

Teaching across Cultures: Canada and Qatar

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ABSTRACT

Findings from a comparative case study conducted in Canada and Qatar are presented in this article. The study examined the cultural context of a transnational post-secondary program offered by the Faculty of Business at a Canadian college, with campuses located in both St. John's and Doha. The instructors' perceptions of their students' cultures are examined, and the resulting teaching strategies that appear to represent successful pedagogical adaptations to cultural context are discussed. The data are examined through the lens of a cultural dimensions framework developed for this case study. Drawing primarily on Hofstede (1980, 2001), the framework was modified with additions from Hall (2003) and Dimmock and Walker (2005). The analysis is built on six cultural dimensions: monochronic/polychronic time orientation; power distance; individualism/collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; generative/replicative; and aggression/consideration. Possible factors contributing to the reported cultural traits within each dimension are discussed; in addition, the overall effectiveness of the framework is reviewed and recommendations for future practice and research are offered.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette communication présente les conclusions d'une étude de cas comparative menée au Qatar et au Canada. Dans l'étude, les auteurs examinent le contexte culturel d'un programme d'enseignement transnational et postsecondaire offert par la Faculté d'Administration d'un collège canadien ayant un campus à St-Jean à Terre-Neuve, et

un autre à Doha. Aussi examinent-ils les perceptions des enseignants vis-à-vis la culture des étudiants. Par la suite, Prowse et Goddard traitent des stratégies d'enseignement résultant de ces perceptions et représentant possiblement une adaptation pédagogique réussie au contexte culturel.

Les données sont étudiées par l'intermédiaire d'un cadre de dimensions culturelles conçu pour cette étude. Basé essentiellement sur le travail de Hofstede (1980, 2001), le cadre fut modifié en incorporant le travail de Hall (2003) ainsi que de Dimmock et de Walker (2005). L'analyse repose sur six dimensions culturelles : i) l'orientation temporelle monochronique/polychronique, ii) la distanciation par rapport au pouvoir, iii) l'échelle d'individualisme/de collectivisme, iv) l'évitement de l'incertitude, v) l'échelle de génération/ de reproduction, et vi) l'échelle d'agression/de considération.

Après avoir traité des facteurs pouvant contribuer aux traits culturels observés pour chacune des dimensions, les auteurs concluent en examinant l'efficacité général du cadre, et présentent des recommandations pour la pratique et les recherches futures.

INTRODUCTION

Although the international marketing of Western education is an increasingly common phenomenon, little consideration has been given to the accessibility or appropriateness of Western pedagogy to international students (Altbach, 2002). Many researchers advocate adapting Western curricula and pedagogy to facilitate learning across cultures (e.g., Feast & Bretag, 2005; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000); if cultural expectations are not considered, learning may be inhibited. This is most evident on transnational campuses where Western instructors live outside their culture and are tasked with making Western curricula accessible to students from diverse cultures. If students cannot relate to the class material or have culturally distinct expectations, then the quality of education may suffer. Currently, teachers must rely on their own perceptions of the students' culture to devise adaptations to their teaching practice to ensure student success. With further study, however, cultural traits that impact the classroom can be recognized and an atmosphere that promotes learning can be achieved.

METHOD

The effects of culture on pedagogy and the adaptations made by Western instructors were examined through a case study that compared and contrasted teaching practices at two sites. This method follows the principles of a multiple or collective case study (Goddard, 2009; Stake, 2006) in that the two sites were geographically separate but organizationally linked. This research design

is used to undertake a close study of cases that are linked. Each case is treated as an individual entity, and researchers take an in-depth approach to each. A collective case study approach is especially useful in social settings such as schools, where the distinctions between the context and the events being observed are sometimes blurred.

Teaching practices in a business program at a Canadian college in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, were compared with those at its transnational campus in Doha, Qatar. The Canadian site served as a basis for how pedagogy is practised in the West, while the Qatar site illustrated some of the ways in which Western pedagogy was adapted by that site's Canadian instructors, based on their perceptions of the students' culture. Data describing the experiences and perceptions of teachers were gathered, as were the researchers' observations of the classes. By studying the pedagogical adaptations made by the teachers on the transnational campus, adaptation strategies were able to be identified and assessed. This, in turn, may allow successful strategies to be implemented in the future to improve the delivery of Western education to international students at home and abroad.

At the time of the research, 459 students were registered in the Business faculty at the St. John's campus. Of these students, almost 79% were female, and 99% were Canadian nationals. Approximately 24% had student loans and had accrued an average debt of \$26,000 for the three-year Business program (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). Of the classes observed, class size ranged from 7 to 25 students, with an average class size of 17.25. Classrooms were equipped with older technology, such as overhead projectors; the buildings on campus, constructed in the 1960s, were undergoing repairs during the site visit.

