

## **Growing New Roots: The Voices of Internationally Educated Teachers and Their Mentors**

This series includes seven video clips:

1. **Background Information** on Internationally Educated Teachers – 10 minutes, 48 seconds
2. **Experiences** of Internationally Educated Teachers – 15 minutes, 17 seconds
3. **Challenges** Faced by Internationally Educated Teachers – 15 minutes, 19 seconds
4. **Strategies** for Internationally Educated Teachers – 11 minutes, 6 seconds
5. **Suggestions** for Internationally Educated Teachers Candidates – 12 minutes, 4 seconds
6. **Suggestions** for Teacher Educators and Associate Teachers Who Work with Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates – 15 minutes, 24 seconds
7. **The Academic and Cultural Support Centre (ACSC)** at OISE/UT – 11 minutes, 35 seconds

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## **Background Information on Internationally Educated Teachers**

**Internationally educated teachers (IETs) do not have equal access to certification process and job market**

**Kate Moore - Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in the Teach in Ontario initiative)**

Just like to address that too, and certainly in my experience with Teach in Ontario, I'm not sure how they knew to do this, but they actually don't allow IETs from Commonwealth countries to be part of the program because they've recognized that those IETs have a relatively, it's not necessarily simple, but it's a relatively simple certification process and entry into the workforce in comparison to those from Eastern Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, the rest of the world, Middle East, etc. And so, it's interesting 'cause I think there is almost two types of IETs and some have a quite seamless entry and some don't at all.

**Role of English in categorizing IETs**

**Florinda Kotisa - Associate Teacher**

I think before we go further we should identify exactly what internationally trained means in terms of the school system because I was trained in quite a prestigious university in Britain, in Ireland, actually. I didn't really face barriers getting into the system and I think is more language issue than where you are trained. If you happened to be trained in an English speaking country, I think it's less of an issue to get into the system. So I'm wondering if you should call it international training or a language ...

**IETs come from various backgrounds; they include both native and non-native speakers of English**

**Antoinette Gagné – Academic Advisor for the ACSC**

The Academic and Cultural Support Centre. It's a centre that's open to all students, graduate and undergraduate. And those students may be speakers of English as a first language or they may be English language learners themselves. And in that centre we've developed a range of ways of supporting our candidates who have been educated elsewhere. And when we use the term Internationally Educated Teacher Candidate, we're referring to two different groups. On the one hand, it may be a teacher from a

country like India who in fact has taught as a teacher somewhere in India for a number of years, and who arrives in Canada and finds out that because they don't have a degree in education that they in fact must complete a Bachelor's degree in order to be able to teach in our kindergarten through grade 12 schools. But we also have a group that we refer to as internationally educated who basically have spent most of their lives learning in a country other than Canada and part of the group that you'll hear from a little later during a panel are a cross-section of these groups.

**From “the deficit model” to “the value-added model” – IETs’ experiences need to be recognized, valued, and appreciated**

**Kate Moore - Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in *Teach in Ontario* initiative)**

I think one of the reasons why IETs get slide generally into supply teaching and at best LTOs... Of the 200 IETs that I happen to know from facilitating the programs, I haven't kept in touch with all of them so hopefully this has changed, I only know one with a full-time permanent job. I know over a hundred with the supply teaching jobs, you know. It's fascinating and then there is some who don't get their certification or who do not succeed in their supply teaching. One of the reasons is, I believe, is that the administrators, the boards and as mentioned the staff even, although they are not the ones on the hiring panel, do not necessarily recognize what they bring. They just notice what they perceive as a deficit. So instead of thinking, “Wow, this person is trilingual” or you know, we are living in an increasingly globalized world, this person can give curriculum examples from other parts of the world, they got networks in other parts of the world. So instead of starting to see what they have to offer, they're not embracing them. So I think that a really comprehensive approach is going to do both a deficit model and a value-added model and change the perception of IETs so that they are embraced, so that people are coming and recruiting them from Teach in Ontario, from here, etc.

**IETs’ previous teaching practices/styles should be valued, yet geared towards their new teaching context and educational system**

**Lynn Lemieux - Associate teacher and former teacher educator at OISE/UT**

I would just like to speak a little bit to that and to the deficit model because as a co-ordinator I think one of the things we've noticed and I think has been made more explicit

to candidates who, for example, who come from some of the cultural backgrounds that I think Antoinette was alluding to where, perhaps, classroom management has a very different look. I am thinking particularly of some of the candidates who came from, for example, the Indian sub-continent, thinking that the way that they perceive classroom management. And what they would say to me, the way that the teacher was revered and held as sort-of God in the classroom, and they were used to just telling kids, "Sit down," you know and the kids sat down and very teacher-directed learning. And so what we found was challenging within the short program that even though they had all the instruction in the course work about different ways of learning, how students learn, the ways of teaching that very deeply embedded in their psyche and being was how they had learned and that it was very difficult for many of them when they did their practice teaching to actually implement some of these newer ways that were being recommended. So what happened was if the principal of that school came into watch when they were doing their practicum, he or she may not have got a very positive feeling 'cause they could see this person struggling in front of the class, maybe sort of yelling at the kids, you know, "sit down, sit down," struggling with those classroom management things. So what happens is or what gets built up among administrators is this perception, "Oh, my gosh, this teacher is from Pakistan, this teacher is from India, oh I can just see what's going to happen with those rowdy grade eights." And so if in the BEd. Program we can really pull those out proactively and say look, you know, we understand that it worked for you, you know, in your culture, here's really what we're trying to do here, not just as part of our lesson but pull them aside perhaps, and have some explicit, "This is something that traditionally has been very hard for teachers from your cultural background to deal with." So let's have some special intensive work where they can begin to actually, yes, it seems like a deficit, but it is in reality a deficit, how can you change some of those deep-seated practices and then begin to look, of course, at the positive things they bring. But I think, visually, very visually that's what we see when these candidates struggle in the classroom is they go in thinking that they can use those same methods. It doesn't work.

