

TEACHING TO DISCERN

FORMING CONNECTIONS,
DECOLONIZING PERSPECTIVES

Hernando A. Estévez C. (Editor)

UNIVERSIDAD DE
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INTRODUCTION

Hernando A. Estévez¹

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The issue of academic environments involves both research and practice. It gathers theoretical and practical pieces of knowledge for a permanent analysis and evaluation of pedagogy, content, and accomplishments in the educational field. Moreover, educational practices no longer occur within the boundaries of a specific field; in a globalized world, those practices must overcome their traditional boundaries in order to expand to different disciplines and to different ways of understanding pedagogy. In our time, knowledge travels; ideas and experiences are shared in educational platforms worldwide, while educators and students create novel ways to collectively participate in research projects that contribute to a greater understanding of the universe.

As a field, educational research faces growing challenges for dealing with the requirements of globalization; nowadays, education is not simply synonymous with pedagogical theories that provide frameworks for developing academic programs. The academic environment must be designed to introduce students to different social, political and economic phenomena and to connect them with knowledge of a broader reality. Researchers in the educational field must also examine historical and social dynamics that influence the development of education while considering their implications for different cultures.

On the other hand, one of the key issues researchers face is the extent to which a globalized education is possible; that means they need to be aware of current social, political ideologies and policies that are not necessarily in accordance with this educational project. Understanding education implies understanding the context in which pedagogical practices are taking place; at the same time, in this field, novel political paradigms and ideas of equality, equity and human rights should be confronted.

In summary, nowadays pedagogical practices have two main challenges: first, to introduce local and traditional experiences of teaching to broader perspectives; second, to understand what a globalized education implies and to participate in the transition towards new paradigms that make a global education possible.

The anthology presented herein aims to provide a novel context for academic dialogue on globalized pedagogical practices. Specifically, it focuses on what it means to teach abroad, which means discussing methodologies, pedagogies and contents used by educators who have had the opportunity of teaching in a foreign country. This book is a dialogue that engages academic experiences in a theoretically expansive and encompassing, methodological and content-driven framework around the topic of teaching abroad.

Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá, Colombia, is the context in which all those practices took place. This anthology presents the experiences of different foreign educators who have taught at the University under the Summer Academy program, which was created, organized and implemented by the International Office (ORII). It also presents the experience of the staff members in Bogotá who have had the important duty of organizing the event in two different occasions.

The anthology has three parts: In the first part, it presents the experience of two organizational members at Universidad de La Salle; they provide the perspective of experts in the academic field who have had the challenge of integrating local and foreign educational practices. In the second and third part, this anthology provides the experiences of educators from around the world who participated in the Summer Academy on two separate occasions: 2016 and 2017.

This book is not restricted to discussing methodological problems or accomplishments of the Summer Academy. Instead, they gather the subjective experiences of each partaker, which allows the reader to understand, in different levels, the value of participating in these experiences.

This anthology has two goals: first, to contribute to current dialogues between academic institutions and to foster the creation of novel pedagogical methods by describing the ideas and problems that arose in the context of the Summer Academy at Universidad de La Salle; and second, to provide a space for participants of the Summer Academy, both professors and students, to share their learning experiences and explorations in the context of a study-abroad program.

The first part, "Experience of the Summer Academy from an organizational perspective," is composed of chapters by two staff members at Universidad de La Salle who participated in the organization of the Summer Academy:

Giovanni Anzola's essay, "Grappling with the Challenges of Social Development through In-House International Training," recognizes the academic and administrative challenges that come with implementing an in-house study abroad program. This program requires an institutional commitment that derives from recognizing the emergence of a new generation of students that think, act and communicate in a global perspective. For Anzola, the Summer Academy has become an academic tradition at the university that has focused on several topics: Latin American thought, leadership and global understanding, alternatives to socio-economic growth, peacebuilding, innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable development have been some of the umbrella themes that have been used to invite people from all over the globe to teach local students in Colombia.

This essay brings into consideration a notion of education that goes beyond a mere interaction between individuals, seeing it as a common production of knowledge that can go from the classroom to the solution of real-life problems.

“Education, Pedagogy and Educational Content,” by Hernando A. Estévez suggests that education is always a political act that involves theories, methods and truth values; therefore, it is neither neutral nor impartial. To educate is to politically commit oneself to either reproducing what is already in place or to create new social and political paradigms. In that sense, the contents of an educational program become a tool for mediating between the classroom and reality, to understand its complexities as well as the role education plays in its construction. Educators must be aware of their responsibility as they promote a specific relationship between teacher and student, which in many cases is reinforced by a content that reproduces a fixed way to understand reality and leaves no room for thinking new social and political paradigms. Thus, an educational program and, in this particular case, a program related to teaching abroad, can be improved by the study of alternative contents, which allow students know other ways of being that transcend the social, political and economic perspective already present in their society.

The second part gathers three experiences of educators enrolled in the Summer Academy:

Elizaveta S. Golousova’s contribution to the anthology, “Rewards and Challenges of Teaching Abroad,” reflects on what it means to teach overseas and how this experience can be a helpful testimony for others, as there are plenty of programs offered by various educational institutions for those who want to study abroad. Her writing describes what educators experience while they are away from their home countries. One of the key issues every visiting professor must deal with is the necessity to adapt to a local style of mentoring — e.g., the ability to develop intercultural competence. The author describes some of her experiences on cross-cultural communication and shares her ideas about certain techniques and methods that might be useful for visiting scholars.

