

International student practice teaching partnership program in Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand with St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoor City, Philippines in the formation of Global Educators Beyond Borders

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Abstract – *The International Student Teachers Practice Partnership Program for the Formation of Global Educators Beyond Borders, a program by the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI), has been active since 2011. The WCCI is an NGO of the United Nations and is in a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is a transnational educational organization committed to achieving a just and peaceful world community through collaboration in curriculum and instruction projects, dialogue on educational and social issues of a global nature, and the promotion of person-to-person contact and professional networking. This paper describes the International Practice Teaching Partnership Program between St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoor City, Philippines and Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand on November 20 to December 20, 2013. After the experiences of the student teachers in the program, the following recommendations were made: provide a one-week Thai Language crash program so the Filipino student teachers could have better connectivity with Thai students and teachers, expose the student teachers more to the Thai students' co-curricular programs and activities in order to share their Filipino culture, talents, and abilities, reinforce the continuity of this partnership program between the two schools, share the impact of this international partnership during the WCCI International Conference in San Diego, California, USA, and replicate this kind of international partnership in other countries too. This qualitative research program has been presented during the WCCI 16th World Conference, held in the Town and Country Convention Hotel, San Diego, California, USA on August 17 to 24, 2014. It was also presented during the WCCI Philippines 32nd National Conference at Bayview Park Hotel, Manila, Philippines on February 4-7, 2015, and to be delivered again during the WCCI Regional Convention in Butuan City on May 23, 2015 by Dr. Teresita Paed- Pedrajas.*

Keywords – *Student practice teaching, partnership, WCCI, student teacher.*

The International Student Teachers Practice Partnership Program for the Formation of Global Educators Beyond Borders, a program by the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI), has been active since 2011. On February 3 to March 3, 2011, the program's first event was held between the National Kaohsiung Normal University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, and Global City Innovative College, Philippines. The second event was held on March 2 to April 3, 2012 between Global City Innovative College, Philippines and Alliant International University in San Diego, California, USA. On November 20 to December 20, 2013, the third event was held between Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand and St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoor City, Philippines, and on February 3 to March 3, 2014, the fourth event was held between Alliant International University in San Diego, California, USA, and Miriam College in Quezon City, Philippines.

The international practice teaching program allows educators from all over to learn more about the life, history, culture, traditions, beliefs, practices, customs, and characteristics of people from foreign countries. Through this program, they can acquire a broader world view, richer knowledge,

appreciation, and respect for other cultures, plus acceptance of similarities and differences between themselves as claimed by Deza (2014).

The current researcher wishes to reiterate the importance of assisting the social relationships of teachers. Hudson (2013) found that experienced mentor teachers desired specific mentee attributes such as having an enthusiasm for teaching and being personable for relationship building not just with the mentor but also with students, staff, and parents. Also, the mentee must display commitment to children and their learning, be a life-long learner his/herself, have an ability to reflect on constructive feedback, have resilience, and can take responsibility for their own learning (Gu & Day, 2012; Howard & Johnson, 2004).

The International Practice Teaching Partnership includes opportunities for beginning professional educators to acquire and demonstrate instructional competence. This student teaching experience has been carefully designed to be as realistic and intensive as actual teaching. In a student teacher's full-time classroom experience, the student is placed in an area of specialization where he/she is regularly supervised by the teacher of the classroom the student is placed in and a licensed teacher who specializes in the student teacher's field. In the Philippines, it is a semester-long course, but the Partnership is actually an enrichment program for the student teachers concerned. It will enrich the student teacher's personality traits such as readiness, openness, acceptance, strategy, and versatility in working with foreign teachers, learners, parents, and curriculums. This is in addition to exposure and management of challenges, concerns, and issues in the context of a new culture and a different atmosphere. This program aims to make student teachers confident enough to be at peace with their selves and be in harmony with others as a global citizen meeting foreign teachers, learners, school administrators, parents, and other community stakeholders.

The WCCI is an NGO of the United Nations and is in a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is a transnational educational organization committed to achieving a just and peaceful world community through collaboration in curriculum and instruction projects, dialogue on educational and social issues of a global nature, and the promotion of person-to-person contact and professional networking. Meanwhile, the International Practice Teaching Partnership Program aims to assist in the formation of global educators. This is very beneficial to both Filipino student teachers and the foreign cooperating teachers, administrators, learners, parents, and other school stakeholders as proven in the National Kaohsiung Normal University of Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 2011, and the Alliant International University of San Diego, California, USA in 2012 to 2014.

This paper describes the International Practice Teaching Partnership Program between St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoar City, Philippines and Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand on November 20 to December 20, 2013.

This paper involves three SDCA student teachers and one student teacher from another school:

1. Angela Camille Vizconde, Bachelor in Science in Elementary Education, major in Special Education.
2. Gloria Mae Jordan, Bachelor of Science in Secondary, major in English.
3. Joanne Gonzales, Bachelor in Science in Secondary Education, major in English.

Meanwhile, Catherine Aguilar is taking up a Bachelor in Science in Secondary Education, major in English course in the University of Perpetual Help System in Calamba, Laguna. All four student teachers were deployed for a month of practice teaching in Bangkok, Thailand.

