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Relying on Agile Management to Develop an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program and Navigate the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This article identifies the value and practices of agile management in business and higher education and provides a possible agile management framework for universities to utilize while trying to navigate developing international exchange and dual degree program opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework relies upon agile management practices gleaned and shaped at a school of business of a regional university and modifies the process to fit these turbulent times. The article provides an example of a four-step agile process in this School of Business which followed "the Law of the Customer," "the Law of the Small Team," and "the Law of the Network" to develop an international exchange and dual degree program. Additionally, the article reviews the students' feedback to measure the program's impact on their education, life, or cultural experiences. This agile process can be implemented by other universities to develop their international education programs, especially in light of the global health crisis that is gripping the world at this moment.

Keywords: COVID-19; agile management; international education; exchange program; dual degree program

COVID-19 and its Impact on International Education

As coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) marches across the globe, every industry has been impacted in some significant and tangible way. Higher education and its international exchange programs have not escaped the ravages of the global pandemic. Academic institutions' foreign exchange programs were either eliminated or reshaped in a matter of days as the crisis slowly unfurled. Travel restrictions and health risks have threatened to make study abroad difficult. School administrators and students were left to navigate ever-changing federal and international laws that determined their fate whether they had to return to their home country or look to remain in place in their host country. Students lamented the abrupt change of study abroad plans and mourned the loss of the immersion experience, but fully understood the gravity of the moment and complied with the federal rules and regulations placed upon international travel (CDC, 2020; Durden, 2020; Redden, 2020).

Grappling with the "new normal," institutions are still charged with inculcating global competencies in various programs to ensure that their students are well-prepared for the global marketplace. In that vein, colleges and universities will need to either strengthen existing relationships with sister schools or forge ahead to create new opportunities for their students. To do this, individuals in charge of creating dynamic foreign exchange programs may seek creative alternatives to traditional ones. This is critical because international education remains important to provide global contexts in learning experiences under the guidelines of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) Standard 13.

> For any teaching and learning model employed, the school provides a portfolio of experiential learning opportunities for business students, through either formal coursework or extracurricular activities, which allow them to engage with faculty and active business leaders. These experiential learning activities provide exposure to business and management in both local and global contexts (AACSB International, 2018, p.40).

Also, these standards mandate which educators supply documentation of engagement, innovation, and impact in business programs. At a regional university underpinning our dynamic curriculum is our commitment to AACSB International Standards through our Assurance of Learning Goals. We have four goals that all our majors should be able to do once they graduate. The four goals are:

Goal 1: Effective Communicators

Goal 2: Integration of Knowledge across Business Disciplines

Goal 3: Critical Thinking

Goal 4: Global, Cultural and Ethical Perspective.

Specifically, our students for Goal 4 should be able to identify global, cultural, and ethical challenges facing management in doing business in the international arena.

How can we carry out this goal in northwest Louisiana? We, of course, accomplish this through assignments, such as multi-cultural projects, simulations, and experiential learning projects, etc. (Liao et al., 2019), but we also, through agile management, work to allow our students to attend schools around the world.

Agile management relates to the quick response between business, industry, and education to the many challenges and changes daily in the corporate climate. Agile, by the face meaning of this word, is the ability to create and respond to change (Prejean, Kilcoyne, Liao & Parker, 2019). It is a way of dealing with and succeeding in, an uncertain and turbulent environment (Agile Alliance, n.d.). According to Project Management Institute (2017), agile can be “an approach, a method, a practice, a technique, or a framework” depending on the situation where it is used. According to Denning (2018), organizations that have embraced agile have three core characteristics: the law of the customer, the small team, and the network.

The School of Business uses this agile process for the development of its international exchange and dual degree programs. One recent example of the utilization of this agile process was to increase our visibility in China. We decided that our students should explore China and allow students from China to learn about the United States via our school. We did so because this exchange would enhance our classroom discussions and provide tools for both the U.S. and Chinese students to identify issues in the international business arena. As such, our article will explain how agile management guided our mission of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our university, and a prominent university in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China, to provide exchange and a dual degree program for these types of learning opportunities. In our article, we will define agile management, relate agile management to our process, explain our course matching process, and share the outcomes of our implemented MOU. Additionally, we will share possible modifications to this process that may be made to cope with the coronavirus pandemic to continue the work of educating our students internationally. We hope that after one reads this article other universities that have not yet developed international higher education partners may implement a similar agile process. In doing so, other universities can, despite the global health crisis, stretch their students' global business imaginations.

Literature Review

The Characteristics of Agile Management

To begin, we decided that there should be a deep dive into the essence or characteristics of agile management. According to Denning (2016a), in an agile organization, "self-organizing teams" are continuously providing new value for customers. Work is done in a repetitive format with continuous interaction from small team members working together using resources of the organization to complete projects in short timelines which is essential in business today. It also allows teams to work autonomously and creatively increasing loyalty and efficiency in the organization. The organizational structure of the team is different from the traditional bureaucratic teams because the traditional organizational bureaucratic structure cannot respond to fast changes. All teams work to solve problems as quickly as possible, but the agile team can solve immediate and long-term problems quickly. Also, agile management's primary process is different from traditional management because it primarily focuses on delivering innovation and value to customers rather than making money for shareholders and top executives.

According to Denning (2018), organizations that have embraced agile have three core characteristics:

(1) The Law of the Small Team. Work should, in principle, be done in small, autonomous, cross-functional teams working in short cycles on small tasks and getting continuous feedback from the ultimate customer or end-user. Big and complex problems are resolved by descaling them into tiny, manageable pieces.
(2) The Law of the Customer. The very purpose of a firm is to deliver value to customers rather than to stockholders.
(3) The Law of the Network. An agile organization is a fluid and transparent network of players that are collaborating toward a common goal of delighting customers.

Of the three laws, the first enables the organization to solve problems and update solutions constantly rather than going through long processes to make changes. The second law is the most important –it is the principle that makes sense of the other two and permits the greatest insight into why an Agile organization operates the way it does. Yet, the lynchpin of agile management is really the third law (Denning, 2018), because the customer-focused small team cannot achieve optimal high-performance impact unless and until the whole organization operates as an interactive network. It is when the three laws combine and focus on a common external goal that we get the explosive increment in value that comes from truly embracing Agile management.

Agile for Businesses

These three laws have been readily adopted by businesses. New agile processes allow businesses to flourish quickly and efficiently. The agile process increases team productivity and employee satisfaction while minimizing waste inherent in redundant meetings, repetitive planning, and excessive documentation (Rigby et al., 2016). For Example, Microsoft was able to decrease their production cycles from three years to three weeks by adapting to the agile process. In the process, the physical workspace was redesigned with open space, fresh vibrant colors, comfortable meeting rooms creating opportunities to encourage collaboration in a pleasant and informal atmosphere (Denning, 2015). Agile teams are more efficient giving more time for projects that are often omitted such as quality defects and low-value product features which increase revenue. Senior managers have more time to consider higher-value work such as creating and adjusting the corporate vision; prioritizing strategic initiatives; simplifying and focusing work; assigning the right people to tasks; increasing cross-functional collaboration; and removing impediments to progress with overall benefits to the teams and overall organization (Rigby, Sutherland, and Takeuchi, 2016).

Current businesses need to constantly change to adapt to the environment (Prejean, Liao, Aldredge, Parker, and Kilcoyne, 2020). Agile methodologies are spreading across a wild range of industries. John Deere uses agile methodology to develop new machines. Saab used agile methodology to produce new fighter jets. Intronis, a leader in cloud backup services, uses them in marketing. C.H. Robinson, a global third-party logistics provider, applies agile methodologies to human resources (Denning, 2016c). Mission Bell Winery uses them for everything from wine production to warehousing to running its senior leadership group (Rigby et al., 2016).

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, companies had to repurpose and adjust quickly and efficiently to survive. Notable organizations made agile adjustments to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- LVMH Moët Hennessy – Louis Vuitton SE, also known as LVMH repurposed their factories to produce hand sanitizers (Newburger, 2020).

- In a matter of seven days, an impromptu Facebook group of some 300 engineers and medical researchers banded together to design and produce an open-source ventilator using 3D-printed materials and other easy-to-access items (Etherington, 2020). In several nations across the globe, ventilators are in short supply, as demand for the equipment grows in the wake of the spread of COVID-19. The ventilator design will enter the validation process in Ireland, potentially paving the way for adoption elsewhere. Meanwhile, the group, called the Open Source COVID19 Medical Supplies community, is turning its attention to designs for other badly needed medical equipment like masks and sanitizers.
- One of the local breweries in Natchitoches Louisiana repurposed themselves to create sanitizers to remain open and support the community (Cook, 2020).

Management leaders who teach that teams with high satisfaction produce more and are more effective in increasing the bottom line for business. Customers changing priorities are the most important part of competition today and having efficient methods of quick delivery is no longer a choice, but crucial to ensure customer engagement and satisfaction. It often requires the engagement of team members from multiple disciplines as collaborative peers which builds mutual trust and respect in the organization.

Employees today are constantly training to keep up with the latest technology in all areas of business. For businesses to compete in the new world of technology and artificial intelligence, it will be necessary to streamline processes and change must be quick and valuable to the customer. Since the agile teams always need to deal with the uncertainties and complexity in the fast-changing environment and solve the recent problems which have not been done before, the team members must develop and enhance new skills in real-time. Learning-by-doing is necessary for the employees in agile organizations (Prejean, et al., 2019). There are many assessment tools including surveys, games, and checklists to determine what stage an organization or leadership team is currently in and the process of transformation into an agile system (Linders, n.d.).

Agile in Higher Education

Even before the pandemic began, higher education institutions worldwide were making changes in the aspects of educational settings, instruction means, teaching methods, international exposures, and culture to be agile to satisfy the more customized learning demand of the students (Liao et al., 2019). They embraced agile to cope with complexity, uncertainty, and fast changes in the market.

The United States

Higher education embraced agile with diverse educational settings, means, and methods. These changes have revised the definition of higher education three times in the 21st century in the years 2002, 2012, and 2017 in North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) under Code 611310 – “Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools.” Instruction may be provided in diverse settings, such as the establishment's or client's training facilities, educational institutions, the workplace, or the home, and through diverse means, such as correspondence, television, the Internet, or other electronic and distance-learning methods (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Classroom instruction also changed to a more agile method as a larger percentage of classes are offered online for the convenience of working students. The emergence of Virtual Colleges/Universities (VCUs) in the United States is an evidence of the change (Prejean, et al., 2019). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of international programs used online learning to deliver course content, connect students studying at different program sites and guide and assess student learning. The pandemic has made it necessary for institutions and organizations to be even more creative in applying online learning for students who have returned to the United States (Whalen, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, while international travels were banned or not applicable for study abroad tours, some universities were agile to apply the technology to give their students virtual international experience. In switch the original study abroad program to a virtual tour with online joint classrooms, virtual live cases and consulting projects, cultural online exchange with local students, and online talks with local companies. Table 1 gives an example of the study abroad program, Global Business Immersion in Indiana University Kelly School of Business (Dakhli & Kovacs, 2020) and how it was adapted to a virtual study abroad program in spring 2020. By applying the technology and designing activities to match the original on-site study abroad program, they switched this program to a virtual study abroad program in spring 2020 so students did not need leave U.S. to get the international experience.

