

# Patches

## A model for developing interculturality

*Dr Donna Tangen*

*Dr K. Louise Mercer*

*Queensland University of Technology*

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# The Patches Program

- Support framework to provide Malaysian and Australian pre-service teachers with both structured and unstructured opportunities to develop intercultural understandings
- Structured opportunities: writing workshops, organised social activities
- Unstructured opportunities: social activities

# Purpose of the Research

- To test a model of support for international and domestic Australian students to develop interculturality
- Participants:
  - 56 Malaysian education pre-service teachers
  - 11 Australian education pre-service teachers

# Design of the Research

- Action research spiral
  - First action spiral completed before semester began
    - Involved the lecturers developing a rationale for the study as well as the initial process for implementing the Patches program
  - Second action spiral focused on the implementation of the program
    - Today's presentation reports on the development of interculturality during this stage of the research

# Data Collection

- Weekly reflective writings
- Focus group interviews
- Final reflective questionnaire

# Results

- Intercultural communication
- *As I first arrived in Brisbane, I was overpowered by fear and nervousness in regards to communicating with the Australian people. Fear that they may be prejudiced and refuse to befriend us because of our religion, and nervous because our spoken English is not as good as theirs, hence a reason to ignore us. But the Patches program has proved that such a thing is not true as I have the chance to meet lovely and friendly people like T., her family and also her boyfriend. They showed me how nice Australian people are to everyone they meet and they are very eager and interested to learn about our culture (AN)*
- *I have learned to be a better listener, to let others tell their stories before I tell mine. I have also been reminded of how similar we really all are as we share cultural experiences together. We're all a part of one world and the more we connect with people from different backgrounds, the richer our life experiences become (NM)*

# Results con't

- Intercultural understanding
- *From this program [Patches] I think that the beliefs and assumptions I have are challenged as some of them are unexpected...I had a mind that being with others...I don't know might not be easy, especially people who are from a different country with a different religion or views. But somehow I found out that it is easier as long as I can be 'open' enough about people (BM)*
- *I have been challenged to not see myself as the dominant or the expert but to put myself on the same level, regardless of someone's English ability...I hadn't really realised I had this attitude until I had to confront it, to take myself off my self-placed pedestal! (NM)*

# Results con't

## Intercultural relationships

- *I thought I would be totally out of my depth in the Patches Program...little did I know the Malaysian students have a very similar sense of humour, watch the same TV shows and like the same things as me. I now consider them to be my good friends (AG)*
- Data revealed that both groups benefited in developing interculturality in a non-threatening environment
- Participation heightened awareness that perceived barriers (cultural assumptions/beliefs) were self-generated so needed to be self-managed

# Conclusions

- What is essential is both ‘academic’ and ‘socio-cultural’ scaffolding to bring students together in a supported and purposeful manner
- While the project was focused on pre-service education students, we contend that this kind of program could be applied in any discipline