“Making Relations: A Decolonizing Perspective on Teaching Abroad,” written by Janice Cindy Gaudet, highlights an Indigenous pedagogical approach and teaching philosophy based on “making relations” through notions of decolonization, indigeneity, and gender. Her experience of teaching abroad at Universidad de La Salle inspired a deeper reflection on what decoloniality evokes when one is teaching outside of a familiar context. In this chapter, Gaudet explores the problem of creating an academic environment grounded

in a decolonial framework; namely, an environment in which students and educators, together, deconstruct history, traditional identities and myths based on our colonial past. She proposes the creation of learning spaces grounded in Indigenous thought, which give voice to ancestral knowledge and allow us to rethink the meaning of our own culture and selves. She espouses a commitment to building relations between students and Indigenous peoples from Colombia that disrupts dominant models of pedagogy through co-creative learning. Collectively, yet also uniquely, the idea is to share in a process with the aim “to nourish the learning spirit” and to imagine a “good life (*buen vivir*)” for all of us.

In “Teaching Creativity and Innovation in an International Context,” Jordi Mass-Castella analyzes the relevant aspects involved in teaching creativity and innovation to an international group from his experience during the Summer Academy in 2016. Some aspects are related to the cultural distance between the teacher and the students and also to the multicultural nature of an international school. In such multicultural environments, it becomes critical that instructors develop skills to deliver culturally sensitive and culturally adapted instruction. Other aspects depend on teaching creativity and innovative skills: In education, creativity has more to do with the process than with the final product and focuses on the development of thinking and cognitive skills. The text discusses a selection of different methodologies (business model canvas, design thinking, etc.) to foster creative thinking and innovative skills.

The third part of this anthology gathers the experiences of five educators who participated in the Summer Academy, which focused on the “Peacebuilding Generation”:

Donna Maria Maynard’s essay, “Teaching Abroad: Multidisciplinary Perspective,” outlines her experience as a lecturer from two different cultural contexts and reflects her experience of dealing with a new cultural context and a foreign language under her position as a visiting scholar in the Summer Academy at Universidad de La Salle. She shares her reflections and theoretical insights while teaching an undergraduate course in Counseling as a visiting scholar. She shares her teaching philosophy, inspired by Jean Piaget’s (1952) theory of constructivism, which supports the use of exercises to let students play an active role in their learning process, based on the idea that knowledge depends on action. She also describes what she thinks are the Colombian students’ needs, which includes altering the course syllabus and activities. In addition, she provides an overview of the Pre-service Emerging Reflective Teacher Training (PERTT) model, the theoretical framework that best articulates her experience of teaching abroad. The

pedagogical methods that she used with the students in that course are presented as the interpersonal outcomes of the PERTTT model's psychosocial system, as she shares the teaching-abroad experiences through the lens of that model.

"Reflections on Teaching and Technology Studies through Problem Solving Learning in Bogotá, Colombia," by Jacqueline Gaybor Tobar, is a reflection on what it means to use Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as a strategy to teach an introductory course in Science and Technology Studies (STS). She explores the importance of using PBL as a tool that helps students build critical thinking, reasoning skills and internalize learning by looking at real-world problems related to STS. PBL uses real-life problems as a starting point of learning, which differs from a more "traditional" approach of learning based on teaching theories. The problems were selected to enable the students to gain a global perspective and to reflect upon the complex realities happening in different parts of the world. The goal was not to solve the problem itself; rather, the problem was used to help students acquire knowledge but, most especially, to develop abilities like self-directed learning, critical thinking, and reasoning. The students noticed the difference between this approach to education and a traditional one. They found it challenging because it implies having more responsibility conducting individual research; but at the same time, they found the learning process valuable, particularly with respect to embracing their individual research and participating in group discussions based on their individual investigations. This chapter is also her personal story about teaching abroad in an international environment.

Nour Alrabie's chapter, "Toulouse–Bogotá: More than a Round Trip," is a step-by-step account of an enriching experience; his chapter aims to motivate junior academics to teach abroad, in a new, unfamiliar international context. In particular, he argues to what extent an integrative pedagogy, which involves value co-creation with students, contributes to an overall positive experience. He also provides the reader with some examples from his experiences and educational practices, which have been proven to be effective during his quasi-experimental course.

Keith William Diener's chapter provides reflections and suggestions on cultural adaptation and classroom pedagogy, from his experience in the Summer Academy at Universidad de La Salle. His essay, "Reflections on Teaching Social Justice in a Multicultural Environment," includes reflections on the author's experiences living in Bogotá and integrates these reflections with his experiences in the classroom. The chapter examines some relevant pedagogical literature and recommends resources for faculty members who teach in the global setting. It also identifies the challenges of dealing with the needs of both local and international students

engaged in a short-term study abroad program. In response to these challenges, the chapter provides strategies and resources for leveraging the particular facets of a global classroom and for enhancing the learning experience.