Table 1

Spring 2020 Global Business Immersion Program at Kelly School of Business

Original Set up	**Adapted Set up**
March 9th – March 18th	March 9th – March 18th
3 credits	3 credits
16 classes on campus	2 classes on campus + 14 classes online
4 company visits	5 company online talks
one case competition with local students from FEA-USP	one case competition with 1 case competition with local students from FEA-USP, ESPM and UNIFESP
cultural experiences	cultural online exchange with local students
sightseeing	no sightseeing

Note. FEA-USP, ESPM and UNIFESP are three Brazilian universities.

Europe

The mindset of agile in education leaders can be traced to the “Bologna Declaration” which was signed on June 19, 1999, by the European Ministers of Education (Prejean, et al., 2019). The Bologna Declaration recognized the highest importance to ensure “higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge” (European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, 1999, p.2). The Bologna Declaration triggered the creation of new administrative procedures, new concepts for the description of curricula (Demartini, Enchev, Gapany, & Cudre-Maroux, 2013, p.5) and brought institutional changes which challenged tradition. For example, in Finland, the reforms emphasized competitiveness, efficiency, and accountability which contested the Nordic welfare state value of equality to build a more effective higher education system, integrate fragmented higher education and research activities, strengthen top-level and priority areas, and enhance the internationalization of higher education (Ursin, 2019, p.67).

Asia

Universities in Asia are also becoming agile through providing students flexibility, experiential learning, and international exposure in degree programs and curriculums.

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). In HKUST Business School, the undergraduate curriculum focuses on broad-based learning with a flexible structure where students acquire multidisciplinary skills relevant to the business environment. Over 80% of business students choose to specialize in two majors. Plus, they can also take non-business minors to broadens their skills and knowledge to meet the employers’ expectations once they graduate. They also have plenty of opportunities for international exposure (Study International Staff, 2019).

National University of Singapore (NUS). NUS Business School established an academically rigorous yet flexible curriculum with a diversity of global and experiential opportunities. Students are taught to possess multiple skill sets and solve new business problems, so they can excel in a challenging and demanding workforce. The school also strongly focuses on leadership and entrepreneurial education (Study International Staff, 2019).

SP Jain School of Global Management – Dubai. The school emphasizes real-world business skills alongside academic learning, ensuring that graduates are confident and hold the relevant expertise to compete in a global setting. Every business student is required to take up an Action Learning or Entrepreneurship Project where they work with local companies to submit consultant-level reports. Students can also participate in special global learning classes where business frameworks are analyzed and tested (Study International Staff, 2019).

While it appears that higher education institutions worldwide have initiated agile practices, we are unclear if they all follow the three agile laws as described earlier in this paper. According to Matthew Moran, head of the transformation at The Open University, "Universities are being slow to adopt agile development practices, let alone to think strategically about agile organization" (Linders, 2019). If higher education institutions embrace agile in general management, they should expect further reforms, especially in university and school level to flatten the hierarchical organization and to build the cross-functional teams (Prejean et al., 2019).

Putting into Practice: Agile Process at the School of Business to Build an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program

To prepare graduates to enter the 21st-century business environment, as mentioned, higher education institutions have realized global learning is now an essential part of the knowledge and skillsets needed by business graduates (Liao et al., 2019). At the School of Business, the mission includes developing international exchanges and dual degree programs. These efforts are to supply international educational opportunities to our diverse student population. To that end, we continuously seek to enter Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with various foreign universities that also pursue excellence in education. Each targeted university is committed to the following: preparing students to take on the jobs of the 21st Century, encouraging students to critically think about business problems, providing opportunities to collaboratively work on projects, teaching students how to effectively communicate, exposing students to global challenges and help them to identify ethical issues, and allowing students to learn multi-disciplinary approaches by crossing disciplines.

Targeting a Market - "The Law of the Customer"

In crafting our international exchange and dual degree programs, we insist that two universities in international education programs meet the requirements of our Assurance of Learning Goal #4. The goal encourages students to take advantage of going abroad studies as well as attract foreign students who wish to come to the United States to learn and partake in the myriad of cultures represented in each area. Students are invited to explore the ethics, religions, political stances that may be different from their home political, economic, and legal systems. This exchange of ideas is an invaluable credit in domestic education with a global perspective.

When higher education institutions decide to go global, the process is similar to a business going global through the international market through export and import. By identifying the value of MOUs for our students and driven by the need to deliver the value to our students through international exchange programs and dual degree programs, we have, albeit by happenstance, come up with a formula to set up these valuable MOUs. The first step is to ask these two questions: Where should be our target market to "export" our students and "import" foreign students? And how can we enter this market?

Here is how we successfully answered said questions back in 2015-2016. We noticed that China had been the No. 1 export market for Louisiana since 2010. See Figure 1 below.

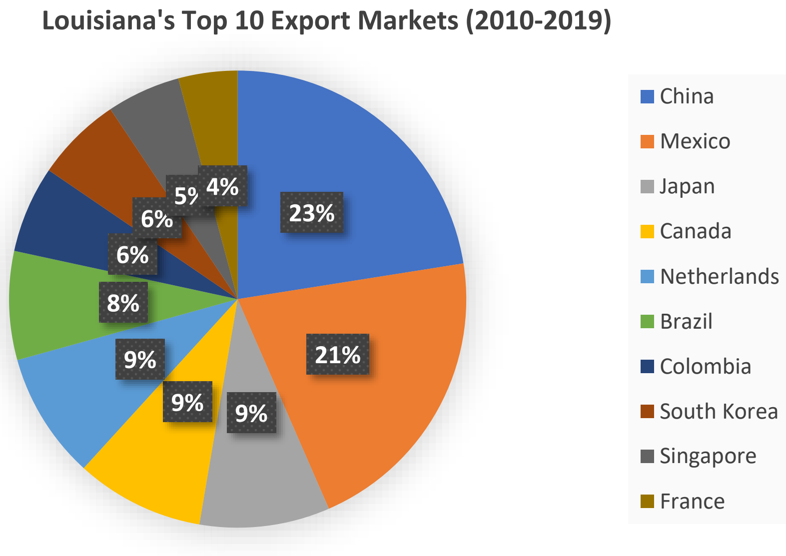

Figure 1. Louisiana's Top 10 Export Markets (2010-2019). The percentage represents each country's share in total Louisiana's export to the top 10 markets based on data from USA Trade Online: http://usatrade.census.gov.

In Louisiana, 96% of the workforce is comprised of Louisiana residents who must be prepared for an evolving economy (Board of Regents, State of Louisiana, 2019), including our largest export market. Therefore, at the time we were searching for a partner for an international education program, we decided, given the data, to select an institution in China. Finding a partnership in that locale was imperative because we strongly believed that our business students should have access to the knowledge and skills of the largest foreign trading partner of Louisiana.

Connecting with a Partner - "The Law of the Network"

To achieve this stated goal, we reached out to find a partner for a new MOU through networking. The Law of Network is a powerful law that provides dialogue on an impressive scale that allows for exchanges of ideas and from that, the tools to transform into being agile and nimble to respond to facts as they change.

As such, the two aspects of the network: one is that we reached out through an external network to find a Chinese partner – Shenzhen University (SZU); another is the supporting internal network in the university for us to complete the task. The internal network included the Office of University Affairs and the College of Business and Technology's Dean's Office. These two offices provided the necessary authority to create the program and empowered us to make the decisions required to facilitate the program. Thankfully, the external network was established utilizing emails and WeChat, the Chinese version of Facebook. This platform also provides the option of video and voice chat. On the other hand, our internal network was established via emails and heavily relied upon face to face communication.

Therefore, the next step for us was to establish a connection with our Chinese counterpart. As soon as one of our professors, a citizen of China, onboarded with the School of Business in the University in 2015, she started reaching out through her networks looking for a strong Chinese university to partner with the University.

Early in 2016, she received word from the College of Management at Shenzhen University. SZU is in Guangdong Province in the south of China. The city of Shenzhen was the first Special Economic Zone of China, the frontier of China's Open Policy and marketing economy since the 1980s. Shenzhen is also the neighbor city of Hongkong. SZU consists of 24 colleges, more than 37,000 students on campus, and 3,704 employees (2385 faculty members). The University established collaborative relations with 289 overseas universities ("General Information about Shenzhen University", 2020).

Their response was incredibly positive as they were indeed interested in partnering with us to establish an international exchange and dual degree program. The team immediately began to take shape to get to work on the MOU.

Matching the Curriculum- "The Law of the Small Team"

As soon as both colleges agreed with working on an MOU, the University formed a small team for the curriculum matching process. The small team occasionally used emails and heavily relied upon face to face communication.

The team decided that the next step was to identify the major that would work best with the targeted institution. We typically looked for the most flexibility in deciding the academic curriculum. We reviewed the variety of upper-level electives to accentuate studies in business analytics, computer information systems, finance, international business, marketing, management, or any combination of these areas. The team decided to work exclusively with the Business Administration major. Figure 2 below are the courses needed to obtain a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the University. A student must complete 120 hours of instructions.

The SZU team, led by the Associate Dean for International Affairs in the College of Management, provided us for the following documents:

(1) Two Degree Plans including the objectives of the major, the degree requirements and the detailed curriculum: one plan for the regular business administration major class; another plan for the all-English business administration class in which business courses were taught in English.
(2) Conversion of Grade, Grade Point, and Integrated Score.
(3) Elective Course List of Science.
(4) Elective Course List of Arts.
(5) Course Descriptions on our request.

FIRST YEAR	SEM. HRS.
Business Administration 1800	3
Computer Information Systems 2000	3
English 1010, 1020	6
Fine Arts 1040	3
History 1010, 1020, 2010, or 2020	3
Mathematics 1020, 1060	6
Natural Sciences[1]	6
University Studies 1000	1
	31
SECOND YEAR	**SEM. HRS.**
Accounting 2000, 2010	6
Business Administration 2120, 2200	6
Business elective[2]	3
Economics 2000, 2010	6
English 2110	3
Finance 2150	3
Psychology 1010	3
	30
THIRD YEAR	**SEM. HRS.**
Academic elective[3]	3
Business Administration 3250, 3270	6
Business elective[2]	3
Computer Information Systems 3100	3
Finance 3090, 4200	6
Management 3220	3
Marketing 3230	3
Natural Sciences[1]	3
	30
FOURTH YEAR	**SEM. HRS.**
Academic elective[3]	3
Advanced business electives[4]	18
Business Administration 4900	2
Management 3580, 4300	6
	29
Total Semester Hours for Degree:	120

Figure 2. Curriculum of Business Administration. From the University Catalog (2016-2017), p.93.

We selected their BUAD major All-English class to recruit the dual degree students under the MOU because, for these students, Shenzhen University had required their business courses taught in English, usually by professors who had overseas experience and English proficiency. We hoped this would help ease the language barrier when they came to study at the University, and they would be successful in the University.

