

Teacher Educators' Extent of Cultural Awareness

教室に異文化を背負った生徒が入ってくるようになった。異文化をどのように受け入れ、自分たちの文化を見直す材料とするか。教師の役割をさぐる。

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Abstract

Cultural awareness affects what is expected of teachers as it relates to their dispositions regarding the cultural diversity of their classroom. This study focused on the extent of cultural awareness of teacher educators along the four dimensions of Cultural Awareness: a) exploring the global context in which the respondents are regularly updated on issues concerning global and international context; b) learning about different cultures so that respondents accept and respect varying gender roles as perceived by different culture groups; c) knowing ourselves as cultures see the teachers as highly culturally aware by considering themselves as part of a particular culture; and d) communicating across cultural differences showing that teacher educators understand and accept the cultural backgrounds of their students. The study used a descriptive survey method and showed that respondents are lacking in terms of finding connections between subject matter and global issues, getting involved in organization concerning global issues, and finding similarities and differences considering various cultures. Based on the findings, it is recommended to place more emphasis on cultural awareness concepts which will be integrated in the teachings and for future researchers to use the university-wide respondents to get a result that will speak for the whole school.

Keywords Culture; cultural awareness; cultural identity; cultural diversity; teacher educators

Introduction

Culture is the result of the learned patterns of behavior that a community of people experiences and its products are embodied in thought, speech, action, and artifacts (Colander & Hunt, 2008). It refers to the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize a group of people (Useem, 1963; Banks et al, 1989; & Berjawi, 2010).

Culture is dependent on the capacity for learning through the use of tools, language, and systems of abstract thought. The culture of a society includes

everything in the lives of its members that is of human origin – that is, everything they learn through their direct and indirect contacts with other people.

Cultural awareness, in relation to culture, is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability to stand and becoming objectively aware of our cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. It also becomes central when we interact with people from other cultures because what is considered appropriate behavior in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another (Quappe & Cantatore, 2005). It

is valuable when it comes to dealing with people. Awareness of the various culture groups and their beliefs and practices could better equip a person to interact with culturally diverse people without worrying about committing blunders or worse, accidentally slighting practices or beliefs of certain groups. It also entails an understanding of how a person's culture may inform their values, behavior, beliefs and basic assumptions. It recognizes that we are all shaped by our cultural background, which influences how we interpret the world around us, perceive ourselves, and relate to other people (Centre for Cultural Diversity & Ageing, 2010).

Our cultural background and orientation shapes who we are, how we relate with people, and how we perceive our environment. Moreover, cultural awareness, which is the focus of this study should not be confused with cultural literacy because the two varies from each other in a sense that cultural literacy was defined by E.D. Hirsch Jr. in his best-selling book published in 1987 (House, Emmer and Lawrence, 1991) as a background for world knowledge. He explains that cultural literacy is the knowledge of past events which have happened in the world. Being culturally literate, an individual has knowledge of what the world has experienced, is experiencing, and what the world will probably experience.

Hirsch also explained in 1987 (as cited by Berjawi, 2010) that cultural literacy is the ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the culture of others. It is the awareness of specific cultural sensibilities that might affect the way people might think or behave.

A teacher cannot be effective in promoting cultural awareness, as well as in teaching culturally diverse students if he himself does not know his own culture. A teacher, to be effective, has to reflect on his or her cultural foundation and biases about several cultures groups and show an open-minded behavior in dealing with the different cultural backgrounds of his students to promote a cultural aware-

ness and respect among the students.

Studies regarding teachers' cultural awareness are fairly limited, yet it cannot be denied that teachers' cultural awareness plays a very important place in their effectiveness as teachers and in influencing their students.

This is the same as saying that effective teachers must have knowledge of their own cultural backgrounds and embedded preconceived assumptions and biases (Spradlin, 2012).

