

- *Water Margin* 水浒传 水滸傳 Shuǐ hǔ zhuàn
14th century
- *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* 三国演义 三
國演義 Sān guó yǎnyì 14th century
- *Journey to the West* 西游记 西遊記 Xī yóu jì
16th century
- *Dream of the Red Chamber* 红楼梦 紅樓夢
Hóng lóu mèng 18th century

Table 2. The Four Chinese classics of literature.

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Volunteer tourism and architecture students: What motivates and can best prepare them?

Ramsey Awad, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

Justine Chambers, University of NSW, Sydney, Australia

Julie Jupp, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

This paper explores student attitudes toward volunteering in the context of university-led building development programs, raising questions about the practice of volunteering and its contribution to community development. Focusing on students undertaking tertiary education in Western countries, this literature-based study firstly explores the perceptions and motivations behind volunteering, and

secondly discusses its developmental impact on low-income communities.

Keywords: volunteer tourism, developing communities, architecture students, pedagogical requirements.

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, travelling to volunteer has grown in popularity throughout the developed world. Within the rising volunteer tourism phenomenon,

undergraduates from the Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC) professions form a large portion of student volunteers. However this has not always been the case, particularly with architecture students, where the focus of innovation and learning is more often affixed on aesthetic qualities than on architecture's social, economic, political, or moral values. Researchers and commentators of architecture and its education have noted these shortfalls and called for change; for example, Scott-Ball (2004: 132-40) highlights:

We focus on edifice, but architecture itself is whatever percolates out of our activity as trained architects. Invitations are everywhere for us to step back out into a broad section of society, if we would show a willingness to reinvent ourselves and allow the profession to percolate once again.

Arguing for socially engaged architecture, Scott-Ball's observations strike a chord with a profession that may appear increasingly out of touch with its students. Where moral obligations are often marginalised by private sector development interests, architects have largely been uninterested in the developed world and the wider concerns of reconstruction in post-disaster settings. However, according to Charlesworth (2006), of Australia's Architects Without Frontiers (AWF), there is a relatively recent but growing trend amongst young architects to want more out of their career than financial success alone.

This research focuses on a generation of architecture students and recent graduates which is increasingly interested in volunteering in community development and emergency projects. As this is a recent trend within the architecture discipline, there is a dearth of academic material that investigates the motivations behind volunteer student architects and how best to educate and prepare them. Drawing on findings from previous research, including volunteer student studies, this paper addresses three important questions:

1. What is student volunteering and how does it relate to the concept of volunteer tourism?
2. What motivates architecture (and other) students to participate in volunteer tourism and what is its impact?
3. What are the pedagogical requirements in preparing architecture students for volunteer tourism?

2. Volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is defined as 'a direct interactive experience that causes value change and changed consciousness in the individual which will subsequently influence their lifestyle, while providing forms of community development that are required by local communities' (Wearing 2001). Such experiences may

occur within the person's home country or, more commonly, overseas; they may be in response to an emergency, either natural or man-made, or as part of a new or ongoing community development program. Over the last two decades travelling to volunteer has become an institutionalised and professionalised phenomenon across the globe. There are programs and packages that cater to all tastes, skills and interests, ranging from community development projects to construction and renovation, education and assistance with medical and dental care (Simpson 2004; Wearing 2001).

Student volunteers are a special form of volunteer tourism in that their placements are structured and supervised, their involvement is formalised and their efforts constitute part of their course work requirements. The rising phenomenon of volunteer tourism has provoked a growing interest amongst academics and policy makers. Most of the research concentrates on the positive effects on the volunteer tourist (Brown 2005; Lyons and Wearing 2008; McGehee 2005; Wearing 2001, 2004), but increasingly the literature has come to highlight the complex issues involved and the potential detrimental effects on local communities (Jones 2005; Simpson 2004, 2005).

Barkham (2006) has highlighted the detrimental effects, citing Judith Brodie, Director of the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and her argument that the majority of international volunteer programs are merely another form of colonialism. Criticising the emphasis by organisations on the enjoyment and personal fulfilment of volunteers, Brodie argues that in many cases, students travelling to developing countries risked doing more harm than good. In fact the language that is used in almost all overseas volunteer organisations focuses not on the benefits to or objectives of the community at hand, but is framed in terms of the volunteer's own personal development (Barkham 2006).

