



Research

**Ethnic Minority Teachers' Perceived
Preparedness, Concerns,
Challenges and Expectations prior to
Teaching Practicum
Presented by: Dr William Nketsia**

Who are
these
community
Language
teachers?



Who are these community Language teachers?

- Volunteer teachers in NSW Community Languages Schools
- They have tertiary qualifications from overseas
- Recognised undergraduate degrees
- They want to gain accreditation in NSW
- Majority of them are women (87%)
- Professional learning programs: Community Language Teaching – Introduction and Advanced

Process

Candidates with overseas qualifications apply via SICLE for a place in the Master of Teaching Secondary meeting the ISLPR or English Language Proficiency.

Professional Learning – Foundation and Leadership Units

2.5 Year pattern of study at WSU is undertaken with school placements and reduced studyload.

Little is known about community language teachers' preparedness, expectations and concerns for their first Practicum

THREE MAIN QUESTIONS

1

How prepared are these Community Language Teachers for their first practicum in Australian classrooms.

2

What they expect to acquire during their first practicum

3

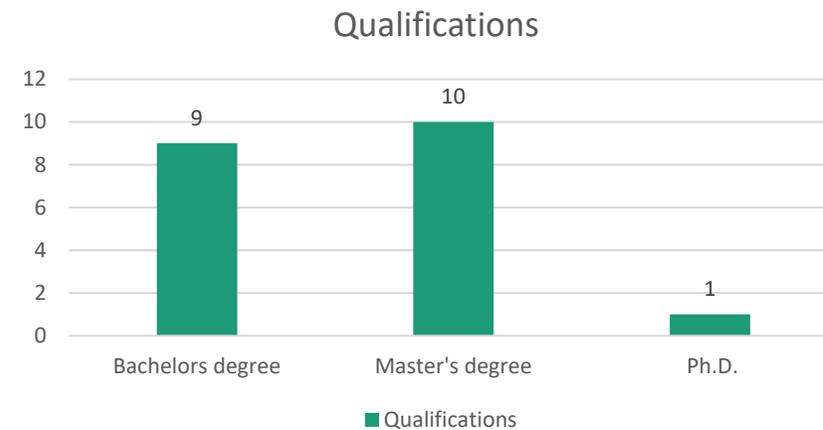
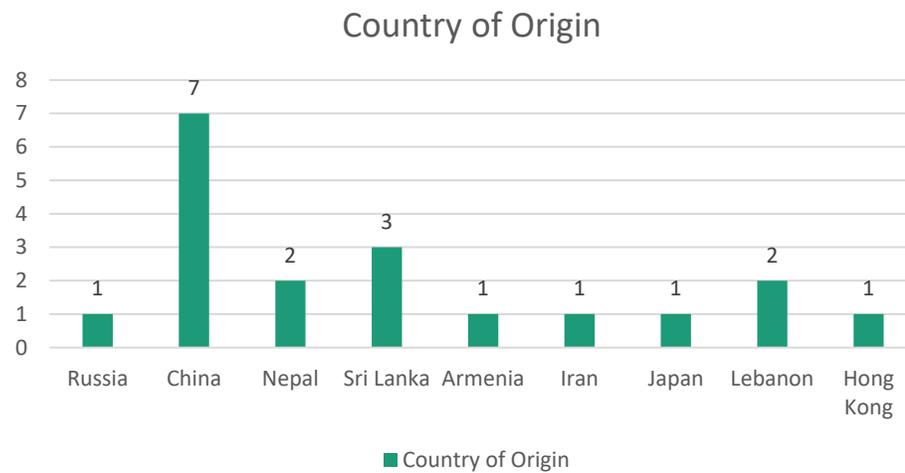
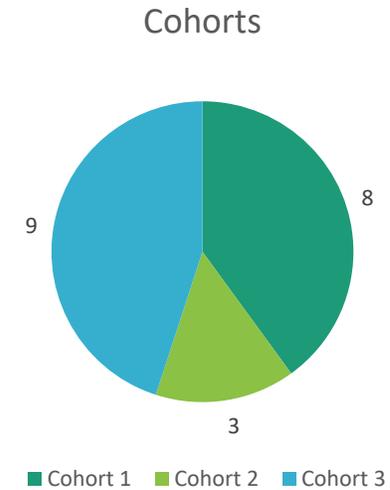
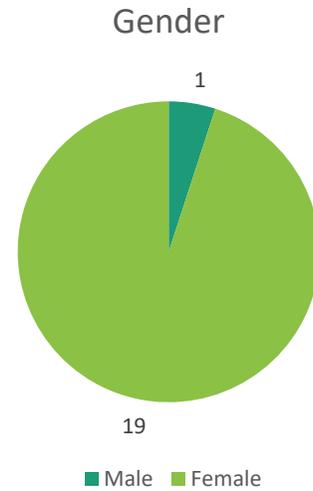
What do they perceive as the major concerns and challenges they might encounter in Australian classrooms

