

Local Goes Global:

**International Service-Learning
& Cross-Cultural Competency**

Jun Xing, Ph.D.

United Board for Christian Higher
Education in Asia

May 31, 2007, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Service Learning in Asia: Creating Networks and Curricula in Higher Education

June 30 - July 3, 2002

ICU

THE LIBERAL ARTS



國際基督教大學

International Christian University



1st Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning

May 30-June 2, 2007



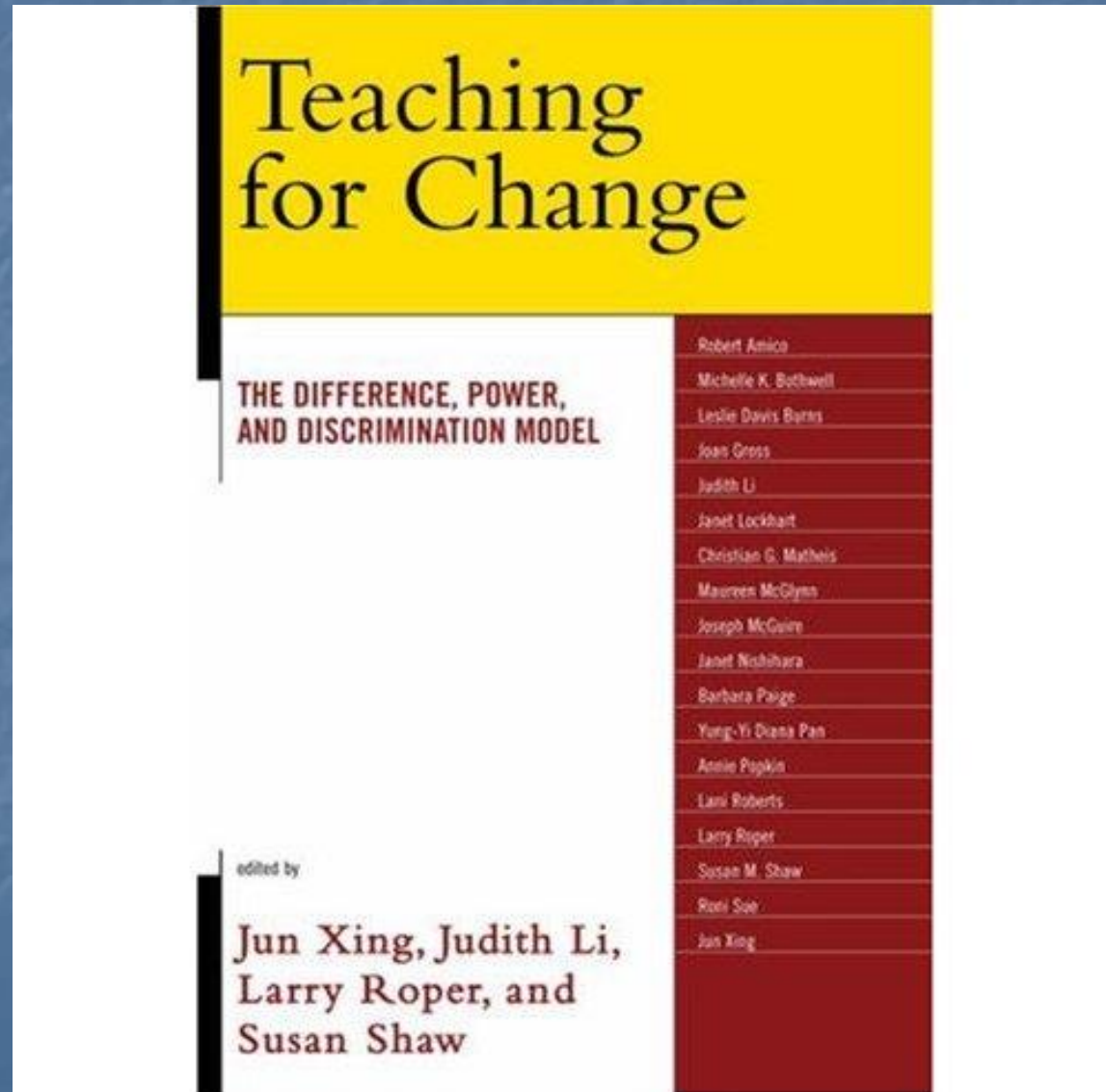
Trends/Directions of Service Learning in Asia

