

### **Fictional Case for Study: New Colleague**

A new teacher has joined your ESL team. She is not straight out of her teacher-education program; after graduation, she volunteered for two years in Southeast Asia. Back in Canada, she is working at your site while she considers her options. By the end of her first week, she notices several things that seem *familiar* when compared with the refugee camp. For instance:

- many students are hopeful for the future: they sometimes they get discouraged but, overall, they work hard and take their studies seriously
- numerous students view their classes as a social world that, in a sense, provides them with the freedom and energy that they do not always experience at home.
- the teacher-student bond is frequently very close; clearly, some teachers are strongly committed to the well-being of their students: e.g. by planning lessons in considerable detail; reciprocally, the students recognize the teaching staff as influential contributors to their learning process.

But she has also noticed some *differences*:

- the classrooms are cleaner, better equipped, and more comfortable
- the teachers' resources library is better-supplied
- although probably the best qualified teachers are comparable in both places, the threshold of qualifications is higher here: everyone at least has TESL accreditation.

While these aspects please her, some other differences perplex her. For example:

- she is surprised that some students show low motivation, almost taking their study as a semi-vacation financed by their parents; she wonders if they understand the value of learning English
- she expresses amazement at how lightly some students regard an opportunity that '*My students back in Asia would have given anything to experience!*'
- she is confused/distressed by the '*invisible barrier*' of professional reserve between teachers and students; the strong emphasis on in-class, rather than out-of-class learning and socialization conflicts with the norm at her former workplace.

You invite her to join you at a nearby Tim Horton's for a coffee after class. Clearly, she is bursting with unexpressed questions. Because you are older and more experienced, you sense that you ought to lead the conversation towards allowing her to verbalize her uncertainties, and gain clarity about the new setting. Her first words are, '*Well, here I am, back in Canada and in pretty much exactly the kind of job I had hoped to land. So, I should feel lucky, but I'm not sure if I'll be happy here. What should I do?*'

**Where do you go from there? What might be the trajectory of the conversation?**