Theoretical framework

Situated learning model by Lave and Wenger (1991):

- All learning should be understood as a process of participation in community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
- Teaching practicum offers tremendous opportunity for situated learning in community of practice (Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006).
- The practicum is based on situated learning placement schools

Methods -Participants



Methods - Instruments

- Semi-structured interview guide was developed based on study objectives and review of literature (Campbell, Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2006; Moloney & Giles, 2015; Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006; Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009).

The interview guide covers the broad objectives of the study:

- The preservice teachers preparedness for their first teaching practicum in Australian classrooms
- What the preservice teachers expect to acquire during their first teaching practicum in Australian classrooms.
- Their views of the major concerns and challenges they might encounter in Australian classrooms.

Methods –Data collecting procedure

- The study and its protocols were approved by Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).
- All the protocols were observed – the community language preservice teachers were invited to take part in the study.
- Statement describing the purpose of the research, study objectives and possible risks and benefits of the study were shared/discussed with each participant and of course, their consent were sought.
- Participants were told that they had every right to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences.
- They were assured that their identity will be kept confidential throughout reporting of the study as no identifying information will be published.
- All interviews were conducted in English. The interviews lasted between 45 min and 1 h, and interviews were conducted on zoom and recorded verbatim.

Methods –Data analysis and results

- The interviews were transcribed verbatim by Pacific Transcription.
- Thematic analysis following steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2014).
- Theoretical or deductive thematic analysis was conducted.
- Themes were predetermined before the data were analysed

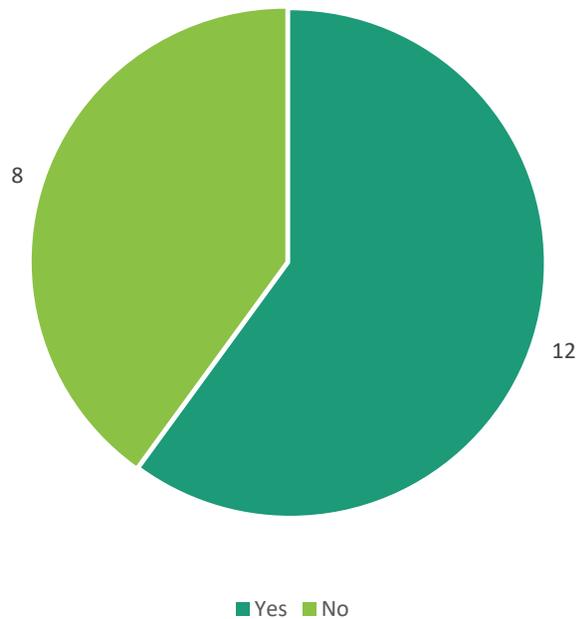
The key themes that emerged from the data were:

- Preparedness for first teaching practicum
- What the preservice teachers expect to acquire during their first practicum
- The major concerns and challenges they might encounter in Australian classrooms.

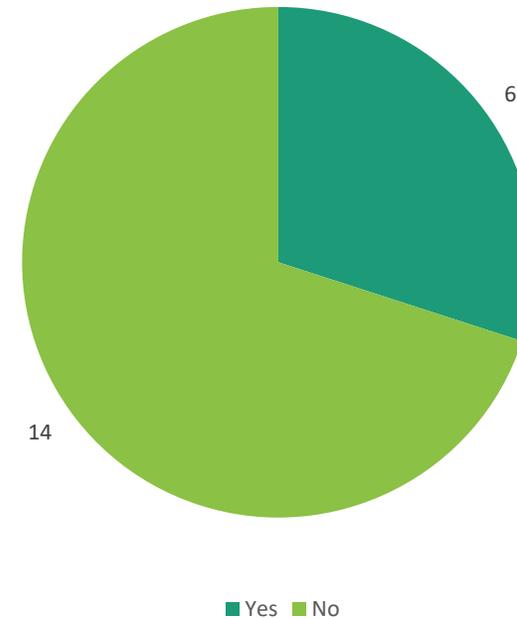
Results – Preparedness for first teaching practicum

- The participants discussed their preparedness for their first teaching practicum and the key things that got them prepared.