**Awareness-raising should not be limited to IETs only; others, including principals and superintendents need to know more as well**

**Jinah Kim - Education Officer - Ontario Ministry of Education**

One of the things that my principal said that she had to get past was when she looked at the resumes sometimes, sometimes, they didn't look like a quote Canadian resume that prioritize the teaching experiences, but for some resumes she would get would sort of outline what was the priority in their home country. For example, "I have three daughters, I have a son, I've been married, you know, 15 years," which is a priority in some countries when you write-up your resume, whereas here, is not as much, whereas you write down your actual qualifications and your experience. So perhaps some of that education has to happen with the IETs but also at the hiring level as well, principals, superintendents across the system.

For more information about teaching in Ontario, please consult with the following resources and/or contact the following institutions:

<http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/citdiv/apt/>

Your path to becoming a certified teacher in Ontario

The Ontario Network for International Professionals Online:

<http://www.onip.ca/sector/4/>

Teach in Ontario:

<http://www.enseignerontario.ca/en/whatistio.htm>

Information on Teach in Ontario partners:

[www.enseignerontario.ca/en/whorunsit.htm](http://www.enseignerontario.ca/en/whorunsit.htm)

### **Teach in Ontario**

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Website: [www.wwwwiw.org](http://www.wwwwiw.org)

## **Experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers**

### **An inadequate level of language proficiency may lead to isolation**

#### **Maggie - an IETC**

And before I came to OISE, I worry about my language barrier and culture. So I think as a teacher, if I cannot speak fluently, how could I teach students, that's the big concern.

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

Actually, after I began my studies at OISE, my concerns came true, and sometimes the situation was even worse than I thought. At the beginning I remember that when we did the group work, some of my classmates didn't want to be my partner, so I felt badly at that time. But I understand that people, they care about their marks, I understand them although I felt bad.

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

During the class sometimes I found it hard for me to join the conversation because almost everybody in my cohort are the native speaker. They don't have any problem with communicating, so sometimes I found it hard for me continue the conversation, so my way is to observe because we were focused on one topic.

### **I experienced differences between teaching strategies used in my country of origin and those I was expected to implement during my practicum**

#### **Katherine – An IETC**

One thing that I really learned and that has resounded with me was being learner-centred because where I came from, teaching practices, there were mostly teacher-centred: Teachers talk a lot and students were mostly passive receivers. And here, she told me that, I was in a grade 2, a primary grade, and she said, "Just try to talk for 15 minutes, and as much as possible give the students the chance to explore and to do hands on activities and do cooperative group work, which is very important I think for internationally trained teachers, especially for most of them who are using more traditional teaching style. That was very good because you do see the difference in how much more engaged the students are and how much they learn and that they sort of own the learning process rather than passively receiving in one ear and then it goes the next time you're not there. So it was really good. That was, I would say, the most important thing I learned that it's not about how well I can teach the lesson best but how well can the students learn. What's the best

way for the students to learn rather than what's the best way for me to teach. That's something I learned.

### **A course specifically designed for IETCs helped enhance my self-esteem**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

I also took this optional course first semester called Language and Culture in the Classroom and I had to say that that course helped me improve my self-esteem because most of the students in that course were internationally educated students, so I had a better self-esteem to talk in the class and also in that course they taught us lots of good strategies to improve our English and to improve our class management because I come from a very different culture when it comes to student discipline and student culture, so I needed some input to get ready for the Canadian education system.

### **Prepare to work hard**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

This course is very intense even for a native English speaker but when it comes to someone who has the English language as a barrier is going to be even tougher. So if an essay or a reflection takes one hour for a native English speaker to write, it's going to be three hours, four hours for someone like me who has a problem in language. What I mean, one of the strategies for me was to spend more time, maybe. The amount of time I spent on my assignments was more compared to my other classmates.

### **Using the available support and resources can result in a more positive experience**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

Of course the time helped and there were lots of support. I had support from my instructors, I had support from my classmates, they made it easy for me at the ACSC centre, which helped me a lot. It helped to improve my self-esteem and seek help.

### **Teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds enrich the program**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

Well, I sense that the B.Ed program at OISE itself encourages teacher educators to include all kinds of students, all kinds of minorities, whatever the minority is: race, religion, creed or language, first language. So I felt included, I would say with all the different courses I attended and that made me feel good.

## **Teacher educators are ready to help and support you**

### **Katherine – an IETC**

Another thing that was really helpful to me was that how accessible my instructors were. They gave us their e-mail addresses and their phone numbers and cell numbers and that we could reach them anytime and anywhere. So I would say that the personality and the warmth that our instructors extended to us paid a huge role in making me feel more comfortable because I was really intimidated because you get that signal from the whole government structure and from the Canadian government that your education isn't good enough because it wasn't recognized.

### **Tara - an IETC**

I have to say that for most parts I've got more support than what I expected in OISE. When I started this program, I never thought that the teacher educators are going to be so supportive. I remember that when I was at my practicum, I've got a telephone call from my math teacher in OISE, Mr. Lancaster. He called me at home to see if I have a problem, if I want support. And I remember once when I had a problem, I was on the phone with him for one hour and he was helping me with my lesson plan, and also the same about my cohort coordinator, Mr. De Angelis. He was supportive of me taking part in the prep program, where I switched my internship and my practicum. And all the way, he accommodated for me and overall, I had a very good experience and I think if all the teacher educators are as supportive as the ones I worked with, and understand the frustration faced by teacher educators, it's going to be really helpful.

## **A positive practicum experience**

### **Tara – an IETC**

Speaking out of my personal experiences, I had a very good experience in my practicum. Practicum is a very exhausting experience and if you don't have the right associate teacher, it's going to make it more difficult for you. But I was lucky enough to work with four amazing associate teachers, they were all really supportive; they never had prejudice against me because I speak English as my second language or I was not originally from Canada. They were really supportive when it came to my language, they would correct me, they would give me feedback on my language besides my curriculum and content and teaching practice and even when it came to my written English for preparing tests

and worksheets, they would work with me and help me correct my sentences and write it in proper English. I even remember once I had this experience of putting up an assignment, and I was not sure. I had a tight schedule, and I was not sure if I can do one paragraph during the lunch and do the copying and I asked my associate teacher to do it for me. And I remember he told me that he is not going to do it for me because it's not going to help me to learn. And he said that he is willing to stay for his lunch break and help me correct my paragraph, but he wants me to do it myself and I think what he did was really valuable and I was lucky enough to work with another English-as-a-second language speaker associate teacher, that was a very good role model to me, to show me that although English was not his first language, he was such a successful teacher, he knew his subject and he had respect of the students and the colleagues.