The campus in Doha had 596 students in the Business faculty, of whom 54% were male and 80% were Qatari nationals. The majority of the non-Qatari students were from other Arab countries. All Qatari students were sponsored, so they enjoyed free tuition, received a salary, and were guaranteed a job upon graduation. Of the classes observed, class size ranged from 6 to 20 students, with an average class size of 11.5. All of the classrooms and labs had up-to-date equipment, including PowerPoint projectors; the main campus had been built in 2005.

The participants in this study were recruited on a voluntary basis. All of them were Canadian citizens and instructors in the Faculty of Business, and none had worked at or visited the other research site. The classes observed were all first- or second-year classes in accounting, advertising, marketing, office administration, and human resources management. The students were enrolled in either a two- or three-year, full-time Business program, and the same curricula and textbooks were used on both campuses.

The ages of the six Canadian volunteers ranged from 43 to 57 years. On average, they had taught at the college for 19.2 years. All six held a certification in vocational training and two had a master's degree; on average, the

participants had approximately 6.7 years of university education. None of the volunteers had lived outside Canada.

In Qatar, the four participants ranged in age from 33 to 58 years. All of them had at least one master's degree. On average, they had 3.7 years of prior teaching experience and 7.5 years of university education. Three of the four volunteers were born and educated in Canada, and the fourth in Egypt. The fourth volunteer, a Canadian citizen, had lived in Canada for 14 years, where he had attained his second master's degree. This participant was fluent in Arabic; the other three volunteers had minimal knowledge of the language and customs of the region.

To mitigate any bias that regional differences might introduce to the research, three additional volunteers were recruited, all of whom had experience on both the Doha and St. John's campuses. The impressions of these three Newfoundlanders largely matched those of the participants in Doha, which confirmed the validity of the finding that the non-Newfoundland teachers experienced and interpreted Qatari culture in similar ways to the Newfoundlanders. Although it was not the intention of the researchers to gather data from students, one student was interviewed and his impressions contributed to the findings. This student, who was from St. John's and currently studying there, had also studied for two years in Doha. Although the focus of this study was to examine the teachers' impressions of how the students' culture affected their teaching, because this student's experiences straddled the Business program at both campuses, his unique insights were valuable for validating the teachers' impressions and balancing the Canadian researchers' speculations.

Each participant was interviewed on site, using interview questions that were developed from the cultural dimensions framework described below. This framework allowed the comparison of cultural behaviour in the classroom, as identified by instructors on either campus. Questions were based on the behaviours that different cultures were likely to exhibit, as indicated by Hofstede (1986) and other researchers (e.g., Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Hall, 2003). Classes were also observed and further discussions continued via email and Web board for four months. Data were checked by the participants for accuracy. The difference in the delivery methods on each campus that could be tied to areas in which the participants perceived cultural differences can be attributed to pedagogical adaptation, since most of the other factors, such as teachers' culture and organizational culture, were similar.

There are several limitations to a small case study. Due to the modest number of instructors participating in the study and the short duration of the research, particular circumstances in the limited data pool may have led to unusual situations being viewed as standard. As well, analysis was limited to a Western point of view, as the participants and researchers were all Canadian. However, the intention of this study was to provide a snapshot of a particular transnational campus at a particular time, rather than providing findings that were generalizable to multiple situations. To date, most related research has been conducted

in East Asia (e.g., Bajunid, 1996; Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Debowski, 2003; Exley, 2001, 2004; Feast & Bretag, 2005; Gribble & Zигuras, 2003; Heck, 1998; Leask, 2004; Pyvis & Chapman, 2005; Singh & Doherty, 2002). Thus, it is hoped that the addition of this work to the small body of research currently available on transnational campuses will lead to a clearer view of the larger picture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A cultural dimensions framework was developed for this study, drawing on the works of Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001, 2005) and Dimmock and Walker (2000, 2005), with modifications added from Hall (1983, 2003). The framework focuses on six cultural dimensions: monochronic/polychronic time orientation; power distance; individualism/collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; generative/replicative; and aggression/consideration. Cultural dimensions are defined as core axes around which sets of values, beliefs, and practices cluster. Because these dimensions represent traits that are universal to all cultures (Walker & Dimmock, 2002), this cultural dimensions framework provided a consistent standard for comparing the two research sites. Moreover, the use of established criteria allow for comparison across studies and also serve to minimize Western researcher bias in gathering and analyzing data.