Preparedness for First Teaching Practicum

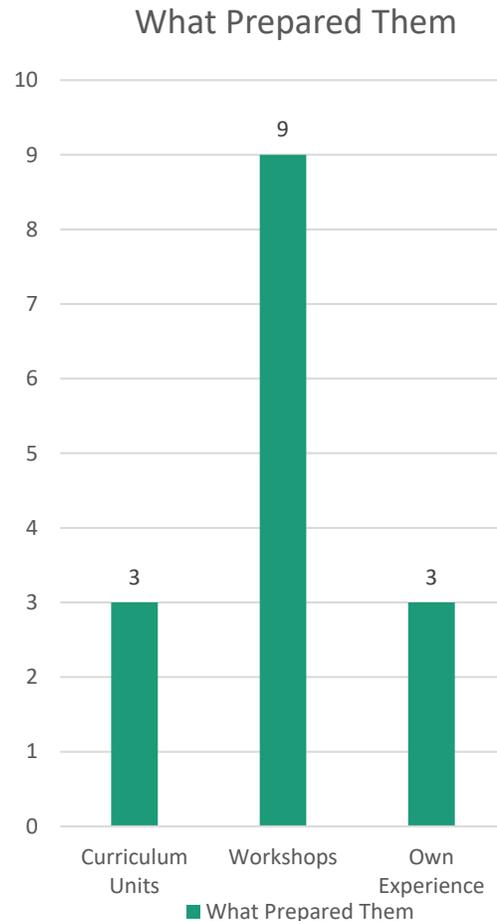


Completed First Practicum



Results – Preparedness for first teaching practicum

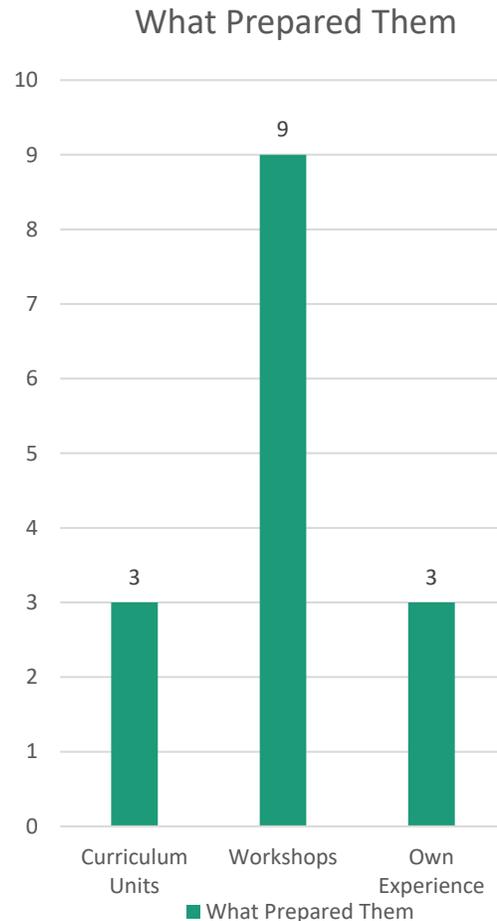
Nine participants felt workshops/seminars were effective in preparing them



- **Some participants commented as follows:**
 - *Last time you provide us a list of behaviour management strategies. I think that was very good. If put in a booklet that would be good to make (Participant 2)*
 - *Yeah. Yeah, I did attend some of the seminars ... I always gain something, some knowledge, from those seminars. So they were quite useful (Participant 8).*
 - *...I really liked the seminar; like you put everything together in a systemic way, so it's like a refresh the memory. Without those seminars it's like... I would need more effort to refresh those memories but with that I can just - okay, it's - that's something I can do during my practicum (Participant 7).*

Results – Preparedness for first teaching practicum

Some also felt prepared by the curriculum units or subjects they studied and also by their own previous teaching experience



- **Some participants commented as follows:**

- *Especially prior to my professional experience, we had two courses to join...they were quite useful for professional experience. The units name was Secondary Curriculum 1B and 2B (Participant 8).*
- *I think before the prac, the curriculum subjects and the prac tutorial, like we had four tutorials and have some workshops. I think these help me with the prac, like I have enough knowledge about the syllabus, the curriculum and some pedagogical content knowledge, like the teaching strategies (Participant 19).*
- *I think it was pretty sufficient. Me coming from a teaching background anyway, and Community Language School, for me personally...I think it was sufficient enough (Participant 13).*

