Realizing the inclusive

INTER *national* *cultural* CLASSROOM

a professional learning community for higher education teachers

Cheryl Gerretsen & Edward van Os

Colophon

Cover picture: International hall of flags, LaGuardia Communicty College, New York.

Layout: Jill Smit

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“In our education we acknowledge the presence of differences. Our pedagogical and didactic approach is based on inclusiveness. Diversity is a given and we try to apply it as a strength. Excluding and stereotyping are discouraged; all students feel at home and we have high expectations for everyone. We offer all students equal opportunities and challenge them to perform at their highest level. We do so by tuning into their varying backgrounds, personal situations, ambitions, motives and talents.”

(From: Our agenda: Education in Rotterdam for the world of tomorrow.
Strategic Agenda of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences 2016-2020)

Table of contents

Preface 7

About the report 8

Chapter 1: Introduction 9
1.1 Inducement 9
1.2 Increasing diversity in the Netherlands and implications for student populations 9
1.3 The performance gap at RBS and teacher development as solution 11
1.4 Research aim and research questions 13

Chapter 2: Theoretical background and project and research design 14
2.1 Some theoretical background 14
2.1.1 The need for professional development on inclusive intercultural classroom teaching 18
2.1.2 The need for professional development to the reflective practitioner: action research and collaborative learning 19
2.2 Design and implementation of the PLC project, first round 19
2.2.1 Project preparations before the start of the academic year 19
2.2.2 Research assignment to individual PLC participants and overarching research by project coordinators 20
2.2.3 Set-up, boundary conditions and facilities for the academic year 2015-2016 20
2.3 Research methodology for the overarching research on the effectiveness of the professional learning community 21

Chapter 3: A selection of action research papers by PLC members 23
3.1 Creating a culture of error to achieve a higher sense of belonging: Interventions to increase study success in the TMA course Research skills 2 – Suzanne Fagel 24
3.2 Interventions to make cultural differences in third year project teams in higher education fruitful - Nebojsa Jovanov 24
3.3 Learning styles and inclusive pedagogy: Investigation of Chinese students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles at Rotterdam Business School – Linas Čepinskas 25
3.4 Eastern philosophy meets Western pedagogy: Increasing intrapersonal awareness in Asian language teachers – Fumiko Inoue 25
3.5 Conclusion 25

Chapter 4: Findings and conclusions 26
4.1 Participants' progress on inclusive intercultural classroom education aspects 28
4.2. Participants' progress in collaborative learning 29
4.3 Participants' progress on interventions and action research 31
4.4 Participants' influence on attaining inclusiveness in their environment 33
4.5 Closing remarks 34

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations 35
5.1 Answering the main research question 35
5.2 Recommendations for a potential second PLC 36
5.3 General recommendations for programme managers and programme teams to facilitate collaborative learning and to develop reflective practitioners 37
5.4 Closing remarks 38

References 39

Appendix I. Creating a culture of error to achieve a higher sense of belonging: Interventions to increase study success in the TMA course Research skills 2, by Suzanne Fagel 41

Appendix II. Interventions to make cultural differences in third year project teams in higher education fruitful, by Nebojsa Jovanov 56

Appendix III. Learning styles and inclusive pedagogy: Investigation of Chinese students' learning styles and lecturers' teaching styles at Rotterdam Business School, by Linas Čepinskas 65

Appendix IV. Eastern philosophy meets Western pedagogy: Increasing intrapersonal awareness in Asian language lecturers, by Fumiko Inoue 76

About the authors 94

Preface

As Research Lecturer and Educational Policy Advisor at a university of applied sciences ("hogeschool") in a highly diverse context in the Netherlands, we, Cheryl Gerretsen and Edward van Os respectively, found each other in wondering about how to improve the study environment. We asked ourselves how we could help reform education to better suit the rapidly changing student population. We were not only wondering, but also eager to do something about the so-called performance gap. To illustrate the problem: there is an immense and growing divide in performance between female students from ethnically Dutch and higher socioeconomic backgrounds with a havo (senior general secondary education) diploma on one end of the spectrum, and male students from lower socioeconomic, non-Western backgrounds who come from mbo (senior secondary vocational education) on the other end. It seems that the Dutch system of higher education is not keeping up with the societal changes of the 21st century!

In the academic year 2015-2016, we facilitated a Professional Learning Community (PLC) of originally twelve teachers, researching their own educational environment, attempting to improve their didactical and pedagogical skills and, therewith, move towards a more inclusive learning environment by implementing interventions and by collaborative learning. This research report describes the whole project and its outcomes.

The idea to come up with this project started in the spring of 2014. We both were given the opportunity to participate in the ECHO master class on Inclusive Excellence (IE). We asked ourselves if and in what way the principles of I.E. could be transferred to the Dutch higher education context and decided "to try this at home".

The PLC project has been made possible by Johan Sevenhuijsen, former staff director of the Education and Quality department, who facilitated several RUAS employees to participate in the ECHO master class[1], and the deans of Rotterdam Business School (RBS; part of RUAS[2]), represented by Mira Ruiken. The deans co-sponsored our participation in the master class and ensured that money, means and teachers were available for innovation. Thank you so much for trusting and supporting us!

This research report would not exist in its current form without the wonderful styling of Jill Smit, the excellent editing of Suzanne Fagel (on contents) and strict final editing of Esther van Oosten and Christophe Van Puymbroeck on English. Thank you very much for being there in hard times!

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Last but not least, we would like to thank all PLC participants for their personal stories and enthusiastic input and contributions: Linas Cepinskas, Suzanne Fagel, Harry Gorter, Helen de Haan, Fumiko Inoue, Nebojsa Jovanov, Katya Offringa, Iain Petty, Jessica Schiltmans, and Heleen Westerman.

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Cheryl Gerretsen
Edward van Os

1 More about this master class and ECHO in Chapter 1
2 RUAS: Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences; in Dutch: Hogeschool Rotterdam

About the report

This report is written in English because RBS is an international institute that uses English as working language. Although most teachers and staff are Dutch, many are not and most of these foreign colleagues prefer to speak and write in English. This also goes for some of the PLC participants.
Writing the report in English also makes it accessible to a larger audience. It obliges the project researchers to explain the used educational terminology.

- In the Netherlands, higher education consists of two different kinds of universities: tradition al research universities and professional universities. The latter are usually referred to as **Universities of Applied Science (UAS)**.
- At RBS, members of the teaching staff are officially called 'lecturers'. In this report, they will be referred to as **(UAS) teachers** because the writers believe that this title is more accurate; teaching is what these employees mostly do or should, not lecturing in the traditional sense of delivering one-sided lectures to large audiences.
- **Programme** is used for the four-year undergraduate programmes leading to the bachelor title or the one-year programme leading to the master title are meant and to avoid confusion with the term 'course' that at RBS is interchangeably used for the bachelor programme as well as a course module. At RBS, the term 'course' is used where the writers think **programme** is meant; they will use the latter.
- Subsequently, this report uses the term **programme manager** for the manager of the programme, as opposed to 'course director' as used at RBS.
- The same goes for 'course team'. This report will use **programme team** instead.
- The teachers that participated in de PLC are referred to as **(PLC) participants, teacher-researchers** and **PLC members**.

The structure of this report is as follows:

Chapter 1 explains the context of the PLC project followed by a brief description of the current situation in the field of higher education in the Netherlands from a historical and social perspective. From there, it focuses on the rapidly changing populations of the big cities and the student populations of the metropolitan universities. Subsequently, the chapter zooms in on RUAS and, in particular, on the situation at Rotterdam Business School. Chapter 1 concludes with a description of the PLC project: the research aims and research question.

Chapter 2 describes the PLC project and simultaneous research. After some theoretical background, a description is given of the assignment, design and implementation of the project. The chapter finishes with the research methodology for the overarching research on the effectiveness of the professional learning community as a means for professional development of UAS teachers.

Chapter 3 showcases some interventions executed by the teacher-researchers, all of whom wrote a research paper. Four of these papers can be found in the appendix of this report.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of findings, interpretations and results of the first four sub questions.

Chapter 5 contains the findings on the fifth sub question as well as the main research question, the conclusion and recommendations for a second PLC round as well as some general recommendations to management to better facilitate collaborative learning, inclusivity and development of reflective attitudes of their teaching staff. as well as some implications for a possible second round (PLC 2.0).

Appendix: four full research papers written by teacher-researchers are published in this section.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Inducement

In 2014, Cheryl and Edward were given the opportunity to participate in a master class on Inclusive Excellence, organized by ECHO[1]. This master class was inspiring and the concept of Inclusive Excellence (IE), which will be discussed in more detail in this report (in chapter 2), was introduced as a framework for making education more inclusive and more suitable for a diverse student population by using an inclusive pedagogical and didactical approach. A study tour to New York was included in this class. The aim was to visit universities and community colleges that already put into practice some important insights, ascribed to I.E., as developed by Dr. Frank Tuitt and colleagues.

Since then, Cheryl and Edward have taken several initiatives in their work environment to create awareness and to 'translate' I.E. to the vastly different Dutch context. Their biggest and most important intervention as yet is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which ten University of Applied Sciences (UAS) teachers carried out action research in their own environment during the academic year. This report is about the PLC project, the main topics being collaborative learning in a learning community, action research (as a tool for professional development of teachers and teams, developing teachers to become truly reflective practitioners that are capable of improving their teaching practice) and Inclusive Excellence as a framework to create a more inclusive learning environment.

Creating an inclusive, intercultural learning environment and doing this bottom-up is closely related to the newest policy of the university. In its Strategic Agenda (Onze agenda, 2016) and Vision on Education (Onderwijsvisie, 2016), RUAS states that its education must do justice to the wide variety of backgrounds of its students, providing them the means to emancipate. Students must be empowered to prepare themselves for a future that is expected to be globalized, dynamic and insecure. Autonomy, resilience and an exploratory, critical and enterprising attitude are vital ingredients. Course teams will have a preeminent role in realizing this. In fact, they could make better use of the diversity that is already present in their classes and that is still rapidly growing.

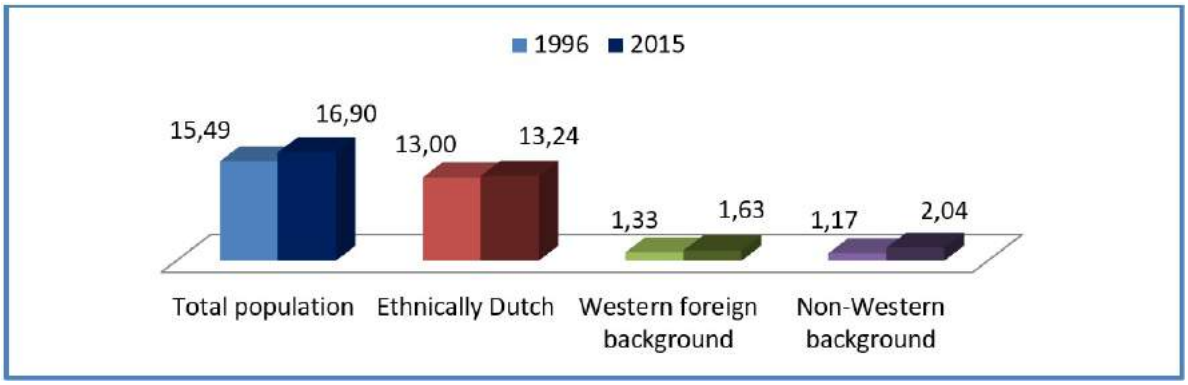
1 ECHO is a non-governmental organization, established in The Hague, the Netherlands. ECHO stimulates and subsidizes research on cultural diversity in Dutch higher education. More information can be found here: http://www.echo-net.nl/

1.2 Increasing diversity in the Netherlands and implications for student populations

In the last fifteen years, cultural diversity within *Randstad Holland*[2] has rapidly grown. Now or in the near future, the populations of The Netherland's three major cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, are or will consist of minorities only, leaving the ethnically Dutch group as majority minority. As a result of this, the student populations of universities in this region, including RUAS, will be increasingly diverse.

The fact that many children and grandchildren of mainly non-western migrant workers that have arrived in the Netherlands from the 1950's, as well as immigrants that came in more recently and for a variety of reasons, have found their way into higher education is, of course, good news. On the other hand, large numbers of these students tend to lag behind in terms of success rates, as will be illustrated in the next paragraph. One of the reasons seems to be that the (teaching) staff and organizations of Dutch universities did not manage

to keep pace with societal changes in terms of increasing cultural diversity, offering course programs that are, unintentionally, traditionally aimed at middle class students with Dutch backgrounds. Chapter 2 will go more deeply into this.



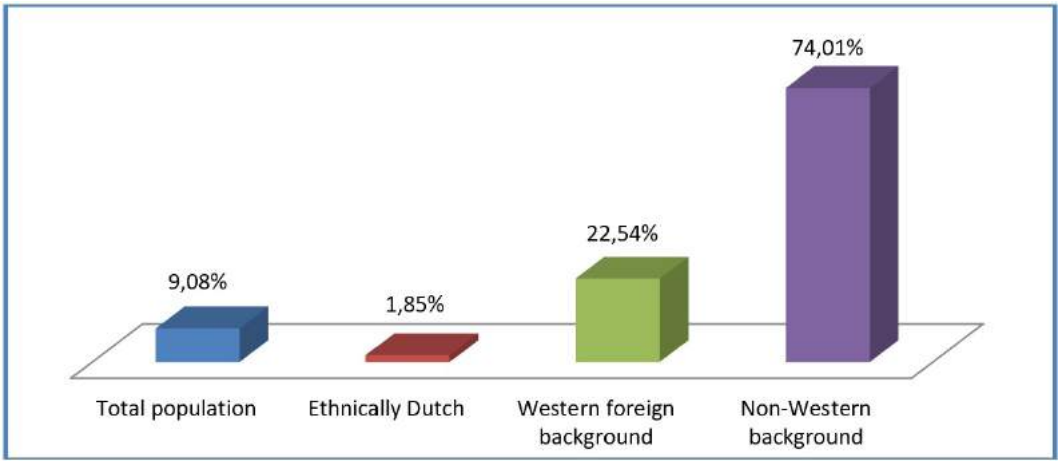
Graph 1.1: Increase in Dutch population 1996-2015 (numbers X 1,000,000), broken down into ethnicity[3]

Graph 1.1 shows some demographic data of the Netherlands in the period of 1996-2015. The total population has increased by 1.41 million people (+9.1%) in this time period. Only 240,000 of these new members were of ethnically Dutch backgrounds[4], while the 'non-western background' category has increased by no less than 870,000 people. The vast majority of people of foreign backgrounds live in or around Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague.

2 The Randstad area is the biggest urbanized region in the Netherlands; it is situated in the western part of the country (mostly in the part called Holland) and encompasses the four major cities of the country (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) and their satellites and suburbs, altogether forming a metropolis of approximately seven million inhabitants.

3 Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag / Heerlen, 4 July 2016

4 Please note that the category "ethnically Dutch" is already much more diverse than it sounds; it may also contain so-called third (and sometimes even fourth) generation immigrants, as well as people originating from, or having roots in, the former colony of the "Dutch East Indies" (now Indonesia), mostly of mixed (Asian and European) origin.



Graph 1.2: Increase in Dutch population 1996-2015 (in %), broken down into ethnicity[5]

Zooming out, graph 1.2 shows the same increase of population between 1996-2015, in percentages. This is a good visualization of how rapidly proportions are changing, especially in the aforementioned cities where most people of foreign backgrounds are concentrated.

What do these figures mean? To be more concrete: in a city like Rotterdam, diversity will show a fast further increase during the next ten to fifteen years. Today, already over 70% of young people are of non-Western background.

It must be mentioned that austerity measures taken by the Dutch government as a response to the economic crisis of 2012 affects students at UAS level in Randstad area in particular. Retrenchments in support structures for lower income families combined with a proportionally higher unemployment among families of students with non-Western backgrounds hit this specific group of students harder than others. Due to a stronger sense of family obligations that is often influenced by culture, as well as the omission of government-sponsored social support structures, causes these students to be called upon for financial or practical support in the home situation which goes at the expense of study time (In ‘t Veld, R., 2016, p. 19).

The inevitable conclusion must therefore be that to keep higher education accessible and attainable to a sizeable portion of the population it is imperative, not only for reasons of social justice, but also for economic competitiveness, that the Randstad region and especially its universities of applied sciences, adapt to this new situation and create study programs in which a bigger variety of students feels at home. A greater sense of belonging will allow more students to thrive, leaving a lesser amount of talent unexploited.

1.3 The performance gap at RBS and teacher development as solution

Several groups of international students at RBS show, on average, lower success rates. The same goes, for example, for male students, students of migrant backgrounds, socially and economically disadvantaged students and those that have mbo as prior education. The question is: how can we make excellence inclusive, using diversity as a strength?

Rotterdam Business School (RBS) is one of the departments of RUAS. It is the most diverse faculty of this university: its three bachelor and three master programmes attract students from the larger Rotterdam area and beyond, as well as from countries all over the world. The combination of dozens of different nationalities and domestic diversity[6] makes RBS without doubt the most intercultural diverse department of RUAS too.

5 Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag / Heerlen, 4 July 2016
6 Rotterdam houses a population of about 174 nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

The three bachelor programmes that RBS offers are financed through public resources. The programmes are International Business and Management Studies (IBMS), International Business and Languages (IBL) and Trade Management for Asia (TMA).[7] All programmes focus on international business, intercultural competence and, in relation to this, language education. Within these borders, IBMS focuses mainly on management related issues, while TMA and IBL pay more attention to intercultural competence and mastering more than one foreign language at a higher level next to English. At IBMS and IBL, languages like French, German, Dutch and Spanish are taught, while at TMA Japanese, Mandarin and Indonesian are the most important foreign languages one can specialize in. All programmes are taught in English, while TMA and IBL also still offer Dutch taught programmes. The latter option will be abolished from 2018.

Teaching staff at RBS is characterized by a higher diversity than elsewhere in RUAS, especially when one looks at the nationalities of the teachers and support staff. Still, the course teams do not by far reflect the student population in terms of nationalities, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, etc. This is not necessarily a problem, as long as teachers and course teams as a whole have excellent intercultural awareness and "readiness", reflected in their didactic and pedagogical competence and in the way they collaborate.[8]
The aforementioned two factors - highly diverse student population and international staff - make RBS a department with a lot of tacit knowledge, experience and intercultural awareness present, waiting to be explored and conceptualized. This makes RBS a good institute to lead the way to more inclusiveness and to show how the performance gap between ethnically Dutch students and others could be narrowed.

The current performance gap follows national trends and is illustrated below in tables 1.1 and 1.2, in which students of four-year full-time bachelor programs are compared.

	RUAS overall average (%)	EC[11] average (%)	EC males (%)	EC mbo [12] (%)	EC nwb [13] (%)	RBS average (%)	RBS: males (%)	RBS: mbo (%)	RBS: nwb (%)
First year certificate within 2 years (cohort 2013)	56%	54%	53%	45%	44%	58%	59%	50%	52%
Bachelor degree within 5 years (cohort 2009)	41%	36%	32%	31%	26%	35%	30%	18%	36%
Dropout after 5 years (cohort 2009)[14]	40%	40%	41%	48%	46%	44%	48%	55%	43%

Table 1.1. Output and dropout rates of full-time bachelor students of different backgrounds within Rotterdam University (source: "Cockpit Studierendement", Hogeschool Rotterdam, reference date: 13 April 2016). EC=Economic Courses

Table 1.1 illustrates that students in the business programs, on average, study longer and show higher dropout rates. Males, students with mbo as prior education and students of non-Western backgrounds appear to experience extra obstacles in this respect. As students mostly show a combination of characteristics, the combined effect is even more devastating as is clearly exemplified in table 1.2, that compares two extremes

7 In addition, RBS also offers three privately funded master programmes: Master in Logistics Management (MLM), Master in Finance and Accounting (MFA) and Master in Consultancy and Entrepreneurship (MCE).
8 If a course team mirrors the student population in these respects, it provides the students with a wide range of role models and examples they can identify with.
11 EC = (Faculty of) economic courses within RUAS. This faculty contains four departments, one of which is RBS.
12 Mbo = senior secondary vocational education (as prior education).
13 Nwb stands for non-western (ethnical / national) background. The official definition of this category is: students of whom one or both parents were born in a non-western country.
14 This percentage includes students that switched to other programmes within RUAS.
15 Havo: general secondary prior education.
16 This percentage includes students that switched to other programmes within RUAS.

	Economic Courses (EC) (%)	EC female + ethnically Dutch + havo[15] (%)	EC male + nwb + mbo (%)
First year certificate in 2 years (cohort 2013)	54	74	41
Bachelor degree in 5 years (cohort 2010)	33	55	14
Dropout after 5 years (cohort 2010)[16]	43	31	59

Table 1.2. Output and dropout rates of two specific 'groups' of full-time economic program bachelor students, Rotterdam University (source: "Cockpit Studierendement", Hogeschool Rotterdam, reference date: 13 April 2016)

Table 1.2 shows that male students of non-western backgrounds and with senior secondary vocational prior education (mbo) of cohort 2013 had a 56% lower chance to obtain their first year certificate within two years, than female students with ethnically Dutch backgrounds and senior general secondary prior education (havo). The same male group of cohort 2010 showed almost double dropout rates after 5 years compared to the females and an almost four times lesser chance to obtain their bachelor degrees in 5 years.

In the United States, the challenge of students of different ethnic, socioeconomic etc. backgrounds resulting in a performance gap in higher education has been recognized for decades and a lot of research has been done on this. Chapter 2 will further examine the situation in the Netherlands, where awareness about inequity in higher education is relatively new. For now, the conclusion is that the PLC project was designed to investigate in how the American findings could be applicable in the Netherlands, using action research as a methodological and practical tool and making sure that teachers can do their research in a safe, collaborative learning environment, just like RBS wants to offer its students. This research aims to produce interventions that are meant to improve the teaching environments of the teachers, making them more inclusive.

1.4 Research aim and research questions

As stated above, this research project aims to examine to what extent a professional learning community of teachers, using action research, can facilitate the creation of a more inclusive learning environment, applying insights of the US-based Inclusive Excellence framework that aims to promote inclusiveness in higher education. This leads to the following research question.

How can collaborative learning on action research and Inclusive Excellence in a professional learning community facilitate individual RBS teachers to generate adequate interventions to attain inclusiveness in the intercultural, international RBS student population?

The PLC project is limited to the three full-time four-year bachelor programs of RBS. The research question is broken down into five sub-questions, of which the first four refer to the progress the participating teachers will have made after being part of the PLC for a full year. In fact, two parallel research projects are ongoing in this project: that of teachers doing action research in a PLC, and that of Cheryl and Edward, researching and evaluating the PLC project itself, as a means to support professional development of teachers and course teams; the fifth sub-question particularly refers to the latter.

1. to what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of inclusive intercultural classroom education?
2. to what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of collaborative learning?
3. to what extent have participating teachers come up with effective interventions in their own context, using action research?
4. to what extent and how have participating teachers been able to influence their environments[9] to attain more inclusiveness?

9'Their environments' refers to their own teaching practice and/or that of their colleagues.

Chapter 2: Theoretical background and project and research design

The relatively new but complex challenge of an increasingly diverse student population, combined with high dropout rates, inequalities and inequities between different groups of students that universities of applied sciences (UAS) currently face, requires an innovative approach. An approach that makes an all-out effort to make improvements in the teaching and learning itself. RBS chose to address this challenge by making its UAS teachers the starting point. A group of teachers was selected to work in a professional learning community in which they collaborated on designing, implementing and researching interventions to attain inclusion.
The following sections explain the reasons for these choices through a brief exploration of relevant theoretical concepts (section 2.1), followed by a description of the project itself (section 2.2) and lastly, the methodology of the research that was performed simultaneously to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of this staff development project (section 2.3).

2.1 Some theoretical background

In this project choices were made for: the subject matter (inclusive international classroom, 2.1.1) and the method by which professional development should be attained (action research projects within a practical learning community, 2.1.2).

2.1.1 The need for professional development on inclusive intercultural classroom teaching

In the last eight years Dutch UAS in the Randstad area have taken a number of specific measures to improve performance of students. The selected measures were mostly aimed at supporting structures outside of the classroom, e.g. remedial teaching, tutor groups for specific ethnic groups and summer schools for student groups that were underperforming. For the large part, the results of these measures were disappointing. The measures taken were almost all generic, meaning that they were aimed at increasing performance of the student population as a whole without distinguishing between groups of students. The result of this was, that the groups that benefited most from the generic measures was the group that was already performing relatively well, whereas the gap with the students of non-Western backgrounds specifically, even widened. It is therefore recommended, to focus on measures specifically

aimed at making education truly inclusive by working on the teaching and learning processes in the classroom itself (Zijlstra et al, 2013, p.205-218).

Since it is the UAS teachers who are in charge of what happens inside the classroom and how the learning processes of students are facilitated, professional development of teachers in this area is the crucial first step. In their essay 'Kwaliteit in de klas' (2015, p. 20-22) Bormans, Bajwa, Van Braam and Dekker build a strong case, based on the work of renowned international and national scholars such as Hattie, Tinto, Thomas and Severiens, arguing how UAS teachers can make a difference in creating equal opportunities for students while keeping high standards. Among the key factors are a sense of belonging in all students via the relationship or connection that teachers have with each of them.

Rapidly changing cultural composition of the student population
UAS teachers, however, face a rapidly changing educational context. As explained in the previous chapter, the cultural diversity at the institutes of higher education is growing due to the increasing influx of Dutch students with non-Dutch backgrounds (domestic diversity), as well as international students who come to Dutch UAS to earn a Dutch degree (international diversity). This causes a situation in which UAS teachers, often literally, come from different worlds than their students, which in turn results in differences in perceptions and perspectives. These differences in perspectives make it challenging to truly recognise and understand one another.

Complexity teaching international diversity
Differences in perspective are most evident when Dutch UAS educators teach an internationally diverse student population, since both teachers and students come from different national educational traditions that often do not match with Dutch education and therefore bring more complexity to the classroom. The fact that the teaching staff in many international business schools also are internationally diverse, even adds to the complexity. Every teacher brings a different national perspective to the classroom. This situation requires something extra from teaching staff: they "need to reverse the lens (and practice what they preach to their students about internationalisation) by examining their own thinking and practice and viewing international learning as an enterprise that occurs not within a single system of cultural academic practice but as an endeavour between civilisations and intellectual traditions (Ryan, 2013, p. 2).

Complexity teaching domestic diversity: different socio-economic and cultural contexts
More tacit, but not less powerful, are the great differences between teaching staff and Dutch students with non-Dutch backgrounds. An increasing amount of students with non-Dutch backgrounds enter into higher education. In this case too, teaching staff come from a 'different world' compared to the domestically diverse student population. This is particularly true for higher education institutes in the urban area of Randstad.

Machteld de Jong (2014) published an important work on this, *Diversiteit in het hoger onderwijs: over allochtoon en autochtoon,* in which she describes how UAS teachers and Dutch students with non-Western backgrounds often do not recognise and understand each other, coming from socioeconomically, geographically and culturally different worlds. Her research has shown, from the part of the teacher, feelings of unease, and incorrect estimations of students' capabilities, specifically with male students of non-western backgrounds and Muslim students (De Jong, 2014, p. 25). This becomes even more apparent in case of societal tensions on topics with an international or racial angle in which there may be vastly different opinions between groups of students or teachers, as seen recently in the Netherlands, e.g. around terrorist attacks, the blackfaced 'Black Pete' character of the Sinterklaas festival, or the influx of refugees from Syria. Research by Taouanza and Ten Cate (2017, p. 6) indicates that UAS teachers feel ill-equipped and undersupported dealing with classroom tensions resulting from these social issues.

Dutch university teachers tend to live outside of, or in the wealthier areas of the cities in which they teach and were mostly born into middle class Dutch cultural backgrounds. Many of them were raised in different

places in the country and in different types of neighbourhoods than the domestically diverse student population. The latter were often born and raised in poorer neighbourhoods of one of the four big cities in which contacts with peers from Dutch backgrounds were not very common.

