Corbin Dwyer: The ABCs of Teaching Cross-culturally
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The ABCs of Teaching Cross-culturally:

University Educators' Experiences

Summary: *Not all students have the opportunity to study abroad nor to benefit from having international students in their classes, but they can benefit from having an educator who has taught cross-culturally in an international setting. As Schlein and Garii (2011) explain, educators can use international experiences to become "culturally enhanced" and bring these enhancements back to their classrooms—including (potential) shifts in personal and professional identities. This paper describes the benefits, challenges and advice that 11 university educators offer based on their personal experiences. Given the reported lack of orientation activities, these ABCs may be important in helping to prepare educators considering international projects (as the old idiom goes "forewarned is forearmed"). Further, it can help universities design support services for educators going abroad and for visiting educators to foster a positive experience for the educators and students.*

Резюме: *Не все студенты имеют возможность обучаться за рубежом и/или получать пользу от пребывания иностранных студентов на их семинарах. Но они вполне могут получить пользу от преподавателя, который получил образование в рамках межкультурной концепции. Как трактуют Шлейн и Гарии (2011), преподаватели могут использовать свой международный опыт и межкультурные преимущества и вносить их на свои занятия - включая (потенциальные) изменения в личную и профессиональную идентичность. Настоящая статья рассматривает использование, задачи и указания, которые описываю 11 университетских преподавателей на основе их личного опыта. Если данные направления отсутствуют, то эти основные положения могут иметь значительную пользу, для того чтобы научить преподавателей учитывать международные проекты (как гласит старая поговорка: «Вооружен, значит, вооружен»). Кроме того, это может помочь университетским дизайнерским службам и преподавателям, которые отправляются за границу и/или приглашенным доцентам, в передаче положительного опыта как преподавателям, так и студентам.*

Zusammenfassung: *Nicht alle Studierenden haben die Möglichkeit im Ausland zu studieren bzw. von der Anwesenheit internationaler Studierender in ihren Seminaren zu profitieren. Sie können aber durchaus von einer Lehrkraft profitieren, die in einem interkulturellen Konzept ausgebildet wurde. Wie Schlein und Garii (2011) erläutern, können Lehrkräfte ihre internationalen Erfahrungen und interkulturellen Stärken nutzen und in ihre Lehrveranstaltungen einbringen - einschließlich (potentieller) Wechsel in personelle und professionelle Identitäten. Der vorliegende Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit dem Nutzen, den Herausforderungen und den Hinweisen, die 11 Universitätslehrer aufgrund ihrer persönlichen Erfahrungen beschreiben. Wenn die genannten Orientierungsaktivitäten fehlen, können diese ABCs eine bedeutende Hilfe sein, um Lehrkräften vorzubereiten, internationale Projekte zu berücksichtigen (wie die alte Redensart besagt: „Gewarnt ist gewappnet"). Dies kann außerdem universitären Designerdiensten und Lehrkräften helfen, die ins Ausland gehen bzw. Gastdozenten, um positive Erfahrungen sowohl für Lehrkräfte als auch für Studierende zu fördern.*

Introduction

"The world of research is such an international world now, it's global. We don't question the benefit of travelling to conferences abroad, of having an international collaboration or [international] research projects. So it seems odd to me that when we're talking about students coming to us from different educational backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds, suddenly there seems to be a barrier that I can't quite work out. There's some prestige to being an international researcher but there isn't a similar kind of kudos attached to teaching [internationally]." (participant #10)

Hall (2007) presents reasons why professors should teach abroad. He states that most universities recognize international experience and global awareness as key components of an undergraduate education. However, this is an overlooked type of experience—while there are many different programs for studying abroad, there are few programs for teaching abroad. He maintains that faculty members need the experience of teaching abroad because it is crucial for increasing the intellectual dynamism of universities. Fung and Filippo (2002) explain that international opportunities may be a successful tool in the integration of the concepts and theories that govern one's professional discipline.