Background of Cultural Dimensions Framework Models

The development of Hofstede's (1980) renowned cultural dimensions framework was based on over 100,000 responses from surveys conducted in 66 countries. From the data, Hofstede identified four (and later a fifth) cultural dimensions that he maintained were universal to all cultures. Although no single study has found correlations involving all four dimensions, partial correlations have been found repeatedly (e.g., de Mooij, 1998; Hoppe, 1998; Van Nimwegen, 2002).

Despite its wide use, the validity of Hofstede's framework has remained controversial. The many criticisms of it include 1) the subjects, all employees of IBM, do not represent the general population of a country (Triandis, 1993); 2) samples as small as 50 subjects were used to represent an entire country, and, in other cases, data samples from various countries were combined to develop a regional score (Van Nimwegen, 2002); 3) although the original survey questions were geared to the workplace, Hofstede drew conclusions about education, family, and other societal aspects (McSweeney, 2002); 4) earlier research (e.g., Ackoff & Emery, 1972; Douglas, 1973; Inkeles & Levinson, 1969; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951) was not considered (McSweeney, 2002); and 5) the methodology for establishing the dimensions was questionable (Bond, 2002).

Notwithstanding these criticisms, aspects of Hofstede's framework are still widely cited and employed in cross-cultural research (Van Nimwegen, 2002). In order to alleviate some of the deficiencies in Hofstede's framework, Dimmock and Walker (2000, 2005) theorized a new model that speaks directly to

the influence of culture on educational leadership. Drawing from a number of sources but primarily from Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2004), this new model focuses on four quadrants of educational leadership, each broken down into related processes. The quadrant of teaching and learning, for example, is broken down into nature of knowledge, teacher/student relations, teacher/home relations, methods applied, generalist vs. subject specialist, learning outcomes, and guidance and counselling. The quadrants in Dimmock and Walker's 2005 model, which was designed to be culturally neutral and to consider the variations that occur within a nation (such as the influence of ethnic minorities, religion, and varying economic strata), are examined within six cultural dimensions.

Modification of the Cultural Dimensions Framework

The framework employed in this study includes six cultural dimensions of societal culture and focuses on aspects from Dimmock and Walker's (2005) teaching and learning quadrant. The six dimensions were modified to capture a wider range of data than that in Hofstede's original framework, as well as to adopt some of the considerations from Dimmock and Walker's 2005 model. This modified cultural dimensions framework includes Hofstede's original four quadrants, which are also in Dimmock and Walker's 2005 model, although under different names. The quadrant labelled power distance denotes the degree to which less-powerful people within a society accept inequalities (Hofstede, 1986) and the extent to which power is shared (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). The individualism/collectivism quadrant is characterized by the extent to which people function as individuals in pursuit of goals, as opposed to how well a person functions as a member of a group (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hofstede, 1986). In collectivist cultures, the individual owes strong allegiance to the group. The uncertainty avoidance quadrant denotes the extent to which people are made uncomfortable by unfamiliar situations or unclear instructions (Hofstede, 1986); Walker and Dimmock (2002) added the quality of fatalism and proactiveness, the notion that some societal groups feel they have more ability to change their circumstances, while others seek to cope with change by holding on to their traditions. Aggression/consideration, the fourth quadrant, is referred to by Hofstede (1980) as masculine/feminine, but Dimmock and Walker (2005) altered the title to alleviate confusion with gender roles. Aggression traits include ambition and competitiveness.

In addition to Hofstede's (1980) four original quadrants, two further dimensions were added. The first dimension, monochronic/polychronic time orientation, was added from Hofstede and Bond's (Hofstede, 2005) later consideration of time orientation. It was identified based on a survey that purposefully employed a Chinese cultural bias. Despite Hofstede's (2005) predictions of Canada as strongly short-term oriented, Canadians do not appear to be overly concerned with saving face, maintaining traditions, or reciprocating favours. Additionally no Arab country was ranked and so the category was modified in the present

study from that of a Confucian/Chinese classification to that of monochronic vs. polychronic time perceptions. Both Hall (1983, 2003) and Lanteigne (2004) have discussed the polychronic nature of Arab cultures and the monochronic traits of North American culture, with Lanteigne's research specifically relating to Qatar. Monochronic perception emphasizes task completion and keeping strict schedules, whereas polychronic perception emphasizes the pre-eminence of relationships over time obligations (Hall, 2003). The second added dimension, generative/replicative, is described by Dimmock and Walker (2005) as a case of some cultures being more adept at generating innovations, as opposed to those that are more prone to imitate. Replicative traits might include reliance on memorization, while generative societies make greater use of critical-thinking skills. These traits have not been widely studied but the concepts seemed worthy of consideration.