**An associate teacher comments on the IETCs she worked with  
Carol – an associate teacher**

...all of my student-teachers made a real connection with the students in my community in the schools. There were very receptive to sharing with each other, any opportunities to discuss their culture and the experiences that the IETs are bringing into the classroom. I was very impressed with their willingness, their enthusiasm that they've shared with the rest of the staff; they were able to participate in the staff meeting and the whole culture of the school very quickly in the week and a half they were with us.

**An Internationally Educated Teacher Candidate speaks favourably of associate teachers**

**Tara – an IETC**

I have to say that from what I've heard from my friends, the number of cases where associate teachers are supportive and helpful is far beyond the number of ones who are maybe not as good. So I think most of the time we are lucky to have good associate teachers in our system and I really cherish the experience and how they have shared the experience with me.

### **Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates are passionate about teaching**

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

I would like to say thank you to OISE/UT for giving me this chance because, I think for most of us we, it's so hard to get into the OISE/UT program and I had to go through university and there is a lot of barriers that we have to overcome, more than most native English speakers here so we really are passionate about teaching and dedicated towards teaching, and I am glad that you have such a diverse student population here too because it helps us to know that there are a lot of us who were really trying very hard and hopefully we can serve as good role models for students in primary and secondary level.

#### **If you try hard, you will succeed!**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

And my last word is that I don't want to disappoint anyone, this is not an impossible task to do. When I started this course, I had a five-month old baby, and I was an English-as-a-second-language speaker, and I did it. So if I could do it, everyone else could do it. They just have to try hard.

#### **Teachers' college is worth the experience!**

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

I would say, "Go to Teachers' College." Definitely. It's really helpful to understand the theory and to be exposed to new and innovate teaching practices and to be exposed to whole school culture and philosophy, which could be really different from what they are used to. And it would help them be better teachers not just in teaching the students but also working within that school culture that doesn't clash with other teachers and sort of makes the students confused. Yeah, definitely go to school and learn about teaching instructions and teaching methods and the best teaching practices.

#### **Experiences of the Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates**

- An inadequate level of language proficiency may lead to isolation.
- The practicum provided an opportunity for IETCs to learn appropriate teaching strategies.
- IETCs worked hard to succeed.

- A caring environment created by teacher educators and associate teachers as well as the support from the ACSC helped IETCs enhance their self-esteem and improve their proficiency in English.
- The diverse backgrounds of IETCs enriched the program and helped create a more inclusive learning environment.
- IETCs recommended their teacher education program as the best place to learn about the theory of teaching and innovative practices.

## **Challenges Faced by Internationally Educated Teachers**

### **Language can sometimes be a barrier to full participation**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

And before I came to OISE, I worried about my language barrier and the culture because for Chinese people sometimes we don't have many problems with reading, and we have a problem with speaking. So I think as a teacher if I cannot speak fluently, how could I teach students? That's my big concern before I came to OISE. After I came to OISE, my concern came true and the situation sometimes were worse. For example, I met difficulties most ESL students have in their schools; sometimes people or classmates don't want to be my partner. I can understand because people care about their marks and it's natural for people to find a strong partner because they work at the job and the assignments done easily and quickly. However, sometimes it made me feel bad.

#### **Tara – an IETC**

The day I got my admission I was extremely happy but at the same time I was worried because I knew that my language is going to be a barrier for me, and when I started my classes I realized that I was right and language was a barrier for me.

### **Limited fluency can impact a teacher's self-confidence and ability to manage a classroom.**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

Before I came to OISE, I was very concerned about my English proficiency, specially my spoken English. My concern was that without fluent English, so that means if I can't speak English very fluently, how could I manage the classroom? I know that classroom management is a complex issue even for experienced teachers, so for me, I am an internationally educated teacher candidate and I am a new teacher. I was about that how could I manage the classroom in a proper way to deal with the students? So that's the big concern for me.

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

Maybe something I could say about concerns during the program was classroom management. Before starting the program, I didn't think much about it. This is still something that I need to work on. I think I am doing fine but it's like a long process.

### **IETCs' knowledge of written English can be another source of concern**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

And I also worried about my writing; so I thought that, I am thinking that I am not going to be a professional writer, write in the perfect English. I mean that if I write something on the blackboard, I want it perfect without any grammar mistakes. I think as a teacher it's very important to be perfect in everything but I know my English is not ready for me to be perfect in everything, that's another my concern.

### **IETCs' level of English proficiency may affect their self-image and self-confidence**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

So the first day in our humanities classes when students started to talk and contribute to the class, I felt really bad because I realized that comparing to them my vocabulary is very small. I speak in very simple sentences and I cannot be as complicated or as sophisticated as others. So at the bottom of my heart I felt like an idiot because I felt I'm illiterate, I'm not good enough to contribute and share my ideas in the class. So I have many ideas, I knew what I want to say but because my sentences were not as complicated as others I was not willing to share.

### **IETCs' ongoing personal efforts combined with support from others can lead to improvement**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

And finally, I think as an ESL learner, I still feel my English is not good enough. I need to improve, I know, but I think for personal efforts and societal input are very necessary in improving one learner's English.

### **IETCs' knowledge of context-specific language will improve with feedback from colleagues**

#### **Kate Moore - Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in Teach in Ontario initiative)**

... also addressing things like language. So, often the IETs come in from societies where one only talks in the male gender if talking in terms of an example, "Well, he would do this, he would do that." And so making sure that they are using inclusive language and again just doing the teachable moments all the time to get them used to that.

### **IETCs' accent can sometimes be a barrier in interactions with students, colleagues and parents**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

And of course, I wanted to be a teacher, so I was not sure how I am going to do in a classroom setting as a teacher who speaks English with an accent, and maybe sometimes I had this feeling that maybe I will have some problems with the students, they will make fun of me, or I may have even problems with the associate teachers or with the parents. There were all my concerns before starting this program.

