

# Faculty development e-module for professional acculturation in Canadian higher education

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**ABSTRACT.** Global education in a global world means increased professional mobility. An important source of new professors in Canada is new immigrants, but an academic career in a Canadian post-secondary institution can be very challenging for internationally trained faculty, limiting their potential and reducing their willingness to persist. The goal of the project presented in this study was to explore the issues, challenges, and barriers to success for international faculty in Canadian post-secondary institutions, and to develop an online professional development module offering resources and hands-on tools and activities to all members of the academic community willing to create and reinforce an inclusive academic environment. Funding for this project was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration as part of the Bridge training programs to help internationally trained professionals get the skills and knowledge they need to practice in Ontario.

**KEYWORDS:** *Cross-cultural communication, Inclusive academic environment, Online faculty development, Professional acculturation, Professional mobility*

The internationalization of higher education - a phenomenon amplified by increasingly accessible online and distance courses - while facilitating a broader circulation of ideas and thinking across the planet, is promoting the emergence of increasingly multicultural teaching and learning environments (Mason, 2002; 2003). The “provision [of higher education] has become increasingly internationalized, especially in the US, UK, Australia and Canada. This has occurred in a number of ways: growth in numbers of foreign students studying on shore in these countries; growth in numbers of foreign students studying at home for qualifications offered by higher education institutions from developed countries; and by institutional collaboration between universities in developing and developed countries” (Iredale, 2001). Faced with this diversity of populations and needs, many educational institutions are

becoming aware of the importance of addressing the notions of multiculturalism and interculturalism to create and reinforce an inclusive academic environment where the contributions of all domestic and international faculty and students are valued and nourished (Germain-Rutherford, Kerr, 2008).

In this study the authors explore the challenges and barriers faced by international faculty recently hired by post-secondary academic institutions in Ontario, the Canadian province with the largest number of universities, and the factors that lead to a successful integration of new immigrant professionals in higher education. In particular, our study seeks to foster an inclusive work environment where the contributions of new professors, regardless of their country of origin, are encouraged and valued. The study resulted in the development of a faculty development learning e-module available in English and French, *SuccessInAcademia.ca*, which offers professional development strategies and resources to both professors newly immigrated to Canada and to Canadian-born faculty, as well as to administrators interested in fostering an inclusive multicultural environment in their institutions. Both the research and the module were funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration of Ontario, as part of the *Bridge Training Programs* to help internationally trained professionals get the skills and knowledge they need to practice in Ontario. Indeed, and according to the 2006 Canadian census, Canada's ethnic, racial and religious diversity is rapidly increasing with more than 200 ethnic origins represented in Canada, an immigration rate that now accounts for more than 50% of Canada's population growth, and a prediction that after 2025 Canada's population growth will be solely based on immigration (Canadian Heritage, 2004).

### **The Canadian post-secondary education context**

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) estimated in its 2000 report that the province of Ontario by 2011 would need 13.500 new university faculty and 7.000 new community college faculty to replace retiring faculty and to meet increases in student demand (COU, 2000). On the national scale, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) reported that in 2005 one-third of faculty in Canadian universities were fifty-five years old or older while predicting an increase of student enrolment from 9 to 18%

in the next ten years. This means that during the same period universities will need to replace 21,000 faculty who will have retired or left for a variety of reasons (AUCC, 2007a).

“A closer look at some of these dynamics reveals many other factors that affect faculty renewal rates at Canadian universities. For example, demographics and international mobility are two important factors. Even with the abolition of mandatory retirement in Canada, universities will still be under pressure to renew faculty positions at a level previously unheard of in this country.” (AUCC, 2007b, p. 7).

Canadian universities and colleges are relying on a variety of sources to meet this important recruitment demand. In a five year period, from 1999 to 2004, more than 20,000 new faculty were recruited and appointed by Canadian universities to full-time positions. One third of those newly appointed faculty earned their highest degree outside Canada (either repatriated Canadian citizens who had earned their degrees abroad, international faculty on an employment visa in Canada, or new immigrant faculty). The fact that faculty were recruited from over seventy-five different countries illustrates the global nature of the Canadian academic labour market (AUCC, 2007b).

It is important to add that while recruitment of graduates from Canadian universities, repatriation of Canadians from abroad and recruitment of foreign graduates all increased between 1999 and 2004, there was a somewhat faster growth in recruitment of graduates from other parts of the world than from within Canada (AUCC, 2007b).

### **Objectives of the project *SuccessInAcademia.ca***

Global education in today's global world means increased professional mobility, and an increase of new international and new immigrant professors in Canada's academic institutions. But an academic career in a Canadian post-secondary institution can be very challenging for internationally educated faculty (Luther et al., 2001; Bannerji, 1995), limiting their potential and reducing their willingness to persist. They may not only have to adjust to a new

language, but also to a new academic culture, to different codes and standards of institutional communication, to different standards and representations of teaching situations, and to different philosophies, styles and strategies of teaching and learning (Ross, 2003), as well as to different teaching tools and contexts. Literature shows that immigrants are rarely supported by peers in the dominant culture (Bannerji, 1995) and support infrastructure specifically designed to assist new immigrants in Canadian academic institutions as well as research on this specific population are very limited (Doyle, George, 2005; California Tomorrow, 2002; Szelenyi, Chang, 2002).

“Although there is a large body of academic literature that describes the barriers to employment in the trades and professions encouraged by internationally trained immigrants, there is little literature on the barriers to access to or integration within postsecondary institutions for this population” (Doyle, George, 2005, p. 1).

International faculty must therefore adapt to rising and rapidly changing expectations from students, colleagues, the institution, and even from Canadian society. Furthermore, new faculty members today must demonstrate a wider array of talents than their predecessors, as well as higher levels of productivity in research, teaching and community service, which not surprisingly results in even more stress, pressure, and uncertainty (Austin, 2002). Faculty perceptions and behaviours are known to affect, and to be affected by, their academic work environments. Understanding how faculty perceive the integration of their personal values, needs, and attributes within institutional contexts is essential to the individual perceptions of meaning, which affects job satisfaction, commitment, and performance levels (Lindholm, 2003).