Walker and Dimmock's (2002) final category, limited/holistic relationships, was not included in the present study. Concepts such as relationship obligation and patronage are addressed under the individualism/collectivism and power distance dimensions. Each of the dimensions represents a loose framework of associated ideas and is not a precise definition. The modified cultural dimensions framework represents a continuum, with cultural traits being exhibited between the two extremes.

FINDINGS

In Doha, the instructors consciously adapted their pedagogy based on their perceptions of the students' culture, while in St. John's, the teachers were less reflective of their practices. In the dimensions where the instructors perceived that the students shared characteristics, pedagogical strategies were similar on both campuses. In short, where the teachers perceived cultural differences, strategies differed.

Time Orientation

Significant differences in pedagogical strategies in this dimension were observed at the two campuses. Hall's (2003) and Lanteigne's (2004) research suggested that Canadians would be punctual and submit assignments on time, while Qataris would have higher instances of tardiness and late submission of work.

The teachers in Doha perceived tardiness, absenteeism, and non-completion of homework assignments as challenges and, not surprisingly, they devised strategies to try to reduce these occurrences. Tardiness was seen as a particular problem. "Students are often tardy, with some chronically late," one volunteer said. Another stated, "I tell the students it is important to come to class on time and attend, as this will affect their exam marks, but students don't seem to see the correlation." Strategies employed included deducting marks for lateness and not allowing late students into class. Only one participant, who had experience on both campuses, reported that tardiness was not an issue. He stated it was a priority of the college to train students to adhere to schedules. "The fear was

that because of the culture, deadlines won't apply and that you had to drill the idea of a clock and deadlines into the students."

Conversely, issues with time orientation were not seen as problems in St. John's, and the instructors overlooked most issues of tardiness and absenteeism since the students explained their situations. "Students are on time as much as they can be given bus schedules and road conditions," a volunteer said. Despite the teachers' perceptions, the rates of tardiness at the two campuses were observed to be similar.

In Qatar, most of the instructors agreed that non-completion of homework or reading assignments dictated that all work be done in class. One participant reported,

Reading and homework must be done in class, as students won't do homework. This creates a problem getting through the class material and there is no extra time for other activities. Homework is still assigned but there is little expectation it will be done.

The adaptation strategies employed in Qatar were effective in altering the students' behaviour. It was also reported that students had better attendance and less tardiness if the classes actually began on time and important information was being conveyed. Work was handed in on time if there were penalties for late submission. As one teacher reflected,

I didn't accept work late. If you expect them to be on time and don't accept lateness, they'll do it and take responsibility. You tend to sell them short by saying, "Oh well that's just the way they are." It is just that no one has had high expectations of them before.

In contrast, the instructors in St. John's felt that the majority of students were well prepared for class and submitted their assignments on time. Of the six instructors, only one thought tardiness was an issue, and only one said he would deduct marks for late assignments. "If students don't get their assignments in, I extend the deadline so that they have more time to work on it. I don't deduct marks or refuse to accept late work," one participant said.

Power Distance

In a high power-distance school setting, teachers are expected to be the centre of classroom learning and students expect to have teachers guide them (Hofstede, 1986). Teachers at both sites felt that their students needed guidance. Although the level of guidance given in Doha was substantially more detailed than that given in St. John's, the high reliance on the instructor in Canada was counter to expectations.

Most classes were delivered lecture style on both campuses, with the teachers using slides to guide the students through the textbooks. The St. John's teachers all reported that their students needed considerable guidance. As one

teacher stated, “The students don’t have any real world experience, so all their learning is through school and therefore they rely on the teachers.” This shaped the instructors’ pedagogy, in that textbook material, which was assigned to be read in advance, was then covered in detail during class. This being said, the St. John’s students studied more independently than their Doha counterparts. The readings were assigned in advance, and business cases were expected to be understood and applied to new circumstances.

All of the Doha volunteers agreed that the Qatari students expected a higher level of guidance than would be required in Canada. As one teacher mentioned, “The class is focused on guiding students through the materials, rather than on developing critical-thinking skills.” In an effort to promote independent learning, some teachers began the semester with highly structured assignments and then moved toward more independent projects. Another observed strategy was teachers breaking an assignment down and teaching it incrementally. Teachers often prepared detailed study notes for the students. “In Canada the teacher may indicate places, in general, to find information to the students, but in Qatar he needs to indicate in detail down to the page number,” one participant related.

