

Meaningful Intercultural Interactions in University Classrooms: A Guidebook for Teachers

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BACKGROUND

This guidebook is one deliverable of a project entitled 'Enhancing meaningful intercultural interactions among local and non-local students in classroom' (No. 17/663), funded by Teaching Development Grants.

The learning environment of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) is increasingly international. According to the student enrolment statistics for the 2017-18 Academic Year, HKU has 3,682 international students studying full-time programmes, which is equal to 21.6% of the total number of undergraduate students (HKU, 2018). Making a good use of this diverse learning environment can provide our students with opportunities to learn other viewpoints and consider them equally while cultivating understanding of others, with tolerance and openness.

As indicated in the QAC report (2016), there is still a need for HKU to improve in terms of adopting teaching pedagogies in the classroom that can 'exploit cultural background and experiences and take account of cultural sensitivities' and 'enrich the learning experiences for all students' (p. 31). To enable us to achieve internationalisation (being one of HKU's 3+1 I's strategic goals), enhancing intercultural interactions will be one of the several important initiatives.

Enhancing intercultural interactions also needs to be situated in a broader context. Our city has been experiencing evolving identity crisis since the handover. Following the national education debate in 2012 and the umbrella movement in 2014-2015, the national self-understanding and local cultural identity become increasingly fluid and controversial (Jackson, 2017b). Our classroom is often a reflection of the society. The dynamics between locals and non-locals have also been influenced.

Intercultural interactions are challenging, especially in the aspect of how to empower students, appropriately recognising racial and ethnic identities while avoiding cultural essentialism (Jackson, 2017a). Moreover, implementing intercultural/ multicultural education requires specific awareness and skills, and not all educators feel confident in navigating diversity issues in the classroom (Hue & Kennedy, 2014; Jackson, 2015, 2017b).

In view of this, we undertake the current teaching development project with four faculties (Faculties of Architecture, Law, Science, and Social Sciences) to unpack the complexities of intercultural interactions and solicit good practices. Through developing strategies and recommendations, we hope to create a more meaningful and engaging learning environment for all students at HKU. It is also part of the efforts towards 'internationalisation at home', meaning that every student benefits from an international campus and student body (Harrison, 2015).

This guidebook aims to provide some suggestions on how teachers can facilitate intercultural interactions in the university classroom setting. These suggestions are supported by literature and grounded in HKU experiences.



SPECIAL THANKS

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Chapter 1: Intercultural interactions in university classrooms

Introduction

Creating a learning environment conducive to intercultural interactions is essential in today's higher education. Encouraging intercultural interactions is not only beneficial for students to develop intercultural competence, but also important for achieving 'internationalisation at home', meaning that every student benefits from the strategy.

Intercultural interactions are complex and they do not often happen naturally in classrooms if there are no effective and well-designed strategies. Currently, there is an insufficient understanding of intercultural interactions in Chinese classrooms. For example, most existing studies are situated in Western classrooms in which local students are seen as possessing greater language proficiency and being more active relative to international students, who are described as quiet and passive. This is simply not true of most classrooms in Hong Kong and Asia more broadly. Furthermore, some academics may find it challenging and wish to be better prepared to teach more effectively across cultures (Harrison, 2015). There is much to be done in order to leverage the cultural diversity in university classrooms.

“

Tolerance, inter-cultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where peoples are becoming more and more closely interconnected.

—Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nations (2004)

”

01

Teachers' intercultural competence — awareness, knowledge, skills and attitude

One thing that makes promoting intercultural interactions challenging is that cultures change, so does the knowledge. Not only that, everyone's social identities and values develop and evolve in an on-going process. It is very hard for a teacher to have complete knowledge of all the differences. What becomes fundamental is the awareness of the need to continuously adjust, accept and understand others, including their students. Besides, there are three essential components: attitudes, knowledge and skills (Byram, 1997).

Awareness

It is the willingness to conduct retrospective inquiry; uncover values and cultural stances; and constantly examine prejudices and biases, which may influence teachers' interaction with students (Gorski, 2007). Often our prejudices are deeply embedded and unconscious. Culturally aware teaching therefore requires teachers to critically and deeply reflect on who they are (Palmer, 2007) and explore the connections they have with those who are different from them. Having the awareness of cultural sensitivity is essential to be an effective educator in a culturally diverse classroom.

Knowledge

It is not the knowledge about a specific culture, but more broadly about how social groups and identities function, and what is involved in intercultural interactions. This knowledge helps us anticipate what may happen when collaborating with partners from a different culture, and what can be done to move the communication forward (Byram, 1997).

Skills

It includes the skills to put ideas, events or arguments in different cultural contexts; enable students to look from multiple perspectives; and delineate how misunderstanding, biases and prejudices may arise (Byram, 1997). The teachers' skills to compare, interpret and relate ideas and arguments in various cultural contexts also need to be translated to their facilitation of students' development.

Attitude

It refers to 'one's curiosity, openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own' (p.7). It is seen as a fundamental quality of an intercultural educator. It involves an ability to decentre, meaning that the teacher is willing to see his or her own values, beliefs and behaviours to be relative and fluid, rather than assuming they are the best and absolute ones (Byram, 1997). It also requires the teacher to be open with the co-existence of different sets of values, beliefs and behaviours.

About the guidebook

This guidebook aims to provide teachers with some suggestions on facilitating intercultural interactions in university classroom settings. These suggestions are supported by the literature and grounded in HKU experiences.

The research team has interviewed 12 teachers individually and 38 students in group format from four faculties. Furthermore, there are a total of 17 sessions of class observations (i.e. 36.5 hours) including the forms of lectures, tutorials and studios. The interviews with teachers covered the course design and instructional strategies. The interview with students focused on their perceptions and experiences of intercultural interactions in general and of the sessions we observed. Observations recorded the instructions that led to effective intercultural interactions. The data were firstly analysed within each course and then compared across courses and disciplines.

The findings show that intercultural interactions are highly complex and the result of thoughtfully planned instruction, which strongly supports studies advocating purposively designed instruction (e.g. Liu & Dall'Alba, 2012; Reid & Garson, 2017). More positive experiences were found in the courses with well-designed group work/classroom discussions, intercultural tasks or elements, and sufficient formative feedback. Consistent with the literature, structured learning opportunities, explicit instructions and trust building are necessary to make intercultural interactions meaningful to students' achievement of their learning outcomes (Leask, 2015).

Structure of the Guidebook

**4 MAIN
CHAPTERS**

**FOCUS ON DIFFERENT AREAS OF
INTERCULTURAL CLASSROOMS**

You can choose to read the Guidebook from the beginning to the end, or go to a particular chapter that is more relevant to you

Chapter 2: Build inclusive classrooms

Read this chapter if you are interested in creating a mutually respectful learning environment, in which students are prepared and encouraged to engage in discussions with people of different cultural backgrounds, disciplines, and learning styles.

Keywords: Inclusivity | Modelling | Mutual learning | Open communication | Open-mindedness

Chapter 3: Adopt a multicultural lens in teaching

Take a look at this chapter if you wish to know more strategies and approaches that help students connect multiple perspectives. We will particularly discuss how to leverage students' cultural backgrounds, use their related experiences as rich teaching resources, and develop their ability to have a critical dialogue with others.

Keywords: Multicultural lenses | Identities | Sensitive issues | Reflections | Students' experiences as resources

Chapter 4: Design intercultural group work

We will look at the task design, student preparation, and strategies to facilitate engagement throughout the process. We will also look at some frequently identified issues, such as how to achieve a meaningful and fair assessment, and how to deal with free-riders.

Keywords: Group task design | Group composition | Collaboration | Assessment | Free-riders

Chapter 5: Case studies from HKU

In this chapter we will present four case studies from the faculties of Architecture, Law, Social Sciences and Science respectively, which aim to illustrate some of the good practices we learnt from HKU classrooms.

Keywords: Good practices | Teacher voices | Professional critiques | Peer feedback | Student-led studios



Chapter 2: Build inclusive classrooms

Introduction

The learning environment of HKU is increasingly international, with over 20% of the full-time undergraduate students being non-locals (HKU, 2018). Our students are from different countries, cultures, educational systems, and sociocultural backgrounds. It is therefore necessary to recognise the unique attributes of each student as a person. Students come to HKU with a great variety of prior knowledge, expectations, as well as personal and professional aspirations. They have multiple identities and being a ‘student’ is just one of these identities. Many of them may have commitments outside the campus, serving as volunteers, entrepreneurs, adventurers, and committee members. It is important for educators to bear in mind that our students have many faces. Inclusive education is about honouring these many faces that our students have, by creating an embracing learning environment so that each student is able to develop their talents and explore their identity.

“

Inclusive education is about embracing all, making a commitment to do whatever it takes to provide each student in the community—and each citizen in a democracy—an inalienable right to belong, not to be excluded.

—Falvey, Givner & Kimm (1995)

”

02

What makes an inclusive classroom?

Inclusive teaching is to use instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches to acknowledge and value diversity as well as promoting equity. Diversity here recognises not only ethnicities or nationalities, but also disciplines, traditions, norms, values and even learning styles - things that make a student unique. It is important for teachers to firstly recognise and honour similarities and differences among students, and with that, devise strategies and pedagogies to encourage active and meaningful participation in the learning activities among as many students as possible (Piercy & Caldwell, 2011; Tange & Kastberg, 2013).

Culturally inclusive practices in a classroom allow students from different backgrounds and with different prior experiences to make contribution and learn from each other. Without these practices, some students may feel discouraged, isolated, or even marginalised. Furthermore, we might miss the valuable opportunities to learn from these students' experiences and worldviews which cannot be solicited without embracing inclusivity (UNSW, 2018). In this chapter, we will look at the following aspects of inclusive practices and strategies in university classrooms.

1. Preparing the mind and environment

2. Modelling inclusive communications in class

3. Nurturing a growth mindset

1.

Preparing the mind and environment

Communicate what an inclusive classroom is. A culturally inclusive classroom embraces some key values in terms of how to express oneself and relate to one another – mutual respect, collaborative relationship, clear communication, and critical self-reflection (UNSW, 2018). It helps if these values are communicated to students at the beginning of a semester so that students know they can feel safe to freely express their opinions, and more importantly, they can realise that they are also contributors to such a learning environment together with their peers and the teaching staff.

Teachers may let students know that inclusivity is important to ensure quality learning and that alternative views and various ideas are respected in the classroom. Below is a HKU example that illustrates how to do so by setting multicultural related learning goals and establishing ground rules.



HKU EXAMPLE

At the beginning of her course, the teacher clarifies the learning goals specifically related to multicultural and inclusive learning. The teacher makes it explicit that students come to class to learn from the teacher and their peers hence everyone should maintain a respectful attitude. The teacher also explains that an open mind can help students learn from what they would otherwise overlook and maximise their learning out of the course. The following suggestions are provided by the teacher to her students:

- Work with as many different classmates as possible throughout the course;
- Learn to respect disagreements and differences;
- Be prepared to have their worldviews or assumptions reviewed or de-constructed;
- Seek alternative worldviews and look for differences and similarities;
- Find and talk to someone who can teach them something new.

