

FINAL PROJECT REPORT
Teaching Scholar Fellowship Program
Summer 2008

**A Cross-Cultural Instructional Redesign Project with
Northern International University, Magadan, Russian Federation:
Incorporating Guided Inquiry Learning and On-line Teaching Strategies in
EEC 227 Early Learning and Development**

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Brief Description of the Project

This project provided research and writing time to re-design EEC 227 Early Learning and Development in order to incorporate:

- (a) cross-cultural instructional strategies;
- (b) on-line teaching strategies; and
- (c) process-oriented guided inquiry learning (POGIL).

This year, the MSU College of Education implemented a signed agreement with North-Eastern State University (NESU) (formerly Northern International University), Magadan, Russian Federation. The agreement called for “a program of mutual training of students in Pedagogy and Teacher Education through sharing teaching and methodological materials; developing joint or cooperative curricula in Kindergarten Pedagogics and Early Childhood Psychology.”

Faculty members agreed that an introductory course would be a place to start developing cooperative materials for instruction at each institution. On-line instruction in both Russian and English would facilitate designing and sharing these materials between institutions. Process-oriented guided inquiry learning would facilitate critical thinking about the assumptions and content of these materials between institutions.

Timetable

Week 1 (Week of May 19) Attended workshop, “Designing Courses for Significant Learning,” Dee Fink and Associates, Chicago, Illinois.

Week 2 (Week of May 26) Supervised second translation of ACEI’s Global Guidelines into Russian language; researched and wrote course elements related to POGIL

Week 3 (Week of June 2) Prepared course outline and draft materials for presentation at conferences in Russian Federation; traveled to Russian Federation

Week 4 (Week of June 9) Attended and presented at Pedagogical Conference, North-Eastern State University, Magadan, Russian Federation; piloted course elements with Russian faculty and student colleagues

Week 5 (Week of June 16) Attended and presented at 2008 World Conference of Association for Childhood Education International, Moscow, Russian Federation

Week 6 (Week of June 23) Taught EEC 227 online as a pilot course during summer session; researched and wrote course elements related to Russian theorists

Week 7 (Week of June 30) Taught EEC 227 online as a pilot course during summer session; researched and wrote course elements related to on-line instruction

Week 8 (Week of July 7) Collected impact assessment data from colleagues and students

Week 9 (Week of July 14) Wrote impact assessment report

Week 10 (Week of July 21) Wrote final versions of course elements and project report

Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

EEC 227 is a new course, taught for the first time during Spring semester 2008, in the College of Education. The course is part of a re-designed academic major in Early Childhood Education.

EEC 227 introduces developmental theorists who have impacted early childhood education and explores child growth and development from prenatal through age eight years. Among these developmental theorists are persons in the Russian Federation and other former Soviet Republics (e.g., Lev Vygotsky), about whom American educators know very little. Additional faculty research on-site in the Russian Federation, as well as research and writing time, incorporated knowledge and experience about a wider variety of theorists. Personal connections with Russian faculty members enhanced the cultural appropriateness of the interpretation of Russian theorists.

The project incorporated process-oriented guided inquiry learning (POGIL), an increasingly-popular approach at MSU and a completely new idea for faculty members at NESU. Faculty members wanted to incorporate POGIL in order to consciously and intentionally analyze and evaluate thinking (in this case about early childhood education) with a view to improving the thinking (and therefore teaching and learning) of pre-service teachers in teacher education programs.

Enhancement of Scholarship

This proposed project included additions to the Global Guidelines project, established by the Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI, 2007), in order to compare and contrast the impact on early education practices by major theorists in early childhood education in the US and in the Russian Federation.

The faculty member implementing this project established a research and scholarship agenda that includes development and evaluation of approaches to early childhood education and teacher

education in Minnesota and in the Russian Federation. During 2007-2008, the faculty member wrote a chapter in a book about curriculum development around the world, as well as two journal articles about the impact of international education on pre-service teacher education.

