MCI Course Content

The course is concerned with the topics of Culture and Identity with special reference to Childhood and Education, and will address some basic questions:

— What is Cultural Identity?
— How to live in a changing Globalized World?
— How to develop Multi-cultural Competence?

2005-2014

— TEACHERS: in the fields of Pedagogics, Social Studies, Music, Religion&Ethics, and Intercultural Studies. All of the teachers have many years of international background and experience, in childhood and/or in adult age.

— And where do the students come from?
Students, from 42 countries, 10-17 countries in each class

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These fundamental questions will be treated through the following topics:

— Cultural Identity and Cultural Awareness
— Childhood and Identity Construction
— Intercultural Communication, theory and practical experience
— Culture and World-view
— Culture and Religion
— Culture and Ethics
— Human Rights and Childhood
— Cultural Identity and Racism
— Traditions, Festivals, and Rituals
— Processes of Globalization
— Global Consciousness
— Cross-cultural Competence
— Social Commitment in a Globalized World
SYLLABUS

Jan.21- May 22
— Week 4: Info, ”Get-to-know”, Intro, Cultural Awareness
— 5-8: Classes, Tues – Friday (08:30 – 11:15/13:00)
— 9-10: Fieldwork (schools, kindergartens)
— 11-13: Classes, Tues – Friday
— 14-15: Fieldwork, 3 days a week, + discussion
— (16: Easter-break)
— 17-19: Reports and Presentation in class
— 20-21: Preparations for Exam, Oral Exam

Other Activities

— Cultural Presentations, all countries, whether 1 or several students, twice a week, 20-25 min.,

— Excursions, from International Office (all faculties), and our own (MCI), average once a week, to:
  - Museums, concerts, outdoor attractions, sports
  - Anti-Racist Center, Oslo International Culture Center, Oslo Red Cross Culture Center.

— Fieldwork-discussions, both before and after the fieldwork-periods, discussing issues observed

— Social gatherings, upon arrival, midway presentations, final Goodbye party.
Requirements for all students, 20/30 ECTS credit-points:
1. *Active participation* in classes and discussions
2. *Individual or group-presentation* of one's own culture with reference to educational challenges

**Exam**

*Exam portfolio for 30 ECTS credit-points:*
1. One paper on a subject treated in the course, ca.2000 words
2. Fieldwork paper, of 6000-7000 words, based on an expanded period of fieldwork, with presentation in class
3. Oral examination based on fieldwork report and course syllabus, primarily on the Required Readings.
4. Total grade for the course, includes both Fieldwork paper and Oral exam

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**For internal/Norwegian studenter**

Norwegian students of MCI follow the same plan as the external students, with presentations and requirements.

BUT, with following emphasis:
- Leader-practice in 6.sem. of ECE students is integrated in the program, in weeks 2-3 (before start) and weeks 9-10 (Fieldwork for the others).
- The final Fieldwork paper is recognized as their Bachelor-thesis, with a separate grade on the transcript of records.
- The total grade for the whole MCI-course (30 ECTS) consists of the Fieldwork paper and the Oral exam.
Background of MCI-Students

— **National:** mainly European, but in all classes also some from Asia, Africa, USA, or Latin-America

— **Cultural:** consciousness of History and Culture vary much, some have dramatic events in recent past (Baltics, Czech Rp.) some have strong cultural identity-markers (language…) some have a rather indistinct notion of cultural belonging

— **Religious:** some from «secularized» Europe (Nordic, German) some from religious schools (Dutch, Belgian) some from societies dominated by religion (Spanish, Italian) some from atheistic traditions (Czech R., Hungary, Baltics)

— Secularized Europe

— Religious traditions, background

Culture-presentations in class

*What do the students focus on?*

- Traditional aspects of their culture: major festivals, nature, architecture, costumes, food, drinks, and music.
- History, religion and traditional values are in the fore, rather than raising critical and sensitive issues in their home-society.
- Symbols: flag, colors, buildings, famous people (royal, music, arts, sports, science…)
- Modern student environment, what are young people pre-occupied with, concerned about?
- Some expose their values and world-view, but mostly indirectly.
Value-clause in Norwegian schools