3. Motivations for volunteer tourism

Given that volunteering is often a costly exercise for students, a cost-benefit analysis would lead to questions as to why such programs are undertaken (Handy *et al.* 2000). Research suggests that placements enhance the development of the volunteer's 'soft skills' such as communication, leadership, organisational, and interpersonal competences (Astin and Sax 1998; Handy *et al.* 2009; Lyons and Wearing 2008). In the case of international projects, these experiences also provide volunteers with valuable cross-cultural knowledge (Soderman and Snead 2008). A longitudinal study of American undergraduate students conducted by Astin and Sax (1998) found that participation in voluntary work enhances academic development, life skills development, and sense of civic responsibility. Jones'

(2005) analysis of the Australian and UK 'gap year' volunteer travel industry similarly highlights the 'transformative' aspects of these experiences in terms of personal development and attainment of a 'global perspective'. Jones (2005: 14) notes: 'placements can be effective learning experiences that allow young people to develop a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of cultural difference and the issues surrounding development'. Thus, some students may engage in volunteering to improve their employment prospects by increasing their human capital.

Drawn from interviews and surveys with past Youth Challenge International (YCI) participants, Wearing (2001) identifies some of reasons that drive young people to volunteer overseas. Many participants in Wearing's study stressed altruistic motivations relating to idealistic conceptualisations of 'saving the world' and 'giving something back'. Other responses were directed more towards the excitement of travel and/or cultural exchange. The opportunity for personal growth, work related experience and professional development was also found to be a common justification for volunteering.

One quote in particular encapsulates the complexity of the decision making process regarding volunteering (cited in Wearing 2001: 70):

I think most people would be lying if they didn't say there was some selfishness in why they were going. Because it was really to benefit themselves, not just the environment and community in Santa Elena, even though it is really important. And that's one of the things I had trouble with at first. I thought that it was really selfish on my part, because I just wanted to go over and see what Costa Rica was like. Helping save a pristine rainforest in Santa Elena as well as helping the community in developing their ecotourism, which is helping save the rainforest ultimately – they were secondary things. But, as you say, when you come back, you think how you benefited a lot out of it and it was really great. When you look at the whole picture, you think well maybe we have affected this community and have possibly saved a cloudforest (Ken).

This US-based research is supported by a number of international volunteer studies that highlight similar findings (Brown 2005; Lyons and Wearing 2008; Sin 2009). The recruitment strategies of volunteer programs reflect these motivations, appealing to altruistic intentions as well as personal gain and development. There is no doubt that these experiences have a positive impact on volunteers, however the benefits for target communities may be questionable. In the absence of similar research conducted in an Australian educational

context, these studies provide some insight as to why Australian students are increasingly motivated to volunteer overseas.

4. Impacts of volunteer tourism

Critics of this booming industry purport that volunteer tourism is less about altruism than about self-fulfilment and resumé building (Perkes 2009; Simpson 2004). Simpson (2004) questions the dominant ideology of the non-skilled but enthusiastic volunteer as a quick-fix solution to problems in the developing world. Simpson argues that even structured placements have little developmental impact in low-income countries, where long-term strategies and understanding of the impact of volunteers are often missing. Many of these programs claim to provide technical assistance to developing countries, but most fail to do so, profiting instead from a generation of students seeking a more 'meaningful' travel experience.

Simpson (2004, 2005) contends that international volunteer organisations perpetuate these simplistic and essentialised notions of 'development' and the 'developing world,' rooted in binary oppositions between 'us' and 'them'. She writes that a 'geography of need' permeates the entire industry, mobilising its own distinct brand of development discourse to legitimise the validity of unskilled labour as a development solution (2004: 686). To ensure that both volunteers and the host communities benefit optimally from this new phenomenon, Simpson argues that what is required is a pedagogy for social justice, to bring critical engagement to the travel volunteer experience. There is a need to revise and develop the scope of volunteer placements and the technical skills required. This also includes being more selective in terms of matching the skill sets of volunteers with the particular needs of the community.