Often these students went to primary, secondary and tertiary education (senior secondary vocational education: mbo) in the Randstad cities, prior to entering the university of applied sciences, where most peers also had non-Dutch backgrounds. Their entry into universities of applied sciences is often their first experience being in an institution with a large group of students and lecturers with Dutch backgrounds (De Jong, 2014, p. 25-31).

Moreover, many of these students took a different educational pathway than students of Dutch backgrounds and their university teachers. Their talents and capabilities often went unrecognized at the moment of selection for secondary education, leading them to not be preselected at age 12 for an academic educational path (havo, wo), but rather for the lower, vocational types of secondary education (vmbo). This, in turn, leads to knowledge, skills and attitudes that do not make an ideal preparation for higher education and a lot of built-up frustrations from the part of these students.

Meerman and Van Middelkoop (2014, p. 51-61) found that many UAS teachers are unaware of the differences mentioned in the previous paragraphs and the different start positions and unequal opportunities resulting thereof, between groups of students. And even those who are aware, often do not know how to address these differences.

Through a series of in-depth interviews Poulussen and Roseval (2016, p. 24-25) showed how the above-mentioned psychological needs of a sense of belonging of students, specifically those with mbo and mostly non-Western backgrounds, as well as the need to feel recognised by their UAS teachers, are important to students at RUAS.

Adding to the complexity is the growing diversity within the ethnic-culturally diverse groups itself, the so-called superdiversity. Especially in the four larger Randstad cities, where the ethnically Dutch group is or will soon become the majority minority, there is a growing variety in national origins and motives for migration of migrants. Unlike 30 years ago, when migrants came to the Netherlands from a limited number of countries, for reasons of colonial history or low-wage labour, nowadays migrants can come from a much larger variety of countries for different reasons and bringing even more socioeconomic, religious, linguistic and cultural pluriformity. Furthermore, ethnic groups that have been in the Netherlands for decades now show more socioeconomic variety with children of low wage labourers, some of whom have degrees and high status positions (Crul, Schneider and Lely, 2013; Geldof, 2013).

Role-modelling intercultural competence as indispensable quality for the diverse and globalised future professional

Professional development for teaching in the higher education intercultural classroom is not only important to enhance performance of the increasingly diverse student population. It is also essential because UAS must prepare students for the increasingly diverse and globalising work field. Graduates must be interculturally competent in order to be effective in society in general and in the work field in particular. The diverse higher education classroom provides a great learning opportunity for students as well as teachers to develop in this area. This implies that UAS teachers, regardless of their subject area, must acquire pedagogical and didactical knowledge and skills to facilitate a learning environment in which students can develop their intercultural skills and can learn from one another's cultural backgrounds. It does not suffice to only offer special classes on culture and diversity.

All of this requires more complex knowledge and skills from the teachers who must not only be competent in the field of their subject area and in pedagogy and didactics in general, but also specifically in this intercultural context in which they are role models for intercultural behaviour. If it is their task, and this is

specifically the case for international business courses such as in the present project, to prepare students for the international business world, they must practice what they preach (Van der Poel, 2015, p. 97).

Inclusive Excellence as approach for inclusion
As described in chapter 1, the intercultural classroom is a relatively new phenomenon in Dutch higher education. The United States of America is decades ahead in this respect, especially at universities in big cities in the coastal states such as Los Angeles and New York. Expertise has been developed at these universities on approaches for higher education classroom diversity and how to reach equity among diverse student groups, although also in the US, research on inclusive classroom practices in higher education is relatively limited compared to that in primary and secondary education (Del Carmen Salazar, Stone Norton, Tuitt, 2010, p. 209).

For the PLC project, the US-based Inclusive Excellence framework was selected as suitable approach. This framework intends to help institutes of higher education integrate diversity and quality issues. It establishes a comprehensive set of systemic actions that focus specifically on fostering greater diversity, equity, inclusion with diversity as a necessary condition to attain excellence.

The chosen pedagogical content relies for the most part on the pedagogical approach as described by Del Carmen Salazar, Stone Norton and Tuitt (2010) in their article *Weaving promising practices for inclusive excellence into the higher education classroom*. In this article the authors propose a set of inclusive practices and methods to promote inclusive excellence, along five dimensions: (1) intrapersonal awareness, (2) interpersonal awareness, (3) curricular transformation, (4) inclusive pedagogy, and (5) inclusive learning environments. For better understanding of the pedagogical content of the project these five dimensions are described below. For a more detailed explanation, it is recommended to read the full article.

(1) intrapersonal awareness
Personal awareness of one's own worldview is essential when teaching people different from ourselves. Critical self-reflexivity on one's ideas, assumptions, values as well as knowledge of other cultures is needed to be effective in a multicultural classroom in order to make connections to students and to decrease the risk that teachers impose their bias on ethnically different students. This requires that teaching staff continuously examine their own ideas and share their backgrounds with students. Furthermore, inclusive teachers reflect on how their pedagogies may privilege majority and minority students and who are included and excluded by their teaching.

(2) interpersonal awareness
The interpersonal awareness dimension addresses the awareness needed for effective classroom dialogue with and between students. The teacher must create an atmosphere in the classroom that creates opportunities to foster multiple perspectives, have students share their cultural experiences, validate them and build relationships with their students. Strategies include having the groups set their group norms, and facilitating group work. The authors plead for fostering academic disagreement, rather than minimising conflict, to allow for 'more ideas to enter the sphere of learning'.

(3) curricular transformation
This third dimension refers to the activity of changing the content of teaching materials to better reflect multiple perspectives, using culturally accurate course syllabi, teaching examples, text books and tools and reviewing them for stereotyping, inaccurate generalizations, and historical omissions. 'They also recognize students' personal experiences as worthy knowledge'.

(4) inclusive pedagogy
Inclusive pedagogy positions teachers and students as 'co-constructors of knowledge'. It uses teaching methods to 'enhance engagement, motivation and learning of historically marginalized groups'. Assignments and activities may include large and small group discussions, journal writing, portfolios,

experiential learning activities, sharing personal stories, and moving away from teacher-centred to more student-centred teaching.

(5) inclusive learning environment
This dimension stresses the importance of fostering a safe learning environment, in which everybody believes they can contribute to the discourse and all perspectives are welcome and the students' voice is heard. This can be achieved, for instance, by demonstrating pride in student achievement, pronouncing students' names correctly, demonstrating a caring attitude both inside and outside of the classroom.

2.1.2 The need for professional development to the reflective practitioner: action research and collaborative learning

Reflective practitioner
Higher education faces continuously changing circumstances in society, which demands that it adapts to these circumstances to guarantee the delivery of quality graduates. This makes it crucial that the UAS teacher is a reflective practitioner, who intentionally and systematically reflects on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön, 1983), to be able to address the challenges of the current times, in which traditional methods often are inadequate. That 'old' methods cannot do the trick certainly holds true for the teaching of the diverse student population as is evidenced by, for instance, the performance gap between the diverse student groups as explained in the previous sections. Since there are no ready-made solutions for dealing with the new phenomenon of the intercultural classroom in Dutch higher education, new ways must be invented by the teachers themselves. This requires their willingness, attitude, ability and skills to experiment in, critically reflect on and further develop their own professional practice.

Action research for improving teaching practice in the intercultural classroom
For this project the project coordinators-researchers chose to have the participating teachers develop their reflective and research-focused attitudes through having them devise an intervention and conduct action research in their professional context. Action research is a type of social research that aims to seek solutions to practical issues in order to come to social change and is therefore suitable for the issue at hand. Ponte (2010, p. 545) describes action research as instrument appropriate for professional development of teachers: "(….) teachers who do action research have reported improvements in pupils attitudes, involvement in classroom activities, the analysis of students' work samples, and teacher-designed assessments" (Ponte, 2010, p. 545).

In action research, reflection is crucial and furthermore "Reflective thinking requires the continual evaluation of beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses against existing data and against other plausible interpretations of data. The knowledge that teachers construct in this way helps to change their teaching." (Ponte, 2010, p. 542). This characteristic of continuous evaluation of beliefs and assumptions goes very well with the necessity for continuous critical self-reflection of beliefs, assumptions and existing knowledge that is crucial to successful interaction in an intercultural context such as the intercultural classroom.

Furthermore, "Teachers become more learner-centred by talking and listening to their students more carefully and they develop higher expectations of what their students know and can do" (Ponte, 2010, p. 545). Precisely these aspects of becoming more learner-centred, critical self-reflection on own beliefs and assumptions, and setting high expectations, are important for teaching diverse classrooms as argued in the paragraph on the five dimensions of Inclusive Excellence.

Characteristics of action research for teachers
There are numerous definitions of what action research means. In the Dutch field of education, Petra Ponte is one of the highly esteemed experts on action research for teachers. In her article 'Action research as a tool for teachers' professional development' (2010, p. 541), Ponte refers to Carr and Kemmis' (1986/1997) definition of action research: "Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices,

their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out". According to Ponte there are five characteristics of action research (2010, p. 541): "1. It is carried out by the teachers themselves, 2. Teachers engage in reflection and change and in doing so they collect data on their students and their own teaching practice, 3. Dialogue and collaboration with colleagues and others, 4. Those who are part of the situation that needs to be changed (e.g. students) are seen as partners in the research, 5. The results are published and are open to criticism by the larger community". The current project was designed to meet all five of these characteristics.

Professional development by means of a Professional Learning Community
Chapter 1 as well as the argumentation in the preceding sections have made clear that the teachers of Rotterdam Business School specifically, should develop their competences in the field of both action research and teaching the higher education intercultural student population. Workshops or classes on these themes do not usually generate a profound effect. More lasting effects are reached through collaboration in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLC's "(…) can connect individual learning to collective learning. This way, general objectives of the educational institute can lead to concrete activities and products, while at the same time improving the educational quality. By participating, the members of such a community can develop their reflective, research-focused and professional skills" (Schaap, Van Vlokhoven, Swierts e.a. 2011).

Close collaboration of professionals in a community offers many benefits over brief one-shot courses, such as easy sharing of tacit experiential knowledge that is already in the participants and room for experiment.

Based on studies by Zeichner (2007) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1998), Ponte (2010, p. 545) listed several conditions to facilitate effective collaborative learning through action research, which were the starting point for the development of the PLC. Among the most important conditions are: small groups, regular meeting times, a thematic concern, a timeline for the action research cycle, supportive work-in-progress discussions, working with 'critical friends', reporting progress also outside of the PLC, control of participating teachers over the research process, including defining a research focus, data collection, analysis strategies and a work culture that respects different opinions.

Probst and Borzillo (2008, p. 335-347) formulated factors for success and failure for an intra-organizational collaboration form quite similar to the PLC, based on a large study of communities: the communities of practice. Among success factors were clear strategic objectives, regular feed with external expertise, overcome hierarchy-related pressures, while among the fail factors were low level of one-to-one interaction between members, rigidity of competences, lack of identification with the community and practice intangibility.

2.2 Design and implementation of the PLC project, first round

The broad outlines of the project were that twelve UAS teachers of different RBS programmes were asked to collaborate for the duration of one academic year (2015–2016) in a professional learning community. Below you will find a description of the project set-up as well as the implementation of it. In the design phase of the project success and fail factors for action research and collaborative communities were taken into account.

2.2.1 Project preparations before the start of the academic year

From March to July 2015 the two project coordinators worked on preparations for the project. Deans and management were persuaded of the necessity of professional development of teaching staff on this issue, funding for the project was allocated from an internal fund for the promotion of educational innovation of RUAS, acquisition and selection of participating teachers was carried out, an initial training programme for the first block of the new academic year was set-up, experts from inside as well as outside of the RUAS were hired.

RBS teachers were selected through a process of application forms and interviews, on personal qualities as well as criteria for the ideal composition of the community. Criteria for individual qualities were: commitment to the project, motivation for the topic of inclusive teaching, availability during the whole school year, ability and network required to initiate change. Criteria for the community composition were: equal representation of candidates over the three bachelor programmes of RBS, equal representation of expertise, gender, experience and national backgrounds. Course managers allotted time to participating candidates. The selection process resulted in a group of twelve participants, of which one dropped out shortly before the start of the project for reasons of last-minute unavailability and one at the end of the first block due to illness. The ten remaining participants formed a diverse group of people: 4 male teachers, 6 female teachers, ages thirties to fifties, 4 Dutch nationals, 1 Chinese, 1 Japanese, 1 Russian, 1 Macedonian, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Brit. Fields of expertise of those participating ranged from marketing to cross cultural management, languages, communication, research skills and project management. Despite efforts to recruit more teachers of economic and financial subjects, the marketing teacher was the only one with that type of background to apply.

2.2.2 Research assignment to individual PLC participants and overarching research by project coordinators

The assignment given to each participant was to design an intervention to attain inclusiveness in their own professional context. Each participant was expected to implement the intervention, conduct action research on its effectiveness and to produce a research paper at the end of the academic year. Furthermore, participants were asked to create an effective practical learning community for their own professional development on the theme of inclusivity in the intercultural classroom and action research.

Simultaneously, research was conducted by the two project coordinators on the effects of this method for professional development of participants in the areas of inclusive, intercultural education, collaborative learning, and reflective action research interventions. The participants' papers on the interventions, combined with the overarching research on the community in the end had to result in a publication.

2.2.3 Set-up, boundary conditions and facilities for the academic year 2015-2016

Set-up and intentions

The academic year comprises four blocks of mostly 10 weeks. Teachers were awarded four hours per week for participation in the project. The project was scheduled to kick-off at the start of the academic year.

The first block was planned for introductions of participants, setting the right conditions for teambuilding, training on concepts relating to pedagogy and diversity around the concept of Inclusive Excellence and reading and reflection assignments, and around action research. All of these activities were to be organised by the project coordinators. The first block was also to be used for the design of the individual interventions.

From the second block onwards participants were to carry out their individual interventions and simultaneous action research activities. The initiative for the community activities were to be transferred from the project coordinators to the teachers, where the teachers would start their process of collaborative learning: working as (sparring) partners in the learning process about inclusive classroom teaching, as well as the implementation of their respective action researches, making use of each other's expertise. At the end of the academic year teachers were to deliver their individual research papers.
The overarching research of the two project coordinators was to be finished in January 2017, resulting in a publication, including the research papers of participants.

Implementation of the first block

In the second week of the academic year, the project was kicked-off. Bi-weekly group sessions were held which were partly facilitated by the project coordinators, and for the larger part by external experts on mainly the following themes: quantitative data on mechanisms of inequalities in higher education, research and measures to combat these inequalities, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in higher education

(e.g. stereotype threat, stereotyping, micro-aggression, tokenism, Pygmalion effect, ethnocentrism, fixed vs. growth mind-set), inclusive pedagogy vs the banking concept (Freire, 2005), the Inclusive Excellence framework and action research. Some sessions were followed by reading and critical reflection assignments on the topics addressed. At the end of the block participants started their thinking and designing of suitable interventions for their context.

Implementation of blocks 2, 3, 4
Whereas the first block served to quickly make participants acquainted with the subject matter, and for individual participants to determine their positions as professionals operating in this complex pedagogic environment, the set-up from the second block onwards was vastly different. From this moment on, the project coordinators attempted to monitor the project at the background, while the participants were expected to function as self-steering professional community. Self-organised sessions took place, mostly biweekly, facilitated by the participating teachers themselves. Apart from sparring sessions on the design and implementation of interventions and progress of the respective research projects of the participants, participants also brought in special topics of interest to spar about. Topics included: the Harvard Implicit Association Test on race, room for failure in education, application of principles of positive psychology in education, mind bugs (stereotypes we have about the world that influence our behaviour), inclusive pedagogy vs. the banking concept. In weeks between group sessions participants worked individually and in subgroups on their research: gathering literature, gathering data, reviewing. Occasionally informal group outings were organised for teambuilding purposes. Communication between members was done either face to face outside of and in the group sessions, as well as per email and via a Facebook platform, which was installed especially for information sharing purposes.

By the end of the fourth block only one (draft) research paper was handed in. The remaining papers were delivered in a trickle during the first eight weeks after the summer holiday, when the project had already officially ended.

2.3 Research methodology for the overarching research on the effectiveness of the professional learning community

In the light of the overarching research question of the PLC project as can be found in chapter 1.4, the methodology of this research on the effectiveness of the PLC as means for professional development of the RBS teachers will be explained below.

Nature of the research: action research
Simultaneous to the preparations for and the implementation of the professional learning community, the two project coordinators have collected qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the functioning, performance and output of it. The fact that the two project coordinators were not only researchers, but also closely involved in the implementation of the project, qualifies this research as a type of action research. A total number of four student research assistants supported in carrying out more practical tasks such as transcription of interviews and translation of project materials.
In order to come to an efficient set-up and structure of the project, relevant content for training sessions, and valid conclusions of the overarching research a literature study was performed.

Data collection
Before the start of the learning community, as well as during and after, data have been collected according to the following grid:

Time	Qualitative	Quantitative
Before implementation of PLC	• Intake forms • Semi-structured intake interviews	Intercultural Readiness Check
During implementation of PLC	• Reflection assignments block 1 • Non-participant and participant observation of group sessions and other, informal, interactions (reported in research logbook) • Intermediary surveys on participants' perception of the project (December 2015, April 2016), with a combination of open and closed questions • Information exchange of information via the Facebook platform	
After closing of PLC	• Semi-structured exit interviews • Participants' research papers • Review of overall analysis by the PLC participants	Intercultural Readiness Check

To evaluate the progress participants had made in the areas of intercultural aspects and collaborative learning in an international group, a quantitative baseline measurement and an exit measurement were conducted, using the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC). The IRC is a digital assessment tool that measures the level of intercultural readiness of individuals, defined as a set of four interlinked competences needed to be successful in an intercultural environment: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, building commitment and managing insecurity (Brinkmann and Van Weerdenburg, 2014). The latter two are particularly interesting for this project, since they measure aspects that are essential in collaboration in an intercultural environment, which the learning community at hand was. Due to the low representativeness of this quantitative measurement because of the low numbers (n=10), they served only to complement the qualitative data in triangulation.

Procedure

Analysis of the qualitative data was done in a process of coding (Coffey, Atkinson, 1996) by the two individual project coordinator-researchers and review of each other's analyses for interrater reliability. The results thus produced were submitted to the PLC members for validation.

Chapter 3: A selection of action research papers by PLC members

All members of the PLC project researched a topic relating to the context of the individual bachelor programmes that they teach in and the theme of inclusive intercultural, international education. The assignment given to each participant was to design an intervention to improve inclusiveness in their own professional context. Participants were expected to implement their intervention, conduct action research on its effects and to produce a research paper at the end of the academic year.
This has resulted in ten varying (action) research papers on a wide range of topics:

- improving team performance in international third year project groups at IBL (two separate papers)
- the perception of the influence, prevention and reduction of culture shock among IBMS students
- teaching styles at IBMS versus learning styles of students from China
- the role of IBMS study career coaches in prevention of study delay with special focus on male students of non-Western backgrounds
- improving the learning experience of international education projects at IBMS
- attitudes of teachers with Asian backgrounds at TMA
- a culturally responsive classroom management approach at TMA
- adapting to learning styles for a more inclusive classroom in English courses at TMA
- improving the study success rates in a research writing course at TMA

The following sections include a selection of abstracts of four of these papers, to give an insight into the types of interventions that were carried out and the research resulting thereof. The full research papers of these four PLC participants can be found in the appendix.

Definition of action research
To facilitate the reader's understanding of the papers, it is important to explain the purpose, nature and boundaries of action research first. For this project the following definition of action research by teachers was chosen, as defined by Ponte (2012, p. 22-23):

"The entirety of activities employed by teachers who, aided by techniques and strategies of social-scientific research, develop knowledge about their own actions and the situation in which their actions take place; based on the knowledge thus generated they try to systematically improve their actions and / or the situation in which the actions take place, and building on this they try to generate new knowledge. This cycle can be repeated several times, until sufficient knowledge has been developed and the problem studied has been solved."

As explained in section 2.1.1, some characteristics of action research and therefore also of action research papers are: a personal and self-critical reflective approach and data collection on students and colleagues who are part of the situation and seen as partners in the research. Since the project only ran during one academic year, there was no time for a repetition of the first cycle to further consolidate outcomes in the scope of this project. As can be read in the conclusions in chapter 4, most participants designed, implemented and research an intervention, as was the intention of the PLC project. Others however, carried out research that can be characterized more as an inventory of the situation at RBS without coming to an actual intervention. The paper described in paragraph 3.3 is an example of the latter.

3.1 Creating a culture of error to achieve a higher sense of belonging: Interventions to increase study success in the TMA course Research skills 2 – Suzanne Fagel

Abstract
The second year TMA course Research skills 2, in which students need to write an individual research paper, suffered from a very low success rate of 25% in previous years. Flaws in the instructional design, but also negative attitudes of students and teachers towards the course (stereotype threat, self-fulfilling prophecy) were seen as important contributors to the high dropout rate.
Changes in instructional design and pedagogical approach were implemented in order to increase the output of the course to 60%. Important pedagogical interventions consisted of creating an open and safe atmosphere in which students were not afraid to make mistakes (a so-called 'culture of error') and in which the teacher approached them with a positive attitude, expressing a strong belief that they would be able to finish the course successfully, even in cases where students were lagging behind with course work.
These interventions turned out to be successful in increasing the success rate of the course. However, it was discovered that apart from internal issues, several external factors still continued to have a negative effect on the output for Research skills

3.2 Interventions to make cultural differences in third year project teams in higher education fruitful - Nebojsa Jovanov

Abstract
This paper is part of a wider research project with an assignment on researching how to make the three RBS bachelor programs more inclusive, intercultural and international in such a way that it results in more sense of belonging in all students.
In that wider context this action research offers a practical answer to this question from the perspective of international project groups. The answer provided pertains specifically to what role social integration plays within multicultural group teams and what ingredients are essential for social integration. The research zooms in even further on the importance of the creation of a safe team environment, as an essential aspect of social integration, and which interventions can be used in creating such a safe team environment. In a broader context, the interventions suggested as a result of this research offer both students and teachers a practical tool on how to use the cultural differences within their team as an advantage that can improve their team results.

3.3 Learning styles and inclusive pedagogy: Investigation of Chinese students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles at Rotterdam Business School – Linas Čepinskas

Abstract
The aim of this study was to establish a link between the learning styles of Chinese students and the teaching styles of the teachers of IBMS. The data analysis showed that Chinese students use a number of learning styles. According to this research no single learning style is applicable to Chinese students. However, Chinese students in Shanghai score slightly higher in collaborative and competitive learning than their Chinese counterparts in Rotterdam. As a result, teachers could facilitate Chinese students by diversifying their teaching methods and tools and in such a way promote collaborative and competitive culture in the classroom even more. In addition, IBMS teachers are most inclined to use expert teaching styles. Other four teaching styles including facilitator, formal authority, delegator, and personal model, are used moderately. On the whole, the teaching styles in IBMS and learning styles of Chinese students match. However, particular attention should be paid to the socio-cultural aspects of the Chinese student population when introducing and experimenting with different teaching methods in various courses and stages of learning. Last but not least, despite its limitations, the study sheds new light on the characteristics of Chinese students in higher education offering practical insights which can be used to aid teaching and learning in different environments.

3.4 Eastern philosophy meets Western pedagogy: Increasing intrapersonal awareness in Asian language teachers – Fumiko Inoue

Abstract
The aim of this research project was to increase intrapersonal awareness in the Asian language teachers at the Trade management for Asia study programme. There appears to be a conflict in values between the native Asian teachers and their Dutch students, leading to miscommunications and maybe even a biased attitude in the Asian teachers: they seem to favour polite, hardworking students over students who are too 'Dutch' in their communication style with their Asian teachers. Intervision was used as a method to increase interpersonal awareness, but this Western pedagogical technique, focused on discussing problem situations, turned out to be less useful for teachers with an Asian background. An alternative way of problem solving was developed, as well as some suggestions for a better integration of the Asian values of the Asian language teachers into the TMA curriculum.

3.5 Conclusion

This short selection of papers shows the great variety of papers resulting from this project. Although the assignment given to participants was the same, every teacher has given it their own interpretation and detailing. The very personal and reflective approach of the first paper and the more distant, abstract interpretation of the third are good examples of this variety, as are the fact that papers one, two and four describe interventions, whereas the third only describes the preliminary research that could have lead up to an intervention.
The great difference in all ten papers regarding content and quality can be explained by the extreme variety in backgrounds of the participating teachers, pertaining to nationality, country of education, field of expertise, research experience, writing experience and academic level (from bachelor to PhD).
Section 4.3 of the next chapter addresses the findings of usability of action research for this particular group of teachers, based on an analyses of all ten papers.

Chapter 4: Findings and conclusions

Chapter 2, section 2.3, describes the methodology used to answer the research questions accompanying the PLC project. The present chapter lists findings along the lines of the research sub-questions, based on the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data as gathered during execution of the project, consequently developing the answers to the sub-questions. This way an image will unfold of the extent to which and the ways in which the participants have progressed in the areas of inclusive intercultural education (section 4.1), collaborative learning (section 4.2) and devising interventions through action research (section 4.3). Furthermore, it will become clear whether participants were able to influence their environment to become more inclusive (section 4.4).
The final conclusion on the main question will be constructed from these sub-answers and elaborated on in chapter 5.

The table on the right gives an overview of the qualitative and quantitative data sources that were used to construct answers to the different (sub-)questions:

Main question	Sub-questions	Data sources
How can collaborative learning on action research and Inclusive Excellence in a professional learning community facilitate individual RBS teachers to generate adequate interventions to attain inclusiveness in the intercultural, international RBS student population? (Answered in chapter 5)	1. To what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of inclusive intercultural classroom education? (answered in section 4.1)	Quantitative: IRC round 1, IRC round 2 Qualitative: intake interviews, intake forms, reflection assignments, observations of group interactions and other interaction, midway surveys, action research papers, exit interviews
	2. To what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of collaborative learning? (answered in section 4.2)	Quantitative: IRC round 1, IRC round 2 Qualitative: intake interviews, intake forms, observations of group interactions and other interaction, midway surveys, Facebook platform interaction, action research papers, exit interviews
	3. To what extent have participating teachers come up with effective interventions in their own context, using action research? (answered in section 4.3)	Qualitative: observations of group interactions and other interaction, action research papers, exit interviews
	4. To what extent and how have participating teachers been able to influence their environments to attain more inclusiveness? (answered in section 4.4)	Qualitative: observations of group interactions and other interaction, action research papers, exit interviews
	5. What recommendations can be made on how teachers can be facilitated to make education more inclusive? (answered in chapter 5)	Qualitative: observations of group interactions and other interaction, midway surveys, Facebook platform interaction, action research papers, exit interviews

The Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC), a digital tool for assessment of four competences related to working in an intercultural environment, provided quantitative data. Due to the low number of participants (n=10), the stand-alone value of the IRC measurement is limited. The outcomes of the IRC measurements must be seen as complementary to the conclusions based mainly on the qualitative data. The average outcomes* of the quantitative pre- and post-measurements for the group of ten remaining participants were as follows:

	Sept. 2015 (pre)	Oct. 2016 (post)	Development
Intercultural sensitivity	6,8	7,1	+0,3
Intercultural communication	6,3	6,5	+0,2
Building commitment	5,8	6,2	+0,4
Managing uncertainty	5,7	6,2	+0,5
Average of all competences			

* Note: scores are on a standard-nine point scale.

The sections below will summarize the findings and conclusions in the order of research sub-questions 1 to 4.

4.1 Participants' progress on inclusive intercultural classroom education aspects

Findings on the extent of progression:
To what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of inclusive intercultural classroom education? Analysis of the quantitative sources indicate that a process of intrapersonal awareness was instigated or deepened in all members, on the scope and importance of inclusive education and the performance gap between different groups of students. Their participation in the PLC provided them with a conceptual framework they were able to apply to their thinking and in their work, on crucial notions, such as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (see also paragraph 2.2). All members indicated that their participation has made them more open to diversity and difference (including culture and race) and consequently to different perspectives and needs of students. They state to be more aware of their role in facilitating a safe, inclusive learning environment. Members are more aware of their own worldview, assumptions and prejudice and actively monitor how this affects their interaction with students. These findings on augmented awareness are corroborated by the average progression of the group on the IRC competence of Intercultural Sensitivity (+0,3). It must be noted that three members showed a slight decline on this competence. Two of them indicated in their exit interviews that they needed more time to process the new information obtained during the project that contradicted their existing world view.
Participants agreed unanimously that the process of thinking about cultural awareness was indispensable and helpful.

