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## AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRIA: EDUCATION AND VALUES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO ENHANCE INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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*Ursula Dopplinger is a lecturer of the Private University of Education of the Diocese of Linz. There she teaches subjects related to sociology and statistics.*

*During the past 6 years Ursula Dopplinger has been conducting research in the field of primary school education and this also includes identifying the basic requirements of successful reforms. Her Masters research, which she conducted being involved to evaluate the transformation of the Psychosocial Care Center from Vienna to Tulln. The Psychosocial Care Center provides clients who need long-term care, a place to live and living. This transformation caused tensions within the inhabitants of Tulln. Therefore the evaluation helped to relieve these tensions.*

*Ursula Dopplinger's doctoral research was a process evaluation – concerning sociological aspects of organisations and education – of the implementation of online courses in primary school of Lower Austria. In this study she points out, that effective e-learning needs on the one hand much assistance for the teachers and on the other hand widespread reforms in the organisation of primary schools in Austria.*

*Since 2010 Ursula Dopplinger has been involved in specific projects of primary school classes to evaluate particular activities taking place there. Additionally she conducted a project to investigate the impact of noise and loud music on pupils at the age of ten to sixteen. Therefore more than 2000 pupils were tested for their hearing subject to their age, sex, their leisure time activities and their migration background.*

*Her continued interest in inquiring pupils in primary school has resulted in a number of publications and presentations.*

### **Abstract:-**

*In this comparative study, primary school teachers from two countries, Austria and Australia, were invited to complete an online survey about their attitudes towards multiculturalism and their intercultural understanding. Furthermore, primary teachers in both countries were asked about their perceptions, in relation to how pupils develop an intercultural understanding. The similarities and differences between the two countries are pointed out in this article.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Contrasting juxtaposition of Australia and Austria**

#### **Australia**

The presence of multiculturalism is not a recent phenomenon in Australia, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that were much diverse in culture and language shared this space for thousands of years. However, colonisation and colonial settlement created this nation state with mono-cultural identity, which was tied to 'white Anglo-Saxon' heritage and their language,

English. Overt political measures were taken to maintain such 'race' ideologies with The White Australia Policy at the beginning of the last century. Later, due to much global criticism and pressure in the 1970s this policy was dismantled and multiculturalism was adopted and promoted by the socio-political institutions of Australia (Tavan, 2004; Stokes, 1997). Since then most sociopolitical institutions and especially educational settings have developed guidelines that support multiculturalism super imposed by nationalism. Consistently goals and guidelines have been developed especially for educational settings so that they engage in pedagogical practices that support intercultural understanding and more precisely eliminate racism and discrimination. With more than a quarter of Australian population being born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011), cultural, linguistic and religious diversity has become a reality for all Australians. Hence, effective educational practices with goals to develop social cohesion, and equitable, just opportunities for all learners have become imperative in Australia.

Literature also suggests that much of students' understandings about who they are, especially in relation to their 'race', cultural, ethnic and religious identity is much dependant on teachers' attitudes and understandings of the factors that influence their learners' attitudes towards such identities (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Kowalski, 2007; Epstein, 2009). Moreover, these authors believe critical understanding of the socio-political, ideological and historical context is essential for teachers to engage in purposeful action that challenges prejudice and stereotyping that is evident in current societies. Much research in Australia suggests that current multicultural pedagogical practices that teach about other cultural groups only result in positioning the 'white Anglo-Australian' in the centre as the national subject, and 'othering' migrant and Aboriginal Australians against this centralised national subject (Aveling, 2002, 2007; Allard & Santoro, 2004, 2006; Johnston, 2007; Leeman & Reid, 2006; Santoro, 2009). Recent research conducted within early childhood and primary school settings within Australia again conclusively suggest that such conceptions of Australia's national identity based on 'race' ideologies still exist and the presence of racism is very evident especially within educational settings (Hatoss, 2012; Srinivasan, 2014; Srinivasan & Cruz 2014). Many others believe that current pedagogical practices offered in schools do not enable them to effectively combat racism that exists within their schools and in the wider community (Dunn & Nelson, 2011; Singh, 2011; Walton et al, 2014). Thus, it has been evidenced that particular ways of understanding and practising one's national identity and commitment to the nation present complexities that impedes social cohesion and results in the continued presence of racism and discrimination in the Australian community.

Moreover, that current educational practices have been ineffective in developing a socially just and equitable society.

#### **Austria**

Austria, on the other hand does not share Australia's history of colonisation, and yet, large movements of population due to varied reasons such as, 'guest-worker migration' and immigration of refugees present complex realities for Austria. However, those who are temporarily recruited to work in Austria continue to stay longer and such large movements of population across the world presents destabilising phenomena that are juxtaposed, such as globalism versus localism and nationalism versus multiculturalism (Hall, 1996). Hence, the development of policies and guidelines and especially educational guidelines has become vital to Austria as well. Similar to Australia, Austria too has educational guidelines that overtly condemn discrimination, and yet desire to build a unified nation by promoting young and diverse learners to become committed to a unified nation and national identity.

On the one hand Australia has a history of researching to identify and address ethnic and racial tensions that emanate from ineffective intercultural understandings, and on the other hand there is a paucity of such studies in Austria. Therefore, this study is a beginning of such critical conversations within educational settings in Austria leading to much needed research in this area. Moreover, it has also been identified that current intercultural understandings within the Australian as well as Austrian societies need to be much supported within school settings (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2013). Hence, the findings of this international study results in identifying the gaps in teachers' attitudes and knowledge that inhibit their effective engagement in pedagogical practices that develop intercultural understandings both in Australia and Austria.