The study by Scott and Mumford was also supported by Joshi et al (2005) as cited by Lin & Bates in 2010 when they stated that when teachers do not have deep understanding of their own or their students' family backgrounds, they tend to have difficulties building bridges between school and home. A teacher who has limited knowledge or experience with children and parents, who are different from him or her linguistically, culturally, and racially, may feel overwhelmed while dealing with them.

Cultural awareness gives confidence and heightens teacher's effectiveness in dealing with culturally diverse students. Knowing their own cultures will also ensure understanding and reserving biases of others' or their students' cultural orientations which may at times conflict with their own beliefs.

For teachers, it is essential in teaching a culturally diverse classroom and also for improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for minority students (Spradlin, 2012). Biases and discrimination inside the school would be minimized if not eradicated if the teacher understands his/her cultural background and relates to his/her culturally diverse students. Moreover, the teacher would be able to create a safe and stress-free classroom environment which could broaden opportunity for minority students to excel and freely interact inside the classroom as confidently and unafraid as their classmates who belong to the dominant cultures.

Cultural and national identity might be deterred by the emergence of globalization, but the kind of technology that it brings links people of different nationalities with each other and the amazing travel

speed of news fosters the spread of cultural awareness to a whole new level. A recent study about cultural awareness by researchers Lin and Bates (2010) also shows that home visitation of students has a great influence on the cultural awareness of teachers which may help in understanding their students' cultural and family background that may have some bearing on the learning styles and learning performance of the students.

Culturally aware teachers also understand the "behavior, physical movements, verbal and nonverbal language, values, worldview, home environment, and learning styles" of students who are culturally different from themselves. Teachers who are culturally aware have a positive orientation toward minority cultures. "They are thoroughly knowledgeable, sensitive, and comfortable with black and other culturally different children's language, styles of presentation, community values, traditions, rituals, legends, myths, history, symbols, and norms (Irvine, 1989 as cited by Cross, 1998). Teachers who are culturally aware accept differences of people, especially their students, whether it is in terms of race, language, cultural backgrounds, practices, or beliefs.

In the national context, studies and researches regarding cultural awareness had not been greatly researched on but it seems that cultural unawareness is also a growing problem not only for the students and teachers but also among the entire Filipino population.

This dismal state of the basic cultural awareness of the Filipinos is quite frightening and needs to be addressed urgently if we even harbor the hope of redeeming the educational system of our nation. We might not entirely remedy this situation in the national context but we could always start with teaching millions of students in our nation about their culture and their historical background.

To address this, The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for Culture and the Arts 2004-2010 (MTPDPCA 2004-2010) stated that education plays a key role in the twin tasks of not only identifying and securing the early development of

future artists, but also enhancing the cultural awareness of Filipinos in order that the arts and culture become a part of their daily lives and that they may distinguish the excellent from the mediocre. It is also the responsibility of education to familiarize young Filipinos with world culture and the arts, so that they become well-rounded international citizens.

It seems knowledge of one's own and one's nation's history is not the only vital part in cultivating cultural awareness, it also involves world cultures and arts as stated in the MTPDPCA 2004-2010.

It would be safe then to infer that correcting this rising global problem of cultural unawareness should start in the schools with the students. But to accomplish this would also mean educating teachers in their own cultural awareness.

Methods

This section focuses on the methods and procedures used in the research. It covers the research design, locale of the study, the methodology used, the data gathering tools, and the data gathering procedures. The research used the descriptive method in considering and analyzing the extent of cultural awareness of the faculty members of the School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines.

Research Design

The study made use of the descriptive -quantitative method in identifying the extent of cultural awareness of the faculty members of the School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University.

Locale of the Study

The respondents of the study were faculty members of the School of Teacher Education (STE) in Saint Louis University (SLU). Out of the 60 faculty members of STE in SLU, the researchers were able to administer and retrieve 45 questionnaires through the use of random sampling.

