Chapter 13

Cosmopolitanism in a World of Teachers: American Student Teachers in a Chinese School

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ABSTRACT

Cosmopolitanism, an emerging educational context in the last decade, has come to mean many things. Three constructs—cosmopolitanism as experience; cosmopolitanism as multiculturalism; and cosmopolitanism as intercultural competency—provide ways to conceptualize American student teachers in a Chinese school context. In this chapter, a collection of critical incidents is presented to illuminate these constructs in the ways they support and extend the researchers’ efforts to use technology to support an international student teaching program in China. Critical incidents describe an event or experience, something planned, if successful or not, or events that are coincidental in nature. Each critical incident is situational and serves as a snapshot to enable discussion and consideration of related issues leading to action. The critical incidents in this chapter show the ways that teachers used technology to deepen their intercultural competencies through the lens of cosmopolitanism while taking into account similarities and differences in the partners’ approaches to effective education.

INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism widens the significance of education by shedding light on the value of the common and shared features of human life. Although people differ in the values they cherish, they share the capacity to value in the first place. Although they find meaning in quite varied forms of art, family life, friend-
As an emerging context for education over the last decade, cosmopolitanism has come to mean many things to many people. *Cosmopolitanism as experience* suggests a type of sophistication—a worldview informed by travel and engagement with others. In this construct, getting out into the world carries a benefit unto its own. Study-abroad is one example of how students develop this disposition. *Cosmopolitanism as multiculturalism* stretches the notion of experience, suggesting that cultural engagement is not enough—instead the structure of experiences must reflect a desire and capacity to know one another. Cultures must blend in the everyday and in organizational activities that give shape to our life. Those more practically minded may be drawn to the notion of *cosmopolitanism as intercultural competency*. Educators develop intercultural competence through intentionally designed experiences that often leverage institutional relationships where cultural competency and education can merge to provide opportunities to develop skills, abilities, and behaviors for teachers to learn with and from others.

All three constructs deserve attention. In this chapter, the researchers describe a successful partnership between North Carolina State University, and a Chinese school in Beijing in an effort to know more about these three cosmopolitan and educational constructs. The chapter focuses on an element of this partnership that involves the design, delivery, and evaluation of an international student teaching program in China considering the intentionality of the program and what Kuh and Schneider (2008) call high impact educational practices. Elements of the international student teaching program will be described through critical incidents that address skills, abilities, and behaviors related to global learning and the use of digital tools to support learning.

A collection of critical incidents is presented to illuminate each of the three cosmopolitan constructs (i.e. cosmopolitanism as experience, as multiculturalism, and as intercultural competency). Critical incidents describe an event, an experience, something planned, whether successful or not, or events that are more happenstance in nature (Andreou, McIntosh, Ross, & Kahn, 2014). Each critical incident is situational and serves as a snapshot that can enable discussion and consideration of related issues and events leading toward action. The collection of related critical incidents focus on elements of a partnership that involved the design, delivery, and evaluation of international student teaching experience in a private school in China.

Through this discussion, paths forward for international student teaching are considered given the importance of enhancing intercultural competency skills among student teachers. The international student teaching program described in this chapter integrates the key framework of cosmopolitanism as a backdrop in the design and analysis of the elements of the program. The next section describes cosmopolitanism as a conceptual framework as well as the general context informing the critical incidents featured in this chapter.

**COSMOPOLITANISM**

Teacher education curriculum and related experiences are often parochial and provide little space for new teachers to explore global education issues such as human diversity and cross-cultural understanding and interaction (Merryfield, 1997). At other times, global education programs only provide token treatment of global topics, viewing global education as isolated singular experiences (Holden & Hicks, 2007). In