UCET

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Date: 22/3/22

Dear James,

I am writing to apply for the Gordon Kirk scholarship to fund travel to the University of Thessaly, Greece in January 2022. I am a senior lecturer in the Department of Teacher Education, at Sheffield Hallam University with a passion for the Philosophy for Children (P4C) pedagogy. P4C is a dialogic, inquiry-based teaching methodology that is designed to embed creative, critical, collaborative, and caring thinking skills in the curriculum.  It is an evidence-based approach that is widely used in primary schools, and increasingly in secondary schools.

In my work at Sheffield Hallam University, I have embedded P4C in the BA initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum. Every year approximately 200 students (BA and PGCE) undertake a 4-hour introductory course, and nearly 50 students each year undertake a further 6 hour training to complete the full certificate.

From 2016-18, ITE educators and students from six European countries (including the University of Thessaly) were involved in developing and evaluating curriculum materials for the Project in Citizenship and Mathematics (PiCAM) Erasmus project. The PiCAM curriculum materials are designed to enhance pupils’ (9-13 years) engagement with mathematics by linking mathematical concepts to global citizenship topics such as migration, wealth, and colonisation. For example, in one activity students are given a selection of world maps, from which they are invited to choose the best one. The pupils must then justify and reflect on their choices. Following this, they undertake mathematical calculations to work out how the older maps distorted the actual sizes of different countries and continents. To successfully take part in these activities, pupils need creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills which the P4C pedagogy develops.

The aims of the proposed collaboration are two-fold. Firstly, whilst students at both institutions have trialled some of the curriculum materials, we would like to integrate this resource in a more systematic way in our respective courses. This would provide mathematics educators and student teachers with a rich source of materials to explore current debates about global citizenship topics form a mathematical perspective. Secondly, the visit would enable students at the University of Thessaly to undertake an accredited P4C course which will support curriculum delivery.

The programme of events at the University of Thessaly will include:

* Training staff and students in the P4C pedagogy and curriculum materials.
* Observing and evaluating students’ use of the PiCAM curriculum materials.
* A seminar presentation to staff and students about the P4C curriculum in initial teacher education.
* Setting up of online platforms for University of Thessaly and Sheffield Hallam students to explore and document their experiences of using the curriculum materials and their perspectives on global citizenship and mathematics.

The scholarship will assist in the following ways:

* Travel to Greece £400
* Accommodation for 5-7 days £350
* Subsistence £150
* Total: £800

The expected outcomes of this international collaboration are as follows: a project evaluation/research paper on students’ and tutors’ use of the PiCAM materials, dissemination of the PiCAM curriculum materials in the UCET community, and development of research and scholarship activities between SHU and the University of Thessaly.

The PiCAM curriculum materials offer an innovative resource for teachers and educators to enrich the mathematics curriculum. This collaboration will provide a valuable opportunity for students and staff at the University of Thessaly and Sheffield Hallam University to learn from each other’s experiences, and to inform teaching approaches in ITE and schools. On a personal level, this collaborative activity will strengthen my professional knowledge and understanding of the PiCAM curriculum, develop professional development/scholarship opportunities, and inform my ongoing work to disseminate the possibilities of the P4C pedagogy in initial teacher education.

Regards,

Fufy Demissie