Teacher development across disparate cultures: A case study

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Introduction

Curriculum in an International Context: A course that began with 24 teachers from 9 countries, and ended with 18 teachers from 7 countries. ***A Learning Story...***

Getting to know the audience:

Raise your hand if you…

1. Teach international teachers outside of the IB?

2. Coordinate **PD** for PYP, MYP, or DP schools?

3. Work with teachers from at least 4 cultures?

4. Struggle at times when working across cultures?

Multi-cultural Education: Background

Cultural sensitivity in urban subcultures (Banks & Banks, 2002; Eberly et al., 2010)	Business research on cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001)	Immigrants learning outside of mother tongue (Canagarajah, 2013)	Stages of becoming an intercultural educator (Ramalho & Sperandio, 2009)

Related background research

- **Critique of Hofstede:** It is problematic to equate nations and cultures (Cronje, 2011).

- ***"Riding the waves"*:** Two stages of moving from mono-cultural to intercultural educator (Ramalho & Sperandio, 2009):
  1. Learning to be ***internationally-minded.***
  2. ***Transferring*** what one has learned into one's teaching practices

Our context: **Bilkent In-Service MA**

- **Graduate School of Education:** In-service MA courses for full-time teachers in our Bilkent schools.

- **Five schools:** 4 **IB+** and 1 for music located in Ankara, Erzurum, & Erbil:

Music – uniting cultures

Course participants: May 2014

Location	Nationalities	Teaching levels
Erbil (2)	Kurdish/Iraqi (1) Canadian (1)	Elementary (2)
Erzurum (6)	Turkish (6)*	Elementary (1) High school (5)
Ankara (10)	Turkish (2) Syrian (1) Thai (1) England (2) US/Canada (4)	Elementary (7) High school (1) Middle school (1) Curr Designer (1)

* Turks from western Turkey teaching in eastern Turkey say they "feel like" expatriates.

Inquiry *within* the course

1. What is international education? → Discussion, forums, presentations

2. How do national policies influence international curriculum? → Web quest

3. Gaps between ideals and how IB is really implemented? → Present → Guest speakers → Curriculum Project

4. Why so little MYP in Turkey? → Guest speakers, discussion, forums

*Inquiry **about** course participation*

1. How did **comfort levels with the English language** influence participation in the course?
2. How did participants' **varied levels of teaching experiences** contribute to collaborative learning?
3. What **cultural differences** were acknowledged by course participants?
4. *How can we make the most of cultural differences for optimizing learning and participation?*

Links with IB standards C3 - Teaching & Learning

6. Teaching and learning addresses human commonality, diversity and multiple perspectives.

7. Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs including those for students learning in a language(s) other than mother tongue.

10. Teaching and learning differentiates instruction to meet student's learning needs and styles.

13. Teaching and learning engages students in reflection on how, what and why they are learning.

Action 1: **In-class discussions**

- Interpersonal dynamics were key throughout course.

- Who were the most active participants overall?
  - *Those most internationally experienced (+ fluent in English)*

- Proposed Features of Int.Schools: *Review Handout 1.*

Action 2: **Moodle forums –**
8 forums offered, 2 required responses

- **Topics:** Enderun, Hayden's definition of int.educ, philosophical alternatives, features of int.schools, 2 million minutes video, UN's education millennium goal, MYP...

- **Most active:** Western internationals.

- International teachers responded first; less experienced teachers waited.

- *Which topics would be most popular for which cultural groups?*

Forum topics with greatest participation, <u>regardless</u> of cultural backgrounds:

- **Enderun:** How was it international? Why was it important?

- **Hayden's arguments about defining international education (2006):** Based on your experiences, how would you elaborate?

- **"2 Million Minutes video":** Significance of global competition? Notable stereotypes?

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- **Philosophical alternatives:** Answered by Westerners only.

Action 3: **Team presentations evoked varied, inquisitive collaborations**

- **Presentation 1 (Handout 2):** *Describe an international school (preferably non-IB) – what makes it international?*

- **Presentation 3 (Handout 3):** *Investigate an international feature of your own school.*

Action 4: **Curriculum projects evoked mostly rigorous inquiries**

Many choices:
- Individual, pairs, or…
- Topics widely varied by school needs, teacher interests, skills…

Project rubric:

1) Objectives for learners;

2) Collaborative planning;

3) Recommended content;

4) Reflections on int. education.

