been really valuable. But not necessarily the teaching of intercultural understanding in a classroom ... at a cultural—it's happening right now in my classroom as opposed to, 'I'm going to teach you about Australian history and we're going to do it properly.'

Although the concepts of ICU as part of the curriculum and responding to a problematic school culture overlapped, this teacher said one of the biggest benefits of the PD was discussing them at all:

I think for our school culture, just having that conversation with our staff was the benefit, creating the time and the space and allowing us to talk about these things in a big group rather than in our little faculty silos in our staffrooms.

Equipping Teachers With Knowledge and Skills to Promote Students' Acceptance of Difference and Rejection of Prejudice

Teachers reported the PD equipped them to deal more effectively with controversial issues, as did the knowledge that so many colleagues had also undergone it. One said:

That was valuable because people got handouts about how to talk to people about using casual racist comments and how to call them on it or even be mindful about what they're saying and how they're saying it. Hopefully over the next year, we will see staff being more comfortable about talking about topics because they've got that in their bag.... It definitely has impacted my ability to interact with students when I'm seeing casual racism and just having some clear lines that they're hearing hopefully from more than just me.

Another teacher who said the course improved her intercultural competency had spent time thinking about strategies she could use to improve that of students and support minority students and staff:

It's giving me ideas on things that I can do with my classroom to encourage conversation and how to stop negative comments with validation that makes them feel good about the fact that their school cares about them, that we care about them. I'll continue to go and support my colleagues who maybe feel like we don't do that because I want to be a supportive staff member as well and community member.

Teachers commented on how useful they found some of the resources they received from the PD. One said:

I think my favourite thing was probably the handout with the sentence starters about how to address people when they're being inappropriate and calling it out. I think that was singlehandedly one of the most useful resources that I've received at a PD in a long time.

A school leader also mentioned the handout and said that staff feedback indicated teachers wanted more opportunities to practise using such resources in future workshops:

The biggest takeaway for our staff that they want more of is at the end of the second session they ran a half an hour where they gave that handout, this is the conversation, how to have it, the sentence starters; this is how to do active listening. People want to be practising with the dialogue and they want those handouts. They want those things to go back to—'Oh actually I did really poorly in my class today, but next lesson I'm going to start my class and I'm going to go back to, "Hey guys, you remember this from yesterday, this is how this conversation could have happened."' They want a chance to practise that.

A teacher explained why she thought more workshops were needed and the type of resources she wanted to see more of:

Three sessions is not necessarily enough for some of the traditional attitudes at this school. It would be beneficial to have even longer workshops, kind of, 'Let's sit down and look at what that might look like in a classroom' or act

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People want to be practising with the dialogue and they want those handouts.

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out some scenarios of people saying things and practising how to address that. People say, 'I won't teach it because I don't feel comfortable teaching it.' It's like sex ed. for teachers, you don't want to teach sex ed. because I don't know what I'm allowed to say in that space.

I'd really like some resources that are student-friendly that we could present to our own students so that if we do have casual racism occur in the classroom, they'd be like, 'Hang on. We're going to stop here. We're going to address this' and I could just pull up a quick PowerPoint that goes through why we can't say that. I think that would be great to upskill the kids to be able to start feeling confident enough to call each other out on it too.

Building an Inclusive School Culture

A stand-out feature of the TFH intervention in this school was its centring of student voice, with the school allowing students to direct its response to concerns they had raised. The TFH worker described how this approach felt transformative to all involved:

It would be almost pointless to work with a student body over and over without working with the staff. It's like teaching your kids something but the parents are doing whatever. It won't work. A lot of times students have identified issues that are staff issues. To have given students the voice to say, 'This is a problem' and to have gone, 'All right, we hear you and we're actually going to do what you suggest,' I think that that group of students was quite impacted by that.

So was the leadership. The principal realising, 'Oh, that actually works.' If I could engage with schools in this manner every time, that would be fabulous; spend a term with the student voice group. What was good as well, they weren't your student leaders. They weren't the prefects. They were the ones that put their hand up to say, 'I need to have a voice. I have something to say.'

Communication channels between staff and students improved as a result of this approach. Students were informed if staff were having PD and an email address was established through which students could report general justice issues on the ground (rather than individual complaints) to staff. A school leader said:

It was very, very important for us to be able to advertise both to our community in our newsletters and to our students that we were undertaking this training. Because as kids do, they have a lot of opinions, but you've really got to make sure that you tell them that we are on the change with these things.



