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12. TEACHING IN TRANSNATIONAL SPACES

A Journey of Short-Term Study abroad in China

INTRODUCTION

As our world has become increasingly globalized, international and comparative education activities in the form of study abroad programs have become increasingly prevalent, and students in higher education are often motivated to participate in short-term or longer-term study abroad programs (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). In addition to providing learning opportunities in students' respective subjects, such programs are also expected to challenge and expand students' worldviews by enabling them to become fully immersed in structured cross-cultural learning experiences.

For the past six years, the authors of this chapter have designed and implemented a two-week, short-term study abroad program for local San Francisco Bay Area educators, graduate students, and teaching credential candidates from the Graduate College of Education at San Francisco State University (SFSU), to provide an opportunity for cross-cultural, comparative educational praxis in a broad range of classrooms in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China. This program is part of the curricular internationalization endeavors initiated by the leadership of the College, with goal of better preparing Bay Area educators to positively interact with their transnational students. Although the length of the program is relatively short, many of the participants have described their learning experience as "life-changing," or "transformational," stating that the program has impacted their personal and professional lives profoundly. This chapter shares our journey of developing and implementing this endeavor by identifying and discussing the design of this unique program.

The chapter is divided into the following six sections: (1) the context of the program through which the goals of the program emerged; (2) program participants and the recruitment process; (3) a detailed description of program curriculum, including its objectives, teaching strategies, teaching sites, and assignments; (4) key elements that constitute the unique design of the program; (5) student learning outcomes substantiated by participant narratives; and (6) reflections and challenges experienced after conducting the program with four cohorts of participants.

TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAM

Program Contexts

The Graduate College of Education at San Francisco State University has a history of serving graduate students and credential candidates from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Most of these educators themselves face the continuing challenge of serving an increasingly diverse student population in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the San Francisco Unified School District alone, almost one-third of the students are of Chinese origin, and almost half of the students in the school district are of Asian and Pacific Islander origins (Lapkoff and Goblet Demographic Research, 2010). In addition, many of the students throughout the district are new immigrants and English language learners. Being situated at the strategic doorway to the Pacific Rim, the phenomenon of globalization in San Francisco Bay Area is more intense than ever before. Therefore, it is inevitable that we as Education faculty members reflect on our role and responsibilities in preparing reflective practitioners to effectively interact with their transnational students in a variety of educational contexts. To this end, the following questions were kept in mind when developing the program: What kinds of educators are we creating to respond to this increasingly globalizing society? How can we and our students better serve the students, whose “previous life experience” is primarily unknown to us? What type of domestic and global citizens are we envisioning, when our students’ identities are more “transnational,” rather than attached to just one country? These questions continued to guide our thoughts as we considered the type of the program to develop for our participants, current and future educators in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Program Participants and Recruitment

Our application process was open to local Bay Area educators, as well as to the graduate students and credential candidates of the Graduate College of Education at San Francisco State University in order to maximize participant diversity. Applicants were required to submit required application documents and letters of recommendation. They were selected based upon faculty assessment of their motivation, goals, and the potential impact of the program on their career development. Each cohort comprised approximately 15 participants. Demographically the program participants were quite diverse; many were reflective of the background of their own students, coming from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds with various schooling experiences. All of the participants were either part-time or full time students in graduate and credential programs, or full-time K-12 teachers in the Bay Area. Although every effort was made to minimize costs to participants, some potential participants may not have been able to afford to participate due to financial barriers. To make the program more affordable, scholarships were secured and granted to the first two cohorts of program participants by the leadership of the college through fund-raising efforts.

Program Curriculum

This section presents the program curriculum in terms of its design, course objectives, teaching materials and strategies, and course assignments.

Program design. The process of program design was a collaborative team effort among a group of faculty and staff, incorporating suggestions and feedback from prospective and actual participants. The team decided, after deliberation, that the program should operate at multiple sites, which would enable participants to experience the broadest range of embodied, transnational experiences while critically comparing, contrasting, and examining forces of globalization that shape educational practices in California, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou, China.