The level of power distance between the teacher and the students was significantly different between the Doha and St. John’s campuses. Participants indicated that the Qatari students tended to see the instructors as authority figures, but the Canadian students did not. In Doha, the students were observed to be polite and respectful and always used a title when addressing teachers. As well, they rarely interrupted and would usually wait to be called on to answer questions, a strategy that would be expected in a society with higher power distance (Dimmock, 1998). In St. John’s, the students were more casual and were observed to be off topic on several occasions. Usually, the students in St. John’s asserted their own examples, while the Doha students waited for the teacher to provide answers.

The power distance between the students was also different on both campuses. In Qatar, the instructors had to be mindful of male/female interactions, as well as those between Qataris and non-Qataris. “If there is, for example, a strong Indian student in class, then the weaker Qataris will latch on and ask for help. Non-Qataris may feel pressured to help Qataris even if they don’t want to,” one participant in Doha said. To compensate for power distance between students, teachers were careful not to pair Qatari women in groups with men. To ease the pressure on the non-Qatari students, some teachers had the students sit according to a seating plan, and non-Qataris were often placed together in groups or allowed to work on their own.

In St. John’s, the students who were academically stronger participated in class discussions more often. A St. John’s volunteer commented, “All the students are from the lower to middle class status. Academics make the difference, and the better achievers stand out more.”

Given that the teachers’ perceptions of the students were similar in this dimension, adaptation strategies were common at both sites. These adaptations included beginning the term with structured activities and progressing to

independent work; allowing for readings and homework to be done in class; holding office hours; teaching assignments incrementally; providing models or examples; and giving detailed study information.

Individualism/Collectivism

The teachers reported substantial cultural differences in this dimension and, consequently, adaptation strategies varied between sites. Students in Doha were proactive in helping their friends. As one volunteer stated, "I've come to accept students speaking to each other in class, as I realize they are usually clarifying information about the lesson for each other." The students rarely turned to the teacher for help, but they did rely on the teacher for approval of completed work. Teaching strategies employed in Qatar included allowing students to speak in their native language; calling on students individually; being careful not to ask questions students couldn't answer; assigning invigilators and set seating during tests to reduce cheating; and asking the more exuberant (usually non-Qatari) students not to call out all the answers.

In St. John's, students worked individually for the most part. During class observations, the students usually relied on the instructor if they were having difficulty. "The students rely on the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter," one teacher related. "Usually in Accounting the teacher presents topics, and then the students ask clarification questions." When the students spoke together, generally they compared results, discussed processes, or chatted off topic. The teaching strategies included holding special tutorial classes to allow weaker students a chance to catch up; focusing on the weaker students during class to clarify class material; and calling on students both as a class and as individuals to allow weaker students to contribute.

In Doha, the instructors all agreed that the students enjoyed group work yet it was rarely employed. The issues with group work included the teacher not being able to monitor the students, the students not working, poor work quality, and time requirements. As one volunteer stated, "When it came time to pass in [group] assignments ... only one or two people had done their parts. They didn't see it as a cohesive thing."

In St. John's, only one teacher felt that the students preferred working in groups. However, regardless of the students' preferences, the St. John's teachers stated that group work was an important part of the course. A teacher related,

We need to do a lot of group work because the social skills you need for today's workplace are far different than 25 years ago. The soft skills, like the ability to work with people, are going to carry them [the students] a long way.

Uncertainty Avoidance

In the classroom, strong uncertainty avoidance can be manifest by behaviours such as students needing structured learning situations and students

being uncomfortable discussing controversial topics (Hofstede, 1986). Some of the traits that arise in this dimension are similar to those that involve power distance, such as the need for guidance. The traits discussed in this section are the avoidance of uncertain situations and the use of controversial (taboo) subjects. The teachers at the Qatar campus reported a strong level of uncertainty avoidance in the students, which is confirmed in the literature (Hofstede, 1991); however, the St. John's teachers' perception that the students required highly structured classes was unexpected.

All but one of the volunteers felt that students in Qatar both preferred and needed structured learning situations. "We need to make courses more highly structured and give the students more guidance on how to progress," one volunteer said. Most teachers felt that an essential part of education was to ensure the students became independent learners by the time they graduated. The teaching strategies observed in the classrooms seemed to oscillate – from creating highly structured learning tasks to assigning projects that were presented incrementally in order to take the students, step by step, through the completion of the final assignment.

In Doha, most instructors were aware that the students' prior experiences were different from what would be the norm in Canada, and they consciously worked to make the material more relevant. To demonstrate the connection between the class material and the work world, some instructors took the students to visit work sites or invited guest speakers to class.

In St. John's, the participants stated that the Canadian students preferred structured learning. As one teacher reported, "Many of the students have been to university but found they didn't like the learning environment. The university is more independent and self-learning centred. Students here want more structure and guidance." Although most instructors felt that the students had little relevant work experience, students were able to use examples from the media and the experiences of their families. The teachers tried to use local examples to help the students learn; sports, local news stories, and pop culture were commonly used as topics.