“….The school shall build on respect for human worth, freedom of speech, loving your neighbour, equality and solidarity- the way these basic values are expressed in Christian and humanistic tradition, different religions, worldviews, and UN’s Declaration on Human Rights. The school should promote democracy, equality and scientific way of thinking. Pupils shall develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for them to be able to cope with their lives, and to participate in work and community society……”

— Source: http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/Curricula-in-English/
A Surprising subject in schools: RLE subject
(Religion, Philosophy of Life, and Ethics):

“The subject shall teach knowledge of Christianity, other world religions and philosophies of life, and ethical and philosophical themes. It shall also teach the significance of Christianity as cultural heritage in our society. For this reason, Knowledge of Christianity will be a major portion of the learning content of the subject. This involves allowing for local variations in the scope of subjects between the main subject areas in order to satisfy competence aims for the subject.

Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics is an ordinary school subject intended to bring all pupils together. The Norwegian Education Act demands that the teaching of this subject be objective, critical and pluralistic. This implies that the subject be taught impartially and based on facts, and that the different world religions and philosophies of life shall be presented with respect.

Source: http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/Curricula-in-English/Value-clause-in-Norwegian-Kindergartens

Value-clause in Norwegian Kindergartens

“…. The Kindergarten shall be based on fundamental values in the Christian and humanist heritage and tradition, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights... Kindergartens shall promote equality and work against all forms of discrimination.”

Nordic «Child-centered Pedagogy» «Participation», one of the 3 P’s in the CRC

Ethical Values in Kindergartens
- Friendship
- Helpfulness
- Respect
- Tolerance
- Solidarity
- Empathy

Key concepts:
Recognition, Acceptance, Mutuality, Dialogue
— How do we teach these values??
— Democracy?

The fundamental values of kindergartens

- Care, upbringing and learning in kindergartens shall promote human dignity, equality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, health and an appreciation of sustainable development.

(Norwegian Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)
Participation, elements included from the CRC

— Children in kindergartens shall have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten.

— Children shall regularly be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten.

— Children’s views shall be given due weight according to their age and maturity.

(Norwegian Kindergarten Act, Section 3, Children’s right to participation)

Values, Worldview, and Religion

Responses from MCI-students?

Surprise:
- Children’s Participation is not new to many, but the strong focus and the implementation is unusual.
- Adult-child relationship: the «Acceptance» and «Recognition» aspect dominates, sometimes turning into «chaos».
- Few, if any, have a subject in public school like the RLE. True, some have gone to «religious schools».
- Few, if any, have experienced activities with a religious touch, in preparing for festivals (Christmas, Easter, Id-al- Fitr, Divali, Vesak..), including children with diverse backgrounds
Culture-shock, Re-orientation of Values

CS can be a process from enthusiasm in meeting the new culture, to frustrations and anger, to disillusion. The question is whether the U-curve turns upward, taking in new stimuli, adjusting, accommodating, and finding one’s own style in the new environment, being relaxed, fitting in.

Shock? For most students it is rather some frustrations over practicalities, some surprises concerning habits, customs, and also surprises about different values:
- Outdoor life, closeness to nature, «dangerous play», such as climbing in trees and rocks, using sharp tools, and the little ones taking their nap outside in 5-6 minus
- Adult-child relations, the strong emphasis on Participation
- Religious content visible.

Summary: MCI-students Attitudes

— Part of the Modern World, Individual freedom, choice, and deep into «Social Media» as a vital Identity-factor.
— Rather firmly embedded in one’s own culture, traditions, and Worldview.
— Yet, at the outset, not too conscious of the implications, something that gradually changes.
— Being exposed to a different society, different education system, with different values, makes an impact.
— Being exposed to other students with different values, views, makes an impact.
— «Ethnocentrism», more complex, has nuances
— «Neo-essentialism» or «Chauvinism», too narrow.
— «Acculturation», finding a balance, including both cultural identity and integrity, as well as openness for changes.
VISIONS!

— Building a broad network, utilizing for PR!
— Recruit students from diverse backgrounds!
— Create a socially secure environment!
— An academic exiting environment!
— Open communication between students and teachers!
— Give a total experience of multiculturalism from both theory and practice!

Challenges

— Ability in English?
— Academic Traditions, Standard?
— Study-habits?
— Used to being abroad?
— Economy of Student?
— Economy of MCI-course?
Literature, References


Literature, References (cont.)