The program design that involved multiple teaching sites reflected the results of long-term partnerships among San Francisco State University (SFSU), Hong Kong University (HKU), and South China Normal University (SCNU) in Guangzhou, China. The program participants were enrolled in this program as a graduate seminar course and received course credits from SFSU. HKU and SCNU contributed to the program by providing onsite instruction, site visit coordination, residential support, and local transportation under contract with SFSU. In addition to providing an embodied transnational experience, the multiple teaching sites represented useful opportunities for witnessing the contemporary Chinese Diaspora and multiple “ethnoscapes” (Appadurai, 1996) in globalized contexts.

Course description and student performance objectives. To clearly communicate the goals and mission of the program to our participants and partners, the faculty team outlined on the course syllabus the following course description and performance objectives. The purpose of the course was to examine the impact of globalization on California education and help students to define their roles and responsibilities as educators, activists, and school administrators in order to effectively respond to the implications of globalization. This summer course, offered in collaboration with Hong Kong University and South China Normal University, enables students to critically examine and analyze the patterns of globalization in education and its implications on California education. The program identified four specific performance objectives to guide the student performance. After participating in the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an embodied and improved understanding of globalization and its effects on California education
- Understand the specific nature of Chinese Diasporas that impact California, including their impacts on recent educational developments in China, Hong Kong, and in California
- Develop skill in collaborative, cross-cultural, and comparative education classroom observation and lesson study, drawing useful pedagogical applications from the experience

- Demonstrate improved capacity to address the needs of diverse learners in their own classrooms.

Contents and teaching strategies. The program took place in San Francisco, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou, China. Course lectures were conducted first by SFSU faculty members at San Francisco State University, highlighting fundamental concepts that included: globalization and trans-nationality, the nature and implications of the transpacific Chinese Diaspora; history and recent educational developments in China and Hong Kong; implications of Chinese culture for pedagogy; and research processes in cross-cultural and comparative settings. An overview of educational systems in Hong Kong and China was particularly stressed in order to help participants develop a comparative lens through which to analyze educational practices under three different systems. The series of lectures in San Francisco were followed up with lectures by Hong Kong University faculty members on more specialized issues in the context of Hong Kong and Chinese education: analysis of language policies, assessment and tracking, learning Chinese via computer animation, lesson study, educational issues in contemporary Hong Kong and China, and general equity and social justice issues in Chinese educational contexts.

The literature and readings included in all lectures were selected purposely to represent multiple perspectives grounded in different cultural and socio-political contexts, adding another dimension to foster curriculum internationalization. Research and readings used for program curriculum featured works of Asian American scholars (Hsu, 2000; Ong, 2004), or translated works by Chinese scholars (Gu, 2001). Faculty members, activists, and practitioners in Hong Kong and China also recommended research and literature produced by local experts (Kwo, 1992; Kwong, 2006) in order to enhance the diversity of scholarship presented in the program.

In addition to theoretical discussions, numerous visits to various school sites in Hong Kong and Guangzhou constituted the embodied dimension of this program. During these half-day to whole-day school visits, participants were invited to tour schools, engage in in-depth conversation with teachers and students, and observe several classes for substantial periods (at least one hour). We visited various types of schools serving populations distinctively diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, language as the instructional medium (English, Cantonese, or Mandarin), religious affiliation, and prestige rank (as determined by Chinese government). As a result, we visited schools ranging from very privileged, private sites serving international students, to marginalized institutions hosting new immigrants and children of migrant workers. This diversity of settings enabled program participants to compare and contrast a range of schooling experiences under different educational systems.

Also stressed in the program were the goals of enhancing participants' skills of teaching, interacting, and conducting action research in culturally diverse and cross-cultural classroom settings. To achieve these aims, diverse teaching strategies and

activities were adopted in the curriculum. For instance, participants were required to conduct a research project on a topic of their choice by collecting data through observation and interviews during their school visits and course observations. Participants were also provided with opportunities to teach at a host school (newcomer school for children of Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrants in Hong Kong) with a curriculum they had developed. Panel discussions on topics related to comparative education experiences with graduate students of Hong Kong University and South China Normal University were also implemented to facilitate cross-cultural discussion and understanding. Various learning activities were designed to engage students so that they combined theory and praxis by directly observing, analyzing, critiquing, and comparing educational practices in the San Francisco Bay Area with those of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China.

