FOSTERING APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS IN AN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS

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Abstract - Contemporary education is now a global phenomenon. The international branch campus serves as an experimental proving ground where sometimes radically different ideologies collide, co-exist, and in some cases, merge together. Teachers and students engage in an educational discourse and travers the often labyrinthine paths of explicit and hidden curricula stemming from differing backgrounds and perspectives. This paper presents findings from a qualitative study of teaching strategies perceived as successful and effective by faculty in an international branch campus of an American university. Data was collected through two focus groups of male and female instructors of varying years of experience at a branch campus in the Arab Gulf. Similar to western-based research, key findings include developing a learning environment within which students feel safe, feel accepted, and feel they have a voice. One major difference from western-based main research is the cultural diversity of the international branch campus and corresponding differences in student pre-university education and preparation. For example, culturally-based extra-curricular training such as having been taught to never question the teacher, also have an impact on teaching and learning relationships in the classroom of the international branch campus. Collectivist and individualist cultures also have an impact.