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Aid and Teachers in Intercultural Settings: Struggles and Strategies by the Exchange Teachers invited to South Korea

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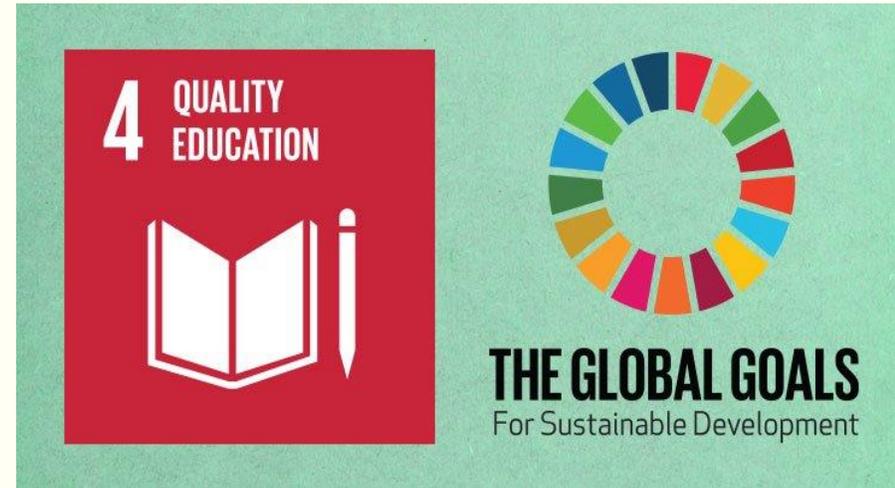


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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- In the direction of a more global society, nation-state relationships are increasingly interdependent
i.e. Increase in cross-cultural training
- SDGs emphasize on Quality Education with Quality Teachers



- Present world conditions pose a great challenge to the field of teacher education to be involved in **understanding how to effectively educate and train teachers for Intercultural competency**
- How do teachers struggle and learn to work effectively in intercultural setting?



Role of Teacher in International Education Development

- Teaching not as a most popular profession but surely the **most** populated - 57 million teachers in the world, about two thirds of whom work in **the developing world**. (Agarao-Fernandez and de Guzman, 2005)
- Issues and factors causing low teacher quality in developing nations include lack of qualification, severe budget constraints, and the absence of effective teacher compensation. Her evidence-based research indicate that **quality teachers were 'what matters most'** (Rowe, 2003)
- With educational reforms occurring around the world, the **double roles of teachers** in education development – **both subjects and objects of change** makes the field of teacher professional development a growing and challenging area (Villegas-Reimers, 2003)
- In interdependent world, modern teachers are expected to develop awareness, understanding, empathy, knowledge, skills, and attitudes for **ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism** (Wilcox, 1973)
- Teacher exchange** has been popular worldwide as it brings imperative values for both incoming and outgoing teachers between the participating nations (Tigchelaar and Korthagen, 2004).



1.2. Program Description

Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange Program (APTE)

- A bilateral teacher exchange programme between the Republic of Korea and six partner countries in Asia to promote mutual understanding and exchange of teaching experiences.
- Sponsored by the ODA budget from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and implemented by UNESCO APCEIU, in corporation with the Education Ministries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam
- Dispatches and invites teachers to and from partner countries and provides participating teachers with opportunities to teach at host schools of the partner country for 4 months.
- Main objective is to improve the quality of teachers through Education ODA and to promote GCED (Global Citizenship Education) as advocated in Education 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



1.2. Research Questions



- (1) What kind of **cultural disequilibrium** do the teachers experience throughout an exchange program in Korea?
- (2) How do the teachers **respond to** the cultural disequilibrium throughout an exchange program in Korea?