### **Group work and presentation skills can also cause concerns**

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

So my concerns that arose were with the whole bunch of group work and presentations that we had to do. It's really different if you are presenting to people who speak the same accent and understand you as opposed to speaking to a whole bunch of native English speakers. So that was part of my concern.

### **Culture shock is a challenge to overcome**

#### **Clyde – an IETC**

Maybe they might have had a little language problem or cultural or culture shock problem. Maybe they didn't want to admit this but there were some people who confided in me and said they cried tears, you know, for different reasons: some being cultural, not being accustomed to Canadian classroom or how it operates, being frustrated.

### **IETCs' needs may be different from those of Canadian-educated teachers**

#### **Jinah Kim - Education Officer - Ontario Ministry of Education**

... but there were a few who were internationally educated or trained, and their needs were a little bit different than the Canadian-trained INTs. There was that cultural aspect that you've been talking about, Lynn. They said their top priorities were classroom management 'cause that's was different and has nothing to do with subject-matter, classroom management, special ed., because a lot of times where there were trained special ed. kids weren't integrated into a regular classroom as well as the way we assess and evaluate here in Ontario. So they were looking into those kinds of things.

**Orientation to the Canadian culture and educational system is essential to the success of IETs**

**Jinah Kim – Education Officer – Ontario Ministry of Education**

And one of the things they specifically asked for, the IETs, was an orientation, not necessarily what everyone else gets but an orientation to the culture, to the cultural aspect of Ontario and that could look very different depending where you are. Toronto is very different, than you know Sault Sainte Marie or Muskoka or the east or the west, so we heard that very clearly.

**IETCs should become familiarized with Canadian communication styles**

**Katherine – an IETC**

Communication in Western cultures is that, I think you said that too, that people jump right in and it's interrupting one another and just being assertive and talking and everybody is talking and contributing all at the same time.

**Systemic barriers faced by IETCs can sometimes seem insurmountable**

**Katherine – an IETC**

When I came here to Canada, the whole system itself, the government system, the political system didn't even recognize my degree. So that does make me doubt my academic credentials, so I had to go to two years of university here when I was already considered a university graduate back home. So I definitely had doubts about my academic preparation for the OISE program. And considering how competitive OISE is, so I knew I was competing against the crème de la crème. So those were my concerns, I was intimidated academically and I would say, I was also intimidated socially because English, even though we spoke English back home in the Philippines, I still had to take the TOEFL exam. So there was still that whole connotation that my English wasn't good enough and that there must be something wrong with my accent and all that kind of stuff. So English, I never thought about myself as having English as a second language but here I was considered an ESL person and I had to take an exam. And so it wasn't, so aside from thinking of English as a second culture, there is the added barrier of you as an ESL speaker and you had to speak very carefully because people might not understand you. So I was intimidated academically, culturally, socially.

### **Mentors can make a difference**

And so I came to the program. When I came to OISE, I wasn't sure if I would be able to handle the load but I was really lucky because I had a mentor who was also a teacher.

### **A lack of experience teaching a certain age group can also present a challenge**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

I thought that if I passed the English exam, I would have enough of the language to understand and to go well with all the different requisites here. My big concern was actually dealing with high school students because I don't have much experience with them in my own country. I taught in the university, I was a teaching assistant for many years but that was relating with young adults rather than with kids in their teens, so that was my big concern before entering here.

### **Knowledge of the Canadian educational system is important**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

As Maggie mentioned, it's very important to know the Canadian education system. Maybe it seems funny for you, but I didn't know what's a homeroom because I didn't know what does it mean. We don't have anything like a homeroom, when it comes to our education system.

### **Differences between the home country and Canada can present new challenges for IETs**

#### **Clyde – an IETC**

So when I came to Canada in October 2004, it was something of a cultural shock for me because when I thought I was exposed to lots of ethnicities or races, when I looked around me, even this room right now, there're must be maybe different 40-50 ethnicities in this single room. So I didn't have a small inkling or small little view of what Toronto really was. In many ways it was a culture shock for me much as so going into a classroom, talking about ESL, talking about behavioural kids. My school life really, never really had students labelled or identified as behavioural or whatever. It's either you made it or you didn't. So in many ways, the Canadian educational system is so much different from many others, especially in Guyana. One thing we do there, we dress in uniform, so but I don't understand why in Canada you don't, maybe like winter and all

that. So it was, there were so many things I had to learn. There was a culture too of language, the way we speak. I never thought I have an accent 'til I got here.

### **Knowledge of pop culture can contribute to more effective teaching**

#### **Antoinette Gagné – Academic Advisor for the ACSC**

The knowledge and understanding of the Canadian school system and also pop culture that exists for young people in Canada, that is as much a barrier for internationally educated teachers for whom English has been the medium of instruction. There are many parts of the world where in fact English is the language that's used every day but where the norms, both in school and outside of the school, are very different. And we are finding there's a dual challenge. So in the support we offer we try to mesh those two elements and that's why even the title of our centre is the Academic and Cultural Support Centre.

### **Getting volunteer teaching experience can be a challenge**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

When we came to this country not knowing anyone, so I didn't have any friends who were teachers, so I could ask them if I can volunteer in the school. So what I did is I went to my local school and asked them if I can volunteer there. I showed them my credentials and they easily said no. They didn't want me to be a volunteer there, so I didn't know exactly how to get that volunteer experience, or that experience you need to apply for Teachers' College here.

## **Strategies for Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs)**

### **Observing in classrooms is one way to learn about the Canadian school system**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

I went to this program where I could observe several schools because my exposure before coming to Canada was just what I watch in movies about what the school is about, and that is mostly American schools, right?

### **I sought support to improve my oral and written communication skills**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

I think I needed to improve my English, that's one way to survive and to realize my goal to be a teacher. So I came to ACSC for help and when I wrote my initial version of my paper, I went to ACSC, so teachers there helped me a lot. While improving my essays, I improved my English including writing and speaking.