Happy and safe kids learn, and culture is integral to that.



As previously mentioned, the student survey data presented to teachers during their PD had a strong impact on them. One teacher, when asked their thoughts about creating a culturally inclusive school, responded:

I think it's the most important job on our list of things to do because without a culture of inclusion and an environment of feeling safe and a place that kids want to be, they won't learn. Happy and safe kids learn, and culture is integral to that.

Intercultural Understanding Connections With Curriculum

The school was very clear that the PD was instigated and designed to respond to cultural problems within the school rather than related to the curriculum. Asked about the PD program links to the curriculum, a school leader said:

I don't think that was a lens we had on anything. The data we had was more around what we had heard the year before, that these are conversations that are happening in classes, racist and homophobic comments. And lots of children who were reporting that things just get swept under the carpet. There was nothing at any point that came up from curriculum conversations. We were more about our culture at our school. By doing the program it's a way of us being able to gauge where our school is at in that culture and it's a stepping stone to then move it into curriculum.

One teacher thought it was important that ICU tie in with the curriculum and saw doing so as a way to ensure that the issue was not forgotten:

I think it is important that it ties in with the curriculum because for a school like ours, as our demographics change, teachers may miss those opportunities to be inclusive. Keeping it at the forefront of teachers' minds is important and helping them identify ways in which

they can link it to their curriculum. I don't know if it's strictly curriculum-related or teaching and learning-related. I think it's more about the teacher awareness and then their demonstrability in their classrooms to find those opportunities.

Another teacher also drew the distinction between the PD undertaken and the curriculum content. They agreed that the issue was important to address as part of the curriculum but outlined that teachers needed to increase their cultural competency both to address the problematic school culture and to be able to teach such units competently and confidently:

I think they saw it more when they were on playground duty or interacting with kids in the classroom, not necessarily teaching it. That would be where I would think that we'd need to go to next, is just upskilling cultural competence. With the current curriculum, there was a lot of cultural units that were just dumped in front of us going, 'Here, teach this' without any upskilling. But what are the skills that people need so they can actually teach those units? A lot of people got uncomfortable really quickly.... There were a lot of Aboriginal and Asian texts put into that space, but they were almost targeted at people that had a lot of cultural competence.

She felt that a good next step would be using some of the strategies used in the TFH PD to help teachers learn and practise those skills:

Even looking potentially at some case studies of teachers having to teach these units and having those skills and what that might look like, 'How would you teach this if you had to? What are your concerns about teaching this unit?' you know, language, attitudes of the kids and just, 'I don't have enough content knowledge about it to do it justice.' Maybe even workshoping that in a safe space as teachers.

Her recognition that teaching ICU in the curriculum raises the need for teachers to lead difficult conversations underlines the importance of what a school leader sees as the main benefit of the PD:

It will be the moral imperative that as a teacher in the classroom you cannot let any racist or homophobic comments go by without the adult in the room addressing them. If you don't have the skills to be able to do that, you go 'Right guys, I'm going to come back to that,' come back and get the right person in. Cultural safety's a non-negotiable for us because we've done the training this year. We want to make sure that we can guarantee our staff, community and students that when you are at [school name] comments aren't going to be not dealt with.

Sustainability

Teachers commented that they had noticed a difference in how colleagues interacted with students in the classroom and suggested ways to increase the likelihood these changes were sustained. One said:

I've seen staff say, 'Stop, kids' when there's kids going, 'That's gay.' They've said, 'No, stop. We don't use that kind of language.' So, I think there's definitely been a bit of empowerment there which is good. But I'd like to do a session with staff in the next few weeks just to recap some of that stuff and maybe extend on what we did in that session, so people don't forget that we did it.

Another suggested that the student forums, which so impacted the teachers supervising them, should be ongoing:

I would like to see the student forums rolled out every year with our junior classes and our senior classes and whoever else needs to hear it. Because it creates that platform for staff to feel safe and appreciated and improve their wellbeing so that our school is a great place to learn but also work.

The TFH worker confirmed that the school had requested the organisation spend a week every year at the school to conduct these presentations so they will eventually reach every student.