Relationship to Professional Development Plan

The faculty member who implemented this project had elements in her Professional Development Plan that called for

- a. participating in the POGIL Community of Practice at MSU (related to Criteria 1, 2, & 3);
- b. enhancing cooperative projects with NESU in Magadan, Russian Federation (related to Criteria 1, 2, 3, & 4); and
- c. continuing scholarship related to ACEI's Global Guidelines, early childhood education, and teacher preparation (related to Criteria 1 & 2).

Human Subjects

The human subjects involved in this project were students who participate in the summer pilot version of the course, EEC 227. The faculty member completed application to the MSU IRB related to Global Guidelines Assessment and the Teaching Philosophies project.

Project Activities

The following activities were included in the project:

1. Attendance at "Designing Courses for Significant Learning," Dee Fink and Associates, Chicago, IL.
2. Attendance at "Early Education in Russia and the USA" at North-Eastern State University in Magadan, Russian Federation
3. Attendance at 2008 World Conference for the Association for Childhood Education International, Moscow, Russian Federation
4. Revised course syllabus for EEC 227
5. Revised teaching module about Lev Vygotsky in with POGIL approach
6. Preparation for conference presentations, articles, and data collection and analysis across cultures with Global Guidelines Assessment (including translating into Russian: application to IRB, GGA instrument, GGA presentation, and GGA article)
7. Preparation for conference presentations, articles, and data collection and analysis across cultures with Q-sort Teaching Philosophies (including translation into Russian: application to IRB, Q-sort instrument, Teaching Philosophies article)
8. Preparation for conference presentations and articles related to Institutional Review Board protocols for research with human subjects (including translating into Russian: IRB presentation and IRB article)
9. Impact Assessment Report based on responses from three Russian-speaking teachers or faculty members and three English-speaking teachers or faculty members



Participants in the 2008 World Conference of the Association for Childhood Education International, Moscow, Russian Federation

Project Work Products

- (a) Revised course syllabus
- (b) Revised POGIL-related module for Lev Vygotsky
- (c) Project Impact Assessment Report
- (d) MSU IRB application related to Global Guidelines Assessment
- (e) Global Guidelines Assessment and related materials translated into Russian language
- (f) Presentation about Global Guidelines Assessment at conferences in Russian Federation
- (g) Article about Global Guidelines Assessment for conference proceedings
- (h) MSU IRB application related to the Philosophies of Teaching project
- (i) Article about Philosophies of Teaching for conference proceedings
- (j) Presentation about Institutional Review Board at conferences in Russian Federation
- (k) Article about Institutional Review Board for conference proceedings

Project Impact Assessment

For the impact report, six persons were invited to comment specifically about the Vygotsky module, as well as on the course material and approach in general. Responses were received from four of the six persons. This impact report presents the specific responses according to the five questions that were posed to the respondents. Representative responses are included here:

1. Do the materials provide instructional strategies that help students of Russian cultures and students of North American cultures to understand Vygotsky's theories as they are presented?

"In terms of understanding Vygotsky, the double experience of (1) working with a dilemma from his perspective (the workshop/homework task) and (2) working as a small team to illustrate the benefit of interaction will make this theory real for students."

2. Do the D2L materials provide appropriate on-line teaching strategies?

“The course is definitely in the upper echelon of what an active learning course would be. The students would be unable to pass the class unless they were actively engaged in their own learning. This is evidenced in the assignments you have provided (e.g. Observations of 4 Children and Reflection Paper).”

3. Do the materials about Vygotsky incorporate appropriate process-oriented guided inquiry learning (POGIL) strategies?

“POGIL seems to fit perfectly with this theorist. The homework tasks and other prompts really require high level thinking that would be in students ZPD...provides a challenge. Vygotsky would be proud. I'm interested to know how this worked and if you were able to stick to the time frames provided.”

4. What barriers do you see for teaching this material in collaboration with colleagues in Magadan, Russian Federation?

“How much group work and use of abstract prompts is currently done? Is this a stretch for them or will it be familiar? I think even if this is new, you have provided such detail in the process that the structure would ensure success.”

