SPARK Training

Teaching International Students & their Learning Styles (SPARK)

Presented by
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12 December 2017
Session Overview

This session seeks to provide ideas and practical examples of ways to:

• teach more effectively in an international context
• promote better interaction between student cohorts
• Understand the need to build cultures of respect, collaboration and understanding to facilitate international learning
Culture Shock (International Students)

• Different physical environment & different customs and practices

• Language shock
  
  “I speak English but I don’t speak Australian”

• Academic shock (different teaching/learning approaches)
• Relationships between academics & students
• Types of assessment (skills, knowledge & capabilities)
Culture Shock (Academic)

It can also be unsettling for teaching staff faced with a room of international students and often limited resources to devote to them outside teaching hours (despite the 24x7 demands)

• Will they be able to cope with the course?
• What will they have studied before and is it equivalent?
• Have they studied at this level in English before?
• Is it going to take me extra time to teach them?
• I can’t even pronounce their names?
Questions That Often Arise?

- How do I teach to this new diversity of local and international students?
- Can I teach international students in the same way as local students?
- How do I keep my standards up when working with international students who don't have the language ability and background to "keep up"?
- I feel I am lowering the standards of my lectures and lessons!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider your assumptions</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Management expectations</td>
<td>Gentle paced introductions</td>
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<td>Group work (you need more than a “one-size-fits-all” approach)</td>
<td>Encourage speaking English in class but recognise that this may put some students out of their comfort zone</td>
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<td>Case studies (relevant examples)</td>
<td>Assessment strategies</td>
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<td>Get to know your students - International names can often be hard to pronounce – ask them whether they have a “preferred name”</td>
<td>Make time to reflect and share experiences with colleagues</td>
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<td>Student expectations</td>
<td>Clear unambiguous requirements with well defined “time-frames”</td>
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Encouraging English

PLEASE... SPEAK ENGLISH OR DONATE $$$$
Effective Communication

• Find out where your students are from and do a little research on those cultures
• Be sensitive to terminology (Use neutral language)
• Be patient with students from different educational systems
• Use more visual examples to avoid language barriers
• Learn from your colleagues/previous students about what works
• Make curriculum relevant by customising your examples
Tools/Techniques

- Cultural/Language Quiz
- Geographical Quiz
- Use activities to encourage students to accepting that they learn differently and culture can be more important than language in this
- In particular International Students find it challenging to think/discuss/recognise that they do not all learn in the same way
Forming Groups

• Students gravitate to their friends and often into their cultural and linguistic groups when sitting in class.
• Learning activities can be more effective with groups of diverse students.
• In-class team activities are a good way to get students to form new friendships and step away from their cultural norms and listen to the perspectives of others.
• Yet the challenge is how to do this equitably, effectively and without offence (such as finger pointing).
Some Non Threatening Techniques
Intercultural Communication

- Avoid stereotypes
- Useful to understand people’s behaviour and how it differs
- Remember that you set the example
- Be respectful of all the beliefs, cultures and perspectives expressed by students in your class
- Pay attention to holidays/celebrations from other cultures
Culturally What Can We Do?

• To translate from concepts from one value system to another and make it work?
• Understand the “rules” of the game and how they differ across cultures?
• Accept that the features of education are highly influenced by culture are:
  • Different perceived status of teachers
  • Supportive culture of education
  • Differing views on accountability and assessability
“Why does the teacher keep asking if we have any questions, I was taught it was rude to ask questions”

“All I need is to remember everything the teacher tells me and memorise the textbook/materials and I can pass”

“What is this critical thinking? Why can’t I ask tell the teacher what I can remember ”

“Why can’t I just learn the way I did before – why are they making it so hard for me?”

“I think my English is OK – so why can’t I understand anything my teacher says”
Small Changes May Help

- Broadening the curriculum (provide global examples)
- Make curriculum relevant by customising your examples
- Ice-breakers do not always work in a “cross cultural context” so you might need to try other ways to get students to get involved
- Learn from your colleagues about what works
- Encourage cultural exchanges in tutorial activities
Self Reflection

1. Consider how your own personal style contributes to your own teaching and learning style
2. What changes/improvements could you make?
3. By thinking more about the cross-cultural differences in educational expectations, how can this assist in improving student interaction and the student experience?
Any questions?

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