Video: 'Story of Mus'

(a Research Participant)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8CwvsuglC8> (00:00~01:04)



1.3. Important Terminology

- **Intercultural competency:**

An adaptive capacity to alter his or her perspective to effectively understand and accommodate the demands of a different culture from his or her primary culture (Taylor, 1993)

During the acquisition of intercultural competency, 'Cultural disequilibrium' is seen as a 'Catalyst of the intercultural learning process'(Taylor, 1994)

- **Cultural Disequilibrium:**

Dissonance in the participant's life causing stress and intense emotion by experience in the host culture (Taylor, 1993)

- **Transformative Learning:**

Learning that transforms problematic frames of references – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations – to make them more inclusive, reflective and being able to change (Mezirow, 2000)





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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Intercultural Competence

- Bennett (1993), Louis (1980): Emphasis on the features of intercultural competence such as skills, habits, dispositions, and practices that an individual may come to achieve or fail to achieve with less attention to learning processes or learner development
- Earley and Ang (2003): Cultural intelligence, or CQ, suggests that intercultural development is multifaceted and integrative in nature. Defined as “a person’s capability for **successful adaptation to new cultural settings**”. They specify CQ as a specific kind of intelligence and its development relies on practical understanding of how one’s behavior and physical presence are received in cross-cultural settings. They assert that cultural adaptation is neither a fixed ability nor develops naturally and thus requires ongoing refinement and learning



2.2 Cultural Disequilibrium

- Experiences of dissonance are central to most theories of intercultural competence. Such disorienting experiences are given various labels, such as 'culture shock' (Oberg, 1960), 'surprise' (Louis, 1980), 'cultural difference' (Bennett, 1993) and are analogous to the 'disorienting dilemma' in Mezirow's (1991, 2000) model of transformative adult learning
- The challenging experience, the encounter must be provocative enough to generate a reaction, and it is clear that such encounters are vividly experienced and can be stressful, confusing, isolating, and/or threatening (Roberts, 2006).





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3. METHODOLOGY

3. Methodology

A Case of Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange Program

It is hosted by Korean MOE and implemented by UNESCO APCEIU, to invite teachers from developing countries in Asia-Pacific region to Korea for 3 months, with the objective of strengthening teacher's intercultural competency

Research Participants

2 exchange teachers each from Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines were the main interviewees. In addition to 6 primary and secondary in-service teachers, a Korean mentor teacher, a Malaysian ministry official, and Korean program officers also contributed during observations

Qualitative Approach is naturalistic, where real-life experiences are allowed to emerge and answer the RQs.

Data Collection

(1) Interviews (2) Observations (3) Field Documents

Data Analysis

(1) Open Coding (2) Focused Coding (3) Taylor's Framework for Cultural Disequilibrium and Behavioral learning strategies

*Use of In-vivo codes

Validity and Reliability

Q. How congruent are the findings with reality?
Q. Would the findings be the same if the inquiry is replicated?
- Triangulation of Data & Member Checking with Participants

Limitation

Findings consist one cycle's worth of data, only during the program. Lack of generalizability despite in-depth understanding