### **Significance and innovation in both countries**

#### **Australia**

Currently, Melbourne Declaration on Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) outlines that all schools along with families and community members should take the responsibility for building a socially cohesive nation by engaging in educational practices that are not only free from bias and discrimination, but also promote values of democracy, equity and social justice. Yet, as highlighted above racism and prejudice have been evidenced by much research conducted in educational settings in Australia. Moreover, the report (VicHealth, 2014) drawn from studies conducted in Victoria, Australia in the year 2013 indicate that more than half the respondents expressed overt prejudice against specific groups. More specifically, this report highlights the role of nationalism influencing covert prejudice, as 52% of the respondents believed that "minority groups should behave like

mainstream Australians” (VicHealth, 2014: pg. 10) and therefore, recommends to engage in more efficient educational programs and strategies to combat such attitudes. Most of all the report highlights the negative effects that such prejudice has on the mental well-being of the victims. This clearly indicates how the complexity of cultural diversity when reduced by nationalism results in subtle racism and discrimination that further impacts on the well-being of communities.

**Austria**

In Austria, the attitude towards migrants are termed as “paternalism”, as they are seen as being less capable of fending for themselves and hence need to be supported by those who are not migrants (Mecheril, 2014; 2008). The author also adds that this is the predominant attitude that is present in most German speaking countries, and hence they are hastily encouraged to assimilate the language and values of the adopted nation (Quehl & Mercheril, 2010; Karuse & Liebeg, 2011). Hence, schools teach migrant and refugee children to take on Austrian values and become integrated into the society as Austrians. This presents a phenomenon very similar to Australia, where minority groups are categorised as, “with and without migration”, and those “with migration” are subjected to domination and discipline in the name of integration (Mercheil, 2014). This research investigates how intercultural understanding is interpreted and supported by primary school teachers in Australia and Austria. It aims to uncover the theoretical and experiential underpinnings of such support and whether there are differences and similarities between the two countries. This comparative study brings about new ways of understanding the complex interceptions between nationalism and multiculturalism in globalised spaces. It outlines current gaps in effectively supporting intercultural understandings and provide recommendations for current and future teacher training leading to further long-term participatory action research projects with teachers and students.

The findings of the project “promoting cohesion, challenging expectations: educating the teachers of tomorrow for race equality and diversity in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools”, whose leader was Peter Hick, pointed out that teachers often tended to view race inequality at personal and cultural levels rather than at institutional level. (Hick, 2011: 24)

Moreover, student teachers are not prepared or even empowered to challenge the implicit assumptions which constitute passive, institutional racism and how it impacts on the educational opportunities of Black youngsters in their school. (Lander, 2011: 362)

The main hypothesis was, that compared to Australia, Austrian primary schools are not as experienced in multiculturalism. Therefore, this study should highlight the differences in order to gain more intercultural understanding in primary schools. The results points out facts and figures, which were not expected.

**Method and Materials**

The online survey of this project was opened from 1/7/2015 until the 31/12/2015, with the majority of teachers (or) participants completing the survey from October 2015 to December, 2015. This period corresponds to the commencement of the school year in Austria, and the commencement and completion of the final school semester in Australia. The total number of teachers who completed the online survey from Austria, was 138. This was compared to the total number of teachers who completed the online survey from Australia, which was 78.

**Living in Austria – Australia**

	frequency	percentage
Österreich	138	63.9
Australien	78	36.1
Gesamt	216	100.0

**Table 1: Frequency of participants within the observed countries**

Before presenting the results of our research, one has to consider the time when teachers in Australia and Austria were asked to fill in the survey.

During the period that the online survey was open for primary teachers in Austria and Australia to complete, significant historical events were occurring in Europe. This was the European migrant crisis, which saw millions of refugees fleeing the Arabian world to find refuge in Germany as well as in Austria and other European countries.

Therefore, these political irritations in Europe are an important consideration when interpreting the results of this comparative study, as this political situation could have an influence on teacher’s responses.

**Results**

In Austria, there was no formal political regulation for asylum seekers during the same period as the open access to the online survey of this study. Politicians pursued the open-door policy of welcoming refugees, which caused considerable debate within the Austrian society.

On the other hand, Australia has a stricter foreign policy, which is more accepted and a constantly developed immigration, caused by colonialism. Among other things these facts can be reasons for the significant differences between Austrian and Australian teachers concerning the attitude of multiculturalism and intercultural understanding.

The common theme through all the researched items of intercultural understanding was more prominent for Austrian teachers compared to Australian teachers.

To provide a clear understanding of the results, the differences between the Austrian and Australian teachers are now described: Firstly, demographic data such as: the size of school, the length of time teachers have been working, and the number of pupils they teach, did not influence the teacher’s cultural understanding. That demonstrates in both countries the researched variables are not associated with the demographic data.

Secondly, gender and the place of birth of the teacher cannot be associated with the researched variables. This is due to a lack of respondents who completed the survey in these two groups. In relation to gender, 95.8% females and 4.2% males in Austria completed the survey. This was compared to 84.6% females and 15.4% males in Australia. These percentages reflect the numbers of males teaching in Austrian primary schools. On average just 5.77% of male teaching staff work in primary schools in Austria and 19.3% of all FTE (Full Time Equivalent) male teaching staff at primary school level in Australia.

**Identified discourses about differences among students**

At the beginning, there is a short overview about the identified discourses of Austrian and Australian teachers:

First, concerning the treat difference, educators in Australia rely on rationalised knowledge to observe and infer students’ behaviour to enable all students to behave within particular expectations. Such a reliance can’t be observed among Austrian teachers.

There is also an erase difference, which means that educators in Australia believe that their humanistic pedagogical practices can remain apolitical and neutral to enable students to mutually care and accept each other. Austrian teachers don’t think so as politics have a great influence as well as impact on Austrian education.

An additional aspect is to learn about difference. Educators in both countries seek to enable all students to learn about the different ‘other’ to promote social understanding and tolerance.