The goal of the project was to explore the issues, challenges, and barriers to success for international faculty in Canadian post-secondary institutions, to enrich the dialogue between Canadian and foreign-educated faculty and administrators, and to foster success of any new faculty in the increasingly multicultural Canadian universities and colleges across Ontario. The project involved faculty, researchers and faculty developers from four very different post-secondary institutions in Ontario: the University of Ottawa (a bilingual university), Ryerson University (a large multicultural

urban university), Lakehead University (a university in a rural area with a high enrolment of Aboriginal students) and Seneca College (a community college in a large multicultural urban area); in addition the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education (IATHE), a not-for-profit corporation, participated in the development of the website. As mentioned earlier, the project was funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration of Ontario.

### **Barriers and challenges for new immigrant professionals**

The biggest challenges identified in the literature for new immigrant professionals in general are a lack of recognition of foreign professional certification, degrees or professional experience which leads to poor labour market outcomes and under-employment (Picot, Sweetman, 2005; Frenette, Morissette, 2003; Picot, Hou, 2003); a lack of information about the new country and working practices in their field before arriving in Canada, hence a loss of professional identity; a lack of understanding of the dominant culture, of institutional and organizational functioning, of the rules and procedures for accreditation; a lack of fluency in the profession's language; and a lack of a professional and social network, hence leading to a sense of isolation (Alfred, 2003; Doyle, George, 2005; Schellenberg, Maheux, 2007).

Adding to these barriers common to a wide variety of professionals, internationally trained faculty are also facing a lack of professional development support and awareness of immigrant faculty's needs in their new institution (California Tomorrow, 2002), a lack of familiarity with computer technology when this medium is more and more prevalent in higher education (Ross, 2003), as well as

“for members of ethnoracial and/or linguistic minorities, pressure [...] to act as role models and advocates for ethnoracial and /or linguistic minority students (Phillion, 2003), [...] differences in educational philosophies, gender roles, taking initiative while occupying a subordinate position in a hierarchical relationship (Ross, 2003)”. (Doyle, George, 2005, p. 9).

For the project we focused on ten major findings, most of them

relating to the process of socialization, identified by the literature as crucial for a successful integration into a new institution. Indeed, the ability to effectively integrate into the culture of a new institution is directly related to the types of ongoing socialization and training practices that exist within the institution (Jones, 1986; Major, Kozlowski, 1997):

1. A successful integration into an institution's culture is directly linked to the degree of socialization and professional development practiced within the institution (Boyd, Thomas, 2001; Dryburgh, Hamel, 2004; Basran, Zong, 1999; Silkowska-Masior, 2003).
2. The more valued the socialization process is in the practice of the institution, the more the uncertainty of the newcomer is reduced (Jones, 1986; Major, Kozlowski, 1997).
3. Taormina (1997) argues that socialization is a continual process that is engaged in throughout an individual's tenure in an organization. This process of socialization evolves simultaneously in four areas of activities:
  - Professional development
  - Peer support
  - Understanding the organization and its work
  - Future opportunities in the organization.
4. Jones (1986) and Major and Kozlowski (1997) suggest there is a direct relationship between a newcomer's personality and cultural background and the strategies for seeking new information that s/he will employ in her/his new environment.
5. The way the institution gives information through its socialization practices has a significant impact on the integration of any newcomer (Jones, 1986).
6. Empirical studies in the industrial and educational world show that collaboration between the newcomers and the existing employees is an important factor for the dissemination of implicit knowledge, technical skills and the organizational culture, hence the need for graduate schools to provide initial training and socialization for future faculty by facilitating access to mentoring possibilities that extend beyond the purview of the supervisor-student relationship (Austin, 2002).
7. Networking allows the exchange of culturally implicit knowledge, skills and attitudes between the newcomers to

the organization and the existing employees (Helweg, 1985; Bagchi, 2001).

8. Effective communication plays an integral part of the socialization and acculturation process as well as in the performance of teaching and learning. Communication that pays attention to the tacit and the non-verbal as well as to the explicit and verbal is more successful (Gill, 1998; Chase et al., 2002).
9. Beyond the initial orientation of the new international/Canadian professor, the integration and adaptation to the new institution depends on mentoring/modelling by an experienced professor and the level of positive social support (Jones, 1986).
10. Each post-secondary institution has its own micro-culture with specific expectations which can conflict with certain individual or collective norms. The strategies to facilitate the acculturation of foreign professors must therefore apply to all new professors, foreign or not (Gorsuch, 2003).

## Methodology

Based on these ten findings, survey instruments and data collection tools were developed to identify the barriers and challenges faced by Canadian and internationally educated faculty newly recruited in the four participating institutions of our project. International faculty participating in the study came from Algeria, Brazil, Britain, Chile, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, Peru, Romania, Ukraine and the United States. Many faculty had not come to Canada directly from their home countries, but through another country and generally had educational and/or work experience outside their home countries at the university and/or high school level.

Three types of tools were developed: an online questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group question guide. Twenty-two Canadian and thirty-eight international faculty recently recruited among the four partner institutions were surveyed, then interviewed in one hour individual interviews or ninety minute focus groups. The survey and semi-structured interview or focus group question guides were related to the themes identified previously in the literature review and centred on issues of cultural

distances, cultural barriers, socialization processes, communication and interaction and work-related roles. Indeed, the online survey presented six areas of questioning: knowledge about the new job requirements, expectations working with colleagues in the new institution, perceptions about the new institution, engagement in professional activities, beliefs about the profession and biographical information. The semi-structured interview and focus group question guides dealt with issues such as the perceived organizational impact on new faculty's successful integration into the institution, students' and colleagues' expectations, socialization and communication with colleagues and administrators, teaching philosophies and practices, and boundaries and perceived cultural distances.