Data Gathering Tool

A modified checklist questionnaire patterned from the Cultural Awareness Profile of the NAFSA (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers) was the primary tool used in gathering the data. The academic institutions, government agencies, and private organizations that combined to form NAFSA knew that meeting the needs of students from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds required special knowledge and competencies, thus, forming the MYCAP or My Cultural Literacy Profile to help spread cultural awareness and recognition of the importance of international competence. The questionnaire however was modified to fit in other questions that the researchers believe are important in learning about the cultural awareness of the respondents.

To measure the accuracy and validity of the questionnaire, a reliability test was administered to the faculty members of the College of Teacher Education in Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines. The reliability was computed through the use of Cronbach Alpha was 0.97.

Treatment of Data

After the data was gathered, answers were tallied and computed. The weighted means for the extent of cultural awareness of the faculty members in STE – SLU specifically along the four dimensions a) exploring the global context, b) learning about different cultures, c) knowing ourselves as cultural; and d) communicating across cultural differences were extracted using the four-point Likert scale with the corresponding descriptive interpretation as shown in the table below.

Range of Values	Description
3.26–4.00	4 (Highly Culturally Aware)
2.26–3.25	3 (Culturally Aware)
1.76–2.25	2 (Rarely Culturally Aware)
1.00–1.75	1 (Not Culturally Aware)

The range of values from 3.26–4.00 which corresponds with the description of “Highly Culturally

Aware” means that the respondent teachers exceed expectations in understanding and respecting their culture and the culture of others. It means that the respondent teachers are very much aware that other cultures exist aside from their own and that they accept and respect them. The range values from 2.26–3.25 which corresponds with the description of “Culturally Aware” means that the respondents may not exceeded the expectations but are fairly aware that other cultures exist aside from their own and that they accept and respect them. The third range of values from 1.76–2.25 which corresponds with the description of “Rarely Culturally Aware” means that the respondents are slightly lacking in awareness of their own cultures and the cultures of others.

The last range of values from 1.00–1.75 which corresponds with the description of “Not Culturally Aware,” on the other hand, means that the respondents are not aware of their own culture and the existence of the culture of others.

Result and Discussion

This shows the results and their corresponding analysis and interpretation with regard to the extent of cultural awareness of the faculty members of STE—SLU.

In Table 1, the data shows that within the dimension of exploring the global context, the highest weighted mean of 3.36 is seen on item C: *‘I read/watch international newspapers, TV programs, and/or movies’* which is qualitatively described as “highly culturally aware.” It implies that the faculty respondents are highly updated on issues concerning with global and international context. Teachers must be prepared to teach students who will be citizens of a rapidly changing and interconnected world (NAFSA, 2011). They need to be highly informed with different events whether local, national, or international issues in order to help the students how to think globally. In this new era of globalization, knowledge of the current events and issues are powerful information that needs to be discussed inside the classroom

Table 1 Extent of Cultural Awareness of the Faculty Members of the School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University along Exploring the Global Context.

Indicators	Mean n=45	Qualitative interpretation	Rank
A. I am knowledgeable about global and international issues.	3.04	CA	3
B. I find it difficult to find a global connection in most topics I plan to teach.	2.02	RCA	9
C. I read/ watch international newspapers, TV programs, and/or movies.	3.36	HCA	1
D. I look for courses that focus on international and global issues and topics.	2.67	CA	7
E. Globalization directly impacts my life.	3.23	CA	2
F. I teach and assess curricular units that explicitly address global issues.	2.89	CA	5
G. I consider how choices I make in my life might have a global impact.	3.00	CA	4
H. I get involved in activities concerned with global issues.	2.73	CA	6
I. I get involved in organization concerned in global issues.	2.53	CA	8
Over all mean	2.83		

Legend: HCA- Highly Culturally Aware, CA- Culturally Aware, RCA- Rarely Culturally Aware, NCA- Not Culturally Aware

for the students to be able to be clarified of the truth and correct information about such global issues.

Another statement having the 7th rank got a weighted mean of 2.67 and qualitatively interpreted as 'culturally aware' is '*I look for courses that focus on international and global issues and topics*'. This shows that the teacher respondents do not necessarily incorporate subjects or courses focusing on issues—global or international.