From an institutional perspective, the benefits of having professors who have experience teaching abroad or who are from another country include the broadening of teaching, learning, and scholarship perspectives; incorporating specific cultural and academic skills; the revitalization of language instruction programs; and the building of tolerance and understanding among staff and students (Welch, 1997). In 1997, Welch pointed out that while the internationalization of the academic profession is growing, it is a little studied field. Sixteen years later, it still appears to be an understudied area given the importance of teaching styles, student responses, and classroom relations (Slethaug, 2007). The exception is personal accounts of teaching abroad, particularly in the business literature (e.g., Garson, 2005; Sisco & Reinhard, 2007). Much more research has been conducted on students' experiences of studying abroad, reflecting the focus on student programs.

Terminology

One of the more practical difficulties of exploring the experiences of teaching cross-culturally is which term to use. Some terms include 'cross-cultural,' 'multi-cultural,' 'international,' 'intercultural,' 'global,' and 'transnational' (Johnson, Lenartowicz & Apud, 2006). Knight (2003; 2004) offers an updated definition for the term "internationalization" which is being used more to discuss the international dimension of higher education: "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (2003, 2). Worldwide, the majority of institutions give a high importance to internationalization (Marmolejo, 2010). So while this has created more diverse classrooms, it does not appear to have led to a broader emphasis on culturally responsive teaching approaches.

I was particularly interested in exploring with participants their experiences of teaching 'abroad' (internationally) because academics who go abroad to teach "engage in cross-cultural dynamics in ways that those who stay at home do not, even if they teach culturally diverse and international students" (Slethaug, 2007, 6-7). Hall (2007) further explains that faculty members benefit most from a total immersion in cultural difference, in a different institution with different students, in circumstances outside of their academic comfort zone. But I also feel it is important to acknowledge that cross-cultural teaching experiences typically occur in the everyday practice of university educators. Therefore, I wanted to keep the term as broad as possible and used "cross-cultural teaching" as opposed to "international teaching" experiences. I let my participants apply the term as they wanted. A qualitative method was determined to be the best approach to answer my research question "what are university educators' experiences of teaching cross-culturally?"

Methodology

Research Participants

After ethical clearance was received, recruitment was conducted through posters, email, and word of mouth. This section briefly introduces the educators who volunteered to take part in the study and their variety of backgrounds. I will first introduce myself as who I am as a researcher affects my interpretation, the style of my written expression, and how I narrate the participants' experiences.

The Researcher

Over ten years ago, I become involved in teaching cross-culturally, delivering CIDA-funded seminars and workshops for Chinese educators and administrators (Corbin Dwyer & McNaughton, 2004). Following that, I became involved in international education through a HRDC-funded international curriculum development project for pre-service teachers (with colleagues from two Canadian universities and three European countries) (e.g., Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, Andrews, Tupper & Corbin Dwyer, 2006). For the past few years, I have engaged in research on parenting cross-culturally (through transracial adoption), including pre- and post-adoption support services (e.g., Gidluck & Corbin Dwyer, 2008). More recently, I taught in an undergraduate program delivered exclusively to Canadian Aboriginal students. These experiences led me to want to know more about the experience of teaching cross-culturally and what support services universities can provide to foster a positive experience for professors and students. During my last sabbatical, I taught two graduate courses during one semester at a university in northeast China. It was the longest time I had spent living, and being immersed, in another culture. I engaged in data collection just prior to, and during, my sabbatical. All of these teaching experiences allow me to be engaged in this research as an "insider" (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

The Participants

Eleven educators volunteered to share their experiences of teaching cross-culturally. To qualify, participants needed to work full-time in a university setting and have cross-cultural teaching experience. It should be noted that all of the participants taught in English rather than another language.

#1 is a white male who has a long history of teaching internationally, beginning in the 1980s. He taught for extended periods of time in Asian countries both before and after obtaining his Ph.D. as an international student. Since becoming a tenured professor, he continues to teach internationally during his non-teaching (typically summer) semesters and sabbaticals, combining research and teaching as teaching helps to cover some of his expenses (such as travel and accommodation). His spouse often accompanies him since his children have grown.

#2 is a female of colour. She immigrated to Canada a number of years ago so her daily teaching experiences at university are cross-cultural. Her accent is different from her students, which is one way of being set apart from them. She was also a professor in her country of origin.