1. Service-learning is not “random acts of kindness,” but, instead, it should promote advocacy, social justice, and policy-related learning and community engagement;
2. Service-learning practitioners in Asia should explore deeper the indigenous traditions and local practices in the region;
3. There should be more cross cultural/international service learning programs for peace/reconciliation.

My Thesis

Service learning, when PROPERLY implemented, can become a powerful pedagogy in developing students' (and faculty's) CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCY and prepare them to deal with a world that is increasingly GLOBALIZED, but deeply divided by racial, ethnic, class, gender, religious and other cultural DIFFERENCES.

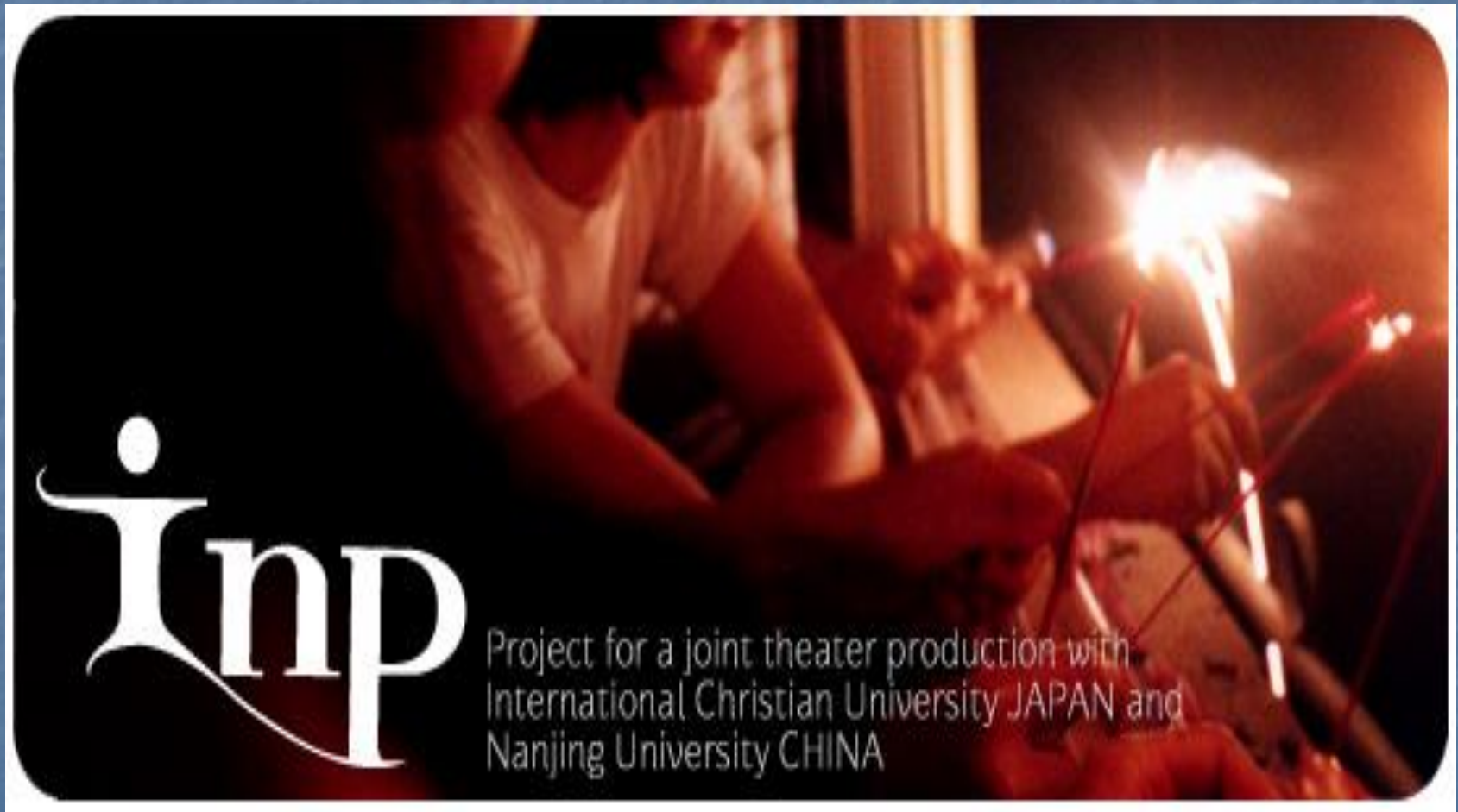
My Own Teaching Experience



Globalization

Like it or not: globalization has come knocking on our door. Increasingly, people have little choice about whether to be globally engaged. Soon, most of us will either work for an international organization, sell to or buy from one, or compete with one. As a result, we are now more directly involved than ever before with the array of differences presented by the world's cultures.

The ICU-Nanjing Univ. Project



inp

Project for a joint theater production with
International Christian University JAPAN and
Nanjing University CHINA

Zouba! (Let's Go!)

In January of 2005, International Christian University (ICU) students have participated in service-learning programs in China organized by the Amity Foundation and Nanjing University (NJU). ICU and NJU students jointly produced a new play called *Zouba! (Let's Go!)* which was recently performed in Tokyo (January 07) and in Nanjing (March 26, 07). The play portrays a group of students from Japan and China, trying to understand each other by overcoming cultural and language differences.

“Students’ Play Bypasses China-Japan Tensions”

NPR “Morning Edition” Story, January 27, 2007