Procedures

- a) The Dean of SDCA's School of Arts, Sciences, and Education (SASE) submitted a copy of the WCCI's International Practice Teaching Program proposal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research, the Director of Quality Assurance, and to SDCA's President for official approval. The copy was received for implementation.
- b) The SASE Dean submitted a format of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Maepra Fatima School in Bangkok, Thailand to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President for approval.
- c) The Dean started communication with Maepra Fatima School of Bangkok, Thailand's Licensed Manager Fr. Alexis Surachia through the WCCI's Maepra Fatima School Coordinator Sr. Josephine Taban-Ud, OP, in May, 2013. The agreement's rationale, objectives, and all the processes to be done by both institutions were discussed.
- d) An acceptance of the proposal and the confirmation of the Memorandum of Agreement was received from Maepra Fatima School.
- e) In preparation for the one month internship program of the four Filipino student teachers, a safe, economical dormitory or hostel for the students to stay near the school had to be found. The students were to be given a city map, time schedule of English classes, grade levels they were supposed to handle, copies of evaluation sheets and daily outfits. Also, instructional materials, lesson plan formats, schedule of activities during weekends such as exposure to religious, cultural, and educational spots, etc. were identified and confirmed.
- f) A conference with the student teachers and their parents was conducted regarding the whole program, the MOA, the location of the school, the hostel the student teachers would be staying in, and logistical aspects such as schedules of classes, security, contract, insurance policy, application of passports, application of visa, and schedule of payments.
- g) Submission of documents for Thailand's acceptance took place prior to the application for visas, which included the procurement of parents' consent, complete addresses, contact numbers, and email addresses.
- h) A preparation review was undertaken to review the student teachers' attitudes, habits, behavior, and perspectives of the whole International Student Practice Teaching Program. The program's objectives, the roles of teachers, knowledge of theories, teaching methods, learning approaches, assessment of instruments, writing of reports, and preparation of portfolios were discussed. Other miscellaneous functions were also discussed such as personal matters like finance, health concerns, laundry, choice of nutritious meals, sleeping habits, and the bringing of personal belongings such as medicine, laptops, cellphones, chargers, ATM cards, etc.
- i) Sr. Josephine Taban-Ud, OP, prepared all necessary documents, coordinated every detail of classroom activities with the Thai cooperative English teachers concerned, and secured

assistance from all the class advisers as well as service personnel from the schools canteen, vehicle personnel, rooms, etc.

- j) Personal Oaths to be a Model of Good Teacher Abroad were submitted.
- k) Final preparation for departure included the procurement of passport, visa, luggage, and trip ticket. Also a positive attitude for a purposive educational and cultural trip was cultivated in the student teachers. .

The four Filipino student teachers were accompanied by Hon. Rosalinda V. Tirona, SDCA International Relations Consultant, Former Ambassador and Extraordinary Plenipotentiary Officer to Asian and African countries, and Dr. Teresita Paed-Pedrajas, the International WCCI President and Dean of the School of Arts, Sciences, and Education. They were welcomed at the airport by the administrators of Maepra Fatima School, led by Sr. Joy Taban-ud, OP. The student teachers and their companions were given garlands of Thailand's national flowers, and were then taken to a restaurant to taste Thai cuisine. The group then went to the hotel where the student teachers were to reside during the whole period. Later that day, an official visit to the Ambassador of the Philippines to Thailand, Hon. Jocelyn Garcia took place with a formal introduction and orientation of life in Thailand.

The next day, the group was taken to the Maepra Fatima School where a general assembly was convened to welcome the Filipino group. All of the school's faculty members, students, and administrators were there to give a gleeful welcome. A campus tour followed which ended with a formal meeting with the school administrators, before a small group of English faculty advisers and teachers were personally introduced to the student teachers with corresponding instructional kits. The next day, Fr. Alexis Surachai, the Parish Priest and School Licensed Manager, and Fr. Don Bosco Suchat Udomsittipallana, the Director and School Principal hosted another welcome lunch to the Filipino group along with their Thai counterparts. The Filipino group easily caught the sincerity and family spirit of the Maepra Fatima School community.

The student teachers were heartily met by the whole Maepra Fatima School Community during their daily reporting, and were exposed to both the routine of Thai teachers teaching English subjects to students in Kindergarten and Grades 4-6, along with methods and approaches in teaching-learning experiences with Thai students in the classrooms. It describes how the student teachers and Thai teachers established very harmonious interpersonal professional relationships and expanded their horizons to understand and to challenge the Thai students in learning the English language. Barbre and Buckner (2013) postulated that teachers who are proficient and effective in their art (for that is what teaching truly is) realize the value of feedback.