### **Classroom observation provided a view of Canadian culture and the education system**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

So this program of observing classes was also very, very helpful to me. Perhaps it would be great to see not only a classroom and how classrooms are being dealt with, but also the whole culture of the whole community of the school is all about that I realize how things were in my practicum internship: The different extra-curriculum activities, and the role the ESL department or the guidance department do to the students.

### **You can learn from associate teachers**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

And for the associate teacher, in my first practicum, I learned a lot from my associate teacher. We worked in this way: Because my associate teacher has two math classes, both are math classes at the academic level. In the morning the first session she taught, I observed and helped other students. And in the afternoon, I taught. In the morning I observed the way she taught and observed how she communicated and managed the classroom. And in the afternoon I tried to use the teaching methods I thought she did very well, and also I tried my own way. And after the teaching she gave me some feedback on what I did good and what I needed to work on. It really helped me a lot.

### **Deal with problems in a professional manner**

#### **Clyde - an IETC**

There were some ATs who weren't very helpful, sometimes, you know, you have to swallow a lot of stuff, saying, "I am bigger than this," and deal with it in a mature fashion in a professional way also, even though sometimes you stressed to the limit to be professional, sticking to your guns, sticking to what you believe in without people trying impose their view on you.

### **Talk to teacher educators about assignments**

#### **Maggie – an IETC**

And the second way, I got much help is my TS co-coordinator: she's Karen Sheppard. Because we have a big assignment, everybody knows that the portfolio we have five papers to write reflections. Every time I went to her to ask her opinion before the final deadline. She was very nice to give me some extra help, gave me her opinion and helped me on the right track

### **Ask questions and use all the available resources**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

I actually knew that because I would be a teacher in Canada, I would have in a way to accommodate myself to Canadian, to the Canadian reality. And even though Canadian reality includes people who immigrated here, people from different like a very diverse population, there is a unifying factor, which is Canada, and some of the customs and languages spoken in the school, that sort of thing.

#### **Tara – an IETC**

At the end it paid off and it helped me to be successful in the course, and one more thing that really helped me is that I tried to socialize and to be with English native speakers in the course and be friends with them. Not just to be with ESL teacher candidates.

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

I consider myself a pretty sociable person, very approachable. And I don't think I changed much in that respect. I just acted the way I am truly, and that gave me the chance to mingle with the different classmates or to contact, to communicate with the different instructors or to when I have to be, when I have to talk to administration or teachers in schools, and most of the time I was fine.

### **Katherine – an IETC**

The personal strategies I would say I used most often were that I did a lot of questioning. If I didn't understand something, I would either put up my hand in class and ask a question or I would approach the instructors, or I would ask other people to gain information. So other approaches would probably be accessing other resources that are available here at OISE and from my colleagues and from the library or from the Internet. I must say that Internet has been, it wasn't something that I really utilized back home, but coming here has made me realize how much valuable assistance the Internet would provide. So I guess it's something that's sort of you learn, that I learned here. 'Cause I didn't have an e-mail account before coming here. Yes, those were resources that I would say, helped. And I did a lot of reading and asking and talking to people about what their experiences was like. And I would say that the whole practicum experience had been invaluable because you have theory that they teach in class but it's really different when you see it being practiced. And that's when you believe that hey, it really works, it's not just the theory. And it's applicable and it can be used by teachers and it does work better than old, traditional methods.

### **Be prepared to work hard. Flexibility and open-mindedness are key**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

I think that it's very important to be prepared. They have to know that they have a tough year ahead but it doesn't mean it's impossible to do it. They just have to try hard. I think it's very important that if they have time, work on their English, improve their English before they come to this course. They have a full summer between the time they get their admission and they start the course. If they can improve their English written and spoken, it's going to be a great help. They also have to be very adaptive. In this year you learn that you have to be very adaptive, very flexible. You are exposed to a new culture, you have to be very open to the new culture and try to learn and adapt yourself to this new culture, and of course there are many help resources in OISE. If they don't seek help, they are not going to get help. So my advice is that seek help, there are many people who are here and who are willing to help you but you have to go to them for help.

**Tara – an IETC**

I think my final word is that international teacher candidates have to understand that as much as it's their part to make an effort and try hard to make it. There are lots of supports available at least in my case where I know in OISE and it's very important that they try hard but they also try to take advantage of the support.

**A few effective strategies:**

- Learn about the Canadian school system by observing classes before the practicum
- Work to improve your English proficiency and seek additional support
- Build a professional relationship with associate teachers
- Ask questions and socialize with people
- Utilize Internet resources
- Take advantage of your practicum experiences to try new teaching strategies
- Be adaptive, flexible and open to new ideas

## **Suggestions for Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates (IETCs)**

### **Seek support**

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

So I feel that if you are an internationally trained candidate, it's very important that you have a mentor who can guide you through the whole process, the whole academic process, who has been there, who's talked the talk and walked the walk, and will provide you that one-on-one support which you might not get from a whole classroom and from your colleagues as well because there are a lot of issues that you are dealing with. It's the whole cultural issue and interpersonal issue, and communicating with others. And it's not just language but it's the nuances as well and the humour. Sometimes I go and I asked him, "Oh, we had a conversation today and I didn't really understand why everybody laughed." Or, "What was the nuance behind it?" And he'd explain it to me. So it was really good to have a mentor who could do that for me.

### **Seek help with writing in English**

#### **Tara – an IETC**

And I have to admit that OISE had lots of good support for students like me. One of the centres that really helped me, especially with my written English was a centre in OISE called Academic and Cultural Support Centre, where you can go there and seek help for your written English, or even for your spoken English. I never had an occasion when I seek help in spoken English but I sought help in my written English and it was on frequent basis. And it really, really helped me to improve my writing style. I want to make it clear that this is not a simple editing service. This is a service which helps you to improve your English, not just editing your assignments. This centre was really helpful when it came to my cover letter, my essays, my assignments. I think my written English has improved a lot since I started this course in OISE.