Issues identified in the literature reviews	Themes of questions in the survey/ interview/focus group tools
Cultural distance	Expectations and surprises concerning recruitment and hiring processes
Cultural distance/Cultural barriers/ Socialization	The main factors within the organization that favour a successful integration
Cultural distance/Cultural barriers	Matching between the individual and cultural values of the new faculty and those of the institution
Cultural barriers	Perceived institutional support
Communication/Cultural distance/ Socialization	Differences in individual and cultural communication styles with others
Communication and interaction	Perceptions concerning interactions with administrators and colleagues, expectations, surprises
Work-related roles	Expectations and surprises concerning relations with students: students' expectations and their own
Work-related roles	Methods and work practices: the institution's explicit and implicit academic expectations

Table 1.  
The table shows how the underlying themes of questions relate to issues identified in the literature review

Using a qualitative interview protocol (Creswell, 2005) the interviews and focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. A content analysis (L'Ecuyer, 1990) was then conducted using the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software to code and analyse all textual data following a multiple step process (Creswell, 2005) involving reading through the data, dividing the text into segments of information or "noyaux de sens" (Landry, 1997), labelling the

segments, reducing overlap and redundancy and collapsing codes into themes. An intercoder agreement completed the process.

## Results

Eight main themes emerged from the content analysis. Some themes illustrate the participants' perceptions of the institution's expectations and the support it offers, others describe specific needs to ease the integration of new professors; expectations and relations with the students were another important theme, as well as personal feelings related to a sense of being valued in the new institution, or being discriminated against. And lastly, surprises and differences in cultural values, as well as implicit cultural knowledge.

### *Institution's expectations*

Participants perceive that institutions expect a quick integration and excellence in teaching, research and service, the three professional areas a professor, Canadian or recently immigrated, is recruited for:

“They expect you to teach courses, undergrad and graduate; to bring in research grants from various sources, and publish a bunch of papers per year. To run labs, hire grad students, and give talks at conferences, and participate on various committees in the department and faculty”.

Several expressed the difficulty in balancing such a workload with their social and family life:

“I mean to be honest, it would be for professors not to have such a huge teaching load on day one as soon as you start. I think it is unrealistic and I don't think twice about it. [...] How can you do that? In the end you suffer through it and there is no balance between work life and home life. I am working until beyond midnight every single night, 7 days a week”.

“I also don't understand what's reasonable in terms of workload either, from a university perspective, because I meet all my teaching demands, but I still have all of this research on the go, feeling pressure to write, feeling

pressure to submit grants, feeling pressure to be on committees, so you don't actually have a sense of what are the expectations and I still haven't found tenure guidelines, because I think if I actually get my hands on those, maybe that would help actually put in perspective what I need to be focusing in on".

Some shared certain practices they felt helped them better understand the institution's and department's expectations; for instance a participant received an official letter outlining previously discussed expectations for the first year and first five years. Another spoke of monthly meetings with the departmental Chair to help better understand what was expected in terms of teaching, research and service. Another suggested that new professors, when they start in the institution, should receive a copy of what goes in an annual report, in order to have a more concrete idea of what is expected of a professor during the year.

Many faculty raised the issue of expectations for teaching using technology and that this was an additional learning curve for them when they started teaching. The role of technology in teaching and learning in Canadian institutions was not necessarily the same in their home countries. Many indicated also that administrators and peers assume immigrant faculty have much more knowledge about the system than they do.

### ***Support offered by the institution***

Most participants praised the moral, informal, symbolic support of colleagues, the administration and the staff. Several mentioned how approachable the administration was. However there is a real need expressed for more concrete and daily support (for issues like office availability and support, finding keys, phone system, email accounts, photocopier access and procedures, health benefits etc..), as well as funding support to start research:

"I found, nobody told me things like office supplies or photocopying or door keys or, like I found that very frustrating, I didn't feel welcome".

The orientation sessions organized by the different Centers for University Teaching (CUT) were very much appreciated and

praised:

“[The CUT]’s invitation to new faculty members which I attended was really good because you meet other people from all the faculties and that started quite a bit of friendships. [...] You feel part of the bigger community as opposed to your own little one. [...] For me that was my initial integration”.

“The [school] was organized, the new employee orientation program was very helpful, people were friendly and when asked, most colleagues were helpful”.

Some participants, however, expressed the need to have this same level of support to start their research program:

“Orientation for new faculty was very good, except for research component”.

And more “timely” support to accommodate short term needs and long term needs. Several participants also noted that specific acculturation needs were not addressed in these orientation sessions:

“Administrators assume that [international faculty] know the context of the Canadian employment environments, the practices of the professions in Canada, therefore, the goals of the department, and consequently can make the appropriate judgments about what to assess and what kind of feedback to give”.

### ***Expressed needs to ease integration***

Although the initial orientation sessions were very much appreciated, most participants spoke of a sense of isolation and a lack of formal socialization process to help new professors and foreign professors integrate quickly into the institution:

“I think the orientation is good - but there was no mechanism afterward to socialize”.

The biggest need expressed, by all participants, is the need for more

social interactions. They mention the lack of spaces to meet, to mix with other colleagues, to go beyond the departmental/faculty culture and to be more interdisciplinary to allow sharing of ideas, expertise and collaboration; the fact that there are no or few social invitations between colleagues, deans and faculty:

“It took 4 or 5 months for someone to ask me out for dinner. When you are here alone - it’s a bit daunting”;

“there is no central focus, no central meeting place and we don’t have any kind of seminar series or weekly talks or anything. There is nothing that really bonds the department together at the moment [...] so I think that compared to many other departments, like in New Zealand, [we] had a really nice lunchroom, break room”.