Most of the teachers stated that introducing controversial topics in class was not an issue, but such topics were never observed being discussed in Qatar. Moreover, the Canadian student participant felt there were definite taboos in Qatar. "Many topics could not be brought up in Qatar, like marijuana, for instance. You have to be careful about what you say there," he related. The Egyptian-born instructor was also concerned about the topics raised in class and in the textbooks. He felt the examples needed to be monitored because if the students were offended, they could be alienated from accepting Western education. Conversely, only one teacher in St. John's felt that controversial topics had to be avoided. In St. John's, taboo topics such as sexual behaviour, marijuana use, and alcohol consumption were observed being used in class daily in order to generate discussion.

Since the teachers perceived similar traits among the students, many of the teaching strategies employed were similar. Five strategies were observed on both campuses: 1) teaching highly structured classes; 2) expecting the students' level of independence to increase as they progressed through the program; 3) encouraging students to ask and analyze their own questions; 4) letting students know it was okay to make mistakes; and 5) using class presentations and case studies to increase independence. In Doha, teachers related the class material to the work world via company visits and guest speakers. Some instructors were also observed breaking large projects down into manageable sections so the students could proceed incrementally. As noted earlier, in St. John's, taboo topics were commonly exploited to generate discussion.

Generative/Replicative

Based on the public-school systems (Saif & Kamal, 1983), the expectation would be that the Canadian students had more generative traits while the Qataris were more replicative. In fact, teachers at both sites identified their students as having replicative traits. In Doha, the teachers felt that the students needed to develop critical-thinking skills. "Students often repeat from pages in the text on exams, but the important ideas are not clearly understood," one teacher related. In St. John's, the teachers felt that the students relied on memorization when they started at the college. "Students often think there is only one right answer," a teacher said, "but I try to get them to understand there is more than one answer. There is big improvement in second term." At both sites, the teachers stated that as the students developed a foundation of information and a familiarity with class expectations, their ability to demonstrate critical-thinking skills increased.

In Doha, the teachers often used repetition to ingrain processes and gave the students detailed reminders of what was expected. The teachers who employed this strategy felt it was effective. On both campuses the instructors tried to get the students to reflect on how class material would help them in the future. Both groups of instructors said they used student presentations, group work, and class discussion to encourage analytical thinking.

Aggression/Consideration

Hofstede (1991) assigned the Middle East and Canada comparable middle ratings for aggression and consideration. In both countries, the students were generally co-operative and helpful to each other. Failure was not considered to be a serious setback at either site.

The teachers in Doha reported that the students were very competitive. This trait was exhibited in games, class activities, and exams, and yet, the teachers reported the students helped each other freely and did not seem overly concerned with passing. "It is common for students to take a course more than once and there seems to be no stigma for failing a class," a participant said. Another volunteer reflected, "In Qatar the students are very competitive, but they still

feel responsible for helping out their friends.” As none of the students appeared upset by the results, these competitions did not seem serious. In contrast, the teachers in St. John’s reported that Newfoundland students competed mainly with themselves. “The students are somewhat competitive with each other but more are competitive with themselves,” a participant said. The instructors reported that the St. John’s students were motivated to find employment, so other motivation, such as competition, was unnecessary.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the study findings are examined in view of other factors that may contribute to the teachers’ perceptions of the students’ behaviour. Implications for policy and practice are highlighted.

Time Orientation

Although levels of tardiness and absenteeism were not dissimilar on either campus, the teachers in St. John’s did not consider them to be significant, while the Doha teachers were preoccupied with correcting these issues. Educators should consider the impact of tardiness and absenteeism on the classroom. If these factors are, in fact, impeding student learning, then a cohesive strategy to deal with the problem should be considered. In Doha, the teachers devised their own attendance policy, and this lack of college-wide consistency likely confused the students. Conversely, if it is found that these factors do not disrupt learning, then concern about these issues should be de-emphasized. As Hall (2003) pointed out, Western culture is so indoctrinated in monochronic time that “it is treated as the only natural and logical way of organizing life” (p. 264). This was certainly true of the majority of the Doha participants, who considered tardiness and late submission of homework to be indicators of disinterest and disrespect. An understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of both time perceptions might better prepare teachers from a monochronic background to work with those from a culture, such as the Qataris, who have a polychronic outlook.

