

“Global Health Symposium – Bridging Different Worlds –” and Learning Strategy Related to Global Health

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Abstract The aim of this paper is to introduce pioneering learning methods in global health and discuss strategies for learning about global health. This report is based on my experience as an observer attendee at the 7th Global Health Symposium “Bridging Different Worlds” in India from April 17th to 29th, 2017.

The symposium was held at Manipal University in Karnataka’s Udupi district in India. Three universities participated: McMaster University, Ontario, Canada, Maastricht University, Limburg, Netherlands, and Manipal University. Almost two hundred fifty interdisciplinary students attended.

The symposium conference featured five lectures on the first weekend in which students learned mainly through group work. The role of faculty in the symposium was to provide instructions before starting the program by presenting essential minimum information and suggestions only to promote learning among the students subjectively. Student volunteers assumed leadership roles for each group and for the overall symposium.

At this symposium, students learned the importance of communicating with others in fieldwork at the actual site, which is the basis of active research and enhancement in global health fields. Strategies for enhancing global health learning were discussed.

Introduction

The School of Health Sciences at Niigata University has been promoting international exchange with Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka and McMaster University, Canada for over ten years. During the Sri Lanka visit, students can experience first-hand the circumstances of people with traditional medicine and developing facilities, and in the Canadian study tour they can experience living and learning in another developed country as a bilateral exchange.

Although the focus of global health tends to be on pandemics such as SARS and other infectious diseases, basic health is actually a key global issue related to economic development, global security, effective governance and the promotion of human rights. Since the exchange people and the instant exchange of information are now borderless, health and related issues have become multilateral concerns

in our daily lives. Therefore, what should we be learning as health professionals?

In response to ongoing discussions about the contents and competency of global health education^{1,2)} and the challenges graduates are expected to face, McMaster University has proposed and developed original learning methods in their global health education program. It was received the 2015 Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) Panorama Award for Outstanding International Education³⁾. This is a report of the 7th Global Health Symposium “Bridging Different Worlds” in Manipal India, April 2017, which is a main component of global health education at McMaster University. And it was discussed how to model and develop a global health program in graduate school based on my experiences as an observer at the event.

Contents

I . Overview of the pioneering Global Health Program at McMaster University

McMaster University's Master of Science in Global Health is a one-year graduate program established in 2004 by the Faculty of Health Sciences, which is known as a pioneer in the world⁴⁾. The program follows the 'McMaster Model', which is based on student-centered, problem-based learning (PBL), and uses a unique approach to transcontinental issues. Seventy students enroll in the fall term every year.

The program collaborates on a global scale with Maastricht University in the Netherlands and Manipal University in India and the three schools maintain strong and flexible relationships. In the fall and winter term, the program combines lectures on basic contents in face-to-face classrooms at each university with the experience of joining virtual teams with students from all three universities via international networking tools. Then, in the spring term, this symposium is held. This immersive learning environment fosters career skills for a globalized world.

(<https://globalhealth.mcmaster.ca/program-overview/program-requirements>)

The Global Health Program at Maastricht University is a one-year master course offered by the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences. Eighty graduate students enroll yearly and attend the symposium. (<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/master/master-global-health/ranking-recognition#Global-Health-has-an-innovative-character>) About one hundred graduate students belong to the Department of Public Health's two-year master course at Manipal University. (<https://manipal.edu/doph/programs/program-list/mph-master-of-public-health.html>)

II . Overview of the "Global Health Symposium"

1. Location

Manipal University, Karnataka's Udupi district is located on the western side of southern India.

2. Participant Students

Almost two hundred fifty students gathered from the three universities. They learned about global health practices mainly through group work. Twenty-three groups were assigned from six clusters, which were defined in advance as occupational health, environmental health, traditional health

practices, reproductive and child health, infectious disease surveillance and mental health.

Depending on each student's focus he/she was assigned to one group in the same cluster. Each group consisted of 11-12 students, three from each university who were coordinated among the students from the same university. One of the three was designated as the group leader. The group leader was responsible for guiding the schedule, facilitating the beginning of group work, and so on.

3. Contents and Management (Figure 1)

(1) Schedule

The program lasted two weeks in total in April 2017 (Table 1).

(2) Learning Activities

There were only five lectures from keynote and plenary speakers featured during the first weekend of the Symposium Conference.

Students learned mainly through group work. They were able to understand the situation in Indian more deeply via discussions with Indian students in same group while making system maps. Group planning sessions, stakeholder interviews, dilemma workshops and community visits were done as group work assigned according to focused themes.