Participants reinforced here the need to be provided with mentors (for research and teaching), the need to have more support to (re) locate in the new city (moving expenses, information about schools and daycare, orientation for research issues and funding, editing and language support for those who have to publish in English as their second language, etc...)

“Mentorship has been a huge issue. There isn’t any. Women and mentorship has been difficult because a lot of the women in my faculty have kids, so I don’t see them and they are not available as mentors. I take bits from people - one for research, one for teaching etc. It’s not just one person. It’s people I feel comfortable asking questions to. I ask questions, it’s me initiating contact”.

They also offer suggestions that helped, or would have helped their acculturation process: the creation of a community of women scholars within the institution which helped the integration and socialization of women faculty; having pronunciation/intonation class to develop oral skills in English or French; the implementation of a mentoring or “buddy” system to work and socialize with an experienced faculty member; the production of a manual or checklist for housing and family support; of a booklet about rights and duties in the institution, as well as a checklist of best practices

for new faculty, Canadian and foreign. One participant suggested the creation of a manual/checklist on how to get things like a driver's licence, a SIN [Social Insurance Number] card or even how to file income taxes.

### ***Expectations and relations with the students***

Most participants, Canadian and foreign new professors, expressed their surprise at the lack of motivation (e.g., some were surprised to discover that a student would choose a course based on timetable issues rather than interest) and critical skills of many undergraduate students, their need to be “spoon fed” and their sense of entitlement, manifested in a client/customer mentality, although, at the same time, their high expectations in terms of the quality of their learning experience:

“Just to help you understand the context from where I am coming from, the whole surprise with regards to the students and their lack of history and knowledge and stuff like that, also comes from where I come from. In other words, in the schooling system that I went to, every student takes world history for 5 years for you to have that basic knowledge. We take world geography for 3 years so you know about Africa and Asia and even if I can't remember every capitol of every country, but at least I know that it is a country. When I compare it to my high school background it is very hard for me to understand or relate, coming from a country that experienced internal conflict, it is surprising to me that people are not interested in things that are happening, coming again from an underdeveloped or third world or whatever you want to call it, where we hear about what's happening everywhere else in the world, it's quite confusing to get here and see that people don't actually know what's going on in their own country, but even less what's going on in other countries”.

They also note that students are very much aware of their rights and that the system nurtures a culture of consumerism, which goes against their personal values on education:

“J'ai été surpris par les plaintes des étudiants reçues à 2

reprises et faites au doyen. Des déclarations données ont été mal interprétées et dans les 2 cas les étudiants ne sont jamais venus me voir, mais une initiative en groupe a été prise pour aller voir directement le chef de département. L'étudiant dit qu'il paye tant, donc il veut voir la marchandise, dont la motivation d'apprendre. C'est un outre passément de ma personne, une attitude retorse, détournée, peu honnête qui amène une réflexion globale: cette culture de clientélisme me révolte, et en le disant je sais que je suis politiquement incorrect. J'ai fait mes études à Paris et à Lyon, où il n'y a pas cette culture de l'argent comme ici dans le monde universitaire”.

Different academic systems, learning cultures and educational contexts explain the vast discrepancy between the students of the four participating institutions and the study's participants:

“Students challenge their grades, criticize the professor's exam questions, show an unwillingness to accept responsibility for their work, expect high grades without working hard”.

“In Peru, and it's more of the same I guess in a lot of countries in Europe in which you get an 11/20 you are really happy with that, because most of the times, first year, you fail most of your classes and it is not uncommon, it is basically the rule that at some point during your years at the university you will fail classes and as I said at 11, 12, or 13 if you get 15/20 you are ecstatic. You actually have to work and study and you know, it takes you 2 hours of transportation and, and when there is a blackout, so you actually have to study by candlelight. The conditions are so much harsher and difficult and limited, for instance you just can't walk around in the library, you actually have to look through the catalogue, which is still paper, and ask for that specific book and then you realize that it has nothing to do with what you wanted to look at, so you have to bring it back and go through the whole process again, you cannot just take a look at it and put it back on the shelf. It's the whole structure that is so much complicated, but

people don't complain about it, it doesn't stop them from performing. It doesn't stop them from wanting to learn, but it becomes their responsibility and I guess that's also part of my shock with the students here. I thought it was important just to, for you guys to understand where I am coming from and why I sound so harsh towards the students".

An important issue for immigrant faculty was the differences in teaching styles in Canadian institutions and in their home countries, especially student-centred teaching approaches. Not only was this the most-mentioned issue in one of the four institutions, it seems to be the hardest for the faculty to acculturate to.

### ***Being valued***

Although the difference of perspective between the immigrant professors and the Canadian students brought much frustration to the professors who were new to the system, all our participants felt that they were valued by their new institution and colleagues. The orientation programs at the beginning of the year which often involved a welcome reception or lunch offered by the President or the Vice-President of the institution, the warmth and friendliness of colleagues and the availability of administrators were important factors that made them feel acknowledged.

However several mentioned a few strategies that could enhance the perception of being valued and welcome, such as explicitly inviting new faculty to departmental meetings so that they feel they belong, being asked and listened to for input by their Chair, being invited to faculty dinners and get-togethers, and being brought into grant proposals and research groups.

### ***Discrimination***

One prominent issue is accreditation for international degrees and work experience. Several sensed that their education from home was not valued. This feeling, although mentioned only by a few participants, highlights the stereotyped notion that professors from developing countries or lesser known countries received a lesser degree, or that their level of education and qualification is lower than that of North American institutions. Students as well as some colleagues, therefore, doubt their skills and qualifications:

“Il y a là peut-être une question de discrimination: un professeur bizarre, d'un autre pays, qui leur dit ça. Il y a un besoin d'éduquer les étudiants pour leur dire que les professeurs sont compétents. Les professeurs étrangers doivent être appréciés pour leurs qualités humaines, mais ça fait écran pour le moment”.