Table 2 focuses on the dimension of learning about different cultures. Generally, the teachers are culturally aware and this was presented by the overall mean of 3.17. Evidently, item M '*I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures (e.g., who makes major decisions for the family, play and social interactions expected of male and female children*' garnered the 1st rank which has a mean of 3.6 that was qualitatively interpreted as 'highly culturally aware'. A high number of respondents believe in respecting the varying gender roles as perceived by different culture groups. In and across different cultures there is a great consistency in standards of desirable gender-role behavior.

Item V got the mean of 3.56 and qualitatively interpreted as 'highly culturally aware', "*I accept and respect that customs and beliefs about food, its*

value, preparation, and use are different from culture to culture." The result implies that the respondents do highly respect the cultural differences of his/her students. Culture is similar to an iceberg in that the visible aspects of culture are only a small part of a much larger whole, and we need to learn more about a culture before we can understand the parts that are not visible (Turmidge, 2009).

On the other hand, item D got the lowest mean of 2.31: *I find it hard to find both similarities and differences when I consider various cultures*, which was qualitatively interpreted as culturally aware, since everyone is a product of their own culture, the teacher needs to increase both self- awareness and cross cultural awareness (Quappe & Cantatore, 2005). The teacher needs to have more understanding of the diversity of the students whether their culture is similar or different from their own.

Learning about different cultures is about exploring the cultures of the students, to be able to handle cultural diversity and to understand the culture that is being manifested inside the classroom by the students. The teacher should also know the cultural differences of the students, so that the teacher would be able to identify the differences and similarities of his own culture from others.

Table 3 dealing with "Knowing Ourselves as Cul-

Table 2 Extent of Cultural Awareness of the Faculty Members of School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University along Learning about Different Cultures

	Mean n=45	Qualitative interpretation	Rank
A. I believe that talking about common cultural characteristics is different from stereotyping.	3.22	CA	12.5
B. I believe that culture is more about traditions, celebrations, and history done about core values.	3.11	CA	14
C. I believe that the best way to come to know other cultural groups is through international travel.	2.6	CA	21
D. I find it hard to find both similarities and differences when I consider various cultures.	2.31	CA	22
E. I go to cultural events on campus or in my community.	2.71	CA	20
F. I actively promote cultural awareness in my teaching.	3.02	CA	17
G. I am very familiar with a culture group other than my own	2.78	CA	19
H. I believe that the curriculum should be culturally neutral so it appeals to all children.	3.44	HCA	6.25
I. I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.	3.24	CA	10.5
J. I discourage people from using racial and ethnic slurs.	3.24	CA	10.5
K. I understand and accept that families defined differently by different cultures (e.g. extended family members fictive kin, god parents).	3.51	HCA	3
L. I recognized and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into dominant culture.	3.38	HCA	8
M. I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures (e.g., who makes major decisions for the family, play and social interactions expected of male and female children).	3.6	HCA	1
N. I understand that age and life cycle factors must be considered in interactions with individuals and families (e.g., high value placed on the decisions of elders or the role of the eldest male in families).	3.47	HCA	4
O. Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the family/parents as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports for their children.	3.44	HCA	6.25
P. I recognize that the meaning or value of medical treatment and health education may vary greatly among cultures.	3.22	CA	12.5
Q. I recognize and understand that beliefs and concepts of emotional well-being vary significantly from culture to culture.	3.44	HCA	6.25
R. I understand that beliefs about mental illness and emotional disability are culturally based. I accept that responses to these conditions and related treatment/interventions are heavily influenced by culture.	2.91	CA	18
S. I accept that religion and other beliefs may influence how families respond to illnesses, disease, disability and death.	3.09	CA 15.5	
T. I recognize and accept that folk and religious beliefs may influence a family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or later diagnosed with a physical/emotional disability or special health care needs.	3.09	CA	15.5
U. I understand that traditional approaches to disciplining children are influenced by culture.	3.29	HCA	9
V. I accept and respect that customs and beliefs about food, its value, preparation, and use are different from culture to culture.	3.56	HCA	2
Over all mean	3.17		

Legend: HCA- Highly Culturally Aware, CA- Culturally Aware, RCA- Rarely Culturally Aware, NCA- Not Culturally Aware

Table 3 Extent of Cultural Awareness of the Faculty Members of the School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University along Knowing Ourselves as Cultural.