Power Distance

Most of the instructors, on both campuses, did not seem to take into consideration the students’ expectations of power distance. Classes in which the teachers exhibited lower power distance generated more discussion, but the students were often disruptive. If teachers were made aware of these implications, they could decide if power distance should be minimized or exploited to benefit the learning environment.

Other factors may also have contributed to the lack of discussion in the Doha classes. The Qatari students had the disadvantage of not being familiar with topics such as Western marketing techniques, and, except for the Egyptian-born participant, the Canadian teachers had little familiarity with Middle Eastern practices and so rarely used in-depth local examples. On two occasions

students were observed to report that the topics (direct marketing and debt collection) were not practised in Qatar. When importing Western curricula to another culture, it would be beneficial not only to adapt the curricula by adding examples from various cultures but also to educate foreign teachers concerning indigenous practices.

At both sites, teachers complained that readings were not done in advance, especially in Doha. Since assigned readings were gone over in detail in class, reading in advance was not necessary, so this practice actually deterred students from reading the textbooks when assigned.

The teachers in Doha often stated concerns over the students' lack of independence and need for guidance. This issue affected their pedagogy in that the students in Doha were monitored and directed more closely than those in St. John's. The high level of academic achievement among the Doha volunteers, coupled with their inexperience teaching in a college system, may have fostered an expectation that the Qatari students should aspire to perform like Canadian university students and develop strong independent learning styles. It might be beneficial for those administering transnational campuses to look for instructors with teaching qualifications that are required at the onshore campus, such as vocational training, rather than hire instructors with excellence in the field but little teaching experience.

Individualism/Collectivism

There was a clear distinction in the degree of individualism/collectivism displayed by the students at the two campuses. Some of the adaptations made in Doha were similar to those discussed by researchers in East Asia, where the societies are also collectivist in nature. The Qatari students may have preferred receiving help from friends because of their common culture and language. Bodycott and Walker (2000) and Robertson et al. (2000) found that Asian students often felt insecure over their second-language abilities and that allowing the students to work in small groups, to use their mother tongue, and to report findings to the class as a group were successful strategies for learning. Moreover, the Qatari students may have felt more comfortable receiving help from those who shared the same culture. In Hong Kong, the students reported that they often felt the teachers were proselytizing Western values (Bodycott & Walker, 2000).

Group work seemed to be underutilized on both campuses. As discussed in the seminal work of authors such as Vygotsky (Haenen, Schrijnemakers, & Stufkens, 2003), co-operative problem solving plays a significant role in the learning process. However, in the present study, few opportunities were observed for students to work in groups. The teachers' aversion to group work in Qatar is worth noting, as many researchers (e.g., Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Chapman & Pyvis, 2005; De Vita, 2001; Robertson et al., 2000; Watkins, 2000) have advocated the use of group work in collectivist cultures. Indeed, students were found to prefer working in groups, and the level of group work was found to be superior to that produced by individuals (Bodycott & Walker, 2000).

Uncertainty Avoidance

In Doha, guidance was given at a fundamental level; for example, teachers regularly reminded students to bring their textbooks, papers, and pens to class. Although these traits are consistent with a strong level of uncertainty avoidance, they are also explained by the Qatari students' inexperience with Western classroom expectations. In Canada, it is usual for students to write short essays and give presentations at the elementary-school level, but this is unlikely to be the case in Qatar, where teacher-centred classes are the norm (Saif & Kamal, 1983). It is therefore understandable that the Qatari students needed more direction when asked to perform unfamiliar tasks. Not knowing expectations does not indicate that the students were avoiding uncertain situations. In fact, the Qatari students had intentionally placed themselves in a highly uncertain environment in which cultural expectations differed greatly, there was no gender separation, and the language medium was not their own.

The two teachers who had lived in Qatar the longest made the most adaptations to their teaching. Their classes were more structured and their assignments were broken down incrementally to ensure the students understood class expectations. In one case, the students were assigned a marketing presentation, and, over three class periods, the teacher demonstrated how to make a presentation, created a worksheet to guide the students through the steps of developing their presentations, and gave the students time to work on their presentations in class so they could receive feedback. This process allowed the students to understand expectations, and the work produced was of a high quality.

On the St. John's campus, it was contrary to the researchers' expectations to find that the students required highly structured classes. One volunteer opined that students preferred structured lectures because they had little time to complete work outside of class. "Many students have family responsibilities and jobs, so don't have a lot of free time," he said. Although many volunteers felt their students gradually became more confident and independent between the first and third year of the program, their expressed goal was to prepare the students for the job market. Teaching students to become independent learners was not a primary concern for most instructors.