Figure 3 is a screenshot from the all-English BUAD class Degree Plan of SZU. It indicates the credit hours required for the degree. The translation of Figure 3 is that SZU requires 155 credit hours for a bachelor’s degree in management, including 39.5 hours in university core, 52 in business core, 43.5 hours in elective courses (including at least 33 hours in business electives and at least 6 hours in science electives), and 20 hours in Innovation, Entrepreneurship Practice and Student Development.

课程类别	最低学分要求	附加要求
公共必修课	39.5	
学科专业核心课	52	
选修课	43.5	其中，学科专业选修课最低要求33学分，理科学分最低要求6学分。
创新创业实践与学生发展	20	
总学分	155	

Figure 3. SZU Credit Hours Requirements for A Bachelor's Degree in Management (Business Administration Major, All-English Class)

The SZU team was also agile. They worked with us in every inquiry and question we sent to them promptly and responsively. There was a 12-hour time lag between two universities, that was, the daytime in the University was the evening in SZU. Two teams took advantage of the time lag and worked seamlessly online and in-person daily toward the completion of the MOU.

The University's small team was empowered to decide which SZU courses were good matches for the University's courses. We reviewed the course lists, had extensive communications with the SZU team, and used a team member's knowledge as a former business professor in China to ensure the proper courses were selected to satisfy the degree requirements.

Completing the MOU - "The Law of the Small Team" and "the Law of the Network"

To complete the MOU, after many hours of oral deliberations over course match work, both teams agreed on the document. The University's small team then finally physically presented our agreement to the Dean and Vice President of the University. There were little modifications to the document and no changes to the courses selected for substitution. After this process, the President of the University signed the MOU.

After the University completed signing the MOU, four original printed copies of the document were mailed to SZU by post office express mail for countersignatures. The digital copy of the document was emailed to SZU at the same time. In Shenzhen, the MOU was countersigned by the dean of the College of Management and the university president, then submitted to the Chinese Ministry of Education for approval. The Ministry of Education approved it after the reviewing process.

Implementation and Feedback

Implementation of the MOU

We started to market this program in spring 2017 and welcomed the first two exchange students from Shenzhen. Of course, they experience a different culture and had some cultural shock. We worked with our University, especially the International Student

Resources center, to solve their problems, including teaching them how to use a community kitchen. They participated in class and campus activities with curiosity, surprise, and joy. They spread good words for the University when they backed to Shenzhen.

Next year in 2018, SZU got more applications for going the University as exchange students. They selected two students again. The two girls had extensive engagement in campus and classrooms. One student made a presentation on the University with satisfaction and good memories when SZU hosted an annual meeting to promoting all their exchange programs. Our member of the small team also helped the University's International Student Resources Office to market this program to the U.S. students. In 2019, SZU decided to send two graduate students to us. We also sent one student to Shenzhen. Thus, this program has a real meaning in "exchanging" and bought benefits to both universities. Figure 4 is the implementation timeline of this MOU.

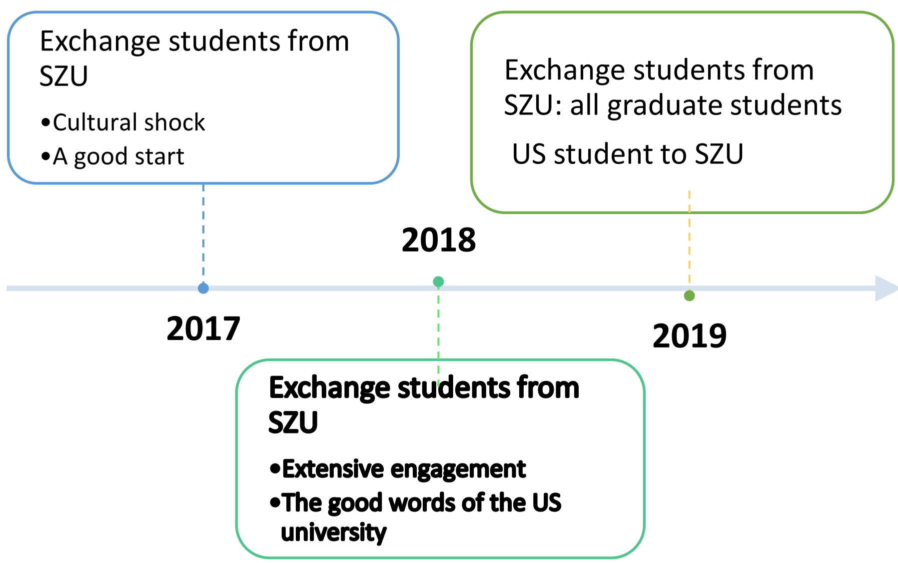

Figure 4. Implementation Timeline

Students' Feedback

We interviewed the exchange students at the end of the fall semester before they backed to China. Interviews were recorded as videos in real time. Students answered the interview questions in their native language then one team member translated the scripts into English. In the interviews, students thought higher education in the US was of high quality and had been longed for an opportunity to study abroad.

The best experience

They felt very lucky to have an opportunity to come to the US. Although they only stayed only one semester with us, they got to know many people and experienced a different culture, which was the best of their experience. One student told us he had been to church every week where he got to know a lot of international students and professors, which was "a good experience" for him during the stay. Another student said her best experience was that she had got a lot of help from many people around her while she was strange to everything. She especially mentioned her volunteering experience in the Food Pantry. As she told us,

"I joined a volleyball team in the University and got to know my school mates and became friends, so I could learn from them. I am also a volunteer in the Food Pantry. I had very little knowledge and did not know how to do it in the beginning. I am so appreciative that my professor took much patience to explain everything to me. I feel I have become a good volunteer there."

Differences in study

First, the course management system (Moodle) and the paid digital access of course materials were something new to Chinese students. One student admitted that the system was perfect and very individualized and the study in the US was "strongly self-motivated and based on more technologies." The second big difference was their classmates. They found that "a student here usually has a job, that is, the student usually already has some work experience". As one student said,

“In classroom study or research, working with these students who are already a part-time boss or employee will bring more practical knowledge to students from China. Students in China usually only search online for research, but here the students will tell you the real business practice, so your network is different from that in China.”

Third, a study in the US was much busier because of the course load. They were required to take at least 12 credit hours (usually four courses) which they felt study here "really needs quite a lot of time". One student said "I have two quizzes and one exam every week. This keeps me very busy every week." Additionally, US courses were more challenging. Those challenges were firstly from the English language, including the accent and the handwriting, as one student told us,

"Courses of my major is difficult, professors' accent is different from the English which we have learned in China, their writings on the whiteboard are quite handwritings which are different from the printing style we usually work on."

Then challenges were from the course content because the US course might be more challenging than a similar course in China. As one student pointed out,

"For example, in the class of International Business, my classmates in China are taking the same class. They were assigned a task as 'Shopping as an agent in Hongkong' while here my professor is leading group discussions to help us create a group report on how to export a product made in the USA. This is a greater challenge compared to my Chinese classmates' assignment because it challenges the capability of teamwork and requires us to consider to whole export process and complete every step-in export.”

How did they overcome the challenges?

Students admitted that they experienced challenges from a foreign language, a different culture, more difficulties in the study, and the different lifestyles and habits from their dorm mates. They experienced a cultural shock and learned to be adaptive. One student said she had overcome the challenges in the study by seeking help from classmates and contacting professors further during their office hours. Another student said,

"In the beginning, I was resistant to the local culture and insisted on my own habits and norms. This brought some confusion and trouble to me. Later, I gradually adopted an adaptive attitude and could tolerant these differences because I felt that my purpose of coming here is for exchange. After this, I gradually understood the rules and could get well with others."

Impacts on students' future

While talking about the influence of their study-abroad experience in their future, students have given us many positive feedbacks. The following words are from their interviews:

"I had a different life and learning experience here during this half-year. I have got a broader vision and developed an attitude of patience. I became not to be in a mood of anxiety and worry."

"If you go to a new place and stay in a new environment, you will find a lot of new possibilities and this will influence our attitudes."

"I think the experience here will possibly have a great influence on my future life. The experience in a different culture and in-depth academic research will be good for me to apply for graduate school. Furthermore, I think I will not be afraid of greater future challenges with this 4-month live alone experience."

Conclusions and Implications

In our paper, we identified the agile process, showing its value and practices in business and higher education today and introduced an example of an agile process for developing an international exchange and dual degree program. It can be a simple 4-step agile process as shown in Figure 5. Every step is agile by following the "Law of the Customer," "the Law of the Small Team," and "the Law of the Network."

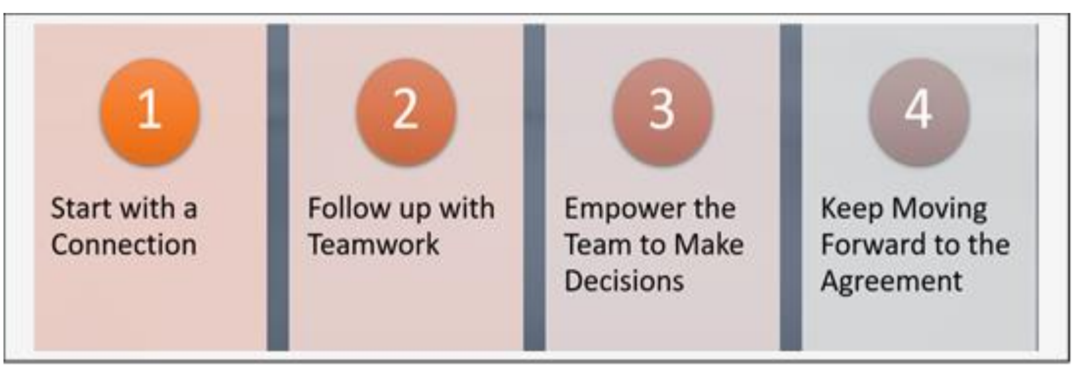

Figure 5. The Agile Process to Develop an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program

Additionally, the publication of the student's experiences allowed the authors to measure the impact of the program reviewing the results of their educational and life or cultural experiences while attending the university. As such, this international MOU agile process can be implemented by other universities to develop their international education programs, especially in light of the global health crisis that is gripping the world at this moment.

Sharing these hard-won lessons learned and memorializing this process of establishing an MOU with a foreign, yet equally as an agile university can assist individuals that are dedicated to internationally diverse educational opportunities. In each of the laws presented, the main modes of communication were either electronic or face to face; however, as institutions adhere to international, federal, state, and local guidelines to reduce transmission of this pernicious disease, all collaborative elements of the process could be accomplished virtually. Each step, including the implementation phase and feedback gathering process, could be achieved by heavily if not solely, relying upon the electronic platforms that are mutually agreed upon by both institutions. Using today's technology can not only bridge the cultural geographical distance but also serve as a means of forging lasting partnerships that last well beyond the age of COVID-19.