5. Architects as volunteers

There is increasing emphasis on the role that architects can play in meeting the skills gaps surrounding volunteer tourism for community development and assisting recovery in post-disaster communities and conflict areas (Aquilino 2011; Charlesworth 2006; Sinclair and Stohr 2006). For instance, the devastation that Hurricane Katrina wreaked on the US Mississippi coastline in 2005 provoked a flurry of ideas and goodwill from the American architecture community.

Similarly, providing the technical 'expertise' to support Japan's 2011 tsunami post-disaster damage assessment and promote the 'build back better' agenda, the UK's Article 25, a UK charity that designs, builds, and manages projects to provide better shelter wherever there is disaster, poverty, or need, quickly became a major force in Japan's relief efforts.

New York-based Architecture for Humanity has helped design mobile health clinics to combat HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as transitional housing for Kosovo's returning refugees following the Kosovo War of the late 1990s. Indeed, architects are increasingly playing an instrumental role in assisting post-disaster communities in the recovery process, by providing expertise where it has previously been absent.

6. Educating architecture student volunteers

In his seminal work *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, Ramsden (2003) argues that 'active learning', defined as instructional activities involving students doing things and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell 1991), encourages a deeper understanding of the material taught in undergraduate courses. Academics and design professionals within the architectural discipline increasingly recognise the need for implementation of active learning modules in higher education. In the context of volunteer tourism in architectural undergraduate education, active learning modules are therefore aimed at integrating technical and practical experience in community development, post-disaster risk management and reconstruction, as well as exposing students to real world issues and challenges, thus equipping students with the expertise in the implementation of an appropriate and socially engaged architecture. Such opportunities increase the capacity of architecture students by building the important 'soft skills' required in community development projects.

Founded in the wake of the 2004 Asian tsunami, Architects for Aid (A4A) sends approximately 100 skilled volunteers each year to areas affected by natural disasters. This organisation's growing portfolio of projects ranges from the restoration of Kabul's old town to the construction of a new school building in Goa, India. A4A's training program aims to promote disaster-preparedness among architects, offering a range of continuing professional development accredited courses in humanitarian architecture and hostile environment training. In doing so, they have created a registry of trained professionals ready to travel to disaster zones. One of their most notable projects was the development of prototype animal shelters in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Recognising the local people's dependence on animals to survive the winter, A4A designed small, lightweight frame structures, using readily available materials such as corrugated galvanised iron for roofing and woven grass reeds for walls.

Like A4A, the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio developed by Perkes (2009) focuses on providing architecture students with a practical and pragmatic experience, designed to meet community needs. Perkes'

organisational practice is focused on three core values: service, proximity and experience (Perkes 2009: 65). According to his philosophy, a useful architectural practice in post-disaster or conflict zones denotes not only the environmental factors that contribute to the design process, e.g. hurricane force winds, but also an understanding of community needs and their cultural beliefs. Perkes (2009) calls this form of architecture 'an alternative practice'. Working in close proximity and co-operation with local community members and organisations through what Perkes (2009: 68) sees as a 'dynamic effort of integration', local members of the community are encouraged to be part of the commitment to reconstruction. Such practice promotes a relationship with the community that extends beyond producing one-off experiences and individual expertise in reconstruction. It also includes a willingness to increase collaboration and share the design process with the community, an element that is often lacking in architectural practice. The softening of conventional professional boundaries between architect and client leaves room for a practice that works in conjunction with local community needs.

Australia's architectural training programs are yet to fully embrace this trend. They lag behind Europe and America, where many universities offer specialist training and courses to encourage graduates to participate in community development and disaster relief projects. The benefits of such programs have been particularly highlighted within Australian Engineering studies (Harding *et al.* 2009; Smith *et al.* 2010; Sotomayor and Benavente 2009). By offering active learning opportunities beyond the usual academic program, university programs have the ability to greatly enhance the educational outcomes and professional skills of undergraduate students (Harding *et al.* 2009).