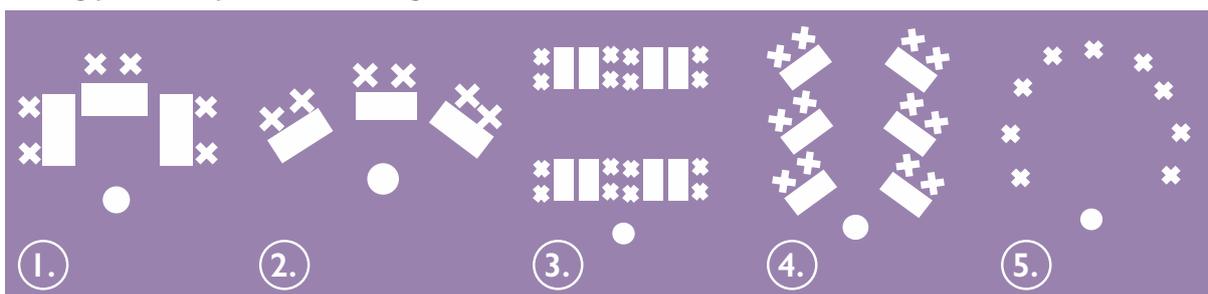
Learn about your students. Early in the course, teachers may find opportunities to learn more about their students' cultural and educational experiences as well as motivations and expectations on the course. This information helps adjust and enhance the teaching plan as the teacher can anticipate the interaction dynamics based on the students' profiles. Below are some possible ways to learn about the students:

- Develop an ***introduction session*** early in the course to encourage students to share their prior experiences and expectations of the course. The teacher can also introduce his or her cultural backgrounds, cross-cultural experiences, expectations on the students, and teaching style. It would be helpful if this introduction can be meaningfully connected with the subject of the course.
- Design a brief ***needs analysis questionnaire*** for students to complete before class, with the questions covering student's self-reported level of certain core skills required in the course, (e.g. language capacity or technical skill level), their previous educational experiences, what aspects they might need to have more support, and their motivations and expectations on the course.
- Establish a ***database*** (on Moodle or other online platforms) of resources that assist students in their learning journey. The database may contain a list of terms, concepts or contextual information central to the course. For example, some local regulations and policies may be useful to students in law or surveying courses but may not be easily identified by non-locals. Including these resources in the database helps students from different backgrounds obtain the necessary information more easily.

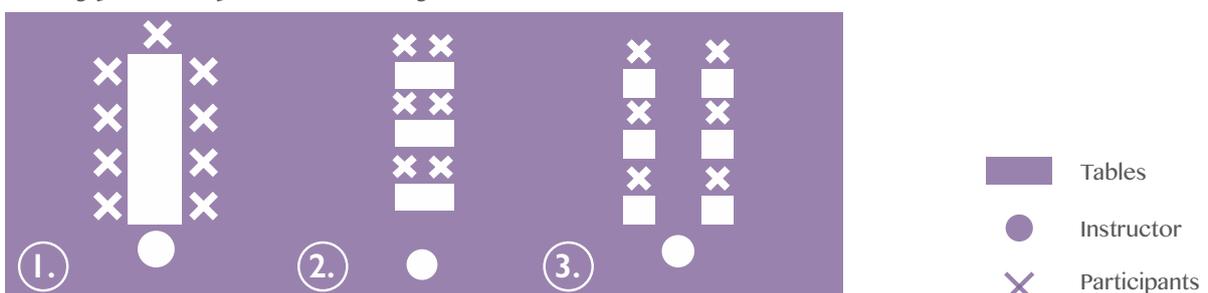
Intervene early when there are signs of incivility. Even with ground rules established in the class, incivility may still take place. Signs of incivility may include rudeness, prejudices, domination in the group, negating the needs of individual students, and behaviours that cause others to feel intimidated, humiliated or degraded (UNSW, 2018). The teachers are suggested to deal with these inappropriate behaviours early through proper interventions. Yet some behaviours can be subtle or unconscious, which may require the teacher to develop sensitivity towards diversity and inclusivity. The following behaviours are considered as problematic that teachers may need to **avoid**:

- **Make one student as a representative of his or her country.** This will unfortunately reinforce stereotypes. What teachers can do, instead, is to plan opportunities for students to contribute their own experiences and opinions to the classroom (Dunworth & Briguglio, 2011) and recognise that these experiences and opinions may not be consistent with the dominant views in the country where the students come from.
- **Only value experiences of the privileged or the dominating cultural or social groups.** This will undermine the experiences and contributions of those from minority groups. What teachers can do is to solicit experiences and opinions from different groups of students, sometimes with scaffolding.
- **Neglect difficulties caused by different language abilities.** In Hong Kong classrooms, most students speak English as their second language. Without sensitivity to different language abilities, teachers might unconsciously deprive students with language difficulties of opportunities to contribute.
- **Overlook the physical environment.** Sometimes theatre seating style can be counter-productive to active classroom participation but it is still quite common at HKU. If possible, the seat layout can be rearranged to encourage interaction. For example, seats may be arranged in round circles, small groups, or other ways that students can see their fellows' faces. These arrangements also leave some walking space for the teachers to see students' work or join their discussion. The goal is to maximise the use of the physical space so that teachers are able to give attention to students so that they feel more encouraged to talk to one another.

Seating plan examples that encourage interactions



Seating plan examples that discourage interactions



2.

Modelling inclusive communications in class

Teachers themselves can be effective role models in demonstrating what inclusive communications are in class. The way how teachers approach and interact with students and position themselves in the class have an impact on students' attitudes and behaviours towards diversity. In the following, we will illustrate several ways that teachers can model inclusive communications, according to our observation at HKU.



LISTENING

- **Apply active listening.** That means showing curiosity and dedication when approaching students' comments and expressing genuine interest in their point of views. This shows that the teacher welcomes all kinds of views and comments, without a preference for one group or another.
- **Stay patient.** Some students take a longer time to form their arguments than others, which can be due to different language proficiencies or learning styles. In either case, teachers need to show patience to students so that they can gradually unfold their arguments. Teachers have to withhold their urge to intervene and only make comments after the students have fully expressed themselves.



ALLOWING

- **Allow silence and 'I don't know'.** At times when students may not be able to give any response to a question, or remain silent, teachers need to allow that space, and respect students who say 'I don't know'. Instead of pushing for an answer, teachers may consider using the following ways to start the conversation or encourage some thoughts:

- *You don't need to have a full answer to these questions. Have a think about it.*

“

- *It isn't easy to formulate questions or feedback on this concept, is it? To some of you, this has been the first time you have heard about the concept so I encourage you to go back to it later.*

”

- *This is a tough question, isn't it? We cannot find an easy answer. What about focusing on one aspect of the problem first, for example, the positive side?*

- *This is something I want you to keep pondering, even if you don't have an immediate answer for now.*

Alternatively, teachers may consider using different words to frame the question so as to help students think about it from a different perspective:

- *Is there anything we just talked about that links, resonates with or impacts on your original thoughts or assumptions?*

“

- *If you are not sure about this concept, what is the closest example that you have seen elsewhere?*

”



RESPONDING

- ***Give immediate feedback to students' responses.*** It can be in various forms, including asking for clarification or elaborations, affirming students' answers, paraphrasing students' answers to confirm if the teachers' understanding is correct, and giving further comments. The key is to express appreciation to what students have said, show interest in learning more about students themselves, and make them feel that their voices are heard. Below are some suggested ways teachers may use to respond to students' comments:
 - Voice his or her understanding and check if the student's meaning is correctly interpreted;
 - Highlight the key message of what students have said;
 - Ask more questions based on students' comments;
 - Connect students' comments with what had been taught or what has been presented by others in the class;
 - Pick up comments and use them in the following class discussion;
 - Ask other students how they think of the comments.
- ***Adjust questions according to students' levels.*** Teachers may consider adjusting questions to suit student's abilities. When soliciting opinions on abstract or difficult concepts, teachers may rephrase the questions that focus on solid experiences or specific examples.
- ***Make open-ended enquiries.*** Teachers may consider following up on students' comments in a tentative and negotiable manner, soliciting deeper thoughts and encouraging alternative views. Teachers also need to withhold their own view and avoid rushing to conclusions. Instead, the argument or answer is developed through back-and-forth communication among students or between students and teachers in a co-constructive manner. For instance, teachers may use the following phrases to further the dialogue:

- *Can you say a bit more about this?*

- *What makes this angle important?*

“ - *What leads you to approach the issue this way?*

- *Tell me more. What else?*

- *Do you have any comments on what your classmate just said? To what extent do you agree or disagree?*

”

Even at times when teachers introduce alternative views or points out any logic flaws made by students, the teachers should remain open-minded, which allows students to clarify their views or ask further questions.

- *When you say this, I can see you are trying to approach the issue in this way.... However, we can also use a different angle. ... The two approaches are different in the aspects of ...*

“ - *I see where you come from when you say this.... Though this view is also supported by some others, we need to recognise that the potential flaw of this argument would be...*

”



REFRAINING

- **Refraining from giving easy and quick praises.** Though it is very convenient to give students quick praises after they respond to teachers' questions, this practice may not always be effective. Sometimes teachers need to refrain from giving praises (e.g. 'Well done.' ; 'That is a good point.') too quickly and easily; instead, they may consider approaching students' initial responses with some clarifications or probing questions that allow students to give a more elaborative response. This helps deepen the conversation and encourage students to review their arguments and articulate their views more fully.



RELATING

- **Stay authentic and open.** Teachers show willingness to relate to students in class by sharing their views and experiences, which is similar to 'use of self' (Cayanus, 2004). For instance, teachers sometimes tell the class what they feel resonated with students' presentation, what have caught their attention, or how a point made by students has aroused their curiosity to know more. In the process, teachers engage students in further discussion, with an emphasis on authenticity, openness and diversity:

- *When you say this, I recall what we have touched upon earlier about ...*

- *I find that was fascinating. It resonates with what I experienced when I was a student.*

- *I find this interesting when you said ...*

- *I'm wondering if you have also thought of ... I myself find that example interesting.*

- *I became a researcher in this area because I was influenced by... I wonder if any of you share similar inspirations as I do.*

We observed that the sharing of personal stories by teachers in the class sometimes encourages students to relate the teaching contents to their personal experiences and thus share their reflections and comments more openly.