#3 is a white female. She taught in an African country very early in her academic career, which informed her pedagogy. She was an international student, completing two of her graduate degrees in

two different countries, both outside of her country of origin. She has not engaged in teaching in an international setting since coming to Canada but plans to before she retires.

#4 is a white female. She was a teacher in the K-12 system in inner city schools in a large urban Canadian city so her daily experiences were cross-cultural. At the university level, she engaged with First Nations students and in a teacher training program outside of Canada, and set up a primary school during a 3-year project in an African country. She and her husband, #5, are both professors in an Asian university and have been for a number of years. They divide their time between this country and Canada. Prior to this role, #5, a white male, worked cross-culturally in a professional setting outside of academia and did volunteer work in the same country where his wife worked in Africa. He has also taught at the university level in Canada for about 15 years.

#6 is a white male and #7 is a white female. They are a married couple, both retired from a Canadian university and both now teaching at an Asian university where they have been for a number of years. They, too, divide their time between that country and Canada. Both engaged in teaching in an African country during their tenure at the Canadian university.

#8 is a white male who worked professionally for many years with immigrants in a large urban Canadian setting. He spent a year living as an international student while he completed a graduate degree. He recently completed a second graduate degree and is now a professor at an Asian university, along with his wife.

#9 is a white male. He travelled and worked extensively in many different countries in his professional roles outside of academia, both before and after immigrating to Canada. He has been a professor at an Asian university for a number of years, moving there permanently with his teenaged child.

#10 is a white female. She is an academic developer, working with colleagues across disciplines in their learning and teaching roles. She is employed at a European university with a large population of international students.

#11 is a white female. She is an immigrant who is an educational designer at a multi-cultural European university, also with a large international student population. Her country of origin has a large Indigenous population, a large white immigrant population, and a dominant white population.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of individual, recorded interviews conducted in person or by telephone, if distance was prohibitive. These interviews, which were later transcribed verbatim, focused on several guiding questions, which evolved based on participants' responses, and included:

- What are your experiences of teaching cross-culturally/internationally?
- What personal attributes should people possess who teaching cross-culturally?
- What are some of the supports you had or wished you had to facilitate your international/cross-cultural teaching experiences/opportunities?
- What are the rewards of teaching cross-culturally?
- What are the challenges of teaching cross-culturally?
- What are the personal implications of teaching internationally?
- What advice would you give to others about participating in cross-cultural projects?

Data Analysis

Data analysis was grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. Specifically, thematic analysis was used with the individual interviews. In qualitative research, themes are usually expressed as statements. These statements highlight explicit or implied meaning that runs through most of the collected data or that involves deep and profound emotional or factual impact (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). One of van Manen's (1990) approaches to isolating themes in text, the selective or highlighting approach, will be used to assist with reflective analysis. The text was listened to and read several times, asking "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience?"(ibidem, 93). These statements were highlighted and arranged into working themes.

Once the themes and data were revisited several times and the essence of the experience was revealed, the data was turned to again to find examples of this 'truth'. Some features of the phenomenon were extracted to help make its essence visible (van Manen, 1990) by asking the following questions of the data: Of what aspect is this an instance? What questions about an aspect does this item of data suggest? What sort of answer to a question about an aspect does this item of data suggest? (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

I conducted a brief literature review prior to conducting the research, to find out what had been done in the field. I did a more extensive review after the themes were identified in an attempt to reduce bias in my interpretation of the themes (Ray, 1990).

After the themes 'the ABCs of teaching cross-culturally' were identified, I sent this document to the participants asking for their feedback. This helps improve the trustworthiness and rigour of the results (Bergum, 1991). Five participants replied. No one contradicted or had any issues with the themes: participant #10 stated "the themes definitely resonated with me," and participant #2 responded "I … found the responses insightful." Participant #8 wrote: "I … think that those who currently teach cross culturally will see the benefits of a foreign teaching experience as one that is a worthwhile investment towards improving their own insight and ability with populations that have different motivations and core skills than native English speakers."

