

SECONDARY MATH METHODS SYLLABI ACROSS CULTURES

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Introduction

This poster presentation focuses on the comparison of syllabi for secondary mathematics methods courses across cultures. The authors uncover similarities and differences between these documents and their relevance. According to Wikle and Fagin (2014): “Within most college or university courses the syllabus serves as the principal tool for course planning” But is this true across cultures? Similarly to Kaki (2000), the authors believe culture does play a role influencing syllabus production.

Research Question and Design

The research questions guiding this comparison study are: a) how are secondary mathematics methods courses similar and/or different across cultures? b) How are the objectives of those courses similar and/or different according to their syllabi? And c) How are the evaluation methods similar and/or different according to their syllabi?

To conduct the comparison, the authors collected secondary mathematics methods syllabi from five institutions: two United States (US) colleges of education, one public teacher preparation program in Uruguay, one college of Engineering in Colombia, and one college of education in Korea. The syllabi were review first structurally, to see what sections they included, and then the content of those sections, specially objectives and evaluation methods, similarly to what Parkes, Fix and Harris (2003) and DuBois, Burkemper (2002) did.

Summary of Findings

Structurally, the US syllabus contained the greatest number of sections, and were in general the longest documents. They had the most coincidence with Korean syllabi, even though these were the shortest along the Uruguayan one. This one also was the one with the least number of sections, notoriously not including any information about how the students would be evaluated for the course, which was also the case for Colombia. Korea and US included outlines of the content by week. Standards and accreditors information was only included in the US syllabi.

When looking at the objectives all of the syllabus mentioned planning of instruction, and classroom assessment. All of them but the Colombian one also mentioned societal issues like diversity and equity through mathematics education. And the two south American syllabi also mentioned the importance of considering mathematics methods as a scientific discipline.

Last, looking at the course evaluation methods, the authors of this poster found that only the US cases have sections explaining assignments. There were some coincidence on the topics for evaluation: readings, planning, and assessment. Korea had a very broad explanation of how students would be evaluated, mentioning lecture, discussion/presentations, xperiment/practicum, and field study.

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