

# The Perspective Transformation through Overseas Voluntary Services – Based on the Experiences of “Going back to hometown” at Myanmar.



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# Introduction

## Background

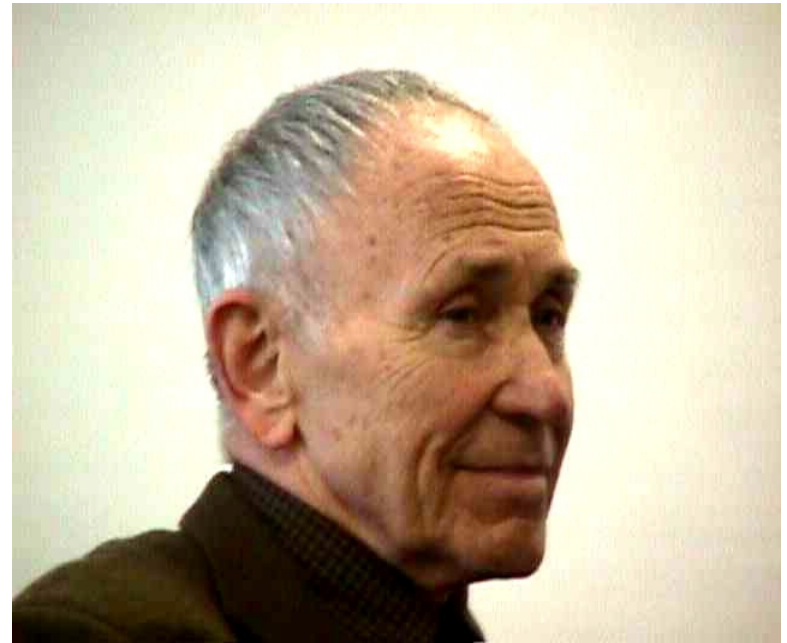
- It is an important issue of global competence that college students should pursue diversity and civic responsibility.
- Does the voluntary service learning experience can help students to pay more attention to social justice and to take action in the related problems ?

# Mezirow's Transformation learning theory

■ Based on cognitive and developmental psychology

Jack Mezirow views learning as

“ the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action ”



Jack Mezirow  
Emeritus Professor of Adult  
and Continuing Education at  
Teachers College, Columbia  
University ([www1.nl.edu](http://www1.nl.edu))

## perspective transformation

- Central to Mezirow's thinking is the process of making meaning from our experiences through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection.
- He named this process *perspective transformation* to reflect change within the core or central meaning structures through which we make sense of the daily life of our experiences (Dirks, 1998) .

## Research Purpose

- What and how the “Going back to hometown” program have influenced the overseas students from Myanmar who Participated the program in 2008 summer.
- This study investigated the students’ perspective transformation, such as political, ethnic, educational and other hometown issues as well as future life based on the experience of hometown service program .

# Research Method

- **Qualitative research with depth - interview method**
- This study adopt qualitative approach and takes advantage of in-depth interview method to collect data, which focus on the meaning of hometown service, and considers the process of impact and reflection on the formation of new ideas , trying to explain the forms of perspective transformation.

## Service Setting and Interview Samples

- The Myanmar hometown service program began in 2007 by NTU student club named International Affairs Society (IAS).
- The mission of IAS aims at participating in various international events to develop an international perspective of students.
- The 2008 service group is made up of 14 members, including 6 Myanmar Chinese overseas students and 8 Taiwan students. They had been in Myanmar from August 7 to August 28.
- They provided the services of teaching guidance about the life education , health education , and medical care for students (nursery, primary and secondary school) and carrying out field study in Lashio (臘戍).

# Interview Samples

Name	Gender	School	Department	Grade	Have ever taken service-learning course	Volunteer Myanmar Service	Volunteer In-campus	Volunteer Off-campus	Part time job
A	M	NTU	Foreign language	Senior	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
B	F	NTU	Nursing	Senior	Y	N	N	N	Y
C	F	NTU	Geography	Senior	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
D	F	NTNU	Education	Senior	N	N	Y	Y	Y



## **Study implement and the role of researchers**

- Established the Research team including three members engaged in service-learning programs.
- semi-structured interviews were conducted with every participant, which emphasis on self-concept, the relationship with others and career-related objectives.
- Researchers don't involve in back to hometown program but play the role of co-constructer of the students' stories.
- member checks with study participants and debriefing with peers helped ensure consistency and trustworthiness in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

- 1 Before leaving Myanmar they were sure that fate was responsible for the life.
- The four students had not been to Lashio , only know a few of Lashio information from textbooks, and never observe the local affairs carefully.
  - They took everything for granted until left Myanmar.
  - The experience of leaving home and studying aboard in Taiwan, raised the passion to provide service to their hometown.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### 2 The types of perspective transformation :

After completing hometown service program, some forms of perspective transformation occurred, and which are different individually.