The so called embrace difference points out that educators strive to establish multiple ways of being and acting ‘normal’ to enable students to embrace difference in multiple ways. Therefore, teachers try to resist and (re)construct the current situation. That means, in Australia educators are consciously engaged in the arbitration and contestation of historically and politically established power relationships between groups to enable students to be critical and take collective action that can (re)construct historically constructed marginalisation of particular difference. In Austria teachers try to point out the current difference between groups and on the same time they strive to respect each other.

**Australia and religion**

In 2016, the ‘typical’ migrant in Australia was born in England and is 44 years old; a decade ago they were aged 46. There are however some differences between the states – the ‘typical’ migrant in Queensland was born in New Zealand, while in Victoria the ‘typical’ migrant was born in India. The ‘typical’ migrant in New South Wales was born in China.

Looking at religion, Islam was the third largest religion in Australia after Christianity and Buddhism according to the census of 2011. Nevertheless, the second largest group in Australia is ‘no religion’ and the third largest didnt answer the religion affiliation.

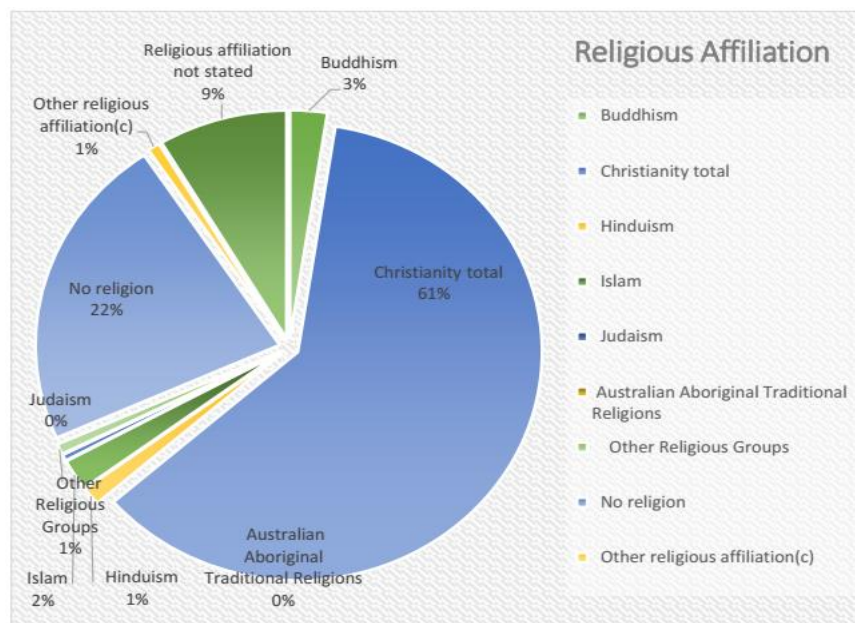
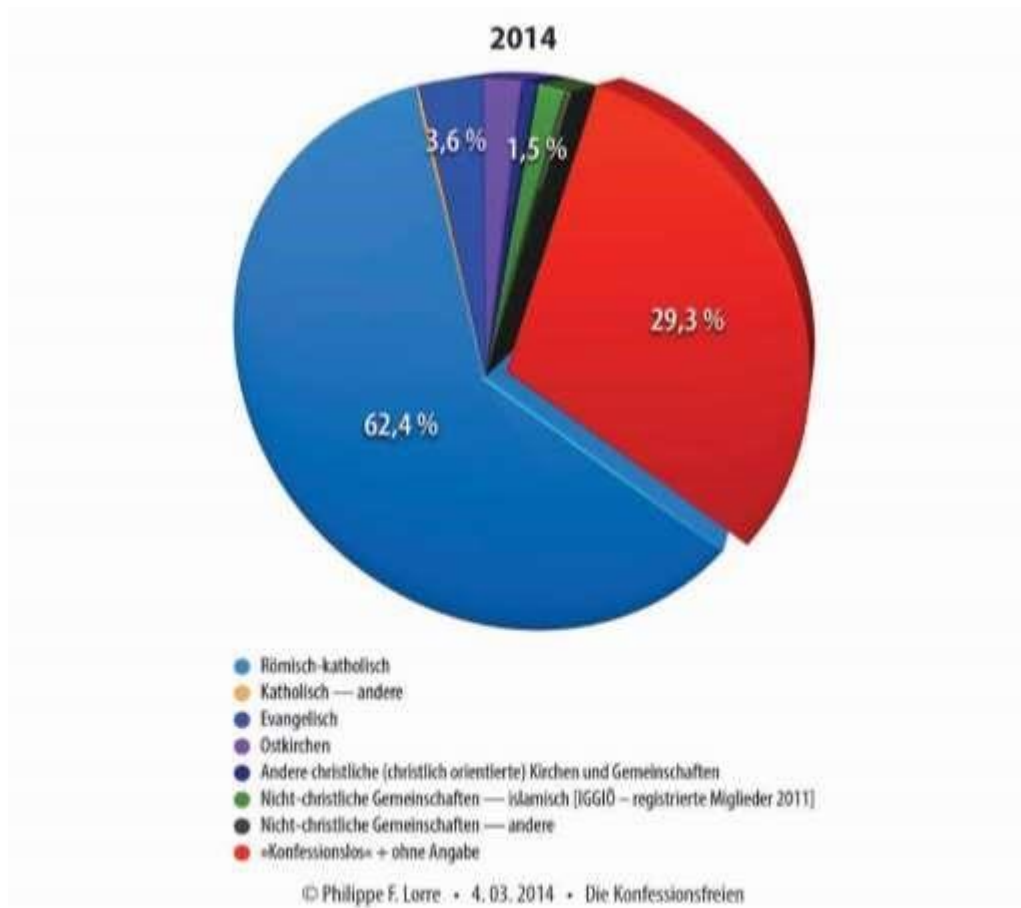


Figure 1: ABS Census 2011<sup>5</sup>

**Austria and religion**

Christianity is dominant in Austria because of historical reasons. More than two third of Austrian population are affiliated to Christianity.