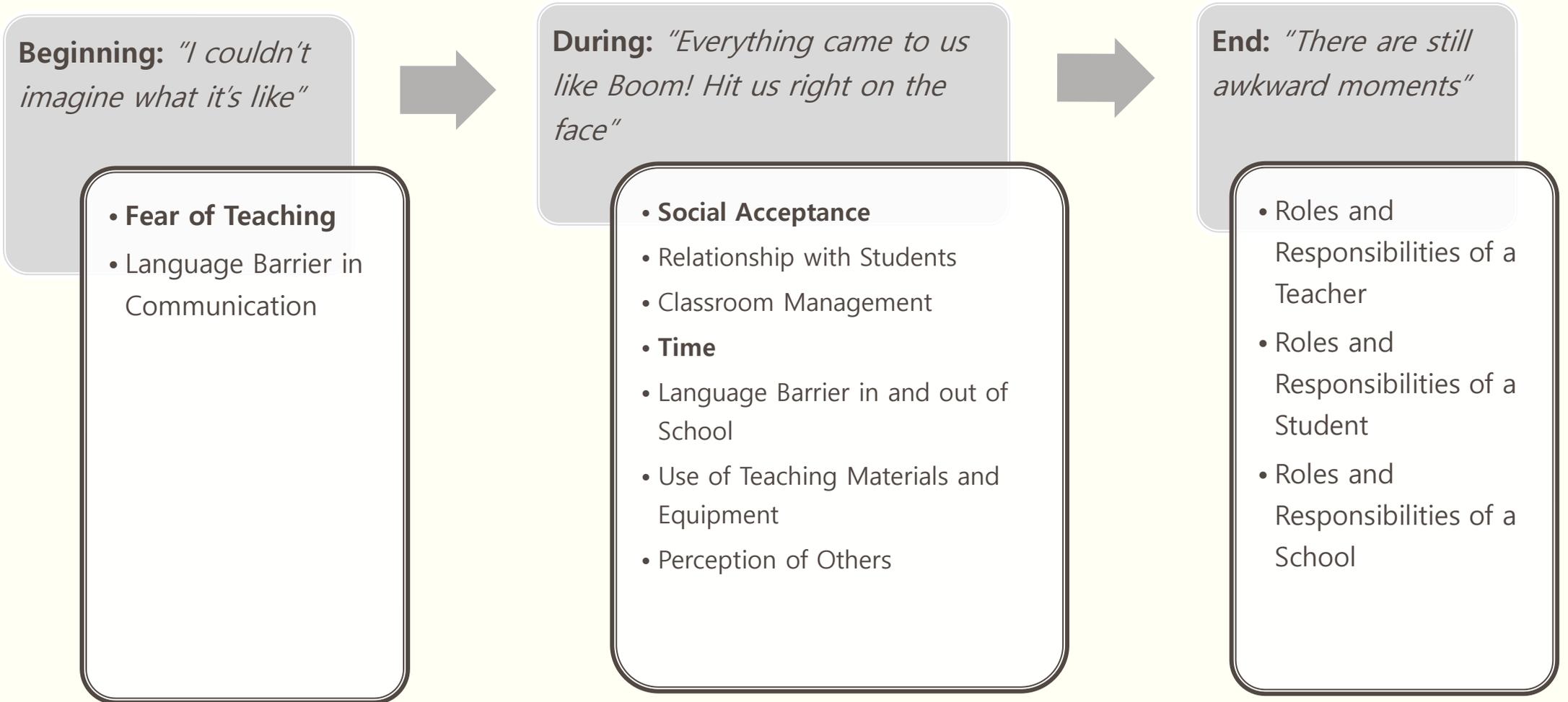




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4. FINDINGS

4.1. Experiences of Cultural Disequilibrium



4.1. Experiences of Cultural Disequilibrium

Fear of Teaching

e.g. "First time, I was very serious that students will not be able to talk with me during my lesson. I prepared a lot to teach my major subjects. But I was so worried about how to communicate with Korean students. For all day long, wherever I went, I only thought about this matter. I used so much energy thinking about 'what can I do? How can I do?' I was worried and I was stressed. Especially when I had to teach 3 periods on one day it was very stressful. I was very frustrated" [160901_Preeda_THAI]

Social Acceptance

e.g. "I didn't know that when we observe the Korean teachers, I will have to maintain my position in my seat properly, not crossing our legs like this or putting the hands in the pockets when speaking... You know? I didn't know it is considered very rude... We never really take this as a rude behavior, it is not a problem. I think it's normal if someone puts hands in the pocket. Those are just little things that Malaysian teachers don't care too much about" [160921_Halim_MALAYSIA]

Time

e.g. "Korean teachers are most concerned about time. When the bell goes, it needs to be finished straight away! Yesterday, I told students 'We will continue if you have time' and my Korean mentor teacher said 'No, stop. It's their break time' I was shocked how they were so strict on time. No flexibility!" [160922_Kulap_THAILAND]



4.2. Types of Responses and Strategies to Disequilibrium

4.2.1. As an Observer

- *"I try to look at their behavior"*
- Watching, Listening

4.2.2. As a Participant

- *"I will do what others do"*
- Trying, Eating

4.2.3. As a Friend

- *"They say, why don't you stay longer?"*
- Understanding, Sharing

4.2.4. As an Ambassador

- *"We are the representatives"*
- Taking pride, Showing

4.2.5. As an Educator

- *"It's good for the students"*
- Explaining, Correcting

4.2.6. As an Avoider

- *"I came here in peace"*
- Enduring, Ignoring



4.2. Types of Responses and Strategies to Disequilibrium

As a Participant

e.g. "(Even when I feel confused) I would still smile and say 'Annyong!' (meaning Hello in Korean) to students and teachers. I wouldn't confront people or try to change. But instead, I will follow and do what others do." [161028_Jackie_PHILIPPINES]

As an Educator

e.g. "Sometimes we fail. We struggle. We have dilemma. It's not easy at all. There is nothing that works all the time. Sometimes with some classes my lesson worked well but sometimes it failed. It can be stressful, especially in a new cultural setting, but it is our job to educate the learners as a teacher. To make students more interested in learning. We shouldn't let them go because of the circumstances." [161004_Kulap_THAILAND]

As an Avoider

e.g. "Social etiquettes at school... How do I know what not to do if I never try even once? It makes me kind of passive and making me not to go out of the staff room where I sit and prepare for the lesson only. I cannot know every aspect what is wrong so I just stay inside where I meant to be."