"Now I look at the world with different eyes"

"I became more self-critical and more open to change"

"Now I have the right words for and knowledge of mechanisms such as tokenism, stereotyping, white privilege, which makes me stronger in discussions about diversity"

"I realize now that I have excluded students in the past, and now I am more conscious about that. Before I never reflected on my teaching practice, now I do so continuously. I am more aware during my teaching."

"I have become more aware of differences in cultural backgrounds of my students and how it influences their study progress"

"She made me aware of the importance of colour. This was new, because I am white and therefore never thought about this"

"I am now aware of new perspectives and especially the importance of a personal and cultural approach of students".

'So I thought I was open, but now I understand that I need to go deeper"

Not only have the members progressed on the intrapersonal dimension of inclusive excellence (see also paragraph 2.1.1), the dimension of interpersonal awareness was also further developed and, more importantly, in most cases also transformed into practical skills that teachers have started to apply. Examples being: shaking hands with each student before the start of the first lesson, careful use of

examples in class, including the students in class in setting up classroom rules, cold calling, actively monitoring diverse group composition, giving immediate feedback on interculturally counterproductive behaviour such as a micro-aggression of students by asking positively critical questions on the estimated effect of the behaviour at hand, improved personal relationships with students. Part of this progression on the interpersonal dimension is corroborated by the average progression of the group in the IRC Intercultural communication (+ 0,2).
Data suggest that the process of intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness development takes time and focus and is an ongoing process. Two participants explicitly stated that they needed more time to digest before the awareness may materialize into concrete actions.

"As coach and as teacher I interact with students differently now and it's the little things that work"

"I improved my collaboration with students: it is more personal now"

"When Dutch students complain about Chinese students I now have them reflect on their own bias. I now see that I have a pedagogical task. I don't allow homogeneous groups anymore"

"I am now more self-confident in my interaction with students and receive many compliments from them. My relationships with students have improved. Now I have a better understanding of what's going on in the students' minds"

Findings on the 'how' of the progression: supportive factors
Analysis of the qualitative data indicates that the training sessions of the first block were crucial to start up this process of growing awareness and improving skills mentioned in the previous section. Effective elements of the training were: conceptualization along the five dimensions, the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT), the mechanisms of in- and exclusion, challenging external speakers, introduction to inclusive pedagogical techniques, information on numbers and causes of exclusion in the Dutch education system and critical self-reflection assignments. Apart from the training, the continuous dialogue between participants during all four blocks, including the self-facilitated sessions on topics brought in by the participants, were beneficial to the development of their awareness.
However, data also give evidence that development of awareness on the intra- and interpersonal dimensions specifically, take much time to digest. A small minority of participants struggled with the course content on the IAT and race-related issues. In hindsight, all but one of the participants who were irritated by this topic, felt that they had needed the confrontation on these topics to develop their sensitivity.

Conclusion
The first sub-question was: To what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of inclusive intercultural classroom education? Based on the above-mentioned findings it can be concluded that all participants have to a large extent developed both their intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness around issues pertaining to inclusion in intercultural, international classroom education. The combination of intensive training on concepts in the beginning, with continuous group dialogue on how this applies to participants' own thinking and professional practice during the rest of the academic year, have proven to be effective.

4.2. Participants' progress in collaborative learning

Findings on the extent of progression
The second sub-question was: To what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of collaborative learning? Collaborative learning was a new phenomenon to all. Most participants had not intensively collaborated with colleagues in an educational context before. None had collaborated on research or educational interventions. In both the midway surveys and in the exit interviews, participants praised the benefits of collaborative learning in the PLC: a safe environment in which there was opportunity

and time to learn from each other by sharing knowledge, experience and doubts. It was recognized as beneficial that the PLC was composed of colleagues from three different programme teams, and with different national or cultural backgrounds, to have access to a wider variety of experience, knowledge and network.

The group average of the quantitative IRC measurement seems to suggest that participants have improved on competences that could be related to collaboration in an intercultural environment. Building Commitment, measuring the ability to build relationships and to reconcile stakeholder needs in an intercultural environment, went up by +0,4 on a nihe point scale. Managing Uncertainty, measuring the willingness to deal with the added complexity of culturally diverse environments as well as the degree to which one is stimulated by diversity as a source of learning and finding new approaches, went up by +0,5 (stanine).

"I really enjoy the atmosphere within the PLC. I learned much from the colleagues at various levels, which I would never be able to achieve on my own. (...) I am motivated regularly by other teachers' contributions"

"It was great to be challenged by other contrasting opinions and views"

"I enjoy the meetings as I learn many things. Moreover, I like to hear my colleagues points of view on different topics which are discussed during the meetings. It gives you insights on different perspectives"

"I feel that I have learned a lot from the PLC because the engagement with other participants brings in new perspective, fresh ideas and deeper insights"

"It helps motivate myself to keep up in difficult times: you don't want to disappoint the colleagues, you don't want to lose face, you get mental and emotional support from the colleagues'

"I find the PLC project to be a very useful tool to address important and relevant topics which we would not normally have time to discuss in our day to day work. It has also been useful to get to know our colleagues from different institutes and share with them about inclusiveness related issues we face in the classroom"

However, the data also indicated that collaboration was not optimal. Participants did not equally contribute to the process of the group. On one end of the spectrum were the few participants that were quick to pick up responsibilities such as communication or facilitation of sessions. On the other end were colleagues that showed less active participation, for instance in attending, in timely submission of written pieces (e.g. research proposals) or leaving comments on the Facebook platform. The overall self-steering ability of the group was low. This was evident especially in the third block, where group members implicitly tried to get the project-researchers to take on a leading role, although it was communicated from the start that the PLC was to function on its own from block 2 onwards.

Findings on the 'how' of the progression

The qualitative data show which factors positively contributed to group collaboration. The key element to the group's success, according to its members, was the open atmosphere in the PLC. This atmosphere was crucial for lowering perceptual barriers between the very different participants in terms of expertise, bachelor programme they taught in, nationality and ethnic background, age, gender. The open atmosphere also contributed to: the ability to give open feedback on each other's work, the coming to grips with the theory of Inclusive Excellence, the growing awareness of the individual presuppositions and stereotypes, the tapping into each other's expertise and experience in intercultural classroom teaching, the in-depth discussions on sensitive topics and on the teachers' professional practice, the discussions around

participants' research work and the connections made between participants and formation of sub-groups in meaningful combinations (e.g. per topic or per bachelor programme). Participants mentioned that they 'did not feel alone anymore'.
The guaranteed weekly time-slot and scheduled room were supportive in creating this open atmosphere. Other elements of facilitation of the PLC that proved to be successful were: the self-facilitated plenary sparring sessions, the space for participants to bring in their own topics or even external guest-speakers for the sessions, variation of working methods for the sessions, presentation of research work to other members, working in sub-group alliances even outside of the reserved project timeslots, and informal group outings. Worth mentioning separately is the stimulating effect that doing external presentations had on participants' progress and enthusiasm. On two occasions some members were asked to deliver presentations outside of the PLC group: at a network lunch at RBS and at the annual conference of the Vereniging Hogescholen[1].
A moderately supportive element was the Facebook platform: the majority of participants valued it as an efficient and easy way to communicate and share documents. Interaction via this platform was minimal however, and two members admitted to hardly ever looking at it.

There were also elements that hampered the optimal operation of the learning community. The main element in this respect was the friction between the demanding teaching and organisational tasks and responsibility of the teachers versus the assignment of running a self-steering community. The members were given a large amount of freedom to create their own collaboration process. This meant for instance: no given deadlines (except for the final paper), no meeting schedule, no formal roles or tasks. As described earlier: apart from a select group volunteering to facilitate and organise, most members remained passive or requested for direction by the project coordinator-researchers.
Explanations given by the members were: the great freedom that members had to organise themselves, the inclination to prioritize teaching and organisational responsibilities over the PLC, lack of time due to discrepancies in the PTD, unfamiliarity with doing research, lack of clarity about action research or about expectations around the independence of the learning community and roles and responsibilities. Data also indicate that the heterogeneous character of the group was debit to differences in expectations and perceptions, with members coming from a wide variety of educational and national backgrounds and (research) experience. These differences were also evident in the great variation in the set-up of the research designs.

"Facilitation is half a day per week. This should be enough. However, there are urgent tasks that are not on the PTD[2] and these take up the time that is actually meant for the PLC"

Conclusion
The second sub-question was: to what extent and how have participating teachers progressed in the area of collaborative learning? Based on findings, the following can be concluded.
The collaboration within the learning community was requisite to the development of awareness on the intercultural and inclusiveness issues, and to give and receive feedback on research plans and progress. It gave space for critical self-reflection and feedback on work, to which the heterogeneous character of the group was very supportive. It gave an impetus to cross-discipline and cross-programme collaboration in a friendly atmosphere. Moreover, participants have progressed in at building commitment and are more willing to collaborate with people who are different.
There is, however, room for improvement, when it comes to organisation and productivity, because

1 Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences
2 PTD = Planning- en taaktoedelingsinstrument: a tool used by management for time allotment for the different tasks that the individual UAS teacher should carry out during the academic year.

members found it hard to combine professional responsibilities outside of the PLC with commitment to the work in the PLC, often resulting in a lack of self-steering capacity and some members not living up to agreements. Almost all members mentioned how difficult it was to prioritize the PLC over the day-to-day pressures that come with teaching and with short-term problems in the primary process of the educational organisation, that needed instant fixing. Supportive to effective collaboration were the dedicated time and place. However, the lack of imposed structures and time-lines, originally intended to allow participants to set up their own structure and stimulate ownership, did not have the desired result of a completely self-steering community of professionals.

4.3 Participants' progress on interventions and action research

Findings on the suitability of action research as a tool
The third sub-question of this research project looked into the usefulness of action research as a tool for improving educational practice. The question was: 'To what extent have participating teachers come up with effective interventions in their own context, using action research?' Some of the PLC members were very experienced researchers, none however, had previous experience with action research. Only one participant seemed to have immediate understanding of what action research entailed and how it could be executed. Others needed quite some time to fully grasp what was expected of them in this type of research. Some participants had such fixed preconceived ideas on what research entailed that they had a hard time moving away from the idea of research as abstract, theoretical and positivist and adopting the more personal, self-reflective nature of action research. Some were relatively inexperienced in doing research and felt intimidated by the term. Others needed more time to connect the notion of research to 'action'. All of this resulted in most participants needing more time than expected to design and/or execute an actual intervention. Furthermore, many postponed the writing about their research and submitted their research papers after expiration of the deadline.
After closing the project, all were unanimous in their evaluation that action research is a suitable, user-friendly and empowering tool to intentionally and systematically improve one's own teaching practice or one's own educational context. It is seen as an invitation to experiment and change. The feedback from colleagues and students on the experiments also contributed to the improvement of one's teaching practice.

"I am able to use action research as a planned way of improving my classroom circumstances. In the heat of the day it is often impossible to realize improvements in a structured and analytical way"

"I regularly experiment with new/ different teaching methods. But this PLC has increased my awareness and it has made me think of a more systematic approach to experimenting"

"I now believe that action research should be something we are all encouraged to do as part of our professional development at RBS. The concept is simple, easy to use and beneficial"

Findings on the effectiveness of interventions resulting from this project
Eventually every participant delivered a research paper, albeit mostly after the official closing of the project. Topics of the papers were:

- improving team performance in international third year project groups at IBL (two separate papers)
- the perception of the influence, prevention and reduction of culture shock among IBMS students
- teaching styles at IBMS versus learning styles of students from China

- the role of IBMS study career coaches in prevention of study delay with special focus on male students of non-Western backgrounds
- improving the learning experience of international education projects at IBMS
- attitudes of teachers with Asian backgrounds at TMA
- a culturally responsive classroom management approach at TMA
- adapting to learning styles for a more inclusive classroom in English courses at TMA
- improving the study success rates in a research writing course at TMA

On the positive side, all papers showed that participants had all made a serious effort to study a topic relevant to the project theme's scope. However, only six had actually realized complete interventions, the remaining four had only come to the stage of doing research on the current situation of their context, but had not come to actual interventions resulting from these – in some cases very thorough – preliminary studies. Three of the six interventions were described and evaluated in such an evidence-informed manner that they may be fit to be used by others. These three seem to point to the direction of possible effectiveness, although caution is required, since more iterations of the interventions are needed before validity and reliability can be established. Of the four preliminary studies, half seem to be fit to be followed by interventions.
Regardless of whether the papers presented concrete interventions or more abstract studies, they were of varying quality, either in execution of the research, methodology used, or reporting. Due to the late delivery of the papers and the lack of submission of intermediary products during the execution phase of the project, not all papers could benefit from feedback from other members.

Conclusions
The third sub-question was: to what extent have participating teachers come up with effective interventions in their own context, using action research? Based on the findings this question must be answered as follows. The method of action research has proven to be a suitable method for RBS teachers to reflect on and systematically and intentionally experiment with pedagogical and didactic approaches to improve their practice. Furthermore, the fact that the intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness training that the participants received in block 1 was to be used as a foundation for further research and the design of an intervention, was an indispensable factor in the development of these two dimensions of awareness. Action research is a useful tool for professional development into the 'reflective practitioner' that the university desires.
However, the aim of this project was that each participant come up with their own intervention and produce action research on this intervention. It is clear that this goal has only partially been met. Moreover, there proved to be a gap between research skills and reporting skills of many of the participants and the aforementioned aim.

4.4 Participants' influence on attaining inclusiveness in their environment

Findings
Sub-question 4 was: 'To what extent and how have participating teachers been able to influence their environments to attain more inclusiveness?' As described in section 4.1 of this chapter, candidates have all gained new insights and expertise on how inclusion and diversity relate to student performance. This is necessary to be able to influence their environments. Although change agency never was a specific topic in the PLC, during the exit interviews, eight of the ten participants were able to give illustrations of the type, scope and effect of their influence to their surroundings. Examples of informal influence were given (e.g. talks with colleagues at the coffee machine, the set-up of a students-and-teachers' choir to promote inclusion), as well as examples of influence via formal routes (e.g. PLC members who bring up the topic in the curriculum development board, and instigate changes in the curriculum). Influence was exercised in the very direct environment (e.g. the participant's own classroom), within the RBS or even outside of RBS with PLC members gaining part-time positions in bodies operating at the university-wide level, in part due to

their membership of the PLC.
Clear examples are:

- A TMA colleague was hired to bring in the inclusion theme in a workgroup that engages in the set-up of the university's teacher qualification certificate
- The interventions designed and researched by the participating IBL teachers are now consolidated into the IBL year 3 curriculum
- The participating TMA teachers now play an active role in a team development trajectory on inclusion and sense of belonging
- An IBMS participant was hired in a part-time position in the Inclusion Expertise group, operating at the university-wide level and has developed video's for teacher training purposes

Despite the examples listed above, some members are much more active and influential than others promoting inclusiveness in the RBS environment. Also, among faculty there are still people who may not have heard of the PLC.

Conclusion
To what extent and how have participating teachers been able to influence their environments to attain more inclusiveness? Although the project has just finished and organisational change and curriculum development go slowly, there are already quite some formal and informal ways in which former PLC participants have been able to influence the environment as is evidenced by the examples mentioned. Some seem to be more influential than others, this may partially be explained by the fact that change agency was never formally a topic.

4.5 Closing remarks

Building on the conclusions to the preceding four sub-research questions, an image can be construed on the factors of this PLC project that were supportive to teacher development in their role as facilitators of inclusive education. It has also become clear where this project was successful and what could be improved. The main research question as well as sub-question 5 on recommendations, will be answered in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter aims to answer the overarching research question:

How can collaborative learning on action research and Inclusive Excellence in a professional learning community facilitate individual RBS teachers to generate adequate interventions to attain inclusiveness in the intercultural, international RBS student population?

The research question will be answered in section 5.1 by combining the answers to the first four sub questions as enlarged upon in chapter 4. This chapter will also address the fifth, which is: “What recommendations can be made on how teachers can be facilitated to make education more inclusive?”

The latter question will be viewed from two perspectives:

- Section 5.2 will elaborate on improvements that need to be made in a potential second round (PLC 2.0) of this project, for it to be as inspiring and in some respects more effective;
- Section 5.3 proposes more general actions, which, based on the experience of the first PLC project, could be taken by management and programme teams to stimulate professional development of individual teachers in order to become reflective practitioners and for collaborative learning of programme teams, regardless of whether there will be a PLC follow-up.

5.1 Answering the main research question

The main research question as stated above, is comprised of three pillars (collaborative learning in a PLC, Inclusive Excellence, action research). Demonstrably, the three reinforced one another in achieving the various aims of the PLC project. Both qualitative and quantitative data point in the same direction.

Participation in the PLC project - more specifically, the continuous exchange of information, ideas, discussing doubts in a safe environment, working as a team towards complex problem solving - vastly contributed to increased interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness in participants of the necessity to create more inclusiveness in the learning environments offered to their students. The training in the first block provided its members with a conceptual framework. Moreover, their participation in the PLC has influenced the management team and dean of RBS as well as a wider circle of RUAS employees. Finally, most participants demonstrated an increased ability to learn collaboratively in an intercultural context.

The fact that the participants not only internalized the concepts and principles of Inclusive Excellence, but at the same time also brought their newly acquired knowledge, insights and awareness into practice,

contributed to the transfer of knowledge into utility. Unanimously participants stated that the knowledge and insights of Inclusive Excellence they acquired changed their way of looking at students and their needs.

Action research is, in conclusion, highly valued by each participant as a practical tool to systematically observe and improve the professional environment. Therefore, it is an adequate means to support teachers in their development to become reflective practitioners and be role models in this respect to their students.

Also important to mention is a side effect that appeared on a scale that had not been foreseen by the project coordinators: many of the former PLC participants evolved into influential change agents, putting inclusion on the agenda in several ways and in several bodies of RUAS. Examples of this are:

- One member is working in a project group that developed the new didactical and pedagogical training cycle that is part of the familiarisation programme for all new RUAS-teachers;
- Others can have an impact in their positions as members of the curriculum development boards of their programme or as members of the exam board.

Just recently one participant was elected member to the Central Participation Council of RUAS. It may prove very helpful to the cause of inclusion to have someone with thorough understanding of this topic at such a strategic position.

5.2 Recommendations for a potential second PLC

In chapter 4, conclusions were drawn regarding which elements of the PLC project were effective, which were moderately successful and which seemed unfruitful. Based on those conclusions, which partly were drawn from recommendations the participants made in their exit interviews, advice for a potential second round of the PLC project will be given in this section: what should be maintained and what should be adjusted and in what way?

Effective and/or approved content-related components of the PLC project to be maintained are:

- Inclusive Excellence (Tuitt et al): five dimensions to create an inclusive study environment;
- The Implicit Association Test (IAT; Harvard)[1]: reflection on the scores;
- Explicit explanation of and reflection on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion;
- Challenging guest lectures by external experts;
- Discussing causes of exclusion in the Dutch education system (success rates in relation to diversity).

Adequate methods and tools to be kept are:

- Training on content, preceding the execution phase of the self-steering learning community;
- Dialogue on personal experiences and points of view in an open atmosphere;
- Critical self-reflection assignments and dialogues;
- Practical introduction to didactic and pedagogical skills and techniques;
- Action research as a tool to systematically design, monitor and evaluate one's intervention.

Valued facilities to be kept are:

- Sparring sessions;
- Self-facilitated sessions;
- Introduction of personal topics and themes of the participants;
- Collaborative work in plenary groups as well as sub groups and couples;
- Collaboration between teachers beyond the boundaries of the programme they teach in;
- Mid-term external presentations; this is an incentive to deliver interim results;
- Facebook as a platform to exchange information, documents and a means to archive the project.

1 https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

Improvements and changes in a second iteration:
It is recommended that measures are put in place that enhance the self-steering capacity of the community. This means that time-management and planning issues around the implementation of interventions and the production of the research should be simplified, clarified and structured. This can be done by (1) simplifying and clarifying the task of action research and (2) structuring and simplifying the processes.
To simplify and clarify the action research task for participants:
• The threshold for conducting and writing research as perceived by many participants, who feel unequipped for writing a full research paper, should be lowered. These participants should be allowed instead to choose to fill in an elaborate 'research form' in which all the necessary elements of research (e.g. research (sub) questions, sources used, research methods used, conclusions drawn), must be filled-in;
• Examples of best practice action research papers of the first PLC round should be provided from the start and woven into the other programme items. This way participants will immediately have a concrete idea of what is expected from them and realize that action research is practice-based and highly accessible. The report at hand provides some good examples of interventions and papers that serve as best practices;
• All participants must prepare a presentation to their programme (sub-) team halfway through the academic year, as well as a final presentation of their action research at an open, RBS-wide seminar on Inclusive International Classroom teaching. The prospect of having to deliver presentations will serve as a big stick to keep participants active and on track with their research.

To structure and simplify the processes of the learning community:
• One single platform for all communication and knowledge-sharing should be employed. This single platform could then also serve as the project archive;
• An overview of deliverables and milestones should be provided by the project coordinators before the start of the project. To promote ownership the participants should collectively decide on the best timeline for the deliverables, activities and milestones, ensuring an equal distribution of these elements throughout the school year and come to a work plan in which each participant is given a role and responsibility relating to that timeline.
• Deliverables in the timeline should at least include feedback sessions on the draft versions of the research design, (intermediate) presentations to the programme team of the participants, draft version of the research paper/ outcome format.
• Participants should designate roles and facilitators per session for the whole year;
• Participants in the second round who also participated in the first round could bring in their experience and expertise to help processes run smoothly;
• Work forms and deliverables should be chosen that require working not only individually, but also collaboratively and in sub groups, e.g. presentations and thematic sessions, literature discussions;
• Every participant should choose a 'critical friend' to monitor the progress of their intervention and the collection of data, to prevent procrastination and to promote critical feedback on the research work;
• A procedure for giving constructive feedback on one another's collaboration skills should be agreed upon before the start of the project
• At the start of the PLC a meeting should be dedicated to agreeing to above-mentioned timeline, deliverables, roles, tasks and procedures. Part of this meeting should also focus on content about action research, and theories on collaborative learning.

Lastly, recommendations can be made to optimize the process of gaining the necessary awareness around intercultural and inclusion issues:
• More self-reflection assignments should be given in the first phase of the project to strengthen the process of growing awareness on the issues at hand and for participants to internalize them;
• More attention should be given to the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The results should be discussed in detail; it should be emphasized that no result is 'bad': awareness of one's bias is just a necessary requirement for non-biased behaviour;
• More time should be allowed to internalize concepts related to Inclusive Excellence before participants are asked to design interventions.

5.3 General recommendations for programme managers and programme teams to facilitate collaborative learning and to develop reflective practitioners

Collaboration on action research has proven to be an effective means for empowering individual teachers and programme teams. Developing self-managing employees and teams is in line with the policy of RUAS as explained in chapter 1. What lessons can be drawn in this respect, based on the outcomes of the research at hand?

If one of the main objectives at RBS is to create a safe learning environment in which all students feel a sense of belonging, then a safe, inclusive work culture within RBS has to be in place. The project researchers found that the participating RBS teachers expressed a great need for such a culture. Programme managers and dean have an important, facilitating role to:

- create opportunities to discuss specific challenges in relation to teaching diverse classes. Discussions in wich it is okay to make mistakes and to have and express doubts;
- make room for experiments and exploration;
- make room to be critical of each other's work, for consulting each other and giving advice;
- promote the sharing of knowledge and practice among team members. In such an environment, the participants will inspire and help each other, make optimal use of the variety of (cultural) expertise and experience within the team or group;
- to promote and demonstrate the use of action research as a tool for professional development towards becoming a reflective practitioner and role model to students. One way to achieve this is to make it optional to make action research part of the yearly planning and evaluation interview cycle that each team member agrees on with their programme manager. In that way, the planning, evaluation and assessment phases of the cycle can be made more concrete and connections between personal goals and programme and team goals can easily be established .

Programme managers are recommended to support their teams to form small intervision groups to achieve these goals. Furthermore, it is important to address the necessity of being interculturally aware. To achieve this, it is necessary to train the programme team, including the management, on the topics of intercultural awareness and inclusion. Differences and different views should be acknowledged and allowed to surface while, at the same time, efforts should be made to come to common guidelines.

Programme managers can connect elements of intercultural awareness, action research and collaborative learning to their programme goals and from there to specific modules. They should use the review cycle to structurally discuss and monitor the personal development of their employees on these topics, as well as their contributions to the programme aims.

5.4 Closing remarks

Dealing with diversity in the higher education classroom in a way that creates inclusion and equal opportunities for all groups of students, is a complex and relatively new challenge. A challenge for which there is no easy recipe or quick solution. Therefore it is up to the UAS teachers to find these solutions themselves.

This project has shown that there is great potential to having UAS teachers work together on experimenting with new ways of thinking and working, and that doing this in the safe environment of a learning community with colleagues, empowers them. Especially if they are able to fully draw from the diversity present in the teacher team. Fumiko, one of the participants in the PLC could not have formulated it better in her action research paper (full paper in appendix 4): "Our aim is the liberation of the abilities and talents of the students from racially, socially or culturally diverse groups in an inclusive classroom. As a result of my research project, I now strongly believe that in order to achieve this, we should focus on liberating the full potential of our culturally diverse team members as well."

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Appendix I

Creating a culture of error to achieve a higher sense of belonging: Interventions to increase study success in the TMA course Research skills 2.
Suzanne Fagel

Abstract
The second year TMA course Research skills 2, in which students need to write an individual research paper, suffered from a very low success rate of 25% in previous years. Flaws in the instructional design, but also negative attitudes of students towards the course (stereotype threat, self-fulfilling prophecy) were seen as important contributors to the high dropout rate.
Changes in instructional design and pedagogical approach were implemented in order to increase the output of the course to 60%. Important pedagogical interventions consisted of creating an open and safe atmosphere in which students were not afraid to make mistakes (a so-called 'culture of error', and in which the teacher approached them with a positive attitude, expressing a strong belief that they would be able to finish the course successfully, even in cases where students were lagging behind with course work.
These interventions turned out to be successful in increasing the success rate of the course. However, it was discovered that apart from internal issues, several external factors still continued to have a negative effect on the output for Research skills 2.

1 Introduction and research question

1.1 Introduction

Critical thinking and Information (ICT) literacy are considered core elements of what are called '21st century skills' (Binkley et al. 2012, p. 36), skills that are deemed necessary to function well in our current information-based economy. In the Trade management for Asia (TMA) study programme, core elements of critical thinking and information literacy are taught in the courses Research skills 1 and 2. These courses teach students how to find, select and use reliable and relevant sources and assess their skills in writing a research paper. Research skills 1 (RS1) is taught in the first year of TMA, and instructs students in the basic concepts of ICT literacy and critical thinking. Students need to write a small research paper (2000 words, in duo's) to finish the course. In year 2, the follow up course Research skills 2 (RS2) asks of students to write a larger, individual research paper (6000-8000 words), thereby showing that they are able to apply the skills they acquired in RS1 independently and on a larger scale.

This paper focuses on the issue of study success in the course Research skills 2. Results in previous years have shown that this course suffers from a staggeringly low success rate of 25%, meaning that only one in four students passes this course in the second year of their studies. I taught this course for the first time in the spring of 2015, and the following students from 2015 are exemplary for the entire class:

First of all, there was Tom, a student with a Dutch cultural and a VWO[1] educational background . One of his parents was pursuing a PhD in the humanities. Tom attended maybe 50% of my classes (there was no attendance requirement), but he had no trouble in getting his topic and research question approved. He turned in a stunningly good paper on the housing bubble in China, in which he pitted opinions of experts against each other, with the aim of finding an answer to the question if the Chinese housing bubble was likely to burst or not. Tom was able to profit from the professional advice his father could give him on quoting and referencing sources and presenting information. He earned a 9,2 for his paper.