“That first night we all went to dinner,” she (Michiyo Oi, who wrote much of the script) recalls. “We sat around talking, and I figured they must be wondering what we were thinking. Each of us introduced ourselves, and when my turn came, I started to talk about the war, about what a shame it was that we did such terrible things. The air froze. Until then we were all laughing. The moment I mentioned the war, everyone went pale. The Chinese students looked at me as if they couldn’t believe the way I’d brought this up.”

Benefits of Cross-Cultural and International Service Learning

- ◆ It offers exposure to communities that differ from their own by race, age, class, language, culture or life experiences;
- ◆ It reduces parochial attitude or ethnocentric biases among students;
- ◆ It promotes cross-cultural competency (knowledge and a set of skills);
- ◆ It contributes to international understanding and reconciliation.

Dual Citizenship

Below is a quote from the document of "National Service Scheme of India:"

Those who live in the 21st century will have dual citizenship---one, each person's national citizenship and the other the global citizenship. The former is a legal status represented by documents such as the passport while the other is more a set of personality traits, attitudes and values operating in the relationships with peoples of other cultures and countries.

"NOT ME BUT YOU": Profile of a Service-Learning Programme in India

Cultural Competency

Cross-cultural literacy or competency is defined as the personal capabilities, underlying characteristics and behaviors that help students navigate the emotional and intellectual adaptation across national boundaries.

Essential Cross-Cultural Skills

- ❖ Cognitive: to draw upon more than one perspective when judging events
- ❖ Affective: to respect cultural differences and break apart stereotypes
- ❖ Behavioral: to commit ourselves to global issues such as global warming and service to the world

Acquiring Cross-Cultural Skills through Service Learning

Global citizenship or cross-cultural skills is not a birthright. It requires an open mind, dedication and experience to gain that citizenship, so to speak, or acquire those skills in service learning courses. Otherwise, pitfalls of various kinds will occur in the process.