Results and Discussion

The ABCs

> "Living in different cultures does things…It opens your eyes to that new culture, and going to a conference, quite frankly, for a week really doesn't get you into that culture … Three or four months opens your eyes." (participant #1)

While a number of themes emerged from the data, this paper will focus on the ABCs of teaching cross-culturally described by the participants: Advice, Benefits, and Challenges. In education, ABCs often refer to the basics—foundational information. As a starting place, the ABCs offer an entry point, or some of the important issues, for those who are considering teaching abroad to think about. While 'A' does come before 'B' and 'C' alphabetically, I will present the Benefits and Challenges before the Advice the

participants offered. It should be noted that, while presented as separate, the themes were not completely isolated from one another. Overlap between the three was typical (for example, a Challenge and Benefit often led to discussion about Advice).

B is for Benefits

> "Some of us enjoy crossing the boundaries and feeling different being in a different culture." (participant #10)

The overarching theme of the benefits experienced by the participants was that they really enjoyed the overall experience. Participants expressed enjoying the students, enjoying foreign environments, and enjoying teaching.

The benefit of teaching abroad mentioned by all of the participants was the relationships with the students. Many relationships extended beyond the classroom. Participant #9 and I had our conversation in a public place on campus and many students greeted him as they passed. "I can usually be found here so the students know and come by to see me" (participant #9). Participant #6 described meeting up with a former student in another country where the student was doing graduate work. Participant #7 explained "all the connections…just makes your life so much richer somehow…We had one group of students that we were really fond of … and we're still in touch with all of them." Participant #4 said "I think the students are the most rewarding thing." This finding is consistent with the literature—interpersonal interactions with students are valued by effective educators, whether at home or abroad. Participant #8 pointed out "I am sure that there are some common themes to teaching back in Canada, for sure." The literature on teaching includes research on the importance of relationships between educators and students in the learning process. For example, Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002) found that students and faculty want nurturing, open, nonthreatening, and respectful attitudes in student-faculty relationships. These qualities appear to be important factors needed to create a positive environment for teaching and learning. Getting to know students personally is important because as participant #11 pointed out, "You can't make a generalization of any population that every student is going to behave in a particular way … I think definitely talking to the particular groups is really important so that we're not just making assumptions that we think we know what's best for them." Participant #5 explained it this way: "I think for me it's very simple—as soon as you're engaged with other people you have to learn from them. It's learning, seeing other people, experiencing other people, developing wider and wider, deeper perspectives—it just keeps going." Participant #4 reported that one of the benefits of teaching abroad is that it leads to a better understanding of international students at one's home institution: "if you had people there who are teaching [international] students and then if they were here for a while, they would understand so much better how to deal with those students…where they come from, what they know, and how they think."

The benefit of travel was identified by many participants. "The reward of seeing more of the world and having the opportunity from a base here to travel," explained participant #4. Participant #6 also stated "it gives us the chance to travel a lot." This was echoed by participant #7: "I really enjoy travelling—we, my husband and I, have done … over 50 countries now, so we enjoy going and seeing and doing, and this has been a gateway to travel 'cause once we're here, then you can very easily [travel to other countries]." Participant #3 said "I like travel, and I like meeting new people. I liked the opportunity to teach what I did—all of it." Participant #9 had done much travel in his former professional that this was a natural progression: "I have conducted much training around the world…

before I saw this ad for this [teaching] position." The prospect of travel is a benefit of teaching abroad and part of what attracts these educators to take advantage of these international opportunities.

Participant #8 described another benefit: "It's the intrinsic value of how I feel about myself and my contribution." Participant #4 said: "One of the rewards is being valued…I feel much more valued as an educator than I ever did at home… [the students] value your opinion, they ask you things, listen to your answers … it certainly keeps us coming back." Participant #7 said the same thing: "I like to teach—I really get a lot out of teaching…I really feel like I'm in the place where I should be…you're more appreciated…because students think 'well, you've come a long way and you're here' and you're putting the effort into teaching them, so they seem very appreciative and they seem to really like older people." Participant #6 was faced with mandatory retirement at his home institution: "When I came here, it was because I really did not want to be retired but I had no choice…I was forced to retire." For some participants, these international teaching positions provided them with the opportunity to do what they loved—teach.