Assignments. Two course assignments were used to assess students' academic learning outcomes: an action research paper and a portfolio. Students were required to submit a substantive action research paper synthesizing and summarizing their findings related to a specific research question that they had posed at the start of the course, presented in the context of selected course materials and class observations. They were also required to prepare a digital portfolio (using PowerPoint or other similar program) containing a variety of images and texts to codify findings and learning from the experience. The portfolio was to follow the same thematic focus of the research paper, serving to illustrate and convey issues raised in the paper. In sum, the variety of teaching strategies and learning activities offered by the program curriculum were designed to help the participants achieve enhanced capacities to teach and conduct research in cross-cultural contexts.

Key Components of the Program

The process of program development was non-linear, dynamic and collaborative. The following components reflect the uniqueness and success of this well-received program: a long-term partnership with internationally recognized institutions; an internationalized curriculum; a balance of theory and praxis; and a learning process characterized by both formal and informal learning opportunities.

Long-term overseas partnership. The close partnership between the College of Education at SFSU, Hong Kong University, and South China Normal University was a key factor, largely determining the effectiveness of the program. Given the nature of this complex, transnational program, extensive negotiation, discussion, and deliberation among the three institutions were required to successfully coordinate and implement the program. Without accommodating partners who were both internationally recognized and locally grounded, the program would not have had access to such outstanding lecturers and local experts, or such a comprehensive list of varying school sites for observation. All of these opportunities, accessed through

the networks of the two host institutions, enabled our participants to form their own unique understandings of educational practices in Hong Kong and China.

Curriculum internationalization. Our effort to internationalize the curriculum was reflected in various aspects of program design. The adoption of multiple teaching sites in three cities over two weeks, for example, enabled our participants to attend lectures, make in-depth school visits, and interact with local teachers and students through practicum and panel discussions. The program's transnational design also, both culturally and linguistically, exposed program participants to the highly globalized cities of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China. Prior to arrival in China, faculty members purposely expanded course reading references to represent multiple perspectives—not only readings by Chinese American scholars, but also works by scholars and experts from China. We also used recent news articles from Hong Kong and China as readings to highlight current local issues. These multi-dimensional efforts at curriculum internationalization were significant in expanding participants' exposure to globalized settings.

Balancing theory and praxis. This program aimed to balance theory and praxis by arranging numerous in-depth school visits, during which time students were required to serve as researchers and sometimes teachers, individually and collaboratively. These opportunities to apply and test theoretical constructs in real contexts were a valuable dimension of the learning process. By engaging in realistic research and teaching practice in cross-cultural classroom settings, participants were able to obtain embodied understandings of key theoretical constructs from the course and enhance their skills of researching and teaching in cross-cultural, comparative educational settings.

Learning process facilitated by formal and informal learning opportunities. The program offered many formal opportunities, such as lectures, discussion, in-depth school visits, and mini-practicum to engage program participants. Participants agreed that the theoretically substantive course materials and readings they were provided with prior to departure, as well as their participation in seminars by faculty from Hong Kong University, enabled them to develop a rich theoretical vocabulary to draw upon in order to interpret their transformational learning experiences. However, as several participants commented, it was not only the formal learning activities, but also their informal learning that contributed greatly to their learning processes.

Three types of informal learning were mentioned by participants: (1) informal interactions with local students and teachers in various contexts; (2) self-directed learning opportunities pursued by different individuals to serve their distinctive learning needs; and (3) participation in critical learning incidents (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006). While the program only lasted two weeks, the extensive interactions and collective debriefings that occurred regularly among

faculty and the cohort members helped participants process and make sense of the phenomena that they were constantly experiencing. Some also mentioned their appreciation of the valuable experience of informally chatting with or observing school administrators, teachers, and students. According to one Latino participant, Eric,

The conversations and interactions that we had at each of the schools was something that I will never forget, specifically how generous our hosts were in allowing us access to their classrooms and spaces and the warmth and generosity that they received us.