Building on this, it is important for us to continue to learn from each other and share our cultural values collaborating with other countries. It is the expectation of the authors that this management process will be used as a model for other educational institutions during COVID-19 and when all can return to the new normal after the pandemic. It is important to recognize that there is a season for everything and a time to move forward. This is a great example of a group that was able to develop and implement an international exchange and dual degree program and evaluate its success. Though it may not seem possible at the moment, the agile management process requires us to be prepared and ready to adapt and execute a new plan at a moment's notice so that we are ready for the next challenge or pandemic.

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Swim or Sink in the Graduate School: Disability and Outdoor Leisure Activities

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Abstract

Outdoor leisure activities (OLAs) are beneficial and the study of graduate students with disabilities remains under-researched in this area. This is happening when enrollment, dropout rates, and late degree completion of students with disabilities in graduate programs in American universities is on the rise. This exploratory case study approach uses participatory action research framed in photovoice to examine the authors' graduate school and outdoor leisure activity experiences. The authors engaged in collaborative self-examinations of their graduate school period to identify the impact of OLAs on their wellbeing. Three themes emerged from the study: countering the narrative of disability deficit through the collage, building of inclusive beneficial OLAs, and normalized life with assistive technology. It is important to include graduate students with disabilities in addressing barriers to OLAs in order to promote their academic performance and welfare.

Keywords: disability, outdoor leisure activities, accessibility

Leisure, recreation, and outdoor activities are beneficial to people with and without disabilities (Blick et al., 2015; Coon et al., 2011; Zabriskie et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2017). Individuals involved in outdoor leisure activities (OLAs) demonstrate improved developmental and psychosocial qualities in the areas of social skills, social adjustment, self-determination, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-concept, and reciprocal relationships (McAvoy, 2001; McAvoy et al., 2006). Persons with disabilities experience improved self-concept, self-confidence, communication, interactions, and relationships with people with and without disabilities including their families (Burns et al., 2013; Hough & Paisley, 2008; West & Merriam, 2009). However, disability frequently leaves people with little opportunity for leisure and recreation due to personal limitations, natural or built barriers, and negative cultural attitudes (Burns et al., 2009; James et al., 2018). Barriers impede access to opportunities that come with mobility and communication abilities, and people with disabilities are likely to have limitations in functioning in natural environments (Zhang et al., 2017). Further, people with disabilities are seldom given the freedom to choose a pastime or given opportunities to participate in OLAs (McAvoy, 2001). This paper specifically focuses on graduate students with and without disabilities to determine how they may lack similar opportunities.

Outdoor recreation has many benefits (e.g., improved mood or cardiovascular health), and new studies are focusing on ways to create opportunities for participation in

OLAs to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities (Barclay et al., 2016; Burns et al., 2009; Burns et al., 2013; Coon et al., 2011; Franco et al., 2015; James et al., 2018; Wilson & Christensen, 2012). Still, to the best of our knowledge, no research has focused on the constraints and benefits of OLAs for graduate students from the students' perspective. There is no clear understanding on how, and to what extent, disabilities hinder participation in OLAs and their benefits to graduate students. We address this gap by examining graduate students' with and without disabilities participation in OLAs. Using ourselves as subjects, we revisit our graduate school period to examine the locus of OLAs within our academic lives and to elucidate the challenges and benefits of interacting with nature.

The purpose of this study was to show how OLAs can improve the quality of life of both types of graduate students and reduce dropout rates. The guiding research question are the following: *What are the experiences of two graduate students with and without disabilities involved in OLAs and their perceptions of OLAs' impact on their academic wellbeing?* We hypothesized that participating in OLAs increased healthy living, improved academic performance, and supported the completion of graduate programs for participants. This study is important because its findings can improve the quality of life of United States (U.S.) and international college students especially those with disabilities, an increasing demographic in the higher education population in the U.S. (Council of Graduate Schools-CGS, 2004). It also provides knowledge of lived experiences and story of an international graduate student with disability and his African American colleague and their experience during an OLA. Next, we review the literature on the benefits of college education and of OLAs.

Literature Review

Outdoor Leisure Activities

The outdoors is "a space that promotes well-being and resilience by providing an opportunity to test physical and mental stamina through a variety of recreational pursuits in what can be risky environments" (Burns et al., 2013, p. 1060). Open spaces in nature are uniquely shaped to challenge and help individuals grow and develop. Studies reveal that leisure and recreation benefit individuals and society (Blick et al., 2015; Coon et al., 2011; Wilson & Christensen, 2012; Zabriskie et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2017). Natural environments offer a lot of affordances to people with and without disabilities (Burns et al., 2009) that develop their personal qualities such as self-awareness and self-esteem (Devine, 2004; McAvoy, 2001; McAvoy et al., 2006). The woods are spaces where people explore nature and socialize (Finlay et al., 2015; Jiang, 2014) and those involved in leisure and recreation experience positive health impacts (Nimrod et al., 2012). Better quality of life (Burns et al., 2009; Mitchell & Popham, 2008) include improved cognitive abilities, communication, friendship and support (O'Brien, 2005), self-discipline, and personal satisfaction (Pothukuchi & Bickes, 2001). "Outdoor recreation serves as a venue for combining the benefits of physical activity and/or social interaction with the positive impacts of nature" (Wilson & Christensen, 2012, p. 488). As studies confirm their benefits, OLAs are increasingly becoming a means to provide services (e.g., social and therapeutic services) to people with disabilities in an inclusive environment (Burns et al., 2009; West & Merriam, 2009).

While the woods provide many opportunities to individuals and communities, people with disabilities are limited by environmental barriers and personal qualities (Burns et al., 2013; Dorsch et al., 2016; Zabriskie et al., 2005). These barriers may be cultural (e.g., stigma), physical (e.g., curbs or boulders), social (e.g., limited friends or unsupportive parents), political (e.g., unenforceable disability policies), economic (e.g., limited resources or budget), personal (e.g., chronic pain), or systemic (e.g., ableism and poverty). Natural barriers (e.g., rocky hills, slippery river banks), built or infrastructural barriers (e.g., roads with curbs, transportation; Barclay et al., 2016; Franco et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2001), cultural barriers (e.g., biased attitude, or fear of people with disabilities; Burns et al., 2013; Wilhite & Keller, 1992), and personal barriers (e.g., lack of self-motivation, anxiety, lack of leisure partners; Ross, 1993; Sparrow & Mayne, 1990) to OLAs (Bedini, 2000; James et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017) predispose people with disabilities to health problems (James et al., 2018; Moussavi et al., 2007). Individuals with disabilities that restrict their mobility are likely to lead sedentary lives and to have a low quality of life—they are vulnerable to exclusion, isolation, and emergent health issues such as obesity, depression, and stress (Stigsdotter & Ekholm, 2017; Williams et al., 2004). Besides personal health issues (i.e., impairments), cultural practices (e.g., disability myths) make people with disabilities vulnerable to exclusion from OLAs (Fullagar & Owler, 1998; McAvoy, 2001; Oliver, 2009).

Studies have shown that people with and without disabilities share similar outdoor experiences and benefits (McAvoy et al., 2006; McCormick, 2001). However, misconceptions that people with disabilities are not inclined to participate in OLAs, that they dislike activities undertaken by nondisabled people, or that they are unproductive and over-dependent on nondisabled people abound (McAvoy, 2001). In Sparrow and Mayne's (1990) study of people aged 18–35 with intellectual disabilities found decreased participation in home and community leisure activities. While Wilhite and Keller's (1992) study on adults with developmental difficulties found self-consciousness to be a huge impediment to participating in OLAs.

Barriers to OLAs are not just internally or socially created, but external legal barriers further impede OLA participation by individuals with disabilities. For instance, until 1976, the 1867 "Ugly Law" in the U.S. prohibited people with deformities from occupying public spaces to protect the nondisabled population (Osgood, 2008; Smithsonian National Museum of American History, n.d.). Effort to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities in the U.S. is historical (Osgood, 2008). For example, in the 1920s when poliomyelitis ravaged the country, the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a recreational resort for people with disabilities to participate in various OLAs (FDR and polio, n.d.). Recent legal attempts to address exclusionary practices have involved enacting legislations (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act 1990) that prohibit disability-based discrimination. Still, the status quo continues to push people with disabilities to the margins (Oliver, 2009).

Other efforts in the area of inclusive OLAs have focused on the use of assistive technology (ATs) (Crockett et al., 2019; Moser, 2006) to assist people with disabilities in accessing natural environments (James et al., 2018). There are different types of technology used by people with disabilities. In general, low technology are cheaper and easier to use than high technology. Both ATs mitigate environmental forces and personal qualities and, in the process, enhance functionality that enable inclusion of people with different abilities to participate in different leisure and recreation programs (Hammel et al., 2015; James et al., 2018).

Exclusion of Graduate Students with Disabilities

According National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2019) college education is the key to a better life; it leads to equal opportunities and social mobility, which may explain the rise in doctorate recipients in the U.S. from 8,773 in 1958 to 55,195 in 2018. In 2018, 4,156 (7.5%) of the 55,195 doctorate recipients reported one or more functional limitations considering the broad field of study, sex, and citizenship status (CGS, 2004). Still, a college education remains difficult to achieve to people with disabilities (Shapiro et al., 2018), as the current 7.5% of doctorate recipients with special educational needs is far below the average 11% of U.S. population with disabilities age 18-64 (Kraus et al., 2018). Usually learners with disabilities experience academic, social, attitudinal, and infrastructural barriers that hinder their successful transition from high school to college and undergraduate completion (Ressa, 2016). No statistical data on graduate students with disabilities dropout rates are available; however, we presume that it is high, considering that approximately 43% of doctoral students in the U.S. drop out of their graduate programs (CGS, 2004). Personal, family, institutional, financial, social, physical, cultural, and linguistic factors contribute to the high rates of doctoral students who drop out. Personal factors (e.g., poverty, the allure of employment, financial burdens, ill health due to depression and stress) and institutional factors (e.g., disability-based biased, lack of support or appropriate mentorship, attending less established graduate schools) (CGS, 2004; McFarland et al., 2019; Shapiro et al., 2018) make graduate school very challenging for all students. Left unmitigated, these factors cause behavioral and emotional struggles that may exacerbate academic challenges and lead to dropout or late graduation.

Dropout rates hurt individuals, families, communities, and countries. Generally, students have less access to economic opportunities, are burdened with student debt, and those that default on their loan payments further predispose themselves to a circle of poverty (Shapiro et al., 2018). Two broad categories of students in the graduate program are traditional and nontraditional. A traditional student may concurrently pursue undergraduate and master’s degree through accelerated program or may transition directly into the masters and doctoral programs upon completion of the undergraduate program. Though not always, a nontraditional student usually has a master’s degree, a job or job opportunities, and some fiscal stability. Some graduate students have jobs or other sources of income as many graduate programs have assistantships and scholarship to support their finances; however, some students transition from undergraduate programs into master’s programs (Martinez, 2018). Whereas over 50% of undergraduate and master's degree graduates secure employment upon graduation, some remain unemployed for a while (National Association of College Employers-NACE, 2018). According to the 2018 data from NACE, master's candidates employed full time ranges between 69.5 to 77.4%.