Results – Preparedness for first teaching practicum

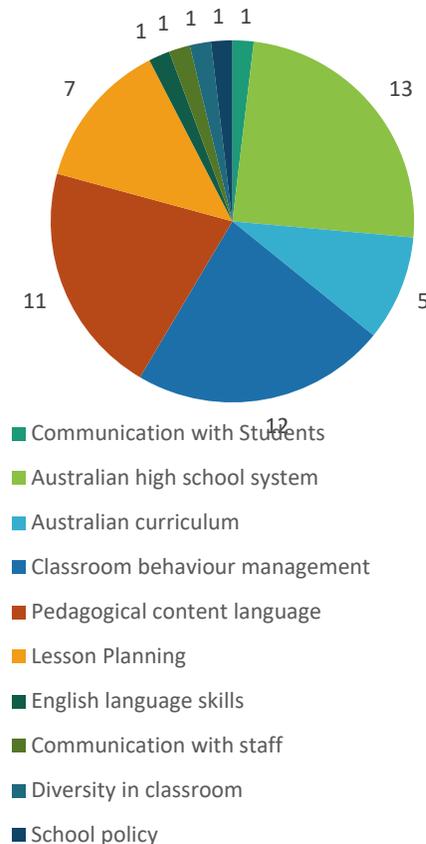
Recommended key topics and areas to be discussed during the **workshops and seminars**

- **The following comments summarised their views:**
- *Like behaviour management and how to recognise children's needs and then how to respond properly (Participant 5).*
- *the relationship kind of professional relationship with children, not going – not like too much separated or not getting too close, those kind of things (Participant 5).*

Results –What they expect to learn during first practicum

Australian High School System: *high school classrooms settings, routines and culture*

What They Expect to Learn



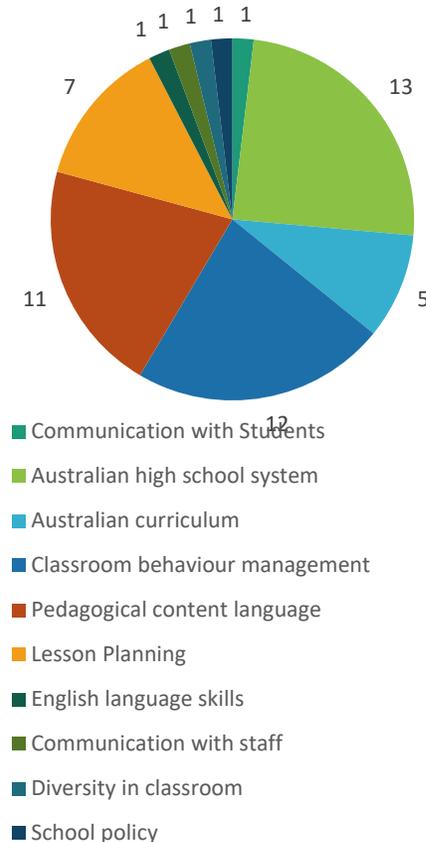
• The following comments summarised their views:

- Because I come from a different school background, it was completely different system. I've never been exposed to the Australian school system, I've never been to any Australian classroom (Participant 5).
- Also, I think I like to know more about, learn a lot about the culture, because I think each local...you know they have different kind of culture, school culture we need to learn (Participant 6).
- I have mentioned I have never had teaching experience at the school setting here. So just try to familiarise myself with the high school involvement here in general (Participant 11).
- So I really want to know the routine of the high school, not just in the class, but also, how high school works (Participant 17).

Results –What they expect to learn during first practicum

Australian High School System: *direct experience with high school students and high school classroom environment*

What They Expect to Learn



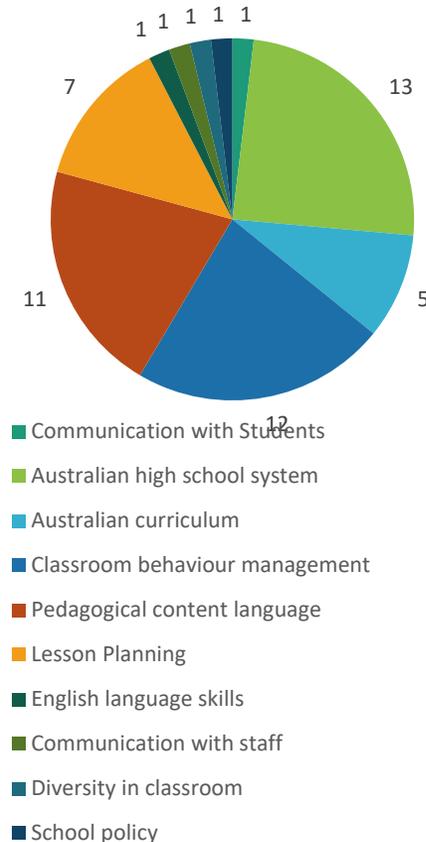
• The following comments summarised their views:

- I wanted to see, or know more about Australian student...I want to have a direct experience of classroom, which I haven't been able to do until now, the direct experience (Participant 3).
- *Most of us don't have the Australia high school experience here...even the daily routine...because we just finish our bachelor overseas...so I just spent the first week, the first of my prac week, to familiar with all this stuffs like teacher's meeting and some school operating routines and some policies. Even the tiny, tiny issue that how to address the other teacher in front of students. That's something I didn't even know before I came...yeah. So you cannot call them the first name, but you need to call them their – the Miss, or Miss plus surname, something like that. That's a very tiny thing, but like for us we don't know [laughs] how to do that (Participant 19).*

Results –What they expect to learn during first practicum

Australian High School System: *organisational structure of high school, mentoring procedures, collaboration among teachers and available resources*

What They Expect to Learn

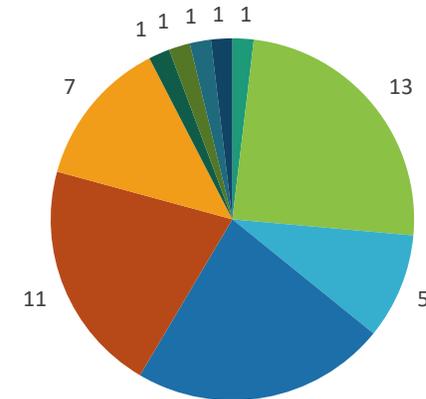


- **The following comments summarised their views:**
- Yeah, I would like to see how the faculties is organised within the school. For example language faculty - how it works, how the teachers can collaborate with each other, how mentors are working. It's very interesting for me from in terms of supporting newcomers (Participant 1)
- I want to learn how - like what resources high school be using, because my teaching area is Chinese language, and also commerce and business. So I want to know what resources they are using in actual high school...(Participant 17)

Results –What they expect to learn during first practicum

Classroom behaviour management: the different behaviour problems and strategies

What They Expect to Learn



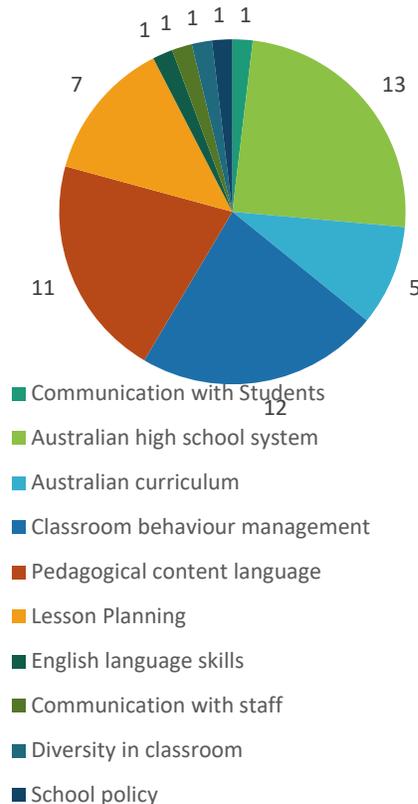
• The following comments summarised their views:

- I believe that there's a difference in classroom management techniques also in here, compared to Sri Lanka. So in my professional experiences I would like to learn more about that, because I think it's very important (Participant 5).
- I think I still need some more knowledge aboutclass management, those things. Yeah. But I think – yeah (Participant 9).
- *My professional goals, before I started PE1... so I wanted to improve my behaviour management...I was mainly working on the behaviour management (Participant 7).*
- *I was hoping to learn the management, the behaviour management, how to actually – because I personally think I'm a bit soft. So, I think I'd like to know how to handle very challenging students (Participant 10).*

Results –What they expect to learn during first practicum

Pedagogical content knowledge: Australian teaching style is more student-centred- differentiated, explicit and direct instructional approaches -practical teaching strategies

What They Expect to Learn



- **The following comments summarised their views:**

- I think there's a difference in delivering the content to children also in here ... compared to Sri Lanka. So in my professional experiences I would like to learn more about that, because I think it's very important (Participant 5).
- *Okay, so for the first professional experience I think the most important thing I've learnt is the pedagogical content knowledge, you know, by practicing. Because before I just learn from the textbook, from the lecture, from the theoretical lens but now (Participant 19).*