It is usual for teachers to employ examples that will capture students' interest. In St. John's, popular topics and controversial issues were discussed regularly. In Doha, the use of taboo topics as a basis of discussion was never observed. Although most instructors felt that there were no restrictions on what could be discussed, the Egyptian-born teacher felt that some topics might be offensive in Qatari culture. He mentioned that students were often resentful that class material rarely reflected non-Western points of view and were quick to take offence if they felt the Western instructors were criticizing their country. He reported,

because I am from the same (Arab) society, I am freer to discuss with the students what is wrong with our society and what needs to be

reconsidered. Canadians could not bring up these topics, as students would be defensive.

Several instructors mentioned experiences of Qatari students reacting negatively when positive aspects of Canada were raised. This led to the common perception among the teachers that Qatari students were not interested in other countries and cultures.

Generative/Replicative

This dimension is difficult to assess without monitoring the students' work over time. A further complication is that Qatari students may seem less generative merely because they have less familiarity with Western topics or because Western ideas are more difficult to transfer to their societal context. On both campuses, the instructors indicated that students relied heavily on memorization until they gained a critical body of understanding from which to draw. In Qatar, the teachers relied more heavily on rote learning, clarifying expectations, and reminding the students why the class material was relevant.

On both campuses, but especially in Doha, rote learning was seen as a negative practice. Teachers should consider the role that memorization plays in learning, particularly during the introduction of new concepts. Indeed, memorization as a learning tool was once widely used in Western education, although it has now fallen into disrepute (Watkins, 2000). However, memorization is still widely used in other countries, where it is not considered to be distinct from learning. Rather, repetition and memorization are believed to allow for a deeper learning experience through the discovery of new meaning (Watkins, 2000).

Aggression/Consideration

In Doha, many instructors introduced games, friendly competitions, and prizes to stimulate motivation. These strategies were not employed in St. John's. As one St. John's instructor stated, "It is my job to prepare the students for careers, and so the class should proceed as in the workplace. The students are adults and would not appreciate being treated like children." This was counter to statements made by the Canadian student who had studied at both campuses. He noted,

I preferred over there definitely – 100%. There is more of a friendly environment in Qatar. Teachers try to get you into it; for example, they may play a "Jeopardy" game or something like that. It was interesting and I thought it was a perfect pace.

Employing motivating strategies to make classes more interesting and enjoyable might be something to consider in the Canadian context.

Effectiveness of the Cultural Dimensions Framework

The cultural dimensions framework utilized here was effective in identifying aspects of behaviour that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Some

behaviours seemed to be the outcome of more than one influence, such as the need for structure and guidance in the case of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Generative and replicative behaviours were difficult to observe because of time limitations. Despite these few drawbacks, the framework was effective in helping to identify cultural traits. Further, by employing dimensions that are used by other researchers, the findings of this study can be compared to those in the literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it is common practice to import curricula from an institution to its transnational campus without adaptation, teachers on the Doha campus were independently altering their pedagogy. These adaptations arose from the teachers' perceptions that the students were not learning at the anticipated rate and/or that the work quality was lacking. Each teacher acted in isolation, so the insights they gained were not shared. Teachers with longer service in Qatar reported more alterations to their teaching styles than those who had arrived more recently. Moreover, the level of student productivity, work quality, and attendance rates were observed to be greater in the classes of the longer-serving teachers. Institutions should explore ways of capturing the experiences of successful teachers and then promote their teaching strategies.

One deterrent to modifying curricula and pedagogy is the fear that the education received at the transnational campus will be inferior; however, modifying pedagogy could, in fact, raise the educational standard of the program. Although different methods may be used on each campus, provided the established learning outcomes are achieved, the standard of education will be equal on and off shore. For example, by including more Middle Eastern examples, the Doha students would gain a wider understanding of both Western and Middle Eastern business practices and feel less alienated by the learning process.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, it is difficult to generalize from a small study, but it is hoped that lessons learned in this particular setting may inform educators working with students from various cultural backgrounds. The literature suggests that instructors adapt their pedagogy in response to how they perceive their students' culture. A systematic approach to determining the best ways to foster learning would ensure quality of education while greatly enhancing the classroom practices of teachers who are new to a culture. Moreover, this study may help onshore Western educators identify differences in societal expectations that exist between cultures. By gaining an appreciation of the differences in cultural expectations, classroom learning can be facilitated and positive relationships can be developed (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004).

Future research should strive to identify adaptation strategies that may be occurring on transnational campuses within other cultural contexts. Further studies that seek to measure the success of implemented pedagogical adaptations would also be significant. Such research would entail gaining insights

from the students, as well as from educators who have familiarity with both the home and offshore cultures. With further research, international educators will be able to structure learning environments to ensure the best possible results for student success. ♣

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