“Sometimes when people do not know much about my country of origin they have questions about the level of development and whether I can contribute - they have doubts about my skills and qualifications, even after they have been recognized by the institution”.

One participant mentioned how she was significantly underpaid in her first college teaching experience and was later told that the reason for the underestimated salary step, was that the college was unsure of what his/her graduate degree actually meant. Participants felt also a need to educate students about aboriginal/ethnic cultures to better appreciate differences in terms of teaching styles and standards. Students, not used to multicultural environments, have also a hard time accepting different teaching styles. One participant expressed frustration at what she perceived was gender discrimination, being a young woman in a white male Anglo-Saxon type of department:

“I don't tolerate yelling, patronizing, racist or sexist attitudes and I've had to deal with all of them. I have had a negative experience (I am jaded today). I am the only woman in my faculty, which is why I have had problems. I have had people make racist comments. I had someone say I 'know precious little' about what I am teaching. I was 27 when starting so I am young. It is challenging working with middle-aged men”.

### ***Surprises and differences in cultural values***

Several differences in cultural values have already been mentioned, e.g. the nurturing of consumerism in the North American academic culture. Furthermore, several participants sense that failure is not accepted, hence the difficulty for students to accept low grades.

The importance put on obtaining research grants and research publications surprised others. One major barrier several new immigrant professors identified was the expectation to publish in particular peer-reviewed journals. Indeed some participants shared that the strong focus on publishing was not part of their cultural academic experience at home. For instance, one participant with a PhD who had worked in a university in her home country shared that because of the political situation, there was less access to international peer-reviewed journals for academics in her home country, so that publishing was not as strong a focus in her culture. Moreover, although she had published articles in peer-reviewed journals, they were in an area within his/her field that was valued in the home country, but not here in Canada. Others described the challenge of doing research with methodology frameworks that differ from Canadian standards:

“I see as a barrier with respect to getting my tenure. It’s a barrier because of the type of research that I do and that I use: an aboriginal research framework, aboriginal methods, aboriginal knowledge and it’s really difficult to get funding because you are not coming from the same perspective. I would say that our knowledge is not as valued when it comes to funding. And whenever you go for tenure, what is looked at with tenure, is not the sort of things that are valued in an aboriginal way of knowing, so it’s in direct opposition sometimes, with my research; for instance, it’s really important for me to publish my results and do something to disseminate my results within the community that actually participated in the research ... you have to do that, first and foremost ... so publishing in a highly ranked journal is not first on my list because I need to respond to the community needs first, and I don’t think that is valued highly with tenure, so I think that what would help if the probation or the tenure track criteria could be looked at, and say what are the barriers within those criteria to different ways of knowing and what are the barriers with respect the new immigrant faculty”.

“The way you conceive research here in Canada, is not a universal way. The game of research in Latin American

countries is totally different; just to give an example, I collected data in Brazil, in a shanty town. Because of the 25 years of oppression and dictatorship, no one wants to sign a paper, in a shanty town, to identify [oneself]; because this is a place of drug dealers, so no one likes to identify [oneself], so even to sign a consent [form] is a dangerous thing there, but at the same time in Canada, they don't accept the idea of oral consent, so we need to be able to build this kind of bridge between standards of different societies”.

Differences in communication styles were another aspect discussed by the participants.

One faculty was told, for instance, that he was very authoritative. This surprised him because he felt and the students had said that he was a very caring professor. The professor felt this was a cultural issue. Others noted cultural differences in greeting practices, direct and indirect communication styles, acceptable topics and depth of conversations, as well as inconsistencies in the way students interact with professors: some in a more formal way and others very informally. These inconsistencies seemed problematic for some who would prefer more distance/formality in the interaction while remaining approachable. Many participants were also very surprised by the fact that students are not shy of questioning exams, challenging grades and even suggest changes to grading systems.

An interesting link was made between this perception of informality in communication and the over-use of emails (some say over-reliance on email), an easy and fast way to communicate which doesn't foster thoughtful consideration but on the opposite a pressure of immediacy. One non-Canadian participant who also worked in the United States talks about his U.S. institution's attempt to cut back on email communication:

“perhaps due to the litigious nature of U.S. culture and fear of paper track”.

Although some participants welcomed the informality of relationships with administrators and colleagues, some seemed resistant to the less structured academic culture of Canadian institutions, preferring instead a more formal, hierarchical culture.

Another issue which created some surprise and came often in the discussions was the hiring procedures; specifically troubling was the notion of “selling oneself”, that “extroversion and self-initiative-taking are required to be successful in finding employment”. Some felt that faculty from a less assertive culture might be at a disadvantage in this regard. Despite having read about or learned about resume preparation and interviewing in Canada, many were still unclear about what constituted an appropriate resume or interview. One participant shared that in one unsuccessful interview she was told that she did not demonstrate academic leadership. This was an unfamiliar term to her, not used in her previous academic experience. She felt uncomfortable having to focus on achievements, and saw this as “bragging” about all the things you do that you should be expected to do. Others were surprised that so many interview questions dealt with class management, conflict management, institutional policies etc. and so few dealt with their discipline’s content knowledge. They indicated that in their home countries this was the critical point. Some even had to write a test in the interview. Some participants felt there were cultural assumptions about what a good professor is. For instance, some immigrants were perceived to be too authoritative. This is interesting in light of cultural differences in communication styles, education systems, the role and value of higher education within a culture and the status of professors in international contexts. In this perspective, some participants felt that many of the interview questions were cultural questions and assumed cultural knowledge rather than disciplinary knowledge (e.g., how to deal with students in particular situations. One participant who had worked at a university in the U.S. shared that there, because students can sue professors and the institution, professors are required not to meet with students to help them solve certain kinds of problems).