The possibility of Religious Education is statutory also in public schools. However, parents are allowed to sign off their children from Religious Education.



**Figure 2: Religious affiliation in Austria<sup>6</sup>**

### The statistical measure Gamma

Before interpreting the table below one has to consider, what gamma is an expression for:

Gamma is a measure in the descriptive statistics. As an index of association between two variables, it measures on the level of ordinal scales. Two pairs of scores are examined; in this study Australia and Austria are juxtaposed. These pairs are concordant if the first variable ranked higher than the other on the first variable and is also ranked higher than the other on the second variable. They are discordant if the first variable ranked higher than the other on the first variable and lower on the second variable. Gamma is defined as the difference between the number of concordant and discordant pairs in relation to the total number of concordant and discordant pairs. It ranges from -1 to 1. In this study 1 means the variable is ranked highest in Australia and 1 means the highest ranking in Austria.

Variables	Australia	Austria	gamma
Australian/Austrian families consider Religious Education as being important for their children	not so important	important	0,861**
New migrant families consider Religious Education as being important for their children	important	important	0,254
Students from diverse cultural background share the experiences of their country of origin with others.	frequently	not so frequently	-0,468**
Students from varied cultural background are accepted by local students at school	completely accepted	less accepted	-0,621**

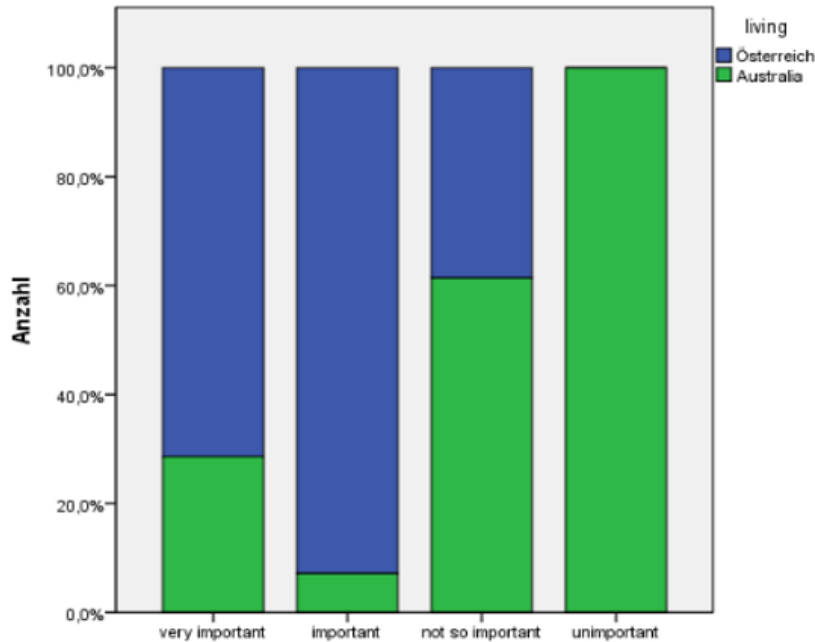
**Table 1: attitudes towards Religious Education of the perspective of multiculturalism**

### The attitude towards Religious Education of Austrian vs Australian families

In table 1 it is shown, that Religious Education is significantly more important for Austrian families whereas Australian families' don't think that religious education is important. This variable points out the highest measure of association (gamma = 0,861). Concerning the attitude to Religious Education there is the greatest difference of all variables. One

could argue that Australian teaching staff is much more secularised than Austrian teaching staff. In Austria, also in public schools the possibility of Religious Education is statutory. However, parents are allowed to sign off their children from Religious Education.

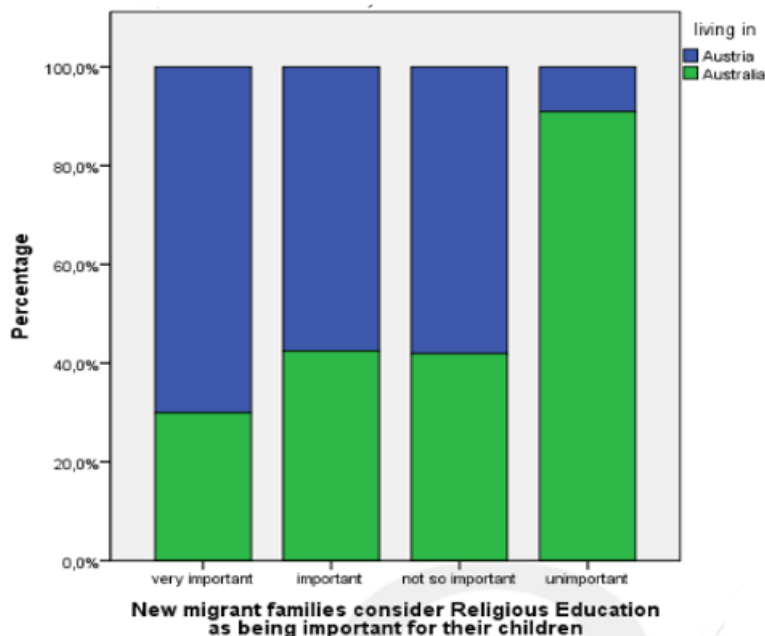
The attitude towards Religious Education is significantly different in Australia and Austria. None of the Austrian teachers thinks of Religious Education as being unimportant and 59,4% of them consider it as being very important or at least important. In Australia there are 7,8% of teachers, who think of Religious Education as being very important or important. Graph 1 shows the significant difference between both countries.



**Graph 1: Austrian (blue)/Austrian (green) teachers attitudes towards Religious Education.**

**The attitude towards Religious Education of new migrant families in both countries**

Actually within the first three rankings there is nearly no difference between the two countries concerning the attitude of new migrant families towards the importance of Religious Education for their children.