Expectation met? And Main sources of knowledge

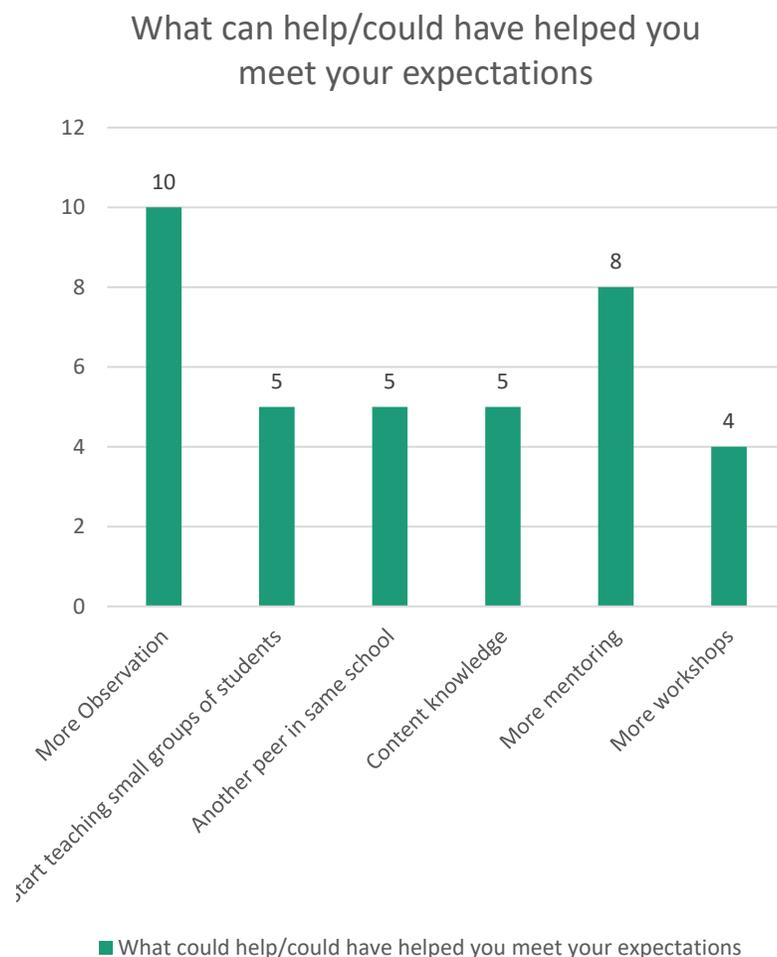
The six participants who have completed their first practicum were probed to find out if they met their expectation and what helped them.



- **The following comments summarised their views:**
- Then also I would like to also learn from the class teacher, so when I go in there to observe and then to carry through what I already know and things like that (Participant 4).
- *Well purely observation, it was just observation. I was just observing and I wish I could have had an opportunity to observe other classes as well (Participant 8).*
- I think the mentoring or supervising teacher will be a great resource to learn. But that supervising teacher provided me a lot idea how to use the school resources and the school policies and practices (Participant 5).
- *Yeah, the mentor teacher...she gave me the PowerPoint of how she teach and what she will be teaching. I make a different thing - it's good to have something to - as a reference (Participant 2).*

Expectations

What can help/could have helped you meet your expectations



• The following comments summarised their views:

- *So before you ...first lesson you don't know. For maybe other student they have 30 days then they have longer observation time and half teaching time. But for me...I just jump into two subjects. It was very challenging for me. I felt overwhelmed. Well, I think more observation would be good (Participant 2).*
- *...but I wanted to be exposed to various types of classroom...but would have been good if it was a requirement that we have to attend various classes, the same subject or even a different subject. Yes, I think probably Community Language teacher, preservice teacher, should have more, a bit more opportunity to observe, more time to observe than the preservice teacher that have previous Australian school experience (Participant 8).*