Organisations such as Charlesworth's AWF have endeavoured to redefine architectural education in Australia. Influenced by her time working in war-torn Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, Esther Charlesworth notes:

It is obvious that while lawyers, doctors, engineers and many other professional and non-professional groups have all played significant roles in alleviating the chronic human and physical suffering wreaked by the alarming acceleration of urban conflict, we may still well ask: where are the architects?' (Charlesworth 2006: 159)

As an advocate for change in architectural education and practice, Charlesworth goes further than most, arguing that architects not only have a responsibility to engage in the restoration of physical infrastructure but also to participate in the peace building and

reconciliation process of post-conflict zones, particularly by promoting social and inter-ethnic co-operation (Charlesworth 2006: 135). Seeking to engage young aspiring architects in real global problems, Charlesworth encourages the formation of ethical teaching courses in universities that impart a pedagogy based on encouraging and empowering students to contribute practically to social change (Charlesworth 2006: 136). Moving beyond academic rhetoric, Charlesworth provides practical recommendations for engaging in peace building and reconstruction processes in post-conflict settings. One example of this was the introduction of pilot project models developed in the 'Melbourne University Mostar Studio' in Beirut, 2000. The primary objective of this studio was to 'provide realizable design concepts that could enhance the future reconciliation of the divided city' (Charlesworth 2006: 138). Designed to implement a small component of a larger design studio scheme,¹ students developed proposals aimed at enhancing social integration and assisting the volatile peace process in Mostar. For Charlesworth, architectural education should place an emphasis on training young aspiring architects as future mediators, peace-builders, and, eventually, educators.

When architects first arrive in an impoverished community or an area recently affected by a disaster there is no telling how the local community will react to the design, construction, or reconstruction process. Current knowledge of building technology, safe design, and construction techniques normally employed by the volunteer architects may be wholly inadequate for the post-disaster situation. Whilst only in its elementary stages, a body of knowledge is emerging around beneficial teaching and learning strategies that equip what is now an increasingly globalised student populace with the expertise in community development practices. In educating students for an engaged architecture, there are a number of key practices and philosophies that can be replicated across the globe, including strengthening: (1) respect for indigenous knowledge and needs, (2) intelligent use of local materials, (3) skills of local communities, (4) communication between the local community and volunteer students. The following section discusses these four aspects in turn.

7. Key practices and philosophies of volunteer tourism

Where traditional architecture has been based on top-down, often externally driven decision-making, university education should place an emphasis on extensive collaboration with all stakeholders, and especially the full involvement of locals to counter this deficiency. Charlesworth (2006) points out that one of the primary faults of the architecture profession is its

reluctance to work collaboratively. She suggests that in construction or reconstruction processes it is essential to look beyond the ideas of grand design to the needs and wants of the community. Design policies based on community-driven construction empower local residents with the knowledge and expertise to (re)build their houses and communities. This approach not only gives locals ownership of the process, but also helps build local skills, as people share knowledge and technology. Charlesworth (2008) writes that one of the founding principles of AWF is to empower communities, rather than just provide the bricks and mortar. Neild of Emergency Architects Australia (EAA) takes a similar position. In what Neild (2011: 50) calls a 'movement of self-sufficiency', local communities are increasingly demanding the right to take responsibility for and participate in the reconstruction process. Indeed, it is important to remember that the student volunteer phenomena is only recent, and that in the majority of the world's impoverished or disaster stricken communities, local people still (re-)build without access to outside expertise. A holistic approach to educating architects is therefore required.

A participatory framework also includes a commitment to long-term development, rather than simple emergency or short-term reconstruction. Charlesworth notes: 'We can kick start a project but unless there is local input to keep it running it can become deeply unsustainable' (cited in Sutton 2008: 12). A transfer of knowledge and information is necessary in order to help local people be independent of aid materials and loans. The most serious criticism levelled against volunteer tourism is that volunteers can sometimes destroy local economies. From this perspective, in writing about the role EAA played in the Solomon Islands following the earthquake and tsunami there in 2007, Neild (2011: 42) comments:

Our architects and their assistants remained in the background, giving the islanders the know-how to rebuild for themselves. Our low profile allowed them to think beyond the world's neglect and take pleasure in acquiring self-sufficiency.

Strengthening the skills of local and indigenous community members is therefore essential to any post-disaster reconstruction project.

Finally, in zones where catastrophic events are frequent, architects can help provide the planning, design knowledge and expertise so that those communities can become more resilient. High quality materials and Western building standards are often inappropriate, unavailable, or too costly for the affected community. In areas prone to natural disaster, it is important to 'tease out,' as Neild (2011) states, the local history of building.