Pitfall #1: Being Superficial

- Some of our students have the notion that somehow the rest of the world is simply a kind of theme-parked extension of the classroom, out there for our own use and ready to be discarded (except for the postcards and the photographs) when the credit-bearing semester is over;
- Occasionally, I have found students talking about their service-learning class as a glorified vacation or a visit to a theme park, a sign of the so-called academic tourism.

Pitfall #2: Being Exploitive

- Some students might take service-learning merely as an opportunity to feel good about themselves or build up their CV's;
- A service learning class could end up as one of those so-called “island study abroad programs,” in which our students stick together with no real interaction with or giving little back to the local communities.

Pitfall #3: Being Destructive

- ◆ Culture-bound behavior is destructive and dangerous in a cross-cultural or international context in various ways. Some legitimate questions could be asked about the concept of “help.” Historically, the missionaries who came to Asia thought they were servants of Christ. In fact, some had used the concept of help (service) to conquer, rule, and dominate others in Christ’s name.
- ◆ If not done right, service-learning sometimes could reinforce student stereotypes about “us” and the “others.” Worst still, our faculty and students might try to make other people in our own image, or use service as a way of exercising their sense of generosity or beneficence (read paternalism, patronization or “colonial mentality”).

A Checklist for the Ethical Conduct of Service-Learning

Not meant to be exhaustive, I have developed a preliminary checklist grouped under four broadly-defined categories: (1) power-related issues; (2) capacity-related issues; (3) equity/reciprocity-related issues; and, (4) sustainability-related issues.

Code of Ethics

- Respect each person and believe in the inherent capacity of every human being;
- Remember you are a guest in someone else's life;
- Learn to be kind and caring, not controlling and exploitive;
- Observe before talking; when entering a community, never assume that we have all the answers to their needs and problems;
- Be careful to do no harm; do not impose changes not asked for;
- Be aware of power relationships;
- Seek to understand before seeking to be understood;
- Exercise patience and remember it takes both time and commitment to effect positive social change and develop cross-cultural competency.

The Meaning of Service

The fruit of Silence is Prayer

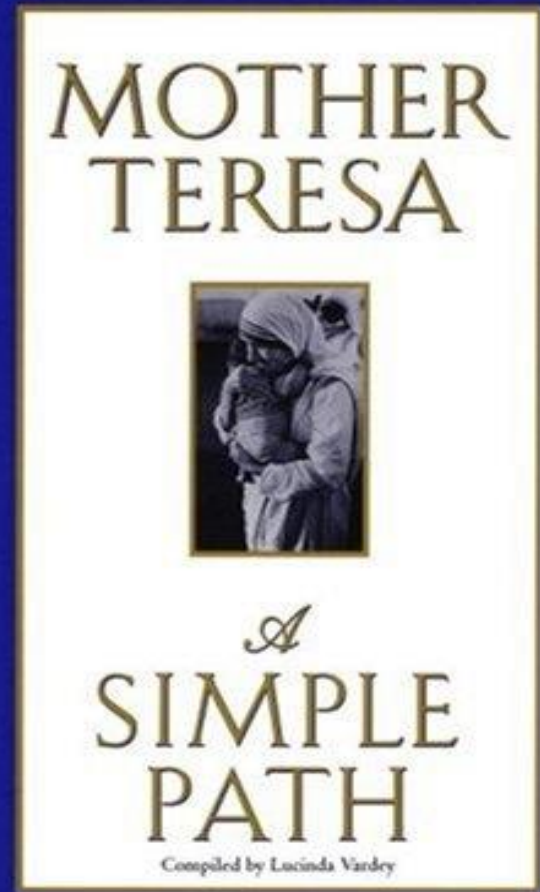
The fruit of Prayer is Faith

The fruit of Faith is Love

The fruit of Love is Service

The fruit of Service is Peace

---Mother Teresa---



Final Challenge

Unless we are doing more in promoting peace, social justice and cross-cultural literacy through international service learning, we are not bringing out the full potential of this powerful teaching philosophy and pedagogy in Asian higher education.