

# TEACHING ACROSS CULTURES: Practical insights and tips

Developed and presented by  
Dr Fiona Swee-Lin Price



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2

## About the presenter





- ◆ International House
- ◆ CICD (Unimelb)
- ◆ Toorak College, Ivanhoe Grammar, MLC, PLC
- ◆ Monash College
- ◆ Adelaide Law School
- ◆ Melbourne Business School



3

1

## Commonly reported challenges

- ◆ Class participation
- ◆ Language barriers
- ◆ Unstructured assessment tasks
- ◆ Help-seeking
- ◆ Group work

## Outline of session

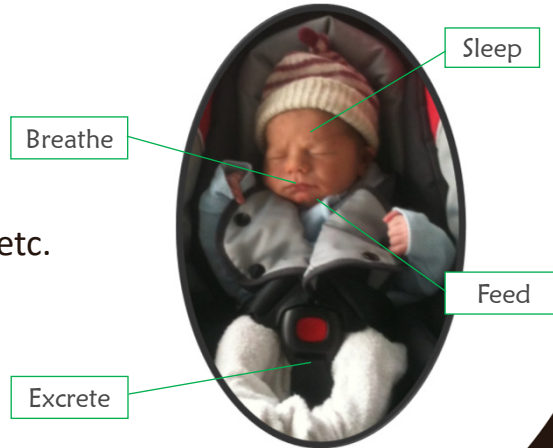
- ◆ Group discussion activity: The Good, the Bad and the Baffling
- ◆ Culture and cultural transition
  - Key differences in classroom culture
  - Educators and international students: Key stressors
- ◆ What educators can do:
  - Class participation
  - Language barriers
- ◆ Summary and Q&A

# What is culture?

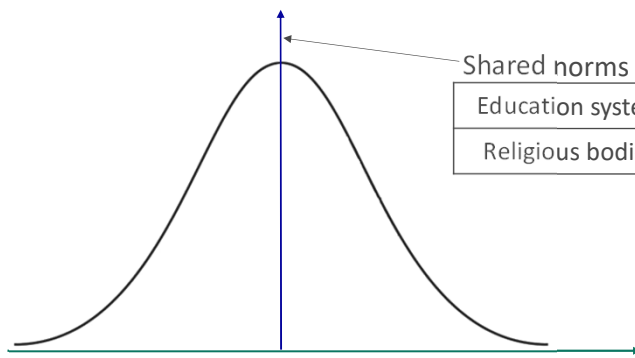
A newborn baby can:

...but has to LEARN:

- ◆ How and when to eat, excrete, sleep, etc.
- ◆ How to communicate
- ◆ How to read people's behaviour



# Culture and individual differences

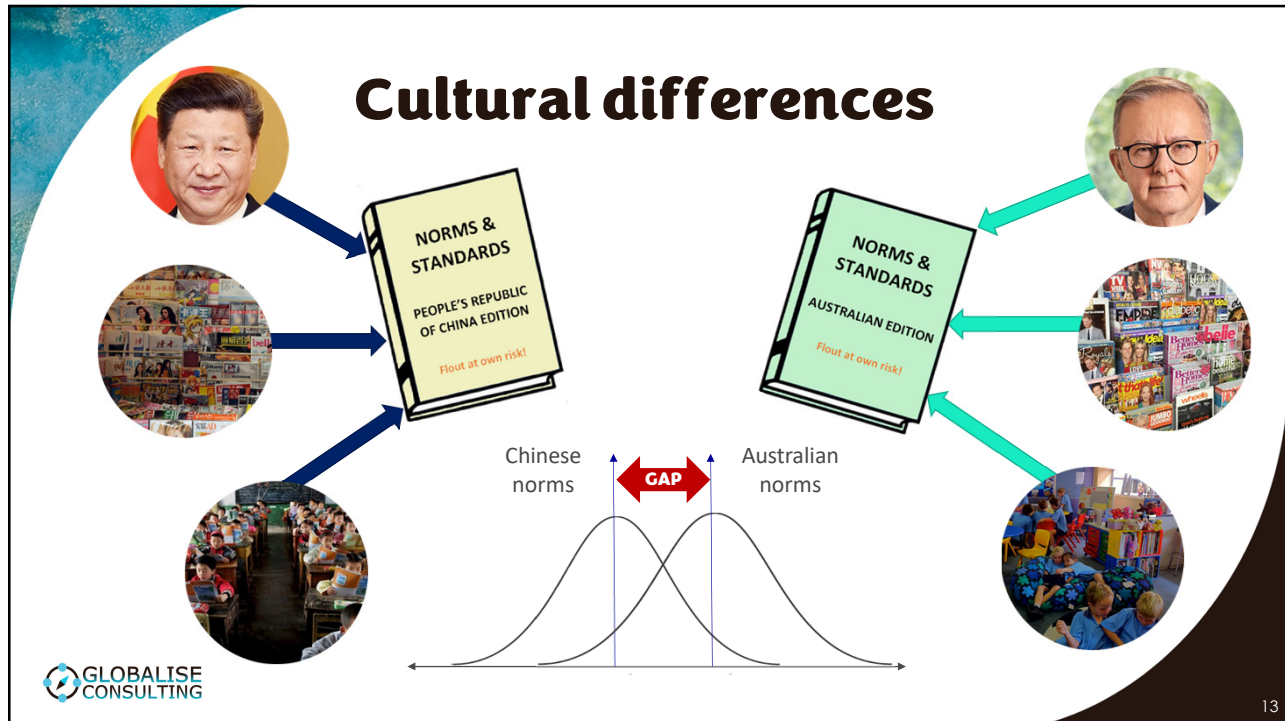


Shared norms & messages from (eg):