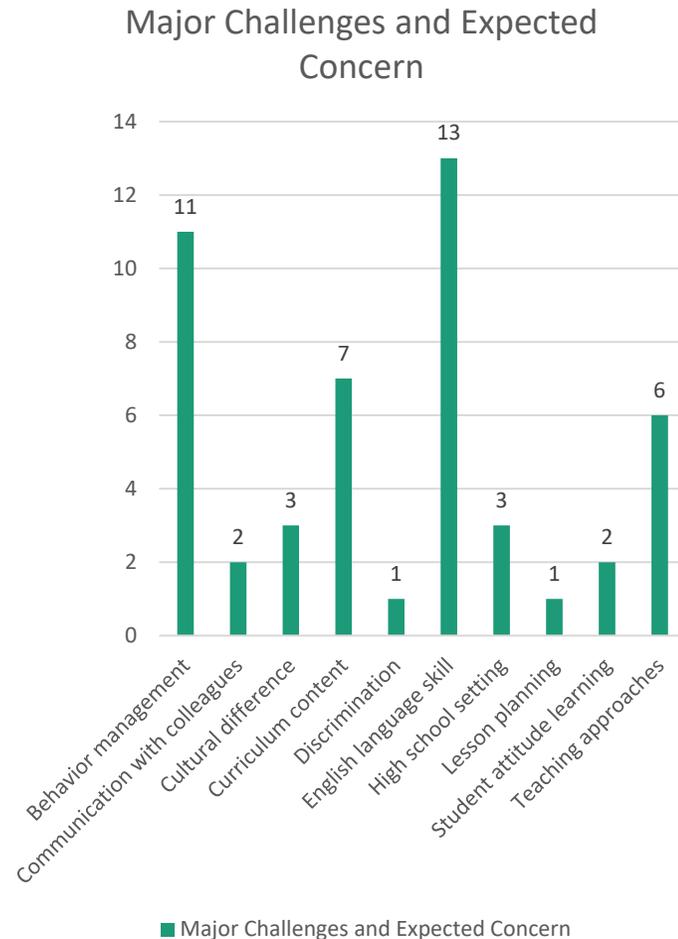
Community language schools/ high schools

They discussed that community language schools are different from high schools

- The following comments sum up the views of the participants:
- *In my current work, I'm mostly working with the Australian school children. But the problem is in both cases I deal with the primary school aged children. I didn't get much experience with bigger children, so if I get a chance to learn more, then it will be I think very helpful for me (Participant 5).*
- *So we don't know how the Australia high school look like, like me, yeah, because my school, my children are still in primary school. I don't know the high school look like, plus Community Language School, it's different from high school, like for us teacher, we don't know how we going to or what we will need and what will happened (Participant 19).*

Results –Expected Challenges and concerns

English language skills: non-native speakers of English language, inability to express or comprehend native speakers,

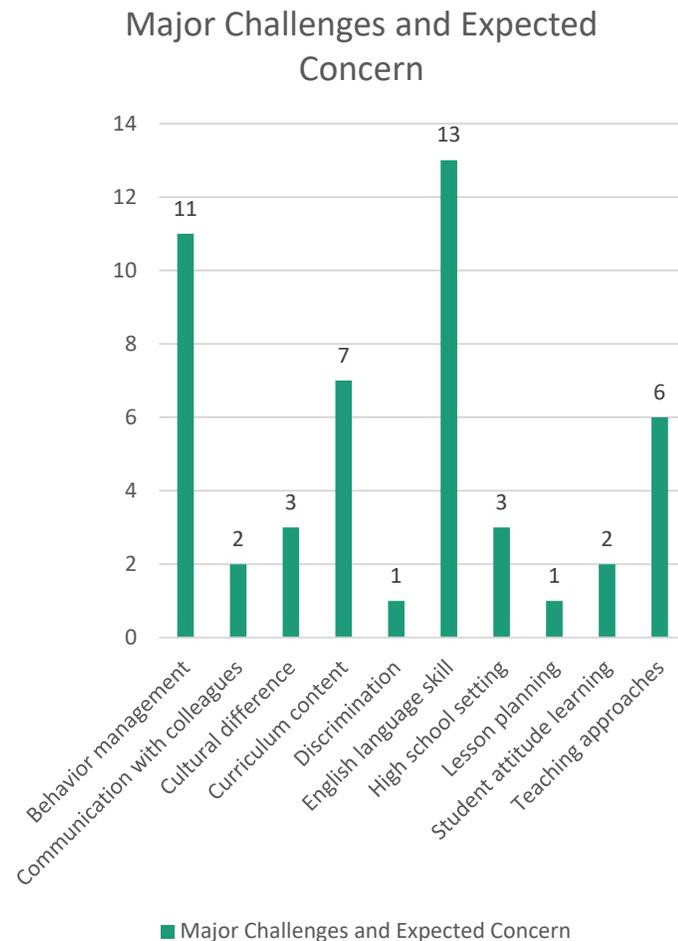


• The following comments summarised their views:

- I think coming from non-English speaking background will be a challenge for me. My level of English was good for Sri Lanka, but because since I'm not a native speaker I think it may be a challenge in delivering sometimes, maybe especially the way we pronounce some words and these kind of things (Participant 5).
- I think English language skills. I'm so worried some secondary students know some words I don't know, and I can't catch up with them about the computer language and now days the social media things if I don't understand them. I'm so concerned (Participant 14).
- *Also, I had a little concern about my English language skills because this is not my native language. Other than that, I was fine, yes (Participant 7).*
- *I am talking with the wrong pronunciation and the kids are telling me. For example, I didn't come up with some word based on that one, I converted to a wrong pronunciation (Participant 12).*

Results –Expected Challenges and concerns

Behaviour management: manage, react and address inappropriate classroom behaviour,

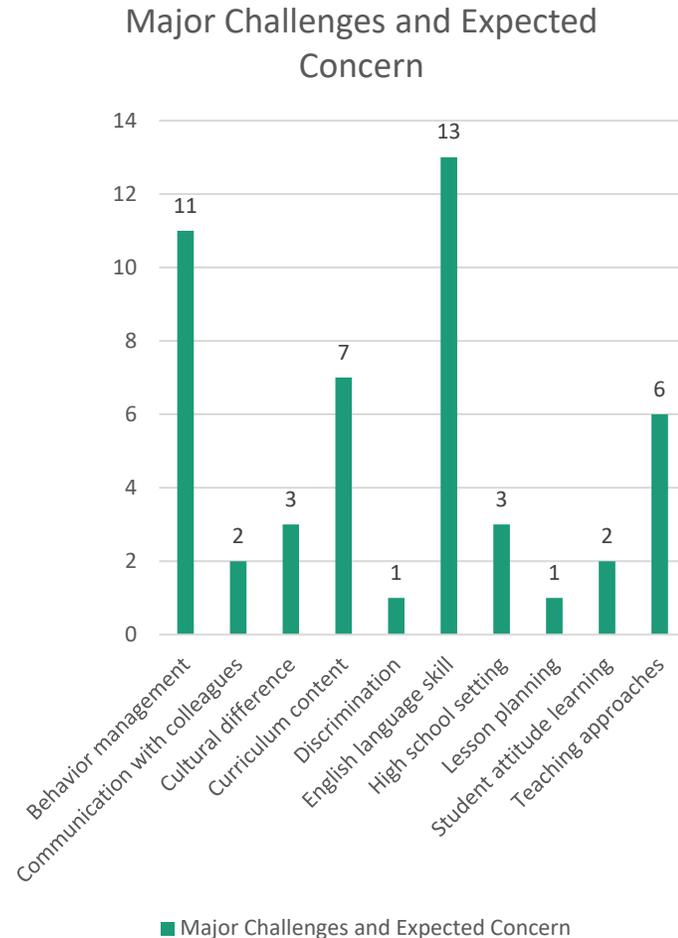


- **The following comments summarised their views:**

- I think maybe the classroom management, so I would like to maybe learn more about that...my concern is with the classroom management thing, but I think hopefully that I will see how the teacher is and then I can pick up from there (Participant 4).
- Behaviour management wise, I am not sure...if kids are ready to learn and I'm teaching, okay. So if kids are not interested ...that kind of challenge is - behaviour management (Participant 12).
- *Yeah...I was concerned about if I could manage teenage students, and I know there will be full class and there are a lot of students in one classroom (Participant 7).*

Results –Expected Challenges and concerns

Curriculum content knowledge: curriculum content, syllabus



- **The following comments summarised their views:**
- So in that aspect I will have like real challenges with business studies and commerce when I started at my next prac (Participant 8).
- My KLAs are maths, physics and Tamil, so Tamil is okay for me. Maths also a little bit subject wise I am okay, but physics can be - I forgot. I had to recall it. So that is one challenge, curriculum content wise (Participant 12)

Discussion

- Community language teachers share similar concerns with other overseas and minority immigrant preservice teachers such as Australian high school system (cultural differences), classroom behaviour management, English language skills and teaching approaches.
- However, discrimination was not a major issue for the participants as cited in other literature. Perhaps, because they have lived in Australia for long.
- (Campbell, Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2006; Moloney & Giles, 2015; Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006; Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009).

Recommendations

- More observation in schools for community language teachers prior to their first practicum
- Mentoring community language preservice teachers could be improved to address most of their concerns regarding their background and previous experience.
- The requalification and retraining of the community language preservice teachers should focus on English language skills, behaviour management, pedagogical content knowledge, Australian high school culture/system
- More workshops and seminars should be organised for them to share practical examples of strategies for teaching, managing behaviour and typical school scenarios and routines, professional relationships in schools, organisational structure of high schools etc

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