OBSERVING

- ***Be attentive to students' participation.*** Some students may not appear to be responsive or vocal in class yet it does not imply they do not have a view. Teachers need to be sensitive to the subtle cues from these students so they can sometimes naturally start a conversation with those students, who can have a chance to share their views. For instance, the teacher may ask:

“ - You seem to be thinking about this. Anything cross your mind?
 - I see you frown when the other student said this and that. What were in your mind? ”

Apart from observing students as individuals, teachers also need to be sensitive to the potential tension among students from different cultural groups in the class, and intervene when needed. We observed that some teachers took initiatives to direct attention to quiet students by inviting them to share their views. This once happened when a few non-local students being more proactive than locals. The teacher shifted the focus to how local students might have a different view given the specific Hong Kong context – an attempt to create equal learning opportunities for all students.

- ***Be sensitive to students' learning needs.*** Students with different cultural backgrounds may have different learning needs. For example, we observed that non-local students were very eager to know more about Hong Kong but they sometimes needed assistance. Some undergraduate programmes are highly dependent on local expertise and knowledge, such as surveying, where many local examples would be used in class. Several good practices were observed when teachers carefully utilised local knowledge and experiences for class discussion.



HKU EXAMPLE

- When making use of local examples that referred to current social affairs or local construction projects (e.g. the Hong Kong – Zhuhai – Macao Bridge), the teacher briefly introduced the background and provided the students with some keywords so that they could search on their own after class.
- When local / Cantonese news materials were used in class, explanations and subtitles in English were followed. As such, students who were not familiar with local materials felt included in the learning as well.

3.

Nurturing a growth mindset

A growth mindset is the belief that students can possibly learn and improve their intelligence level, talents and abilities through making efforts (Dweck, 2008). Students who are encouraged to approach learning with a growth mindset tend to have more confidence and persistence in developing their ability over time, be more likely to seek opportunities to gain new knowledge and acquire new skills, and be more able to embrace challenges (Kazakoff & Mitchell, 2017). On the other hand, students with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence and talents are static, which may prevent them from seeking developmental opportunities. One example is that some female students see themselves as ‘bad’ at science because they feel that they have less natural talent in learning science subjects. With the assumption that they are not as good as others, some students may seek success only to prove themselves rather than learn to expand their capacities (Kazakoff & Mitchell, 2017).

Nurturing a growth mindset among students is important to the creation of an inclusive classroom environment because it encourages everyone to actively participate in learning and pursue his or her goals. Gender, socioeconomic status, learning styles, and language abilities should not be barriers to learning. A growing amount of literature suggests promoting equality by developing a growth mindset because a growth mindset will encourage students to see that they can in fact develop their abilities by participating in the learning tasks whilst a fixed mindset will let them believe that their ability cannot grow because it comes inherently. Teachers may consider the following ways to nurture a growth mindset among students.

Model growth mindset practices. Teachers may consider sharing their own experiences of overcoming challenges or learning from mistakes when they were students or early in their career development. By doing this, students can be impacted by good models from their teachers (Carnegie Mellon University, 2016).

Give growth-oriented feedback. Teachers’ feedback can be phrased as towards growth-oriented by highlighting the ‘next step’ and encouraging the use of different learning strategies. This will be more helpful than giving general feedback such as ‘keep trying’. Below shows a few examples (adapted from Dweck, 2008):

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
You tried your hardest, and that’s all you can do.	Don’t worry if you don’t understand something right away. Focus on your next steps. What should they be?
You’ll eventually get these types of questions if you just keep trying.	If you don’t understand these types of questions, try to use a different perspective. You can put them down either by drawing or writing.
Great job! You’re so smart!	Great job! The study plan you made helped a lot. You should make another one for the next test.

Offer practice and development opportunities. It would be helpful to provide students with opportunities to practice core skills that they need to acquire in the course in low-stake assignments. The following HKU example shows how teachers can enhance students’ final work by giving multiple opportunities to practice and seek feedback.



HKU EXAMPLE

In a science course where students were required to give a presentation at the end to showcase their scientific project work, the teacher designed some practice opportunities by arranging ‘mock’ presentations. Each group of students was required to rehearse their presentation a few weeks before the final presentation in front of the class. Based on the rehearsed presentations, the teacher encouraged the presenters to share how they formulated the arguments, and then pointed out the missing areas they had to address in final presentations.

Meanwhile, the teacher communicated his high expectations on students’ performance through his feedback while also showing that he valued students’ effort. For instance, he said:

“

- *This was a good attempt. In the final presentation, I expect that you could further look into this area.*

- *I can see how much effort you’ve put into this and where you came from in approaching the problem this way. Please take some time to work out why your approach is better than some of the existing ones.*

- *You chose to approach this problem in an interesting way. Please try to explain why this approach can effectively tackle the problem.*

”

Toward the end of each presentation, the teacher invited the class to thank all the presenters and gave them a big applause to affirm their effort.

Reiterate high expectations with guidance and support. Communicating and reiterating high expectations helps encourage students to further enhance their capacity and expand their comfort zone. This strategy would be more effective with necessary guidance and support put into place. For instance, we observed a journalism class at HKU where the teacher often used the language that affirmed ‘success’, ‘doing the very best’, and ‘commitment’. Students were found to be attentive during these moments, showing an indication of being inspired.

- State and repeat the high standards and expectations to students and maintain the same level of standards throughout the course;
- Explain to students that they will be fully supported when they pursue these high standards;
- Provide different means of support to help students achieve their different goals but do not lower expectations for any particular groups of learners (Please refer to the Food for Thought for more details).



Use different instructional components to support students. This strategy helps communicate high expectations because it gives students the autonomy to select the most effective means to express their ideas. Such a process requires students to critically reflect on their work and think creatively about the deliverables. Teachers may consider using different ways to present teaching contents, designing different learning processes, and employing different means to illustrate examples and visualise knowledge (adapted from Guido, 2016):

- **Contents:** When applicable, consider multiple ways of presentations, such as, handouts, PowerPoints, videos, audio clips, storytelling, and physical objects to present the teaching materials so that students with different learning styles can benefit.
- **Processes:** Provide students with opportunities to work individually, in pairs, small groups, and big groups. Students can also be encouraged to form different groups so as to work with different people.
- **Deliverables:** Let students demonstrate their comprehension and interpretation of contents in a variety of ways through tests, projects and other assignments. For example, an open project may be created so that students can complete the assignment by choosing the most effective ways of presentation, such as an essay, an oral presentation, or some artistic productions.



Chapter 3: Adopt a multicultural lens in teaching

Introduction

The world has become increasingly globalised and pluralistic. Multicultural teaching engages students in multiple cultural or disciplinary values and perspectives, and has the benefit of growing students to be more culturally competent as they learn to grasp the value of cultural pluralism in today's world. Therefore, it becomes an essential pedagogical approach to preparing our students for their life-long journey.

Indeed, cultural pluralism is a characteristic of our society. The more open to it, the more able our students are to engage in discussion of issues about current events of inequality, cultural division, conflicts of social roles and identities. Multicultural learning experiences help students develop a broader, more complex understanding of our world (Johnson & Inoue, 2003). An inclusive learning environment fosters knowledge and experience exchange of diverse perspectives, and empowers students to adopt a more active role in learning as they feel their voices and experiences are valued. Research shows that multicultural teaching practices enhance learning for all students, regardless of their cultural groups (Hurtado et al., 1999). It helps enhance students' sense of connection, first with their immediate community, and extending to the larger world.

“

A multicultural society does not reject the culture of the other but is prepared to listen, to see, to dialogue and, in the final analysis, to possibly accept the other's culture without compromising its own.

—Reuven Rivlin (2016)

”

03

What is a multicultural lens in teaching?

Having a multicultural lens in teaching usually involves teachers using diverse pedagogies and materials in class in order to create connections among multiple cultural perspectives, encourage students to share their opinions, and more importantly, develop their ability to have a critical dialogue with other students (Lee, 2005). Different disciplines may adopt the multicultural lens in different ways due to the nature of the subject knowledge. Disciplines such as social sciences might incorporate social issues and policy debates into engaging students in cultural dialogues, while the hard and pure disciplines such as science might help students reflect on the cultural and ethical implications of science principles.

Incorporating multicultural contents into the curriculum

One aspect of multicultural teaching is to incorporate teaching contents and materials that reflect multiple cultural perspectives into the curriculum. It is not about one or two examples that are shown to students in a specific class session; instead, the implementation of content needs to be infused throughout the course and closely connected to the intended learning outcomes (Leask, 2015). If we treat cultural contents as something added on rather than embedded in the course, there will be more resistance from students as they may not see the connection of the contents with the remaining course materials and their learning goals.

Creating an open and safe learning community

Multicultural teaching is not only about having the relevant contents, but also about students' sharing and knowledge exchange in an open and safe community. Teachers need to foster an inclusive, safe and trusting learning environment which helps students relate to each other (including teachers and other students) and share their experiences. The sense of security and community is fundamental if teachers would like to expose students to diversity. Respecting and embracing diversity not only involves sharing different views and perspectives, but also encountering inconvenient truth, controversies, and even taboos. However, not everyone is comfortable with these exposures. For example, students from dominant groups may have greater resistance to teaching materials that challenge their privileges and norms. Yet these less easy exposures in university classrooms are indispensable parts of learning. More discussions on fostering an inclusive and safe learning environment can be found in Chapter 2 in this guidebook.

Educators' roles and development

Teachers' own multicultural awareness and their pedagogical techniques in bringing out diversity are fundamental to engaging students in learning diverse perspectives effectively. The literature on multicultural teaching indicates the importance for teachers to engage themselves in critical self-evaluation (Hyde & Ruth, 2002; Sheets, 2005). This is because a teacher may not be able to engage students fully in the learning of social justice and oppression issues if they have not reflected on their own positions and experiences related to these topics.

In the following section, we will focus on four aspects of facilitating multicultural teaching in university classrooms based on the relevant literature and data collected at HKU.

1. Developing cultural perspectives

2. Raising self-awareness and developing identities and roles

3. Capitalising on students' cultural resources

4. Confronting inequality, assumptions and taboos

1.

Developing cultural perspectives

Prepare students for meaningful discussions on knowledge, examples and perspectives. A meaningful discussion that embraces diversity or focuses on controversies needs some careful planning and preparation. Students need to be equipped with the necessary background knowledge, theories and conceptual frameworks before finding their positions or forming their perspectives in the discussion.



HKU EXAMPLE

Example 1: In a law course, similar legal practices in different jurisdictions and social contexts were introduced and discussed. When discussing the legal systems globally, the teacher started with the UK as a reference point followed by examples from Australia, Canada and Europe, and then facilitated the discussion around these areas:

- Look into how the topic was being received/ addressed differently in the aforementioned jurisdiction systems;
- Trace the historical development of debates of the topic;
- Reflect on the implications and possible solutions to Hong Kong.

Students were prompted to compare the practices in different contexts and think more critically about their relevance to the local context.