Levine, a White female graduate student, described her learning, not just in classrooms, but in other unexpected places:

[These] experiences took place in the time spent outside of our daily routine. Spending time in the markets, downtown, discussions with fellow students, sitting and catching up to our readings at cafes, interacting with people visiting and living there... this is where we saw the migrant workers, the tourists, the investors, the community, students, etc.

Like Levine, Jeff, an Asian American male elementary school teacher, described how his conversations with teachers from Guangzhou were "...informal but so real. Those candid conversations left a far greater impression than all the 'happy happy propaganda' combined."

Finally, many participants highlighted their attendance at the annual Tiananmen Square Memorial held in Hong Kong's largest park on June 4th as an added informal learning experience. The ceremony was not a mandatory part of the program, but was suggested by a Hong Kong University colleague, and many local students encouraged our students to attend. This public event, demonstrating a local community's passion for social justice and human rights, unintentionally became one of the program's most empowering informal learning experiences.

To sum up, this transnational education program, with its internationalized curriculum, multiple teaching sites, balanced focus on theory and praxis, plus its unexpected informal learning opportunities, represented a blended set of activities that all contributed to the development of reflective teacher researchers and educators, who, it is hoped, can effectively prepare a culturally diverse student population to respond to an increasingly globalized world. The faculty sought to maintain a careful balance between macro- and micro-analysis of teaching practices, theoretical constructs and praxis, and "domestic multiculturalism" and "metropolitan globalization." Many of our participants became deeply aware of the significance of preparing their own students for economic opportunities on a global, competitive scale while they witnessed racial, linguistic and social inequalities in transnational contexts (Appadurai, 1996; Kymlicka, 2004; Levitt & Schiller, 2008; Sassen, 2008). This in turn served to further motivate participants' commitments to serving many of their own marginalized, transnational students.

Student Outcomes

Multiple approaches were used to assess students' learning outcomes as a result of participation in this program: students' research projects, instructors' field notes, as well as an instructor-developed open-ended survey focusing on analyzing students' learning processes. All of the data were used to assess the students' learning outcomes. Based on the evaluation data, faculty concluded that program participants successfully achieved multiple learning outcomes plus some unexpected ones—the accomplishment of implicit transformational learning processes.

Enhanced theoretical and embodied understandings of globalization. Participants' presentations and research projects evidenced their understandings of globalization phenomena and how they affected students in educational contexts. For example, after visiting a variety of private schools in China, numerous participants' research projects evidenced parallel analyses of commercialization and privatization of education practices as affected by globalization, in both the U.S. and China. A few participants, too, reported their research on areas that focused on shifts in language policies in Hong Kong, reflecting varying political climates in the British postcolonial period. Some participants' analyses went beyond the educational context to examine how resources, power, and privilege were redistributed as a result of globalization. One Latino student, Chris, after finishing the program, considered himself to "...better understand not only the Chinese American students I serve, but also the global context of education that affects all my students... [I have] expanded the scope of my analysis to include more issues of globalization and transnationalism in education... An Arab American student, Julia, reflected on the impact of globalization on unequal distribution of power and resources:

[S]eeing firsthand the flow of people, money, knowledge, materials, etc. that occur between China and the rest of the world was fascinating. It not only illustrated the global web of capital and power, but also decentered my own understanding of where wealth and power is situated and the position of the US in all of this.

These narratives indicate how the participants' theoretical and embodied understandings of the implications of globalization on people's lived experiences were enhanced.

Improved teaching and research skills in the cross-cultural contexts. Participants demonstrated improved teaching and research skills through the curriculum components that focused on Hong Kong. Their opinions were articulated in discussions following school visits, and in their presentation of the research projects at the end of the program. Some participants described specifically how the program sensitized them to cultural influences on teaching and learning and thus enhanced their capacities to conduct research and teaching in cross-cultural contexts. Eric,

a Latino student, said that he would be interested in teaching overseas after the program: “I [also] feel that my horizons have expanded, in regard to my perceived ability to work within an educational environment outside of the United States.” A Chinese American female teacher, Renee, described how she came to realize her own teaching style was actually culturally grounded, and therefore might not be well understood by her students who had different cultural backgrounds:

Now I understand why I have the philosophies and expectations that I do and why I often feel like I was swimming against the tide in my attempt to establish the culture and norms needed for my style of teaching in the classroom... I have also learned how much [influence] important cultural beliefs, traditional philosophies etc. have on teaching and learning.

