

The Report of Co-Construction into a Trans-National Education Teaching Team

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Abstract : Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation (SCF) was created as a result of a collaborative partnership agreement between the University of Edinburgh and Donghua University. The College provides two programmes: Fashion Innovation and Fashion Interior Design and the overarching curriculum has the intention of developing innovation and creativity within an international learning, teaching, knowledge exchange and research context. The research problem presented here focuses on the multi-national/cultural faculty in the team, the challenges arising from difficulties in communication and the associated limitations of management frameworks. The teaching faculty at SCF are drawn from China, Finland, Korea, Singapore and the UK with input from Flying Faculty from Fashion and Interior Design, Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), for 5 weeks each semester. Rather than fully replicating the administrative and pedagogical style of one or other of the institutions within this joint partnership the aim from the outset was to create a third way which acknowledges the quality assurance requirements of both Donghua and Edinburgh, the academic and technical needs of the students and provides relevant development and support for all the SCF-based staff and Flying Academics. It has been well acknowledged by those who are involved in teaching across cultures that there is often a culture shock associated with transnational education but that the experience of being involved in the delivery of a curriculum at a Joint Institution can also be very rewarding for staff and students. It became clear at SCF that if a third way might be achieved which encourages innovative approaches to fashion education whilst balancing the expectations of Chinese and western concepts of education and the aims of two institutions, then it was going to be necessary to construct a framework which developed close working relationships for the entire teaching team, so not only between academics and students but also between technicians and administrators at ECA and SCF. The attempts at co-construction and integration are built on the sharing of cultural and educational experiences and knowledge as well as provision of opportunities for reflection on the pedagogical purpose of the curriculum and its delivery. Methods on evaluating the effectiveness of these aims include a series of surveys and interviews and analysis of data drawn from teaching projects delivered to the students along with graduate successes from the last five years, since SCF first opened its doors. This paper will provide examples of best practice developed by SCF which have helped guide the faculty and embed common core values and aims of co-construction regulations and management, whilst building a pro-active TNE (Trans-National Education) team which enhances the learning experience for staff and students alike.

Keywords : cultural co-construction, educational team management, multi-cultural challenges, TNE integration for teaching teams

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