Indicators	Mean n=45	Qualitative interpretation	Ranking
A. I consider myself as being part of a particular culture.	3.67	HCA	1
B. My cultural identity influences how I perceive the world and how I behave.	3.39	HCA	3
C. I often view others as more cultural than myself.	2.45	CA	7
D. I have been in situations where I felt like a cultural outsider.	2.4	RCA	8
E. I believe that my cultural identity will impact my teaching.	2.71	CA	6
F. I talk about cultural beliefs, values, and traditions.	3.11	CA	5
G. I believe that deep down, most people have similar ideas about what is good and right.	3.53	RCA	2
H. I help students recognize their own cultural identity as essential for good teaching.	3.29	HCA	4
Over all mean	3.07		

Legend: HCA- Highly Culturally Aware, CA- Culturally Aware, RCA- Rarely Culturally Aware, NCA- Not Culturally Aware

tural” shows that item A which corresponds with the statement “*I consider myself as being part of a particular culture*” has the highest mean of 3.67, also described as highly culturally aware. This implies that the teacher respondents identify with certain cultures. It may be a culture within the family, school, workplace, and also within the community where they live in.

Belonging to a certain cultural group is beneficial to teachers. The more the teachers acknowledge their cultural belongings—the food, music, language, roles, identities, and values given to them by their country, region, race, ethnic heritage, religion, class, sexual orientation, and generation—the more they could see the privileges aspects of their culture afford them. It offers them ability to broaden their minds and to develop cultural sensitivity when dealing with a culturally diverse classroom. Everyone has their own culture. As educators in multicultural communities, when teachers acknowledge their culture, they make room for the realization that their teaching practices and learning environments are embedded with their own cultural codes and traditions (Rose- Cohen, 2004).

According to Rose-Cohen (2004) well-meaning educators and community workers, often find themselves in the paradoxical position of speaking up for the importance of cultural diversity and then claiming that they have no culture themselves.

When they speak of the “diverse community” they live in, their assumption is the “diverse” part does not include them. They have been raised to believe that they are regular—the norm against which other groups are measured (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1997). Their self-proclaimed status of cultural neutrality grants them the ability to position themselves in either the center of the multicultural circle as the teacher, facilitator, and mediator, or on the outside of the circle as the observer, social scientist, and tourist. But when they claim that they do not have a culture, it hurts them and hurts those in their classes who presumably do. Examining their own culture has given them credibility as an educator. It required them to take their place on that circle to become a member of a multicultural community.

Most educators, at some point of their teaching careers come to believe that they are immune from the multicultural diversity that covers the whole academic institution and often view themselves as mediators or mere observers of the rich cultures of their students that may sometimes clash inside the classrooms. Yet they come to believe that exploring their own culture helps them understand at a deeper level the workings of their students’ different cultures. They also develop deeper cultural sensitivity and appreciation of the differences and similarities of the cultures surrounding them.

Next in rank as the highest percentage in the

third dimension is item G with a description of “*I believe that deep down, most people have similar ideas about what is good and right.*” This item corresponds with a mean of 3.53, which means that it is highly culturally aware.

The respondents in this research generally believe that most people, regardless of the fact that they come from different cultural backgrounds, have more or less the same inkling of the concept of good and right which is supported by the laws created through the ongoing work of the United Nations—the universality of human rights. This law has been clearly established and recognized in international law. Human rights are emphasized among the purposes of the United Nations as proclaimed in its Charter, which states that human rights are “for all without distinction.” Human rights are the natural-born rights for every human being, universally. They are not privileges (Ayton-Shenker, 1995). Though this law might have been imposed among all culture groups and nations regardless of their beliefs, an array of beliefs in contrast of this view should also be taken into account.