Example 2: Similar teaching strategies were also found in a course from the Faculty of Architecture regarding local real estate development and housing policy. Innovative development ideas such as using real estate development to achieve social integration in New York and Chicago were introduced. Students were encouraged to discuss and critically evaluate the implications to Hong Kong. The subject matters introduced in the course included a wide range of areas such as housing policies, urban planning, city re-imagination and reservations. The complexity comes from the rich social, cultural and historical contexts in which these matters are situated. Recognising and unfolding the interwoven dynamics of these contextual layers within the neighbourhood or across the region can be an important facet of multicultural teaching in class, and a very stimulating one, too.

Cultivate students to view knowledge building as cultural and negotiable. The literature has pointed out that some teachers may not see the cultural and international dimensions as relevant to their teaching or curriculum design (Green & Whitsed, 2015). This mindset is more often found in some disciplines, in particular, science and engineering, than in others (Clifford, 2009). For example, science education in some countries tend to adopt a positivist view as if this is the only way to conceptualise how science is defined, practiced and valued (Durodoye, 2003). Accordingly, emphasis has been put on teaching the scientific content and science is seen as a fixed body of proven knowledge (content-matter).

A multicultural approach, on the other hand, sees the subject knowledge as ‘a way of knowing’ framework — a cultural, dynamic and negotiated way of obtaining knowledge that is practiced by a particular community (Meyer & Crawford, 2011). It also underscores the importance of capitalising on students’ diverse experiences, draws upon differences and similarities of students’ views on science (i.e. it is negotiable rather than absolute), and then turns them into meaningful teaching resources (Leask, 2015) (See more about capitalising on students’ cultural resources on page 26).



To help engage students in appreciating the dynamic and tentative nature of scientific knowledge, we have highlighted the following practices observed from science courses in HKU and the literature (Meyer & Crawford, 2011) :

- Engage students in seeing knowledge as existing in a negotiation manner. For instance, scientific findings can be challenged by new piece of information or technology; and what counts as rigorous research on different paradigms can be different.
- Demonstrate the tentative nature of scientific knowledge (i.e. it is subject to change). For instance, the teacher may draw on examples to show changes in theories so as to encourage students to reflect on or challenge the common view of seeing science as a fixed truth. Hence students may start to see science as an evolving field in which they as young scientists can participate.
- Create space and opportunities for students from different backgrounds to engage in a process of negotiation and accept alternative understanding, interpretations and arguments. For instance, the teacher may have students work on scientific topics situated in a real-life phenomenon so that students can see how knowledge can be applied or challenged in the phenomenon. This also prompts a question: what makes it a science quest?

2.

Raising self-awareness and developing identities and roles

We carry multiple identities related to our race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, professional roles and so on. Before recognising the identities of other people, we first have to know ourselves well enough (Stromquist, 2002). The ability to reflect on and recognise one’s own possible biases in order to achieve a more open and equal stance is important. Some scholars coined such ability as ‘cultural humility’, as a life-long process featured with openness, self-awareness, egolessness, self-reflection and supportive interactions (Foronda et al., 2016). In this section, we highlight some useful practices that teachers may consider adopting in their classrooms.

Experiential activities. Students may find it difficult to make sense of relatively abstract concepts such as cultural differences, social exclusion, the underprivileged and minority if they are not involved in meaningful encounters and activities. Well planned, supported and monitored experiential activities have the potential to reduce the sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, get students to reflect on and even question values of the dominant culture, and help them connect their experiences to the concepts discussed in the classroom (UNSW, 2018).



HKU EXAMPLE

Example 1

Experiential activities were designed to provide students with exposure to differences and otherness in a course in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Students were invited to conduct mini-interviews with fellows on campus to gather views and experiences related to controversial issues, for example, tension between Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong Chinese. Students were then regrouped in the class to report their observations and findings. The data collected formed part of the report students needed to produce for their project.

Example 2

In another course from the Faculty of Social Sciences, a pre-class activity ‘knowing your neighbours’ was assigned that required students to talk to people from another culture living in Hong Kong about how they experienced the city similarly or differently from Hong Kong natives. Students went to Vietnamese or Indian restaurants to talk to people there, overcoming their shyness and language barriers, and bringing back the stories they solicited to share with the class.

Critical reflection on oneself and others. Students may experience some uneasiness or even cultural shocks during the process of getting to know differences and reflecting on their own values. In fact, these moments of discomfort are potentially valuable teaching moments that can be used to develop students’ ability of critical reflection. At the same time, the abilities to deal with disagreements and even critiques from a peer of a different culture or value system, while remaining faithful and open to carry on the dialogue, are important in a multicultural setting.

Teachers may seize such teaching moments to illustrate the necessary qualities and attitudes in order to appreciate a true dialogue with those who are very different from themselves. The following suggestions are summarised from an interview with a HKU teacher:

- Be willing to understand very different stances or perspectives, and the cultural, political and historical causes for such differences;
- Be open to engage in the dialogue despite the vast differences contained;
- Engage in the dialogue with the genuine intention to contribute to the discussion, rather than aiming to convince others to change;
- Be ready to encounter disagreements in the conversations;
- Be assertive to express thoughts despite being challenged;
- Support arguments with well-articulated logic.

Examination of one's roles and assumptions. Another facet of raising self-awareness is to re-examine and reconsider one's assumed roles and often taken-for-granted assumptions. Below we highlight the examples we learnt from HKU classrooms.



HKU EXAMPLE

In a course in the Faculty of Architecture, the teacher encouraged students to discuss urban planning from multiple perspectives. For example, students were prompted to think about housing community development from multiple angles, including those from low-income families and high-income families. They were also asked to take the roles of a developer, an architect and a government official to comment on the housing policy. The teacher also put students in authentic scenarios and invited them to ask themselves: 'Ten years on, if you are the developer, do you think this is something you can support?'

When discussing the matters on foreign investors in Hong Kong and the possible impact of their investment behaviours on the high property price, the teacher showed a variety of examples reported in news regarding Hong Kong people investing in the property market outside Hong Kong such as Taiwan and Japan and invited students to think about the related impact. This discussion helped students re-examine their views about a particular group of investors and challenge their assumptions about the property market development in Hong Kong.

3.

Capitalising on students' cultural resources

Multicultural teaching sees students as rich and valuable resources. It underscores the importance of capitalising on students' diverse perspectives, prior knowledge and experiences, drawing on their similarities and differences, and turning them to meaningful teaching resources (Leask, 2015).

Creation of opportunities for students to connect their discipline to culture and value.

The meaning of subject or discipline can be reflected upon by inviting students to use different cultural lenses to frame the matter. For example, what the subject (e.g. science, social sciences) means in their culture, who is considered to be a respectful figure in that subject area, and what a big achievement or discovery looks like. This enables students to exchange views of the interplay between the discipline and cultural contexts, in particular, how a society may shape the way a discipline is known and perceived.

At HKU, we observed how teachers from different faculties provided such opportunities for students to make sense of their discipline and profession in cultural contexts. One way is to solicit students' understanding of important concepts or key terms related to the subject. The teacher may ask, 'How do you understand the word critical? How is it related to criticality? Do you find this author's essay critical?', 'How do you see the word humanism? What comes to your mind? How would you relate yourself to this word?'. Students are encouraged to interpret the concepts or terms based on their own life experiences and reflect on how things are perceived differently by their peers. They are also encouraged to develop a sense of curiosity to understand what others are thinking, what they may have been through, and how others' experiences have impacted the way they relate to the subject knowledge.

Using materials developed by students. When used well, materials developed by students can be powerful aids to make the learning more student-centred and relevant. Below are some suggestions for using students' materials in lectures:

- Ask students to complete some pre-class tasks that are related to the subject matter and allow them to choose their own topics or emphases;
- Encourage students to bring in their individual interest, perspectives or even struggles in classroom discussions;
- Provide timely feedback to students and link what they have voiced to the lecture materials if possible;
- Prompt students to reconsider individual stories and observations in a broader background or a theoretical framework, and make meaning out it.

Using materials developed by students is not difficult to arrange. For example, teachers may consider inviting students to share or present on specific topics to start the lecture, which can be a natural entry point to solicit students' views of the learning materials. Teachers can also learn from this process what materials students feel more connected with. Students' stories, voices and stances can be further utilised in the remaining class discussion, where the teaching contents can be adjusted according to students' concerns.

Facilitating exchange of views and peer feedback. Class discussion is a common way to get students to exchange views and share feedback, where personal stories and perspectives are encouraged. It can be considered as a co-constructing process of knowledge that is important to expand students' worldviews as well as nurture a sense of learning community.

For instance, teachers may ask students to form a small group with their neighbours to discuss a topic. A representative from each group is then nominated to share the highlights of the discussion with the class. During the sharing, teachers can respond to students' views, solicit other students' opinions, and facilitate their reflections. If a student's comment touches on a different cultural practice, teachers may ask more relevant questions in order to stimulate more discussions.

A panellist style of discussion around the required reading or a chosen topic is also possible. A number of students serving as panel members share their views on the reading or the topic, whilst student audience give feedback and ask further questions. If this is made as part of a student assignment, students can be assessed according to the quality of their questions or feedback.

4.

Confronting inequality, assumptions and taboos

Multicultural teaching aims to achieve changes in mindsets which enable students to become more ethical and responsible global citizens (Haigh, 2014). Hence difficult conversations are needed in the class, during which students would have the chance, with teachers' facilitation, to work through them in order to expand their cultural and intellectual capacity. These discussions or explorations may not always be comfortable, especially when the teaching materials challenge students' existing position, or sense of superiority and privilege. For students to feel safe when they experience such uncomfortable moments, a trusting learning community is needed. At times, in order to grapple with new ideas and listen to opposite views, the discomfort cannot be avoided. Teachers may need to convey this message to students so as to encourage them to cope with the discomfort for the purpose of learning.

Preparing students and anticipating emotional reactions. Before introducing discussions of controversial or taboo topics, teachers may consider the following (adapted from UNSW, 2018):

- Anticipate students' emotional reactions and actively plan to manage it;
- Prepare students to reflect on their skills and abilities in dealing with controversies;
- Develop students' abilities to critically analyse data and present evidence on a topic from more than one perspective;
- Design prior class activities for students to explore both similarities and differences between practices in different contexts so as to reduce barriers to learning new perspectives from a different culture;
- Demonstrate tolerance of and respect for controversial materials and focus on the ideas and views but not the person.

Applying structured discussions on taboos. Getting students to openly discuss unexamined cultural assumptions of their own or those in the society is not always easy, let alone enable them to further challenge these assumptions and link them back to their own cultural origins and make critical reflections. A systematic scaffolding process would be more helpful than throwing a few open-ended questions (e.g. 'what do you think?').



HKU EXAMPLE

In one class in the Faculty of Law, there was a discussion on controversial topics related to legalisation of prostitution. The teacher chose not to ask students' opinions at the beginning. Instead, the teacher outlined four major perspectives in addressing the topic, and asked students to make their vote with a quick exchange of views with their neighbours. With their answers more formulated after talking with their classmates, students were then asked to share their views with the large class. We observed that the discussion of this complicated, controversial topic became more manageable to students as a result of the scaffolded process. A large number of students from the class actively shared their views so that the teacher was able to capitalise on students' input to deepen the discussion.

