Teaching Internationally for Internationalization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a case study of a Western (Irish born and educated) university academic working internationally in a Japanese context where internationalization is prioritized. The case study is framed by intercultural and cross-cultural research and theories illustrating and discussing cultural competencies. While Japanese universities have encouraged internationalization for several decades in various forms, in recent years this focus has become more central to their missions. Vignettes from the author's international working experience are provided to highlight culturally specific understandings of best practice in education and avenues and procedures for progress with recommendations for how international educators can understand and navigate similar experiences. While highlighting the importance of respect for cultural differences, this chapter also argues against cultural relativism.

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES

In this context, they illustrate development of the following World Savvy Global Competencies (2014) essential to working in such a setting:

Values and Attitudes:
- Humility.
- Valuing multiple perspectives.

Skills:
- ◦ Investigates the world by framing questions, analyzing and synthesizing relevant evidence and drawing reasonable conclusions that lead to further inquiry.

Behaviors:
- ◦ Translates ideas, concerns, and findings into appropriate and responsible individual or collaborative actions to improve conditions.

CASE BACKGROUND

I have worked in several Japanese universities for over a decade, and my experience can be usefully split into two categories:

1. **Early Career:** My first experience in Japanese universities was as a contracted English language lecturer, after having completed a graduate degree in Applied Linguistics. At this stage in my life, I had less cultural competency and was hired in term limited contractual roles.
2. **Later Period:** At this time I had completed a PhD in Education, and I had more cultural competency and tenured employment status.

I make this distinction in this chapter because, while it is very important to understand an international working culture in terms of national cultures, my experience also tells me that career stage, type of institution and type of working role (the responsibilities and levels of responsibility) also play a major role in shaping the working reality and the cultural competencies an internationally-based educator needs to succeed. This is not unlike Hofstede's (2017) distinction between national cultural dimensions and organizational cultural dimensions, while still understanding the former may strongly influence the latter (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

In this chapter, Hofstede's model of cultural dimension is used when discussing the case studies presented as a way to provide a theoretical understanding of the events whereby teachers can adapt to novel international settings. There are several other models used in the research of culture (Hall & Hall 2000; Triandis, 1994), and the Hofstede model is not without critics (Schmitz & Weber, 2014), nor is it static or necessarily definitive. One of the dimensions – long versus short-term orientation - was added later based on the work of Chinese researchers (Hofstede, 2007). Models of cultural dimensions developed in Western countries may run the risk of researcher bias resulting from Western cultural norms. Perhaps what is most

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