The PD program also resulted in significant sustainable changes to school processes, structures, and systems. A school leader said, 'I do think our teachers would expect following this training that that is all built within our policies and procedures.' One teacher suggested an item on cultural safety could be added to the agenda of faculty and broader staff meetings.

Other examples of sustainable changes made following the TFH program include adding homophobia as a form of misconduct to the student code of conduct, collecting data on racist and homophobic incidents, committing to ongoing teacher PD on these issues, choosing either First Nations' perspectives or ICU as a curriculum priority for the next 4 years, and increasing school activities and broader community engagement that reinforce these values.

In terms of ongoing PD, the TFH worker said that teachers had strongly indicated they wanted more training on these issues:

We basically offered specific smaller modules. Do you want to have more knowledge about racism? Do you want to practise dialogue in a deeper way? Do you want to have conversations with people of other backgrounds and ask questions, like what we did with the students. Pretty much every module that we offered as a theoretic would have

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I would like to see the student forums rolled out every year with our junior classes and our senior classes and whoever else needs to hear it.

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50 plus teachers put their hands up. A lot of the staff were saying, 'We need to keep refreshing this.' We're thinking about ways of doing that, one could just send a 10-minute video for their staff meetings once a term. A little snippet about dialogue, about diversity, about migration. It just keeps it fresh.

A school leader explained the importance of having an external organisation deliver the training:

Probably most important for us is that they were external people who quickly gained everybody's trust. They led it such that the people felt they were going to be very honest with their data. There's no way this could have been in a manual. There's no way this topic would have worked with our teaching staff with us delivering it.

The TFH worker also recognised how the partnership supported teachers:

They've realised that trying to do everything when you're there to teach is too hard, but also completely leaving it alone is not okay. I think we've provided more of a middle place where you address it, but you don't need to be the expert in this. You can call on someone to come in and support. For the leadership I think it's given them a little bit of accountability. They're not changing for us; they're changing for themselves. But if someone's stepping in at regular intervals, I guess it has that effect. They just want to keep partnering with us.

School activities planned to reinforce respect across cultures include prioritising student voice, using videos, and incorporating the celebration of different foods into occasions such as Harmony Day, Multicultural Month, and All Nations Week. Externally, the school is liaising with First Nations communities to get input into its Reconciliation Action Plan and has had an Indigenous artist visit the school. It is also considering a social project partnership with a Muslim or very high-diversity school.

Summary

The teacher PD equipped teachers with skills to address what ACARA describes as the key elements of the ICU General Capability (reflecting on and engaging with cultural diversity and navigating intercultural contexts). It also embraced approaches recognised as best practice in the literature.

The PD used methods that increased teacher confidence and motivation to address racism, such as mobilising a supportive school leadership, including reflections of teachers' implicit bias and engaging students (Yared et al., 2020), with many of the student voice participants going on to hold leadership positions in the school. The training included all school staff; the school is committed to ongoing PD (Tualaulelei & Halse, 2023) and has invested in a long-term, multi-strategy approach (Greco et al., 2010). The sessions developed the skills teachers needed to facilitate difficult discussions (Sue et al., 2009).

Sue et al. (2009) argue that the most effective PD on race involves a 'lived reality' component outside the classroom involving interaction with people of different racial and cultural backgrounds in real-life settings. While the school plans to engage with First Nations communities and partner with a more diverse school, elements of this were most obvious in teacher observation of the student forums.

Recommendations: Case Study

The TFH teacher PD at this school contained three essential elements that should be continued there and considered for use at different schools.

1. Centring student input to teacher PD

Student voice was fundamental to the teacher PD program, both in making problematic elements of the school's culture visible to the school leadership and in directing its format and content. Through the student forums, students demonstrated that they are capable of and wish to participate in respectful conversations around diversity issues. Schools can access this student voice before damaging incidents occur and without relying on motivated students to initiate it by surveying students annually to get a measure of where the school culture sits on diversity issues. This also increases the relevance of ICU PD for teachers.

2. Tackling school culture before, or simultaneously with, teaching intercultural understanding as part of the curriculum

If students feel their school is culturally unsafe, they are less likely to find curriculum-based ICU credible. Addressing culturally problematic attitudes and actions at a school level sets high expectations for staff and students, equips teachers to run classes that raise challenging subjects, provides a sense of common cause, and supports students and staff who want to change damaging elements in school cultures.