Then there was Annie, a girl with a Dutch cultural and a HAVO[2] educational background and limited experience with writing a research paper. She chose a research topic she was passionate about (Japanese manga), but had a difficult time in getting rid of colloquial language in her paper, and getting to grips with the correct way of incorporating information from sources in her paper. That did not prevent her from working very hard. She attended all classes, handed in all interim assignments and also enjoyed doing research on her research topic very much. She wrote a paper on depictions of smoking in Japanese manga, addressing the question if and to what extent censorship should be applied. For effort, she should have gotten a 9 as well, but since the assessment focuses on the extent to which students possess research and writing skills, she got a well-deserved 6,5 for her paper.

Other students did not fare so well in RS2. Marleen (Dutch background) and Mei-Lan (Chinese-Dutch background) did attend most class sessions and liked their research topic. But they fell behind on the interim assignments and either did not hand in a final paper or they failed to complete their work on time and handed in unfinished work. They later told me they had underestimated the amount of work. Underestimation may have also played a role in Randy's (Surinamese-Dutch background) approach to the course. He never attended a session, did not hand in any interim assignments, but he did deliver a final paper on deadline day. Unfortunately, his research question was faulty to begin with, resulting in a final grade of 1. Randy was a student who would have benefitted by attending the lessons and by handing in the interim assignments. Although there are multiple (online) resources on thesis writing available, it was clear to me that he would not be able to produce a research paper that met all requirements on his own.

Finally, there was Jafar (a Hindustani/Surinamese-Dutch student). The first question he asked me, within five minutes after the start of the first lesson, was: "This lesson isn't going to last until 4 pm, is it?" I took offense to that and got angry with him. He never returned after the first session and did not hand in a final paper.

In total, there were 30 students in my class. Only half of them showed up regularly at the instruction sessions. In the end, 20 out of 30 students failed RS2. Most of them simply did not hand in a final paper, some handed in a paper of substandard quality, like Randy. My colleagues, who were co-teaching the same course, experienced similar results, which resulted in an overall success rate of 25% for the course RS2.

1 VWO is Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, the Dutch name for university preparatory education.
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1.2 Problem definition

The low success rate of 25% has led to disheartening figures of students who still need to retake RS2. In 2015, there were as many as 140 third-year and older students who had not passed the course. This means that besides our regular three second-year classes, we easily could have filled four extra classes with resitters. Apart from the logistical problems this would entail (four extra teachers, four extra classrooms), it means that not passing RS2 contributes to study delay, which is already a problem in the TMA programme.

In teaching the course and by talking to some of the 2015 students, I have identified several problems that contribute to the low success rate: Firstly, RS2 relies heavily on the independence and self-steering abilities of the students: students get a lot of freedom: there is no attendance requirement, students are free to choose their own topic, and a lot of activities – such as choosing a topic, doing research, working on the interim assignments, and writing the paper – take place outside the classroom (and therefore out of reach of the teacher).

Secondly, Marleen and Mei-Lan's story shows that procrastination is an issue. There were four interim assignments designed to help students (the assignments function as stepping stones), but the temptation not to hand them in apparently was too big for many students.[3]

Thirdly, Tom and Randy's results show the importance of prior knowledge and support. Randy did not have the same support Tom had at home, and as a result, he was not able to hand in a good paper. In general, students from MBO or HAVO do not have the same research skills as VWO students at the start of the class. This can lead to MBO- and HAVO-students feeling ill-equipped for the course. The same might apply to students with a partly non-Dutch cultural background[4]. Based on research that has been done on this topic (De Jong 2014; Tuitt 2003, p. 245), it may be assumed that students with a multicultural (for instance Moroccan-Dutch or Dutch Antilles) background might suffer from stereotype threat: they might feel that they are not up to the task, or they might think that the teacher will expect them not to perform very well. This may result in writing anxiety, procrastination behaviour and ultimately a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teacher behaviour also influences this aspect, which is why I included the small clash Jafar and I had had during the first session. Although Jafar and I discussed the issue and solved our dispute a few days later, I still feel that the clash was not conducive for his feeling of confidence in the course.[5] I still blame myself for the fact that he never showed up in class again after the first session.

Furthermore, during a course I took on how to deal with procrastinating behaviour in students, I realized that I too exhibit symptoms of procrastination and writing anxiety whenever I have to write a research paper. This opened my eyes to the feelings my students must also be having in RS2, and it made me realize that I had to address the issue of writing anxiety to help them cope with that.

1.3 Research question

The examples above paint a clear picture of the problems in RS2: it is a course with a high risk of students feeling excluded or not up to the task and therefore failing the course. What I wanted to achieve in my classroom, is that students of all backgrounds (MBO, HAVO, VWO, and multicultural background) feel that they are capable of and motivated to write a paper for RS2.

My action plan was focused on the current second year students in the TMA study programme, who participated in the course RS2 for the first time in 2016, as a part of their regular study programme.[6] It was my goal first of all to prevent these students from dropping out and becoming resitters, by motivating them to actively participate in the course from start to finish instead of procrastinating. Secondly, my aim was to increase the 'sense of belonging' of these students in the classroom, by addressing and tackling

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4 The 10 students who passed the course in 2015 had a Dutch (7 students) or a Chinese-Dutch (3 students) cultural background. Those who did not hand in a paper or failed, had very diverse backgrounds: Dutch, Chinese-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, Dutch Antilles, Turkish-Dutch, etc.
It is difficult to provide accurate data on the multicultural background of the students in my class. Almost all students have been born in the Netherlands, and therefore have the Dutch nationality. Often, I can see or I know whether a student has a Chinese-Dutch, a Moroccan-Dutch, a Turkish-Dutch, a Dutch-Antilles, a Pakistani-Dutch or a different cultural background. But Osiris, the student administration system used at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, does not register multiculturality. Therefore, the only reliable data on student background that is available to me as a teacher, is a student's prior education: MBO, HAVO or VWO.

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any anxieties or insecurities they might have about the task. This should result in more finished research papers. Formulated quantitatively, I aimed to increase the success rate for RS2 from 25% to at least 60%.

These goals can be summarized into one overarching research question:

How can the success rate of the TMA course Research skills 2 be increased?

This research question relates to several key concepts of Inclusive Excellence, as defined by Tuitt (Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, 210). First and foremost, the interventions I implemented were aimed at establishing an inclusive learning environment, Tuitt's fifth dimension of Inclusive Excellence (Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, p. 216-219). Doing this was not possible without paying attention to the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimension (Tuitt's first and second dimension, Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, p. 210-215): it meant an awareness of my own background and expectations (I followed a study path of VWO – University – PhD-degree), and adapting my behaviour to meet the needs of the students, whose backgrounds differ significantly from my own.
In the context of the overarching research question of the PLC project, my research project focuses strongly on creating more 'sense of belonging' for all students in my classroom, by implementing interventions to create an inclusive learning environment in the course RS2.[7] The planned interventions, their relationship with Inclusive Excellence and the way I set up the interventions in RS2 will be described in chapter 2 ('Methodology') of this paper. The implementation of the interventions and the results follow in chapter 3.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

2.1 Introduction

In order to increase student participation and create a higher sense of belonging in RS2, I implemented a series of interventions. In Tuitt (2003, p. 263) two aspects of creating an inclusive environment are highlighted: adapting instructional design in order to promote inclusiveness (cf. the fifth dimension of Inclusive excellence, Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, p. 216-219), and implementation of inclusive pedagogical models to address perceptual barriers between teacher and students (cf. the inter- and interpersonal dimensions of Inclusive Excellence, Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, p. 210-215). The interventions I designed for the course RS2 can be distinguished accordingly.

With regard to adapting instructional design, by now it has become clear that lecturing is not the most ideal way to transfer knowledge to students. 'Active learning' is being used more and more as a pedagogical technique to put the student in charge of his/her own learning process. Pedagogical scientists nowadays agree that the role of the teacher should change from the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side' (King 1993, Prince 2004, Svinicki and McKeachie 2014, p. 191-192). All this without lowering the objectives or expectations for the course. Students should still meet the same high standards as before, but the education they receive should be geared towards installing in them the belief that they are capable of meeting these standards. Furthermore, Inclusive Excellence points to the importance of awareness of different learning styles of the students, and a fluid and flexible classroom instruction to accommodate variety in learning styles and cultural background of the students (Tuitt 2003, p. 251-254).
These changes in instructional design should be accompanied by changes in pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogical models strive to create an open and welcoming environment in which students feel comfortable in seeking help. This can be achieved by way of sharing power and dialogical professor-student interaction (Tuitt 2003, p. 247). A teacher should be 'knowledgeable, caring, enthusiastic and available to students in and outside the classroom'. He should be open to the ideas of others, challenge his students and he should demonstrate 'concern and belief in the (academic) ability of students' (Tuitt 2003, 255). If a teacher is perceived to be unbiased, this will be beneficial for removing stereotype threat in students, and as a result, (multicultural) students' level of performance will increase.
Paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 present an overview of the changes in instructional design and inclusive pedagogy I applied to RS2.

2.2 Interventions: implementation of changes in instructional design

RS2 is a course that is well-suited for applying inclusive pedagogical tools. The course relies heavily on the input of the students: each student is free to choose the topic he or she wants to write about, so the papers differ from a discussion of politics in Thailand, water management in Indonesia, plastic surgery in

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South-Korea to the influence of the Yakuza in Japan. The role of the teacher is that of a guide who assists students in finding relevant and reliable sources, and who provides constructive feedback on the students' written assignments, in order to help them structure and formulate their paper properly.
In order to make the instructional design of RS2 more inclusive, I implemented several changes, some of which on first glance may seem counterproductive to the idea of student-centred learning:

- I reinstalled the attendance requirement. Students were only allowed to miss one out of 4 sessions.
- I introduced hard deadlines for the four interim assignments. Students had to hand in their assignments onlines 48 hours before the start of the lesson.
- I made handing in the four interim assignments mandatory. The assignments function as stepping stones for writing a research paper and function as 'low-stakes' writing assignments (Svinicki and McKeachie 2014, p. 214-216): students can earn bonus points for simply handing in complete assignments on time, but there is no assessment or grade. The lecturer does provide constructive feedback on each assignment, to stimulate the progress of the student.

Assignment 1 asks students to introduce their topic, formulate their research question and sub-questions, and list the sources they found up till then. For assignment 2 students need to compile a larger database of the sources they found, including summaries, paraphrases and quotes they are going to use in their paper. In assignment 3, students need to present a blueprint of their final paper. Assignment 4 is called 'Draft paper'. This 'draft' should in fact be a complete paper, finished from cover page to reference list, and students are asked to hand it in in the second to last week of the course. This allows for the teacher to provide feedback and for the students to improve their work before they hand it in for assessment (in the final week of the course).

These might seem top-down demands made by an authoritarian lecturer, but in fact these measures are conducive to creating an inclusive classroom: in return for adhering to these requirements, the students get my guarantee that their assignments will have been read before class. This allows me first of all to provide students with individual written feedback on their assignments before the start of class, and secondly, it enables me to provide all students with more efficient instruction and assistance during class. Since I have already read their assignments, I would already have an overview of the problems many students were struggling with in a particular week and adapt my instruction accordingly; besides that, I would already have an overview of the level of work of each individual student, enabling me to provide better assistance in individual talks with students during class sessions.

In the classroom I explicitly address the underlying reasons for setting hard deadlines to the students. They know that I rely on their assignments and questions and that I cannot help them as efficiently if they have not kept up with the course work.
Additional interventions I implemented were the following:

- Limiting class instruction sessions to a maximum of 30 minutes per session.
- Focusing on individual feedback. I spent the majority of class sessions (60-70 minutes per session) on individual progress talks (approximately 5 minutes per student) with each student, while the others worked individually or in small groups on their own papers in class.
- Scheduling all class sessions in a computer room, allowing all students access to their work-in-progress and online resources for doing research.
- Planning a peer review session in week 6, so students could read, discuss and learn from each other's work.[8]

2.3 Interventions in the inter- and intrapersonal dimension

Besides changing aspects of the instructional design of my course, I also applied several changes in my own pedagogical approach (inter- and intrapersonal), in order to create a safe and open environment in which students felt it easy to discuss their work and their research problems with me. These interventions included:

- Motivating students by providing positive feedback and encouragement, showing my confidence in their ability to complete this course.
- Making clear my rules and expectations for the course and explaining the reason for maintaining strict deadlines (see paragraph 2.2 on instructional design)

8 TMA also needs to tackle the issue of the numerous third year and older students who did not pass RS2 in year 2 and still need to retake it; this is a separate problem. Due to lack of space and time, this problem has not been addressed in this research project. My research focuses on the prevention of study delay in the course RS2.

- Addressing the topics of writing anxiety and procrastination in the first session
- Sharing the power with students and flexibility in lesson planning, by asking students what topics I should discuss in my instruction sessions
- Paying attention to dialogical student-teacher interaction in the individual talks. I treated the students as experts on their research topic, and offered advice and guidance in my own field of expertise, research skills and paper writing
- Being flexible with deadlines when necessary, instead of punishing students for not meeting hard deadlines.

These interventions were all aimed at improving my own attitude and behaviour as a lecturer (Tuitt's interpersonal dimension), and on building a relationship of trust with the students, in order to build their confidence (the intra-personal dimension). In the past year, I have greatly benefitted from feedback by my peers on my teaching and I have had the chance to reflect on the effect my behaviour can have on others. Feedback from colleagues, friends and students has taught me that people tend to see me as an austere and strict person. People expect me to be the kind of person who never runs a red light, in other words: someone who applies high standards to herself and who expects others to live up to the same standards. As a result, I can easily give off the impression that I look down on others. If this would happen in RS2, it could very well be detrimental to the motivation of my students and it would counteract all efforts to create an inclusive classroom. The measures listed above were aimed at preventing such a situation to occur.

Furthermore, the interventions allow me to individualize my teaching, instead of presenting a 'one-size-fits-all' lesson, but to instruct each student based on his or her current stage of learning. This approach is based on Vygotsky's theory (1978) on the 'zone of proximal development', which can be defined as 'the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help'. Not all students in a classroom are in the same zone of proximal development. The assignments and individual talks gave me insight in the achievements and problems of each individual student, allowing me to tailor my advice to get them to the next level. This process is also known as 'scaffolding' (Griffin et al., 2012, p. 9).

2.3 Other interventions

In addition to being a teacher, I am also the 'module owner' of this course, which means that I coordinate the activities of the other teachers that are teaching RS2. I therefore also planned activities for the dissemination of the principles of inclusive excellence to the other teachers teaching the same course:

- Weekly discussion sessions with my co-lecturers, with a focus on inclusive excellence.
- Weekly e-mails with lesson plans and PowerPoints, with a focus on implementing inclusive pedagogical tools.

However, due to time restraints and busy schedules, my activities in the field of disseminating knowledge were limited to sending my colleagues weekly lesson plans and PowerPoint by e-mail, and some irregular and brief talks with on the course content.

2.4 Data collection

I monitored students' responses and reactions to the course in the following ways:

- By developing small online qualitative surveys and asked students to fill these in on a voluntary basis. These surveys included: an intake survey (session 1), one minute papers (session 1 and 2), a feedback survey (session 3) and a retake survey (after the retake period).
- By talking informally with students during and after class sessions.
- By observing student behaviour during class and by reading student work.
- By registering attendance, the number of handed-in interim assignments and final assignments.
- By looking at the end results (grades, drop-out rate).

2.5 Summary

In choosing the interventions listed above, I have made a selection from Tuitt's overview of methods for promoting inclusive excellence. Due to the limited scope and the specific focus of my research, not all aspects of Tuitt's inclusive pedagogy were applied in my research.[9] In the next chapter, the implementation and results of my interventions are described.

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3 Implementation and results of the interventions

3.1 Introduction

My class of 28 students was divided into two groups of 14 students. Lessons took place on a biweekly basis (in week 1, 3 and 5 for one group; in week 2, 4 and 6 for the other group). Each group therefore received three lessons, and all students had the opportunity for an individual feedback session in week 7 (the final week of the course).The final paper had to be handed in at the end of week 7. The schedule was very demanding: the first assignment (introduction and research question) had to be handed in before the start of the first session. With only three lessons in six weeks and a complete draft version to be handed in in the third session (week 5 or 6 of the course), a lot depended on the amount of work students would do at home. I made sure the course demands were clear to the students in advance (by e-mail) and I explained the necessity and importance of meeting the deadlines during the first session as well.
In the paragraphs below, I have listed the results of several interventions. Paragraph 3.2 starts with an overview of the data I received from the surveys students' filled in at the start of the course and halfway through. The survey answers paint a clear picture of students' opinions on the instructional design of the course. Paragraph 3.3 focuses on the teacher's perspective. In this paragraph, I present an overview of the results of using inclusive pedagogy during the course. Paragraph 3.4 looks at the final results of the course: the success rate, and possible reasons why some students did not hand in a final paper.

3.2 Student responses to the instructional design of the course

Clarity of objectives and requirements
Students showed a high level of self-knowledge and insight in the requirements of the course in the intake survey I asked them to fill in in the first session. In a short online survey, I asked them how they had experienced the previous course (RS1), and what their expectations were for RS2. 22 out of 28 students filled in the survey, and the results first of all told me that students valued the introductory RS1 course highly. They enjoyed the freedom of being able to choose the topic of their paper themselves, they in general liked working in duo's on a paper, and they recognized the importance of acquiring skills in doing research (using databases, report writing). They identified searching for relevant sources in databases and developing a sound research question and sub questions as the most difficult aspects of the course.

In the intake survey, I also invited the students to point out what they needed from me as a teacher, and what they would be able to do by themselves for this course. In answering these questions, the students showed that they understood the course requirements very well. They identified 'starting on time' as the most difficult aspect of the course. Planning, doing desk research, meeting deadlines, avoiding procrastination were on top of the students' minds, showing me that my instructional message had hit home. One student answered the question on what she could do herself to complete the course with: "Planning, will power and perseverance." Students evaluated the four interim assignments as necessary elements to help them develop their paper, but at the same time they disliked these assignments because of the strict and numerous deadlines they entailed.
The main request students made of me was to provide them with clear and timely feedback on their work. Students named receiving unclear, contradictory feedback, or (only) negative feedback from a lecturer as the biggest obstacle blocks for RS2. They also indicated that they expected clear guidance and assistance in developing a research question and finding relevant sources. One student also mentioned that it would be beneficial to see best practices from last year and to receive overviews of tips, tricks and pitfalls.
The results of the intake survey were confirmed by two other surveys from session 1 and 2. At the end of both sessions I asked students to fill in a so-called 'One minute paper', in which they could anonymously evaluate the lesson. The one minute paper consisted of three questions: 1) what was the most important thing you learned today? 2) What question has remained unanswered? 3) Identify a top and a tip for your lecturer.

In the one minute papers, students indicated that they valued the clear explanation of the course content and demands in lesson 1, the instruction on how to use the media library databases to search for scientific sources in lesson 2 and the individual feedback sessions in both sessions. As a lecturer, I hardly received any points for improvements, apart from a few students pointing out that the individual feedback sessions could be structured better by setting up a schedule, so that everyone would know when it would be his/her turn to receive feedback. Most students welcomed the waiting time as an opportunity to work on their paper

in class, but one student felt that it was not useful to spend 100 minutes in class for a brief instruction and 5 minutes of individual feedback.[10]

Internal and external stumbling blocks
During the third session (the session in which students needed to hand in a draft version of their paper), I asked students to fill in a short survey on how they were doing. I specifically asked them to identify any obstructions they had encountered in writing their paper. Due to time constraints, I only gave this survey to one of the groups (14 students instead of 28), and I received a total of 9 responses. Responses showed several stumbling blocks that students encounter in practice:

- Lack of time was mentioned by almost all students. Other courses required a lot of homework as well. One student pointed out that in the eye of a student, one hour of homework per week per course is already a lot, whereas I as a lecturer see RS2 as a task that requires 2 to 5 hours of self-study per week.
- Some students also mentioned the influence of personal circumstances, and indicated that it was difficult to strike a balance between a side job, (unfortunate) personal circumstances, course demands and project work in school.
- Finding relevant sources remains a tricky aspect of the course, in spite of the instruction session and the individual feedback.
- The students were still very satisfied with the opportunities for receiving individual feedback, and they indicate that they would benefit more if the lessons were scheduled on a weekly basis instead of biweekly. That would allow students to receive more assistance in establishing a research question and finding sources.

The difference between the first two surveys (week 1 and 2) and this one (week 6) is notable. It shows the enthusiasm and the good intentions (‘no procrastination’) in the beginning of the course, and it also shows the unmistakable influence of external (personal circumstances, work load for other courses, side jobs) and internal (procrastination, difficulty in finding sources) factors on RS2.

3.3 Pedagogical approaches in practice
The main pedagogical techniques I applied in order to create an inclusive classroom can be identified with the following keywords: positive feedback, culture of error, the joy factor, sharing the power and peer review (cf. Lemov 2014 for an overview of these and other pedagogical techniques). These concepts and their effect on putting students in charge of their own learning process and in creating a safe and open student-lecturer relationship are explained in the following paragraphs.

Dealing with procrastination
As planned (see chapter 2) I addressed the topic of writing anxiety and the danger of procrastination explicitly in the first session. I explained that these are frequent and normal side-effects of writing a paper. I informed the students that the interim assignments were geared towards preventing procrastination, but I also stressed the fact that students would need to put in a lot of work in order to keep on track. As was shown in the previous paragraph, students were well aware of the danger of procrastination.

But still not all students managed to hand in the interim assignments on time each time. What I noticed when I sat down with these students to discuss their progress, is that they were often quite apologetic: “I am sorry I did not do much in the past week”. My response in this situation was to wave away the apologies. I never showed disappointment or annoyance, but I maintained a positive and open attitude and expressed my belief that the student would be able to catch up. I simply asked the student “Well, then show me what you’ve got right now.” Then we would go over his work in progress and his questions. I did express serious concern for the student’s progress and made sure I stressed the fact that he still had a lot of work to do to catch up, because lagging behind in course work was a serious risk factor for not finishing the course.[11] However, in doing this I did not focus on what he did or did not do in the past, but I looked to the

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- assignments and provided them with written feedback, 5 minutes per student was more than enough time to discuss problematic issues and help students on their way.

11 The combination of not blaming/punishing students, but informing them that they were lagging behind and needed to step up their game in order to pass the course, while providing them with an opportunity to do so, made it possible for me to communicate that I was still setting the bar high for them, but that I believed that they would be able to make the jump.

future, by offering the student the chance to hand in a missed assignment a week later and promising him that I would be able to give him extra feedback then. The student was well aware of the fact that he missed a deadline and that he was lagging behind. There was no need for me to 'rub it in' by also focusing on his missed deadline. Instead, I expressed my belief in the students' ability to catch up.
Surprisingly, the apologetic tendency also showed itself in students who did hand in their assignments on time. These students received online feedback from me before the start of the session, and frequently they would say "I read your comments and then I saw that I made these mistakes" or "It was stupid of me to put it that way." I explained to these students that they should not see their mistakes as stupid, but that the mistakes were an essential part of the process of learning how things should be done. To all students I explained that this applied to the draft paper (assignment 4) as well. In this paper, they were allowed to make all the mistakes in the world, because the whole point of the draft paper was to allow the students the opportunity to find out what skills they had not mastered yet and to improve their work before it had to be handed in for real. In other courses, I have heard students complain about failing reports and having to do a retake. Students found it unfair that they only got feedback on what the content and structure of the report should have been after handing in the (insufficient) final version. They needed to do a resit in order to find out what they should have done in the first place. Handing in a draft in week 6 and receiving feedback on it, was therefore essential in order to prevent this from happening.
In this way I repeatedly stressed that errors are an essential and natural part of the writing process. In doing this, I was aiming to create a 'culture of error' (Lemov 2014, Chapter 2), an atmosphere in which students are not afraid to make mistakes.

Putting students in charge of their education
It was clear to the students that RS2 was a course in which they were very much in charge. They were free to choose the topic they wanted to write about, they were aware of the necessity of a strict planning to meet the deadlines, and they knew they could ask me to pay attention to specific topics during class. Sometimes it was very easy to establish what topic should be discussed in my classical instruction session (almost everyone wanted a session on how to find scientific sources), but in other sessions I got little response from students when I ask them 'what topics do you want me to discuss today?'. They indicated that receiving individual feedback was most important to them and that they did not have any specific questions for .

To give a student ownership of his own learning process is easiest when a student is passionate about a topic. But it can be very problematic when a student does not know what research topics interest him and does not start reading (pre-research) to find out. This is where procrastination starts. A few students got stuck in this starting phase of the research process. They have only a general sense of the topic they want to discuss ('women's rights in India', or 'China's decline in economy'), but their topic is still very broad. If students have not found and read several articles on their chosen research topic, then my ability to provide feedback and help them is rather limited as well. I don't know anything about the Chinese economy either. It takes some students a long time to start reading and establish a specific topic (see also paragraph 3.4).

Putting a student in charge of his own education also means deviating from a one-size-fits-all approach whenever necessary. This happened a few times during my course. One student expressed his dissatisfaction with the four interim assignments. To him, they were counterproductive, because he is the type of student who usually just starts writing first, and only thinks about structure afterwards. My assignments followed the opposite order: I asked students to structure their paper first, and fill in the details later. I acknowledged this student's different approach, and did not try to force him to follow the standard approach, because I could see that he was on track, and doing a good job in writing a paper on the semi-legal status of the Yakuza (the mafia) in Japan.

Another student also needed a non-standard lesson plan. This student admitted to me that he felt ill-equipped for the course, because he disliked writing and in his prior MBO education he never had to write papers. He did know that he wanted to write his paper about 'the influence of Islam in Indonesia', but this topic was still too unspecified and he wasn't able to find sources to help him choose a more specific research question. I tried to help him develop a more specific research question, but he rejected the topics I proposed. I then asked him what he could do to find a more specific topic. After a while, he came up with the idea of asking another TMA lecturer, an expert in the field of Indonesian economy and culture, for help. He had heard this lecturer discuss recent developments in Indonesia in another course, and he felt sure that the lecturer could provide him with some interesting articles he could use. I applauded this idea and told him to go right ahead and get the information he needed. This example showed me that some

students, for example students with a MBO background, with little experience in writing papers or students who are having difficulty in finding a research topic need more guidance than other students. Instead of having to find relevant sources by themselves, they would benefit greatly if lecturers could provide them with a preselected set of articles on an interesting topic, or even with a preselected research question..

I used a dialogic approach in my individual feedback talks with the students. I did not present myself as an authoritative lecturer, but I let the students know that they were the subject experts. In return, I felt that students recognized and appreciated my expertise in the field of research skills. Students also felt free to challenge my judgements. When I assessed a particular draft paper as being too historical, while the goal of RS2 was to present a contemporary, problematic issue to the reader, the student disagreed with me. He argued that even the historical information he presented, had relevance for the present. We had a good talk, and in the end we established that the problem did not lie in the content of the paper, but in his lack of use of signpost language and explicit introductions and conclusions. The student agreed to add the signpost language, and our difference of opinion was resolved.

Peer review session
A well-known technique to ensure active learning in the classroom, is collaborative learning. Peer review can be seen as a form in which students learn from each other, which is why I planned a session in which each student would swap his draft paper with that of a fellow student. They would read each other's work, and in doing so learn each other's approach and provide each other with feedback. This session did not turn out as planned. First of all, not all students handed in a draft paper on time, which posed problems for the formation of duo's. Secondly, students seemed reluctant to assess their classmates' work. They either were not very critical ("well done") or they pointed out small spelling errors instead of looking at the bigger picture, even though they had received a detailed evaluation form from me. Thirdly, there seemed to be an individualistic attitude in class: students were focused on improving their own paper, and looking at someone else's paper felt like a distraction. This is understandable in light of the tight schedule and the limited amount of class sessions. Students were more interested in looking at 'best practices', papers from previous years. These papers gave the students insight what their own paper should look like in the end.

