

Diversity Training for Academic Staff to Internationalise Learning & Teaching

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Need to Cultivate Intercultural Capability

- Interpretations of “Internationalisation” are variable among Australian academic staff (Stella & Liston, 2008).
- Internationalisation at home would also benefit domestic students (Parsons, 2009).
- “Intercultural” perspectives and skills often hard to grasp, but fundamental to an internationalised curriculum (Leask, 2008).

Teachers' Diversity Training Needs

- Multiple challenges in teaching diverse students and engaging multicultural classes (Ho et al., 2004)
- Teachers can benefit from strategic training and support, including the development of diversity KAS (knowledge, attitudes & skills) – to reflect on and internationalise their outlooks (Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Stone, 2006)

Development of Intercultural Competence (Freeman et al., 2009)

- Lack of literature on “how to”
- Cognitive understanding insufficient for enhancing academics' and students' attitudes and skills
- One existing practical resource for actively developing IC is EXCELL



- The Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning & Leadership Program is a structured intercultural training system initially developed for providing learning support for international students (Mak, Westwood, Barker, & Ishiyama, 1998).
- Theoretical framework - an integrated model incorporating cultural experiential learning (Mak et al., 1999).



- Targets the development of generic social competencies that many find challenging in crossing cultures, e.g., participation in a group (Mak & Barker, 2006).
- The Alliance Building tool (a strategic approach to facilitating a multicultural group) aims to validate participants' original culture and build safety and encourage sharing in the group.

1-Day Workshop: Engaging & Building Alliance across Cultures

- Diversity training for academic staff at the University of Canberra (UC), which includes the use of EXCELL Alliance Building tool to engage multicultural classes.
- Designed to provide diversity training to teachers to build capacity to implement UC's strategic plan in relation to internationalisation.

Academics' Workshop Aims

- Increase **awareness of cultural values** underpinning student behaviours, & **conditions for positive intercultural contact**
- Promote **empathy** with diverse students' difficulties in participation in academic groups
- Promote the **development and sharing of practical skills** in effective intercultural communication
- Engage staff in **applying the principles and methods of cultural validation and alliance building**

Approach of Interactive Workshop

- Uses active learning methods
 - experiential learning,
 - a cultural assimilator exercise,
 - demonstration of inclusive practices in a facilitated group
 - dyadic and small group discussion
 - critical reflections
- Segments of direct teaching of research evidence
- Course handouts, readings, & websites

Participants in Course Evaluation

- 16 academic staff
- Multi-disciplinary
- Mix in genders, birthplaces, cultural backgrounds, length of service
- At end of training, participants invited to complete an anonymous and confidential survey

Mean Workshop Ratings

(possible scores range from 1 to 5)

Aspect of workshop	<i>M</i>
Workshop activities	4.16
Course materials	4.25
Enjoyment of workshop	4.34
Overall evaluation of workshop	4.31
Value for professional development	4.25

Learning Reflections on Curriculum Development I

- **Teaching pedagogy** (5 mentions)
e.g., “establishing group rapport early on with ice-breaker activities”;
“need to consider student characteristics when designing content & process of teaching”; &
“methods of getting CALD students to participate in tutes”.

Curriculum Development II

- **Teaching philosophy** (4 mentions), e. g., “be aware of the diversity in our cohort of students and allow curriculum design to reflect this.”
- **Curriculum content** (4 mentions), e.g., “adding cultural perspectives in examples and case studies”; “use more inclusive examples/content for discussion”; “issues of values and stereotypes”.
- **Assessment methods** (1 mention) – “devise assessments that equalise student capacities to do well)

Intended Applications to Engage Diverse Classes

- **Inclusive practices** (13 mentions), around planning to offer more small group activities, validate different cultural practices, and using diversity within the class as a resource
- E.g., “small group members to contribute their cultural expertise”;
- “tailoring activities to better engage CALD students and get them work with the Australians;
- “present more case studies showing diverse answers to a problem, according to different cultures”.

Most Useful Parts

- Discussion, sharing, & listening to others' experiences (8 mentions), e.g., "sharing teaching experience and listening to different ways of solving the same problems"
- Networking & meeting particular individuals (5 mentions), e.g., "interacting with CALD academics"
- Handouts & readings (4)
- Practical strategies, tips, & applications (3)

Suggestions for Improvements

- A longer course allowing a greater number & more in-depth activities & case studies (4 mentions)
- Faster paced, half-day workshop (2 mentions)
- Discipline-specific dialogue (1)
- Greater coverage on theory (1)
- Pre-course readings (1)

Recommendations to Others?

- All said yes
- Particularly to their colleagues – “all staff”, “all our lecturers and tutors”
- Including senior academics & administrators
- To broaden perspectives in multicultural Australian society

Discussion of Findings

- Academics welcome this type of diversity training regardless of their disciplinary & demographic backgrounds
- Consensus in favourable workshop ratings, including value for professional development

Discussion of Findings

- Increased understanding of the interpersonal dynamics in culturally diverse classes,
- a heightened sensitivity to the needs of CALD students,
- methods to encourage CALD students' participation, &
- practical ways of incorporating cultural perspectives in learning materials & activities.

Discussion of Findings

- Developed insight into the rationale and knowhow of inclusive classroom practices.
- Almost all expressed an intention to apply strategic L & T practices to engage students and embed internationalisation at home.
- Most found the interpersonal interactions in the workshop to be most useful.

Implications for Future Training

- Interactive workshops for academic staff, effective in encouraging academics to experience the dynamics of diversity firsthand
- Need to offer workshops of varied lengths
- May need to adapt workshop for specific disciplines and types of classes
- Senior academics & admin staff also require professional development to engage with the internationalisation agenda

Implications for Future Research

- Could focus on improving the methodology of evaluating the outcomes and longer term impact of diversity training with academics (see Kulik & Roberson, 2008).
- The latter includes evaluation of change in students' cultural diversity knowledge, attitudes, and skills; &
- CALD students' participation in tutorial discussion and other group activities.

Feedback & Contact

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Contact Anita.Mak@canberra.edu.au
- More info about EXCELL on www.excellinterculturalskillsprogram.com