C is for Challenges

> "Teaching cross-culturally is a challenge, but a challenge shouldn't only be borne by the professor—a challenge should also be borne by the students. So in that way, you meet cross-culturally … It's a challenge but I think it's a worthwhile challenge." (participant #2)

One of the challenges described by a number of participants was missing their families and living so far away from them. "On the negative side, we have grandchildren at home and we have kids at home…so they're saying 'is this your last time, Nan? Stop, please stop, we need you here, we want you here.'…They worry about us" (participant #7). Participant #8: "I miss my children, I really do, a lot, and that's a terrible disadvantage … I miss my parents. I talk to them every … Friday … I miss living within a 30 minute drive of my parents and not being able to eat meals with them regularly." Participant #4 explained it this way: "Life goes on at home without you and you find you've missed out on things, and that's just the reality of it…Last year four long-term teachers had left and they said finally 'I can't have two homes and that's got to be my home.' And I think we're coming to that." So the challenge could lead to a barrier and prevent some from participating in teaching opportunities abroad: "Having kids at home … or having a spouse who's working full time…I would rather not go four months someplace if I was going to be doing that on my own," (participant #1). The wife of participant #1 accompanies him now "because we're empty nesters."

Consistent with the literature (Sisco & Reinhard, 2007), many of the participants explained that verbal communication was often a challenge due to accents (theirs and the students) and rates of speech (being required to slow down when they addressed students). "The language barrier is huge…technically our students are supposed to be able to speak English. We have some who can't and that's just the reality" (participant #4). Also, a lack of understanding of the foreign language presented many challenges in trying to negotiate day-to-day tasks out in the community: "Even getting a cup of coffee—you have to work at it" (participant #7). The participants found ways of addressing this challenge, such as employing a student assistant. As Participant #9's daughter learned the language, she has been able to help her father negotiate daily activities.

Not knowing the local language, however, did not prevent these educators from engaging in teaching opportunities abroad. Participant #1 noted on a couple of occasions that the challenges of teaching cross-culturally can also be the benefits. He gave the example of not knowing the language of

the country in which one would be teaching. While this is often a challenge, as some of the participants described, some universities desire native English speakers so the students have to use and practice their English skills. As well, sometimes cultural misunderstandings are attributed instead to verbal miscommunication, or vice versa, as participant #11 talked about: "A real interesting area to look at [is] unpacking people's expectations and the cultural expectations. That could be done in an intercultural way because we label people when maybe they've never really understood."

A challenge presented by participant #1 is the race of the educator: "If you're a tall, white guy from away, they treat you better than you deserve—in some of these cultures. And it's difficult, if you're wrong or if you make a mistake, for someone to correct you in a different culture because they don't want to embarrass you. Sometimes it's difficult to learn what the correct behavior is in the culture." Participant #11 pointed out, "You're coming in and you're a minority. You might have some status but you may not." As participant #1 stated earlier in our conversation, a challenge can be a benefit because his experience appeared to have helped increase his racial self-awareness and enhanced his knowledge of critical racial issues (e.g., institutional racism and White privilege) (Yeung, Spanierman & Landrum-Brown, 2013). Participant #5 explained the challenge this way, "It's a question of being able to take your context, one context into another context…It's a question of trying to understand just how your context fits into part of this whole jigsaw puzzle." Another way of exploring this challenge is how participant #11 expressed it: "being comfortable in the uncomfortable."

A lack of orientation and supports were described by a few of the participants as being challenges. "I kind of laugh at what they do…for cross-cultural preparation. They tell you how to hold your business card" (participant #4). "The context is always … way more complicated that it appears to be … You're going overseas only to be [told]…'don't drink your tea this way.' … There's so much more that is quite profound" (participant #5).

Again, it seems important to point out that as participant #1 expressed, some of the challenges could be interpreted as benefits or rewards. Participant #3 described her experience: "I remember reading … studies on people's adjustments, and they said that for the first couple of months, you love the place. For the next couple of months, you hate the place. And after that, you know whether you're going to adjust. And I found I never went through the 'hate the place.' I went through disgruntlement with it … but I never found that I actually ever disliked the place. I think I enjoyed the challenges … I still had a really good time."

