

Chapter 8

Reflections on the Pedagogy of International Field Schools in Bali, Indonesia: The Transformative Impact of Textiles and Temples

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 15 years, through the platform of a senior-level undergraduate course at the University of Guam, a team of professors, researchers, and development practitioners have been striving to refine a pedagogic approach that draws on the value of an embedded international field school to Bali, Indonesia. These efforts are designed to help students understand and appreciate the foundational concepts of community development, while also fostering a learning environment and an experiential program that empowers participants to actively engage in social discourses that contribute in positive and transformative ways to their communities. Employing a curriculum that focuses on both classroom work and international field school experience, students and professors as well as many other participants in the field explore such concepts and practices that are proving to be essential to a sound understanding of community development in the modern age.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning about society and how one can be part of contributing to the positive developments of one's neighborhood and community is central to the social science undergraduate university experience. Whether one is studying political science, anthropology, history, or geography, community development is a central question and focus of the academic curriculum. How do governance systems contribute to the empowerment of people? How do traditional cultural values find expression in the modern landscape of a rapidly changing world? How does the historical experience of a people help individuals understand the social conditions of family and community relations in the 21st century? What are the pull and push factors that contribute to the migration of people and how do these movements impact political and economic realities? These are ultimately the questions that social science hopes to understand and in so doing help communities contribute to the welfare and happiness of their members.

This chapter is a reflection on the key insights and learning outcomes of a senior level undergraduate course at the University of Guam that has endeavored to develop a pedagogy that focuses on both classroom work and an intensive structured international field school that takes students away from their laptops and school desks and places them in village settings in Bali, Indonesia. Over the course of fifteen years, a team of professors, researchers, and development practitioners have been striving to refine a pedagogic approach that helps students understand and appreciate the foundational concepts of community development, while also fostering a learning environment and an experiential program that empowers all the participants to actively engage in social discourses that contribute in positive and transformative ways to the development of their communities. This chapter is the culmination of this decade and a half effort and highlights the philosophical foundations as well as the pedagogic approaches and insights of sustainability education. In this chapter, the authors explore how an experiential approach that grounds itself on a holistic curriculum that sees the student as an active participant in their own learning, on the power of both "doing" and "being," on the value of stepping out of the classroom to enhance theory, and on the power of cross-cultural exchange to broaden a world-view and deepen an appreciation of the recognition of the oneness and wholeness of the human family.

The starting point for this course is the recognition that the profound changes now shaping human affairs suggest that new models of life—far reaching in their capacity to release human potential—are within the grasp of a rapidly evolving global community. Advances in knowledge across an ever-expanding range of disciplines, the emergence of international mechanisms that promote collective decision-making and action, and the increasing ability of the masses of humankind to articulate their aspirations and needs, portend a great surge forward in the social evolution of the planet. To realize the promise offered by such changes, the participants in this course come to recognize that a searching reexamination of the prevailing patterns of social and economic development is necessary.

This chapter explores the course curriculum and the pedagogic approaches that frame an international field experience in Bali, Indonesia, and concludes that the development process should ultimately be concerned with both the transformation of individuals and the social structures that the members of society create. The emergence of peaceful and progressive modes of living requires both an internal and external reordering; and such a reordering can only occur when the human heart is transformed. Hence, to be effective, development activity must directly address the inner life and character of human beings as well as the organization of society. Its purpose must promote a process of social change that engenders cooperation, compassion, rectitude of conduct, and justice—a transformation that permeates every aspect of the relationships that govern human activity.

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