[160831_Halim_MALAYSIA]





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5. DISCUSSION

5. Discussions

5.1. Emotional Reactions involved in Disequilibrium

- Participants went through vivid struggles that encountered them to feel confused, disrespected, stressed, fearful, isolated, and/or unstable. These unpleasant emotions are experienced by the teachers and the intensity of the emotional challenges certainly promoted the participants to take initiatives as well as to adopt different strategies and approaches to cope with disequilibrium.
- However, there are few responses that demonstrated 'over intensity' of emotions and perceived the disequilibrium as an overwhelming experience which led the participants to become counterproductive. In this case, the experience of incongruence involved non-reflective orientation to shut down and adopt strategy of ignoring, defending and/or enduring.

5.2. Distinct approaches by Exchange Teachers

- In the adaptive process to teach in the school environment of Korean culture, the research participants mostly adopted the approaches as: an *Observer*, a *Participant*, and a *Friend*, as suggested by Taylor's model. Furthermore, this research presents the exchange teachers' strategies that are identified in three additional categories of approaches as: an *Educator*, an *Ambassador*, and an *Avoider*.



5. Discussions

5.3. Disequilibrium during Immersive Experiences

- Certain types of cultural disequilibrium experienced by the exchange teachers demonstrate some intense emotions caused by the realization of the power relations within the program. For example, some of the exchange teachers expressed their dilemma when they realized the gap between their role they expected and what the school required.
- E.g. The participants expected to play their role as an 'exchange teacher' to trade cultural values and best practices in teaching pedagogy with Korean mentor teachers in the host school. In contrast, they soon realized they were perceived as a 'teacher laborer' who is employed to fulfill the needs of multicultural students in Korean classrooms.

5.4. Responses through Reflection

- From findings, cultural disequilibrium often acts as a gateway for reflecting on their own perspectives to have a more inclusive and integrated world view. The exchange teachers demonstrated how their attitudes and perspectives are challenged and changed in various ways as they left their comfort zones



5.5. Implications

5.5.1. Visualize strategic responses to disequilibrium

- Various types of culturally dissonant experiences, as well as the multiple strategies that are categorized under six approaches by the exchange teachers can be made visible for participants in intercultural teacher training.
- In-depth discussion and analysis on the strategic responses that are available may provide them opportunity to visualize the challenges caused by cultural disequilibrium in advance. Throughout preparatory and introductory sessions, such as pre-departure and orientation in both home country and host country, the access to possible responses and strategies would certainly benefit the in-service teachers to envision the circumstances out of their own frames and maximize their potential of learning.

5.5.2. Constructive intervention with frequent opportunities for shared reflection

- Teacher trainers and other stakeholders who are involved in designing and implementing intercultural teacher trainings may carefully consider how to intervene the experiences timely throughout the program. By paying special attention to intensity levels of emotions caused by disequilibrium, in order to avoid adverse effects from disequilibrium, intervention with shared reflection would surely assist participating teachers to be able to share their challenges and options for strategies with their peers and members of the host culture.





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6. CONCLUSION

6. Conclusion



Concluding Remarks

- This qualitative study identifies various factors for **cultural disequilibrium** which potentially work as “the **driving force** that pushes the participant to become interculturally competent... these strong feelings seem to push the participants to **trigger learning process**” (Taylor, 1994) if **guided appropriately**.
- In the field of teacher education as well as international education development, intercultural teacher capacity building activities and programs are constantly developed and implemented across the region. Hence, it is imperative to **understand how teachers struggle and learn** to work effectively **between the cultures**.
- With the brief opportunity windows we have through **preparatory and introductory sessions**, the access to possible responses and strategies would certainly benefit the in-service teachers to **envision the circumstances out of their own frames and maximize their potential of learning**. The practical examples of the expected and unexpected challenges experienced by former exchange teachers may provide a **chance to examine the existing perspectives and expectations prior to the beginning** of the program in the host culture.



THANK YOU



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