3. Practising and observing difficult conversations

Given that the student forums run by culturally diverse presenters were seen as a type of PD masterclass on discussing discrimination with students by some teachers, it would be beneficial to add value by inviting more teachers to observe them and/or record them to show to staff not present. Similar forums could also be provided for teachers. As requested by teachers, future PD should include opportunities for them to role play and practise difficult conversations based on the 'sentence-starter' handout that so many of them noted was a highly valuable resource.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

- The approach undertaken at the case study school is an example of an integrated, flexible, and interactive (rather than add-on or standalone) model of PD that can be deployed throughout the school, addressing both the school culture (thus improving student wellbeing) and curricula. This should be aspired to and replicated wherever possible.
- Review the scope and suitability of existing teacher PD ICU capability throughout the age span, for diverse school settings and students with special needs, and match to any pre-existing materials.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

- Create surveys to ascertain students' and teachers' baseline knowledge and experiences within their schools/broader communities prior to delivering PD.
- Fund TFH workers to establish student and/or staff committees to drive cultural change and ICU teacher training, based on school survey results.
- Expand numbers and types of interactive scenarios offered throughout the PD programs in consultation with participating teachers and young people.
- Offer ongoing access to classroom-ready intercultural teaching resources to address difficult issues such as casual racism in the school environment.
- Model feasibility of ongoing TFH mentoring and follow-up support from PD facilitator.
- Pilot extending the cultural diversity of PD presenters by including young people, especially from culturally diverse backgrounds and areas, who have or had relatively recent classroom experiences to share. Document and evaluate this.
- Where possible, provide training as a 1-day session at the start of the year.

RURAL/REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Explore opportunities for local-level ICU engagement such as use of locally spoken Indigenous and other languages on signage, games that bring together different cultural groups, and opportunities presented by local demographics such as beginning with Indigenous cultural inputs and extending to other cultures.
- Identify models and approaches for addressing lack of exposure to cultural diversity such as Sister School programs and interactions with culturally diverse community groups.

EVALUATION

- Re-survey students and teachers on their knowledge and experiences within their schools/broader communities after delivering PD.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A. RESPONDING TO EXPRESSIONS OF RACISM AND BIAS

Excerpt from: "Specific, Candid, and Helpful Responses to Expressions of Racism and Bias" written by Rick Wormeli (Read the whole article here: <https://www.amle.org/specific-candid-and-helpful-responses-to-expressions-of-racism-and-bias/>)

Consider these examples of four ways to respond:



1. Invite deeper conversations

- "Some people would see that as a racist comment. Is that what you intended?"
- Play "innocent" and ask, "I don't get it. How is that funny?"
- As needed, give people the benefit of the doubt. Maybe you heard it differently or just didn't understand: "I'm sorry. Can you say that again? I may have misheard you."
- "Is this something you would have said to a white/ Asian/Black/Hispanic, impoverished/affluent, heterosexual/homosexual/transgender, able-bodied person?"
- "It's been my experience that... Is this something you've experienced?"
- Start with common ground: "Most of us want to feel like we have something to contribute, that we belong, would you agree?" "Neither one of us wants to be diminished by the other..." "What's our goal here – to be heard? To vent and move on? Our children's welfare?"



2. Express direct desists

- Stay silent, make steady eye contact.
- Be direct: "I find that racist, and I'm not okay with that. It's inappropriate."
- "You may not have meant to offend me, but you did. And this happens to people of colour all the time. If you do not mean to offend, you will stop doing this."
- "You just assumed that without evidence. Let's take a look at the evidence and correct that perspective."
- Explain that your being upset at the racist/ prejudicial comment or joke is not a matter of political correctness. It's an indication that society has evolved and what was once funny or acceptable, is no longer so.
- Walk away. Wait 24 hours. If possible, and no one will be harmed, wait one day, think clearly, then bring up the subject again with the offending person.



3. Avoid blaming, deflecting, generalising, or being dismissive

Examples of these unhelpful statements include:

- "It's your fault because you're a racist."
- "They can just get used to using the bathroom associated with their birth gender. It's not the end of the world."
- "I didn't intend it as a racist comment, they just took it that way."
- "This is just more liberal clamouring from Political Correctness Police."
- "There are already enough books on LGBTQ students. You're just pushing your social agenda."
- "But these white, male authors are canon. To not teach them is not preparing them for society."



