

Towards Increasing Interest in Teaching School Mathematics as a Career

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Interest in teaching school mathematics has been waning globally. We report on Stage 1 of an interdisciplinary collaboration between the UK and Australia, with an aspirational aim to increase interest of undergraduate mathematics majors to consider teaching as a career. A small international seed grant tasked us to explore interest in a coordinated UK-Australia exchange or potential for a joint degree program in the future that could enable graduates to work in either country. This could be an inviting opportunity for students in the UK, for example, where some teacher education programs are only offered as a post-graduate degree. It may also facilitate education students in Australia to undertake a coordinated international exchange within restrictive course requirements of their teacher education program.

We quickly realised the importance of establishing a common understanding of the diverse contexts in which we each worked. The broad and exploratory nature of the aim created ambiguities that generated low-stakes dialogue. We report on exploratory boundary crossing activities that helped us to build a shared foundation and generative space in which to progress creatively (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Employing student interns in our own disciplines helped us hear students' perspectives and, through their experiences interacting with each other, highlighted boundary objects and challenges in the diverse spaces we were working. We offered seminars and surveyed students about career aspirations in teaching; the student interns generated and researched their own questions, held focus-group discussions with peers, and created narrative cases to illustrate their findings; we investigated opportunities for exchanges and navigated the opportunities and challenges for transferring teacher registrations between countries.

Our experiences have energised us to continue to progress our common interests together, and our experience has encouraged greater engagement within and beyond our home universities to broaden our networks.

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References

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