**Graph 2: New migrant families attitudes towards Religious Education**

The last ranking points out a difference in considering Religious Education as being unimportant in the sense that new migrant families in Australia can't see any importance in Religious Education. It is possible that new migrant families adapt themselves a little bit more to the values of Australia.

Religion is often a vague experience of their country of origin for students from diverse cultural background. One cannot expect that children in primary schools have already made many experiences in their lives. Nevertheless, Australian

teaching staff thinks that their students from diverse cultural backgrounds share the experiences of their country of origin with others. Austrian teaching staff doesn't think so.

Additionally the teaching staff in Australia thinks that students from varied cultural backgrounds are completely accepted by local students at school whereas Austrian teaching staff observes that they are less accepted.

In general Australian teaching staff doesn't see any need for action. Multiculturalism is part of the everyday live without any troubles. Religion as an aspect for multiculturalism is not present in Australian schools. In Austria, the great number of refugees coming to Europe sensibilised the teaching staff during the year of 2015. Consequently, multiculturalism is a topic, which requires more need for action in Austria. Additionally Religious Education is part of the Austrian School System. Therefore it is considered more as being important than it is in Australia.

To highlight Religious Education it can't be done just by pointing out the demands or differences of Religion. Religious Education has many faces and talking about it means to consider also philosophical perspectives, by asking about the aims of Religious Education. Because of the refugees in Europe, people have started to think more about what Religion and culture mean to them and this leads to a more critical attitude towards the social system within the school system. In Australia, people are used to living together with many different cultures, so that they are not so much aware of problems caused by multiculturalism. Concerning the situation in Australian schools, teachers often marginalise tensions among their students caused by racist taunts.

### Reasons for conflicts

Teachers were asked which reasons for conflicts are important in their class. The table indicates a significant gap in the answers of teachers from Austria and Australia. Austrian teachers see much more conflict about clothes between students compared to the response from teachers in Australia. One possible reason is that in Europe people often discuss the problem of wearing a headscarf. What is the problem of wearing a headscarf? Are there any transmitted and transformed values related to that problem? Even on TV, documentations about wearing headscarves were shown, and in schools, supervisory school authorities issue edicts about swimsuits especially for girls who are members of the Islamic religion. Consequently, also the religious values differ significantly between the two countries. Australia is more secularised than Austrian people are. Hence, Austrian people and teachers care more about religious values. Referring to the study of U. Dopplinger, 2014, pupils of primary schools tend to adapt their opinion to that of their teacher. Considering this impact of teachers on their pupils, they are a most important role model in present day society and in the future.

Even food is estimated as more of a reason for conflicts in Austria than it is in Australia. Obviously Austrian pupils care more about what they eat than Australian pupils do. A look at the eating habits can explain the different awareness of food children eat in school.

Another significant difference between the two countries is the language; however, this difference is not as grave as the answers of the other items. Cultural values don't play a big role in the ranking of the differences between key reasons for conflicts.

Key Reasons for Conflicts	Gamma
clothes	0.811
religious values	0.665
food	0.625
language	0.576
cultural values	0.395

**Table 2: Measure of association of key reasons for conflicts to Austria and Australia**

### Pupils talk about diverse things – a matter of identity

The individual identification with one's own person is one of the most relevant criteria, on the one hand for self-confidence and on the other hand, for showing respect for others. That leads to the question "Who am I"? The answer to this question contains several aspects as follows: The interests and needs, the nationality and language, the appearance, the beliefs and ancestry and to whom you belong. All these criteria are part of the questionnaire to get a hint about how important these aspects are for pupils of primary schools. Therefore, teachers were asked what their pupils talked about. In other words, do pupils reflect over their own identity by talking about these aspects mentioned above? Is there a difference between Austrian and Australian pupils? The following table with the measure of association "Gamma" shows, that in a contrasting juxtaposition, Australian pupils talk a bit more about cultural activities, food, sport and school work than the Austrian pupils do.

Students talk about	Gamma
cultural activities	0.478
food	0.444
sport and school	0.422

**Table 3: Measure of association of subjects pupils talk about for Austria and Australia**

The most mentionable result is that 81.16% of teachers in Austria and 69.23% in Australia observed that their pupils talk about other things. To be specific they talk about three main subjects, which are the same in Austria as well as in Australia: leisure activities, friends and TV/computer.

	Austria			Australia		
	activities	friends	TV, PC	activities	friends	TV, PC
percentage within a country	64.49	15.89	19.63	50.00	29.17	20.83

**Table 4: Percentage within a country of topics pupils are talking about**

As pointed out in table four, the extent as to how much pupils talk about videos, films and computer games is nearly the same in Austria and Australia (19.63% vs 20.83%). Whereas in Australia the pupils talk more about their friendships and relationships (29.17%) than Austrian pupils do (15.89%), Conversely, Austrian pupils talk more about activities during their free time (64.49%) than Australian pupils do (50%). In any case, leisure activities are seemingly the most important things to talk about in both countries. According to these results, primary school pupils don't care, or, reflect much over their identity. Their interest is located in their everyday life. What they have done or what they will do next. – A healthy approach to life.