Mae Caralde' chapter, "Reviving Social Imagination," reflects on the dramatic social transformations brought about by new media and its technologies and the challenges that educators and learners have to critically face. New media is "new" because it has replaced our old cultural forms and value systems and, consequently, our understanding of the world. When old cultural forms and value systems have been eroded and replaced by a "me-centered" media culture, when information is transformed into a commodity, when news content becomes strongly driven by market demands, and when control and ownership of new media platforms restrict the plurality and quality of information available for the public, the situation becomes symptomatic of a digitally "colonized" society. This situation ushers an alarming devolution of the people's agency and the rise of illiberal governments who are hostile to genuine peace and development. To illustrate this phenomenon, the chapter shows examples and insights from the author's experience teaching in the Philippines; thus, it compares and connects that teaching experience with the experience in Colombia. In her experience as a lecturer on Social Media and Peace in the Summer Academy, Caralde incorporates some ideas on education and active learner engagement. According to the author, putting the voice of the people first in our new media engagements is crucial for decolonizing perspectives and for promoting social cohesion, which favors justice and lasting peace.

Although the book shows that there are many differences among the educational strategies of participants, there are also commonalities: For instance, they recognize the contrast between their prejudices about the country before arriving (considering Colombia is seen as a very violent country) and the reality of the people with whom they interact, as well as between the differences in the educator-student relationship in their country of origin and in Colombia. Most of the educators recognize the challenge of teaching in English in a non-English speaking country, as well as the challenge of teaching four hours a day for two weeks to the same group of students. In general, they recognize that the Summer Academy is not only an opportunity for students to learn but an opportunity for foreign educators to develop novel pedagogical strategies, to identify problems in their way of teaching, and, in general, to be aware of the need of educational research for the challenges of our global village.

SECTION I

Teaching to Discern:

Experience of the Summer Academy
from an Organizational Perspective

01

Grappling with the Challenges of Social Development through In-House International Training

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Introduction

In order to gain new ways of understanding the world, we need to rethink academic environments. In this sense, a commitment to provide new generations with practical, communicational and critical thinking skills necessary to face present challenges is imperative. This effort provides students with opportunities as members of the global village. Obviously, globalization implies, to some degree, the loss of individual and cultural identity, and academia has an important role in creating common scenarios for the convergence of experiences and knowledge.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are becoming important problem-solving environments in which researchers think about complex issues concerning contemporary societies. In this sense, several questions demand answers: how to move to new societies; how to achieve sustainable cities; how our contexts can be re-purposed, redesigned for healthier and more resilient settings with improved economic efficiency and less impact on the environment; and how HEIs can address these issues from a knowledge-based perspective.

In addition, the role that HEIs can play to help societies to grapple with their very complicated social limitations is a matter of examination, especially the way students can be agents of social transformation by applying knowledge to real life, and how faculty members can become mediators to tackle social challenges. It also seems that an open dialogue within the different branches of an educational institution must be encouraged in order to reach agreements on how to deal with those challenges.

As members of the organizational staff, we have learnt that relationships strengthen by solving problems together and that knowledge is created through these efforts and in dealing with issues arising in real time. Wise institutions cultivate alliances and common efforts at problem solving. Consequently, institutions must seek international scenarios for cooperation. The ultimate goal is to bring together different innovative experiences and abilities in order to further societal goals.

It was back in 2011 when two faculty members from the University of Mississippi visited Universidad de La Salle to teach some courses on intercultural issues for students at the School of Education. This experience ignited a series of reflections on the possibilities of offering students an international and multicultural experience, especially for those who could not go abroad but had the skills to intermingle with people from other latitudes. This sparked the idea of instituting permanent interdisciplinary courses taught in the English language and under teaching and learning interactions based on a problem-solving approach.

The idea of having visiting scholars at La Salle was conceived as an “in-house-mobility-laboratory” on the premise that *mobility* means the interchange of knowledge and that individuals serve as “vehicles” to disseminate such knowledge. This concept is different from the traditional understanding of mobility programs in which, sometimes, the sheer number of students or faculty members that have travelled is seen as an indicator of the level of internationalization achieved. Our motivation, rather, was bringing the world to the students.

In order for this initiative to work, a new internal organization had to be devised, with new academic and administrative units. As a result, an international and intercultural campus came to life, not only for students, but also for the staff.

Our “Summer Academy” grew in scope and organization and became a tradition at the university. Every year, the courses have a different interdisciplinary thread: Latin American ideas, leadership and global understanding, alternatives to socio-economic growth, peacebuilding, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.

The reflections presented herein have to do with how to make interactions between individuals possible, but also with how to transfer knowledge in order to achieve solutions to real-life problems.

Background: The Need for an Integrated Region

Latin America is going through a strong economic recession, accompanied by great social and political challenges. This crisis is structural due to inefficient and uncompetitive social systems that have increased poverty and inequality, as well as public and private indebtedness. Latin American societies have the common challenge of creating a conscious, civic, efficient, but, above all, innovative and critical human capital that would allow raising international competitiveness while creating social conditions for a better distribution of wealth.

Latin American economies, in general, and the Colombian economy, in particular, all face the challenge of guaranteeing students’ access to and continuity in higher education. According to Izcson de Carvalho, Looi, Saad, and Sinatra (2013), only 40 out of every 100 students who start elementary education in Colombia will finish high school. Out of those, ten will go to college, and only five will graduate — a situation that is mainly due to economic distress. Such a worrying situation makes it imperative for higher education institutions to take a political stand and insist that education is decisive in achieving social development and not a luxury for the very few people who can afford it.

Therefore, Colombia faces a big challenge if educational institutions (both public and private) do not see themselves as a collective that must help society to achieve development and wealth. These institutions must be aware of their responsibility to change the historical path of the country instead of simply reacting to global trends in order to survive. It would be useful to approach a social constructionist perspective that considers that, among other things, educational institutions build the realities of the individuals as they interact with the outer world; that means that these institutions need to bring the world to the classrooms.