Bringing in culturally related topics for discussion and reflection. In some cases, teachers may consider directly bringing in culturally related topics or even controversies to classroom discussion. For example, to help students reflect on their cultural roots or sense of 'Hong Kongese', stories of minorities (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, domestic workers, and sex workers) can be used as learning materials. The teacher may foster students' curiosity about and openness to appreciating different people's stories, emotions, choices and life narrations with a sense of shared humanity, and then encourage students to re-examine their values and identities.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Engaging students in thinking about and discussing culturally related controversies can be difficult in some cases. A variety of tools might help ease the process. Examples include debates and observations. Teachers may also consider using media items or video vignettes to encourage students to critique and reflect on media sources, interpretations, and the wider sociocultural contexts of the issues. Scenarios where a particular incident is reported differently in different media sources or where a specific opinion is interpreted differently by people from different cultures can constitute good learning materials. More suggestions can be found on UNSW's webpage on Teaching Diverse Groups (<https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/managing-issues>)

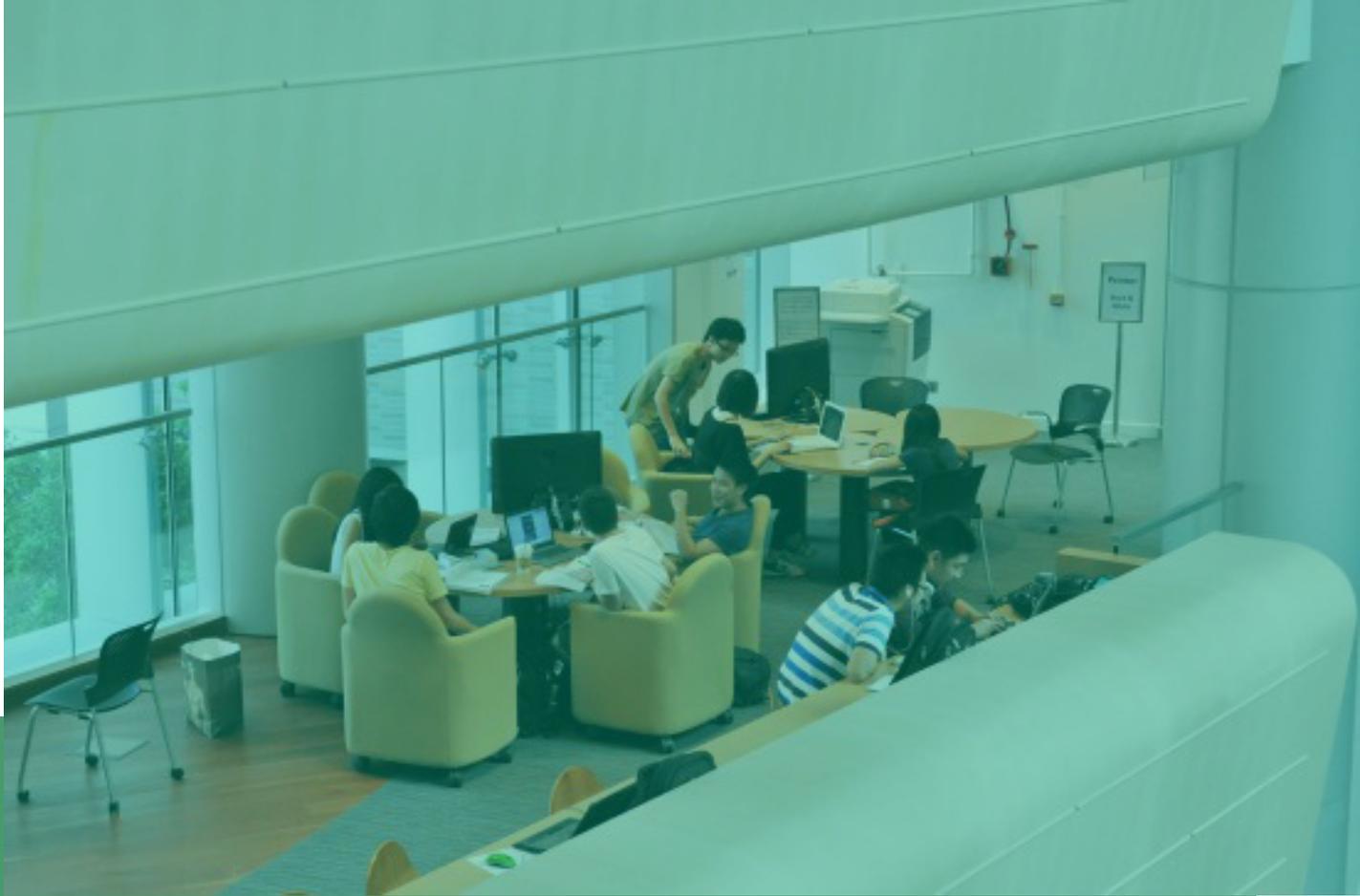
Use of self. The concept of 'use of self' is often seen in the social work context. For example, a social worker consciously uses his or her motivation and capability to interact with others to facilitate change (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2003). In multicultural teaching, teachers' use of self can sometimes bring another perspective to students and provide insights into cultural differences. It may involve teachers' self-disclosure of their cultural backgrounds and experiences to illustrate how these elements have shaped their perspectives.

We observed that teachers in our study often applied the 'use of self' concept when giving comments and feedback on students' work. For example, one teacher shared that he felt difficult to understand a specific aspect of students' work because he was not familiar with the local cultural context. He then invited the students to elaborate how their work can be adapted and better introduced to people from different cultural backgrounds. Students are more likely to discover their blind spots in this setting.



HKU EXAMPLE

Courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences often involve discussion of debatable social issues heavily situated in local (or Chinese) contexts, such as the social development in China, national identity, and the tension between Mainland Chinese and the local Hong Kong Chinese. Faculty members (especially non-Chinese members) demonstrated the 'use of self' by reflecting on their 'outsider' roles and how the roles enabled them to provide their somehow 'different' views on the sensitive issues. Teachers' self-disclosure helped students think more deeply and form more balanced views. By sharing their views as someone from a different culture, the teachers illustrated how culturally sensitive issues were viewed from a different angle. Students became more aware of how their feelings and social norms might influence their views.



Chapter 4: Design intercultural group work

Introduction

Group work can potentially bring many benefits to student learning. It leads to a more authentic learning environment closer to the professional workplace. It would be helpful if students start practicing group work at university to develop the necessary collaborative and interpersonal skills, which are key graduate attributes. Moreover, group work also allows students to make a deeper inquiry into a topic or take on a more complex task that is not always feasible for individuals to work alone. With more international students joining HKU and more courses emphasising interdisciplinary collaboration, developing students' abilities to work with others from different backgrounds on global and interdisciplinary topics in a group setting becomes increasingly important.

Yet more often than not, different members have their own way of approaching group work, influenced by various factors such as their prior experiences, and educational and cultural backgrounds. Students do not always automatically harvest the benefits of group work by just being put in the group setting and asked to 'work together'. As much as cultural diversity can increase productivity and promote innovation, it can also increase conflicts, and hinder the efficiency and effectiveness of group work (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999). Cultural diversity in classroom is thus seen as a double-edged sword in the sense that it can create great learning opportunity but can also do harm if it is not well managed (Ramburuth, 2005).

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Placing people in the same room, seating them together, telling them that they are a group, and advising them to ‘work together’, does not mean that they will work together effectively.

—Johnson & Johnson (2005)

”

04

What is intercultural group work?

Intercultural group work is defined as having two or more students with different cultural backgrounds work together interactively and interdependently to achieve a set of objectives (e.g. complete a project, undertake investigations, and discuss and generate ideas) (Davies, 2009). Culture here is highly related but not restricted to nationality or ethnicity. It also covers disciplines, traditions, norms and values.

There is a need to prepare and support students appropriately to work effectively in culturally diverse groups (Leask & Carroll, 2013). We cannot assume that students entering the classroom come with the ability to perform well in culturally diverse groups. It is an ability that needs to be developed through structured learning opportunities and facilitation (Leask & Carroll, 2013).



Upon designing intercultural group work, teachers often have the following questions in mind :

- What would be the appropriate task for students from different backgrounds to work collaboratively?
- How can I prepare my students to respect diversity and collaborate with each other in a diverse group?
- What would be the optimal group size for an intercultural group? What role should I take to organise the group?
- What guidance and instructions are useful to facilitate intercultural collaboration within the group? How can I monitor the group progress more effectively?
- How can I intervene appropriately when students encounter cultural clashes in their group? What steps can we take to deal with the free-rider issues?
- When it comes to assessment and grading, how should I make the balance between incentivising individual contributions while maintaining fairness to the entire group?

With these important and practical concerns in mind, this chapter recommends good practices in the following four key aspects of implementing intercultural group work in university classrooms.

1. Designing group tasks

2. Preparing students to work in a diverse group

3. Facilitating interactions

4. Devising assessment

1.

Designing group tasks

Among many others, we discuss two basic elements that can contribute to the design of group tasks:

- Tasks that are truly collaborative
- Tasks that maximise individual students' cultural or interdisciplinary asset

Truly collaborative. Intercultural groups are found to be more effective if students are working on complex tasks, as the diverse skill sets and multiple perspectives contribute to the synergy (De Vita, 2002). Examples of complex tasks include original and creative outputs, multimedia products, and mini-research requiring scientific evidence. These tasks are difficult for an individual to complete on his or her own and cannot be readily divided into sub-tasks. Ensuring that tasks are collaborative thus reduces the possibility for students to simply divide up the task and combine each part without discussion and coordination (Leask & Carroll, 2013).

What kind of tasks are more likely to lead to collaboration? Tasks that include the following requirements may be helpful:

- Collect data from the field and analyse the patterns;
- Categorise different approaches and evaluate their effectiveness;
- Analyse the phenomenon using each member's cultural and personal knowledge and generate a conclusion;
- Propose solutions to the problem and discuss their effectiveness and feasibility in different cultural contexts;
- Include reflective elements in the task design by asking students to reflect on their work processes and outcomes.

Making use of students' cultural asset. Students' cultural, social and personal knowledge, together with their past experiences, are good resources to draw upon when designing the group task. Rather than asking students to seek one 'best' approach to the problem at hand, teachers can consider encouraging students to explore various possibilities and share ideas originated from their cultural and personal resources on how the problem can be defined and tackled so that a range of approaches are considered, discussed, and even evaluated or synthesised in some cases.