A is for Advice

> "There were some orientation books that said how to get a cab, how to travel on the bus, where there were good restaurants, some kind of basic information about that…But I think it could be better. I'm also convinced that there's certain people who are unsuited for [this work]. They're probably people who believe that they have a missionary kind of thing and I've seen a few here. It's "I'm coming to show these people the right way to live"…a sense that we in our [home] country have the answers and these people have the questions, rather than to immerse yourself and say "there's going to be some two-way learning going on here." So I do think that those people come almost with a disrespect before they even get here, they're destined not to do well, and I've known a couple of [people] who would say "they"—"they" do this and "they" do that. And they don't last and they're not happy." (participant #4)

An important piece of advice that all of the participants offered is explore and confront your own biases. Participant #5 continued the conversation started by participant #4 and said "it depends on what attitudes they bring with them. If they bring a dogma with them that says 'I am going to go there

and I'm going to take something to them' as opposed to 'I'm going to go there and let me see what I can learn from them,' then I think if they bring dogma, they're more likely to get into the 'us' and 'them' and 'they' do this and 'they' do that and I suspect more probably, much more probably, [they will bring] rejection." This was echoed by participant #1: "My wife and I are very open-minded about 'how are things done here?' and not 'well, in Canada this is the way we do it so it should be the same here'—that's wrong in my opinion … You say 'how do things operate here?'… So just being open-minded on what the local standard is—neither right nor wrong, but it's kind of the local standard for how things are done." Participant #3 related that during one teaching situation "they had no trouble at all [discussing the material] once they realized that I wasn't judging their culture as being different…from my own." Participant #8 put it this way: "Identifying with other people as just being people. They're people, I'm a person and it's not an 'us' and a 'them.'" Participant #10 reflected on what she learned from a colleague about working with diverse students: "I always remember the example given of how positive stereotypes of different nationalities, different cultures, can be very offensive." Participant #11 said "You can't make a generalization of any population, that every student is going to behave in particular way." Fung and Filippo (2002) note that international opportunities can help people question their biases. They explain that it is tempting for people to place values on differences which frequently lead to negative and positive stereotyping. International experiences, they maintain, can help people enjoy the similarities and respect the differences. Sisco and Reinhard (2007) suggest that a better understanding of cross-cultural differences is the first step toward building on similarities. This resonates with what participant #2 said: "My advice is don't think of race because once we are aware that we are different, like before we go to class … then it changes the dynamics because you are in a different mode, like you are in a position where you have to defend [yourself] … You lose your own individuality, your own interests… [My advice] is first not to think that we are different … I am aware of my ethnicity as well as the students' ethnicity and … though we may be divided, we share some common interests." But as participant #11 asked, "Who's responsibility is it to make people aware of some of these things? I know that in a way there are assumptions that if you are somebody that's new to a country, then I think that you have a personal responsibility to make some efforts."

There appeared to be some disagreement among participants regarding changing their academic standards when teaching abroad. Participant #3 was adamant: "My first and foremost piece of advice is don't lower your standards. Just because it's a different culture doesn't mean the people are any less capable. Don't let anyone tell you they can't do this or they can't do that—they can." Participant #7 related what another educator told her about teaching students whose first language is not English: "She was easier on all the students when they wrote something. She said 'you know, you have to remember they're doing things in a second language so therefore you accept things you wouldn't normally'… Tell teachers that they may come in saying 'I'm going to do the same thing, the same marking scheme.' Well, it ain't going to work."

Because the lack of orientation or support is noted as a challenge by some participants, it is not surprising that some gave the advice to seek out colleagues who have done this before. Participant #6 suggested talking to them about their experiences. Participant #1 said "If you're interested in cross-culture type research, then search out the people that … have been in the area longer than you and … talk to them about getting involved." Participant #5 acknowledged that a possible disadvantage of this is that it could lead to "unhelpful biases … In retrospect, I'm sort of glad now that we just learned it because then there's nobody giving you a perspective which you then have to unlearn." It was suggested that educators do some research on their host country and read about the culture.