Development integrates human, cultural, environmental, social, productive, and welfare values; in order to achieve it, education must be connected to the specific needs of society. We believe that mobility facilitates the interchange of ideas that help our countries devise useful and autochthonous ways of reaching the desired development.

To ensure the flow of knowledge and ideas, mobility cannot be a privilege of the few; it should benefit all manner of students, especially those in need. With regard to international opportunities, Colombian HEIs should use their available resources to achieve the aim of knowledge exchange. The first step is to create institutional mechanisms to strengthen access to higher education. A weak higher education endangers democracy, the productive apparatus, as well as other social structures needed to overcome the systemic crisis.

However, access to higher education is not enough for social change: Universities must train professionals to imagine the best future for our country. They must promote critical thinking and minds that propose viable solutions for current challenges in order to create wellbeing for the majority of the population. In this sense, academia may build proposals to restructure societies — and educational systems — that currently evidence all types of failures and weaknesses; to that end, international ventures present different opportunities. Therefore, internationalizing activities in higher education should not be understood only as a way of achieving an international reputation or prestige.

In a democratic society, having a degree legitimizes particular roles and social status; therefore, improved access to degrees fosters equality. In this sense, the social commitment of bringing higher education to underprivileged populations (poor, disabled and discriminated minorities) must materialize in a process based on principles of quality and equity.

Bringing the World to Universities and Social Development in Colombia

Universidad de La Salle is committed to social development, both urban and rural. The Utopia Campus in Yopal, which brings agronomical training to some of the most marginalized rural inhabitants of the country, is testimony to the latter. Internationalization can be used to further these aims. The idea is that educators, organizational staff and students become problem solvers of societal needs by means of relevant research and knowledge contribution, and that they also become directly involved in activities that further social development (as an example, exchange students in our university have volunteered their time to teach English at Utopia).

In order for Colombia to achieve both economic growth and a stable peace, societal growth, public policies, and educational approaches must be taken into consideration. If Colombian society (with universities as mediators) does not pay attention to current social challenges, the sustainability of our country is at risk. On the other hand, quality education is essential for building equity and generating opportunities. Also, the university is a special space to draw people's attention to their role in protecting the environment. In short, universities must educate human beings to live in opposition to the logic of domination, excessive and predatory consumption, disrespect for life, ambition, and destructive egotism.

Learning to Collaborate by Means of Fruitful Relationships

Collaboration strengthens personal relationships, both being empowered by new communication technologies. Nowadays, social interactions are not only faster but more diverse: New media makes it possible to enter into relationships with people from very different cultures, with different experiences and ideas of reality.

However, what we may call "detached relationships through virtual immediacy" is gaining more and more popularity in our time: Currently, it is more difficult to converge with others because the interaction mainly occurs online; it seems the traditional face-to-face encounters are disappearing. Moreover, a rising culture of uncertainty, hate and fear (in which new media plays a large role) makes us protect ourselves and take a step back from those who are different.

From a social development approach, it is imperative to establish open and diverse relationships in order to solve societal problems. We have run out of ideas; we need other experiences and other ways to live in a community in order to chart our own path. Without denying the importance and the need for virtual

interactions, the experience at our university proves that close interactions are capable of transforming and giving meaning to our existence. Nowadays, we have access to information, but everybody — especially the younger generations — faces the difficulty of knowing what to do with that information. In this sense, HEIs need to think about what it is important to learn and how that learning impacts social development. Educational environments are tasked with strengthening the sense of community and solidarity against individualism and standardization. Education plays a role in fighting poverty, in promoting thinking on justice, peace, fraternity and tolerance; and in promoting free and fair individuals. Universities should give more importance to relationships than to mere knowledge accumulation, as UNESCO recognized a couple of decades ago: “This truly exceptional time in history calls for exceptional solutions. The world as we know it, all the relationships we took as given, are undergoing profound rethinking and reconstruction. Imagination, innovation, vision and creativity are required.” (UNESCO, 1996, p. 11).

Boutros Boutros-Ghali presented three threats of globalization in relation to education. First, the danger that nation-states will dissolve into transnational powers, with states being unable to guarantee the equality of opportunities on education. Second, that communities will fight to avoid diversity. And third, that ties of solidarity will be destroyed. In this regard, he said:

I see individuals, countries, entire regions of the planet sinking more and more into misery. I see a widening gap between info-rich and info-poor, between those who are connected and those who are not, between those who have information and knowledge and those who do not have them. (UNESCO, 2006)

In this sense, it is necessary to set up the proper structure to support social development through educational policies. This means that not only internationalization but also all the actions of strategic management of an institution need to pay special attention to the relations between stakeholders (within political, bureaucratic and symbolic interactions). These forms of interactions refer to the legal framework that affects universities, the interplay between what society demands of universities, and institutional autonomy. This promotes a permanent rethinking of what a university is and about the possibility of new environments that foster competitiveness, scientific research and technological advancement, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity to transform societies.

International Curriculum Development to Put Forth Relevant Social Teaching

One of the needs for internationalizing the university through a mobility program is to create an appropriate international curriculum. This curriculum should impact the particular curriculums in different areas of knowledge inside the university and the development of knowledge and skills of international and multicultural students. Such a curriculum advancement has social implications: It promotes a real appropriation of knowledge to solve real problems by means of academic reflections, enriched by international perspectives.