Results: Wow! [Handout 4]

Technology constraints

- **Video conferencing:** Delays in audio & visuals
- **Moodle** new to some participants
- **Strategies used:** Local monitors, peer coaching, emails to key tech support, <u>and</u> lots of (im/)patience!

"Call the tech. Our new video-conferencing equipment needs adjustment."

Reflection: Q1 – Language issues

- **Everyone:** Needed time to adjust to a variety of accents.

- **Less fluent:** Not so comfortable speaking, reading, or writing in depth. They listened more.

Not being able to speak is **NOT** the same as not having anything to say.

-Rosemary Crossley

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Stories-from-the-Sandbox/252057948257315

- **More fluent:** Gave more wait time for others, yet one noted "I feel uncomfortable participating as much as I would like."

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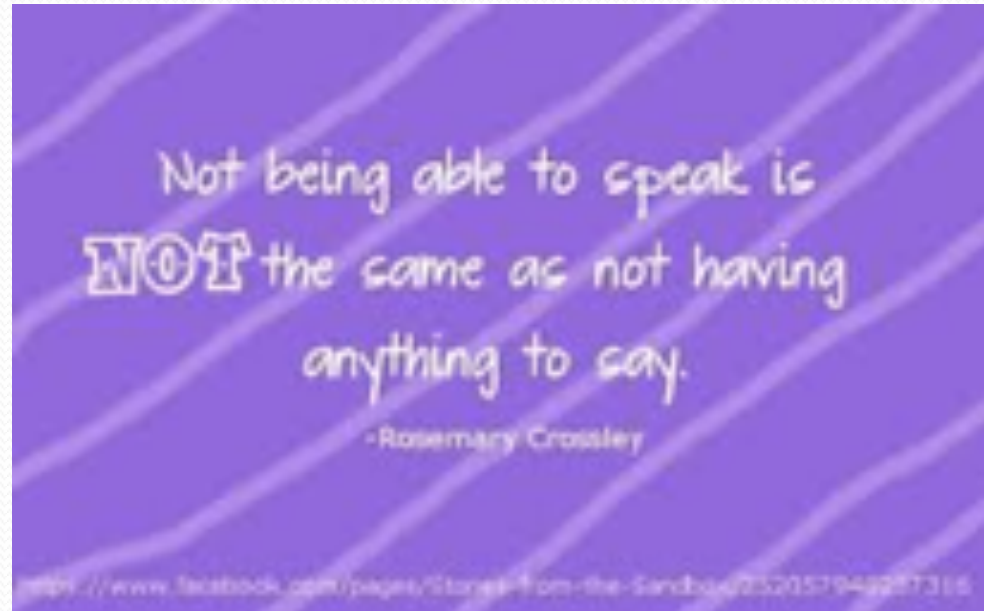
Reflection: Q2 – Teaching experiences

- Experienced teachers = comfortable, confident with collaborative learning.
- Strategies to encourage those with less experience:
  - Vary reporters from small groups
  - Call on quiet students
  - Assign roles
  - Gave reminders for a chance to think.
- STILL: More varied experiences = quicker and eager to share ideas.

Reflection: Q3 – Cultural differences

Culture	Comfortable with…	Less comfortable with…
Turks	Variety of teaching strategies	• Moodle forums • Self-assessment • Questioning presentations
Iraqi/Turkmen	Questioning presentations (?)	• Moodle forums • Self-assessment • Initiating a project about one's own teaching practices • PYP topics
Eastern internationals	Variety: Forums; small & large group discussions; etc.	• Self-assessment • Questioning presentations
Western internationals	Variety: Forums; small & large group discussions; etc.	• Questioning presentations

Reflection: Q4 – How to optimize teacher learning and participation?

Do again! (RM's observations)	Participant suggestions for future
❖ **Team presentations** and/ or web quests	❖ **Class project** where everyone can take part to relate on a topic from their own culture's perspective.
❖ **Moodle forums**, modified for fewer topics that elicit varied perspectives	❖ Team members should collaborate before posting to forums.
❖ **Curriculum projects** around local school needs.	❖ Post curriculum projects online to spark more online discussion.

Recommendations

1. Class language agreement

2. Pre-assessment

3. Explicit instruction in learning strategies

4. Explore home-country curriculum

5. Study groups

6. Diaries

Your Questions?

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