The types of perspective transformation are included as personal changes, moral issues, cultural issues, intellectual growth, spiritual gain and future expectation.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ **Personal changes**

Problem-Solving for unpredicted changes encourage their motivation to complete the new tasks.

- The students were aware of laying down their own subjectivity in the partnership with the team interaction .
- Developing more communication skills.
- Eestablishing self-confidence in the process of helping Taiwan students.

D student who dedicated herself into this activity recalled that:

*During the service a lot of courses needed to be changed instantly, and it is a great challenge either for cooperation or teamwork.*

*I never danced before and it has been taught with Burmese language. But when I began with the course, all I could think was how to let those children play more fun and overcome the beginning of nervous emotion.*

## C student mentioned:

*During discussion, I felt that most of Myanmar students would insist on their own opinions and it took times. Thus, I really admired our leader, who always respects each opinion, making final integration. I think every one should put aside his subjectivity, and listen to the voices of others.*

## A student mentioned:

*I am proud of the spirit of Taiwan students, because they don't have peculiar look on the political instability in Myanmar.*

*When we work together with Taiwan students, we have the duty to explain the situation of Myanmar. And every place we arrived, the first thing to do is urge them to call back to their parents. With a cooperative partnership, it is very important for me to set up my self-confidence.*

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ **moral issues**

The development of care and justice perspective is going beyond ethnic groups.

- They all agree that except for a few of government officials who have money and power, almost all of the Burmese people are extremely poor.
- The poverty problem leads children to be out of school, the lack of qualified teachers and the limitation of education system.
- It is impossible to make a fortune without the help of the government.



# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ **cultural issues**

Stereotype challenge to expand the horizons

- Most of overseas Chinese lived together in the north Myanmar, and they had little contact with other ethnic groups.
- There is ethnic discrimination between overseas Chinese and the Myanmar officials.
- An example of the challenge and the perspective transformation .

While dinner with those nursery staff, the A student overcomes his fear to eat the local Burmese food.

In the following services, he found out that he can play with those Burmese children with nature attitude;

after home, he can look for those previous friends of junior high school, which means a new interpersonal relationship, and is also a great breakthrough for him.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ Intellectual growth

They put forward the views of the root of the problem.

- The lack of information in Myanmar, and to children, is unfair to their future life. Children need to know that in addition to gargle with salt water, there is another possibility. ( e.g. keep the oral hygiene using the toothbrush ) .
- Calm disruption is in order to open the window.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ **spiritual gain**

Confess from my own heart - a good sense of well-being, but also know how to treasure.

After completing the voluntary service program, B student feels her own freedom to enjoy life in comparison of the intrinsic link.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

### ➤ **Future Expectation**

Across tribal, increase capacity and expectation to the future of Myanmar.

For the D student, she believes that :

*Although the most important issue is the lake of qualified teacher, I intend to in charge of educational policy rather than serves as a teacher.*

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A student said :

*I think I want to go back to what I am and would like to engage in business, because the company can help his employees in training, which can also enhance the status of their education.*

*I will try to cross the line between Burma and Chinese, and I would like to care about the children in Myanmar. I really want to do something for them, not just for the Chinese.*

*I am ready to graduate in June. I want to apply for the exchange student of Shanghai, because China is also a place that I need to break through.*

# Results

## Major findings of the study

- 3 The study also found that, in the political point of view, the students thought of that they were just a Chinese lives in Myanmar. They are Myanmar nationals but not citizens. So, the self-identity to their country has not yet been integrated, while continuing to change.

# Results

## Major findings of the study

- 4 The hometown voluntary service program may be viewed as a stage of critical reflection, or a mirror to illuminate.

By contrast with situational observation and reflection, there were understanding and belief that contributed to the perspective transformation , which is a key factor.



# Conclusion

- The hometown voluntary service program provides the students involved in service and in partnership with the team interaction.
- It is also like a mirror to let students see what the past experiences meaning to them.
- The situational observation and reflection contributed to the perspective transformation.
- However, the impact of pre-experience to the outcomes of voluntary Service- learning , need to be clarified.

Thanks for your attention