The peer review session might have worked better if I had included peer review assignments in each lesson instead of only in session 3, so students would have become used to talking about each other's work more. It might also be a good idea to have students work in pairs in RS2, or to pair students with similar topics. This way, the pairs could support each other in getting the work done. In the current situation, the importance of peer review apparently is not clear to the students yet.

Positive feedback
Although I have applied several pedagogical techniques throughout the course, looking back it feels like I only applied one main intervention: positivity. As a lecturer, I am passionate about the topics I teach and this shows in the enthusiasm with which I present my topics. Feedback from students tells me that my enthusiasm is appreciated (cf. Lemov (2014) 'the joy factor.') But I am also seen as a strict lecturer with high standards and I realized I also needed to take care to always formulate my feedback in a positive way so students would not get the impression that they could never meet my standards.

Giving positive encouragement and expressing belief in my students at all times was not too difficult for me, but I must admit it sometimes was scary as well. In a few occasions my positivity and kindness felt insincere to myself, because in my mind I was thinking 'Oh my goodness, this student still needs to improve so much in his paper! Will he be able to pull this off in less than a week?!' While I doubted some students on the inside, I took care not to show it on the outside.
I am glad to be able to say that my doubts were proven wrong on several occasions. For instance, I had a very serious feedback conversation with two students in week 6, in which I had to inform them that the quality of their draft paper was substandard. Their papers were superficial, and the quality of their sources was weak. Even though I was doubtful whether they would make it, I kept these doubts to myself and I told these students that they still had their work cut out for them, but that I was sure that they could pull it off. And they did. With the improvements these students made in the final week, they showed that they were hard workers who deserved every inch of their final grade (a 6,5 and a 7,1). I do not credit myself for their success: they were hard workers from week 1, who handed in all interim assignments on time. Their success story functioned as a reminder to me how easy it is to doubt a student's abilities.
These students both had a Middle-Eastern-Dutch background, so I had to ask myself the question: did I

doubt their abilities because of their cultural background? Did I let myself succumb to the stereotype that Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch students are more likely to underperform? I cannot tell for sure, but what I do know is that it took me quite some time before I realized the full potential of these students. The strategies described in this paragraph are well-known techniques to promote 'active learning' and to create an open and safe classroom environment. They can be found in teacher's guides like Lemov (2014). The old saying that a teacher should be 'hard on the content, but soft on the relationship' has proven its worth for me in teaching RS2. I have experienced how my enthusiasm and positivism rub off on my students, and how maintaining an open and positive attitude works as an antidote to any prejudices and doubts I might have in my mind. I felt that my pedagogical approach was rewarded with a high degree of honesty by the students. The almost entirely positive evaluations my lessons received in the surveys indicate to me that I achieved my goal of creating a safe and open classroom environment in which students were not afraid of making mistakes.

3.4 Output of the course

In RS2, there are two opportunities to pass the course: students can hand in their final paper at the first opportunity (deadline at the end of week 7), or during the retake period (with a deadline halfway in the next Quarter). 28 second-year students participated in the lessons. 17 of these students handed in a paper for assessment during the first opportunity. All of these students passed, with grades ranging from 5,7 to 9,6. One of the two students who got a 9,6 already handed in a near-perfect draft paper in week six of the course (assignment 4). When I asked her how she pulled it off to write an entire research paper of such high quality in so little time, she informed me that before studying at TMA, she studied Journalism for a year, where she already acquired all the skills required for report writing.

Eleven students did not hand in their final assignment on the first deadline date. Sadly enough, only 2 out of these 11 handed in a paper at the retake opportunity. One student passed with a 6,8, the other student unfortunately failed. 9 out of 28 students never handed in a final paper and got an 'ND' ('Did not participate') as a final result.[12]
In sum, 18 students passed (64%) and 10 students (36%) failed RS2 in my class. This means that I in fact achieved the quantitative goal (a success rate of 60%) I was aiming for. Nonetheless, the lack of participation in the retake still left me feeling dissatisfied, especially since many of these students had been performing well throughout the course and in my view could easily have passed the course if they had improved their drafts and handed in their final papers.
Apart from my students, there were two parallel classes RS2, taught by my colleagues. In one class, the success rate of 61% was very close to mine (11 out of 28 students failed). The third class did not fare so well: 20 out of 30 students failed, which means the success rate for that group was only 33%. This means that the overall success rate for all second year students in RS2 was 52% (in other words: 41 out of 86 students failed the course). A lack of time for the dissemination of knowledge (see paragraph 2.3) and differences in pedagogical approach by different teachers can be seen as contributing to this result, but personal circumstances of the teacher of the third group also played a role in the lower success rate.
The paragraphs below look into the correlation between study success and cultural and educational background, and present survey results that give insight into the question why some students did not manage to hand in a final paper.

The correlation of educational and cultural background

Grading data show that educational background did not have any influence on the success rate of the students. MBO-students were just as likely as HAVO students to pass the course (table 1):[13]

Table 1: Success rate vs. educational background

	MBO	HAVO	VWO	Total
Passed	5	12	1	18
Failed	2	8	0	10

There does seem to be a correlation between the educational background and the height of the grade (Table 2): MBO-students tend to receive slightly lower grades than HAVO or VWO students, but the

12 The possible causes for not handing in a final paper are described in the next paragraphs.
13 No gender differences could be established either: 50% of the students who passed were female, and 50% of students who failed as well. The male/female radio in my class was also 50:50 (14 male, 14 female students).

numbers are too small for statistical analysis. In general, the spread of the results follows a normal grading curve.

Table 2: Height of grade vs. educational background

	MBO	HAVO	VWO	Total
5,5-5,9	1	1	0	2
6,0-6,9	2	2	0	4
7,0-7,9	1	3	0	4
8,0-8,9	1	5	0	6
9,0-9,6	0	1	1	2

The 18 students who passed the course, were from diverse cultural backgrounds:

- 6 students with a Middle-Eastern-Dutch background (Turkey, Morocco, Afghanistan)
- 6 had a East-Asian-Dutch background (China)
- 1 student had a Surinamese-Dutch background, and
- 5 students with a Dutch cultural background

The cultural backgrounds of the 10 students who failed, were Chinese-Dutch (3 students), Indonesian-Dutch (5 students), Guyanese-Dutch (1 student) and Dutch (1 student). Based on these data (again, the numbers are small), there does not appear to be a correlation between cultural background and study success in RS2.

Factors that contributed to not completing the course
I asked the students who did not hand in a paper to fill in a short survey to tell me why they did not participate. 5 out of 10 responded, providing clear reasons for not participating.
Several students made a conscious choice to drop the subject. They decided to focus on studying for resit exams from their first year study programme. Obtaining the Propaedeutic exam was a more important goal for them than finishing the RS2 paper.

Others freely admitted that bad time management was the main cause for not handing in their work. Both the deadline in week 7 and the retake deadline in Quarter 4 posed problems. In week 7, finishing the RS2 paper conflicted with studying for (resit) exams that would start in week 8. During the retake period, other obligations prevented students from working on their paper: in Quarter 4, all second year students are away from school 4 days a week, for a full-time internship of 9 weeks. Combining the full-time internship activities with working on the retake of the paper turned out to be too challenging. Several students laid the blame entirely with themselves: “I should have handed in the paper in week 7.” And: “That I did not hand in the paper during the retake period had everything to do with my personal circumstances, combining a full-time side job in the weekend with the internship during the week. It had nothing to do with the course.”
One student cited a different reason for not finishing the course: “I did not find a research topic that really interested me.” Data on his performance during the course weeks show that he only handed in the first interim assignment on time, and therefore was lagging behind in doing research for almost the entire duration of the course. The same applied to approximately 5 or 6 other students: there was a clear correlation between (not) handing in the draft version in week 6 and (not) passing the course: out of the 11 students who did not hand in a paper in week 7, only 3 handed in a draft version in week 6, and several students did not hand in earlier assignments either. As described above, I tried to get these students back on track during the individual feedback sessions in class, but the lack of handed in assignments indicates that these students were already lagging behind throughout a large part of the course, because they did not put in the amount of hours this course required. Not handing in interim assignments was indicative for not passing RS2.

I also asked the students what should be improved in the course. Some indicate that there was too much freedom, which made it easier to neglect working on the paper. One student suggested that deadlines could have been maintained more strictly, but then added: “But this is higher education so in fact everyone has his own responsibility”. Another student indicated that the deadlines were too tightly scheduled. Overall, all students evaluated the course content as clear and the feedback as helpful. Some would have liked even

more time for individual feedback during the sessions.
The data above show that not only internal factors – planning, motivation, choosing a research topic – but more importantly external factors – choosing to focus on studying for year one resits instead of second year courses, conflicting study/internship obligations and personal circumstances – contributed to not handing in a paper for the first and retake opportunity for RS1.

3.5 Summary

From the results described above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The success rate of the course increased from 25% of 64% in my class, and from 25% to 52% in all three groups of students.
- Positive feedback was the most successful aspect of the course.
- The instructional design functioned well, but having only 4 biweekly sessions per group instead of weekly meetings was seen as limiting. Students would have welcomed more sessions and more time for feedback.
- There was no difference in study results related to cultural background or prior education of the students. This may indicate that I was successful in neutralizing factors as stereotype threat and self-fulfilling prophecy in RS2.
- Students who do not hand in assignments on time or who are having trouble finding a suitable topic during the course, run the highest risk of failing. Feedback talks in class are not sufficient for this group to get them back on track. Additional instructional tools need to be developed for them. This applies to approximately 6 out of 28 students.
- The influence of external factors on the success rate of RS2 was greater than I had anticipated. Stumbling blocks for students were having to study for resit year 1 exams, a high work load for the other courses and school projects that ran alongside RS2, and managing personal circumstances, side jobs and school work.

4 Conclusion, evaluation and reflection

I started out this research focusing on several factors in the course RS2 that could present stumbling blocks for students: instructional design, cultural background, procrastination and the attitude of the teacher. By applying interventions in instructional design and pedagogical approach, I set out to answer my research question: *How can the success rate of the TMA course Research skills 2 be increased?*
My research has shown that students responded positively to the changes in instructional design (attendance requirement, mandatory interim assignments, individual feedback in each session): the demands were clear, the expectations were high and the students knew what their responsibilities were. Flipping the classroom and spending a large part of each lesson on individual feedback was appreciated highly by the students. I would have liked to make more use of peer feedback and collaborative learning in my classroom. But if group assignments should be introduced, great care should be taken that these exercises are relevant in light of the end goal of the course: there are only 4 sessions, so each in-class exercise used should be carefully designed to get the students closer to a finished paper. Another possibility is to turn the RS2 into an assignment for duo's. This way, students will receive support from each other in each stage of writing the paper.

The pedagogical approach used by their teacher (positive feedback, the joy factor, a culture of error, dialogic student-teacher interaction) was also met with approval and I believe I succeeded in creating an open and safe environment for RS2. The pedagogical changes proved to me that an open mind and positive encouragement is important for all teachers, not just for Study Career Coaches. Procrastination turned out to be an issue only for a minority of students and no influence of cultural background on course results could be established. The pedagogical approach I used may very well have contributed to a greater 'sense of belonging' of the students in my class, leading to equal participation, involvement and success from students from all walks of life (educational and cultural background). Creating an open and safe environment is already a well-known recommendation for teachers, and it has proven its worth in my research project as well.

Giving students freedom and responsibility is important for building trust; but procrastination lurks around the corner, especially for those students who are having a difficult time in getting started (finding a topic, finding relevant sources). Individual feedback sessions are not sufficient, and more experimenting with an individual lesson plan (providing students with preselected topics and/or articles) is necessary to improve the success rate of these students in the future.

A surprising result was that external factors (studying for resit exams, heavy work load for other courses and projects, personal circumstances) turned out to have a greater negative impact on the study success for RS2 than expected. Writing an individual research paper in a semester with a lot of other demanding courses (Management theory, Asian studies, Asian Language and Import project) was challenging. Some students dropped RS2 because they made a conscious decision to focus on studying for resits for their year 1 exams. Others could not strike a balance between other activities (side jobs, internships, personal circumstances) and their course work for RS2. Because I was focusing on internal factors – factors that I was able to address and change within my own course – I may have underestimated the influence of the rest of the curriculum on RS2. Study delay students already incurred in year 1 was not a factor I could take into account in my interventions, but it shows the importance of Tuitts fourth dimension of Inclusive excellence: an inclusive pedagogy. : the heavy course load for other courses and project work in the same Quarter and study delay students already incurred in year 1.

This shows the importance of Tuitts fourth dimension of Inclusive excellence: curriculum transformation (Del Carmen Salazar et al., 2010, p. 215-216). Faculty involvement is crucial for progress. Any successful interventions in my course might be annulled by counterproductive elements in other parts of the curriculum. Dissemination of knowledge is therefore very important. This already showed in the different results from the parallel classes RS2: a success rate of 60-65% in two groups, and only 33% in the third group. Colleague involvement is crucial, but teachers should not only look at their own course. They should also coordinate with fellow-teachers so course demands for one course do not hinder the activities for another course. This is why dissemination of knowledge and coordination with other courses in the curriculum will receive my special attention next year.

In the end, although I achieved the quantitative goal of my research with a 64% success rate, still 36% of my students will need to retake RS2 next year. They will join the other third- and fourth-year students who did not pass RS2 yet. A separate action plan needs to be developed for these resit students.

But no matter how many resits a student needs, no matter if he is a fourth-year or a fifth-year student, a former MBO-, HAVO- or VWO-student, a student with a Dutch or a multicultural background, etc. etc., each of these students should feel that he or she is welcome in the classroom, that his teacher believes in his capability to pass the course, and that he is allowed to make mistakes. It is my firm belief that it is the main job of the teacher to instil this ‘sense of belonging’ in each and every student.

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Appendix II

Interventions to make Cultural Differences in Third Year Project Teams in Higher Education Fruitful
Nebojsa Jovanov

Abstract

This paper is part of a wider research project with an assignment on researching how *to make the three RBS bachelor programs more inclusive, intercultural and international in such a way that it results in more sense of belonging in all students.*
In that wider context this action research offers a practical answer to this question from the perspective of international project groups. The answer provided pertains specifically to what role does social integration play within multicultural group teams and what ingredients are essential for social integration. The research zooms in even further on the importance of the creation of a safe team environment, as an essential aspect of social integration, and which interventions can be used in creating such a safe team environment. In a broader context, the interventions suggested as a result of this research offer both students and teachers a practical tool on how to use the cultural differences within their team as an advantage that can improve their team results.

I. Introduction

As a teacher in an international business school in Rotterdam I hear, and am expected to do something, with the word *international* in various contexts on a daily basis. I teach about international business to international students who will hopefully after graduation be well prepared for the ever globalising international business organization of the future.
The question arises therefore, how can I as a teacher create the right international micro environment that will somehow resemble the real-world international business. Or more specifically, how can a context be created where students can not only experience an international environment, but also learn how to become effective in dealing with the differences and potential problems that arise from such a multi-cultural setting.

There are several examples in my daily practice where problems among students occur which are related to and often stem from the multi-cultural cooperation, but for the purposes of this research I will focus on one specific setting. Last year I was involved as a tutor in third year group projects at IBL (International Business and Languages). The participants of these projects come from different backgrounds to work together in teams of 4 to 5 students. The regular students have a Dutch background, a bi-cultural Dutch background or an international western European background. Then there are international students, some of whom are exchange students who come to study for only half a year, and come from various parts of the world but mainly from China, Eastern Europe and mostly neighbouring Western European countries.
In the past the collaboration between students from all these different nationalities has sometimes proven to be quite challenging.

Both I and my colleague Harry Gorter, but also other teachers who have worked on the 3rd year projects, noticed that both the Dutch and the international students complain about the other students' ways of working (e.g. collective vs. individual), different motivation levels and (dis) respect for deadlines to name but a few of the complaints. My personal experience from last year, while working as a tutor with these groups, was that especially the Dutch students complain about their international exchange student group members.

The experience of these problems of the students clearly discourages the development of intercultural skills that will benefit students to deal with such issues in their future careers in (international) organizations upon graduation. But what exactly is meant by the term *intercultural skills* and does literature say something about how and why should students develop such skills?

To answer this question, it is maybe useful to know that it has become evident that developing the intercultural competence for students will not come automatically. Despite the enduring assumption that "proximity" to students from other cultural backgrounds will automatically result in intercultural contact which leads to intercultural learning has been refuted by research (Robertson et al, 2000).

It is a well-known trend that the university classroom is becoming more and more international in most western countries. Given the fact that students are faced with colleagues with various cultural backgrounds it is only logical that students need to learn how to interact in this setting. This is not only because the student will have less conflict with their international fellow students, but perhaps more importantly because being able to work effectively as a member in multicultural teams is a generic skill that is highly valued by employers (Ryan, 2013). For reasons of simplification and clarity, I will define these intercultural skills by using the term intercultural competencies as defined by Deardoff who states that Intercultural competence "is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006)."
The focus of this action research is to find out what concrete actions can teachers undertake during group projects to develop intercultural competence in students.

The reason for this focus on intercultural groups in particular is twofold. Firstly, because I experienced a problem in my own 3rd year international project groups and secondly, because the literature confirms that to achieve intercultural competency, intercultural group work should be an integral part of a student's educational experience. (Popov, et al., 2011).

Current versus desired situation

Although, the marks of the projects of last year were quite good I had the strong feeling that if the project teams were to succeed in better mutual cooperation the students would deliver even better results, and maybe even more importantly they would learn more from each other, enjoy the intercultural aspect of their groups and therefore somehow be more prone to develop intercultural competence. It is my suspicion that the current situation (last year's projects) of frequent complaints by students is closely connected to the lack of a safe social environment within the project groups. The definition for the right environment I will use throughout this action research is a psychologically safe educational setting where students can feel free to share and even criticize other students where necessary, and where students will include all members equally regardless of their cultural background. Since this right environment was absent in several groups last year, the need arose to do research to discover in what way can the cooperation between team members in the project groups improve. To this end an action research was set up in the fall semester (block 3 and 4) in the school year of 2015-16 among 3rd year IBL students.

Background

Within the programme of International Business and Languages (IBL) at the Rotterdam Business School various group projects are organised for 3rd year students. There are three different projects at IBL in year 3 and these projects are connected to the three different electives students can choose from: Doing business in Central and Eastern Europe, Doing business in Latin America and Marketing Communication. I was tutoring 6 groups of students who had to produce this deliverable throughout the 16 weeks of the project. These 6 groups were divided into two focus regions. The first set of 4 groups were part of the elective Doing Business in Central and Eastern Europe and the second set of 2 groups were part of the elective Doing Business in Latin America. In the concept and research set up phase of this project I worked closely with Mr. Harry Gorter a lecturer in Marketing Communication for whose project groups I was a tutor last year in the 3rd year project. We decided to work together because we both experienced the same problems from two different perspectives, namely that of a lecturer and of a tutor, and also because he did a similar research on the elective of Marketing Communication which gave us a broader sample of students. Furthermore, this action research gave me and Mr. Gorter an opportunity to research the same problem by focusing on two different sets of project groups, from two different perspectives (teacher and tutor) which will hopefully lead to more reliable results compared to researching just one set of project groups.

Goal of the research

The goal of this research is to find specific and practical interventions that can be used in order to create the right environment in the project groups especially before but also throughout the duration of the project which will improve cooperation between the culturally diverse group members and therefore help increase intercultural competences in the students. This research goal is in line with at least two aspects of what Tuitt's terms inclusive excellence in education: Interpersonal Awareness and Inclusive Learning Environment (Tuitt at all 2010). Regarding the contribution to the Interpersonal awareness, the chosen interventions when implemented and exercised with the students, will inevitably contribute to an increased level of awareness of the student's own worldview. The very interaction, discussion and immersion into topics of diverse cultures expands the knowledge of how the students developed their own worldview and helps them reflect on the worldview of other students as well.

Regarding the goal of this research and how this goal contributes to the creation of an Inclusive Learning Environment at least one aspect is important. When the teacher reflects upon and implements the interventions (that will be chosen as a result of this research) he or she will learn more about the students' background, social identities and learning styles. This knowledge will in turn lead to a reflection upon and ideally creation of a more inclusive learning environment.
In order to achieve the research goal, as stated above, I will answer the following research questions:

Research question:
Which interventions can be effective in improving social integration, pertaining to cultural differences in the 3rd year project teams at IBL, by specifically focusing on team cooperation in culturally diverse teams?

Sub questions:

1. How do cultural differences affect team cooperation?
2. What general principles can help develop intercultural competence in project groups?
3. Which interventions can be found (in literature and experience of colleagues) that are useful for improving social integration in culturally diverse teams?

This research question is closely related to the overall research question of the whole PLC (Professional Learning Community) project at RBS (Rotterdam Business School). By answering the research question of my personal action research I hope to contribute to answering the main PLC project research question:

Which methods can be used by lecturers in the classroom to make the three RBS bachelor programs more inclusive, intercultural and international in such a way that it results in more sense of belonging in all students?

The answer to the main research question of this action research paper would give lecturers more concrete hands on tools to help them understand and increasing the sense of belonging for students within the specific context of project groups. In order to achieve this some research findings will be provided on what kind of social environment is needed in order to increase the sense of belonging of students in project groups. The answer of this question will be the connecting point between the research goal of the RBS PLC project and this individual action research paper.

II. Methodology

The ultimate aim of Action Research is to improve the teacher's educational environment by using a process that is practical and easily applicable to any problem or issue a teacher might want to change. The involvement of students is, I believe, a strength of action research, and therefore the input of the students as described in the next section is the backbone of this research. However, apart from student input an extensive literature review was conducted to look into multicultural group work in particular.

For answering questions sub questions 1 and 2 secondary data sources were used which consisted of book and article review. Sub question number 3 was answered by combining a short literature review and conducting several interventions among students, described in detail in the next section.

All the research data was gathered during the tutor meetings I had with the students. I must also point out that not all the students submitted the questionnaires, since these interventions were not mandatory or were not part of the grade. Nevertheless, a response rate of 65% was achieved which is sufficient but given the number of the relatively small sample size of 24 students, the reliability leaves something to be desired. A further shortcoming of the research is that our literature review was not finalized before we (me and Mr. Gorter) had to start with designing and starting the interventions since we needed to start our interventions in the beginning of block 3 which was at the beginning of February in 2016.

III. Answers to research questions, description of the interventions and interpretation

1.How do cultural differences affect team cooperation?

There is a lot of research done on the effects of difference in effectiveness between mono- cultural and multicultural teams. This paper relies quite heavily on the models and suggestions that Kramer (Kramer, 2009) has developed in her book Managing Cultural Dynamics for at least two reasons. Firstly, she as a native author of the Netherlands brings the Dutch perspective and context as a starting point. The fact that this is not stated explicitly does not undermine the fact that she brings her own background into the cultural models and findings she offers in her book. This, I believe, is more useful in the context of our own university, which is based in the Netherlands, and has a majority of Dutch born teaching staff, than using a cultural models developed by a foreign author. And secondly, the research of Kramer has a substantial focus on the social aspects of team work and cultural dynamics by showing how to create a team culture that is socially comfortable, which in turn leads to a more effective team. This focus of her research on mutual trust, participation and team loyalty coincide with the goal of this research paper. The context in which Kramer concludes her research is mainly in the work setting and organizational environments, but the observations and findings can be also translated to and used in the educational environment as well, since the problems with intercultural team work to a great extent are of the same nature in both educational and work environments.

What is often the case in both these contexts is that multicultural teams perform either below or above average. The reason behind above average performance is the wide range of perspectives a team can draw from but at the same time this divergent force could also be a weakness. These various perspectives also increase the complexity of mutual cooperation between team members and the evaluation and implementation of these perspectives can be challenging (Kramer, 2009). This was indeed the problem I experienced last year in the 3rd year projects. Students had difficulties finding a way to openly share and implement various opinions on how to best deliver the work required by the projects.

There are many problems that are common in all project groups related to scheduling, conflict management, adhering to timelines and alike. But above these problems another layer of problems exists that is specific to multicultural groups and relates to the complexity which arises due to culture-related differences (Behfar et al. 2006). Because of the different cultural backgrounds that students bring to a multicultural group the "web of intra-group dynamics" becomes more complex (Halverson & Tirmizi 2008 p.12).

Kramer (2009) states two main challenges that exist in managing culturally diverse project groups: finding the right mechanisms of dealing with exclusion and preventing and solving cultural misunderstandings throughout the duration of the projects. In conclusion, it can be therefore said that exclusion of individual group members and cultural misunderstandings are two key issues that affect team cooperation in multi-cultural teams.

2. What general principles can help develop intercultural competence in project groups?
Incorporating group work in higher education, specifically in multicultural settings, creates both challenges and opportunities. The challenges arise when coordinating students' different communication skills, behavioral patterns and intercultural competences. On the other hand, the opportunities to capitalize on the different cultural backgrounds of the students are also present. These potential benefits, found primarily in terms of sharing culturally diverse knowledge, should be capitalized on (Popov, et al., 2012). To make group work of international teams effective for the purposes of developing intercultural competences at least two aspects are essential. Firstly, the teacher should create the right environment for students to participate in social integration before the actual subject-specific tasks take place (Ryan, 2013) and secondly, making the development of intercultural competency for students more explicitly "outlined in the learning outcomes of the exercise and marks awarded for demonstration of awareness of and / or reflection on these skills" (Ryan, 2013 p. 24).

For the purposes of this PLC research I have focused on the first aspect, namely creating the right environment for students to integrate socially before (and also during) the subject-specific tasks took place, as a starting point in the development of intercultural competence.

The creation of such a safe psychological environment is also a goal for our project groups and will be part of the goals of the interventions. Kramer concurs by stating that the "minimum goal of every team leader should be to create an atmosphere and climate in which everyone feels at ease and functions well. Her answer in how to create this climate begins with the recognition of team member's individual differences and respect for each other's abilities as a starting point. She continues to say however that in order to reach the maximum potential of multicultural group work, a safe environment is just the beginning step and only a challenging climate can contribute to maximum utilization of cultural differences. (Kramer, 2009). As mentioned earlier, the scope of this project is only the creation of the safe environment and not looking into what challenges make groups excel.

The importance of project group climate and safety is also something Google recently discovered. During their extensive research on what makes some project groups more effective than others they found out that the key element of successful groups was the social environment. Only when the group members experienced a high degree of psychological safety open communication commences and project members get involved in conversational turn-taking and experience empathy for the other's perspective and experience (Chong, 2016).

3.Which interventions can be found (in literature and experience of colleagues) that are useful in developing intercultural competence in culturally diverse teams?
One of the main ways of developing good cooperation in multicultural teams is to focus on interaction while

preventing team members to think in stereotypes. (Kramer, 2009).
In order to avoid problems in multicultural teams one should not necessarily plan endless discussions and sensitivity moments with the team what is more useful is to “recognize that differences exists and encourage people to share their opinions and points of view; and discuss the working methods and procedures more explicitly than would be the case in a mono cultural team (Kramer, 2009 p. 22).”

Bearing this in mind Kramer has developed several ways to help the interaction process within multi-cultural teams. One of these is a set of sample questions for a cultural dialogue. These questions are useful in opening up discussions in new teams with the purpose of creating the right climate in which team members can start feeling at ease from day 1. The second intervention that Kramer has developed is a quick scan of cultural dynamics which is a tool used to help improve team cooperation which is more of a diagnostic and improvement tool for multicultural dynamics in a team (Kramer, 2009).
Based on these two sets of questions me and Mr. Gorter have developed an adjusted set of interventions which we have used in all stages of our project groups from inception to the end stage.
The interventions I used, which may slightly differ to those of Mr. Gorter and are as follows:

Intervention 1: Starting questioner with 20 questions

The purpose of the starting questioner was to gather data in order to find out several things:

a) the students past experience with multicultural teams;
b) student’s opinion about what constitutes good team work and cooperation;
c) student’s opinion on what constitutes team design;
d) the students’ opinion on what is important in creating good team interaction.

Intervention 2: Cultural “ice breaker” questions

The objective of these cultural questions was to be an ice-breaker for the students through which they can get to know one another and create a good and safe environment in which more cooperation can take place.

An example of ice breaker questions that were given to the students are: What foods are most famous in your own culture and why do you think this is the case? Similarly, another question was asked about language: What is your mother tongue or dialect and what other languages do you speak?