Education system	Government	Media
Religious bodies	Peers	Workplace


What individual people do, depending on their:

Age	Personality	Place of residence
Gender	Education level	Personal experiences
Ethnicity	Socio-economic status	Exposure to other cultures




13

### Personal trainer



- ◆ Two-way classroom
- ◆ Teacher facilitates/tests knowledge, retention, analysis, application, research, innovation
- ◆ Students volunteer input, seek help proactively, often in public
- ◆ Concept-centred learning
- ◆ Strive for personal best, teachers tailor to individual needs

### Tai Chi master

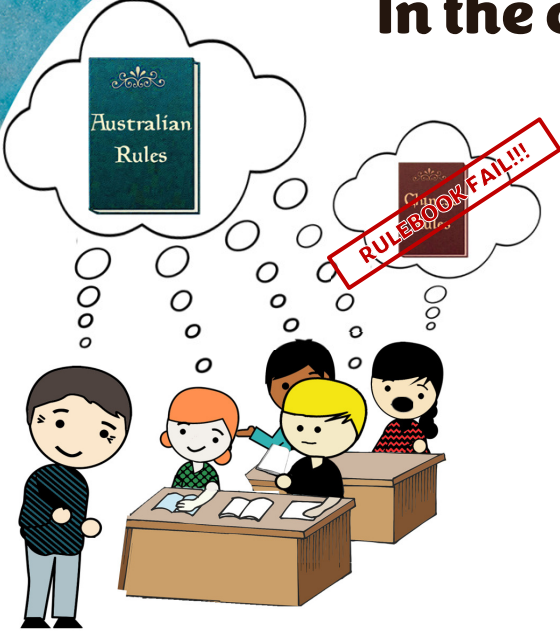


- ◆ One-way classroom
- ◆ Teacher transmits knowledge, tests absorption, retention
- ◆ Seek help outside class from teacher, peers, tutor, internet
- ◆ Model-based learning: watch, imitate, follow instructions
- ◆ Strive for flawless technique

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20

## In the classroom



International students draw on the rules they learnt at home about:

- ◆ How teachers and students should behave in class
- ◆ How assessment works
- ◆ Seeking academic support
- ◆ Engaging with other people

21


## Educator stresses

**Language**

- ◆ Listening
- ◆ Reading
- ◆ Speaking


**Education culture**

- ◆ Interactive learning
- ◆ Assessment style
- ◆ Priorities & motivations



**Support structures**

- ◆ Support for students: institution-based, other
- ◆ Support for staff: values-based, skills-based



22

## International student stressors

### Family brand

- ◆ Academic results
- ◆ English language skills
- ◆ Physical appearance



### Social order breaches

- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Teachers
- ◆ Other authorities

### Ambiguity around extrinsic goals

- ◆ How to achieve high marks
- ◆ Link between curricula and goals



23

## What can educators do?

Support international students with the transition to the Anglo-Western classroom culture by:

1. Reducing social risk
2. Reducing language stress
3. Providing more structure
4. Linking learning to extrinsic goals



24

24

6

## Class participation

Involves volunteering for high social risk behaviour:

- ◆ Often unsure of what's expected/appropriate
- ◆ Exposing English language skills
- ◆ Confessing to ignorance/confusion
- ◆ Giving answers, own ideas, opinions
- ◆ Critiquing authority figures

What would you do?

What do you think about this?

Is this clear for everyone?

Any questions?



## Class participation: What to do (1)

Communicate your expectations clearly, ideally:

- ◆ In writing as well as orally
- ◆ With a 'model' of what you expect (e.g. video demo, roleplay, flag and explain examples of good participation)

Reassure students about the impression they're giving, by

- ◆ Acknowledging early attempts at a new, challenging task
- ◆ Affirming what you want them to do, and why

## Class participation: What to do (2)

Reduce social stress by:

- ◆ Using structured small group activities to try out new skills
- ◆ Validating contributions before they give them publicly
- ◆ Building in preparation/practice time before they speak in class

Reduce ambiguity by:

- ◆ Starting with highly structured instructions
- ◆ Easing them in with convergent questions
- ◆ Connecting participation skills to extrinsic goals



27



**Dr Fiona Swee-Lin Price, Director**

**Facilitation, consulting and coaching on:**

- ◆ Teaching across cultures
- ◆ Cross-cultural communication
- ◆ Multicultural names

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39