HKU EXAMPLE

A student self-initiated project in the Faculty of Law demonstrated how making use of students' cultural asset added value to the group work. The project looked at the legal needs of residents in subdivided flats in Hong Kong. A focus group interview with the students indicated that the local students in the group were able to view this familiar local phenomenon with new perspectives provided by the overseas students and that the overseas students also benefited from relying on the local wisdom of the local students and having a better access to the people in the community.

2.

Preparing students to work in a diverse group

Developing mindsets and attitudes. Some students are reluctant to engage in group work, let alone working with people who are culturally or disciplinarily different from them. Two possible reasons for such reluctance are related to the fear of losing control of the grades in the group work and the uncertainty involved in the work processes. Hence developing students' mindsets in terms of respecting cultural diversity and dealing with disagreements or critiques before they start the group work is critical. The preparation may focus on the following knowledge, skills, and attitudes:

- Be willing to understand one's own cultural norms and those of their peers, and the interactive processes in different cultures (Byram, 1997);
- Be able to interpret and analyse an incident and acquire new information/ knowledge in cross-cultural communication (Byram, 1997);
- Stay curious and be open to other cultures and one's own without being judgmental (Byram, 1997);
- Be motivated to engage in cross-cultural dialogue (Marginson & Sawir, 2011).



HKU EXAMPLE

There are different ways for teachers to convey these messages in class to students. We observe that some teachers do so by inviting senior students from previous cohorts who have intercultural group work experiences. The senior students shared their personal experience of the group work, the challenges they faced, and disagreements they dealt with. Fellow students valued this kind of sharing because they were aware that they would undertake similar intercultural group work. Students of the current cohort also asked questions and shared thoughts on and past experiences of culturally mixed group work. They brainstormed a number of difficult scenarios they might encounter and discussed how to resolve them. Some of the scenarios discussed and the possible solutions are shown below:

Scenario	Solution
Fail to get to know one another	Introducing one another in the group and having some social gatherings
Leave too little time for members to discuss group work processes	Spending some time discussing the group process and reviewing the progress from time to time
Jump to conclusions too quickly if a member communicates in an unfamiliar way	Clarifying with the member and checking one's understanding
Fail to cope with students who have very different work styles	Openly discussing with groupmates about different styles and reaching consensus on some desirable behaviours that everyone agrees with; being flexible and willing to learn new practices

Knowing each other. It will be helpful if teachers could spare time to get to know students' cultural and disciplinary backgrounds so as to get prepared for the potential dynamics in the class. Meanwhile, it enables students to perform better if teachers provides opportunities for group members to know each other through class activities early on in the course. The key is to get them interested in one another and find out their peers' experiences and perspectives. Some useful activities are:

- Ice-breaking activities (e.g. Bingo; Finding 10 things in common; Speed-dating)
- Peer interviews to solicit one's opinions related to a topic to be covered in the course
- Encouraging students to establish communication channels among themselves (e.g. whatsapp groups; discussion forums on Moodle)



One way to get students more psychologically prepared is to get them start with small warm-up exercises. We observed a teacher used 'talk to your peers' before asking students to share their opinions to the whole class. Students are particularly encouraged to talk to those whom they did not know well in the class. To students, it was an opportunity to rehearse what they were going to say in front of the class. It also helped students realise that there are different opinions on the same issue. Open-ended questions were used by the teacher:



- *Now talk to your neighbours to share what you think.*
- *Check how your views are similar to or different from your classmates.*
- *Think of how these differences may be related to your own experiences.*
- *Why don't you talk to someone you haven't spoken with yet?*
- *Move around to find someone you haven't spoken with yet.*



Help students see why. On top of developing students' attitudes to and mindsets of approaching intercultural tasks, it is equally important for teachers to help students see the 'reason' for group work. Teachers may wish to consider the following questions or have students think about them:

- Why are we working in a group, and sometimes in a culturally diverse group?
- Why is it worth enduring the frustration in the process of resolving conflicts and discussing disagreements openly?
- How does it matter to my future work and why is it relevant to my professional readiness?

3.

Facilitating interactions

Group work facilitation is indeed an ongoing process, which means that students need support and guidance throughout the course.

Reinforcing group rules and group contracts. It helps if teachers encourage students to establish group rules or group contracts by themselves, which need to be agreed upon by all groupmates. Everyone is thus clear about their responsibility to the group. Suggested items for the ground rules include:

- Respect one another's opinions and no one is supposed to dominate the discussion
- Attend group meetings and show courtesy when one cannot join the meeting
- Go to meetings prepared and complete the assigned work diligently
- Allow disagreements and resolve them through open discussions
- Delegate work fairly to group members
- Seek timely help from other group members when there is difficulty

Building intervention mechanism. Students sometimes experience frustrations when there are conflicts among group members. This concern can be mitigated if they are clear about how to seek help from the teacher when needed. It helps if the teacher can provide information to students early on about the necessary steps that students can follow when they wish the teacher to intervene.

Spotting early signs for intervention. Teachers may need to be sensitive about the group dynamics. An early identification of potential issues helps determine whether an intervention may be required. What teachers can consider doing is to create opportunities along the course for students to reflect on their group work processes and outcomes and openly talk about their learning progress (Leask & Carroll, 2013). It is also important for students to know that the purpose of the reflection is to keep the group on the right track.



HKU
EXAMPLE

There are many ways to identify potential issues within a group. For instance, we observed allocating some time for students to have discussion with their group members in class provided a good chance for the teacher to observe students' interactions. If a particular member does not seem to get along well with other members, the teacher can follow up with their project progress more closely, and identify students' needs of support more promptly with an attempt to mitigate the potential tension.

Group composition and memberships

- What would be the optimal size for an intercultural group?
- What can I do to encourage students to form intercultural groups?

Small size helps. Relatively small size helps ensure that students have opportunities to interact with one another and make contributions, especially when the group tasks demand students to draw on their diverse backgrounds and skills, and to learn from and with one another. A number of studies in the literature recommend having two to three students in a group for simple tasks and three to four for complex tasks (Davies, 2009).

Membership criteria and other incentives. When there is a choice, students tend to group with those with a similar background, and their focus is usually on the outcomes - how to deliver the end product as efficiently as possible. To encourage intercultural group work, one strategy is to introduce some rules in grouping. For instance, the teacher can consider requiring students to form disciplinarily or culturally mixed groups when the class composition allows (e.g. each group should consist of members from two disciplines). Alongside with this, the teacher can also consider embedding cultural elements in the project topics, which helps students appreciate that culturally mixed group could effectively achieve the project objectives through leveraging each member's strengths, expertise, and skill sets. Moreover, being able to leverage multiple perspectives in the group can also be made as part of the assessment criteria where appropriate.

4.

Devising assessment

How to ensure fairness becomes more challenging in an intercultural group work context as there seems to be more uncertainties. Though all types of group work involve uncertainties, intercultural group work can be more complex. Sources of uncertainties may be from various levels of competence, different working styles, different commitments and expectations, and ideas of how to resolve conflicts and free-riding issues within the group. Here are three points that we could consider:

Transparency is the key. As a guiding principle, transparency is essential. Assessment criteria and rubrics for group work should be made very clear and available (e.g. via online) to students. Students are also given opportunities to raise and clarify their concerns either in private or in class.

Dealing with different levels of competence. Levels of competence may vary within the group. For instance, students with higher language proficiency are often given the task to proofread and edit the writing for others in essay assignments, which could make these students overloaded. Similarly, students' disciplines also have an impact on the dynamics in their group work. Science and engineering students are often given the task to calculate or experiment while law and social sciences students to write. When the group tasks are closer to the nature of one particular discipline, students from that discipline sometimes dominate the group or are overloaded with most of the work. This may also lead to students giving up their work too early and not having enough interactions.

Teachers can consider the following ways to address the issue:

- Convey to students that an effective group process relies on a fair contribution of each member;
- Be explicit about the assessment criteria and mechanisms. When there are large differences among students' abilities, having individual assessment components in the group work assessment becomes more important;
- Design group tasks that require contribution of students from different backgrounds and that can be better accomplished if these students manage to work collaboratively.

Dealing with free-riders. Free-riders refer to those who rely on other group members to do the work while unfairly getting the credit. Students concern about the fairness of grading as they are afraid that their grades can be easily affected by free-riders. Below shows a few things teachers can consider doing:

- Keep the group size small (no more than six members) to reduce free-riding as it's more difficult for any team member to avoid pulling their weight;
- Make use of online learning tools that allow teachers to access the digital records of every individual's progress;
- Conduct peer review to help teachers identify suspected free-riding behaviours so that the teacher may discuss the situation with the team or intervene early on if necessary.



There are different ways to assess group work. Below we introduce two practices from the literature:

Have both individual and group assessment components

Having both individual and group assessment components is especially relevant if the group work takes a substantial weight in the overall course grade. For example, students in the same group may receive the same grade on the group report, but different grades on their oral presentations (Gibbs, 2010). Another variation can be the same grade on the overall team performance while bonus marks are given to outstanding members within the team (i.e. these members can be the best performers or contributors nominated by the group).

Assess both the group output and the process (Lencioni, 2002)

Process here refers to how students contribute to the group, interact with one another, and leverage their perspectives (Lencioni, 2002). Traditionally group work assessment is mostly based on students' final deliverables (i.e. outputs). However, if developing intercultural competencies is one of our objectives, we should include it as an intended learning outcome of the course and derive a way to assess the group's interaction process. Below are some aspects we can consider when assessing the process:

- **Trust and openness:** whether the group shows a trusting relationship and openness in discussing different perspectives and ideas
- **Conflict resolution:** whether the group actively embraces different perspectives and commits to resolving conflicts when they arise
- **Commitment:** whether group members are clear about the group goals and priorities and committed to these goals and priorities
- **Accountability:** whether group members keep one another accountable
- **Results:** whether group members stay focused on the team goals and maintain a high level of motivation along all times



Chapter 5: Case studies from HKU

Case 1: Structuring student-led Studio for intercultural and interdisciplinary learning

Introduction of the Studio learning

Studio is a unique learning environment in the Faculty of Architecture. Learning in Studio is often student-led in nature, with study contexts and materials designed as close to real-life scenarios as possible.

To mimic the workplace scenarios, students are asked to join randomly formed project groups in their first two years. As a result, students learn to work in a team with members from diverse backgrounds early on. The small group of 3 to 4 students is given a property development project to work on throughout the whole semester. Students meet on a weekly basis in the presence of the teacher in the Studio, and are presented with new materials related to the project week by week. The final deliverable expected from students is a team proposal on the property project.

What makes the project interesting is its authenticity. The project scenario is based on real property development projects in Hong Kong; and students are required to take up different roles (e.g. surveyors, lawyers, and government officials) and negotiate with one another. Each meeting has a specific agenda. For instance, in one meeting students focus on how to explain to people in the local community who might be affected by the development project, while in the next meeting on the type of development that is needed at the particular site. The learning process is structured in a way that students are scaffolded to learn a complete property development process.