Intervention 3: Making a short film about group experiences in the middle of the project

The objective of this film was to evaluate mid-way through the project the status of how the cultural aspects of the project are progressing in a fun and unique way

Intervention 4:

End questioner with 10 questions

The objective of the end questioner was to evaluate the same topics of interest as the starting questioner and ask the opinion of the students these issues once the project was finalized.

a) the students experience of the advantages and disadvantages of working in the current multicultural project teams
b) student’s opinion about how good the cooperation within the current team was
c) students’ opinion on what helped the team deliver good quality work and what made them successful
d) the students’ opinion on the added value of the multi-cultural team in this project and a reflection on what new things were learned.

Outcome of intervention 1

a) Most students already had some experience in multicultural teams mainly from internships abroad or from project work in teams they had done previously at IBL
b) What students valued in good team work and cooperation was: Working together, respecting each other, good communication, clear planning, understand each other, honesty, stick to deadlines, everyone contributes equally, good atmosphere, open-minded, obeying agreed upon rules, the goal is group achievements but they are achieved through individual achievements, constructive feedback, use each-others’ knowledge and so on.
c) Most students put priority on group results above individual results. Some students thought that it was best to first individually conduct your task and later combine the work while others also felt that a combination of individual and group focus is best.
d) Regarding team interaction almost all students believe that you need to be direct, keep good eye contact and provide eye to eye feedback whenever possible.

It was clear to me that throughout the tutor meetings the students did actually live up to their opinions and built upon their past experiences. For example, they were quite direct also with me as a tutor and when they were not satisfied with the provided answers from me we arranged join meetings with other teachers who could help them further in their work.

Outcome of intervention 2

The results of the second intervention, the cultural "ice breaker" questions were not written down since the purpose of this intervention was to provide the context for a more pleasant and easy conversations on topics that were culturally relevant and interesting to the students. It was my impression that the use of these questions in first session vas fruitful in a sense that it contributed to creating a more relaxed group atmosphere and a context where the participants already know something about each other's cultural background from day 1.

Discussing these cultural questions on a personal level made a great contribution toward the creation of deeper and more personal relationships among group members which in turn contributed to a better social environment, and probably better group results. This is an observation of both me and Mr. Gorter and in that sense it is subjective. We compared the experiences of the previous year projects and this year projects and we noticed that already from the very beginning (after the ice-breaker questions were introduced) the social environment in the project groups felt more relaxed and in some ways safer for both the students and teachers. This is a conclusion that is purely based on observation and comparison and is in that sense not academically sound.

Outcome of intervention 3

The results of the third intervention were also satisfactory, as the students shared about what they thought was difficult about working in groups. The main issues were the different ways of working and different expectations that mainly comes because of different levels of education but also because of different levels of experience in previous project related group work. It was good for the students about the advantages and disadvantages of working in multicultural groups and share this in the middle of the project. Nevertheless, it seems that the form of video is not optimal because all groups provided a very politically correct answers and focused disproportionally on the positive aspects of group work.

Outcome of intervention 4

a) **Advantages**: Different points of view improved quality, can find sources in other languages, combining different views, knowledge of different cultures, you learn things from other cultures which improves content.
Disadvantages: Cultural differences lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, different understanding of what the assignment is, different concepts about sticking to deadlines. There was sometimes tension when giving feedback to each other which was easily considered criticism, difficult to give criticism to people from other cultures, even simple issues take longer to discuss and decide on, not the same knowledge level of methods

b) Generally positive, and even though sometimes the deadlines were not met respect was not lost. One group did experience communication problems, one student found it difficult to give feedback to a Dutch member of group because he got upset

c) Motivated students, multi-cultural knowledge, perseverance, compromising, good communication despite different backgrounds, delivering information on time

d) Mostly task related comments, like more knowledge of languages which is useful for finding sources, broader knowledge of project issues.

This intervention was taken after the project was finished and although there were more comments given regarding the disadvantages of working in a multi-cultural team the students did. It must be pointed out, however, that it is difficult to establish a correlation between the multi-cultural make up of a team and good team results.

IV. Evaluation and reflection

My overall impression of this year's 3rd year projects interaction among group members is more positive than last year. In all groups where the above mentioned interventions were conducted there were almost no problems that were expressed to me as a tutor, relating to group member interaction. This is of course a very positive development; however, it is quite difficult to prove that the only reason for this "success" in

team cooperation can be attributed to the interventions as described in this research paper. Nevertheless, the positive experience of this year increases the likelihood that these interventions have indeed contributed in creating the right climate and context for a more effective intercultural interaction.
The main research question of this action research paper was:

Which interventions can be effective in improving team performance pertaining to cultural differences in the 3rd year project teams at IBL by specifically focusing on team cooperation in culturally diverse teams?

Based upon the answers of the sub questions in the previous section we can answer the main research question by stating that the creation of a good social environment even before the content tasks are assigned is essential for good team cooperation. This coincides and confirms the findings of Ryan as presented under sub-question 2 in this paper.
In order to create the safe social environment intervention for the purposes of improved intercultural cooperation 1 and 2 were very useful. Intervention 3 however, the video in the middle of the project, was not as useful and needs to be avoided or redesigned. Intervention number 4 is useful but the questions need to be redesigned and more focused on measuring the difference of the level of intercultural competence the students had at the beginning and the end of the project.
Intervention 4 gave mixed results. Intercultural competence is not a skill that a student could significantly increase in a period of five months especially when only measured in the context of the projects. Therefore, a well-designed end questioner needs to be tailor made and have clearly designed objectives. The questioner used was somewhat vague and did not provide a clear picture on the extent intercultural collaboration played a role in team success.

In retrospect I think that in order for the interventions to be more successful they need to be conducted in cohort with a content filled course where students could learn more about intercultural dynamics. While IBL offers such courses in for example Cross Cultural Management it would be useful to combine the content of these courses with project group work, in order to better measure and apply the things learned in the course in real life situations.
In conclusion, the interventions were useful in improving the overall quality of the year 3 student project experience and inevitably contributed to a better mutual team cooperation. Furthermore, the goal of the PLC project as a whole was that our research results could be also used within similar contexts elsewhere within the educational institution and in this sense this project was also a success. Starting this year on a smaller scale IBL has also introduced a couple of the interventions to the first year projects that are based on this action research. I hope that the findings of this action research will be a good basis to design valuable and focused interventions to create a good climate in future multicultural project groups in all years of study.

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Appendix III

Learning styles and inclusive pedagogy: Investigation of Chinese students' learning styles and lecturers' teaching styles at Rotterdam Business School.
Linas Čepinskas

Abstract

The aim of this study was to establish a link between the learning styles of Chinese students and the teaching styles of the lecturers of IBMS. The data analysis showed that Chinese students use a number of learning styles. According to this research no single learning style is applicable to Chinese students. However, Chinese students in Shanghai score slightly higher in collaborative and competitive learning than their Chinese counterparts in Rotterdam. As a result, lecturers could facilitate Chinese students by diversifying their teaching methods and tools and in such a way promote collaborative and competitive culture in the classroom even more. In addition, IBMS lecturers are most inclined to use expert teaching styles. Other four teaching styles including facilitator, formal authority, delegator, and personal model, are used moderately. On the whole, the teaching styles in IBMS and learning styles of Chinese students match. However, particular attention should be paid to the socio-cultural aspects of the Chinese student population when introducing and experimenting with different teaching methods in various courses and stages of learning. Last but not least, despite its limitations, the study sheds new light on the characteristics of Chinese students in higher education offering practical insights which can be used to aid teaching and learning in different environments.

Introduction

Rotterdam Business School (RBS) is home to over 85 different nationalities which makes it the most international institute of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences located in Europe's largest port city of Rotterdam. With the advent of digital technologies, alternative ways of learning and teaching as well as the increasing growth of international students it is crucial to keep abreast of the latest developments in higher education. Likewise, it is important to monitor the situation in our own classrooms and take necessary action to improve student learning.

So far little has been done in examining the learning styles of particular international student groups, including for instance, Chinese students. Considering that Chinese students represent the largest share of the entire international student body at RBS, it is important to shed more light on the needs and expectations of this student group in relation to its preferred learning style. At the moment 141 Chinese nationals are studying at RBS and 126 of them study International Business and Management studies (IBMS) (see figure 1).

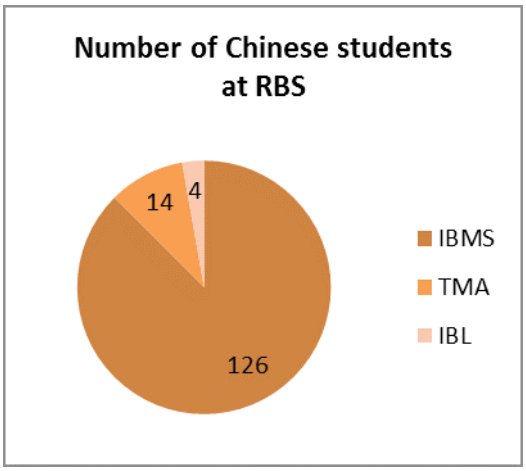

Figure 1. Number of Chinese students at RBS (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, 2015)

Personal experience as a lecturer of International Business and Management Studies has shown that Chinese students at RBS often struggle with English skills, they may not always have enough cultural knowledge or, in general, they find it hard to study together with other students across different subjects. This is in line with the results of the research conducted by Harms (2005), which shows that the greatest difficulties for Chinese students in the Netherlands include the command of the English language, the possession of the prior knowledge and skills needed to study in the Netherlands, and differences in learning styles (as cited in Biemans and van Mil, 2008).

Furthermore, by examining the statistical data from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, one can notice that Chinese students, in comparison to other students, study longer (graduate later) than their peers. Additionally, their dropout rate in the propaedeutic and main phase is relatively high as well. Of course, there may be numerous underlying reasons for all these issues. However, this situation illustrates that additional attention is needed to establish the study habits of Chinese students.

This research is part the professional learning community at Rotterdam Business School whose main aim was to investigate which methods can be used by lecturers in the classroom to make the three RBS bachelor programmes more inclusive, intercultural and international in such a way that it results in more sense of belonging in all students. According to Salazar, Norton and Tuitt (2010: 243) inclusive pedagogy teaching practices embrace students as a whole taking in consideration their personal, political and intellectual features, and as such "…diversity is valued as a central component of a learning process".

In line with the agreed general research framework, this article therefore sets out to examine the extent to which the learning styles of Chinese students align with the teaching styles used by the lecturers of IBMS. The basic premise in this study is that students should be exposed to a range of different learning and teaching styles during their studies. By doing so, students would be better able to understand, acquire and apply new information in alternative, less conventional, and easier ways. Last but not least, some practical recommendations are provided to help the teaching staff of IBMS to facilitate more effective learning in their classrooms.

Literature review

The literature on learning styles is characterized by a vast number of studies on the differences in learning patterns among learners of different origin, age, gender, etc. One of the most commonly used definitions of a learning style is provided by Keefe (1979) who defines learning styles as 'characteristic cognitive, effective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment' (as cited in De Vita 2001:166). In other words, learning styles indicate personal preferences for learning in different environments.

The benefits of identifying learning styles of individuals are manifold. For instance, educational organisations as well as companies can select and adapt more appropriate ways of acquiring, sharing and imparting knowledge to its students and staff respectively (Holtbrügge and Mohr, 2009). Furthermore, identifying learning styles can help design instruction that addresses the learning needs of all (or most) students (Larkin, 2001, Felder and Silverman 1988). A study by Shi (2011) shows that for students each style preference offers significant strengths in learning and working. If students can recognize their strengths, they can take advantage of ways they learn best. In line with that, optimal teaching can be achieved when all students sometimes receive instruction matching their learning style preferences (Felder and Spurlin, 2005). What is equally important is that neither learning nor teaching styles are immutable (Montgomery and Groat, 1998). They both can be adjusted over time and for different purposes in different learning contexts. In addition to the match between a learning and teaching style, other factors, such as classroom dynamics, previous educational background, motivation, gender, and multicultural aspects can impact the amount and quality of learning.

Due to cultural differences, learning styles vary extensively across cultures (Holtbrügge, 2009; Li, 2003; De Vita, 2001). There are plenty of studies investigating the differences of learning styles in individuals across cultures. Yet few studies have been conducted on Chinese learning styles at Dutch universities although Chinese students rank in the second place as the largest international student group (6,642 out of 90,000 international students) (Nuffic, 2016). Some recent and relevant Dutch studies relating to the learning styles and study success of Engineering and Life Sciences students from China, however, are available and offer interesting insights. For instance, Biemans and van Mil (2008) from Wageningen University investigated the extent to which the learning styles of Chinese and Dutch Life Sciences students differed. Their research findings demonstrated that Chinese students, on average, were more reproduction-oriented and had an undirected learning style whereas the Dutch students, as a group, did not have a dominant learning style.

In addition, a recent study by Van Gelderen (2015) carried out at HZ University of Applied Sciences among Chinese students of Engineering has shown significant differences in learning styles compared to their year of studies as well as the class/group. According to Van Gelderen (ibid.), the Chinese students can study independently better than their Dutch peers, but they are not better at independently solving problems.

When discussing learning styles of Chinese students it is important to keep in mind the cultural values that are central to Chinese thinking and behaviour. In essence, these values help shape the learning styles of particular groups of students. Lau and Roffey (2002:9) identified three Confucian values as highly relevant to Chinese students: respect for age and hierarchy, orientation towards groups, and preservation of ‘face’. First, Chinese students use age to clarify their position in the teacher/student hierarchy. Second, Chinese students are expected to maintain harmonious relationships, which means they view the teacher as a leader figure accepting them without any challenge. Third, Chinese students attach high importance to the views others hold of them far more than may be the case in other cultures. Moreover, any conflicts and arguments with the teacher are culturally inhibited.

The information presented above pinpoints the vital role of the teaching staff in facilitating the learning process of all students and challenging them by experimenting with different learning styles and strategies. That is why understanding the learning style of the students is not enough. It is important to raise awareness of the existing varieties of learning styles among lecturers and students alike and encourage teaching staff to expand their repertoire of teaching styles in order to make learning more inclusive. Further, proponents of inclusive pedagogy advocate teaching practices where the student is embraced in the learning process. Importantly, each student enters the classroom as personal, political, and intellectual being with his or her complex experiences and life which makes diversity a central component of the learning process (Tuitt, 2003).

A variety of models are available to classify learning styles and identify individual learning preferences. For instance, the Felder and Silverman‘s Learning Style Model (1988) has been explicitly developed for classroom application and the results provide an identification of the preference profile of a group of students (De Vita, 2001). The Index of Learning Styles (ILS) is a 44-question instrument which can be administered via a questionnaire or online. Each of the four dimensions has parallels in other learning style models (e.g. Kolb). The model, first applied among engineering students in the United States, classifies learners into active and reflective, sensing and intuitive, visual and verbal, and sequential and global (see figure below).

Continuum	Preference
Sensing – Intuitive	How you prefer perceive or take information
Visual – Verbal	How you prefer information to be presented
Active – Reflective	How you prefer to process information
Sequential – Global	How you prefer to organise and progress towards understanding information

Table 1. Overview of learning styles (Peak Performance Centre, 2015)

Felder and Spurlin (2005) note that learning style dimensions can vary from student to student. They may be mild, moderate or strong. In addition, the authors suggest only behavioural tendencies, which means that learning strengths and weaknesses are not predicted by the questionnaire. Furthermore, learning style preferences can be affected by the student's previous learning experience. What is important to emphasise is that identifying a learning style is not to label students and modify instruction to fit their labels but, instead, to offer a balanced instruction for all students.

As far as the reliability and validity are concerned, the ILS shows the most representative characteristics of each learning style dimension presented above as well as how representative these characteristics are. In addition, the model is shown to be of particular use in technology-enhanced learning (Graf, S. et al. 2007).

On the other hand, Anthony Grasha's (1994) typology of learning styles' stands out from others in that it is based on students' responses to actual classroom activities rather than on a more general assessment of personal or cognitive abilities (Montgomery and Groat, 1998). It has been specifically designed to determine teaching techniques that address particular learning styles of students. There are five learning styles (see figure 2): competitive, collaborative, avoidant, participant, dependent, and independent. These styles reflect student attitudes towards learning, classroom activities, their teachers and peers alike; the model emphasizes the students' ability to solve problems, engage in communication with others, and organize materials (eLearning Industry 2016).

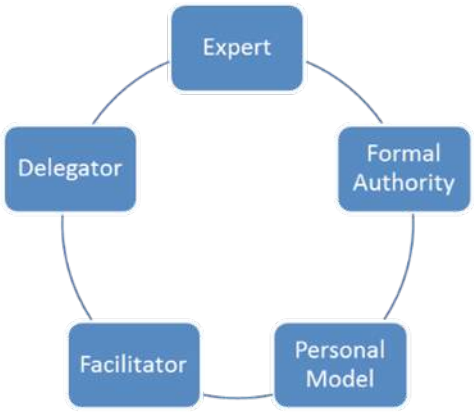

Figure 2. Teaching styles based on Grasha (1994)

One of the distinguishing characteristics of this typology, as argued by Montgomery and Groat (1998), is that Grasha (1994) has also developed a corresponding Teaching Styles Inventory (TSI) based on actual classroom behaviours. As a result, both learning and teaching styles can be compared and hence can help fully describe the social dynamics of the classroom setting. Similar to learning styles, teaching staff utilise a wide range of teaching styles which reflect one's personal preferences, experience, as well as attitudes towards the subject matter and the target audience. According to Grasha (1995:1), teaching styles "may facilitate or hinder students' ability to acquire content and skills and it influences the learning styles the students adopt". Oftentimes lecturers are prone to use one or two main teaching styles for various reasons whereby limiting their own repertoire of effectively delivering learning activities and facilitating a learning process.
Research by Grasha (1994) showed that the expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator styles stand out as the most prevalent teaching styles (see figure 2). TSI which helps identify 5 teaching styles (see table 2): expert (transmitter of information), formal authority (sets standards and defines acceptable ways of doing things), personal model (teaches by illustration and direct example), facilitator (guides and directs by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives), and delegator (develops students' ability to function autonomously).

Learning style	Characteristics	Classroom preferences
Competitive	Compete with other students	Teacher-centred, class activities
Collaborative	Share ideas with others	Student-led small groups
Avoidant	Uninterested, non-participant	Anonymous environment
Participant	Eager to participate	Lectures with discussion
Dependent	Seek authority figure	Clear instructions, little ambiguity
Independent	Think for themselves	Independent study and projects

Table 2. Characteristics of Grasha-Riechmann Learning Styles (Montgomery and Groat, 1998)

In the table below, an overview is provided of learning and teaching styles which could be used in a learning environment. By knowing the predominant learning styles of students, teaching staff can enrich their repertoire of teaching techniques so as to provide multiple learning opportunities for all students. When designing the course and selecting teaching methods, it is recommended to consider one's own teaching style as well as students' preferred ways of learning. Grasha (1994) points out that lecturers introducing the methods of clusters 3 and 4 need to use caution. According to him, these activities are best employed when: they are introduced gradually into the course; a clear explanation for their use is provided; explicit instructions and requirements are given to the students; lecturers observe students' reactions and intervene appropriately to reduce the possibility of negative reactions.

Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Primary Teaching Styles *Expert/Formal Authority* **Primary Learning Styles** *Dependent/Participant/Competitive*	**Primary Teaching Styles** *Personal Model/Expert/Formal Authority* **Primary Learning Styles** *Participant/Dependent/Competitive*
Exams/Grades Emphasized • Guest Speakers • Lectures • Teacher-Centered Questioning • Teacher-Centered Discussions • Term Papers • Tutorials • Technology Based Presentations	Role Modeling by Illustration • Discussing Alternate Approaches • Sharing Personal Experiences • Demonstrating Ways of Thinking/Doing Things
Cluster 3	**Cluster 4**
Primary Teaching Styles *Facilitator/Personal Model/Expert* **Primary Learning Styles** *Collaborative/Participative/Independent*	**Primary Teaching Styles** *Delegator/Facilitator/Expert* **Primary Learning Styles** *Independent/Collaborative/Participant*
Case Studies • Critical Thinking Discussions • Guided Readings • Key Statement Discussions • Problem Based Learning	Contract Teaching, Debate Formats, Independent Study/Research, Learning Pairs, Position Papers, Self Discovery Activities, Small Group Work Teams, Student Journals

Table 3. Teaching methods associated with each cluster of teaching and learning styles (Grasha, 1994)

It is worthwhile noting that Grasha does not advocate to accommodate all learning style preferences at all times. Instead, he argues that an awareness of these styles can help lecturers enhance their methods of presentation (Montgomery and Groat, 1998). In addition, Grasha sees it as the task of the teaching staff to facilitate students in developing the learning styles they are weak in.

In terms of the reliability of Grasha's typology of learning and teaching styles, it is considered to be medium (Baykul, Gürsel, Sulak, et al. 2010). For the purposes of this small-scale study the model is considered to be sufficient.

Methodology

Participants

In this study 35 Chinese business undergraduate students were surveyed in April-June 2016. 28 of them were 2nd and 3rd year business management students from a partner university in Shanghai and 7 of them were 1st-4th year Chinese students of IBMS.

The average age of the survey participants was 20 in Shanghai and 23 years of age in Rotterdam respectively. There were 2 males and 26 females in the sample of Shanghai and 1 male and 6 females in the sample of Rotterdam. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to diversify the research sample (for instance, include more males) due to time and logistical constraints.

Since the research framework also addressed the teaching styles of the teaching staff, 13 IBMS lecturers were surveyed in June-July 2016. The average age of the lecturers was 41 years of age. There were 8 males and 7 females in the sample. The lecturers were nationals of Canada (1), China (1), Netherlands (8), Serbia (1), Ukraine (1), and the United States (1).

Procedure
The researcher used his personal contacts in Shanghai in order to hand out ILS questionnaires (Grasha-Riechmann Inventory of Learning Styles) to the target group. In addition, he reached out to Chinese students in IBMS via e-mail by sending them a personal video inviting them to participate in his action research. The researcher used the official list of all Chinese nationals enrolled in IBMS and contacted them all at the same time. Only students who showed interest in participating in research were sent a link with detailed instructions to an online ILS questionnaire.

In addition to Chinese students, IBMS lecturers filled in self-administered online TSI questionnaires. The researcher contacted many RBS lecturers early in advance inviting them to participate in research. Only those who responded to the invitation, received a link with detailed instructions to the online questionnaires.

Instruments
The ILS was used to identify particular learning styles of students and TSI was used to determine teaching styles of lecturers accordingly. These instruments developed by Grasha (1994) were chosen due to their flexibility as well as adaptability to the research target groups and limitations of research scope. The ILS consists of a list of 60 items which measure dominance in one or more of the six learning styles. On the other hand, lecturers filled in an online TSI questionnaire consisting of 40 items. Both questionnaires use a five-point scale measuring the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the statements.

Besides the above-mentioned questionnaires, 5 semi-structured 50 minute-long interviews were conducted with Chinese students enrolled in IBMS in July 2016. All of these students participated in ILS survey. The aim of these interviews was to clarify the preliminary results as well as to elicit more answers to the main research questions. In addition, towards the end of data collection, the researcher also organised an informal meeting with 5 IBMS lecturers who participated in research. The purpose of the meeting was to present the preliminary findings to the lecturers and gather more in-depth information as well as feedback which could be used to improve the research article. Apart from these interviews, the researcher had several informal conversations about Chinese student learning habits and teaching strategies with his fellow colleagues teaching at a partner university in Shanghai while visiting the country in April-May 2016.

Data processing
After data collection had been finalised, the researcher used descriptive statistics to analyse the data from the questionnaires. As for the interviews, each of them has been properly recorded and notes have been taken to ensure the completeness of information.

Even though the sample size of this study is very small and the findings cannot be extrapolated to larger groups beyond the present study, some useful trends have been observed and corresponding recommendations have been presented.

Findings and discussion

Learning styles of Chinese students
The results of ILS questionnaires from Shanghai and Rotterdam are highly comparable as no significant differences have been identified. For this reason a table with combined results of Chinese student learning styles from Shanghai and Rotterdam is presented below (table 4).
Interestingly, Chinese students in Shanghai score slightly higher in collaborative and competitive learning styles. Based on the interviews with the students in Rotterdam, lecturers in Shanghai as well as personal

observation of classes in Shanghai, this extremely small difference in scores could be explained by analysing a few factors. First, entering universities in China is very competitive. Only students who pass their national university entrance exams are allowed to start their studies in China. Once the students start their studies, they do their best to achieve the highest marks they can. They do so by investing long hours studying for exams thus spending much less time on their social lives. During the interviews in Rotterdam some students shared their personal stories about their course mates in China demanding the notes they made during classes so that they get the advantage of preparing themselves better for the exams. Second, considering teacher-centred learning is a common practice in China, which suggests that classes are run in a traditional way where the teacher is perceived as the main authority, students do little project work.

Besides regular classes, there are very few group assignments. As a result, whenever given an additional opportunity to work on a project, students are eager to engage with other participants. Such projects are seen as rare valuable and highly practical learning experiences.

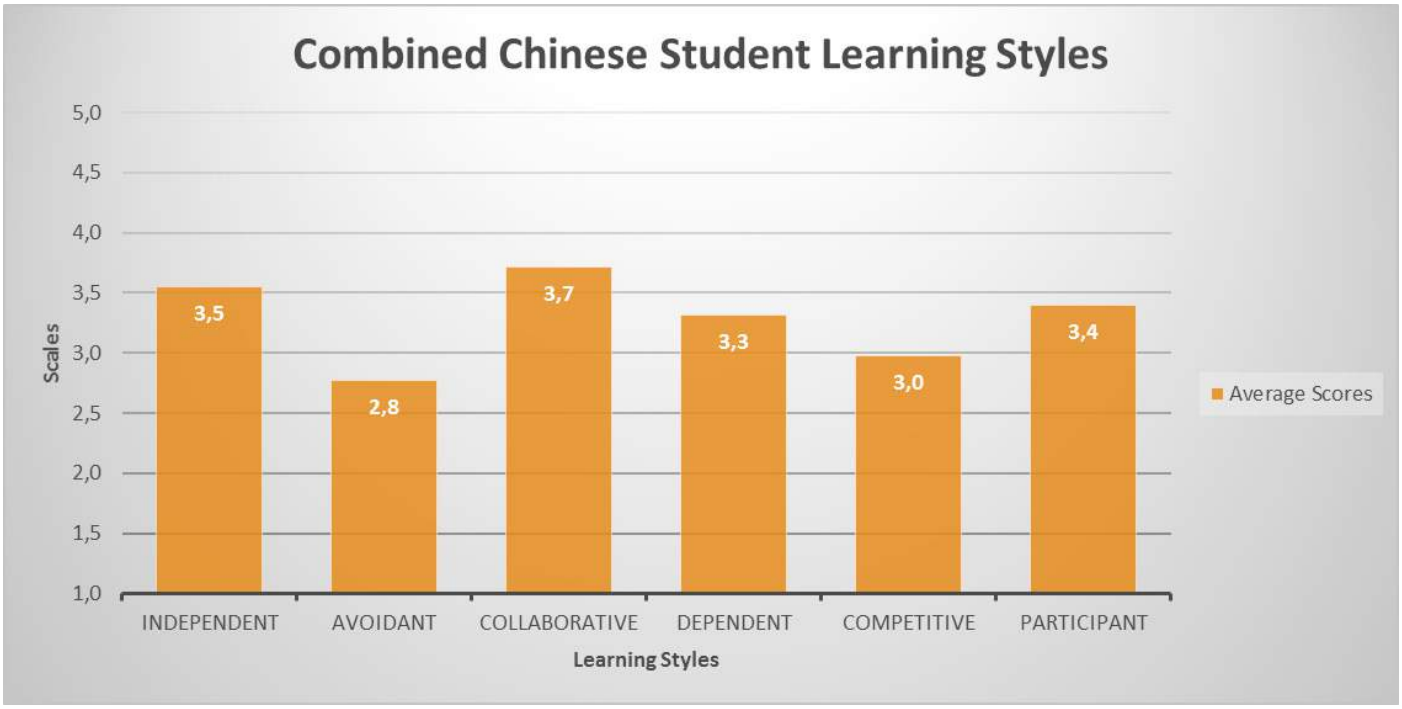

Table 4. Learning styles of Chinese students (combined data)

	Independent	Avoidant	Collaborative	Dependent	Competitive	Participant
Low	1.0-2.7	1.0-1.8	1.0-2.7	1.0-2.9	1.0-1.7	1.0-3.0
Average	2.8-3.8	1.9-3.1	2.8-3.4	3.0-4.0	1.8-2.8	3.1-4.1
High	3.9-5.0	3.2-5.0	3.5-5.0	4.1-5.0	2.9-5.0	4.2-5.0

Table 5. Ranges for low, average, and high scores of each learning style (Uzuntiryaki, 2007)

Preferred learning styles of Chinese students

Based on the surveys carried out in Shanghai and Rotterdam, the researcher was not able to identify one particular learning style of Chinese students. Previous studies conducted by other researchers have shown that students often use a number of different learning styles (Uzuntiryaki, 2007). In fact, they adjust their learning style to the subject of study as well as the study environment.