Success of graduate students with and without disabilities (i.e., students in master's and doctoral programs) is dependent upon a positive work–life balance, including engagement in OLAs. Unfortunately, college students with disabilities have largely gone unrecognized within the realm of OLAs. To our knowledge, there is no study on graduate students with disabilities despite evidence of the health benefits of OLAs for people with and without disabilities. Involvement in OLAs leads to increased social network, improved communication and cognitive abilities, and enhanced self-discipline. By and large, healthy students are more likely to focus on their studies than sickly students. Then, understanding the impact of OLAs on the wellbeing of both graduate students with and without disabilities could be a mechanism to reducing dropout rates, ensuring the successful completion of graduate programs, and facilitating transitions to careers.

Methods

Case Study using Participatory Action Research

This phenomenological research used exploratory case study as an approach to describe the experiences of two graduate students' experiences in OLA. Nested in participatory action research (PAR) the participants/researchers seek to understand the interaction between disability and nature. As such using PAR privileges knowledge of the researcher and the subjects as equal partners in understanding a phenomenon (Swantz, 2008). In designing this PAR study there is a process for developing the research and the authors considered the following steps by individual self-reflection and communal decision making when thinking about their outdoor experience. They observed and interacted in the experience together with the action taken based on responses in their environment as shared. Upon conclusion of the experience, they reflected on the action within the experience with the hopes of completing the experience again in the future (Kemmis & McTaggert, 2005). The process identified is the cycle of participatory action research in this study.

The authors used a retrospective photovoice methodology to examine the impact of OLAs on their graduate schooling (Creswell, 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Photovoice is a qualitative participatory research method that blends photography and stories about images to examine intricate community matters; this allows researchers to understand and address the cultural, social, political, economic, physical, and linguistic issues and needs of participants and their community (Nowell et al., 2006; Palibroda et al., 2009; Pink, 2001). Photovoice 1) enables people to record and reflect upon their community's strengths and concerns, 2) promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussions about photographs, and 3) reaches policymakers so they can institute policies that improves the welfare of society (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Photovoice involves images and personal stories, and because of the narratology of the visuals, participants have a broader vocabulary with which to express knowledge of circumstances and have a better way of finding meaning in situations and therefore understanding their needs (Wang & Burris, 1997). Since photovoice involves the identification, classification, and discussion of images, researchers are likely to gain multiple perspectives of issues that may lead to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and allow the institutionalization of broad or targeted solutions (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Nowell et al., 2006). Photovoice also provides insiders' perspectives, which are often quite different from the dominant framework. Insiders are likely to focus on valued matters rather than dwell on outsider researchers' needs and knowledge (Ruby, 1991; Sontag, 1973; Wang & Burris, 1997).

As Wang and Burris (1997) cautions when using photovoice, representation and personal judgement may cloud perspective of the experience. Determining what, when, who, and where to take the photos creates challenges in determining inclusion of all perspectives in the experience. It also risks reproducing class stratification through the control of information. Moreover, researchers may still wrestle with 1) sorting and analyzing a huge data volume, 2) engaging decision-makers in the research process, and 3) ensuring genuine depictions of community matters (Wang & Burris, 1997). Yet, in this study, the researchers shared responsibility in selection of photos prior to the trip (from this and other experiences) and came to a consensus and permission to take photos during the experience as they determined as a part of shared communal agreement. As such phenomenological approach was used to target the personalized experiences of the authors in their environment throughout the trip using the photos as the descriptors of the experience. Moustakas (1994) describes phenomenology as an approach to qualitative research that describes the meaning of a lived experience of a phenomenon for several individuals, which in this case in the experience of the graduate students (the authors) during their camping experience. In further elaboration of phenomenology within photovoice, Plunkett et al. (2013) suggest that one way to create authenticity for phenomenological approach is to create opportunities for participants to provide data that is most meaningful to them. Doing this through photovoice produces perspectives from those experiencing the phenomenon as they take photographs of what is meaningful to them and in this respect, they control the nature of the data and can share the meaning behind the photos they took as interpreted by their lived experience thus fulfilling the tenets of phenomenology.

Participants

This paper is a co-written as an exploratory case study using participant action research design. The subjects in this shared experience are described as the following: Simba has an acquired physical disability and because of his varied physical strengths, he uses different types of mobility devices (wheelchair, manual and electric; crutches and braces) for various environments based on his needs. Simba grew up in a rural village of Kenya where he participated in nature and life skills (i.e., brush cutting, firewood collection, and cooking over a fire). Due to his academic successes he progressed through school to become a teacher, scholar student, and successful recipient of a Ford Foundation scholarship for a master's degree in special education in the U.S. Simba has been involved in various adaptive sports as a student and adaptive physical education teacher prior to coming to U.S.

Daniel is an African American and his area of study is Physical Activity and Adapted Physical Education. He does not have a known disability and has professional experiences as a former campcraft coordinator (YMCA summer camp), extensive Outdoor Education experiences (i.e., instructor and assistant director), a high school special education/physical education teacher, and outdoor enthusiast. What is of particular note is that in his role as a High School teacher and throughout his career, he has been a supporter and advocate for individuals with disabilities becoming an Adapted Swim Instructor (American Red Cross), teaching lesson to persons with disability, and working in his graduate program as a mentor/supervisor for undergraduate students in the Adapted Physical Activity Lab for children at the University.

Setting

The two met in class at the Large Midwestern University and the connection point occurred when Daniel asked Simba what physical activity experiences he had participated in at the University. After discussions of his limited experience the two determined a partnership/kinship to assist each other in participation in physical activity and graduate program. The reflection of the lived experiences in graduate school at a Carnegie R1 a large university in the Midwestern U.S. provides documentation of Simba who, like all people with disabilities, lives in a community whose norms influence who belongs and Daniel who has a family (Spouse and children) and interacts with them daily. The work here entwines empirical studies on network, allyship, disability, and OLAs, and having an insider and outsider information of each person's respective graduate program to co-produce knowledge. As insider researchers there are possibilities of bias that may affect the integrity of the research (Dorsh et. al, 2016) . To ensure its validity and reliability, there is an intentionally balanced insiders' and outsiders' perspective during data collection and analysis (Dorsch et al., 2016). This study is the result of the researchers' interest in addressing barriers to graduate programs for students especially those with disabilities in the hopes that universities will find solutions to the problems they face (Dolmage, 2017).

Data Collection

Body mapping allows an individual to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences about oneself relative to the environment. A collage is a combination of various things such as pictures. A narrative is a chronicle of experiences. Therefore, narrative of collage is pieces of pictures that tell a story of phenomena based on the understanding of the involved individuals. This study used imaginative ways to collect data (i.e., body mapping) (Lu & Yuen, 2012; Yuen, 2016) and to analyze and report the findings (narrative of collage). Photovoice is a creative form of PAR (Schleien et al., 2013). In this phenomenological approach the authors seek to describe their experiences through pictures taken throughout their weekend in the woods. A discussion of the phenomenon or OLA experience required the researchers to select photos taken during the camping adventure. Simba had taken over 100 photos, while Daniel had taken over 75 photos. Thus data collection involved Simba and Daniel complete the following steps: 1) taking pictures of the phenomenon, 2) sharing the pictures with each other, 3) selecting salient pictures of the phenomenon individually, 4) discussing key photographs of the phenomenon, 5) analyzing pictures of the phenomenon in a together (group) setting, 6) describing the phenomenon together (group) setting, and 7) sharing information about the phenomenon with agents of change such as educators or university administrators (Nykiforuk et al., 2011; Wang & Burris, 1997). Both Simba and Daniel took pictures of moments of OLAs. As discussed previously, the researchers shared responsibility in selection of photos and came to a consensus on which photos would be used during the study by shared communal agreement. The selection of photos contextualizes and enables storytelling about the phenomenon and involves participants' voice, their individual and collective experiences.

Data Analysis

Using photovoice requires a three-stage analytic process: 1) selection (classifying pictures that most accurately reflect the phenomenon); 2) contextualization (narrating the purpose of the photographs); and 3) codification (identifying, organizing, and interpreting the issues, themes, or theories that emerge from the stories about the pictures)— codification allows for meaning making regarding the images or phenomenon (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 370). Aligning our work with PAR allowed the opportunity for reflection and evaluation surrounding the photos selected using the SHOwED analytic tool (Shaffer, 1983). The tool provides framing questions for the researchers to discuss and analyze their photos. They include: a) What do you *See* here? b) What is really *Happening* here? c) How does this relate to *Our* lives? d) Why does this problem, concern, or strength *Exist*? e) What can we *Do* about it?

Our task here was to use this tool to shape what pictures provided meaning to our experiences. After sharing our pictures with each other camping in the woods, we then discussed each image in depth. Of the 175 photos taken between the two of us, we shared our own experiences—ones we believed reflected and captured our OLAs and camping spirit and came to a consensus of 9 photos that best captured our experience. We analyzed the data (photo data and field notes) thematically using *Nvivo* software to understand the interactions of disability and nature —and the collage is illustrative of the moments of OLAs in our experience as themes. Van Manen (1997) posits that by collaboratively discussing the data, central themes are identified and focus of the phenomenon can be pursued. In a combined phenomenology and photovoice study, data analysis begins at the onset of data collection and continues for the duration of the research (Plunket, et. al., 2013).

Findings

The descriptions here are the combined narratives of Simba and Daniel's experience camping in the woods. They signify varied perspectives, but communal agreement on what occurred through the collage of photos.

A First and Different Experience

The authors' (Simba and Daniel) had several leisure and recreation opportunities in our graduate school, but this weekend camping in the woods was the first and different. We did not comprehensively understand the demands of graduate school until we were fully immersed in our education programs. Trying to finish master's (Simba) and doctoral (Daniel) education programs on time, relaxation and rejuvenation were critical to our productivity. Like many people in the U.S., taking time to return to nature by going camping fulfilled our need to disengage and relax. Daniel's family owned property in Upper Michigan, so we drove five hours from Ohio to return to nature after our spring semester had ended. As we embarked in the afternoon, the weather was perfect for camping. We drove for three hours, stopping to visit Daniel's family friend for an hour. We then drove for two more hours and arrived at the campsite at around nine p.m. when it was pitch black. We had to use the car's headlights to prepare the campground and start the fire to cook their food (see Figure 1 Picture #1).

Figure 1. Collage of a Weekend Trip. Collage of outdoor activities. Day 1, Photo 1: Simba lights the bonfire to cook a late dinner. Photo 2: Simba eats roasted chicken and ugali upon arrival at the campsite. Day 2, Photo 3: Simba crawls out of the tent in the early morning. Photo 4: Simba cuts firewood for a bonfire to make breakfast. Photo 5: Simba roasts chicken for lunch. Day 3, Photo 6: Simba and Daniel explore the pond. Photo 7: A wider nature shot. Photo 8: Daniel puts out the campfire before heading back to school. Photo 9: Simba is ready to get into Daniel's car for the journey back to school.