TEACHER'S VOICE

“With help from our alumni, we are able to find a few completed projects. We rewrite the scenario based on the actual project information and use this story for the whole semester. We assign students to different roles.” (L. H. Li)

Within this structured learning process, students have to take a proactive and autonomous role in their learning journey. Being given an open-ended scenario along with some basic information, students have to reach consensus of how to proceed with sound rationales and proper assumptions. During the Studio session, the teacher sits back and listens actively to students' discussion among themselves, and at times raises a few questions to stimulate more in-depth discussions. The teacher only intervenes when the discussion goes off track too far. The facilitating role taken by the teacher helps create an open and collaborative learning environment.

STUDENT'S VOICE

“I really enjoy how the studio meeting is structured. We are able to voice our opinions and listen to others. We discuss in a way in order to foresee issues and resolve problems, based on the research we did before class and input from other teammates. I feel very honoured to be part of the studio group.” (An international student)

A summary of the key elements

Based on the feedback from the teacher and the students as well as the insights from the literature, we summarised a few elements that contribute to the effectiveness of the Studio learning in the aspect of enhancing intercultural interactions:

- **Meaningful learning tasks.** Students are given meaningful learning tasks and required to work with people from different backgrounds. The tasks demand sufficient interactions among groupmates over a period of two years, which leaves no excuse to stay away from working in groups.
- **Authentic learning experience.** From the grouping arrangement to the project materials and design, the Studio learning is as close as possible to students' future professional life of a surveyor. This motivates students to learn and make the best out of this context.
- **Space and structure.** The learning experience is structured (i.e. learning materials provided, weekly meetings arranged, milestones set, and assistance from the teacher made available), whereas the student teams have sufficient autonomy to drive their proposal direction. Such a balance between autonomous and structured learning allows students to inquire and explore while also develop essential knowledge and skills.

STUDENT'S VOICE

"I like that we meet on a weekly basis and can ask questions directly in the meeting. During our own research and preparation, we do come across questions and I appreciate the chance to bring them directly to the team or the facilitator, that we usually can have some directions." (A local student)

STUDENT'S VOICE

"All groups are given the same scenario but it turns out every group has a very different proposal. It relies much on our own research and development principle. It feels amazing to see that we submit very different proposals. It has our voices there." (A local student)

- **Assessment both on product and process.** Assessment is not only based on students' final proposal, but also on the quality of their feedback on peers' work and the group's interaction dynamics at the Studio meetings on a continuous basis throughout the semester.

Further work - Studio without Borders

This collaborative learning environment has been taken further by Dr. Li to create intercultural and interdisciplinary learning opportunities for students from Hong Kong and Mainland China. Students from the Real Estate Programme at HKU and students from the Faculty of Law were brought together to work on settlement projects, with the former bringing expertise in property development and the latter in legal advice. At the second phase of the project, students studying Construction Management from a Guangzhou university were also invited to work together on the feasibility of a property project in Guangzhou.

Students from Hong Kong and Guangzhou communicated via an online discussion platform on a weekly basis, which was monitored by the teacher. This further work has created multiple layers for students to interact with their peers from different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, each contributing their own professional knowledge and bringing unique perspectives to the project. It provides new possibilities for enhancing intercultural interactions. In particular, involving students and partners outside the university through virtual platforms can be beneficial.

TEACHER'S VOICE

“In this experiment, and to my surprise, students showed their eagerness to learn about international practices even the discussions did not form part of the assessment in their own course in our programme. Students from the three programmes showed immense interest in this collaboration. More interestingly, I noticed the cultural differences not just between HK and Mainland students, but also among different programmes. This has also been a learning curve for me as well.” (L. H. Li)

Acknowledgements

This case study draws on the insights obtained from an individual interview with Dr. Li (Faculty of Architecture), a group interview with three students in his Studio class, and observations of two Studio sessions. The presentation of the case and the relevant details have been validated by Dr. Li.

Case 2: Enhancing intercultural learning through professional critiques

For the journalism profession, the abilities to think critically and communicate in different cultural contexts are important (Blom and Davenport, 2012). We have learned from Mr. Kevin Sites (Faculty of Social Sciences) some useful strategies to embed the learning of critical thinking and intercultural competence in a 'Backpack Journalism' course. One key element is to use professional critiques, which means having students present their work in the class, critique their peer's work, receive critiques, and make use of them to improve their own work.

TEACHER'S VOICE

"Critique can be very challenging to some students. Some students don't like that at all. My students are like others students in HKU, high calibres, and most of them may have succeeded academically most of the time, and now I'm asking them to experience something differently, telling them they may not be successful at the same level. To their own personal confidence level, they can be shaken up a bit. In the US, that's considered normal but here in Hong Kong, some may consider it to be too direct."
(Kevin Sites)

Effective practices - Scaffolding the structure

It is noteworthy that giving critiques on peers' work is not always easy for students, especially those with certain cultural backgrounds, who may want to reserve 'face' for others by not giving criticisms openly. Therefore a structure to demonstrate how to professionally deliver critiques and learn from critiques given by others is needed. According to Kevin, a few steps could be taken:

- **Highlight 'taking critiques' early on.** The teacher created a class motto 'think on your feet and take the punch', preparing students to give and take critiques constructively in the class. It was emphasised that taking critiques was an indispensable process for students' growth.
- **Rethink about 'criticism'.** The teacher helped students see it as an opportunity to improve, expand perspectives, and develop skills and professionalism. He also lets students be aware that it is a chance to gain insights into how people from other cultures may perceive their work, and develop students' commitment, and that not all critiques need to be agreed on but it's always good to listen with an open mind.

TEACHER'S VOICE

"In my classes, we have a motto, a motto for our class - Think on your feet, find ways to be self-sufficient and solve the problems. Also take the punch, meaning when you are being critiqued, it's not personal. It's something to make you a better journalist. We want our students to be as good as they can in this competitive field." (Kevin Sites)

- **Provide peer feedback opportunities.** Opportunities for peer feedback were embedded in the 3-hour lecture. For instance, a 20-minute slot was allocated for students to share their assignments in one class session. All students had an equal chance to practice critiquing others and learning to be critiqued. Along the process, students developed their ability to not only make critiques, but also receive critiques to improve their own work.

- **Model professional criticism.** The teacher modeled how to deliver professional and constructive critiques in a candid and structured manner. Comments to students were well balanced between what were appreciated and what could be improved, and most of all, concrete solutions or new perspectives were also suggested (e.g. In what ways one approach is better than the other.) When it came to critical points, the teacher affirmed students' efforts before providing advice.

Reflection from students and the teacher :

All you need is trust, which has to be earned.

TEACHER'S VOICE

"I thought I had to gain their trust that I really wanted the best for them, trying to come here to be this hard person.... The practice of critiques is very good, as long as your students know you have their best interest. And you have to earn that. You can't expect it. You have to earn it" (Kevin Sites)

In the process of sculpting who the students could be at their best version by appreciating critiques, what comes to be fundamental is indeed the trust teachers earn from students through daily interactions. Kevin reflected that at times the new learning experiences that he brought to the classroom may not be readily embraced by everyone, as some feel they were challenged. What the teacher can do, as Kevin shared, is to **'try to make sure, to show, to convince that it's never personal even if it's not always comfortable'**. It takes time and consistent effort from the teacher to show to students that: it is for students' best interest and it is to prepare them to be a competent professional when they face the real world one day.

STUDENT'S VOICE

"You can't expect me to be so ready and open right away. It needs to have a process to talk about it, a context for us to talk about it, so we can be totally candid." (A student from Journalism)

The voices from both students and teachers illustrate that trust needs to be built and is essential for effective peer critiques. Making critiques openly on peers' work in class can cause more uncertainties and concerns with some students than others. However, all students, regardless of their background, need some support in providing critiques to their peers and making use of the critiques they receive. Both the modelling behaviours from the teacher and the building of a trusting atmosphere in the class are found to be helpful. Students need to be given time to observe and learn before they can take actions. It will also be helpful to make students aware that this whole learning process is for them to learn from one another and improve their work rather than trying to defeat others.

Acknowledgements

This case study draws on the insights obtained from an individual interview with Mr. Kevin Sites (Faculty of Social Sciences), a group interview with three students in his class, and observations of four class sessions. The presentation of the case and the relevant details have been validated by Kevin.

Case 3: Enhancing learning through systematic peer feedback and interaction

Effective feedback is an important part of the learning cycle to motivate students to constantly improve their performance and become more competent learners. Yet some teachers find it difficult to provide effective feedback as it often requires significant time and effort. We have learned about a dialectical feedback system which Puja Kapai from the Faculty of Law has designed for her courses, in which feedback greatly enhances student learning while the effort from the teacher remains at a reasonable level. Such a design is both effective and sustainable for the shared learning objectives and outcomes and helps with the co-creation of a safe learning environment, in which students are in charge of their own learning journeys and of contributing to each others' progress, providing motivation and encouragement along the way. This design is adopted both for the weekly seminar sessions but at a more basic level whereas a more sophisticated version of it is implemented for the purposes of the coursework development and continuous assessment. In addition, a student-led panel discussion is organised on a weekly basis to provide more opportunities for peer interaction and reflective engagement with the instructor in understanding and applying new knowledge.

Structuring peer feedback opportunities for individuals to improve

There are two key assessment components in her course of 'Multiculturalism and the Law': a research presentation and a final research essay. There is also a small percentage of the grade which is allotted to class participation. The three components of assessment are designed to mutually strengthen conditions for performance at a high level in the other assessment components.

The research presentation is not merely about the research itself; instead, it is structured with both, sufficient feedback and, learning opportunities. Students are asked to complete a draft of their research paper. Upon submission of the draft to the teacher, the personal identifiers of students are removed. The anonymous drafts are then circulated to other students by the instructor. Each student will receive two draft papers on different research topics completed by their fellow students and is required to provide feedback to their peers orally by presenting their comments on the papers at a symposium. Students then make their presentation by sharing their understanding of the two assigned papers as well as their feedback on these papers, providing their peers with encouragement, a first reaction to the quality and treatment of the topic in question, critiquing some of their arguments, offering counter-perspectives and in some instances, even references on helpful resources that would add value to their paper. Teachers assess students' performance based on the quality of their feedback to their peers on the substance of their submitted work.