Innovations for Building Better Societies by Means of a University's Mission Statements

Universities must develop actions that promote, facilitate and encourage the creation and implementation of socially relevant research projects. Therefore, it is necessary to produce alliances and agreements that promote knowledge transfer, infrastructure integration, cooperation and common projects with national and international researchers and institutions. This collaboration was highlighted as urgent at the Conference of UNESCO in Paris in July 2009.

This cooperation is specified within two concepts: *academic collaborations* and *international development cooperation*. Both concepts are seen as mechanisms to deal with the growing academic competitive scenario of higher education, which is determined by the liberalization of education guided from a market-based perspective.

Extension, understood as the aspect of academia that allows the interaction of the university with other sectors of society, must be intrinsically integrated with teaching and research. Also known as "public service," it contributes to the solution of social problems and to the development of knowledge inside a community. Its purpose is to establish processes of interaction and association among various social and community stakeholders.

HEIs at the service of a global society

We are living in an era of opulence and increased wellbeing. Revenues have been rising around the world; infant and maternal mortality rates have declined significantly in the so-called developing world; life expectancy has visibly and significantly increased. Lifestyles have become more active, and the use of a variety of innovative

technologies has reduced the daily chores, especially for women. The levels of education have increased dramatically, to the point that primary education coverage is almost complete. However, the advantages of this advanced world are not for everyone. Poor people in underdeveloped countries continue to suffer deprivation and experience a lack of opportunities. Education is a tool to remedy inequality through the formulation of solutions, the improvement of social inclusion and citizenship, and the professional development of people.

Social development is based on the premise that human welfare depends on the preservation of ecosystems; in that sense, development implies an awareness that the challenges of future generations depend on our current socio-economical decisions. We cannot think of social transformation without thinking about the limits of the world's resources; social change involves considering the sustainability of our oceans, atmosphere and climate, among other resources.

Technologies Should be at the Service of Marginalized People

In our contemporary world, technologies strength social ties and connect cultures. Access to an informational network has increased as nearly half of the world population is living in urban areas and more than 60% are using mobile telephones.

Although face-to-face interactions are important in this hyper-technologized world, the internationalization of Colombian HEIs also depends on the use of available technologies. In the end, learning how to use technologies in this globalized world helps to provide solutions to social constraints: It connects the countryside with the urban, researchers with the business sector, universities with governments.

Today, the world offers wealth, technologies, knowledge, abilities and institutions that were not available for previous generations; these days, travelling around the world, and even around outer space, is possible. Yet, in visible and distinct ways, the world today is also facing huge deficits and discontents. Nearly 1.2 billion people, about a fifth of all humanity, are living below a poverty line of \$1.25 per capita per day. Nearly 40% of all children under five are malnourished, and half of all children live below the poverty line. All of this includes low access to education in a large part of the global population.

While inequality in access to education is frightening, educational institutions must provide strategies for promoting access to education, and they have an important social role as mediators between society and government in order to implement

those strategies through public policies. Therefore, they have an important role in enabling a real change in the conditions of those who are less favored.

Internationalization Includes Educators

In this essay, our main purpose has been to offer a perspective for social development through the internationalization of educational institutions. There is a last issue to consider: namely, the lack of experience in global connectivity of a number of educators. Although educational institutions must provide training in technologies and learning of a second language to their staff members and educators, the government, and specifically, the Ministry of Education, should invest in strategies for internationalizing educators. To strengthen international cooperation is one way to do that; such cooperation could provide researchers with the possibility of access to scholarships and funding for travelling and studying abroad.

Nowadays, faculty members should acquire the appropriate training and experience to their academic fields within an international context. It is not enough to attend international conferences. Faculty members should spend at least six months in another country to understand and acquire the skills to become effective as international educators. Faculty members with international experience provide leadership and inspire motivation throughout the institution.

Our historical moment challenges the traditional relationships between science, academia and society. The democratization and relevance of scientific knowledge are traversed by social and ecological justice, as well as by the recognition of a plurality of knowledge.

Therefore, there should be an ethical commitment of both educational institutions and governments that links global development and higher education; namely, a commitment to respect and recognize the relevance of higher education in connecting people with the world. This also implies the institutions being prone to dialogue with local knowledge, in order to exalt what they could provide in order to answer global questions; this includes listening to local solutions for global societal needs: Sometimes, the knowledge for taking action against problems experienced in communities around the globe is locally available; other times, for scientists and academics to be aware of both local and global knowledge they need to be mentally and emotionally open; all of this in order to be sensitive to unfamiliar wisdom and to exchange knowledge with outsiders.

Conclusion

Universities should focus less on teaching specific contents and more on experiential learning and problem-solving objectives. Although teaching contents is important, sometimes these tend to be decontextualized. Nowadays, global training depends on human development + capacity building + problem-solving skills. In this regard, some ideas are developed in what follows:

Students

Universities should focus on setting contextualized learning objectives rather than vague and abstract learning outcomes. This means determining what the university wants students to achieve while they are studying and, most importantly, how these achievements are connected to the problems of their surroundings. Students do not only need to acquire knowledge but also skills, attitudes and values for working in a local environment from a global understanding.

Staff

Staff needs training and international immersion experiences for acquiring those skills that are important to replicate with students. As the world changes at a rapid pace, staff must be part of a learning community that is permanently reflecting upon the new challenges of society.