A Talking Collage

Day 1, in Picture 1, Daniel (not pictured) took the photo and continued unpacking the car of other necessities (e.g., drinking water) from the car parked a few feet away from the fire pit. Arriving at the property at dark, it was necessary to use the car's headlights to provide light and to set up camp. As you can see Simba is seated in his manual wheelchair is kindling the embers of the fire with a stick and getting ready to cook a late dinner. There is a pot at his feet for cooking ugali (a type of maize porridge made in East Africa). Also, around the bonfire are logs serving many purposes—seats, tables, candle holders, and a drying rack for a t-shirt. There is also storage for cooking materials—corn flour, cooking oil, and salt. Daniel is around the camp, laying out the utensils and equipment and tent and setting up other camp features, that is, the bathroom. The property was primitive and did not have any structures, running water, or bathrooms because tax rules prohibited property owners from building anything larger than a 10 ft x 10 ft structure. A tent was used, and a bathroom dug by digging a trench and placing a portable structure over it away from the main camp. This photo demonstrates Simba's independence and autonomy at the camp, while not pictured does he same for Daniel as he is working to set up other camp features. Daniel's and Simba had agreed to assist each other when asked or called upon as it allowed for each person to determine their own level of support. Daniel uses his camping background and skills with the help of Simba to set up camp.

Daniel took Picture 2 to capture Simba eating food on the trip and the nature of our camp on the first night. In the picture, Simba is seated in his wheelchair with a paper plate full of white ugali on his lap. In his right hand is a portion of ugali, while in his left hand he is holding and biting a piece of chicken. A shovel is leaning on the tree; on the left side of the picture lying on the ground are two plastic bags containing jugs of clean water for cooking, drinking, washing up, bathing, and washing our hands. The two five-gallon water containers were filled at the water station in town and we had to be conscientious about using our water so we would not have to go on extra water runs. After having dinner, food items were stored in the car to keep raccoons and rodents away. At 3 a.m., a chilly rain flooded our tent and Daniel woke up to dig a trench around the tent. When finished he and Simba rearranged the bedding to sleep more comfortably.

Day 2, Picture 3 Daniel left the tent early to move around and take pictures in nature, when he returned Simba was crawling out of the tent as seen in the photo at 9 a.m. While the evening rain may have been discouraging, Simba crawls out of the tent, smiling to the camera (Daniel) and getting ready to embark on the early-morning chores—clearing brush, cooking, and exploring the woods. As noted from the photo, the tent is pitched well, with a rain fly to keep the rain off the tent with strings pegged equidistant from each other to the ground. The tent is erected on relatively flat cleared ground surrounded by trees to protect it from strong winds and rain with a trench dug around it and away from the base for good drainage. At the entrance to the tent are Simba's braces, crutches, and a black plastic bag he can sit on while putting on his braces. Simba decided to use his braces to exercise and reach tree canopies. Daniel had described his role in the morning is to get the fire going for breakfast. When camping there are no set rules for when things like breakfast happen, it happens when the group decides it needs to happen.

In Picture 4, Simba asked Daniel to take his picture. As seen in the photo Simba is seated in his wheelchair next to three big trees and surrounded by bushes and shrubs, happily smiling to the cameraman. A streak of sunlight lights up his face as seen in his t-shirt and shorts and places on a brace on his left leg. He has shoes on both feet. He is holding a piece of wood in his right hand and has his left hand raised in the air. There is a machete on his wheelchair for cutting the wood for the fire that needed to cook breakfast. Though not in this picture, Daniel stopped clearing brush in the same area as Simba, as it had been several years since the family last camped on the property. The camping area was overgrown with small saplings and grasses and needed to be cleared. Daniel had experience clearing brush and used a weed wacker to clear the brush while Simba assisted in this effort and also gathered wood for the fire the night.

In picture 5, Simba is holding a stick with a whole chicken on it, which he is cooking by placing it in the fire pit while sitting on his manual wheelchair for mobility and stability. The fire pit embers make it easier for Simba to prepare lunch from a safe distance. Also, in the vicinity are logs, firewood, a pot, the tent, a sock, and a machete sticking into the ground by its tip (for safety and easy picking). The fire is in a shady area, which allows for ongoing cooking activity without getting overheated. Though not in the picture, nearby Daniel is unpacking tools for clearing the ground after airing the bedding from the night prior rains.

Day 3 activities involved exploring the woods, packing, and preparing for the five-hour drive back to college. In picture 6, Simba and Daniel are on a day trip to explore the woods and hike to the Au Sable River near Cadillac, Michigan. Facing the camera while seated in his manual wheelchair, Simba flashes a victory sign with both hands; Daniel stands next to him holding his daypack in his hand. There are people behind us kayaking down the river. In this picture, both are in the frame because we used the selfie-mode on the camera to capture the photo.

Picture 7 was a photo snapped by Simba and shows the woods and the Au Sable River, both of which provide a great deal of nature and wildlife, including croaking frogs, fish, mosquitoes, black flies that buzzed and bit, birds flying around and singing in the trees. Although not fully captured in the picture as we walked in the woods was the fresh air; smell of the earthy aroma of the soil; the natural sounds of water, falling leaves, and cracking wood; while walking in and out of the trail where we saw glittering streaks of sunlight. We visited many surrounding areas along the river and campsite. Our activities were dictated by our interests, resources at hand, and need to explore nature. For instance, we visited scenic places in the woods around the riverbank that were wheelchair accessible.

In picture 8, Simba snapped a photo of Daniel putting out the campfire at the end of our camping experience. He slowly pours water on the hot coals, which causes steam and ash to rise. He used the shovel to turn over the embers and coals to ascertain that they are extinguished so that no bush fire starts after we leave the woods. The putting out of the fire signified the end of the experience as the damping of the fire demonstrates the energy and stress that was relieved through our time in nature from our studies.

In picture 9, Daniel was asked to take Simba's photo as he is seated in his wheelchair and is smiling at the camera prior to leaving the camping experience. Simba, who does not own a car nor drives, is next to the open front passenger door of Daniel's car ready for the six hour car ride back to town.

We left the property at around 2 p.m. and drove through the woods on a dirt road for about 20 minutes before joining the main road to our State. Throughout our travel, we stopped three times for gas, snacks, and to use the bathroom. It took us another five hours to get to back to our town. Daniel dropped Simba off at the college at about 8 p.m. and then drove home to his family about five miles away from school.

Discussion

Three major themes emerged from the data: 1) Countering the narrative of disability deficit through the collage, 2) Building of the inclusive beneficial OLAs, and 3) Normalized life with assistive technology.

Countering the Narrative of Disability Deficit through the Collage

For centuries, images of people with disabilities have been intentionally skewed to objectify and invoke nightmarish feelings (e.g., freak shows—American Horror Story, Season 4 "Freak Show" or Barnum and Bailey's— featuring conjoined twins and people who were short, fat, armless, or legless) (Bogdan et al., 2012). The collage in Figure 1 depicts moments of life that counter the dominant narrative of disability as a deficient, miserable, and irksome experience. The storyline of Simba and Daniel acting on and being acted upon by the environment provides insider and outsider perspectives on inclusion. Our outdoor experiences are animated conversations about disability and nature. The active life in the settings as shown by items (e.g., water and food), equipment and tools (e.g., kitchenware, machete), and activities (e.g., cooking, eating, cutting firewood, clearing the ground, erecting the tent, organizing the space, using the bathroom, knowing our surroundings) enable readers to remotely interact, visualize, and feel our lives in nature. Also, the woods create an ambiance that invites readers to theorize about ability and disability and the environment. The collage is aesthetically pleasing and positively presents disability, showing the capabilities of people with disabilities when society accepts them. The images show a smiley, happy, energetic, and agentic Simba engaging in various activities, not experiencing feelings of sadness and disappointment because he may not get the opportunity to experience outdoor camping. This portrayal of disability pride contrasts with the shame that is often associated with disability (Fialka, 2016; Goffman, 1963).

The collage's spoken and unspoken language of our OLAs challenge normative constructions of disability as a deficit and people with disabilities as aliens (Burns et al., 2009). The first-person descriptions of the sequenced images communicate our behaviors and feelings, generating various topics about the setting, activities, collaborations, friendship, education, tools, materials, processes, and adaptations. These are points of convergence and departure that prompt readers toward critical thinking and self-interrogation; they can investigate the happenings and make meaning out of our ability to adapt to this primitive setting; the influence that nature had on us and our ingenuity to adjust to life before, during, and after camping; agree or disagree with our experiences; make judgments about disability norms; understand situations of living with disability in a community that sometimes de-values those with impairments; and draw conclusions about human differences, qualities, and the possibilities for people with disabilities (Valle & Connor, 2011).

Building of the Inclusive Beneficial Outdoor Leisure Activities

The trip to the woods benefits Simba and Daniel. The tangible and intangible events in the woods (e.g., our interactions with the flies, mosquitoes, birds, falling leaves, and natural aromas) connected us with the universe and its mysteries. Outdoor leisure activities connect us to our environment and allow us to interrogate events; tailor our needs for the woods; develop self-control; find a sense of solace, balance, and peace; and feel rejuvenated. For us, the woods helped us acquire insight into our own character, reset our minds, and the physical, emotional, and intellectual freshness of being in nature made us creative and positive and focused during the camping period and after we got back to college. The serene and interactive safe atmosphere create spaces for inclusion, collaboration, and re-discovery. This safe atmosphere nurtured our relations, revitalized us, enhanced our cognitive prowess, and enabled us to refocus and continue in our academic destiny. It also helped us to develop and solidify a mutual friendship and relationship with nature and each other. We were able to rediscover our potential and humanity that we could not have done in urban and simulated natural settings. We negotiated spaces, our wants, our needs, and through dialogue, we found a balance with one another, striking agreements that worked for both of us in the time and space during the experience. For example, as seen in image 6, during the tour of the Au Sable River, the proximity of Simba and Daniel challenges notions that segregation of people with and without disabilities is inevitably good for the individuals and society. Also, our social distance and reciprocal relationship in private and public countered feelings of disability stigma. We also balanced our chores based on our abilities, as seen in image 4 when Simba collected firewood and image 8 when Daniel extinguished the fire pit and when he drove us back to college. We developed resilience, judiciously used our time and money, invested in our graduate studies, attained better grades leading to our current professorial positions and continued collaboration. Our successful OLAs and collage challenge notions of disability, sympathy, and charity holding that disability is a passive or inactive human experience.

Previous studies show that natural environments offer a lot of affordances to people with and without disabilities (Burns et al., 2009) that develop self-determination, self-awareness, and self-esteem (Devine, 2004; McAvoy, 2001; McAvoy et al., 2006). Burns et al. (2009) conducted a study on the outdoor experiences with 31 participants with disabilities (mental health, multiple and complex needs, learning disability, visual impairment, sensory impairment, and physical impairment) and 15 assistants. Those with disabilities appreciated OLAs and reported that the woods provided spaces for “rest, recreation, recuperation, and revitalization,” creating a refuge away from city life (Burns et al., 2009, p. 412). The authors also found that OLAs enabled interactions and inclusion of participants with and without disabilities and also helped develop self-identity of those with disabilities. Besides, Burns et al. (2009) participants felt free, were actively involved in directing their lives, and experienced increased interactions, bonding, and networking among the group members. They considered their OLAs to be a political movement—a counteractivity to the dominant practices that have long excluded them from nature based on their impairment. They felt liberated and rejuvenated and were therefore unwilling to succumb to deficit ideologies.