TEACHER'S VOICE

"It allows students to engage in an in-depth manner with two other sets of papers that may have very different ideas from their own. Sometimes they may have in their mind that, we must support multiculturalism, or we must be responsive to a diversified society because that is the expected conclusion or learning anticipated from this course. However, by reading ideas presented in other papers, they are engaged in a reflective exercise which encourages them to rethink their approach to their own paper, to reshape their thinking, perhaps, to dig deeper into some of the arguments or to completely alter their perspective. I always tell my students that you are not in competition with your classmates. In fact, you are encouraged to help support each other in learning how societies can respond effectively to the challenges presented by multiculturalism and diversity in a fair and just manner. These are difficult questions that real nations and peoples are grappling with everyday. The more you engage in a substantive critique of your peer's arguments and to help push each other to excel by presenting more thorough and robust arguments, the more effectively you have fulfilled the expectation of this assessment component. The presentation is graded entirely on how effective their feedback to their colleagues is." (Puja Kapai)

The beauty of this practice is that each student has to engage with their peers' research topics in order to provide good feedback in the presentation. Students thus have an interest to know how others in the same class work on the same learning task and how they approach it differently. This not only fulfills their curiosity, but also helps them gain knowledge and skills by studying their peers' work, analysing the weakness and strengths, and thinking about how their own work can be improved. More importantly, such feedback process in the form of class presentations generates an interactive space for students to justify and negotiate meanings. Students are prompted to learn to give well-thought through arguments when delivering the feedback (Carless, 2015).

TEACHER'S VOICE

"Because it's collegial in nature, and its unanimity, there is a healthy honesty among students. They don't know whose papers they have been assigned to critique (unless they have shared among themselves the topics they are working on), so usually they are quite candid, (and give) some very helpful feedback. In recent years, there're increasingly more students sharing resources to lift other students' work up. They say, 'oh, I read the article by this philosopher, but you haven't mentioned him. I think you should really look at his work. It's going to support your case.' Very constructive feedback. (Puja Kapai)

As mentioned earlier, some teachers may struggle with giving feedback to students in a timely manner. By delegating the responsibility of giving feedback on a preliminary research draft to students enrolled in her course and therefore, with similar subject matter interest and level of experience, Puja ensures that each student receives preliminary feedback in a timely manner, based on which they can start improving their essay early on before it is due for final submission. Students have multiple opportunities to improve their research paper, firstly by reading the peer feedback, and then by receiving feedback from the teacher at a later stage. The process helps enhance the quality of the final papers submitted at the end of the course. This design is particularly useful in large classes in which giving timely and detailed teacher feedback can be demanding.

Organising student-led panel discussions

Apart from the above peer feedback process, Puja also creates a motivating, intercultural space for student exchange by organising student-led panel discussions. Students are asked to form their reading group and take turns to lead the weekly discussions pertaining to the assigned reading. The students in charge have the liberty to select which of the assigned readings they will prepare for presentation and discussion together with their co-panelists. Depending on the class size, each student may need to undertake this task for one or more weeks for the duration of the course.

Most students tend to tie the reading to their own research topic so that they can make use of the opportunity to enhance their research paper. During the panel discussion, they will share with the rest of the class what they have learned from the materials as well as their critiques or any outstanding questions they have. This practice helps motivate students to read their peers' work more carefully and provide constructive feedback. More importantly, students gradually see the process as a 'joint enterprise for knowledge building and sharing collectively' (Puja's words).

TEACHER'S VOICE

"When they know their (research) topics, they will naturally pick those reading materials that develop their research topics to enable them to make certain arguments. So it's really about taking responsibility of their own (learning) journey. (During the panel discussion), students provide enriching input to each other on what they got out of particular reading material and they find it mutually beneficial because they may not have read the material in the same light. It helps them learn (from peers) from other countries, and gives them inspirations from other examples that they would never know about, if they were not engaged in listening to their classmates' contributions." (Puja Kapai)

Acknowledgements

This case study draws on the insights obtained from an individual interview with Ms. Puja Kapai (Faculty of Law). The presentation of the case and the relevant details have been validated by Puja.

Case 4: Interdisciplinary and inclusive approach in science learning

Too often science is considered to be a neutral subject, apolitical and non-cultural, based on a fixed body of knowledge that has been proven over time (The National Association for Multicultural Education US, 2018). There has been a perception among certain people that implementing intercultural education in science is not necessary or even not applicable.

Contrary to this perception, a growing amount of science educational literature suggests that having an intercultural science education is important, relevant and doable. The purpose is not just to extend fruitful learning opportunities for students coming with various backgrounds, but also enable our students to become scientists or professionals that can thrive in the global era.

We observe some good practices from the science teaching team at HKU, specifically in adopting an interdisciplinary and inclusive approach in science learning.

Encourage interdisciplinary exchanges and address students' varied academic backgrounds

The teaching team puts a great emphasis on interdisciplinary learning in science education in order to address the emerging new demands of today's scientists. Scientists in the 21st century are expected to possess a very different set of qualities, as ones who understand a broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, ask critical questions, and analyse complex phenomenon with a wide array of tools.

In science classes, we observe the interdisciplinary nature of science is emphasised in many aspects, from the teaching materials, class activities to group assignments. The teachers encouraged students to draw upon knowledge and views from the fields of physics, chemistry, biology and social sciences to discuss complex issues facing mankind, for example, the use of green energy. The teaching team also purposefully incorporated interdisciplinary elements in the assessment rubrics in order to encourage students to think outside of their own disciplinary field.

TEACHER'S VOICE

“One key challenge we are facing for foundation courses is the background and preparation of our students, and it's getting increasingly diverse these years, especially their academic backgrounds.” (Jason Pun)

The educational reform that introduced HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) and abolished the streaming system in 2012 has resulted in a decline of students taking multiple science subjects in high school. Students enrolled in the science faculty in HKU hence may vary a lot in terms of their prior subject knowledge, meaning that not everyone has fundamental knowledge of different science branches. The teaching team sees the importance of giving students more equal access of mathematical and science fundamentals. Therefore, the team offers relevant introductory courses and creates incentives for students to enjoy more inclusive learning and interdisciplinary exchanges in class.

For instance, the teaching team gets students to reflect on their pre-existing ideas related to science principles in their own discipline so as to help them become able to identify bias in their or others' thoughts. This is to encourage students to better appreciate the value of interdisciplinary approaches in solving a problem.

Teachers also guide students to see the real-life applications of science and mathematics knowledge. For instance, how the mathematics assignments in ‘guesstimation’ was related to commercial operations, or being part of the recruitment interview questions in large corporations such as P&G (e.g. guesstimate the daily amount of nappies consumed in China market).

Appreciate the dynamic and tentative nature of science knowledge

Science education in some countries may tend to adopt a positivist view as if this is the only way to conceptualise how science is defined, practiced and valued (Durodoye, 2003). A multicultural approach, on the other hand, sees the subject knowledge as ‘a way of knowing’ framework - a cultural, dynamic and negotiated way of obtaining knowledge that is practiced by a particular community (Meyer & Crawford, 2011).

This usually relates to how the teacher handles the teaching materials on hand. In the lectures, the teacher engaged students in appreciating the dynamic and tentative nature of scientific knowledge and helped them see science in a negotiating manner. For instance, contrasting articles presenting arguments from prestigious journals on the same scientific issue were presented in class. With that, the teacher guided students to see the assumptions, procedures and logics, and even historical and social factors that led to the very different ‘scientific findings’. Science discovery per se was not presented as the ultimate truth or absolute facts in the teaching process, but rather a set of arguments, some of which could be sounder than the others. The teacher also urged students to read cutting-edge research studies and critically examine the theoretical paradigms and methodologies to form their own views.

When presenting the arguments, the teacher used a tentative tone to encourage students to challenge assumptions, trying to demonstrate the tentative nature of scientific knowledge, which could be subjective to change in light of new findings. Development of theories over time was also discussed as examples to show the tentative nature of science. Students were encouraged to see science as an evolving field to which they can also contribute or even pose challenges. When the teaching materials involved difficult concepts and arguments from different perspectives, the teacher also prepared students by drawing their attention: “Please bear with me as the following involves concepts that you may be unfamiliar with and arguments based on theories from different disciplines. Please follow closely.”

TEACHER'S VOICE

“We do see an enhanced dynamic in small group discussions for topics interconnecting science and the society when involving students from different cultural background.”
(Edmond Leung)

Acknowledgements

This case study draws on the insights obtained from individual interviews with Dr. Jason Pun, Dr. Edmond Leung and Dr. Eddy Lam (Faculty of Science) and observations of two lecture classes conducted by Dr. Jason Pun. The relevant details have been confirmed by the contributors.

Useful resources

Ten good practices identified in HKU

We have compiled a list of ten good practices for teachers who are interested in knowing more about how to facilitate an inclusive and culturally diverse classroom in university.

The ten good practices outlined below were derived from a Delphi Survey method. The project team firstly compiled 23 good practices that were identified in HKU and then invited a group of experienced educators from Architecture, Education, Law, Science, Social Sciences and the Common Core to review and evaluate these practices in two rounds. These educators reviewed the practices, made comments and revisions, and finally selected the most important practices in the HKU context.

*The **10** good practices are:*

- 1 Arouse students' curiosity by connecting the learning materials to their own cultural identities, experiences and assumptions.
- 2 Anticipate and mitigate emotional response, tension or conflict when approaching sensitive topics with class, and turn it into resources to enrich teaching when appropriate.
- 3 Prepare students to engage in intercultural interactions by respecting differences, and establishing ground rules, expectations and related learning goals.
- 4 Stay updated with current political and social issues locally and internationally, and provide opportunities for students to share their thoughts and perspectives with respect and openness.
- 5 Show willingness to be genuine to students, e.g. being open to share own cultural reflections and stories.
- 6 Incorporate intercultural elements in group project topics and structure the groups across cultural lines or encourage students to form culturally mixed groups, whichever is appropriate.
- 7 Make intercultural aspect an assessment criterion to incentivise students to work with peers from different backgrounds when appropriate to the class purposes.
- 8 Address offensive, discriminatory and insensitive comments in class, so students learn to own their responsibilities for potential consequences.
- 9 Convey the importance of tolerance, inter-cultural dialogues and respect for diversity in nurturing the quality of global citizenship in a world, where people are getting more closely interconnected.
- 10 Develop the capacity of critically reflecting on seemingly local or individual problems in broader systematic and cultural contexts.

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- Prof. Alice Wong, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Science

Guidelines from universities and institutions worldwide

In addition, we have also compiled a list of resources from a number of universities which have been dedicated in promoting cultural diversity and inclusive practices in their communities. We are inspired by many good practices they have shared when writing this guidebook:

Deakin University - Teaching and Learning

<https://www.deakin.edu.au/about-deakin/teaching-and-learning>

Flinders University Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice (CDIP) Toolkit

http://www.flinders.edu.au/equal-opportunity/cdip/cdip_toolkit/cdip_toolkit_home.cfm

Leask and Carroll (2013) Learning and Teaching across Cultures: Good Practices

<https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/397>

Harvard University – Inclusive Teaching

<https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/inclusive-teaching>

HKU Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning – Internationalisation of Teaching and Learning

<https://www.cetl.hku.hk/cop-itl/resource-library/briefings/>

Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD)

<http://owww.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslld/resources/index.html>

The University of Michigan, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching - Multicultural Teaching

<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching>

The UNSW Diversity Toolkit

<https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/diversity-toolkit>

The Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning - Inclusive Classes

<https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/ClassClimates>

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