Faculty

All faculty members (not only educators) should be in touch with the global agenda. This encourages a view of themselves as facilitators of the students' development. The institution should help faculty members to achieve their own developmental objectives. A way to do that is to create a program to recognize potential faculty leaders for international training. The institution must determine what abilities the leaders need to strength for improving their intercultural/international competencies; also, it must encourage them to motivate other colleagues to achieve personal objectives to acquire the same skills.

Mobility

Learning a second language is a priority for accessing the knowledge developed elsewhere in the world; however, it is not necessary to get an advanced level of that second language in order to initiate a mobility program. One strategy

should be to promote academic exchanges with peer universities that have some expertise on internationalization.

Those exchanges are possible through the establishment of personal relationships: Internationalization programs into the university are the result of the networking of local faculty members and students with researchers from different international universities who share an academic interest. Even short-term visiting scholar programs helps faculty members and students in widening perspectives and enable further intercultural interchanges.

On the other hand, we are positive that contact with small colleges or universities around the world is sometimes more fruitful than expecting exchanges with the large ones, as the former are more flexible and eager for that international contact. The size of the institution does not matter; what matters is the convergence to tackle social problems.

Those contacts do not necessarily end in local faculty members or students visiting a foreign institution; there are many models of effective programs that can be created locally, regionally, or nationally that simulate an international immersion experience and enable students to develop intercultural/international competencies without great investment.

It is possible to create programs “at home,” and they can have significant impacts in changing the students’ and faculty’s perspectives and enable them to develop competencies, such as intercultural communication, acquiring knowledge of different cultures and of different ways of dealing with societal problems. In our case, and as this anthology shows, the Summer Academy at Universidad de la Salle is a good example of a very successful way to bring the world to the institution.

Finally, reflections on world sustainability and development cannot be limited to the classrooms. Students need to implement what they have learnt and to experience the specific needs of the outer world, creating solutions to societal constraints. The internationalization activities give them the theoretical background for doing that; the institutional philosophy of service and research for social change pushes them to apply that knowledge.

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02

Education, Pedagogy and the Content of Education

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Education and pedagogy have different spheres of action within the educational system. Education is a practice, a social activity, and an action, while pedagogy is the pondering and reflection about educational theories. However, they possess the common goal of guiding individuals' activities and behavior in any given society. This distinction is measured by the realm of their concern and their function in society: While pedagogy is concerned with the precepts and principles behind an educational theory, education's main interest lies within the process involved in the practice of imparting knowledge.

In addition, pedagogy and education share a common political goal. Behind every given educational theory and pedagogical reflection is a political ideology. Educational theory and pedagogical practice contains a political ideology. Educational theory deploys in its practice a set of social principles and political rules conducive to perpetuating a given social and political structure, or, in the best case, it promotes a critique of the social order ruling society and its citizens. A pedagogical reflection in this sense aids the understanding of the social and political aspects of an educational theory by providing a rubric by which educational theories can be evaluated and understood. Most discourses on education have the structure of any given theoretical practice, since they guarantee a desirable educational objective, presupposing an understanding of those who are going to be educated and demand specific procedures to reach and realize its objectives. Intrinsic to education's role in society rests the need for a pedagogical practice consistent with the principles and the rules governing society in order to reaffirm the social structure and reflecting the principles governing the relations between citizens. If Plato is correct in *The Sophist* (1892) when affirming that education's role in society is to release individuals from the affliction created by an excess of accepting opinions and the lack of truth and knowledge, then education must always be a catalyst towards some form of political change, and pedagogy should be a reflection about its practice and principles.

When I was first invited by the Office of International Affairs at Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá to be part of the Summer Academy Program during the summer of 2016, I was also informed that one of the general aims of the program was to bring the world to the students of the university. Besides other general considerations, the program finds its uniqueness on the premise that the study abroad experience can be brought to the students of the university through a series of pedagogies, methodologies, academic contents and life experience from different professors from a variety of cultures; that is, the study abroad program at Universidad de La Salle invites researchers from different countries to discuss interdisciplinary topics, current trends on contemporary themes in order to provide a greater understanding of the global context to the students of the university.

The rationale behind such an approach to study abroad programs derives from the economic challenges that most of the students at Universidad de La Salle face, while recognizing the current need for an education that must engage students in global issues and global concerns. As a whole, the program is designed to prepare students to interact globally and to get a significant glimpse of the world through interaction with various disciplines, languages, and peoples.

As a philosophy professor at Universidad de La Salle, the invitation to be part of such a unique program was exciting and challenging; my academic and personal experience with study abroad programs rests on the traditional programs organized by universities in the United States that primarily provide students with the personal experience of adapting to different cultural values, being immersed in a language, acquiring coping skills and tools for internationalization while developing opportunities for personal growth. Prior to working at Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá, I had the opportunity to be the co-director and faculty member of a study abroad program in the Caribbean for students from John Jay College (CUNY). This study abroad program was primarily designed for undergraduate students interested in the humanities, and all course contents were developed in topics that provided students with an understanding of the reality in which they were being immersed while they focused on issues of justice and social change as part of the university's overall academic research interest.

Both programs shared the common interest of providing students and faculty with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the world in an academic setting that celebrates cultural diversity while enriching the vibrancy of academic themes, topics and issues. Besides the commonalities and distinctions of the programs, that is, the difference between "bringing the world to the university" versus "taking students to the world," and the common goal of aiming at gaining a greater perspective on the world. In this scenario, I argue that, regardless of the aim and the academic content of the program, study abroad programs need to provide a level of awareness to both students and teachers of the power and privilege endemic to travelling abroad. Although I do not intend to reduce the experience of study abroad programs to a simple relationship of power and privilege, I do believe that the content of the classes, the pedagogy used in each class, as well as the function of education during the study abroad, will greatly benefit from such awareness.