### ***Implicit versus explicit knowledge***

The perceived differences in values and behaviours emerge from a disconnect between the explicit values of the university or college (stated in the mission statement or in the rules and regulations of the institution) and the implicit knowledge students, staff and faculty progressively develop by working and studying in the institution. Gaining this implicit knowledge is at the same time essential and difficult. Overwhelmingly, all participants said that the social network

and social relationships with peers were most important for their successful acculturation. Relationships with peers were useful for insight into appropriate cultural behaviours (e.g., email behaviours, meeting behaviour, etc.). Faculty cited observation of others as the main means to ascertain implicit rules and expectations:

“This week I talked to one of my colleagues and said, ‘You know how many graduate students is normal, I mean I am up to 5 now, what’s reasonable in terms of my workload to be able to handle?’ and the comment I got was, ‘You probably better stop now because you don’t want to get yourself in over your head and if you’ve got that many students on the go, they’re going to be demanding on you all the time.’ The informal comes through asking somebody. I ask around to get a sense from others what their different perspectives are”.

Immigrant faculty sensed that the role of “rules” varies across cultures. One professor wasn’t sure about how seriously to take certain “rules” (e.g., Students must have a doctor’s note if missing a test or handing an assignment in late).

It seems from the participants’ answers that an important implicit knowledge to develop is how to set priorities within all the expectations which are well written and explained. What are the implicit expectations of research for promotions (beyond the explicit); what are the implicit expectations of teaching/research/service to be able to balance one’s life with all the explicit duties of the job?

“The other area is service or meetings and in the first year it’s very tough to know what you have to attend and what you don’t have to attend and you start to get a sense of people’s level of commitment for these different meetings, but it’s a huge learning curve in terms of what the expectations are from the service part of your position”.

What are the implicit expectations for grading students? This is an area where many participants seemed unfamiliar with the institutional cultural expectations:

“like when I got the mid-term exam results I had no idea if it was a good mark or not, in terms of the class average or the distribution of marks or, because I have no point of reference, to be able to put that on. So I was able to contact [a colleague] at home and say, ‘what does this mean, is this good, is this reasonable?’ and then the same actually when it came to marking the papers for that course, because I marked all the papers and once I had them all marked I actually took a pile to her, we discussed good papers and we discussed papers of students that had failed and helped put it in perspective of what is reasonable in terms of my expectations and feedback for the students”.

Table 2.  
The table presents a summary of the participants' answers (right column) to the different themes of questioning (left column)

Themes of questions	Answers
Expectations and surprises concerning the recruitment and hiring processes	- Surprised by the difference in styles of negotiation (cultural and gender differences)
The main factors within the organization that favour a successful integration	- A need for more mentoring, networking structures - Good initial welcome at the level of the university but there is a need to also be welcomed at the level of the department and in their daily lives in the working place
Matching between the individual and cultural values and those of the institution	- Yes at a more macro-level but not at a day to day micro-level - Very surprised at the academic system that encourages attitude of students as consumers/clients
Perceived institutional support	- The process of socialization within the institution is unstructured and not emphasized - There is a need of formal acculturation process even before beginning in the new environment - A strong sense of isolation
Differences in individual and cultural communication styles with others	- Non-verbal, and culturally-implicit communication are difficult - There is a need to better differentiate between formal and informal communication styles

Themes of questions	Answers
Perceptions concerning interactions with administrators and colleagues, expectations and surprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is little support at the local and departmental level. Deep sense of isolation</li> <li>- Surprised to discover that the administration has no expectations of collaboration (in terms of research team, team teaching, etc...)</li> <li>- There is a strong need for a centre of cultural awareness for all</li> </ul>
Expectations and surprises concerning relations with students: students' expectations and their own	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a large discrepancy between students and foreign and Canadian new professors' perspectives: the student is perceived as a consumer, a client, not deeply engaged in his/her studies, lacking motivation</li> </ul>
Methods and work practices: the institution's explicit and implicit academic expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explicit information and knowledge are easy to acquire, but implicit knowledge grows from dialogue with others</li> <li>- This dialogue is rarely possible because there is little collaboration between colleagues</li> <li>- There is a strong need for clear directions on institutional expectations, and what is appropriate or not (reasonable standards) in order to meet the institution's expectations and to advance in the institution</li> </ul>

### Professional acculturation e-module

Bauer and Green (1994) suggest that the greater the number of opportunities that newcomers have to experience and learn about their new roles, the better their assimilation and satisfaction. In keeping with this finding, and informed by the result of the study, an online module offering professional development strategies and activities was designed to assist Canadian and immigrant new faculty to overcome these barriers and challenges and to foster an inclusive working environment. The e-learning module, because it is technology-intensive, may be perceived as an additional barrier for new faculty trying to establish themselves in a new academic environment. However we believe that participants' exposure to the interactive and experiential activities in the e-learning training will at the same time serve as a model for effective use of technology in the context of teaching and learning, and they will

develop important skills for their own teaching.

The goal of this e-module is threefold: to help Canadian and international faculty to be more aware of cultural issues in post-secondary education; to foster intercultural dialogue; and to facilitate a successful integration in a new institution. The overarching goal of SuccessInAcademia.ca is to offer information and interactive tools to foster and support an inclusive multicultural academic environment where the contributions of all Canadian and international new faculty are valued.

“The trick is to find out how the difference is related to other differences, to assemble a coherent picture of how they all fit together to make up a grand difference between you and them, a difference that leads to a different way of seeing and doing things ... Culture isn’t something a group of people have; it’s something you make up to fill in the spaces between them and you ... Culture is something you create, a coherent connection of differences” (Agar 2002, pp.127-128).

The design of the e-module is based on this dynamic definition of “culture”, an inclusive and evolving culture. Hewling powerfully illustrates this notion of an evolving culture with the famous image of two faces seen in profile, revealing, in the “interstitial space,” a vase or goblet:

“The space in the middle - is it really a goblet? - perhaps it is just a space, which happens to resemble a goblet, but which is in fact the ongoing product of participant joint endeavour ... Could it be the manifestation of evolving understanding, a way of finding beliefs, behaviours and norms; a way of generating something that some might call culture?” (Hewling, 2004).