Normalized Empowering Accommodations

Assistive Technology. Beside the culture of reciprocity, assistive technology (AT) facilitates the inclusion of people with disabilities in OLAs. Assistive technology enables interactions between Simba and the environment and between Simba and Daniel. The wheelchair enhances Simba’s functionality by supporting his body and making him mobile, so Simba can choose what, when, where, and how to participate. He manipulates his paths around the woods and assists with various tasks like tending the fire, cooking, and breaking down the tent. Other tools and equipment made this camping trip possible, comfortable, informative, and exciting, including the car, tents and blankets, a machete, kitchenware, lamps, and a camera. With these technologies, we accommodated one another’s needs, collaborated, and complemented each other’s abilities to tame the environment and make camping fun. For instance, Daniel cleared bushes and paths, which made wheeling and walking safe and efficient, normalizing our accommodations.

Assistive technology mitigates environmental factors and enables inclusion of people with disabilities in leisure and recreation (James et al., 2018; Moser, 2006). It bridges the gaps created by functionality and environmental conditions, empowering people with disabilities to become independent agents of change (Moser, 2006). James et al.’s (2018) study on people with disabilities and their nondisabled peers found that TrailRider enabled people with mobility impairments to access previously inaccessible natural environments. Despite its empowering abilities, AT can also be a barrier to inclusion. The lack of appropriate resources and services make some environments inaccessible (Hammel et al., 2015; James et al., 2018). Some built environments within parks, such as paths, embankment, inclines, hills, rails, or berth areas, are made with nondisabled people in mind; ATs (e.g., manual or electric wheelchairs) are not tailored for outdoor activities or are too difficult, fragile, or dangerous to use (Hammel et al., 2015). Also, OLAs can be counterproductive when nondisabled assistants assume guardianship or decision-making authority about events, and people with disabilities may not be given autonomy to make personal decisions (e.g., where and when to go, how long to stay in the woods) when nondisabled assistants take control (James et al., 2018; Moser, 2006).

Barriers to OLAs. Many factors related to institutional practices (Dolmage, 2017; Valle & Connor, 2011) and the environment and individual limit graduate students with disabilities from participating in OLAs. For instance, without Daniel owning a car, knowing how to drive, and willing to provide transportation to and from the campsite, it would have been challenging for Simba to participate in OLAs during their graduate studies. Also, without Simba competency to take care of himself, for example, cook unassisted, it would be difficult for him to camp in the woods. Previous studies reveal that involvement of people with disabilities in OLAs is influenced by the availability of resources, services, facilities, experts, families, and friends who can provide physical, emotional, and psychological support (Dorsch et al., 2016; James et al., 2018). Physical, social, political, economic, and cultural barriers can make OLAs inaccessible (Burns et al., 2013). Barriers to OLAs include inaccessible environments (e.g., rough terrain) (Barclay et al., 2016; Franco et al., 2015); transportation issues (Williams et al., 2004); and stigmas, stereotypes, and biases (Goffman, 1963; Reeve, 2012). This means that communities must contribute their input to help remove barriers to OLAs.

Conclusion

This study provides insight into our experiences with OLAs. Firstly, it identifies and acknowledges the barriers that exist at the personal and institutional levels that can be overcome by networking. Secondly, it emphasizes the significance of OLAs for graduate students with and without disabilities. Thirdly, it documents several perceived benefits for individuals involved in OLAs. The collage and descriptions of the occurrences show different perspectives that challenge disability myths. The productive life in the woods, as seen in the active interactions and negotiations between Simba and Daniel, demonstrates how people can share in camping experiences as equal partners and contributors without the labels of disabled and abled.

Outdoor leisure activities provide graduate students with spaces to learn; refresh; build relationships; claim their own independence, identity, and humanity; and lead healthy lives (James et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). This is because life in the woods is quite different from the urban and university concrete jungle. Unlike the fast-paced life of a city, the woods provide a tranquil environment where life is stable and continuous. This slower-paced existence in the woods allows individuals to engage with nature in a more respectful manner (Burns et al., 2009). People in the woods feel reciprocally connected to nature and thus find themselves pacified by intimate interactions with the setting (O'Brien, 2005). Even though the woods afford opportunities to improve one's wellbeing (Coon et al., 2011; Diodati, 2017), graduate students with disabilities face barriers to leisure and recreation; these barriers can be analyzed at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural levels (Burns et al., 2013; James et al., 2018). The intrapersonal level refers to qualities that control the mechanism of an individual's internal environment (i.e., body and mind) and its capacity to interact with the external environment. The interpersonal level comprises relational factors that influence how individuals react to one other (e.g., attitudes). The structural level describes social, economic, and physical factors that influence the intra- and inter-personal levels of relationships (Burns et al., 2009). Then, it is important to include students with disabilities when choosing OLAs to ensure they meet their needs.

Implications

Outdoor leisure activities have many health benefits: they lead to improved body function through exercises, they inculcate self-discipline, nurture self-determination, promote self-esteem, enable self-awareness and self-control, strengthen relationships, revitalize energy, and enhance cognitive prowess, and improve an individual's quality of life. Considering social, economic, political, immigration, and academic demands in the graduate school, instead of confinement in segregated spaces such as the concrete jungle making up university campuses (Shapiro, 1994), graduate students with disabilities need to participate in OLAs alongside their peers with and without disabilities. This can be achieved when college students with disabilities are involved in participatory approaches that help to identify and address barriers to OLAs (Fialka, 2016). Interactions between disability with nature challenge the notion of normalcy (Oliver, 2009). Therefore, to increase enrollment and the successful completion of graduate school, people with disabilities require opportunities to belong and successfully deal with college stressors.

Recommendations

This study is very informative. It provides readers with ways OLAs' support graduate students with disability who lead a sedentary life, peers without disability to learn about different people's strengths, an opportunity for nondisabled peers to know that they are not superhuman in comparison to their counterparts with disabilities. It also provides opportunities to share responsibility and allowance of person with and without disability to make choices on their own. Nonetheless, there are some limitations to the study. The sample size is small, the findings are subjective and so may not represent the full perspective of experience of people with and without disabilities in graduate school. In addition, the authors participated in a primitive camping experience, yet there are different kinds of outdoor leisure activities. Few colleges provide inclusive camping trips or other experiences for people with disabilities. So future studies should focus on these areas with a bigger population. Also, future studies should address contextual factors regarding political, cultural, social, physical, economic, linguistic, and psychological barriers to the participation of graduate students with disabilities in leisure, recreation, and outdoor programs. While this experience was the first and different, it was only a starting point for other future experiences shared by both.

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Swedish School Librarianship: Meeting New Challenges

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Abstract

Sweden has made great strides in school librarianship, particularly in the area of legislation and policy. School libraries are now mandated, and curriculum indicates where school librarians should play a role. School libraries must be accountable to two sets of agencies, and oversight mainly occurs at the municipal level. The main challenge currently is the lack of school librarians. The author examined the practices of the Borås Högskolan School of Library and Information Science faculty, and collaborated with their school librarian program faculty to address this shortage and the preparation needs of school librarians. Several recommendations emerged from this work.

Keywords: Sweden; school librarians; school libraries; curriculum

School libraries can play a vital role in K-12 education by providing physical and intellectual access to educational resources that help the school community become effective users of information and ideas. However, for school library programs' resources and services to be effective, they need both material and fiscal resources and trained informational professionals. They also need administrative and legislative support.

For years, school libraries in Sweden had been ignored by the school community and the government; moreover, in the 1990s school library positions were slashed. Not until the 21st century was there strong lobbying by various library associations for legislation that would support school libraries, and the National Authority for School Improvement funded pilot school library development. As a result, the Education Act of 2010 made the school library mandatory (Barrett, Eriksson & Contassot, 2011). The Swedish Library Act of 2013 further stipulated that all students should have access to school libraries (Rameno, 2017).

However, the reality is that several schools might share one collection or be served by an integrated public-school library, and only about half of the students in Sweden today have access to a school library that has at least half-time staffing. To address this issue, the government granted three million euros as a one-time effort in 2017 to stimulate staffing of school libraries. However many schools have had no luck in finding and recruiting trained school librarians; formal academic preparation to prepare professional school librarians seriously lags behind these legislative initiatives.

Swedish universities with librarianship programs include Borås and Uppsala. With its seventy employees and more than a thousand students, the University of Borås's School of Library and Information Science (UBSSLIS) is the largest, leading institution within Sweden for preparing professional librarians, and offers their program in English. This paper details the educational situation in Sweden and efforts to improve school librarianship in the face of new curriculum and school librarian shortage.

Research Plan

The University of Borås School of Library and Information Science is the principle university in Sweden that provides school librarianship training. Thus, their faculty constitute the main body that is working to address school librarianship issues. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) School Libraries Section, which I chaired, held a meeting in Stockholm. At that event I was able to meet with the National Library's statistics director, who maintains data about Sweden's school libraries. Because of my work, The University of Borås School of Library and Information dean invited me to consult with them about the school librarianship program's direction.

The guiding research questions were:

1. What knowledge, skills and dispositions do school librarians in Sweden need in order to provide a school library program of resources and services that complies with Swedish legislation and supports student academic achievement?
2. What formal academic preparation do school librarians in Sweden need in order to provide a school library program of resources and services that complies with Swedish legislation and supports student academic achievement?

To answer these questions, a phenomenological research methodology was employed to study the lived experiences of school librarians and school librarian faculty. To that end, the following procedures guided this study.

- Examine Swedish legislation about school libraries.
- Conduct a literature review on school libraries in Sweden.
- Contact relevant Swedish library associations about the status and needs of school librarians (Skolbiblioteck, Skolbibikoteksforum, and Nationalla Skolbkblioteskgruppen).
- Analyze statistics about school libraries in Sweden.
- Analyze the University of Borås library science curriculum in light of Swedish legislation and Swedish school library statistics, in collaboration with their faculty.
- Make recommendations for school library curriculum for the University of Borås School of Library and Information Science.

Swedish Education: Background and Current Needs

In order to understand the situation of school libraries in Sweden, it is necessary to understand the context of Swedish education and the role of school librarians therein.

Education Overview

The Swedish school system consists of several levels of education ranging from optional, free preschool (förskola) starting at age one through adult schooling. Schooling is required from grades one (usually age seven) through nine (grundskola): divided into lågstadiet (years one through three), mellanstadiet (years four through six) and högstadiet (years seven through nine). Most students attend three more years of school (gymnasium), which prepares them for university or a trade. Post-secondary schooling is also free, but university acceptance is competitive, dependent on grades and national examination scores. Schooling must provide Sami (Lapland) language instruction as needed, and must educate newcomers of all languages. School libraries should provide materials in those languages as appropriate. There are about 5000 grundskola and 1.34 million students in Sweden, of whom about 27% are immigrants. A separate division addresses the needs of students with disabilities.

