



TED UNIVERSITY



**TED UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
TEACHING EXCELLENCE GRANT FINAL REPORT
by Dr. Elif Karsli**

Overview of the Course

EDU 401 Community Service course, which was awarded with TEDU Teaching Excellence Grant, is a 2 credit, required course for all seniors across different majors in the College of Education. I carried out this course collaboratively with my colleagues Dr. Aysel Saricaoglu from TEDU, Dr. Brian Ruane and Maria Barry from Dublin City University (DCU). I had eight students enrolled in this course from Early Childhood Education and Primary Education programs. This course incorporated a project funded by U.S. Department of State titled “*Next Generation Teachers Co-Working for Refugee and Immigrant Communities in Turkey and Ireland.*” The students, who registered for the course, carried out this main project by designing their own small community engagement projects.

We designed the course around three main learning activities that aimed to promote “*student engagement and participation*”, “*critical and creative thinking skills*”, and “*leadership skills*”. During the course, our students attended online lectures, which were given by Brian Ruane and Maria Barry from DCU and us (Dr. Elif Karsli and Dr. Aysel Saricaoglu) and they engaged in online communication with their peers from Ireland to develop the practices of their community service projects and shared insights. The students in Ireland, who participated in our course activities, are also from Primary Education program and pursue minor degrees in Global and Intercultural Education in DCU.

Innovative Aspects of the Course with respect to TEDU Priorities

The course targeted a number of TEDU priorities including “*technology enhancement*”, “*diversified faculty*”, “*internationalization*”, and “*civic engagement*”:

Technology enhancement: This course provided students a virtual classroom experience, which they do not commonly have in their TEDU courses. We converted online classes to Adobe Connect enhanced sessions so that both TEDU and DCU students had synchronous online classes.

Diversified faculty/Team teaching: This course collaboratively led by four instructors, giving students team-taught learning experiences (Dr. Elif Karsli main instructor and Dr. Aysel Saricaoglu, Brian Ruane and Maria Barry co-instructors). With the four instructors having

different areas of expertise relevant to the specific contents of the course (Culturally-responsive pedagogy by Dr. Elif Karsli; teaching in linguistic diverse settings by Dr. Aysel Saricaoglu and human rights and global citizenship by Brian Ruane and Maria Barry), students engaged in interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Internationalization: This course offered our students a chance to collaborate with international peers and contributed to internationalization of TEDU at the same time. In addition to the online interactions throughout the semester, students had face-to-face communication opportunities through cross-country visits.

Civic engagement: Increasing their awareness to recognize the concerns of refugee and immigrant children at schools, the course equipped students with the knowledge and skills to actively participate in civic engagement but also offered them hands-on use of skills and knowledge through meaningful involvement with diverse communities in educational settings.

Course Activities & Results

During the semester, our students:

- Reviewed and visited non-governmental and/or non-profit organizations, cooperatives, charities or social organizations targeting children and/or education such as *UNICEF, AÇEV, UNESCO, Tohum Otizm Vakti, Freedom to Grow Unschool, Başka Bir Okul Mümkün, Save the Children* and constructed their own understandings of how these organizations meet the educational needs of children.
- Conducted observations in culturally and linguistically diverse schools in Turkey and Ireland. They attended two public school located in Mamak, an *Educate Together School* in Dublin. In these settings, students critically examined the differences between pedagogical practices for culturally diverse communities in these different contexts: across schools and organizations and across countries.
- Designed and implemented four community service projects. Students connected and applied knowledge from the course, the reviews, and the observations to the targeted schools and offered their insights. Students worked in groups of two and developed the four projects listed below:
 - **Group 1: YouTube Channel:** Students interviewed teachers in the public schools and conducted a needs assessment considering their needs in terms of working with immigrant and refugee students and families. Based on teachers' needs,

students communicated with experts and recorded expert videos, and gathered them on a YouTube Channel.

- **Group 2: Z-Library:** Students designed a multicultural library in the school context, and included books and curriculum materials, which reflect different languages and cultures.
- **Group 3: Community Center:** Students discovered a public community center located nearby the school and communicated with officials in the center and in Mamak Municipality. They organized an event for Syrian mothers in this community center and aimed for them to attend this center, and utilized available resources offered in the center such as language classes, and arts and crafts courses.
- **Group 4: Play:** Students developed a play with its materials to increase the social interaction among children. The material they developed provided a play context where children who do not share the same linguistic backgrounds could come and play together.

Overall, our students share that this has been a unique experience for them; they feel more ready to work in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and they recognize the possible challenges they may encounter in their future teaching. Moreover, our students showed interest in ERASMUS internship at elementary schools in Dublin (They did observations in a school in Dublin) and ERASMUS exchange programs with Dublin City University (They attended a course named “Teacher as Person” at DCU) and they also have been looking for graduate study opportunities in Ireland.

The Use of Teaching Excellence Grant & Project Grant:

We used the \$10,000 grant provided by U.S. Department of State for students’ project activities (e.g. travel to schools, curriculum materials, educational equipment, food) and to cover our travel expenses for Ireland. We used the teaching grant 1,750 TL provided by TEDU to get two professional cameras, two tripods, 2 SD cards and two microphones. Group 2 YouTube Channel used these materials very effectively and could record professional expert videos. I believe that having these equipments ready for students also triggered their motivation and definitely influenced them as they came up with this YouTube Channel idea. Other students also used these equipments to document their project activities both in public schools and Dublin, and used videos they recorded as they shared insights with their peers from Dublin.