Teaching styles used by the lecturers of IBMS

Based on the TIS survey (see tables 6 and 7 below), the most favoured teaching style of lecturers of IBMS is expert. Other four teaching styles (facilitator, formal authority, delegator, and personal model) have average scores which means they are used moderately.

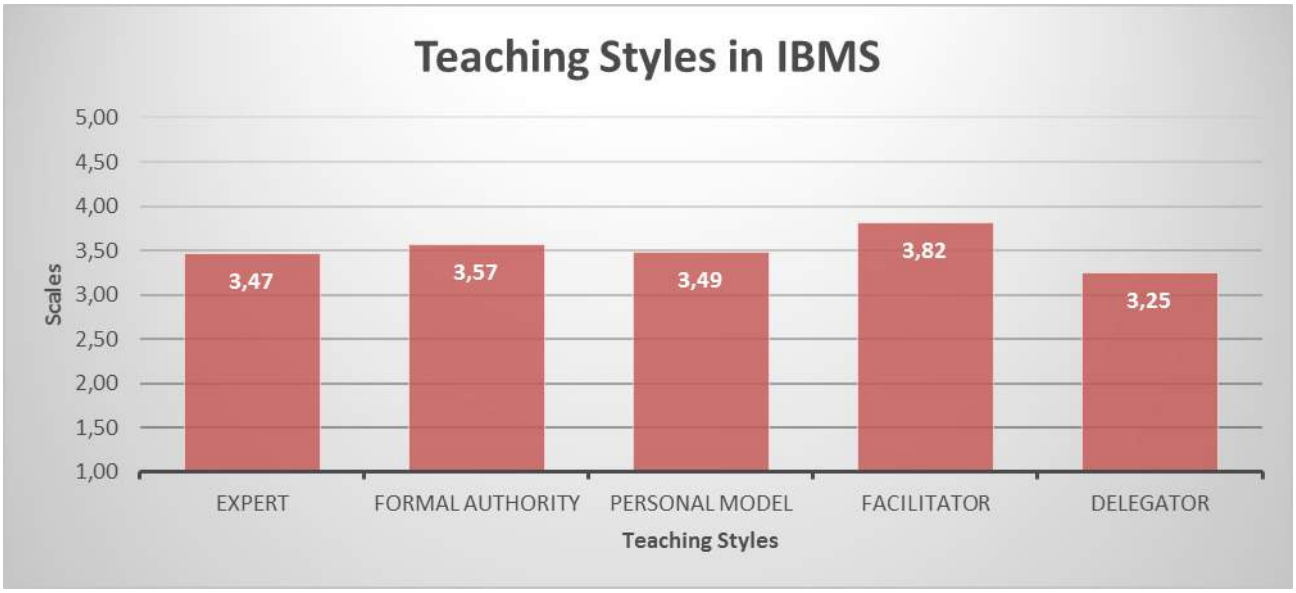

Table 6. Teaching styles of lecturers of IBMS

	Expert	Formal authority	Personal model	Facilitator	Delegator
Low	1.0-2.0	1.0-2.8	1.0-3.2	1.0-3.0	1.0-2.5
Average	2.1-3.1	2.9-3.9	3.3-4.1	3.1-4.0	2.6-3.7
High	3.2-5.0	4.0-5.0	4.2-5.0	4.1-5.0	3.8-5.0

Table 7. Ranges for low, average, and high scores of each teaching style (Amini, Samani and Lotfi, 2012)

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to establish a link between the learning styles of Chinese students and the teaching styles of the lecturers of IBMS. The data analysis has shown that Chinese students use a number of learning styles. According to this small scale research no single learning style is applicable to Chinese students. However, Chinese students in Shanghai score slightly higher in collaborative and competitive learning than their Chinese counterparts in Rotterdam. As a result, lecturers could facilitate Chinese students by diversifying their teaching methods and tools and in such a way promote collaborative and competitive culture in the classroom even more.

In addition to the learning styles discussed earlier, the teaching styles of IBMS lecturers have been analysed. Conducted research shows that IBMS lecturers are most inclined to use expert teaching styles. Other four teaching styles including facilitator, formal authority, delegator, and personal model, are used moderately.

Comparing the results presented above, it can be concluded that, generally speaking, the teaching styles in IBMS and learning styles of Chinese students' match. The author reached this conclusion by interviewing and surveying Chinese students in Shanghai and Rotterdam. However, particular attention should be paid to the socio-cultural aspects of the Chinese student population when introducing and experimenting with different teaching methods in various courses and stages of learning.

One must, however, consider the findings of this study with caution given the limitations of this research. Considering only a limited number of Chinese students and teaching staff have been surveyed and interviewed, one cannot draw larger generalisations to other populations on the basis of this study alone. Further studies could be performed drawing on larger samples of students and lecturers. Furthermore, Dutch and other international students could be added to the sample so as to map out their preferred learning styles and compare them against each other. Last but not least, despite the limitations, the study sheds new light on the characteristics of Chinese students in higher education offering practical insights which can be used to aid teaching and learning.

Recommendations

Lecturers who teach Chinese students should recognise the behaviours of these students and help them to integrate slowly in a Western learning environment by:

- recognising the importance Chinese ascribe to education and educators and being explicit about the expectations of students' behaviour and performance (Chan, 2002).
- introducing students to the education system and effective learning practices in the Netherlands at the start of the academic year. In addition, it should be emphasised to all students that asking questions in class is expected and that it is part of the learning process.
- adjusting their pace and vocabulary to Chinese learners.
- administering an online learning styles' survey in an international classroom at the start of an academic year in order to have a general overview of preferred learning habits of students.
- considering the fact that Chinese students tend to think in visual/spacial rather than verbal terms related to time and effort they have spent learning a written language (Chan, 2002).
- integrating active teaching methods to develop skills of active and critical enquiry with clear instructions, guidelines and preparation time.
- introducing case studies (both displaying success and failed stories), role-plays, and business games slowly with clear instructions, guidelines and preparation time (Lau and Roffey, 2002).
- introducing discussions by first raising general questions about society and customs encouraging students to join student organisations and do volunteering in local communities.
- publicly rewarding and motivating students to excel. In China good performance is regularly encouraged with high performers being readily rewarded and acknowledged by their lecturers (M. Cerna, personal communication, 28 April 2016).

Personal reflection

Over the past 4 years I have been teaching and working with many international students, among others, Chinese, across a range of subject areas. Moreover, I have been able to observe their study habits, communication styles, motivation, and attitude towards their studies and life in the Netherlands as a whole. In addition, I was one of the few lucky ones who also had the privilege to visit our partner universities and meet students and lecturers in Shanghai, China twice.

Joining the professional learning community on inclusive excellence at Rotterdam Business School in the autumn of 2015 opened up new perspectives for me both as a professional and as an individual. It did not take me long to realise in the professional learning community that there is so much I do not know about inclusive excellence and struggles our students undergo every day. Effectively, I discovered new ways of looking at cultural differences and was drawn to the idea of analysing my role as an educator and relating it to some specific (different) culture. Soon I did online tests to check my own learning and teaching style, delved into various didactic materials, and posed critical questions to myself. Eventually, these reflective activities led me to choose Chinese students and their learning habits as my main research focus.

Why? I realised I wanted to research Chinese students who are often considered as passive learners with a keen preference to study independently. My own research and recent personal encounters with Chinese students and colleagues in Rotterdam and Shanghai often revealed the opposite. Chinese students can be engaged and active participants in the classroom. As one of the ways to empower students to be active in the class, in my study I looked at the awareness of learning styles and cultural fit by Chinese students and lecturers alike. In addition, during my research as well as personal reflection, it became clear to me that educators frequently overlook the importance of the latter for various practical reasons, such as the lack of time or little knowledge. Moreover, I provided a short list of practical recommendations which could be used in a classroom setting to aid learning and teaching Chinese and possibly other students.

What is more, by carrying my research I learned immensely about Chinese culture and norms, people's learning habits and preferences. Additionally, besides refreshing my knowledge about learning and teaching, I also discovered I prefer to facilitate and delegate during classes, which means I need to be more flexible with other teaching styles.

In addition, while talking to a number of fellow lecturers of IBMS throughout the research process, it became clear to me that we tend to agree on the core issue: Chinese students are not yet fully integrated in the learning process in IBMS. Some of the reasons being mentioned were: students do not always get clear instructions to do assignments, they often prefer to work with their fellow countrymen because they find it easier (some of them tend to free ride at the expense of other students), they are rather submissive (or passive) during classes etc.

On the whole, it is my strong belief that by clarifying our own perceptions about particular groups of students and critically assessing them, deepening our understanding of the particular needs of these students and addressing them regularly by pro-active use of inclusive pedagogy, we can make learning more inclusive, intercultural and international whereby creating a sense of belonging in all students.

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Appendix IV

Eastern philosophy meets Western pedagogy
Increasing intrapersonal awareness in Asian language lecturers

Fumiko Inoue

Abstract
The aim of this research project was to increase intrapersonal awareness in the Asian language lecturers at the Trade management for Asia study programme. There appears to be a conflict in values between the native Asian lecturers and their Dutch students, leading to miscommunication and maybe even a biased attitude in the Asian lecturers: they seem to favor polite, hardworking students over students who are too 'Dutch' in their communication style with their Asian lecturers.
Intervision was used as a method to increase interpersonal awareness, but this Western pedagogical technique, focused on discussing problem situations, turned out to be less useful for lecturers with an Asian background. An alternative way of problem solving was developed, as well as some suggestions for a better integration of the Asian values of the Asian language lecturers into the TMA curriculum.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

I have been teaching Japanese in the Netherlands for more than 25 years now. Over the course of those years, I have struggled with my own insecurities regarding the Dutch language and the pedagogical approach I should use. When I started in education, I sometimes compared the Dutch educational system to the Japanese way of teaching, suggesting that we could use Japan as an example. But I soon stopped doing that after some people told me “If you think Japan does it better why don’t you just go back?”

I am also no stranger to micro-aggressions. Co-workers have told me: “Wow, I thought Japanese women were modest! But you are…” For a long time, I also sensed that I needed to put in more effort to get heard in meetings than my Dutch colleagues. I felt that my opinion was not always taken seriously, because I am a non-native speaker of Dutch and you can hear that fairly clearly every time I speak. Small comments made by students are also hurtful every time they pop up: “With due respect, your command of Dutch is pretty good, but if I am totally honest I do need to keep paying attention. Otherwise I sometimes don’t understand what you mean.” I have had sleepless nights because of incidents and comments like these.

Luckily, in my job as lecturer in the course programme Trade Management for Asia (TMA), I have had ample opportunity to develop my expertise and to show what I am worth, both in spite of and thanks to my Japanese background. I have gained knowledge of both Western and Asian pedagogical teaching methods, and as a result, I am often seen as a ‘bridge builder’ between Dutch colleagues or students and the other six Asian lecturers who teach Mandarin, Japanese or Indonesian at TMA. Dutch students and Dutch lecturers come to me for advice on how to address an issue with an Asian language lecturer, and I gladly help or mediate whenever needed. This is necessary, because several of my Asian language colleagues are native Japanese, native Chinese or native Indonesian. Most of them continue to embrace a pedagogical model that is based on Asian (= non-Western values), which sometimes leads to conflicts with Dutch students or leaves colleagues puzzled on how to address an issue. That is why for this research project I wanted to figure out if the gap between Western and Asian pedagogy could be bridged.

Apart from that, I have begun to think that something more should be done to improve the position of Asian language lecturers in the Dutch educational system. It is my impression that many of my Asian colleagues have experienced similar micro-aggressions as I have, and that they, like me, continue to struggle with the fact of being a minority in a Dutch context. This was the second big motivational factor to start my research project in this area.

1.1 Problem definition

The problems between my Asian colleagues and their (Dutch) students are most likely caused by a difference in value system. I will use three cases for Asian lecturers to illustrate the conflict. The conflict revolves around three closely related core values: authority, respect and responsibility.

Case 1: Authority
When I started teaching at TMA 18 years ago, I remember that I had many difficulties with what seemed to me to be ‘arrogant’ behavior of some students. Students asked me questions in such a way that it seemed to me that they were expressing their doubt in my expertise. It felt like they were challenging me in such a case, and I reacted with a strong need to demonstrate that I was correct and more knowledgeable than the students. At that time, I strongly believed that as a lecturer, I was an authority figure. I was the one who told the students the truth and the facts, the students were in no position to question my remarks or judgments.

It was especially difficult for me that I was not able to put my thoughts into words well enough to ‘defeat’ the annoying and offensive arguments of the students. It took me a couple of years to understand that the students’ way of questioning had little to do with their opinion of me as an authority figure. Before I started teaching at TMA, I had already studied in Dutch higher education for almost eight years, so I should have already known that there are some differences in the behavior of Dutch and Japanese students in the classroom. But this knowledge helped me only a little bit to cope with my emotional difficulties towards what I saw as ‘arrogant’ students.

Case 2: Respect
One of my Asian colleagues forbids her students to use a laptop, e-book or I-pad during class. According to her, all students should buy the hard copy textbooks, or they should print out copies of textbooks that are available online. She strongly believes that students who work with real books get better results than students who read from a screen. She told me: “Once someone decides to start a study, it is his own responsibility to come to class with the prescribed books.” She also feels disrespected if a student does not follow up on her advice. It would be indeed unthinkable in Asia that a student doesn’t buy study books despite of a strong recommendation of the lecturer to purchase them. If a student doesn’t follow the lecturer’s advice, in Asia it means the student doesn’t take the study and the authority of the lecturer seriously.

Not following the advice of a lecturer might seem a small thing to a Dutch student, but for an Asian lecturer, broader consequences might be attached to such an action. For example, one student experienced some financial difficulties, but fortunately found a free PDF-version of the Asian language textbook on the internet. But the lecturer did not allow him to use it during class. This student had to ask his fellow students to share their book every time it was required during class. But apart from this practical issue, this particular student also felt that the lecturer was “a bit angry with him” because of this affair.

Students sense that their lecturer is biased: the student who does not have a hard copy textbook feels that his lecturer views him in a more negative way than the other students. And vice versa: in my talks with the students as a part of the module SCC (Study Career Coaching) I often hear students talking about ‘favorite students of some Asian lecturers’. If it is visible in class from which students the lecturer expects better study results, and from whom lesser results, we are talking about a classic case of Pygmalion threat or Golem effect (see paragraph 2.1). Students might start acting in accordance with the expectations of the lecturer.

I have also heard from many students that Asian lecturers – in Asia as well as in the Netherlands – do not appreciate it when students voice critical notes on their lecture or performance. Some students even told me that they don’t always dare to speak up their doubts towards the Asian lecturers. They are afraid of negative consequences. Trompenaars (2013, Over de grenzenvan cultuur en management., p.109-112) pointed out that Asian people tend to take businesslike criticism personally.

Case 3: Responsibility
The aforementioned colleague also fears that students might use their laptop for other activities than taking notes, such as reading e-mails or watching movies during class. Another Asian language lecturer recently told me about her struggle with students who keep chatting during class. Her standard solution to the problem was to warn them several times, and if that did not have the desired effect, then she would finally tell those students to leave the classroom. My colleague expressed doubt whether there could be another way of handling such a situation. She told me she acted out of concern regarding the distracting effects of those chatting students on the other students in the class.

Furthermore, it is her opinion that it is basically the student’s own responsibility to behave in a correct manner in the classroom. This also applies to basic actions like not talking in class, handing in homework on time and in a neat fashion, and dressing up properly for a presentation. Handing in work late, handing in incomplete or disorderly work or presenting in jogging pants or shorts are simply not done in the Asian educational system.

Asian lecturers appreciate ‘discipline’ and ‘hard work’ of the students more strongly than Dutch colleagues. Dutch lecturers evaluate the students mainly by their final performance (paper, exam etc.). Asian colleagues sometime imposes their Asian values onto the Dutch classroom, appreciating a certain attitude of the students during class sessions, such as seriousness and diligence as well as their final performance. This could mean that some students with a typical Dutch attitude might be less appreciated because of their Dutchness. Examples of these typical Dutch attitudes are: not showing they are (hard) working, not always paying full attention to the teacher in class, just going for a ‘sufficient grade’, spending time ‘efficiently’ and applying their own learning methods regardless of what the lecturer suggests.

Problem definition
These three cases show that there is an (often implicit) difference in values between Asian lecturers and

their Dutch students. This implicit value gap can be problematic, because it can lead to a mutual lack of understanding. On the one hand, the lecturer does not understand why his students do not 'behave' and he values their disruptive behavior negatively. Students on the other hand do not understand why their lecturer makes certain demands, or why their questions are met with resistance by the lecturer.

From the different incidents described above it can be concluded that Asian lecturers (consciously or subconsciously) use different criteria (Asian ideas on education) to determine if students' behavior is right or wrong than Dutch lecturers or Dutch students. I assume that some of the Asian lecturers strongly believe that they know the best way of learning, and that it should be universally applied to every student in the same way. The lecturers see it as their professional responsibility exert control over the actions of the students. The students are supposed to obediently follow the instructions the lecturer gives.

In an extreme case it could even happen that some student attitudes that are tolerated or even applauded by Dutch lecturers are seen as a problem by Asian lecturers. For example, typical Dutch attitudes of being critical and self-directedness – which are often stimulated by Dutch lecturers – could come in conflict with the Asian value of the teacher's authority. This could cause uncomfortable situations in the classroom. These problems could lead to negative feelings and negative expectations from the Asian lecturers towards certain students, and it could lead to a negative evaluation of these students.

1.3 Research question

The main theme of the action research of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) is social exclusion. Social exclusion, according to Major and Eccleston (2005), is often accompanied by ideas about social justice within a community. Major and Eccelston categorize this type of exclusion as 'moral exclusion'. In other words, exclusion based on ideas about 'right or wrong'. Moreover, Opotow (2005) wrote: 'Moral exclusion occurs when individuals are perceived outside of the psychological boundary in which moral values, rules and consideration of fairness apply'. People who have been excluded because they are 'wrong' in the eyes of others, most likely feel that they have been treated negatively and unfairly.

In our education we want to realize an inclusive environment, because we believe all students deserve an equal chance for study success. This could be achieved by equally fair treatment, taking into account the ethnical and cultural diversity among the students. It is therefore one of the aims of this PLC to implement an 'inclusive pedagogy' in our education.

I would like to see a change in the current situation where some students feel that their Asian lecturer is negatively biased towards them for some reason they don't completely understand (chatting, not having a textbook, asking questions, etc.). Because the conflict in Asian and Western values lies at the heart of this problem, the goal of my research project was to lessen the gap in values between the Asian lecturers and their Dutch students.

A secondary goal of my research stems from the situations described in the introductory chapter of this paper: my second aim was to improve the minority position of the Asian language lecturers in the team of TMA lecturers by bridging the gap between their Asian educational background and values and Western pedagogy.

The desired outcome of my research would be a situation in which:

a) The Asian language lecturers create a more inclusive classroom for all students (bias prevention);
b) The Asian language lecturers are more included in their Dutch educational environment (prevention of exclusion of Asian lecturers within the TMA team).

Increasing (self-)awareness of intercultural differences (cf. Tuitt's (Salazar 2010) first dimension of 'intrapersonal awareness') in the Asian lecturers seems to be a logical first step to reach these goals. The desired situation would be one where Asian lecturers have knowledge of and insight in the differences in the prevailing pedagogical ideas in Asia and the Netherlands. They should be able to recognize their own value system regarding education and learning, and they should be aware of their own pedagogies, beliefs on education and learning. They should be able to reflect critically on their own beliefs to detect bias which

could lead to the occurrence of exclusion mechanisms in their classrooms.
With such an increased self-awareness, Asian lecturers should be able to realize a value-free classroom in such a way that they are able to apply the Asian value system consciously whenever they see educational advantages to do so, for example to better prepare students for their study year abroad in Asia.

By increasing intrapersonal awareness in Asian lecturers, a more inclusive learning environment should be created: students with attitudes that are contrary to Asian values would not be excluded from the classroom. On the contrary, the gap between the ideas of the Asian lecturer and the Dutch students regarding 'proper attitudes' would be more openly discussed in order to reach mutual understanding and collective agreement.

As a consequence, the main research question of this paper is:

How can we increase intrapersonal awareness in lecturers with a native Asian background who teach in a Dutch educational environment?

In order to answer this research question, chapter 2 looks deeper into the conflicting values of Asian educational philosophy versus modern Western pedagogy (summarized as the 'Confucius vs. Freire discussion', paragraph 2.1). This theoretical background is then used to develop the methodology for the research activities and interventions I carried out (paragraph 2.2). The interventions themselves are described and analyzed in chapter 3, and followed by an evaluation and conclusion in chapter 4.

2 Theoretical background and research method

2.1 Theoretical background

In this paragraph, some theoretical principles from modern Western pedagogy (inclusive pedagogy, paragraph 2.1.1) are contrasted with the common Asian view on education, based on Confucian philosophy (paragraph 2.1.2).

2.1.1 Inclusive Pedagogy

Within the theoretical framework of Inclusive Excellence, and also according to the policy of our Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS) we often talk about the necessity to pay more attention to the increasing number of the students with ethnically, racially and culturally diverse backgrounds. In reality, many of the lecturers represent the majority of society (white, with a native Dutch and higher educational background), whereas many students are from minority groups. This difference can lead to conflict situations.

In my own research, the tables are turned around. The lecturers that are at the core of my research project belong to a minority group (Asian born lecturers) in Dutch society, and the students represent the default group (born and raised in Dutch society). But although these Asian lecturers are from a minority group, they still are the ones who have the formal power to grade the students. They are in a position of authority, which is why the theory of inclusive excellence can also be applied to them.

Avoiding bias

Tuitt (2003) advocates for the necessity of implementation of an Inclusive Pedagogy, which considers reflective attitudes of lecturers as one of the key issues to create motivating and inviting learning environments, especially for students from minority groups. Tuitt suggests that educators should critically examine how their own beliefs and cultures affect their teaching (Salazar 2010). He also mentions that lecturers should actively gather students' feedback on their lessons and assessment, in order to develop a stronger intrapersonal awareness. In this regard, Asian lecturers have the same obligation as native Dutch lecturers, which is to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs on which their teaching is based, in order to detect and adjust for possible biases or misconceptions.

Tuitt (Salazar 2010) warns educators of the danger of estimating others according to one's own ethnically and culturally colored notions, unless the educators have a well-developed intrapersonal awareness. There

is a danger of bias here. For instance, I guess almost every lecturer has had “favorable students” as well as “annoying students” in his class, which could just be a result of personal preferences. We, as professional educators, however, in order to create a bias-free classroom, need to examine how our personal feelings towards individual students are triggered. My experience is that students are very sensitive regarding matters of social relations in the classroom, such as the trust, care and expectations the lecturer has or doesn’t have regarding individual students. It is well known that these matters have a powerful influence on the performance of the students; students of whom the lecturer expects more, often perform better. This also means that students of whom lecturers have a negative image have a lesser chance to achieve a good result; the so-called Pygmalion Effect / Golem effect[1].

For instance, research by Babad, Inbar and Rosenthal (1982) shows that the more strongly biased the teachers were, the more strongly the results of the students’ performance (which were also assessed by neutral assessors) were influenced. This outcome was most clearly observed when the strongly biased teachers had a negative expectation from certain individual students. In other words, if the teachers are strongly biased and estimate students’ ability negatively, there is a substantial chance that those students will perform really badly (Golem effect). Furthermore, these researchers detected dogmatism as a key element of biases. They uncovered that the judgment of teachers with dogmatic ideas (firm beliefs that are considered as unquestionable) is often and easily influenced by the factors like someone’s appearance, race, profession, education of the parents and place of residence.

Based on available research so far, I can conclude that lecturers who are aware of and reflect on their own frame of reference, are less biased and have a greater chance to realize an Inclusive Pedagogy in their class.

Power sharing

A second important concept in modern Western pedagogy is the idea of ‘power sharing’. Until the 1970’s, teachers were seen as a source of absolute authority. Freire (1970) challenged this traditional ideas of absolute power and control of a teacher. In his view, a lecturer should not be seen as the sole possessor of knowledge in the classroom, who transfers his knowledge to the minds of the students (Freire calls this ‘the banking concept of education’). Freire also described the authoritative lecturing situation as a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’, since students do not necessarily share the same world views as their lecturer, but they are forced to take in this world view without being able to accommodate their own.

Instead, Freire introduced ‘knowledge construction’ as an alternative to the banking concept of education. Knowledge construction is a joint activity by both the students and the lecturer together. This is accompanied by the idea of ‘power sharing’ among the teachers and the students. Freire’s idea of ‘power sharing’ was embraced by Tuitt (2003). The inclusive pedagogy Tuitt describes (Salazar 2010) is actually a pedagogy for liberation of the students, who are able to use their own background as a source of knowledge in class, instead of leaving their own cultural background and knowledge behind in order to listen to information from an authority figure.

2.1.2 The Confucian view on education

On first glance, Asian society still seems to embrace the idea of the lecturer as the sole source of authority in a classroom. From my own personal experiences (born and raised in Japan, living in the Netherlands for 35 years now and often doing business between the Netherlands and Asia) I am able to state that authority figures are much more respected in general in Asia than in Dutch society. Especially teaching always has been a profession that enjoys a lot of respect not only from students, but also widely in Asian society. Openly doubting the expertise of a lecturer is classified as a very brutal action. Seen in this way, aspects of a teacher’s authority in the Confucian pedagogy could be categorized in Freirian terminology as a ‘pedagogy of the oppressors’.

According to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (1991), the so-called power distance is much larger in Asia than in the Netherlands. This means, in an educational context, lecturers have comparatively much more power to determine the success or failure of their students. Asian people will not doubt the reliability of

1 ‘The Pygmalion effect, or Rosenthal effect, is the phenomenon whereby higher expectations lead to an increase in performance. The effect is named after the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who fell in love with a statue he had carved, or alternately, after the Rosenthal–Jacobson study […]. A corollary of the Pygmalion effect is the golem effect, in which low expectations lead to a decrease in performance; both effects are forms of self-fulfilling prophecy.’ (Wikipedia N.D.)

authority figures as quickly as people in the Netherlands do.
Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang (2013) explain the influence of Confucius[2] in the Asian epistemological beliefs by quoting from Chan and Elliot (2004, p.817-831)): "[…T]he factor of authority/expert knowledge identified in the Chinese context indicates the significance of the belief in authority in traditional Chinese culture because teachers are considered knowledgeable and the transmitters of knowledge; therefore, the students should show their respect and obedience to the teachers under the Confucian Chinese culture."

Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang further mention that effort and hard work are seen as extremely important factors for personal success. Repetitive practice to memorize facts is seen as an essential part of learning. You can also find Western literature that shares these Asian views (value of hard work). According to the cultural dimensions of Itim International, which is based on the theory of Hofstede, for instance, Asian people think it is important to learn to control / suppress their desire to enjoy life and have fun. So they prize hard work, while Dutch people think it is also important to have a leisure time and fun in their life (Hofstede N.D).