The idea of cultural relativism for example, believes that right and wrong can only be judged relative to a specified society. There is no ultimate standard of right and wrong by which to judge culture (Anderson, 2004).

Rosaldo (2010) also added that cultural relativism is the urgency of studying and learning from other cultures and the belief that because somebody has a different form of life, they are not deranged, or evil.

The idea of right or wrong varies from culture to culture. What might be perceived as wrong in another culture can be seen as acceptable in another. Although there is a general idea of morality or of what is right as decreed by the United Nations Convention on Human Rights, not all culture groups or nations conform to it and the norms and perception of right and wrong may still depend on that of a certain culture group. Teachers should communicate this concept to their students again and again to remind them that what could be a repulsive action to them is

greatly valued by other cultures. They should understand that cultural sensitivity and acceptance means that you might not agree with the cultural practices of others but you should at least respect them.

The third in rank having the highest in percentage among the items in dimension three is item B, which says that “*My cultural identity influences how I perceive the world and how I behave.*” This item has a mean of 3.39 and is estimated as highly culturally aware.

Cultural awareness is an understanding of how a person’s culture may affect their values, behavior, beliefs and basic assumptions. It recognizes that we are all shaped by our cultural background, which influences how we interpret the world around us, perceive ourselves and relate to other people (Centre for Cultural Diversity and Ageing, 2010).

A person’s cultural background affects how a person perceives and reacts to the stimuli around him/her. Our cultural background and orientation shape who we are, how we relate with people and how we perceive our environment.

The dimensions having the lowest mean starts with item D “*I have been in situations where I felt like a cultural outsider*” with the lowest mean of 2.4 and is qualitatively described as rarely culturally aware.

The second lowest mean of 2.45 is item C, which corresponds with the statement “*I often view others as more cultural than myself.*” This is also qualitatively described as culturally aware and shows contradiction to most of the respondent teachers’ answers so far. They might accept and respect other people and their cultures but they don’t believe that these people may at some point be more cultural than themselves.

Preiswerk and Perrot (1975) as cited by Carignan, et al., (2005) identified ethnocentric biases as the means of putting our socio-cultural group and its values in a central position.

The third to the last that has the mean of 2.71 is item E which corresponds to the statement “*I believe that my cultural identity will impact my teaching*” and is qualitatively interpreted as culturally aware.

Table 4 Extent of Cultural Awareness of the Faculty Members of School of Teacher Education in Saint Louis University along Communicating Across Cultural Differences.

Indicators	Mean n=45	Qualitative Interpretation	Ranking
A. I am comfortable talking with people from other cultural groups.	3.4	HCA	3
B. I believe that the best way to avoid cultural misunderstanding is to treat other people as you would want to be treated.	3.78	HCA	1
C. To be an effective teacher, I believe that it is essential to learn about the cultural background of my students.	3.71	HCA	2
D. I am misunderstood because of cultural differences.	2.4	CA	8
E. My cultural identity affects how I communicate with most other people.	2.56	CA	6
F. I notice that people from other cultures use different gestures and body language when they talk.	3.18	CA	5
G. I adjust my communication styles depending on whom I am talking to.	3.24	CA	4
H. I believe that only certain subjects that are taught in school require teachers to think about issues of culture.	2.47	CA	7
Over all mean	3.09		

Legend: HCA- Highly Culturally Aware, CA- Culturally Aware, RCA- Rarely Culturally Aware, NCA- Not Culturally Aware

Teachers must develop a strong cultural identity, also appreciating and respecting that other cultures are different from their own. They can use their understanding to create classrooms that affirm the cultural identity development of the students, while also teaching them how to work respectfully with those who are different from themselves (NAFSA, 2011).