The Filipino student teachers were able to demonstrate how to relate with individual Thai students, Thai students as a class, Thai cooperating teachers, Thai subject coordinators, and Thai class advisers in varied situations, be it in planning their lessons, preparing their instructional materials, using media-related visuals, choosing instructional methods and approaches, correction of students' work, post conferences, and final demonstration lessons before the Thai school administrators. These teaching particulars are true as Stairs (2007) referred to improving teaching by being culturally responsive. The particular needs of an urban English class required that teachers renegotiate many aspects of their methods, including teaching, curriculum choice, assessment, and feedback to improve the instruction. These pragmatic changes facilitate a better experience for both the teacher and the students. It is worth mentioning that Atiyat (2006) and Liu

(2007) postulated that being culturally responsive is vital as teachers may encounter students in classes who have backgrounds different from their own. The differences may be grounded in language, religion, culture, socioeconomic level, or any other aspect.

The four Filipino students had been immersed in the different facets of Thai culture in terms of their Buddhist beliefs (patterns of behavior in praying, listening), classroom etiquette (speaking, answering and asking questions, reading board work, standing to recite, involvement, engagement in the classrooms and co-curricular activities), daily activities (playing games, dancing Thai and Filipino dances, singing Thai and Filipino songs, reciting poems, slogans, drawing slogans), and all of their dealings with the Thai teacher counterparts and students inside and outside the classroom. The challenging and well-conceptualized program made all those involved to be future global educators.

The Thai school administrators gave all of their support and attention to the Filipino student teachers' personal needs like daily breakfasts and lunches. They looked forward to the genuine bonding with their cooperating teachers during the weekend exposures to varied educational, religious sites, historical venues, tourist spots, business spots, and attractions around Bangkok, and even a special exit trip to Cambodia. The parents of the Thai students likewise acknowledged the presence of the student teachers with hospitality in the campus and the Thai communities the school served. The Thai students and faculty members have manifested a sense of friendship and esprit de corps with the Filipino student teachers and made them feel accepted in the school community.

Memorable experiences and insights shared by the Filipino Student teachers:

1. The all-out enthusiasm and generous accommodation of Maepra Fatima School under the leadership of Fr. Alexis Surachai Kitsawat, the School Licensee Manager, Fr. John Don Bosco Suchat Udomsittipallana, the School Director and Principal, Sr. Josephine Taban-ud, the Maepra Fatima School Coordinator of this Partnership Program, as well as all of the administrators, faculty members and students who helped make the whole partnership a resounding success.
2. The scheduled meeting with the Filipino Ambassador in Thailand, Hon. Joselyn Garcia, and other officials served as an essential experience for the student teachers abroad with the accompaniment of Rosalinda C. Tirona and Dr. Teresita P. Pedrajas.
3. The student teachers became more responsible in accepting the varied roles of a teacher-researcher and a leader in the classroom in a foreign land as postulated by Atiyat (2006) and Li (2007).
4. Their harmonious exposure to the Thai students, teachers, parents, school curriculum, the Thai community, and Thai culture coupled with very colorful opening and closing ceremonies were great learning experiences for the student teachers. They also afforded the student teachers the opportunities to expand their horizons and accept the realities of being a global teacher.
5. Their improved personal and professional attitudes, skills, abilities, and talents in managing varied situations, challenges, and responsibilities in a foreign land have proven the maturity of the student teachers, and their responsibility as future global educators. This affirms Buehl and Fives' (2009) and Canning's (1995) statements.

6. The student teachers' time management planning skills were challenged to meet Thai standards in class punctuality. Breakfast was always at 6 A.M., lunch at 12:00 noon, along with the timely preparation of lesson plans, visuals, teaching approaches, assessment sessions, post conferences, activities, and reports as affirmed by Atiyat (2006) and Lui (2007).
7. The WCCI International Student Teaching Partnership Program Certificate and commendations received during their Farewell Party gave the student teachers a sense of fulfillment, while the giving of Filipino Certificates of Gratitude and tokens to the Thai administrators and cooperating teachers and the sharing of national dances by both Thais and the Filipinos concluded with a sumptuous Thai meal proved the highly professional and memorable experienced by all who were concerned, as affirmed by Pedrajas, T. P. (2011, 2012, and 2014).
8. The student teachers' reception of a Special Commendation and Certificate from the WCCI International Partnership with their parents on stage during the commencement exercises was another unforgettable experience to behold, same as in Pedrajas, T. P. (2011, 2012, and 2014).
9. The student teachers showed readiness to share their learning experiences during the National Student Chapter Conference on September 24, 2014, same as Pedrajas, T. P. (2011, 2012, and 2014).
10. The student teachers showed awareness in becoming inspirational models and progressive teachers in their future teaching milieus.
11. The student teachers' portfolios speak of the joy, happiness, and fulfillment they gained during this one month of partnership between Maepra Fatima School and St. Dominic College of Asia.
12. The expressed oral and symbolic commendations by the Thai cooperating teachers and advisers also made the student teachers feel happy and fulfilled.
13. The student teachers became more confident and were sure to stay in the teaching profession to grow personally and professionally.

Recommendations:

1. Provide a one-week Thai Language crash program so the Filipino student teachers could have better connectivity with Thai students and teachers.
2. The student teachers could be more exposed to the Thai students' co-curricular programs and activities in order to share their Filipino culture, talents, and abilities.
3. Reinforce the continuity of this partnership program between the two schools.
4. To share the impact of this international partnership during the WCCI International Conference in San Diego, California, USA.
5. This kind of international partnership can be replicated in other countries too.

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