The complexities of my suggestion become especially obvious when one considers both students' reality and the way such reality is presented while recognizing the intrinsic relation to the content that will be presented to the students participating in the study abroad program. In other words, my initial claim is that

there is a correlation between the content of education, the context where the educational practice occurs, and the pedagogy that is used to share any given knowledge. The relationship between the content of education, its context, and pedagogy serves as the bases for communication between individuals in the classroom. However, such a relationship reveals an epistemological approach that unfolds forms of privilege and power for students and faculty of both versions of the aforementioned study abroad program.

I would also like to argue that education is always a political act that involves a theory, a method, and a value of truth — that is, it is never neutral nor impartial because to educate is to politically commit oneself to either reproduce what is already in place or to create new social and political paradigms. In that sense, the content of education becomes a tool for mediating between the classroom and reality and a medium for proposing novel ways to understand the complexities of reality and the continuum need to reflect upon the role education plays in the construction of reality. In that sense, one does not engage in education through knowledge alone; on the contrary, knowledge contains judgements, values and perceptions of the world that are impossible to avoid. In other words, we are all defined by a subjective account of our own understanding of reality and, as such, education and teaching are practices that are aware of the unequal relation between teacher and student, which in many cases is reinforced by a content that reproduces reality and leaves no room for creativity towards novel social and political paradigms.

This awareness is the bases for Paulo Freire's work on education, teaching, and social change. According to Freire (2005), education's end is driven by the possibility of liberating individuals from the oppressive quality of their reality. This form of education demands individual and collective liberation through the process of "conscientization." Freire's pedagogy is mainly concerned with the construction of a less dehumanized world. A liberating process of becoming aware, of regaining humanity implies, for Freire, a move from a naïve consciousness to a critical consciousness. Individuals possess an understanding of the world but they do not always comprehend that their reality has been imposed by an oppressive social order and justified by historical accounts claiming its reality as necessary or normal. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005) makes us aware of the traditional conditions that affect education and pedagogy by dismantling the inner practices that constitute traditional and normal education. The level of normalization to which peoples' consciousness and system of beliefs have been accustomed is, in Freire's opinion, the state of oppression. However, it is also the source of a need to transform individuals' perception of the world and understanding of the place they hold in society. Human beings make history

and, simultaneously, history constitutes humanity. Human nature is not predetermined; rather, it is constructed socially and historically. And it is within history and society that individuals can find not only the source of their oppression but also the means to escape their own situation.

In this liberating process, individuals take possession of their reality by denouncing their dehumanized order and proposing a humanized structure. For Freire (2005), individuals are not solely beings in the world; rather, they are constituted in their context, having a role in it and with others. Once individuals' consciousness has become aware of their role in history and society, through the educational process of "conscientization," then they come to realize that their place in society can be transformed and that they are the protagonists of their own history.

For Freire, education can only take place in a community of inquiry in which the content of education comes from the participants through dialogue by creating a dynamic process in which education and action are interwoven. Understanding and participating in individuals' reality is probably the first step in the Freirian awakening process. For this reason, the relationship between teacher and student must exist outside the "banking concept of education" (Freire, 2005, p. 72), which forces students to replicate old dynamics of social oppression; it is opposed to an "Education as the practice of freedom" (Freire, 2005, p. 81). This education allows students to critically think about their socio-historical conditions in order to try and change them.

The banking system does not acknowledge the value of students' life experience, but rather it considers them empty minds in need of education and knowledge. The process of education is then reduced to a simple imparting of knowledge rather than a sharing of knowledge. At the center of Freire's proposal is a call to overthrow all forms of a social order based on power and privilege containing precepts for the preservation of a society based on power dynamics.

For Freire, the world is divided between the oppressor and the oppressed. In some form or another, every individual is part of what Hegel (1977) expressed in the master-slave dialectic. In order for an individual to be liberated from this existential dichotomy, according to Freire (2005), he or she must first engage in a *pedagogie vraiment liberatrice* ("truly liberating pedagogy") capable of distinguishing between humanistic education and humanitarian education. Only a humanistic education would enable a process of conscientization through which individuals would engage in a pedagogical practice *animee d'une generosite authentique* ("animated by an authentic generosity"). I would like to argue that authentic generosity constitutes the core of Freire's educational theory. For

Freire, (2005), the desirable goal is to liberate individuals from their oppressive realities through generosity and humanization. Beneath this claim lies the belief that all individuals, regardless of their contingent place in society, are entitled — if not by education, by their own humanity — to participate in the construction of their own realities and communities. To reach such goal, Freire (2005) advocates an educational theory conducive to the empowering of individuals by the development of a critical consciousness capable of pushing education beyond its instructional limits. The force behind Freire's educational project surpasses traditional education as a social tool, by making it a necessary and transforming political resource. In that sense, education and pedagogy for Freire (2005) are political practices adept at finding solutions to social and political problems. Freire articulates this principle by maintaining that education's key precept is the undeniable fact that education is not neutral.