While some students’ cultural awareness was sensitized, others began to consider pedagogies observed in Hong Kong and Guangzhou as useful educational models that could be applied to their own teaching. One Arab American male educator, Joey, discussed how the group-based instruction activities he observed in Hong Kong and China helped him in his own teaching: “The opportunity to see different teaching techniques in China allowed me to understand more about my abilities as a teacher. I now understand the strengths I possess in working with children.” Betty, an American-born Asian educator, noted that her observations in Chinese classrooms helped her decenter “Western individualistic values” and appreciate the respect Chinese teachers enjoyed in the classrooms.

Prior to this course, although I appreciated group projects, I was accustomed to individualistic learning. In other words, I was more focused on learning on my own and not seeking the assistance of others. Through observing the classes in Hong Kong and China, I learned that group work and collectivism in the classroom were both valued and useful. Observing as well as speaking to some students taught me that they took pride in learning together and figuring out the problem together.

In sum, participants’ narratives, mini-teaching demonstrations, presentations, and their final research projects reflected their heightened awareness of culturally informed pedagogies and research. As a result, many participants appeared to be better prepared to conduct research and to work with students in cross-cultural contexts after finishing the program.

Transformational Learning as Unexpected Student Outcomes

In addition to the expected student learning outcomes, a majority of program participants reported in program evaluations and research projects, or verbally expressed to faculty members, that they had gone through “transformations”, “paradigm shifts,” or “life-changing experiences” as a result of the program. Others reported that they had developed “a fresh perspective” or learned to “lean into

discomfort,” which in turn led to more self-reflection. One student in particular, Chris, a Latino who worked at a community-based organization, described a process of transformational learning: “This course helped me to step outside of myself and view myself and the world through the lens of another culture. I had to examine my beliefs and prejudices, and [I was] not sure to what extent those beliefs and prejudices changed...” Specifically, “I describe my own transformational learning as a process which involves taking in new information to challenge already held beliefs, assumptions, or practices. This course began a new transformational process in me which is still ongoing.” The process he described appeared to have a life-changing nature, as described by multiple transformational learning theorists (Lee, Hemphill, & Perea, 2009).

According to Mezirow (2000), the process of transformational learning is one of the most well researched areas within the field of adult education in recent decades. Mezirow defines transformational learning as a process by which individuals critically challenge their own perspectives to allow for “more inclusive, discriminating, [and] open perspectives to emerge and to guide revised behaviors and actions” (2000, p. 8). Lived experience, critical reflection, and adult development are considered common conceptions underlying *all* kinds of transformational learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006).

In addition to theoretical dimensions, transformational learning research also focuses on strategies adult educators can apply in their classrooms to facilitate the process of transformational learning (Cranton, 2002). Strategies recommended to enhance various phases of transformational learning have included materials representing multiple perspectives, critical incidents, critical debate, reflective journals, and support groups (Cranton, 2002). Although our program did not intentionally seek transformational learning outcomes, various learning activities used in the program, including the literature representing multiple perspectives, critical discussion and debriefing among the faculty and participants, in-depth visits to various kinds of schools, and extensive exposure to Chinese culture in highly globalized cities seems to have precipitated unexpected transformational learning opportunities for participants. Student narratives regarding unexpected learning outcomes are particularly pertinent in two areas: transformational learning that occurred in the area of professional development, and in the area of deepened commitment to social justice.

Transformational learning in the area of professional development. Many participants noted how the program either opened their eyes to different ways of defining teaching and learning or even altered their career development direction completely. For example, a White female teacher, Patti, described herself to “have gone through a process of transformational learning in the form that my eyes are open to newer ways of teaching... [they] have changed my conception of what education is and what education should be.” Three participants in the program have challenged themselves to the extent that they charted out completely different career

paths after finishing the program. One White female participant, Levine, decided to change the topic of her MA thesis to focus on a critical analysis of globalization in education. Sherry and Chris, two students of colour, completely shifted their original career plans and applied to the Ph.D. programs at universities in Hong Kong instead. They were both accepted at these programs, though they would not even have considered the programs accessible or feasible for them before their participation in this program. Not only did they change their career paths, but they also altered their personal life trajectories. To that end, this program reshaped their perspectives for seeing the world, and it expanded their horizons for envisioning new opportunities in their future professional career trajectories.