#### Additional aspects of intercultural understanding

Variables	Australia	Austria	gamma
Australian/Austrian families consider Religious Education as being important for their children	not so important	important	0.861**
Do you believe cultural diversity causes conflicts between students	rarely	sometimes	0.542**
Families receive adequate financial and social support	don't agree	agree much	0.529**
English/German speaking students become annoyed when students with EAL/GAL communicate in their first language within their own groups	nearly never	sometimes	0.256**
New migrant families consider Religious Education as being important for their children	important	important	0.254
Students from new migrant background mingle and work together with local students in groups.	often	often	0.046
Students from new migrant groups develop friendships outside school.	somewhat	somewhat	0.005
Parents with diverse cultural background rename their children	frequently	not so frequently	-0.764**
Students from diverse cultural background are proud of their own ethnicity	very proud	not so proud	-0.727**
Students from diverse cultural background are adapted to the overall culture of the Australian/Austrian society	much	somewhat	-0.667**
Students from varied cultural background are accepted by local students at school	Completely accepted	Less accepted	-0.621**
Feel students that they belong within Australian/Austrian society	much	somewhat	-0.577**
Students from diverse cultural background share the experiences of their country of origin with others.	frequently	not so frequently	-0.468**
Families from diverse cultural background support each other	more	less	-0.432**
Students from new migration background and local students invite each other to play outside school times	agree much	don't agree so much	-0.375**
Students from new migrant background develop friendships with local students at school very quickly	very quickly	not so quickly	-0.318**
Students are interested in each other's culture	much	much	-0.094

**Table 4: Ranking of the measure of association from diverse variables between Aus/Aut**

First, it shows in table four that religious education is important for Austrian families, whereas Australian families, don't think of it as being important. This variable points out the highest measure of association (gamma = 0.861) which means, that of all the variables, attitudes towards religious education differ most of all between both countries.

Another aspect is, that parents in Australia rename their children more often than parents living in Austria do. According to the numerical value of gamma = - 0.764, Australian parents have a higher association to renaming their children than Austrian parents. This seems to be in contradiction to the results that Australian pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds are very proud of their own ethnicity and Austrian pupils are not so proud (gamma = -0.727), because pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds in Australia are more adapted to the overall culture of the Australian society than pupils from Austria. (gamma = -0.667). Consequently, pupils from varied cultural backgrounds are completely accepted by local pupils at school in Australia whereas pupils in Austria are less accepted (gamma = -0.621). So pupils with diverse cultural



backgrounds have more of a sense of belonging within Australian society than pupils of diverse cultural backgrounds in Austria do. (gamma = -0.577)

Another aspect is that, primary school teachers from Australia believe more that families from diverse cultural backgrounds support each other than Austrian teachers do. (gamma = -0.432)

Another phenomenon is that English-speaking pupils become annoyed when pupils with English/German as additional language (EAL/DAZ) communicate in their First language within their own peers. In Australia, classmates don't care at all if pupils with EAL communicate in their First language (84.2%) and they care only sometimes (15.8%). Whereas, pupils of Austria do care (14.7%) and care only sometimes (22.9%) if pupils with DAZ communicate in their First language. The measure of association is not very high (gamma = 0.256). In Australia pupils don't care at all and in Austria they care sometimes. One explanation therefore is that teachers in Austria call on their pupils to request classmates with migration background to talk in German and not in their First language. On the one hand, this question represents accurately the influence of teachers on their pupils and on the other hand, it points out that in Austria the different languages turn out to be a problem much more than in Australia. English is a globalized language, which means that the migrants of Australia are often more able to understand English than the Austrian migrants understand German.

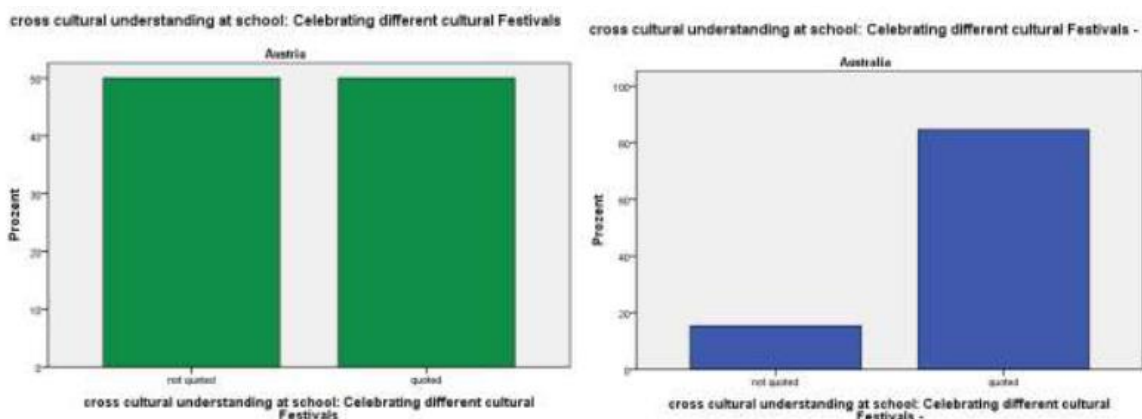
One finds no difference between Austrian and Australian pupils in the interest in the different cultures. In both countries, the interest of the students is rather high.

Although there is an interest in each other's culture and additionally pupils from new migrant backgrounds mingle and work together with local pupils in groups, in both countries pupils from new migrant groups develop only few friendships outside school. Again, this could be a sign of the influence teachers have on their pupils, as teachers in both countries motivate their pupils to work together.

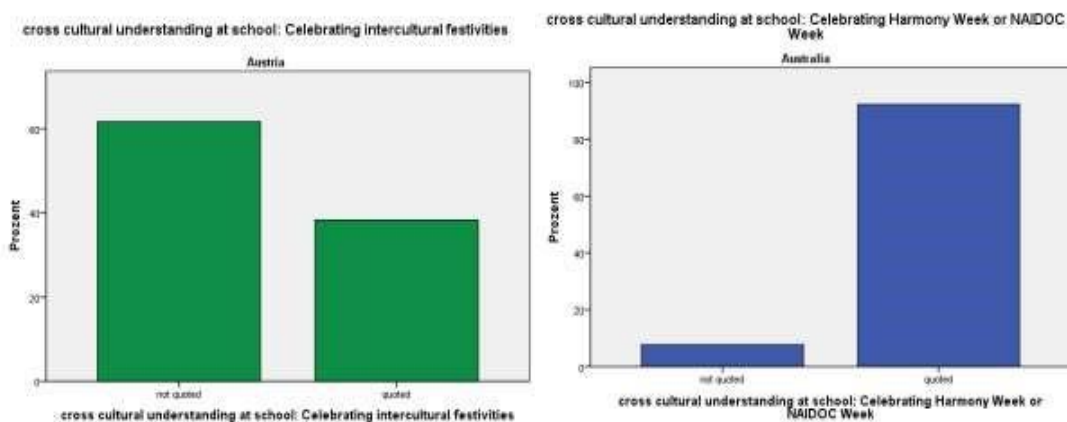
### Cross cultural understanding

The following bar charts point out the different cross-cultural understanding in some variables:

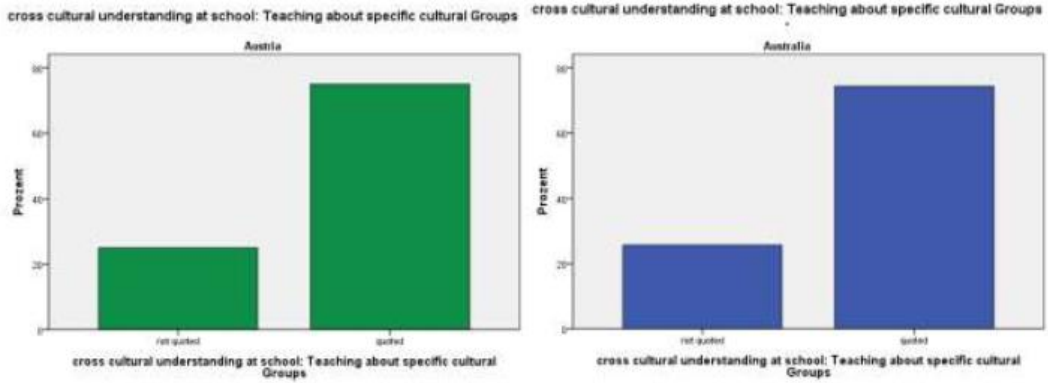
1. Australian teachers think that celebrating different cultural festivals can lead to a better cross-cultural understanding. Half of the Austrian teachers didn't quote for celebrating different cultural festivals. So they don't think that cross cultural understanding can be fostered by cultural festivals as much as the Australian teachers do.



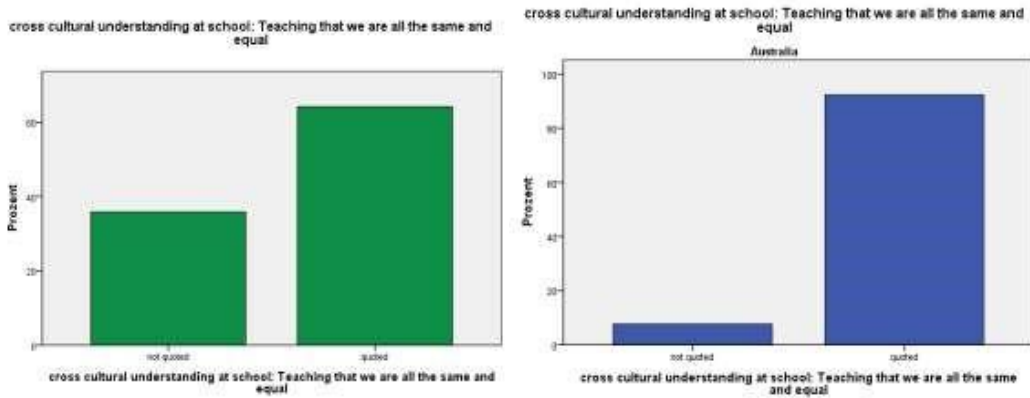
2. Harmony Week or NAIDOC Week is very important in primary schools in Australia for forming cross-cultural understanding. As there aren't common festivals in Austria like those in Australia, it is not important for Austrian teachers.



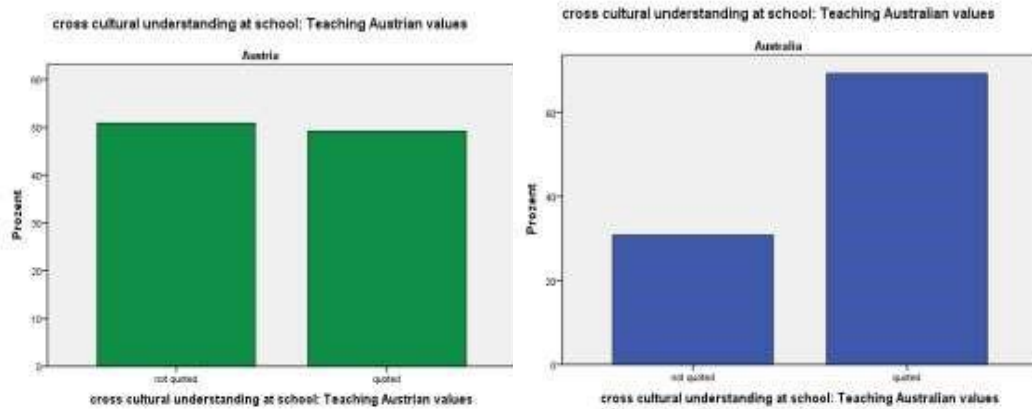
a. Both teachers in Australia and in Austria think that cross-cultural understanding is fostered by teaching about specific cultural Groups. Obviously, teachers all over the world think that by training cognitive abilities, pupils will get a better understanding for each other, no matter if the subject deals more with emotions than with cognitive contents.