Accordingly, education is either designed to maintain the status quo, imposing on people the values and culture of the dominant class, or to liberate those people, helping them to transform society. Freire's new individual undertakes the critical role of merging theory and practice: praxis demands of a critique, a theory, in order to become a transforming social and political experience. Engaged in these critical perspectives of socio-political conditions, individuals fuse theory with praxis by making knowledge contextual. Individuals attain knowledge from daily interaction with others and by facing the problems of their reality.

The study abroad program proposed by Universidad de La Salle, built around the idea of "bringing the world to the students," must take into account the endemic relations of privilege and power that come with traditional education. Furthermore, it should also become critical of one's own condition, as well of the conditions determining one's reality. Plato's dialogue, *The Sophist*, claims that the fundamental aim of education is to contest ignorance. Education's concern is not the fulfilling of a need, like providing food to the hungry; rather, the primary goal is to release individuals of their indigestion of opinions that have obstructed their possibility of any desire for knowledge and truth. Ignorance is not a deficiency. Instead, it is an excess of confidence on mere opinions. For Plato, as well as for Socrates, education's first duty is to establish a critique of such opinions. The quote, commonly attributed to Socrates, "I only know that I know nothing" (see Plato, 1914), elucidates a great level of understanding and knowledge: Not knowing is the result of a profound critique of what one thinks or believes; it is to transform what one knows. The most effective education is one that creates the need for knowledge. Education is not solely a need for information, but rather a need to learn to think critically. To be critical is to learn how to think for oneself. To find fault in the world and society involves a specific practice,

an education conducive to awaken in others the capacity of becoming empowered to find knowledge within their own means and concurrently to critique and reflect about what is learned. Ultimately, education must develop pedagogical reflection about our own body of knowledge and the process of acquiring it.

Regardless of Freire's political views on education and the consequences of his theory of education, we cannot reduce Freire's theory to a mere political agenda. In order to avoid such a possibility, I believe is necessary to understand Freire's pedagogy and theory of education as a socio-educational and cultural project and not just a curriculum project. Teaching is the sensible junction of all the modern problems in which we live. I do not believe it is possible to teach without critique. Education requires a profound reflection about the existing relationship between the force of culture, society and politics. It is at this juncture where I believe Freire's work is of great importance for understanding the dynamics of power that are endemic to a study abroad, as well as the relationships it produces while allowing for its unfolding as an exchange of various expertise, experiences, and knowledge.

A study abroad in either modality, "bringing the world to the university" or "taking students to the world," collapses not only differences but also unequal realities that are initially expressed in terms of privilege and power. Such differences and inequalities required a pedagogical approach inspired by Freire's work, insofar as it must be critically acknowledged as a social construct and, therefore, subject to transformation. For Freire, education must be simultaneously an ideal and a point of reference servicing the construction of a new society. Included in education is instruction, but education goes further by establishing specific pedagogical practices and social relationships that influence those engaged in a libertarian education. Learning, teaching, and knowledge are contextual insofar as the process of "conscientization" requires a socio-cultural understanding of the elements that have configured the context from which they have been constructed. In the wake of Freire's (2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, any educational theory demanding of critique must surpass the instructional level of education.

In this perspective, the two major objectives of Freire's educational theory and pedagogical practice are the development of critical thinking and the empowering of actors for social change. It requires a reformulation of the relationship between teacher and student's role in the classroom whose mission is to mediate between knowledge, community and individuals through the assertion that education is not a social tool but a political resource that cannot abstract itself from its power to create a specific individual and citizen. For Freire, teaching is to put into action, to accelerate an individual desire for knowledge. Every action

implies a reflective act. Every educational theory contains a pedagogical practice, making of education the reflective process of analysis about the practice and consequently promoting both political and social values.

For Freire, traditional education is defined by what he calls the “banking system of education,” which is a type of education that is always caught up on a struggle of power that rests not only on the individuals engaged in the practice of education, but also on the pedagogy and the content of education. Let me explain. For Freire, education is a political act since it conveys certain practices that contribute to liberation, oppression, and social transformation. As such, education can be active or passive depending on student and teacher’s agency and the power imbalance it can produce; the content of education, which initially mediates the relationship between student and teacher, can be a catalyst for fracturing the artificiality of the classroom setting or it can contribute to preserving the power that already exists in a given structured society. Freire understands that only through pedagogical exercises that make reality relevant to students through the content of education is it possible for education to question the power relations that are endemic to the educational setting. To do so, Freire (2005) proposes problem posing and dialogue as processes that can posit education as a social and political resource that can humanize students by learning “to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2005, p. 35). For Freire, education that transforms the students’ perception of reality facilitates a particular type of relationship with the learner’s experiences while sharing a conceptualization of the common good. Although Freire is aware of the oppressive tendencies of institutionalized education, a pedagogical practice that overcomes the obstacles for making education a social process makes possible a collective conception of a common good. In that sense, education is a subversive practice since it humanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed while developing a cooperative education wherein “teachers and students, co- intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge” (Freire, 2005, p. 69).

Thus, an education and, in this particular case, an education in the context of the academic experience of studying abroad can be surmounted by the study of liberating contents, allowing a recognition of the privilege and power caught up on the practice of education as a mere mirror of the social, political and economic relationship already present in society. It is important to recognize that, as educators in a giving level of education, in any given country or culture, one must choose to teach to either preserve the order of society or transform such

order. There is no middle ground for this decision. Nevertheless, both choices demand an understanding of reality, as well as a recognition of the power relations endemic to reality. In this context, teaching is not a passive or a neutral activity.

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