The learning framework for the module emerged from the findings of the literature review and the results of our own study. Four notions seemed to be seen as essential to positively affect Canadian and non-Canadian new professors’ integration into post-secondary institutions: an awareness and understanding of “cultures” to build multicultural institutions; community building and social

networking; an experiential learning approach; and timely information. The module presents therefore three “places” to learn and interact, *A Place to Discover*, *A Place to Network*, and *A Place to Try*, that users can access at any time and at any level of the module, when information is needed.



Figure 1.  
A Place to Discover, A Place to Network, and A Place to Try

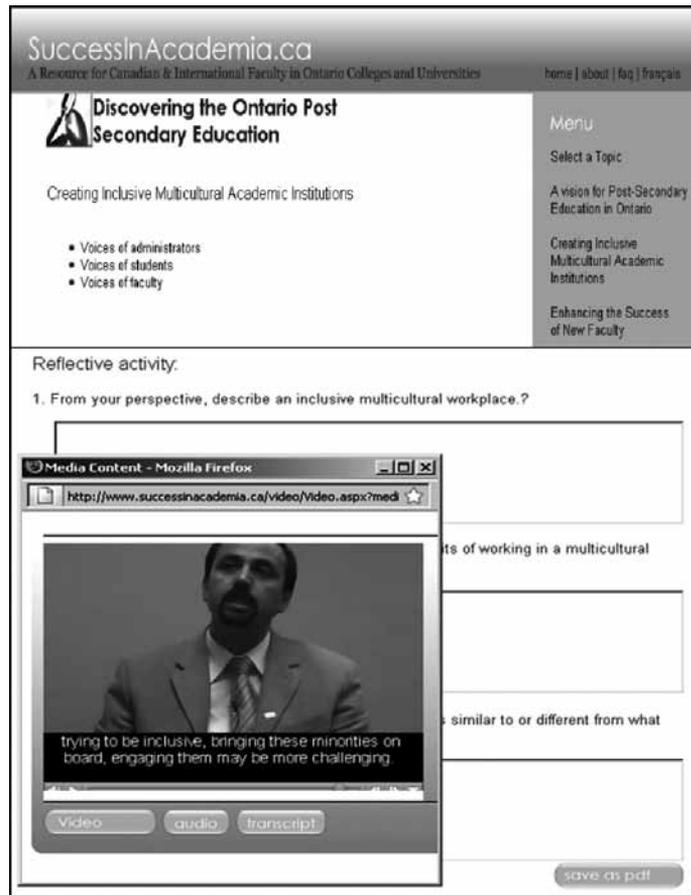
*A Place to Discover* revolves around a series of videotaped interviews of different post-secondary institution stakeholders (Canadian and international administrators, professors, students, and researchers) who each, at their level, participate greatly in facilitating the integration of new faculty in our post-secondary institutions. Our goal was to bring a diversity of perspectives to academics coming from a wide range of cultures and environments. Eight students (five international), nine administrators (three with international background), and nine faculty (four of whom internationally educated) were videotaped as they were interviewed on:

- their vision of a successful post-secondary education and the challenges to realizing it;
- their description of an inclusive multicultural institution;
- the conditions of a successful integration of international and Canadian new faculty into post-secondary Ontarian institutions;
- the qualities of a good professor and the challenges and benefits related to teaching in a multicultural institution;
- suggestions of resources and good practices to promote a positive engagement of new faculty in their institution.

More than 200 videoclips were edited from these videotaped interviews and placed in *A Place to Discover*, presenting to the e-module users a mosaic of “voices” and perspectives allowing them to construct their own understanding, however fluid and evolving, of the Canadian higher education institutions. Each series of videoclips is linked to activities where the users are invited to

reflect on the narratives they have just heard.

Figure 2.  
SuccessInAcademia.ca



In *A Place to Network*, users can access links to faculty development sites at the four participating institutions, a Blog where they can share reflections and strategies on working and teaching in a new institution, and a listserv where they can post questions and exchange ideas.

*A Place to Practice* presents a complete module on “Cultural awareness” with a variety of documents, tools and activities to help users develop a deeper understanding of what it means to work in Canadian post-secondary institutions. This third “Place” offers three different sections for three different purposes as well as learning styles. For those who prefer to read about the research

done on cultural issues in higher education and gain a quick overview of cultural and intercultural concepts, they can choose to explore the section entitled *Cultural Concepts in Brief*. This section offers concise theoretical information about the important notions linked to the concepts of culture, cultural dimensions, teaching and learning cultures, leadership cultures, acculturation processes and intercultural communication. Short accompanying activities encourage active reading of these texts.

Activity 5

This dialogue, taken from *Cross-cultural dialogues* (Storti 1994), was inspired by an actual case. What do you think about this discussion between Dean Smith and Professor Singh concerning Professor Desai? Is the cultural perspective it reveals similar or different to your own professional, ethnic or personal culture?

Write your reactions in the text box following the dialogue.

**Dean Smith:** I asked Professor Desai to come and see me yesterday to discuss the new course he will be teaching.

**Professor Singh:** How did the meeting go?

**Dean Smith:** He was charming. But he avoided the subject of the new course whenever I tried to bring it up.

**Professor Singh:** Maybe he's upset that you didn't consult him before giving him the course?

**Dean Smith:** I don't think so. He didn't mention anything about that.

[save as pdf](#)

[Click here to read the explanations of this situation involving intercultural communication.](#)

Figure 3.  
A Place to Practice

But those who prefer to grasp the reality of a Canadian post-secondary education workplace by engaging in various reflective activities and to learn more about teaching in Canadian post-secondary institutions can go to either *The Canadian post-secondary education workplace* or *Teaching in Canadian post secondary education* sections.