1) Personal research activities

During weekend conferences on days 6 and 7, each student, with the exception of 1st year students, presented individual research proposals with the support of a supervisor from his/her own university. Students then received questions and suggestions related to research activities from faculty members of Manipal University and the other universities, as well as from the audience.

2) Field orientation

The purpose of field orientation was to provide a vehicle to allow students to work in diverse groups while giving them the opportunity to learn to work with others and take advantage of each other's various backgrounds. It also gave students exposure to the local environment and to part of the Indian health care system (Table 2).

The final event in the symposium consisted of field orientation presentations (Day 13). Each group was given 30 minutes for their presentation and discussion. Before the presentations, all groups were required to submit a report on their results, which was checked by faculty who then asked

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questions or made comments. At the same time, students needed to prepare summaries of their experiences with reflections on working with international teams and a discussion of the skills and attitudes necessary to work with an international global health team. They were also asked to describe some critical incidents that illustrated how group work contributed to the development of open and self-conscious attitudes among group members.

(3) Role of faculty

Before starting the program, a “Faculty Meeting” was

held for the faculties of both McMaster University and Maastricht University. Five or six faculty members from each university attended, some of whom were replaced during the program. A coordinator from McMaster University had negotiated and adjusted the arrangements with the other universities in advance. She had also prepared a “Faculty Instruction Guide” that outlined the plan for the whole symposium, described the symposium’s objectives, each educational activity and the roles of faculty members in each of the activities. Other faculty members from Manipal University had been oriented on a separate day prior to the



Figure 1

Upper left: Manipal University Campus, right: venue for the Weekend Conference

Middle left: lecture, right: opening ceremony of the Weekend Conference

Lower left: faculty members from McMaster University and Maastricht University, middle: faculty members from Manipal University as they danced at the Welcome Dinner, right: students of the three universities dressed up

Table 1 Symposium Schedule

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Day 1	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Student Committee Meetings
	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Foundations 2 Pitches
	6:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Welcome Dinner
Day 2	9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Introduction and Symposium Program Overview
	1:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Group Planning Sessions
		Stakeholders Interviews and Observations Preparation
		System Mapping Instruction
	5:00 pm onwards	Free Time
Day 3	9:00 am – 12:30 pm	Group Planning Sessions
		Stakeholder Interviews and Observation Preparation
		System Mapping Instruction
	1:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Group Planning Sessions
		Dilemma Workshops
	5:00 pm till sundown	Evening at the Beach (optional)
Day 4	9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Community Visits
	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Faculty Expert Lectures
	6:00 pm onwards	Manipal Student Daily Life Exercise
Day 5	9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Excursion (optional)
	1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Thesis/SP Presentation Preparation and Practice
	4:00 pm onwards	Free time
Day 6	9:00 am – 5:30 pm	Weekend Conference Day 1
	7:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Conference Dinner
Day 7	9:00 am – 5:30 pm	Weekend Conference Day 2
	5:30 pm onwards	Free Time
Day 8	9:00 am – 3:15 pm	Stakeholder Meetings
	3:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Group/Faculty Meetings
	6:00 pm onwards	Free time
Day 9	9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Community Visits
	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Independent Group Work
	5:00 pm till sundown	Evening at the Beach (optional)
Day 10	9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Community Visits
	1:30 pm – 4:30 pm	Alumni Meetings
	1:30 pm – 4:30 pm	Group/Faculty Meetings
	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Networking Sessions (optional)
	6:00 pm onwards	Free Time
Day 11	9:00 am – 1:00 pm	Community Visits
	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Optional Workshops
	5:00 pm onwards	Free Time
Day 12	9:00 am – 7:00 pm	Finalized Field Orientation Presentations and Reports
	7:00 pm	Presentations and Reports Due
	7:00 pm onwards	Free Time
Day 13	8:45 am – 3:30 pm	Topic Groups` Final Presentations
	3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Announcement of Foundations 2 Winners and Closing Ceremony
	6:30 pm onwards	Informal Dinner
Day 14	All day	Departure

Table 2 Places of Field Orientation in Each Cluster

Cluster	Occupational Health	Environmental Health	Traditional Health Practices	Reproductive and Child Health	Infectious Disease Surveillance	Mental Health
Places Four in each cluster	Cashew Factory	Dumpsite	SDM Udyavar (Psychiatric Hospital)	Dr. TMA Pai Hospital, Karkala	District Surveillance Office- Udupi	A V Baliga Memorial Hospital
	Tile Factory	Slums	Department of Ayurveda-Kasturba Hospital	Rural Maternity and Child Welfare Home	Integrating Counseling and Testing Centre- Kasturba Hospital	Asare & Hombelaku Home for Differently Able Persons
	Fish Canning Factory	Water Treatment Plant	Parika Ayurveda Institute	Anganwadi-Kalmadi	DOTS- Kasturba Hospital	Department of Psychiatry- Kasturba Hospital
	Pasteurization Plant	Hospital Waste Management	Department of Yoga	Anganwadi-Badagabettu	Manipal Virology Centre	ASHA Nilaya