In response to the challenges presented by the lack of knowledge of the local language, some advice was related to verbal communication, and this incorporated the theme of being open, flexible and adaptable. As participant #7 reported: "I think, too, you have to be really flexible … everyday is a surprise … You can't let it get to you … You have to be very open and flexible and willing to try different things … You have to be willing to try different teaching methodologies. If one doesn't work, you got to try another one." "When you come here, talk slow when you're talking in English…Check and repeat the same word. If I say something, I'll use three different phrases to say the same thing, and I'll do it real slow," (participant #8). Participant #3 said "figure that there are things you are going to have to adapt to … like … slow down my lecturing … But you just take it that this is the way it is and eventually they get used to you."

Another piece of advice that some of the participants would like to give other educators who would like to teach abroad is what the Nike commercial says, "Just do it"—and relax. "Give it a whirl, give it a try," (participant #8). "Number one, do it," said Participant #5. Participant #4 continued, "First, do it. Secondly, relax … Relax about yourself, you'll be okay. Just try to learn and to listen. Learn from other people, ask questions … It's life changing, really, in many ways … I think professional educators … really have a high standard for themselves. If it's not a perfect lesson today, there's tomorrow ... Not take yourself too seriously about the whole thing. You're not going to change [the country], you may change a few kids' lives if you relax and do it … Read as much as you can about the history … You need to have some background, without bias, about what these people have lived through." Participant #7 also said "I would say take the plunge. It's just such a wonderful experience … there's something that happens when you come to another country." Participant #10 put it this way, "Be less fearful of making mistakes, be open to receiving feedback and learning … Stay curious about your students, and not to be so fearful of putting your foot in it or making a terrible mistake. I wonder at this point if we could all do more kind of international exchanges because I think there would be so much learning in that."

Future Directions

Some of the participants in this study mentioned the need to explore one's biases when working abroad and the need to be flexible, including the willingness to change one's teaching methods. How might this be similar with international and diverse students? Ward (1998) noted that Canada, like most Western countries, has an increasingly diverse population whose social and educational needs are not being met by the mainstream school system. With an emphasis on the internationalization of Canadian universities, is post-secondary education meeting the needs of its domestic and international students? Ward pointed out that working cross-culturally in a post-colonial context is to put oneself in disputed territory. As participant #2 pointed out: "When you teach cross-culturally, I am very much aware of the … dual frame that 'you're inside or outside' and there's no ambiguity. I think that many, almost all, students think in those binary terms." The goal of critical race theory is to eliminate racial oppression. It does this, in part, by acknowledging that racism exists and grounds it in a historical context (Green, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Henry & Tator, 2002). Acknowledgement of dominant ideologies is key to understanding the barriers that minority people face. Critical race theory makes race visible and empowers those who have been oppressed through the process of "othering" by recognizing that social norms have been constructed to serve the interests of the privileged (Burnett, 2012). Some faculty members may take a 'colour-blind' attitude in their attempt to 'deal' with racism because it makes them feel racist to acknowledge race (Jayson, 2006). If this is to change, those of us working in post-secondary education settings must challenge these feelings. However, no models about how to do this

emerged from the present study. A follow up study could explore how to link foundational understandings of cross-cultural education with classroom practice (Ward, 1998).

With regard to international teaching experiences, does length of time abroad affect the impact of the teaching experience? While most of the participants in this study had worked internationally for years, and these teaching opportunities included periods of at least one full academic year, most also engaged in one semester contracts. In her research with students, Dwyer (2004) found that while the greatest gains across all outcome categories were made by full-year students, well-planned, intensive summer programs of at least six weeks duration can have a significant impact on student growth across a variety of important outcomes as well. Is this the same for educators?

In Summary

Not all students have the opportunity to study abroad nor to benefit from having international students in their classes, but they can benefit from having an educator who has taught cross-culturally in an international setting. As Schlein and Garii (2011, 82) explain, educators can use international experiences to become "culturally enhanced" and bring these enhancements back to their classrooms—including (potential) shifts in personal and professional identities.

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