Transformational learning in the area of deepened commitment to social justice. Many participants articulated deepened commitment to social justice in globalized contexts after they came to realize parallels between the struggles experienced by marginalized communities in the U.S. and Asia. A middle-class Asian American teacher, Jeff, spoke of his observations in Hong Kong and China:

Prior to this trip, I was able to notice inequities and cultural capital being used in ways that perpetuated various levels of hegemony. Race, class, ability, gender, [sexual] orientation, etc. all played a part. Seeing these inequities in Asia allowed me to step back from experiences in the U.S. and catch a glimpse from an outsider's point of view. At the end of the day, there were many differences, but I think the idea of 'global commonalities' really stood out.

Echoing Jeff's words, Levine summarized her observations in Southeastern China: "It showed how much similar global poverty is across the board and how marginalized people face similar struggles and experiences across borders and continents."

During the program, some participants began to reflect on how their identities (racial and cultural) and lived experience shaped the process of how they made sense of their learning experience (Lee, 1999; Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). This, in turn, helped to reaffirm their commitment to social justice education. Ken, an African American male educator working at a community-based organization, shared how his witnessing of familiar struggles among marginalized people in China motivated him to better serve his own marginalized students:

I was able to see firsthand that China is dealing with similar social justice issues as the US. It also reminded me of what it means to be a minority by observing the phenomenon in a different context. I think it reminds me of how important it is to [be] culturally aware and responsive to improve outcomes for all students.

Eric, a Latino student, articulated how the similar struggles experienced by marginalized schools in Hong Kong and U.S. have deepened his commitment to working towards social justice:

I think that visiting and interacting with the staffs and students at these Band 3 [lowest track] schools grabbed me personally and served as a means of realization that other parts of the world are going through similar experiences... [p]articipation in this program has reinforced my belief of the existence of a global educational community with foundations in equality and social justice.

Another example was voiced by Kattie, a Latina participant, who shared her own experience of baby-sitting White children in New York City when she observed White and Chinese children in the wealthy parts of Hong Kong being cared for by darker-skinned nannies from the Philippines and Indonesia. Reflecting on her own racial identity and lived experience, Kattie made sense of her experience, while also helping her cohort contextualize and analyze issues of transnational labor, rendered by globalization. It was her racial identity and lived experience, through collective critical reflection and discourse, which challenged everyone in her group to recognize patterns of globalized migrant labor.

Generally speaking, student research projects, faculty field notes, and student narratives during group debriefing and surveys evidenced participants' achievement of expected and unexpected learning outcomes. To a large extent, the program aided participants' acquisition of taught theories, and enhanced their teaching and research skills in cross-cultural areas. The program also began to facilitate the process of transformational learning for a number of participants. Moreover, students' powerful narratives demonstrate their critiques and deepened awareness of globalized marginalization and poverty in both China and the U.S. This study abroad program ultimately resulted in changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes, thereby modeling a holistic learning process.

REFLECTIONS AND CHALLENGES

It has been five years since the faculty and staff team of San Francisco State University pioneered the first two-week transnational, study-abroad program for the cohort of 15 participants. Three more cohorts participated in the program since that time. Although the program received consistently positive evaluations from participants, the team continued to improve the curriculum and program design based on collective reflections following each trip and suggestions by prior participants. Highlighted below are those reflections after offering the course for four cohorts of program participants.

The Importance of Developing Long-Term Partnerships with Higher Education Institutions Overseas

One of the most essential elements that made the program a success is the long-term, collaborative partnership that the College developed with the two hosting institutions, Hong Kong University and South China Normal University. The relationship

with these two hosting institutions enabled the program to access networks of relationships, opportunities, and resources that only locally grounded institutions could have developed. Without their support, accommodation, co-ordination, and management, the program would never have been successful, or even possible.