### **Be proactive about improving your English**

#### **Maggie - an IETC**

I think I need to improve my English and actually I tried to get help. I went to ACSC. The instructors there are very helpful, they helped me with my assignment. Every time

when I first finish my first version of my assignment, I went there ask their opinion. They helped me with my grammar and word choices and helped me express my idea in a clear way and correctly, so they helped me a lot.

### **Mentors can make a difference**

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

What has made it easier for me as an internationally trained teacher candidate was that I had a mentor to whom I could turn to for more personal support and academic support and emotional support, as well as the fact that OISE/UT has an academic support program so it's very helpful to know that institution itself has this support structure for teachers like us to whom we could turn to.

### **Use the available resources**

#### **Geoff Lawrence – Coordinator of ACSC**

And the biggest suggestion I've heard from other candidates I've worked with and things that I thought myself is really, it's important to use the resources that OISE offers. It offers a lot of resources for internationally educated candidates: writing resources, resources to understand how school culture is. Really asking, it's important to really ask a lot of questions of your teacher educators, of your peers to try and clarify information if you are not sure, if you feel you didn't understand the point, understand the information, the assignments. Really reach out to ask people for help because a lot of people are very willing to support you in the program. I also think it's very important for you to try and share stories, share *your* stories, share *your* experiences with other colleagues and with the teachers in your program because your experiences are rich and they can enhance and enlighten everyone's experience in this program. So that is key.

#### **Tara – an IETC**

So please make sure that you use resources because if you don't use resources, it's like you are on your own but when you use this kind of support, you know other teacher candidates, who share the same problem with you. And there are these people who are trying to help and be supportive, so please make sure that you take advantage of this support. And I think I'm really thankful because this support helped me a lot to get through this difficult year.

**Have confidence in yourself and be open to sharing your story****Katherine – an IETC**

I guess one way of making the prep program more effective would be: I think, one of the speakers said that students can be resources, and *we* can be resources to our fellow-classmates and tell our stories. I've gone through, we've gone through the full immigrant process and yes, we are ESL speakers ourselves, so I think that's one of way of helping out the prep program.

**Be open and approachable****Sergio-an IETC**

Don't be shy. Be approachable. Approach yourself to other classmates. OISE is a safe environment where you can show what you are truly are and what you can do for students' success and for you to become a better teacher. Take advantage of all the different resources that the school gives you; don't be so lazy. It's a busy year but very enriching.

**Maggie – an IETC**

One important thing is to be open-minded. So it's a fact that for an internationally educated teacher, English and culture is our barrier, for us. However, if we are willing to change and willing to face that challenge, we can improve. And also we should be life-long learners. It's not only good for us to improve our English, it's also good for us to improve our curriculum knowledge because when you are competent in your teaching subject, you will prove and win that you are a good teacher and you will win.

**The Pre-field Experience Program or PREP can help you in various ways****Maggie - an IETC**

Because I joined the PREP internship. I did my internship first, not the first practicum. It really helped me to get me ready for the first practicum. Actually, I got a very good evaluation from my associate teacher. That is because I felt very comfortable after the first internship at the PREP program.

**PREP can help enhance your confidence****Clyde – an IETC**

Because if it wasn't there, maybe I would not be sitting here today. Yesterday I finished my second practicum actually and I was successful in both but what I was looking for is growth in that when I looked at my summative evaluation the first time, and then I looked at the second one, I wanted to see if I'd have moved from the level threes to fours. And I did, so I was pretty happy with that. So I think I'm pretty much ready to go.

**PREP can provide a view of the Ontario school system****Maggie – an IETC**

I think that another thing good about PREP is that instead of focusing on teaching, making lesson plan teaching, we had a chance to look at different facets or factors of the school, just like we are not focusing on the piece of paper, we focus on the whole picture. So in the first internship with PREP we had a chance to look at a major way of those teachers in special ed. and the school policy and we interview principals, and we have a lot of things to do. And we also do other things. Yes, that's a very good experience. I think if I did my practicum, I am going to focus on my teaching but I don't know how the school runs in Canada because I didn't grow up here. If I went to high school here, I'd know how the school runs but I'm from China, I don't know how the Canadian school runs here. That gave me the chance to look at the whole picture.

**Other suggestions include:**

- Try to improve your language skills
- Expose yourself to English and the English-speaking community
- Learn about the Canadian education system
- Visit schools and observe classes
- Be proud of yourself for making it this far!

## **Suggestions for Teacher Educators and Associate Teachers Who Work with Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates (IETCs)**

### **Be aware of the special needs of IETCs and consider establishing a ‘buddy’ system Maggie – an IETC**

And another thing it’s better to give us a partner, a buddy, with a Canadian born teacher candidate we can work regularly on some homework, on some school work. And through doing homework and school work, we can improve our language and learn from each other. And I also find that sometimes I found it hard to follow the group discussion or the class discussion. So I think it’s better for the instructors to notice that we have some cultural barrier, sometimes we find it hard to follow the discussion, so it’s better for the instructor to stop for a while, summarize or remind us what’s going on and give us some main points, then we can follow and we will continue. And also I found it when we handed in assignments, it’s only for the marking and I think it’s better for us to get some advice before we hand in assignments. We can get some feedback before we hand in assignments and make sure we are on the right track. OK.

### **Help IETCs to become aware of their needs**

#### **Antoinette Gagné – Academic Advisor for the ACSC**

I think that one of our biggest challenges has been to help our IET group to know that in fact they do need help. So those who come, for example to the ACSC or who come to their teacher educators or to their hosts asking for explicit input and help, they know that that would be useful, they are there already. We find it that’s a minority. And those who aren’t successful in the program are the students who don’t realize that they would benefit from this very directed kind of activity or input. And that’s where things become delicate and our sensitivities are at play. Do you just walk up to this candidate and say, “Look, you may not think you need help or explicit input but you do. So we are gonna do it now. It’s a very delicate line.”

#### **Katherine – an IETC**

I asked some of my classmates what suggestions they would have because this would be our opportunity for teacher candidates to offer suggestions to instructors. Some of their suggestions were if we could have, because it’s very hard to modify and accommodate

for our special needs and exceptional students, so we were wondering if we could have more chances to really see samples and practice modifying and accommodating not just the teaching practices but also the curriculum expectations because I think we need more practice with that.