Figure 4.  
SuccessInAcademia.ca



At any time in the module users can post their reflections and strategies in the *Blog on Teaching in Canadian Post-secondary Education* designed in *A Place to Practice*.

*SuccessInAcademia.ca* has been developed in French and in English to allow greater access to a diversity of users, and it is the hope of the authors that this resource developed under a Creative Commons Licence will continue to evolve and grow with new contributions. The resource is available at the following address:  
<http://www.successinacademia.ca>

## Conclusion

The research which informed the development of *SuccessInAcademia.ca* was first initiated to answer the “mal être” and challenges that international and new faculty were experiencing in their first years of employment in their respective post-secondary institutions. The numerous interviews that were conducted with academic administrators during the research and the development of the e-module made us realize that this resource would in fact benefit not only new faculty but all members (faculty, students, administrators) of the academic community, willing to create and reinforce an inclusive academic environment where the contributions of all new Canadian and international faculty are valued and nourished.

The Centre for Intercultural Learning at the Canadian Foreign

Service Institute, after examining the findings of over forty years of published empirical studies on “the skills, knowledge, attitudes and other characteristics required or desirable for living and working in another culture” (Vulpe, 2001) developed a “profile of the interculturally effective person”. The nine essential competences of this profile are: adaptation skills, an attitude of modesty and respect, an understanding of the concept of culture, a knowledge of the host country and culture, relationship-building, self-knowledge, intercultural communication skills, organizational skills, and personal and professional commitment (Vulpe, 2001). Following this model, it is hoped that that SuccessInAcademia.ca will help Canadian post-secondary institutions develop a parallel profile of an inclusive post-secondary institution that would demonstrate itself to be:

- an institution which embeds in its policies and practices cultural and diversity awareness programs to help faculty, administrators, support staff and students to acknowledge and adapt to the culture of others; to demonstrate humility and respect for the culture of others; to understand the concept of culture and the pervasive influence it has in the values and behaviours of others; to understand the Canadian academic culture and the specific culture of one’s own institution; and to develop intercultural communication skills;
- an institution which offers a variety of social spaces and mechanisms to allow regular formal and informal, personal and professional exchanges and networking opportunities;
- an institution which presents clearly the goals of its mission, its strategic planning, its successes and failures or shortcomings, its policies and practices;
- an institution which shows its commitment to be inclusive by recognizing and valuing the contributions of all.

The last word goes to one of the study’s participants:

“... the mosaic is a common metaphor for multiculturalism. But we should focus on the material that holds the pieces together, the bonding material ...”

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## Sintesi

“SuccessInAcademia.ca” è il titolo del progetto pilota realizzato da docenti e ricercatori delle Università di Ottawa, di Ryerson, di Lakehead, del Seneca College e dello IATHE (cooperativa no profit) per offrire uno sviluppo di strategie professionali a docenti canadesi e stranieri, ad administrators interessati ad un’espansione multiculturale degli ambienti universitari, soprattutto nella regione dell’Ontario la cui componente di internazionalizzazione è sempre più evidente.

La ricerca ha tenuto conto di alcuni elementi di base: l’inserimento e l’integrazione di studenti e docenti stranieri, la loro socializzazione nell’Università; le quattro aree di attività della socializzazione (crescita professionale, supporto orizzontale, comprensione dell’organizzazione e del tipo di lavoro, possibilità di crescita professionale); il fattore determinato dalla formazione di provenienza; la possibilità di accedere alle informazioni necessarie; la comunicazione come parte attiva del processo di integrazione (verbale e non verbale); la supervisione di altri docenti; i conflitti tra micro-modelli culturali già presenti nell’università.

Sono stati utilizzati come strumenti di ricerca il questionario on line, l’intervista e il questionario diretto a un focus group. Le domande rivolte nelle interviste o nel focus group hanno riguardato temi individuati nelle più recenti riviste scientifiche inerenti tematiche sulla distanza culturale, sulle barriere, sui processi di socializzazione, sulla comunicazione e sull’interazione. L’esame online è stato suddiviso in sei differenti aree: la comprensione delle conoscenze richieste nel nuovo lavoro, le aspettative e la percezione nei confronti dei colleghi nella nuova Università, l’impegno nelle attività professionali, le informazioni biografiche.

I risultati della ricerca hanno centrato le aspettative universitarie, il supporto offerto dal contesto accademico, i bisogni espressi di maggior facilità di integrazione, le aspettative e le relazioni con gli studenti, la condizione di sentirsi giudicati, le discriminazioni, le sorprese e le differenze nelle abitudini di pubblicazioni e nello stile della comunicazione, la difficoltà di afferrare le aspettative implicite rispetto a quelle esplicite.

Le interviste, pubblicate in video sul sito [www.SuccessInAcademia.ca](http://www.SuccessInAcademia.ca), raccolgono invece le diverse prospettive degli studenti, dei ricercatori e dei docenti sulle tematiche dell’integrazione. Sono stati presi in esame e intervistati otto studenti (di cui cinque stranieri), nove administrators (di cui tre con un background internazionale) e nove insegnanti (di cui quattro internazionali). È stato preso in esame il loro punto di vista su una dimensione competitiva dell’educazione universitaria e dei cambiamenti necessari per renderla tale; la loro descrizione di una “inclusive multicultural institution”; le condizioni per un’effettiva integrazione del corpo docente straniero nelle università dell’Ontario; i benefici legati ad un insegnamento in un contesto internazionale e multiculturale; le good practices per l’integrazione di un nuovo

*professore.*

*Le numerose interviste condotte hanno permesso di considerare questo studio non solo una risorsa utile per gli insegnanti, ma anche per gli studenti e gli administrators della comunità accademica; uno strumento utile a rinforzare l'ambiente accademico per tutti i nuovi contesti internazionali delle università canadesi.*

