



Reflecting on International Education Experiences

Facilitator Notes

Though programs to orient international students to the expectations of a Canadian university environment are often designed and facilitated by professional learning support faculty and staff, the international students themselves are the “experts” on their experience of educational adjustment. Therefore, they are key resource people for identifying critical learning needs for their peers. This exercise allows experienced international students to reflect on their own experience in preparation for supporting other incoming students.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this learning activity, learners will be able to:

- Describe the key differences between their home country education systems and the Canadian educational system by mapping them on a grid of surface and deep cultural differences.
- Identify skills that enable them to learn successfully in the Canadian environment by reflecting on past successes.
- Select key information and skills that would enable new international students from their own country to adapt to their new learning context.

Materials and Preparation:

- Diagram of visible and invisible cultural differences (Iceberg model)
- Post-it notes
- Student handouts

Learning Activities:

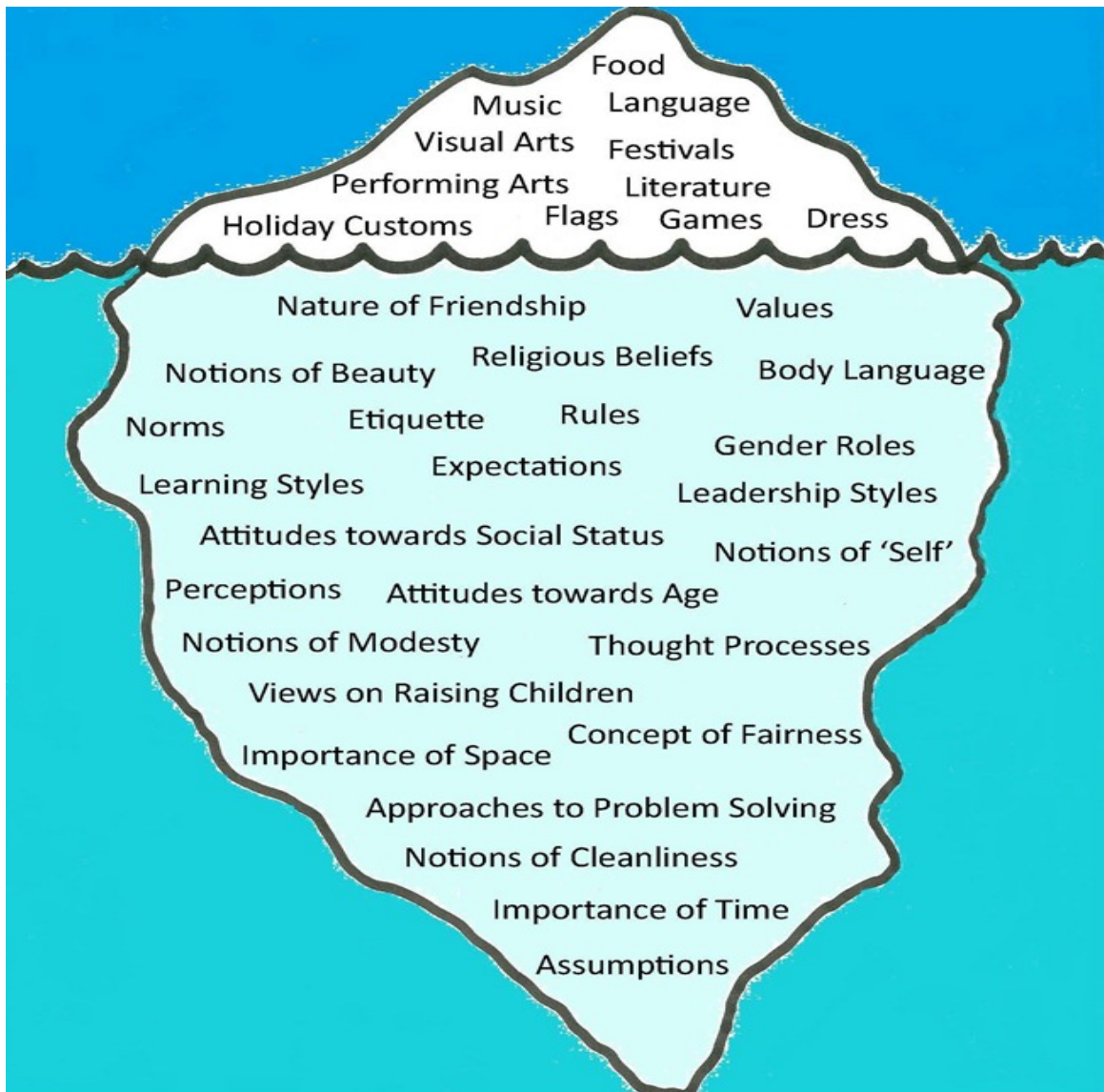
Mapping Cultural Differences in Education

When we first arrive in a new culture, we often notice surface differences between our country and the new country – food, clothing, festivals, and language. However, as we begin to understand our new environment more deeply, we become aware of differences that are “below the surface”. These differences can cause us confusion or culture stress in our new environment as we learn to navigate them well, particularly because they often relate to values and ways of thinking we consider important.

Activity: Cultural Differences in Education

Facilitator note: If completing this activity in a group setting, create a “Culture Iceberg” diagram on the board or a flip chart.

Consider the cultural differences in education systems between your country and Canada. Write each difference on a post-it note. After, place your notes on the iceberg diagram indicating whether the differences relate to visible culture or invisible culture.



Which of these differences were easier to adjust to?

Which differences caused you more stress as you learned to navigate them?

What Contributed to My Success?

For most people who have lived internationally, the first months and years of this experience are usually stretching and challenging. The experience of international life can also produce growth, self-awareness, and the development of new skills.

Consider your own experience as an international student. What were the greatest challenges in your first months? What helped you to overcome these challenges?

Activity: Challenges and Successes

<i>Challenges I faced as an international student</i>	<i>What helped me to overcome these challenges?</i>

Supporting Incoming International Students

As an experienced international student, you are able to be a key resource person for newer international students. So far in this workshop, you have reflected on key differences between your home country's education system and the Canadian system. You have also reflected on key areas that were challenging for you. The next step is to use this information to design a resource or workshop that will support other international students from your home country.

Activity: Identifying Key Areas to Support New International Students

From the reflection you have done so far, list the three most important pieces of advice you would give a new student from your home country:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, with the support of your facilitator and peers, identify one key topic for your workshop or learning resource.