What is particularly worth noting is the nature of the long-term relationships with the involved Colleges. The leaders of the College carefully nurtured a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship over a number of years prior to the launch of the program. While all of the three involved institutions are universities, all universities, especially those situated in different socio-political contexts, have their own distinctive bureaucratic processes, organizational cultures, and regulations. Also culturally grounded, each institution operates based upon taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. This presents additional layers of potential misunderstandings and ambiguities to the already-existing complexities, which could potentially have undermined the efforts at program building. The long-term, well-cultivated relationship valued by all involved institutions rendered the extensive communications, coordination, and collaboration much less challenging, and as a result, the program development process went much more smoothly.

The Significance of Conducting Ongoing Evaluations of the Program

As suggested by all curriculum and program development theorists, faculty and staff responsible, this program maintained ongoing evaluation efforts to collect data for the purpose of continuous curricular improvement. For each program cohort, different types of evaluation were implemented. Initially, needs assessment questions were included in the application forms so that program faculty could develop an initial understanding of the applicants' motivations and goals for participating in the program. Two hosting institutions were contracted to provide programmatic services; their responsibilities included selecting local experts as speakers, identifying appropriate schools for in-depth visits, and providing lodging and transportation service. Each institution also designed an evaluation survey to solicit students' input and feedback for logistical improvement. Third, the fact that this program was offered as a credit-bearing graduate seminar during the university summer session also meant that a regular, end-of-semester, course evaluation was disseminated to assess students' satisfaction with the course. Finally, an additional faculty-developed, open-ended evaluation instrument was distributed to the student cohorts to solicit their reflections, especially on their overseas learning experience. Informal conversations with the students, post-visit debriefings, and discussion among faculty, students, and staff added further valuable insights to improve program quality.

Unlike developing regular courses offered on campus, the team of faculty and staff implementing this program had to go beyond academic considerations in order to make decisions on various logistic issues, which, in turn, may have indirectly affected student learning. For example, how were we to accommodate

vegetarians during the trip? Would it be feasible to have two school visits in one day in Guangzhou, when the temperature there is at least 20 to 30 degrees higher than San Francisco; how would the heat affect people? How should we clearly communicate with our host institutions so they would identify a range of different schools for visit, and not just the “best” ones? At times, we had to make decisions without much information available; at other times, we learned from our mistakes. Nonetheless, we relied a great deal on informal input and data gathered through formal evaluations. Based on the results of numerous evaluations, the curriculum of the program was continually revised multiple times to better meet the needs of the participants.

The Importance of Program Sustainability

As stated previously, the team of faculty and staff implemented this program for four cohorts of 15 students each over a period of six years. There were a number of students in each cohort who commented that the program was one of the most inspirational courses that they took during their entire higher education experience. While many students may have perceived great benefits from participation, other graduate students, teaching credential candidates, or new K-12 teachers may also have regarded the program as unaffordable and thus might have hesitated to apply—despite all efforts to keep course fees as reasonable as possible. As faculty members grounded in research on equity and justice, we are clearly aware of the opportunity gap between the haves and the have-nots, even in the context of higher education. Particularly after the financial crisis in 2008, many school districts reduced or completely eliminated funds for teacher professional development. In response to this, and in order to benefit more participants, the leadership of the College successfully raised funds to support the first two cohorts of participants. This financial support represented an effort to expand professional development opportunities for local educators. It has become more necessary than ever to prepare educators to understand the implications of globalization to better serve the needs of their transnational students, given the financial situations of local educational agencies. Moreover, this effort symbolizes a strong commitment from the College to bridging the gap between the have and have-nots, which may well include many of our students and young educators.

Two particularly influential factors served to make the program possible: one was strong commitment from College leadership and the involved faculty, and the other was ongoing funding to support international education initiatives. To develop a program such as this takes a great deal of time, resources, administrative support, and leadership devotion. Without such commitment, support, and resources, a program like this might never have existed. Continuing to offer it in a shifting administrative, policy, and resource environment will present a continuing challenge for faculty.

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