Table 3 Student Volunteer Committees

Group	Tasks
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with students through daily news letter to inform student, faculties about daily symposium activities. • Printing in-charge
Weekend Conference and Final Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate student to introduce and thank speakers. • Manage student presentation rooms and perform technical function in presentation rooms. • Coordinating with venue and hall in-charge members for technical support.
Networking Session Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and organize the Network Sessions. • Communicate with students in advance about the purpose and format of the session and let them know about any advance preparation required. • Facilitate the session on the day ensuring that students get the most benefit out of the experience. • Liaise with the faculty support people and involve faculty as required in the session.
Optional Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise the optional workshops to Maastricht and McMaster students. • Perform the registration function (taking names and payments) • Provide a list of participants for each of the workshops to the organizers. • Attend the workshop, take attendance and be the liaison with the host organization or person giving the workshop. (Attendance will be assist with planning this activity for future years.)

Table 4 Working in an International Context

What	When	How
Human Bingo	Welcome Dinner	Before the dinner starts you will each receive a Bingo card that you will fill in with information gathered from other students. The aim is to get to know each other quickly, as it forces you to mingle and talk to those you do not know.
Amazing Symposium Race	Orientation	In Groups, you will play a game fashioned after the Amazing Race designed to increase your mutual understanding and to enhance your skills for working in international teams.
Manipal Student Daily Life Exercise	Day 4	You will assemble in your Groups. The Manipal students in each group will take their colleagues to visit an aspect of their own daily life choosing whatever aspect they think is most suitable.
Networking Sessions	Day 10	The Student Volunteer Committee will organize a Networking session where you will have a chance to meet other delegates, find areas of common interest and establish useful worldwide Global Health contacts to take them with you as alumni.
Optional Workshops Yoga Clothing Indian Dance Ayurveda Philosophy	Day 11	Optional Workshops have been organized for Maastricht and McMaster students to learn about an element of the Indian Culture. Each of the workshops will begin with a talk followed by a practical hands-on session or demonstration. Students are asked to sign up on the first day for the workshops of your choice. The cost is Rs 400 per student to offset costs.

program's commencement.

Faculty from all three universities supported students throughout the symposium only by proposing essential minimum information and suggestions.

(4) Role of student volunteers

Before starting the symposium, second-year students from Manipal University and first-year students from the other two universities coordinated various situations and volunteered as student leaders. There were also four student committees in charge of communication, weekend conferences/final presentations, networking events and optional workshops. Each committee consisted of students from all three universities and they held a committee meeting on Day 1, during which members of each committee met and discussed their roles with faculty facilitators (Table 3). The committees took the lead in publishing daily newsletters

during the symposium, managed and carried out weekend/ final presentations and managed optional events.

(5) Promotion of understanding in an international context

There were several activities that were focused on working in an international context. On the first day after the introduction, students engaged in activities designed to facilitate teamwork and enhance the overall experience (Table 1). On Day 1, "Human Bingo" and the "Amazing Symposium Race" aimed to promote interaction and communication in each group and they contained quizzes on topics and knowledge from around the world as well as a game for aligning the initials of student's names (Table 4). The "Manipal Student Daily Life Exercise" on Day 4 was guided by Indian students to teach other students in same group about daily life in India. At the end of the symposium, there were also optional sessions in which students could

experience Indian culture, which included yoga, clothing, Indian dance, and Ayurveda (Day 11, Optional workshops).

A welcome dinner (Day 1), a party after the Symposium Conference (Day 7, optional) and an Informal Dinner (Day 13) were held. Over the course of the symposium, visiting faculty members' and students' attire had gradually become more colorful like the clothes worn by Indian people, which was a sign of progress representing an increased understanding of Indian culture.

(6) Transportation, Accommodation and Facilities

Students who had received orientation in their own country arrived at Manipal University on their own. Accommodation for students from both McMaster University and Maastricht University were assigned rooms in international student dormitories in air-conditioned facilities on campus. Faculty stayed a hotel only a few minutes from campus on foot. During the symposium, students prepared their own meals. There were also cafeterias on campus as well as small restaurants and fast food shops outside campus.