**Ongoing feedback from teacher educators and/or peers as well as peer tutoring are great sources of support for IETCs**

**Maggie – an IETC**

I think I have some suggestions for instructors of OISE. One way is to give formative feedback assignment before the due date because teacher candidates like me, sometimes we have a language barrier and because most of the other teacher candidates are native speakers when they discuss and give a class, lectures they go very quickly. Sometimes I didn't get what exactly was going on in the class. So I think it is better give me more feedback through one-on-one help my English was improved a lot. I think that this way maybe work for most other people like me.

**Pay attention to IETCs linguistic needs**

And also during the class I found sometimes the instructors and the classmates talk very fast. I think it's better for teacher candidates and instructors to pay more attention about the speed of talking or lecturing because I think it's important for me to listen. If the teacher speaks clearly and loudly, I can understand better. And also speak loudly and clearly not good for ESL learners but also for most other regular students.

**IETCs can contribute positively because diverse backgrounds enrich the program**

**Geoff Lawrence – Coordinator of ACSC**

And for teacher educators, I think it's crucial to really work to try and hear the voices in your classroom. The understanding that we have the luxury, the beauty, these days, of having diverse experiences, diverse richness in the class and to trying exploit that, to use it as an opportunity to increase the intercultural communication and awareness of teacher candidates who are going to be working with diverse students in schools. I think that layer of learning is incredibly rich and incredibly useful in this day and age.

### **Open the lines of communication and provide clear feedback to IETCs**

**Antoinette Gagné – Academic Advisor for the ACSC**

What you are all saying in fact is reflected in our IET candidates' interviews, whereby they have expressed how much they've appreciated input that is very clear and explicit. In fact, they are very aware how often when they go into schools either as student-teachers or interns how everybody is very careful and especially they say that the teachers who would be Canadian-born teachers are careful because they are aware of all kinds of policies and plays that respects diversity. So they will tell me instead of having a straight out conversation saying, "Look, you speak a different variety of English and I am not saying that's bad but some of the kids are saying that they have difficulty with a few words now and then and getting it. Let's look at some strategies; let's figure out how you can be even more effective." So I'm not saying as your associate teacher, your host, "I want you to change your accent." I just want to figure out with you some strategies for you to be more comprehensible so that you feel confident, your students are confident and learning can take place.

### **Support IETCs in developing cultural fluency in their new teaching contexts**

**Kate Moore - Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in the Teach in Ontario initiative)**

One of the things that we do explicitly and implicitly at Teach in Ontario is cultural fluency. And so in terms of addressing classroom management, resumes, mock interviews, things like that we do often compare and contrast, "Ok, what worked in your country of origin? Which of those would be appropriate for here? Which are you never gonna talk about and you're certainly never going to (laughter)." We're very explicit about that kind of thing. You know, the interaction, you know, how you must be revered, and having that automatic respect, how it's quite different here. So making those conversations explicit.

... To give you one example, and I'm not exaggerating. There was one IET from Eastern Europe. She had approached twenty schools to volunteer and had been turned down at twenty schools. She goes, "What's the problem with that! Here I am. I am willing to volunteer my services. What's their problem?" You know? And I said, "Remember that that critical frame? Let's sit down and have a conversation." The next week she had

successfully approached the school and she had a private school job offer based on the interview that we... So just sitting down with the person and saying, “That is totally appropriate from the culture where you’ve come from, this is how it is viewed here.” You know, so being really, having those frank conversations, which as a simple Canadian, doesn’t come naturally. And when I said, ‘cause I’ve already talked to her of beating around the bush like simply Canadians tend to do, and I said, “I am just letting it on the line for you.” She goes, “Thank you!” And I said, ”You are being perceived as brusque, offensive...” And she walked away and she was so grateful and it let her to a very different outcome. So being able to go there which doesn’t necessarily come naturally in our society. So incorporating that cultural fluency.

### **Collaboration and peer-review will lead to improvement**

**Kate Moore - Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in the Teach in Ontario initiative)**

And so reviewing all their cover letters, teaching them about cover letters, resumes, then reviewing each and every one and having them critique one another’s before they get their final version, doing mock interviews and we would do what we called public interviews, where certain IETs would volunteer to go through the process with everybody else present. We tell them all the reasons why they want it to do it and typically over half of the group would volunteer to do that.

### **Vary your support strategies to suit the different needs and preferences of IETCs**

**Florinda Kotisa - Associate Teacher**

I am thinking when you have this critical friend: a) the critical friend may not always want to say anything; and b) this person may not be ready to receive this kind of critical friendship. I’m wondering if it could be done differently, have a model video, show a different person, not the person involved but have things that can go wrong in the interview, in the resume, in the classroom and have this teacher in OISE doing it before they go into the workplace so that they have some cultural knowledge and that it’s something that they can aspire to without being put on the line, without being meant to feel inadequate.

**Associate teachers as a great immediate source of support and learning for IETCs****Maggie – an IETC**

I would say that I had a very good experience with my associate teacher in my first practicum; my associate teacher helped me a lot. I remember, she used the routine, every day when she came to the classroom, she'd write the agenda on the board. So when the students came in, they knew what they should do. I found that very useful in classroom management. And also when I taught, when she found some mistakes I made in terms of English and she corrected me afterwards. And also she showed me how to use the photocopier. Although it's the small thing but I learned very quickly and learned how the school runs. But I think the one problem is that I only worked four weeks with the associate teacher, it's pretty short for me. So I think that I still need more time to learn but the practicum was finished. So I think in the future, it's better to buddy a teacher candidate with the associate teacher, give them more time to work with. It's because for the internationally educated teacher candidates, we need more time to practice, not only about English and also about teaching. So I think it's good to give us longer time to work together, and it's better to start from the beginning of September. Maybe we can go to school one day or one afternoon but regularly go there and have more time.

**Be understanding and supportive****Tara – an IETC**

I have to say that it's very important for associate teachers to be supportive and understand how difficult and exhausting it is for ESL teacher candidates to prepare lessons and stand in front of class and present a lesson. So they have to support and try to improve the teacher's style.