Lessons Learned About International Collaboration in Teaching and Scholarship

1. Time is needed for colleagues to get acquainted personally and professionally, as well as for colleagues to learn about initial teacher preparation programs in each region. Get acquainted with the other academic culture, operational practices, salary and resource inequities, related agencies, and project sustainability. The getting acquainted is part of establishing common ground for collaborative teaching and research projects and also part of finding and understanding resources available in each region.

2. Internet accessibility is uneven around the world. For example, MSU has a wireless environment in which every professor has a computer in their own office, in which nearly every students had access to their own computer, and in which every classroom has media available. At NESU, thousands of students must share a lab with 20 computers and the dean is the only faculty member in education who has a desk computer and internet access.

3. Vocabulary translates in interesting ways between languages. For example, the word, “discipline,” in Minnesota means something like “behavior guidance,” while in Magadan, it means something similar to “corporal punishment.” The word, “kindergarten,” in Magadan means all sorts of educational programs for children between birth and age five years. In Minnesota, “kindergarten” generally refers to a specific type of educational program for children who are five year olds.

4. Research and scholarship mean different things between the regions. In Minnesota, research involves understanding and citing prior literature. It includes designing research in valid and

reliable ways and contributing one's own curiosity and intellectual property to the field. In Magadan, research involves quoting prior research and literature, without citations. One's professor is assumed to know the prior research and it would be insulting to the professor's knowledge and stature for the student to cite the sources.

5. Rights of human subjects and ethics in research are considered differently between the regions. In Minnesota, professors and students alike are expected to follow the protocols related to protecting the rights of human subjects in research. Human subjects are presumed to have the right to volunteer or to decline to participate in research. Researchers are expected to do everything possible to reduce the risks of research for human subjects. In Magadan, there are no protective protocols. In fact, research data (including names of subjects) is required to be available for review by the Federal Minister of Education. Practices related to confidentiality, risk management, and informed consent are foreign to the Russian academics.

If a study is to be conducted outside of the United States, add to the IRB protocols: 1) Approval for the proposed research from the University IRB; 2) Letter of approval from an appropriate local or national official in the other country; 3) Collect contact information to include the name, agency or institutional affiliation of the contact, email, telephone and/or other means to reach the contact person; 4) Demonstrate an awareness of the distinctive qualities of the local area of the collaborating university; 5) Assess risks that may arise from the political and social condition of the nation; 6) Describe how contact will be maintained with the MSU IRB and faculty adviser while abroad.

6. Critical thinking is used differently between the regions. In Magadan, critical thinking is for the teachers or professors to use when evaluating work of students. Students are expected to find the correct answers, which the professors will evaluate. In Minnesota, critical thinking is for students to use in evaluating or pondering ideas. There may be alternate answers and/or students may be expected to discover the answers for themselves.

7. Individual effort or intellectual integrity is viewed differently between the regions. In Magadan, students try to find the correct answer and share the answers among their peers. "Cheating" is not considered to be a fault; it is a way of being a good group member. "Gifting" to authorities for good grades or advancement is a common way of doing business. In Minnesota, students are penalized if they do not present their own work or if they do not give credit to the sources of ideas that they use in their work.

Lessons Learned About Collaborative On-line Teaching and Learning

1. "Guests" may be added to D2L so that colleagues in other regions may have access to the course material.

2. Software needs to be reviewed carefully for compatibility with a variety of student settings. For example, I used Windows Vista occasionally to create materials. When uploaded, many students had trouble accessing the documents with older software and operating systems.

3. Connectivity in Magadan is slow-speed and undependable. (See earlier comments). Alternative connections need to be explored (e.g., phone, fax, Skype, email) in addition to on-line web sites.

Future Activities

1. Work with Russian colleagues to create introductory and explanatory material (such as the News, Glossary, Groups, and Discussion boards) for D2L so others who encounter it for the first time are not confused by the format (in English).
2. Get a good translator who understands the nuances of the professional field involved in the collaboration. Translate English materials into Russian.
3. Develop and improve material to foster group work through the on-line platform.
4. Develop and improve material to incorporate POGIL principles and activities throughout the course.
5. Create materials from the Russian viewpoint and translate into English.
6. Have the course reviewed by the on-line practitioners through the College of Extended Learning.