4. Helpful dispositions during conversations

- Give every clue that you value time with those of other cultures/orientations/faiths/politics as well as those with whom you disagree. Honour what the other person brings to the conversation.
- White silence in racist or biased situations or policies is consent. Say or do something if at all possible. It's the same with other situations of bias/ prejudice against certain religions, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic class.
- Speak in such a way as to continue thoughtful dialog, not prove that you are right or the problem is solved. It's not about you providing the solution, it's about the person arriving there.
- Sit or stand next to the victim of someone being attacked for his or her race, gender, politics, or socioeconomic standing to assure them that they are not alone, and to communicate clearly to the offending person where you stand on the issue.
- Use the first person, plural, we, not I or you as you can. It's more inclusive, like we're in this together.
- Breathe several times before responding.
- Forgive yourself and others for making mistakes in these conversations, including inexact wording, unintended use of stereotypes, muddled thinking, and outright offending others.
- Discuss systemic racism with people of our own colour, and not just when there's an upsetting racial incident. We're able to respond more constructively when there is a racial/homophobic/religion-phobic incident when we already have the tools and perspective for the conversation.

APPENDIX B. RESPONDING TO EXPRESSIONS OF RACISM AND BIAS

Guidelines for Dialogue

TRANSFORMING OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERS

Learning to explore faith in healthy ways is an important skill for life. These simple guidelines ensure a safe place for young people to talk faith, make friends and change lives.

LISTEN TO WHAT EVERYONE HAS TO SAY

DO NOT TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY BELIEVE, BUT LET THEM TELL YOU

DO NOT FORCE PEOPLE TO AGREE WITH YOUR VIEWS

ACKNOWLEDGE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR FAITHS

SPEAK POSITIVELY OF YOUR FAITH, RATHER THAN NEGATIVELY ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S

Chat

MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GET ALONG WITH EVERYONE REGARDLESS OF THEIR FAITH, GENDER, ETHNICITY OR AGE

DO NOT JUDGE PEOPLE HERE BY WHAT SOME PEOPLE OF THEIR FAITH OR COMMUNITY DO

DO NOT TREAT SOMEONE AS A SPOKESPERSON FOR THEIR FAITH OR CULTURE

BE HONEST IN WHAT YOU SAY

RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE, EVEN IF YOU DISAGREE WITH THEIR VIEWS

At any stage you can ask for a discussion to be stopped if you feel uncomfortable.

APPENDIX C. HOW TO APOLOGISE

HOW TO APOLOGISE AND MAKE IT A SINCERE ONE

This resource can be found at <https://www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/how-to-apologise-the-right-way/>

Ever received an apology that left you feeling worse? That's because not all apologies are created equal, and sometimes a simple 'sorry' doesn't cut the mustard. We've explored the intricacies of apoloising and forgiveness, to help you make amends the next time you experience conflict with a partner, friend, colleague, student, even yourself.

As individuals, we can also find it hard to make apologies. We may feel defensive, or wronged ourselves, or too insecure to admit we were wrong. Yet often, when there is a relational injury, acknowledgment of wrongdoing or hurtful behaviour is often all that the other person wants from us.

It's when we deny someone's feelings or experience that we can compound their hurt, fuel their sense of injustice, and lead to repetitive attempts for them to be heard. It can even be crazy-making, or a form of gaslighting, if someone's concerns are continually dismissed when they try to raise them with you.

Types of (less-than-ideal) apologies:

Have you heard (or given) any of these types of apologies before?

- **The 'it's your problem'** – "I am sorry *you* felt that / I'm sorry *you* took it that way."
- **The 'yes, but'** – "I am very sorry but... (This is why the behaviour was ok / you deserved it)"
- **The justification** – "I acknowledge you were hurt. I did it because..."
- **The table-turner** – "Sorry that what I did was hurtful. But now let's talk about *all* those times you've done it to me."
- **The 'no-perpetrator'** – "I am sorry that this thing *happened*" – not "I am sorry I did this..."
- **The deflection** – "I'm sorry but I was really tired/unwell/drunk...when it happened. It wasn't really me."
- **The 'minimise and blame'** – "You're too sensitive / I was only kidding / don't take it so seriously"
- **The indignant response** – Only given reluctantly when asked to apologise: "Well of course I regret what happened."



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It's when we deny someone's feelings or experience that we can compound their hurt

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