

Global Faculty, Not Yet Global Citizen

Written by Dylan Kissane

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DYLAN KISSANE, MAR 6 2013

I spent last week in Querétaro, Mexico as part of ITESM's Global Faculty program. Each year ITESM invites faculty from around the world to spend a week teaching on campus, networking and connecting with local and visiting professors, and exploring some of the beautiful city of Querétaro. It was a privilege to be invited and I enjoyed myself interacting with new friends and motivated students, all in wonderful March sunshine.

After spending the last few years teaching students here in France, I was curious as to how I would fare with students in Mexico. I was expecting good things – Tech, after all, is one of Mexico's leading universities – but I wasn't sure how these international relations majors would compare to the business majors I was used to teaching back at CEFAM. A couple of things stood out for me that are worth commenting upon.

First, there is a tremendous ease that comes with teaching a subject to students who major in that subject that I had somehow forgotten. For example, I caught myself taking a few seconds to explain the concept of anarchy to second year students before realising from their faces that they knew and understood this fundamental concept. I also didn't find myself searching for raised hands when asking for examples or counter-examples from the students. Historical analogies flowed easily and fast, ensuring that the discussion I started took off on its own.

Second, I was reminded once again both the positives and negatives aspects that come with specialising in a certain region of the world. When I took questions on the trans-Atlantic relationship between Europe and the US, or when discussing Asia-Pacific politics, I was entirely at ease. Yet I found myself left unable to respond to questions about Mexican or Latin American politics – domestic or international – and instead relied on the limited news about that region that makes it way over to France.

Third, I was pleasantly surprised how switched on to new technologies and new media students at ITESM are. By the end of my first class in Mexico I had new followers on Twitter, some articles I had written and referenced during the class had been accessed and downloaded from my website, and I had an invitation to connect from a particularly memorable and active student on LinkedIn. I was later informed by a professor at ITESM that she believed social media penetration in Mexico is relatively low, but that students at ITESM were big users and consumers of social and new media. After a week of online interaction with students, I did not doubt her.

Of course, travelling internationally also reminds one that the idea of a global citizen is still a work in progress. My voyage to Querétaro took me from Lyon through Amsterdam, New York and Dallas, with all of the identity checks and security regulations that come with modern international travel. While the business world might be used to the idea of an Australian working in France and travelling on both an Irish and Australian passport, it seems that border police are somewhat suspicious of a life that does not quite fit the norm. I might feel like a global citizen sometimes and I may emphasise the lowering of barriers between states in my classes, but it takes only a few hours of flying to remember that the crest on the front of your passport can still make all the difference in the world.

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