¹ See (2006: 115-134) for a broader discussion of pilot projects.

In AWF's Malawi orphanage project, for example, the architectural team re-introduced the traditional use of sun-dried bricks to a community that had come to rely on kiln-dried bricks. Although it may appear to be a simple thing, the change saved an enormous amount of time and resources in the reconstruction process. In the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, the architectural organisation Uplink encouraged residents to build traditional stilt houses rather than the popular, modern landed ground-level houses (which are often fatal during an earthquake). In this case the light construction and the flexible footing would allow the stilt houses to sway freely, absorbing shocks during the earthquake. Communication between the local community and volunteer architecture students is another key element of the practices and skills development required.

8. Conclusion

Commonly associated with the privileged classes, aesthetics and elaborate forms of design, architects have traditionally paid more attention to the needs of private-sector clients than to community and global interests. More recently there has been an awakening of architects and other design professionals to a sense of their global and social responsibilities and the necessity to venture beyond their professional comfort zones to meet the needs of communities ravaged by natural and man-made disasters. In addition to the problem-based learning approach widely adopted by architecture programs, the process of encouraging active learning in undergraduate curriculum is now poised to involve external, real-world, community development projects. South African architect Denise Scott Brown (1990: 20) aptly sums this up: 'I think great schools of urban design should stress philosophy, but it should be the philosophy of action.'

Architecture schools and curriculum designers face a complex task. The role of the architect is evolving; if design education is to continue to be relevant it must re-adjust its focus to give students opportunities to learn more about their discipline, themselves and the broader community. Educators can help students make sense of their work, as well as redefine their role in the world. The growth of 'active learning' modules which link architecture schools with NGOs offer such educational opportunities that can equip the development of young architects as global citizens, engaging them in real world problems. Architectural institutes and design studios have a responsibility to facilitate such an active engagement in global issues, particularly by creating innovative curricula and delivery methods that increase the social and global awareness of architecture students.

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The Impact of an In-service Professional Development Course on Writing Teacher Attitudes and Pedagogy

Yin Ling Cheung, English Language and Literature Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract

In education, it is commonly believed that the quality of teachers' learning experiences directly affects the quality of their students' learning experiences. Specifically, teachers' continuing learning may bring about positive effects on student learning. For the past ten years or so, research has emphasized the effects of professional development courses on teachers in hard science disciplines. Little attention has been paid to study the influences of those courses on teachers in the 'soft' sciences, such as English language, especially in the area of teaching of writing. Against this background, I undertook a study to investigate how an in-service professional development course influences the teaching attitudes of writing teachers who enrolled on the course and their teaching practice. I argue that the professional development course empowered the teachers with skills useful for the teaching of writing. I also argue that the course positively changed the attitudes of the teachers towards their practice in the teaching of writing. It is suggested that teachers need to engage in continuing professional development to improve the quality of their teaching.

Keywords: professional development; writing teachers

Introduction

Over the last decade, the fields of teaching and teacher development have seen a number of studies about the impact of professional development courses on teaching and student learning (Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Loucks-Horsley *et al.*, 1998; McDermott & DeWater, 2000; Stein *et al.*, 1999). A number of studies demonstrate that professional development courses enhance teachers' content knowledge and strengthen their pedagogical skills (Radford, 1998; Supovitz *et al.*, 2000). Another set of studies has identified that these courses boost teachers' confidence in teaching their subject matters and foster a positive attitude towards teaching and student learning (Stein *et al.*, 1999). Much research has focused on the professional development of teachers in hard science disciplines in the United States and Britain. Little research has been conducted to investigate the influences of professional development courses on teachers in the 'soft' sciences such as English language writing. In Singapore, teacher education has limited coverage on the teaching of writing. To address the teaching of writing to secondary school students, the Bachelor of Arts (English Language) undergraduate programme in a university in Singapore offers a compulsory course in Year 4, and two electives in Year 2 and Year 4. These courses mostly impart theoretical knowledge to the student teachers, rather than offer skills that are of immediate practical use in the teaching of writing. Against this shortage of practical courses for