All lectures, presentations and group work took place at locations on campus with classrooms for student presentations and halls for conference speakers assigned accordingly. Field orientation was well-coordinated. Each of the six clusters was assigned different places to visit in the community located near Manipal University. Students were mixed beyond their cluster if they had been assigned a place to visit in near area, and they travelled in buses provided by the university.

Discussions

1. The importance of communication

Students were not expected to do much work during the actual symposium. One of their tasks was to give a personal presentation on research activities, which was to be prepared in advance, and the other tasks were small groups learning activities.

It has already been pointed out that communication is a core component in global activities^{1,5)}. Non-English speakers tend to believe that merely the ability to use English is necessary to break the barriers of communication with foreigners. At this symposium, I found that it is not that simple.

When initiating the group work, it was necessary to communicate with group members from all three universities to begin learning to communicate about global health. Although all the students from Canada, the Netherlands and India were able to communicate with each other without a language barrier, unlike Japanese students, they still encountered difficulties. Participating members could all function in the language, but they came from diverse countries of origin and backgrounds. Even the Canadian and Dutch students were sometimes puzzled when communicating with each other. Student volunteers or others acted as leaders with minimal instructions from faculty. The students played leadership roles by thinking for themselves. They persisted in trying to share information and thoughts, and lead the direction of the discussions even after short periods of silence without faculty intervention, and they did it well. In similar situations in Japan, faculty may want to advise students, and students may want to reach their goal soon, without struggle and therefore wait for advice from their supervisors. This might be due to a lack of this kind of experience. On the other hand, Japanese students might be able to perform these tasks similarly, if they have the ability to communicate in English with confidence without hesitation which had pointed out⁶⁾. So it might be essential previous experience in subjective learning, such as that of PBL which originated at McMaster University⁷⁾. I think it is a question of how to design a program that motivates students to learn active communication skills in a safe situation without criticism and hesitation. Therefore, it should be pointed out that active learning methods are not employed enough among faculties.

2. Experiencing being at an actual site

Many cross-cultural programs in which students can cooperate with group members promote understanding in an international context. After having discussions with group members who belonged to the same and different universities, the students shared experiences unique to the actual site. Community visits, stakeholder meetings, lectures at conferences, etc. were all activities that could stimulate the students to broaden their interests.

General academic sessions and the “Weekend Conference”, which included student presentations, both received comments from students and faculty from different countries and as usual, some were negative. The experiences allowed

participants to discover different viewpoints and contexts that reflected different cultures and regions, giving them direct exposure to a global perspective.

Standing on an actual site enriches experience in so many ways: feeling and smelling the wind blow, acclimating to the temperature and humidity, sharing meals and enjoying shopping etc. In the beginning, I was surprised by many things, for example, it was so crowded and there seemed to be no order in the traffic conditions, food tasted intense and it was so hot and humid. However, after a while I recognized many similarities with our own way of living. “Differences” turned into interesting “discoveries”, which made me start to think about how to make a bridge between these differences.

3. Learning strategy about global health

The definition of global health and competency for global health professionals has been discussed^{1,2)}, but first and foremost, it should be essential to experience standing on the actual site to discuss issues with each other under actual circumstances. Opportunities to learn should be offered on an individual basis in addition to being part of an educational curriculum. An example of a program offered to individuals interested in foreign countries is Tobitate, produced by the ministry of education, Japan³⁾. Additionally, we should consider offering the opportunity to participate in a global symposium to our students who hope to learn about and work in global health fields.

To educate human resources personnel who can work in global health, it is necessary to reconsider learning English communication skills. As participating students will be expected to discuss focused themes with each other the ability discuss subjectively is important. Before starting global fieldwork, students should be provided with the opportunity to practice thinking under safe conditions, so subjective learning methods like PBL could be beneficial for them.

IT technology reaches every corner of the world and information can be shared instantly, making the world much smaller. One of the most important concerns we face is how to use information and what to use it for. Global health is an issue affecting various interdisciplinary professions⁹⁾. Discussing situations deeply is necessary for a mutual understanding based on differences among countries from both the West and the East, both developed and developing.

If Japanese students with unique perspectives from a developed Asian country are able to participate in international symposiums, discussions and learning among participating students may become wider and even more interesting as the area expands from a triangle to a square. In order to meet global health needs, we need to discuss curricula related to global health, arrange the subjects, teaching methods and contents accordingly, and construct productive relationships in the field of global health education.

Conclusion

The “Global Health Symposium - Bridging different Worlds” was a well-designed strategy to facilitate learning in global health involving multiple universities and representing multiple countries. In order to enhance global health education, we need to focus on communication skill instead of fearing the English barrier and provide students with opportunities to experience interdisciplinary environments and practice working in global health at global sites.

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