Table 4, dealing with communicating across cultural differences, shows generally culturally aware respondents. Item B “*I believe that the best way to avoid cultural misunderstanding is to treat other people as you would want to be treated*” got the highest weighted mean of 3.78. Understanding and acceptance of the cultural backgrounds of the students does not just go with simple understanding; it also means acceptance. Teachers in multicultural classrooms must be open to their students and put forth the effort needed to get to know their students inside and outside of class. If a teacher is hesitant about being open, the class will reciprocate and the students will become estranged from one another and the teacher. In order to be open, teachers must be interested in their students, fearless, willing to try new and different things, sure of themselves in order to avoid taking things personally, and non-judgmen-

tal of his or her students (Canning, 1995 as cited by Fish, 2012).

Cultural sensitivity and respect goes together. It is a give and take relationship. You cannot demand other people, including your students, to respect your cultural identity if you are unwilling to give it to them as well. It is a mutual understanding between two parties who are willing to bridge the cultural boundaries separating them and are willing to treat each other as equals.

Item C “*To be an effective teacher, I believe that it is essential to learn about the cultural background of my students*” had a mean of 3.71. Teachers who do not have a deep understanding of their own or their students’ family backgrounds tend to have difficulties building bridges between school and home (Joshi et al., 2005 as cited by Lin and Bates, 2010). Hence, when issues occur, it hinders the effectiveness of the teachers to reach out to their students inside the classroom and bridge the barriers between the subject matter and their students’ everyday lives.

The third is item A “*I am comfortable talking with people from other cultural groups*” with a mean of 3.4 and is qualitatively interpreted as “highly cul-

turally aware.” This implies that as a teacher, learning the cultural backgrounds of one’s students would ease communication between them. To teach in a culturally pluralistic nation, teachers must be able to effectively and respectfully communicate across cultural differences” (NAFSA, 2011). Bridging the gap between different culture groups leads to the understanding and acceptance that various cultures, no matter how different or the same they may be, are on equal footing with each other.

In the article of Quappe & Cantatore (2005), cultural awareness was defined as the “foundation of communication and it involves the ability of standing back from oneself and becoming aware of one’s cultural values, beliefs and perceptions” it explains that by interacting with other people with different culture, it tends to develop the understanding that culture differences needs consideration not only in communicating but also in the field of teaching.

On the other hand, item D “*I am misunderstood because of cultural differences*” with the lowest weighted mean of 2.4 and qualitatively interpreted as “culturally aware” implies that the respondent teachers are positive of their cultural identities and by learning about the cultural backgrounds of the people around them are confident that they are not misunderstood because their cultural identity goes with the cultural identity of others. Generally, the extent of cultural awareness of the faculty members of the school of teacher education at Saint Louis University in terms of communicating across cultural differences is deemed as “culturally aware.”

Conclusion & Recommendation

Based on the gathered data, the study found that the respondents are more culturally inclined with the items dealing with their being updated about international and global issues and on how these directly affect their lives. They also believe in respecting that gender roles, families, customs and beliefs are defined and may vary from culture to culture. The findings also showed that the respondent teachers

are part of a particular culture group and this cultural background or orientation affects how they perceive the world. They also believe that deep down, most people have a similar concept of what is right and good, and that to be an effective teacher, it is essential to learn about the cultural background of their students and that they need to treat other people as they want to be treated to avoid cultural misunderstandings. However, the findings also showed that the respondents are lacking in terms of finding connections between their subject matter and global issues and in getting involved in organization or groups concerning global issues. They also find it hard to find similarities and differences among the various cultures and in believing that the best way to come to know other cultural groups is through international travel. Also, they rarely attend cultural events in school or in their communities. Lastly, they do not believe that other people are more cultural than themselves and that their cultural identity will impact their teaching.

Based on the findings, it is recommended for Teacher Education Institutions to place more emphasis on cultural awareness concepts which will be visibly integrated into their subject offerings and for future researchers who might want to continue the research must use the university-wide respondents to get a result that will speak of the whole school.

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