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“So I thought long and hard this week about what Pearl I would share with you with the understanding that I probably have a lot more to learn from you than you do from me. And um, so I have decided to frame it around this idea. We are all different and diversity is something to be celebrated. I was sitting with a friend of breakfast this morning and I was sharing a story about my grandmother. Um, my grandmother grew up in a small town and her world was very, very small. She never really left that town. And when I was around 10 years old, my mother bought a cottage on a Lake and it was about a three hour drive from where my grandmother lived. And my mother was so excited to take my grandmother to this cottage. She had visions of her sitting by the Lake and enjoying her family over the summer.

What my mother did not anticipate was how uncomfortable my grandmother was going to feel about being removed from her very small town. I still remember the drive and my grandmother complaining the whole way about how far we were going and then complaining all weekend and at the end of the weekend my grandmother said I will never come back again. And it was at that moment that I realized that my grandmother's world was very, very small and this was actually impacting her ability to truly enjoy life. And at that moment I really vowed to myself that I would live my life differently and I think it's safe to say that I have, I have lived in places that include for Munich, China, Cambodia, Singapore and Canada. Throughout my teaching career, I'd like to think of myself as a very open minded and internationally minded person.

In fact, I would think that most of us here today, we'd like to say the same things about ourselves. But in my 23 years of education, I have learned something very important about myself. I am not as open minded or internationally minded as I think and neither are you and neither are the teachers that we work with. Five years ago, my school started a Chinese English bilingual program and I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed to admit that at the time that it started, there was a very subtle undercurrent of racism in my school. The Western teachers I think felt that they knew more about best practice in education than the Chinese teachers did. In fact, our school actually paid the English teachers more than the Chinese teachers for doing the same job. You know, I'm happy to say that after the first year we did change that, but still it was not right.

I know now that these beliefs were not coming from a bad place, but rather they were coming from a problem of what might be called different cultural criteria. The English teachers were judging the Chinese teachers, because they new teaching and learning English based on their Western education. Please keep in mind that most of the research that we read is in English, but what about all of the research that is out there in languages that we can't access? Chinese is a completely different language than English and it requires a completely different approach. What works in one educational context may not necessarily work in another. I believe that over the past five years, English and Chinese teachers, I've learned from both, and we now have in place what one might call negotiations of shared understandings of practice. This idea curriculum as a negotiation of shared understandings is an important piece of my Pearl.

Again, we may not be as internationally minded. Four years ago I started a doctoral program at the national Institute of education in Singapore. In my cohort 15 students, we have two international students, myself and one other woman from Korea. I chose to do my program at NIEA because it's close to where I live and I felt that it had a world class reputation, but what I've taken away from my experience there is less about understanding curriculum teaching and learning and more about understanding myself in the stereotypes and prejudice I might've held. As I progressed through my courses and worked with my classmates, I began to see just how much I viewed education for Western lens in addition to challenging my beliefs about teaching learning. I also realized that I held very stereotypical assumptions about what education looks like in Asian countries.

Even though I have very little experience working in a national school in one of these countries. For example, I assume that Singaporean school practices were very traditional new approaches, not inquiry based, maybe not using current research. Wow, was I wrong? I will never forget sitting in on a math lesson led by one of my CF. I wish I had filmed it. It was inquiry based. It was engaging, involve critical thinking. I had way more to learn about teaching math from this person than I could ever share with him. Again, I was not as internationally minded or as open minded as I thought. Our unconscious conscious prejudice as educators extends beyond culture as we all come from different backgrounds and experiences. We each hold our own theories of learning in why did international school, you could have operative 80 different nationalities each



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person bring into the school their beliefs about what teaching good teaching and learning looks like.

We know that we find teachers on a continuum from play-based, more structured, from warm to strict and everything in between. In my role as vice principal, I worked with one particular teacher that I did not like. It's not that I did not believe she was a good teacher. Truly the children in her class were thriving, but telecons was very different from mine. I did not feel that she was warm enough. I felt that her classroom was too structured. I thought she needed to change and I felt this way about her for a long time until one day it was the start of the school year, we were having an assembly for new teachers and parents and there was a child in the audience who is not behaving fabulously. He was rolling on the ground, he was caught calling out. He was running up and down the aisles and he was laughing at his mother and I thought to myself, red flag, whose class is that child?

And I need to find out and I need to find out now and I'll never forget the moment when I found that you had teacher wise. It was this teacher I didn't like and I had a moment where I read the sigh of relief as an administrator cause I said to myself, thank goodness he's going to be okay in her class. You see this teacher has structures in place, in approach to teaching and learning that was going to work for this child. Was he okay in your class? He was in fact he was better than okay and I, I'm going to be honest, I don't think he would've been okay or as okay and anyone else's class and at that moment I realized something else. There is room for all kinds of teachers in our school. In fact, we need them. I have not been as open minded as I had thought I was in 2019 we're inundated with social media.

Our social media shows us what we want to see. It sends us messages that reinforce our points of view and personal beliefs so that we are more inclined to engage with it. Social media works hard to confirm for math confirmed for us that we are right and others are wrong. One of my big takeaways from my first PTC course, leadership in educational technology was to be sure that you keep things on your show, social media feeds that challenged your perspective. You are not as open minded or as internationally minded as you might think. So with the above in mind by is this celebrate diversity. When someone's educational experiences or perspectives make you feel uncomfortable, don't be quick to dismiss them. Don't assume that they are wrong and you are right. What from your educational and cultural experiences are influencing you? What is influencing the other



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person? What negotiations of shared practice can you engage with your school's mission? And guiding principles can help with this, but there's always room contentions and differences of opinion and this is actually what helps us to learn. So as an international school leader, always keep in mind, you are not as open minded or internationally minded as you think, but you do have the power to change this.”