It is also suggested that in other Asian countries, such as Japan, Hong Kong, South-Korea and Vietnam, teachers also have this Confucian view on education. Even though in the last decade an educational reform after the Western model has been implemented, the Confucian view of learning and education still holds a strong influence on the contemporary Chinese educational system, as is shown in research by Watkins (2008). However, Watkins is also critical of the way Western researchers view 'the Chinese way of learning'. For example, the famous Chinese 'rote learning' is often described as 'surface learning' by Western researchers, contrary to the ideal of 'deep learning'. Watkins investigates this idea from a cross-cultural perspective and points out that there is more to it than meets the eye. He draws our attention to the fact that most Asian students, in spite of so-called 'surface learning', often show internationally competitive academic performances. This goes to show that 'rote learning' and 'deep learning' are not mutually exclusive.

Watkins (2008) also explains that the essence of Confucius' educational ideas not only lies in achieving academic goals, but that there is a just as strong focus on the personal development of the learners. Therefore, the ideal relationship between lecturer and students in Confucianism is a holistic one. Result-orientedness, discipline and obedience are valued not as goals in themselves, but because they contribute to the personal development of the learners.
This in fact could mean that the difference between Asian and Western pedagogy might not be as big as one would expect. Personal development and a focus on achieving high academic goals go hand in hand, even though Watkins generally confirms the prototypical view of the authoritarian style of Chinese teachers and well-disciplined and obedient Asian students.

Inclusive pedagogy vs. Confucian pedagogy
In sum, Freire and Tuitt reject the idea of the lecturer as an authority figure and strive for an inclusive classroom in which power sharing and collective knowledge building takes place. This seems to be in opposition to the Asian, Confucian view on education, in which respect for authority, obedience and discipline are core values. I assume some of the Asian lecturers are employing what in Western pedagogy would be called "the banking concept of education"(Freire 1970). They do this not as a deliberate choice of method, but rather as a traditional way of education with which they were brought up themselves, and which is rooted in the ideas on education of Confucianism (Poole 2016). In other words, the Asian lecturers at TMA seem to be teaching based on the idea that the lecturer is the one in the class who has all the knowledge and the authority to transfer the knowledge to the students' minds. The students are supposed to accept the transferred knowledge, to memorize, repeat and reproduce. A good lecturer is, according to this idea, the one who provides substantial knowledge to his students and who stimulates the students to retain the knowledge they have received from the lecturer. This is in conflict with the modern Western pedagogy of inclusive excellence.

The interventions and activities described in paragraph 2.2 are meant to try to bridge the gap between these two seemingly opposing theoretical views on education.

2.2 Research method
As was discussed in chapter 1, some TMA lecturers with an Asian background apply an Asian-style pedagogy in their dealings with students, but not as a conscious educational tool. As a result, some types

2 Chinese philosopher who lived BC 551-479.

of student behavior (critical or non-obedient, not following advice, etc.) could create an element of bias in the Asian lecturers. In that case there is the risk of the Pygmalion or Golem effect occurring. My research project is based on the assumption that these biases can be prevented by increasing the intrapersonal awareness of the lecturers. If the Asian lecturers would become more reflective practitioners, a more inclusive classroom would be created. In order to reach that goal, I planned the following seven research activities.

1. Interviews with ten students and five alumni, six Asian lecturers and five non-Asian lecturers to chart the differences in their expectations and communication especially regarding the way how students in Asia and in The Netherlands deal with authority of the lecturers.
2 Three informal intervision meetings in which the Asian lecturers speak freely about their problems with students, in order to chart actual problems. In these meetings, no criticizing or judging should take place. I myself have chosen to take on the role of a colleague who listens to them carefully and shares experiences with them, instead of a lecturer on intercultural education who tries to teach them something. This appeared to me to be the best way to optimize the cooperation among the colleagues. For the same reason, I do not expect them to spend much time for these intervision meetings and the preparation for the meetings.
3. Providing the Asian lecturers with theoretical information (e.g. Hofstede) and some case studies in order to create a better understanding of cultural differences, with the aim of making them more conscious of their own value system and the value system of the (non-Asian) students.
4. Providing information to the Asian lecturers of epistemological differences between Asia and Europe and the positive effect of an inclusive pedagogical climate on study success.
5. Providing a "Teaching Style Test"[3] and and article with theoretical information about the test (Grasha 1994) to give the Asian lecturers an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching style.
6. Organizing an evaluation meeting with the Asian lecturers where each member proposes one specific action in which he or she gives up a small part of their authority. The idea is that they will all carry out the proposed action as an intervention in their own classroom.
7. Final interviews with the Asian lecturers, non-Asian lecturers and students to determine the change after the intervention.

The results of these activities are described in chapter 3.

3 Interventions

3.1 Interviews with students and alumni

I asked students and alumni: "Which differences between Asian lecturers and Dutch lecturers are most remarkable according to your experiences in Asia and in the Netherlands?" I specifically chose to broaden the question to Asian lecturers in Asia, because I noticed soon after I started the interviews that the students tend to focus on the Asian lecturer who was their most recent lecturer in the Netherlands. I sensed that some students were unwilling to give their honest opinion, or that they wanted to prize or criticize individual lecturers. I did check whether they were referring to TMA lecturers or Asian lecturers every time it was not clear if they were talking about Asian lecturers in Asia or at TMA.

The results from the interviews fall into four categories: Authority and Strictness, Relationship and Communication.

Authority
As was to be expected, several students commented on the authoritative position of Asian lecturers:

• They clearly show that they are higher in the hierarchy than the students.(x3)
• They don't always appreciate criticisms or arguments against their opinion. They take criticism personally. So I have to be more careful to tell them what I honestly think. Dutch teachers don't mind about that. (x3)

Strictness
Related to authority is the notion that Asian lecturers are more strict than their Dutch counterparts:

3 The test I used was a Grasha-Riechmann Teaching Style Survey, digitally available via: http://longleaf.net/teachingstyle.html

• They value factual knowledge more than the ability to analyse, or to reason
• They are stricter in sticking to the rules and less flexible than the Dutch lecturers (x3)
• They follow their lesson program more strictly and are less flexible than the Dutch lecturers. (x2)

Relationship
Several students mentioned the helpfulness and kindness of Asian lecturers:

• They are very kind and help students very well.
• They are more personally and emotionally involved in the lessons they give. Dutch teachers have a more business-like relationship with the students. (x2)
• They often and rather easily show who their favourite students are. (x3)

Communication
There does appear to be a language barrier between Dutch students and Asian lecturers. Several interviewees pointed out that a lecturer's command of English or Dutch can lead to difficulties:

• They are sometimes difficult to communicate with, because of the language. They don't always understand students' questions or comments correctly. (x4)

Through these interviews some of my assumptions were confirmed, like the authoritarian attitude and the preference for a precise way of working. Communication issues turned out to be another important element for students and alumni.

3.2 Interviews with Asian lecturers

I asked my Asian colleagues to describe their opinion on ideal classroom behaviour and classroom management. Three questions were asked:
1. Which attitudes in students do you find preferable?
2. What type of attitudes do you reject?
3. What kind of actions have you undertaken to diminish undesirable behaviour in class?

Preferred classroom behavior
The keywords used to express what Asian lecturers see as positive classroom behaviour, were: seriousness, respectful, paying attention, doing homework, enthusiasm, asking questions, politeness, willingness to learn and being cooperative. A few examples:

• "I like students who show interest and appreciation in the subject or lesson I give, taking the lessons seriously, paying attention to the lecture during the class, asking questions, doing the learning activities actively and enthusiastically, and doing homework. A better study result is not necessarily the reason why I have a positive feeling about a certain student."
• "I like students who behave politely to me, listen to me carefully, paying attention and who always do their homework."
• "I like the students who are obviously willing to learn. Then I feel appreciated. Fortunately most students are willing to learn."
• "I like the students who are cooperative in the class, and don't attend the class only because it's mandatory."

Negative classroom behavior
Impoliteness, being disrespectful, being uninterested and arrogance score highly on the list of answers to the question what type of attitude the Asian lecturers reject. Some quotes:

• "I have difficulties with the students who show little respect to me; doing something else than what they are supposed to do in the class, or sending me an e-mail without a proper salutation. Every time it happens I tell them immediately that they should do that in a different way."
• "I have difficulties with the students who keep chatting during the lesson, or who do something else (homework for other subjects). It's an impolite behaviour towards me. Besides they miss a part of the lesson with which they cannot easily catch up by themselves. I also have difficulties with the students who don't do homework, or who often come too late to the class. I don't think vulgar language is acceptable in

the class. I always tell them if I hear any student to use that kind of language."
• "I don't like to see students with an arrogant attitude. Some of them overestimate their knowledge or skills (which they obtained before they start the programme) and brag arrogantly, which disturbs me. They don't do homework. They are not open to learn."
• "I have difficulties with the students who don't seem very interested, chatting with fellow students, watching their mobile phone, not doing homework."

Classroom management actions
Several lecturers indicate that they try to counter negative behavior of students by adapting their lessons and by making them more 'interactive':

• "My own experience in study in Asia was with rather monotone lessons. However I studied in the Netherlands and have experienced interactive lessons myself during that study, which I also implement in my own teaching. In this way I always try to involve all the students in the lessons."
• "I try to motivate students who are seemingly uninterested by asking them questions, or giving them extra assignments. It works sometimes, but sometimes it doesn't."

From these responses it can be seen that the – 'Western' – pedagogical tool of 'active learning' is an important concept for Asian lecturers. Other responses also show that they are aware of the balancing act between being strict and being soft towards the students:

• "I have learned at TMA that being nice to the students doesn't always have a desirable effect. However being strict makes me feel unhappy. So I have found the way between; not too strict and not too easy."

Some lecturers indicate that they call out on students who show disrespectful behaviour (chatting, looking at their mobile phone, not paying attention, etc.):

• "Every time a student is doing something else than what they are supposed to do in class, or sends me an e-mail without a proper salutation, I tell them immediately that they should do that in a different way. I always try to avoid to see students as a member of some racial or cultural group."

However, other lecturers deliberately choose not to respond:

• "I give them a warning sometimes. However I think it's eventually their own responsibility if they learn something or not."
• "After a student shows undesirable behaviour, I talk with him only if he comes to me himself. I would not go to him to talk."

In sum, Asian lecturers appreciate a serious and active learning attitude and politeness of students. Most lecturers implement principles of active learning in their classrooms and react to what they see as inappropriate behaviour, but they also see it as a student's own responsibility to behave correctly in class. This is in line with the theoretical concepts described in paragraph 2.1.2.

Interestingly, one of the Asian lecturers remarked: "I was born in Asia, but studied in Europe. So I don't really see myself as an Asian lecturer." This raises the question if Asian lecturers and Dutch lecturers differ in their preferred and dispreferred classroom attitudes. This is why I also interviewed five non-Asian lecturers. Their responses are described in the next paragraph.

3.3 Interviews with Dutch lecturers

I asked five of my Dutch colleagues the same three questions as the Asian lecturers. It turns out many of the likes, dislikes and classroom management actions of Dutch and Asian lecturers are the same. The Dutch lecturers favour an active, interested attitude, and they dislike arrogant behaviour, a negative attitude, disruptive or uninterested behaviour just as much as their Asian counterparts. They also show similar responses to negative behaviour, such as implementing strict class rules; and they are equally unsure as their Asian colleagues whether their actions are helpful to counter negative behaviour by students:

• "In my class the rules are clear. They should come on time, eating in the class is not allowed etc. Every

time the rules are violated they get a yellow or red card, although the cards have not yet had really the desirable effects on the students' behavior."
• "I like all the students except for a few students who behave arrogantly, like ridiculing the lessons, fellow students or me. I tried to correct their behaviors, but I am not sure if that had any effect on them."

What was remarkable about the responses from the Dutch lecturers, is that even though I asked them the exact same questions, they seemed to interpret them differently than their Asian colleagues. They focused on personal development of the students far more often:

• "I like the students who are open for (my) feedback intended to encourage their personal and professional development. I see some students progressing strongly in response to my feedback, which gives me a great feeling of self-satisfaction. Students with Asian background are sometimes difficult to supervise for me, because I don't always understand their specific Asian values; Chinese students who were brought up by their grandparents or other persons because their own parents had to work so hard that they could not take care of their own children. That is an example of difficult case for me, just because I simply cannot imagine what that means or how that could happen".
• "I equally enjoy watching all kinds of students struggling and growing, regardless of their cognitive capacity, background, personal character etc. It might have something to do with my age. I am one of the so called 'first generation students' from a working class family. So I understand the situation of many students of our program, who are children of immigrants."

The cause of these differences might be the fact that several of the Dutch lecturers who were interviewed, are also Study Career Coaches (SCC), who guide the professional and personal development of the students during their four years at TMA. Almost none of the Asian language lecturers at TMA combines teaching with SCC activities, which could account for the difference with the Dutch lecturers.

When I explained to the Dutch lecturers that I was comparing their answers to those of the Asian lecturers, they often offered spontaneous comments on their Asian colleagues, based on their own experience and observation, as well as on what they heard from the students, often in the context of Study Career Coaching. Their responses were very similar to the comments made by students and alumni (listed in paragraph 3.1): the main topics were authority and communication issues:

• "Sometimes there are difficulties in communication with the Asian lecturers, because they are non-native speakers of Dutch or English."
• "Some Asian colleagues appear to have a more authoritarian approach towards students than Dutch colleagues."
• "The Asian colleagues take remarks and criticism more personally."
• "Students sometimes don't dare to make remarks or ask critical questions to the Asian lecturers because they are unsure about the negative consequences that might follow."

The colleagues also pointed out the added value of having native Asian colleagues in the TMA team:

• "Having Asian colleagues in the team is an enrichment for the colleagues as well as for the students. We learn a lot about the Asian cultures from them."
• "Asian colleagues help us to understand some situation of our Asian students, such as family matters, which we would otherwise not be able to understand."

One colleague pointed out that she did not find it useful to make a distinction between Asian and Dutch lecturers:

• "I don't see much sense in generalizing Asian or Dutch lecturers. I prefer talking about or with colleague A or colleague B. I see the danger of stereotyping."

The interview results (paragraph 3.1 – 3.3) formed the input for the topics I wanted to address during the three intervision meetings I set up with my Asian colleagues. Paragraph 3.4 describes the results of those meetings.

3.4 Results of the three intervision meetings

The first meeting
My goal for the first meeting was to create awareness of Asian vs. Western differences in teaching styles. I tried to achieve this goal in two different ways: by providing information, and by discussing a problem situation (intervision). Together with the invitation to the meeting I sent all of the TMA Asian colleagues links to an online Teaching Style Test and an animated film of the British Council about Chinese students in a British school.

At the meeting it turned out that due to time pressure only one colleague had done the teaching style test and nobody had watched the film. I gave a short overview of the theoretical foundation of my research regarding different ideas about education in Asia and in the Netherlands. I had the impression that this information was not really new to them, but that they weren't completely aware of the theoretical background either. My explanation of the Western/Asian differences did tie in with their experience that they were to some extent Westernized and no longer really Asian when they visited their home country. Furthermore, I took the initiative to present a problem situation in communication with a smart mouth Dutch student (case 1 in paragraph 1.1), to ask how they would handle such an issue. I had expected that colleagues would easily relate to this case, because I often hear of similar situations from different colleagues as well as from students. However, the case situation was hardly recognized.
They also answered negatively to my explicit question whether they sometimes experienced problems with communication in Dutch or English with colleagues and students.

It is remarkable that the Asian lecturers deny having any problems with Dutch and English, while many of the interviewed students and colleagues mentioned slight communication problems coupled to language use. It could be that they did not see it as a problem, or only as a minor issue. However, it might be problematic if the Asian colleagues had reasons to avoid the subject. I got the impression that they had trouble to talk about the obstacles they may have in their language use (Dutch or English).

I felt that the atmosphere was not very open. Some of them were indifferent, others were suspicious. From body language and some small comments, I got the impression that the colleagues didn't feel very comfortable with the subject of the meeting. I did not address this issue, but I realized that the setting of the first meeting did not provide a 'safe' environment in which the lecturers felt at ease to discuss classroom issues. However, we agreed that one of the colleagues would provide a case for the second meeting.

The second meeting
In my invitation to the second meeting, I included the minutes of the first meeting, and the same links to the online Teaching Style Test, the film of the British Council and an article about the still strongly living beliefs in China concerning education. During the meeting it became clear none of them had had time for neither the Teaching Style Test nor the article.

One of the colleagues provided a case for discussion. She used an example from the elective class she was teaching. One of the students behaved indifferently in class, because he already had prior knowledge of the Asian language and therefore did not need to pay attention. All participants were actively involved in the discussion and together they easily drew the conclusion that the lecturer should not pay attention to indifferent students as long as they don't disturb the rest of the class. They chose a practical solution above other solutions that would comfort the insulted feeling of the lecturer. Everybody agreed with the idea that every student may determine his own way to achieve his own goal: all roads lead to Rome. As long as the students meet the minimum requirements we actually can leave them doing it in their way.

Interestingly, most lecturers felt that the 'all roads lead to Rome' attitude also applied to the use of mobile phone, laptop, tablet etc. in class. Most lecturers indicated that they saw this as inappropriate behavior in the past, but that they now don't fuss anymore about phone or laptop use in class, as long as there is no disturbance for the rest of the class. I heard the colleagues talk in quite a liberal manner about the general issue "to which extent do we, the lecturers, need to control the way in which students learn?" I was positively surprised by this conversation, because it contradicted some of the comments made by students and alumni in the interviews (paragraph 3.1). This was a clear sign that the Asian lecturers were open to a discussion about a teacher's authority in the classroom.

Everyone appreciated the second session. I got the impression that the nature of the case under discussion contributed to the positive atmosphere of the session: it was a relatively simple case, on which there was broad consensus.

The third meeting

After the first two meetings I concluded that a Western-style, problem-focused intervision approach was not a suitable content for a discussion group of Asian lecturers. This may be caused by multiple factors: first of all, the Asian lecturers may not be known with the Western pedagogical concept of 'intervision'. Secondly, I think a difference in the preferred method of problem-solving between Dutch and Asian people could be the explanation of their reserved attitude during the intervision. As Trompenaars (2013) mentions, the direct and to-the-point method of the Dutch is in opposition with the indirect and vague manner of Asians. As a result, the Asian lecturers may be reluctant to discuss problematic issues in their classrooms, because admitting to problems is not done in a culture where a lecturer is seen as an authority figure. Denying or evading is the preferred solution, instead of addressing or discussing a problem.

This is why I tried a more positive approach in the third meeting. I asked my colleagues how they think we can contribute to our study program with our Asian background. After a short discussion everybody agreed on the idea that we can teach students to deal with Asian values and norms in education. Since all TMA students spend a semester of their study at an Asian University, the Asian lecturers in The Netherlands can provide them with a piece of the preparation for their study abroad. The Asian lecturers also greatly contribute to the acquisition and maintenance of our Arian network in Asia, due to their specific knowledge and Asian social skills which Dutch colleagues lack.

At the end of the meeting, I asked them to evaluate the three intervision meetings. My colleagues did not express any enthusiasm, but they neither gave any negative evaluations. Some colleagues acknowledged the fact that they are Asian and never will become Dutch[4].

Analysis and evaluation of the interventions

In the intervision sessions, I intentionally did not take on a prominent position, in spite of the fact that my role in the meetings was that of a faculty developer (cf Salazar 2010): someone who supports faculty to implement the practices of Inclusive Excellence in their teaching. I chose to do that in a restrained manner, because I wanted to avoid to push the colleagues too much: they have a very tight schedule and a high workload. I also thought it was important to create an open and safe space for all of us to talk to each other freely and frankly, also about sensitive matters. This is why I tried not to behave as a superior to them. So I told them at the beginning that I was not there as a teacher, nor as a person who tells them what is right and what is wrong. I tried to create a relaxed atmosphere in which everyone could easily speak up. Nevertheless the atmosphere remained rather cool and indifferent, especially in the beginning. This is something I had not expected. I sensed that they were not very happy to be addressed specifically on their Asian background.

The third meeting was the most productive one, which led me to the conclusion that a positive approach works better with Asian lecturers than a problem-oriented one. A possibility for future meetings would be to ask positively framed questions, in which the lecturers share their expertise instead of discuss problems.

Because the indifferent attitude of the colleagues troubled me, I tried to find a clarification by individual informal talks with my Asian colleagues. This did not give me any additional information. They all responded in a very reserved manner and told me nothing more than what was already said in the meetings. I had the impression that they didn't recognize the problems, or that they judged them as not important enough to talk about. So I looked for literature on this subject, and found several articles about Asian professors in Australia (Santoro, 2000) and in the US (Ramanathan, 2006). and Asian trainees in a teachers training in Australia.(Spooner-Lane, Tangen, and Campbell. 2009 The complexities of supporting Asian international pre-service teachers as they undertake practicum p. 79-94).
These gave me some insight in the attitudes of Asian lecturers in similar educational circumstances. The three articles draw the following picture of Asian lecturers in Western educational institutes:

• Many of them are Asian language teachers who are not in a decision making-position in the institute.

4 Originally, my plan was to ask the lecturers to perform an intervention in their own classroom, and to discuss the results in a final interview to measure the effect of the intervention. But because of the lack of enthusiasm during the three intervention meetings, I decided not to go through with this part of my research. Activities 6 and 7 (paragraph 2.2) were therefore cancelled.

Most of them declare that they don't have the ambition to obtain a higher position within the institute. The language subjects are often seen by other lecturers and by the management as less important than the "main subjects".
• Some of the professors who were not born in the country are culturally, academically and socially isolated.
• Some of the professors who were not born in the country have language problems (English in these cases).
• Some of the professors who were not born in the country have problems in understanding cultural differences. For instance, they interpret any problems or remarks on their profession as personal problems or personal criticism.
• There are not many possibilities for supervision or coaching on offer for these teachers at Western institutes.
• The ones who are integrated in the Western society (2nd or 3rd generation) prefer not to be addressed as Asian descendants.
• They are reluctant to talk about their problems with the researchers.
• Asian students as well as Asian professors work hard, but do not complain much. They cause less concern for the organizations than any other minority group, which is probably one of the reasons for hidden or invisible problems.

These notions helped me to see that the circumstances in which our Asian colleagues are working are not unique. At the TMA study programme, our Asian colleagues are only directly involved in a small scope of the educational programme. This probably limits their view: they don't always see their problems in connection with other parts of the program. Hence they don't feel the need to talk about their problems with the colleagues out of their direct subject group.

Maybe the isolated position of the Asian colleagues also negatively influences their ability to act as reflective practitioners: It seems logical that a lecturer who has more opportunities to collaborate directly with different colleagues with diverse backgrounds has more possibilities to reflect on his own work. This also raises questions on the inclusiveness of our TMA team.

4 Conclusion, evaluation and recommendations

The main research question of this paper was:

How can we increase intrapersonal awareness in lecturers with a native Asian background who teach in a Dutch educational environment?

It was my assumption that a series of intervention meetings in which problematic classroom situations were discussed, would lead to an increased intrapersonal awareness. This turned out not to be the case. My intervision meeting had mixed results, which led me to the conclusion that intervision might not be a suitable tool for lecturers with an Asian background. For an intervision to work, there needs to be a safe and open atmosphere in which participants feel free to discuss their problems. This might be too Western an approach for Asian lecturers, who are brought op with the concept of the lecturer as an authority figure who does not talk about or admit mistakes.

During the course of my research project, I became increasingly uncomfortable with my own presuppositions and hypotheses. I sensed that the resistance I was experiencing from my colleagues might well be caused by my own approach. I suddenly realized that what I in fact was asking of them, was that they should adapt to a more Western pedagogy in their classroom and that they should use the Western approach of 'intervision' to improve their educational practice. But by expecting them to adapt to Western pedagogy, wasn't I myself the one who was being 'exclusive'?

I still believe that cultural differences between Asian lecturers and Dutch students are causing misunderstandings and eventually exclusion in the classroom. As I have shown in this paper, the cause for the differences lies in the implicit difference in value system of the lecturers and the students (the lecturer as an authority figure vs. the lecturer and students as co-creators of knowledge) and in communication problems due to the language barrier between lecturer and students.
I also still firmly believe that, as Tuitt points out (Salazar 2010), intrapersonal awareness of lecturers is one of the key conditions to realize an inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, since we are an educational

programme aimed at Asia, Asian lecturers should be able to add worthwhile elements to the programme. Our TMA Asian language lecturers should be able to consciously use their knowledge and skills of Asian language and culture to prepare the Dutch students for the intercultural communication situations they will experience when they go study abroad in Asia for a year. The only question that remains, is how this could be made to work in practice? Currently, the Asian lecturers are not living up to their full potential as 'reflective practitioners' who consciously instruct their students in the differences between Asian and Western education. Increasing intrapersonal awareness still seems like the best way for them to become more reflective practitioners.

But what became clear to me from the responses I received from the Asian language lecturers during the intervision meetings, was that the method of achieving intrapersonal awareness should be adapted to the specific needs of the Asian lecturers. Due to cultural differences, Asian lecturers are not inclined to discuss problems they experience in their lessons. Traditional Western intervision sessions therefore will not work. A better way to approach them, is to ask for their advice on certain matters (positive instead of negative framing).

From the results of the literature study of Asian lecturers in an Australian educational environment and an analysis of the position of the Asian lecturers within the TMA programme, I concluded that a broader involvement of the Asian lecturers in the program would increase the opportunities for the Asian lecturers to get a wider framework of references which would make reflection and intercultural communication easier.

Evaluation and reflection

Looking back on my experiment, I felt guilty to have put my colleagues, including myself, into one corner by focusing on our Asian background. I knew they are all different individuals with different characters, different personal background and different experiences. I knew the danger of stereotyping (it is a very strong exclusion mechanism!) and was trying to avoid it all the time.

Despite this contradiction, I still chose this subject for my Action Research because all too often students have told me about their conflicts with Asian lecturers during Study Career Coaching meetings: "It's not really fair, but I just leave it like this, because I don't trust I will be helped if I complain." Although students sometimes also complain about Dutch lecturers, I personally feel more responsible to reflect on any incidents which are related to Asian colleagues, simply because I belong to that group myself. I also thought it would be a great shame for our programme if the specific Asian expertise of the Asian lecturers is not utilized intentionally and optimally. I saw it as a great opportunity for our students to learn how to deal with Asian values.

The intervention was not easy from time to time. However, it did give me new perspectives to think of this issue. I realized two important lessons: First of all, I realized that I should not ask our Asian lecturers to adapt to the Dutch educational system, because then I would be excluding the value of their own Asian cultural background, knowledge and skills. Instead, I should have focused on how the Asian cultural background of the language lecturers could be used as a positive force to improve intra- and interpersonal awareness in the students: students should be instructed on how to adapt to lecturers who have a Confucian view on education, in which respect, obedience, politeness, effort and hard work are highly valued. In order to achieve this goal, lecturers and students should develop an integrated approach to achieve conscious knowledge of intercultural differences in the Asian language classroom. Further research is needed in which Asian and Dutch lecturers work together to create a more inclusive curriculum focused on developing intercultural competence in an Asian-European context.

The second conclusion I drew was that not only the Asian language lecturers and their students should be involved: there is a larger issue at stake here, on a course programme level. My research gave me insight in the working environment of Asian language lecturers in Dutch educational contexts. Even in our intercultural TMA team, the language lecturers take up a rather isolated position. This made me take a critical view on the inclusiveness of our own team of lecturers. Further research is needed to investigate how this situation could be improved.

Inclusiveness in a classroom doesn't mean treating each individual equally regardless of individual differences. We want to embrace diversity. As Katherine W. Phillips wrote in Scientific American(2014), diversity gives us a chance for more creativity and stronger innovative thinking. We should attempt to make

maximum use of this possibility of our diverse team of lecturers.
Inclusiveness aims fundamentally at liberation (Freire 1970). Our aim is the liberation of the abilities and talents of the students from racially, socially or culturally diverse groups in an inclusive classroom. As a result of my research project, I now strongly believe that in order to achieve this, we should focus on liberating the full potential of our culturally diverse team members as well.

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