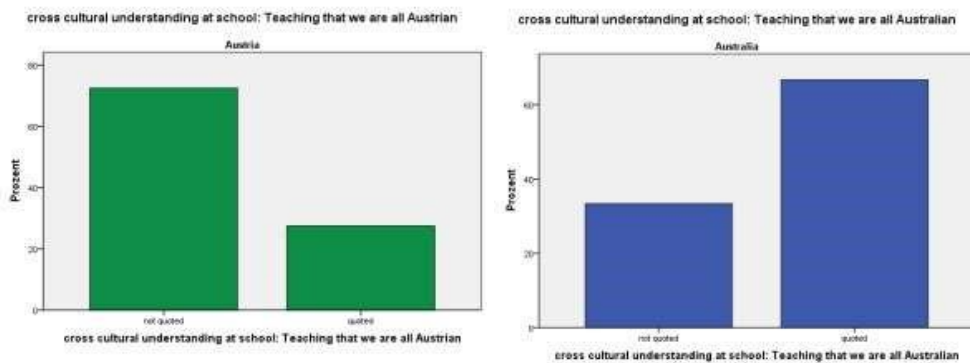
b. The tendency is the same in Austria and in Australia: Teachers think that pupils get a better cross-cultural understanding by telling them, that we are all the same and equal. Although in Australia this opinion is more distinctive.



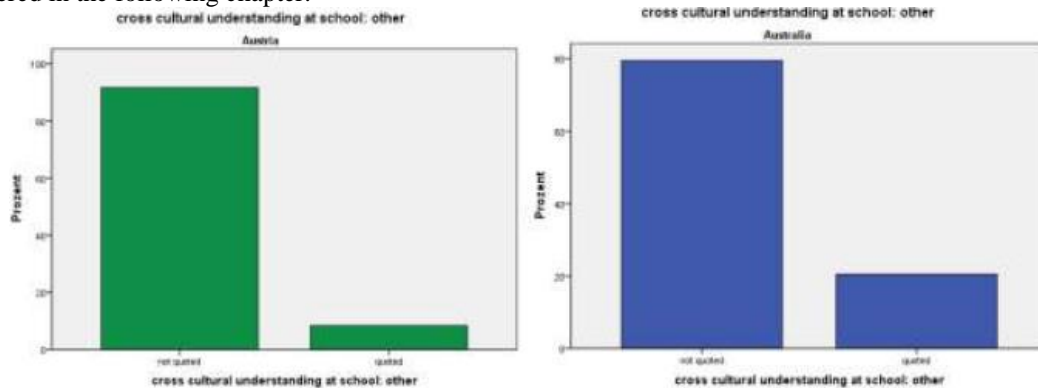
c. In Austria teachers don't think that it is necessary to teach Austrian values for a better cross cultural understanding, whereas Australian teachers think significantly more so.



d. A contentious issue is the attitude to patriotism. In Austria the teachers don't think, that they have to give their pupils a sense of patriotism whereas the Australian teachers' attitude is that it is important to teach that they are all Australians.



- e. Most of the Austrian, as well as Australian teachers, didn't see any more aspects, which would lead to a better cross-cultural understanding, as it is shown on the bar charts. Nevertheless, there are some issues, which have to be considered in the following chapter.



### Impact of teaching pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds

The more teachers teach pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds the more Austrian teachers believe that cultural diversity causes conflicts between groups of pupils, whereas, Australian teachers don't believe that at all. Additionally the more the Austrian teachers teach pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds the more they observe that German-speaking pupils become annoyed when pupils with German as an additional language communicate in their First language within their groups. Again, Australian teachers don't observe this whether they teach pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds or not. In Austria, the more the pupils become annoyed when their classmates of GAL communicate in their First language the less these classmates feel that they belong within the Austrian society.

Additionally the more Austrian pupils discuss their cultural activities with their peers at school the easier pupils from new migrant groups develop friendships with those outside school. Classmates who invite each other outside school feel more integrated in Austrian society and consequently adapt themselves to Austrian society more regardless of their cultural background. In other words the GAL-pupils will adapt to Austrian culture the more they mingle and work together and consequently they develop friendships more quickly with local pupils.

Austrian teachers realise, the less their pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds are adapted to Austrian culture the more the cultural diversity causes conflicts within their class. If pupils mingle and work together regardless of their cultural background, they develop friendships more easily and they become less annoyed when pupils with GAL communicate in their First language. This aspect is the same in Australia. In Austria, as well as in Australia, it has a positive effect in their feeling of being part of the Austrian respectively the Australian society, when pupils mingle and work together.

Australian teachers point out; the more they teach pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds the more their pupils from new migration backgrounds mingle and work together with local pupils in groups.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Epistemologically, this study was conducted under critical cultural studies, as it aimed to inquire the historical, ideological and socio-political origins of teachers' attitudes and interpretations of pedagogical practices that promote inter-cultural understandings. Mixed methods semi-structured electronic questionnaires, providing both quantitative and qualitative data (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) were used. Data from both countries were collated and analysed individually and collectively in order to recognise the similarities and differences that exist between the two cohorts.

Consequently, the findings pointed out in this study intend to provide new knowledge and understanding of how fervent nationalism intrudes equitable intercultural understanding. Thus, these results provide critical information that can lead to further research on offering effective teacher training and professional development for practising teachers in both countries. Additionally the international approach of this study and its findings provide unique multiple perspectives to this complex phenomenon. One of them is that the attitude of primary school teachers towards multiculturalism has an impact on the attitude of their pupils in both countries.

Considering all the results shown above could consequently lead to an additional investigation. Actually, to reduce it in practise research questions like the following should be answered:

Which different methods of teaching can support cultural understanding among pupils in order to avoid conflicts and foster the feeling of being part of the local society? Is there a way to shape or form minds for adopting an open minded and tolerant attitude and perception to multiculturalism not only in primary schools?

As multiculturalism is part of our societies all over the world people should be aware of the necessity of training intercultural understanding in schools as well as within the teacher training.

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