## **The Academic and Cultural Support Centre (ACSC) at OISE/UT**

### **Services tailored to the needs of Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates (IETCs)**

#### **Antoinette Gagné – Academic Advisor for the ACSC**

The Academic and Cultural Support Centre. It's a centre that's open to all students, graduate and undergraduate. And those students may be speakers of English as a first language or they may be English language learners themselves. And in that centre we've developed a range of ways of supporting our candidates who have been educated elsewhere. And when we use the term Internationally Educated Teacher Candidate, we're referring to two different groups. On the one hand, it may be a teacher from a country like India who in fact has taught as a teacher somewhere in India for a number of years, and who arrives in Canada and finds out that because they don't have a degree in education that they in fact must complete a Bachelor's degree in order to be able to teach in our kindergarten through grade 12 schools. But we also have a group that we refer to as internationally educated who basically have spent most of their lives learning in a country other than Canada and part of the group that you'll hear from a little later during a panel are a cross-section of these groups.

### **The ACSC offers a broad range of services for all teacher candidates**

#### **Geoff Lawrence – Coordinator of ACSC**

One great resource for internationally educated teacher candidates that OISE started over the last couple of years is the Academic Cultural and Support Centre that offers writing and oral proficiency support for internationally educated candidates and we can sort of have one on one appointments with you and give you advice and feedback on your writing. Sort of helping you improve your writing and also your oral communication skills, lesson preparation, resume, cover letter preparation and those sorts of things. So that is an area I'd highly recommend.

### **A support system**

#### **Tara – An IETC**

I was lucky enough to meet Ms. Antoinette Gagné and her team on the orientation day and I decided to take advantage of the support. And I think it was not only that the support helped me in my language skills but it's very important if you know that there is a team working in the university who are going to support you morally if one day you really need help, and I think most of the time, I always thought that if something happens, there is a team that I can go back and ask them for help; I think morally and psychologically that helped me a lot to know that there is someone there for you in case something happens and you have a problem.

### **Support during the practicum**

#### **Sergio – an IETC**

What I value from that program the most was my first practicum because, how can I say, it was a challenging experience to me. I had, as a colleague of mine would say, a conflict of personalities with my associate teacher and I had a very valuable assistance from my regular instructors. However, I see that it was the Academic and Support program who made the difference because maybe because they are made by people who were from outside of the (unclear) that would make them realize of things: people who were brought up here would not see us easily.

### **Help with writing in English**

#### **Tara – An IETC**

And I have to admit that OISE have lots of good support for students like me, one of the centres that really helped me, especially with my written English was a centre in OISE called Academic and Cultural Support Centre, where you can go there and seek help for your written English, or even for your spoken English. I never had an occasion when I seek help in spoken English but I sought help in my written English and it was on frequent basis. And it really, really helped me to improve my writing style. I want to make it clear that this is not a simple editing service. This is a service which helps you improve your English, not just editing your assignments. And this centre was really helpful when it came to my cover letter, my essays, my assignments. I think my written English has improved a lot since I started this course in OISE.

**Mentors are important****Katherine – An IETC**

What has made it easier for me as an internationally trained teacher candidate was that I had a mentor to whom I could turn to for more personal support and academic support and emotional support, as well as the fact that OISE/UT has an academic support program so it's very helpful to know that institution itself has this support structure for teachers like us to whom we could turn to.

**Help to Improve my English****Maggie – An IETC**

But I think I need to improve my English and actually I tried to get help, I went to ACSC. The instructors there are very helpful, they helped me with my assignment. Every time when I first finish my first version of my assignment, I went there, ask their opinion. They helped me with my grammar and word choices and helped me express my idea in a clear way and correctly, so they helped me a lot.

**Help with assignments****Maggie – An IETC**

Actually, I really like ACSC; it really helped me a lot with my assignments, and resume, cover letter.

**Email and telephone appointments****Tara – An IETC**

They have an e-mail service or a telephone service because I commute from Mississauga, I could simply e-mail them my assignments or have a telephone conversation with them and they would give me feedback.

**Maggie – An IETC**

I find the ACSC very helpful in helping teacher candidates like me.

**The Pre-field Experience Program for Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates (PREP)****Clyde – An IETC**

The PREP program, I feel privileged to be a part of it.

**Good preparation for the first practicum****Maggie – An IETC**

Because I joined the PREP internship. It really helped me, get me ready for the first practicum. Actually, I got a very good evaluation from my associate teacher. That is because I felt very comfortable after the first internship at the PREP program.

**PREP helped me grow as a teacher****Clyde – An IETC**

Because if it wasn't there, maybe I would not be sitting here today. Yesterday I finished my second practicum actually and I was successful in both but what I was looking for is growth in that when I looked at my summative evaluation the first time, and then I looked at the second one, I wanted to see if I'd have moved from the level threes to fours. And I did, so I was pretty happy with that. So I think I'm pretty much ready to go.

**PREP provided me with a broader view of the Ontario school system****Maggie – An IETC**

I think that another thing good about PREP is that instead of focusing on teaching, making lesson plan teaching, we had a chance to look at different facets or factors of the school, just like we are not focusing on the piece of paper, we focus on the whole picture. So in the first internship we had a chance to look at a major way of those teachers in special ed. and the school policy and we interview principals, and we have a lot of things to do. And we also do other things. Yes, that's a very good experience.

**PREP helped to build my confidence****Clyde – An IETC**

I don't think that anything could stop me after that. I don't know. I got this confidence.

**ACADEMIC and CULTURAL SUPPORT CENTRE (ACSC)**

**FOR**

OISE/UT Initial Teacher Education & Graduate students

**WHAT**

Academic Writing Language & cultural communication support CVs & cover letters

**Where**

In Person consultation: Rm. 8-255 student services

Email consultation: [acsc@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:acsc@oise.utoronto.ca)

Phone consultation: 416-923-6641 x8200

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Florinda Kotisa – Associate Teacher

Lynn Lemieux – Associate teacher and former teacher educator at OISE/UT

Kate Moore – Former Facilitator/Counsellor at Skills for Change (A Partner in the Teach in Ontario initiative)

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