The Swedish school system is governed by several agencies. The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) has central administrative authority for the public school system. It provides services for students and teachers, including training. It also establishes educational standards, regulations, and national tests. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Statens Skolinspektion) audits the schools and conducts quality control. The National Agency for Special Needs, Education and Schools (Specialpedagogiska skolmndigheten) ensures that all students, regardless of functional ability, can fulfill their educational goals through accessible teaching materials and support, and the Ministry of Education and Research oversees the relevant agencies. However, most decisions are made at the municipality level, including library services.

School Libraries

Sweden has about four thousand school libraries, which are funded and managed by local authorities. The first national library law did not exist until 1996, the creation date for the Act on Library Services, which focused on public libraries. For years, school libraries had been ignored by the school community and the Swedish government. Many library associations lobbied for legislation that would support school libraries, and the National Authority for School Improvement funded pilot school library development (Hell, 2014). As a result, the Education Act of 2010 made the school library mandatory (Barrett, Eriksson & Contassot, 2011). The Swedish Library Act of 2013 further stipulated that all students should have access to school libraries (Ranemo, 2017). According to the library act, the library system "aims to promote the development of democratic society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and freedom of opinion" (p.1). The library service should also "promote the position of literature and the interest in education, enlightenment, education and research, as well as cultural activities in general" (p. 1). Additionally, all Swedish curricula were revised in 2017 to strengthen digital competence, and school librarians are responsible for supporting and empowering students in both linguistic and digital skills. However, the reality is that several schools might share one collection or be served by an integrated public-school library, and only about half of the students in Sweden have access to a school library that has at least half-time staffing; one third have no access to a school library.

Organizationally, school librarian oversight has changed hands recently. School libraries today are governed by the school law and the library law. The National Library of Sweden now serves as the agency responsible for coordinating support for all libraries; it records library statistics, maintains a common catalog, and promotes school libraries, but is has no authority to see that legislation is complied with. Its 2018 strategic plan asserted that librarians themselves need to start by examining user needs and behaviors, and then identify effective library functions.

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) oversees staff regulation and has a reference group for school library public relations. It also oversees regional media centers, which serve as educational resources for municipal schools; these centers provide several kinds of services for school librarians, including helping school librarians develop libraries as well as providing opportunities for them to develop their own competence. Some centers provide other educational supports for special areas like information technology, multimedia, special education, multi-language education, health, and subject-specific supports (e.g., an interactive map of Stockholm's history), The media centers in Borås and in Stockholm both provide viewing collections for school-appropriate educational materials, and both conduct in-service training for school librarians. Situated in the country's capitol, the Stockholm center is much larger and provides more comprehensive services such as circulating class sets of literature in several languages, streaming media, makerspaces and robotics, and services for students with disabilities.

The State Media Council oversees media and information literacy. The government's national digitization strategy for the Swedish school system encourages cooperation between teachers and school libraries. The Council asserted that states that "the school library has an important pedagogical task to complement when it comes to strengthening student skills in information retrieval and source literature" (Regeringen, 2017, p. 8).

School libraries have additional support from other groups. The Culture Council helps buy literature for school libraries. The Authority of Available Media deals with accessibility issues. The Swedish Library Association networks, publishes, and advocates. The non-profit National School Library Group of Sweden, which was founded in 1990 by Swedish authors. advocates for school library development. Skolbibliotek Vaste (West School Libraries) and Skolbibliotek Ost (East School Libraries) are the two regional school librarian professional organizations that facilitate networking and professional development. DIK is a trade union for LIS graduates and other academic professions, which advocates for these professions and helps establish fair wages.

School libraries fall under the general umbrella of assessment by the Swedish School Inspectorate, and the recent government efforts showed improvement in their assessing the state of school libraries. However, the National Library's 2015 report on the school library aspect of library planning noted the impact of municipal level governance, which did not recognize that school libraries are answerable to both school and library law. In the final analysis no clear guidelines exist, even though systematic and expanded collaboration between school and public libraries would benefit students.

A 2018 report from the Swedish School Inspectorate examined middle schoolers' ability to "critically search, review and evaluate information in digital and other sources" (p. 5), and found them wanting even though Internet access and use among youth is very widespread in social sciences and Swedish courses. The Inspectorate audit found that information searching needs to be more comprehensively taught, and source criticism needs to be updated to include digital media and images. The audit also indicated that instructors who did not teach these skills did not cooperate with a school librarian, even those these concepts play to school librarians' strengths. Teacher preparation programs tend not to discuss school librarians' roles, and it was found that even principals did not receive training to inform them about the school librarians' skill set and their potential contribution to supporting digital and media literacy.

Skolverket (2017) identified a set of priorities for addressing school libraries' situation. The organization asserted that when school libraries are integrated into the school's activities, school librarians are able to collaborate with the school community, and when a school's principal has a long-term plan for school library activities, then school library programs can effectively impact student success. Currently, however, school librarians are not interacting enough with the school staff, largely because of staff ignorance about school library functions and lack of leadership-based support. To add to the issue, school libraries are weakly regulated. A second key concern is that more people need to be trained as school librarians. Garden's 2017 synthesis of research between 2010 and 2015 on school libraries, focusing on the Swedish system, aligned with Skolveret's study. She also noted the need for more studies, particularly ones that have larger populations and are more rigorous and generalizable.

The lack of collaboration reveals itself in terms of curriculum. School librarians view curriculum in terms of their role in providing supporting resources, as an opportunity for partnering, as a venue for teaching students how to evaluate resources, as a means to incorporate fiction into instruction in various disciplines, and as a way to help define their profession. Barriers to curriculum-based collaboration include lack of time, lack of knowledge and availability, and lack of goal-setting around school library activities (Schedvin, 2017).

One area for possible collaboration is reading, which is a nationally legislated school library function. The library should be stocked with a rich collection of developmentally-appropriate and attractive reading materials that address students' interests and needs so students have many options to choose from. Non-Swedish materials should be available for students as well. The library should also collect non-print multimedia and digital formats of information; these resources support media and digital literacy, which is another curricular high priority – and which provides another opportunity for school librarians to collaborate from an expert position. The library itself should offer a welcoming and stimulating reading environment for individual reading and group sharing of reading experiences. The school librarian brings content and learning knowledge by collecting and organizing appropriate materials, guiding students in their reading habits, instructing students about information and media literacy, and promoting a reading culture. Nevertheless, no legislation requires any collaboration with school librarians or use of school libraries. Again, practices are determined at the local level, so the impact of the principal is very significant.

School Librarians

The qualifications of Swedish school librarians remain challenging. No national qualifications for school librarians exist by the government, librarian preparation programs, or Swedish professional organizations. Even Skolverket, which credentials teachers, does not credential school librarians, nor do they intend to. Currently, principals decide if a person is qualified, largely because school libraries are governed and financed locally. Studies found that principals often do not know what school librarians can do, and tend to prioritize an unmanned library rather than a school librarian (Skolinspektionen, 2018).

With the support of the University of Borås, Limberg and Lundh (2013) edited a collection examining the roles of school libraries in 2013. They questioned the school library's mission relative to reading, education, and relationships with public libraries. They determined that the school library's tasks focused on two main areas: support and stimuli for reading and language development, and teaching different dimensions of information retrieval and use.

A 2016 study by the National Library identified typical school librarian duties, and mapped nine pedagogical functions: teaching information retrieval, teaching source evaluation, promoting reading, advising readers, helping students choose materials for school assignments, giving special aid to students with reading difficulties, planning instruction with teachers, planning media purchases with teachers, and lending media remotely. Almost all school librarians reported that they helped students find developmentally-appropriate reading and ordered media. Among the respondents, 62 percent trained students in evaluating resources, 68 percent participated in teacher training, and several school libraries stated that they also act as information technology (IT) managers, information and communication technology (ICT) educators, and specialist teachers.

Curriculum guidelines for grades one through nine were revised by the Swedish Department of Education in 2017, which strengthened the emphasis on critical thinking, language arts, information and media literacy, and technology. For instance, the introduction asserted that "Students should be able to orientate and act in a complex reality with the great flow of information, digitalization and rapid change rate. Studying skills and methods to make use of and use new knowledge are becoming important. It is also necessary that the pupils develop their ability to critically review information, facts and arguments, and to understand the consequences of different alternatives" (p. 14). Furthermore, the guidelines indicated that "The school will help students develop an understanding of how digitization affects the individual and the development of society. All students should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use digital technology. They will also be given the opportunity to develop a critical and responsible pre-emptive kit for digital technology, in order to see information's potentials and prime risks" (p. 16).

Relative to school libraries, the guidelines stated that primary children are expected to:

- use knowledge from scientific, technical, scholarly, humanistic and aesthetic knowledge areas for further studies, in community life and everyday life
- use digital and other tools and media for knowledge searching, information processing, problem solving, creation, and communication and learning
- use critical thinking and self-formulating views based on knowledge and ethical surveillance.

In terms of the guidelines' section on language arts as it relates to school libraries, by grade nine, students should be able to:

- read and analyze scholarly literature and other texts for different purposes
- create and process texts
- communicate in digital environments, including interactive texts
- search for and critically evaluate information from different sources.

In terms of information and communication as it relates to school libraries as noted in the guidelines, by grade nine, students should understand:

- the role of media as information disseminator, opinion maker, substitute for and reviewer of the merged power structures
- various media, their structure and content, and their newsworthiness
- opportunities and risks associated with internet and digital communication and how to act responsibly in the use of digital and other media based on social, ethical, and legal expectations

Through the education of technology, which can be supported by school libraries, by grade nine, students should be able to:

- identify and analyze technical solutions based on purpose and function
- identify problems and needs that can be solved by technology and develop proposals for solutions
- apply technological concepts and means of expression
- understand the impact of technology choices on individuals, society, and the environment
- analyze driving forces behind technology development and how technology has changed over time.

The curriculum continues to be refined as information technologies continue to evolve as well as cognitive and critical demands on use need to respond.

In 2017, the National Agency for Education was charged to determine what school librarian skills and library functions contribute the most to the quality of education. The report made several recommendations: to clarify the law about school libraries and staffing, strengthen school library activities within the national school development program, inform the school community about the importance of school librarians, increase school librarians' competence, and provide short-term funding to hire school librarians. Already, in 2018, the National Schools Inspectorate facilitated staffing by providing training for principals about the value and oversight of school libraries. The 2018 national revised curriculum also clarified the role of school libraries as part of teaching.

In 2017, the government granted three million kronor to stimulate staffing of school libraries, and in 2018 the government again proposed adding funding to close the equity gap between schools having staffed libraries and those without. However, many schools have no luck in finding and recruiting skilled, trained school librarians, regardless of the funding available.

School Librarian Preparation

Formal academic preparation to prepare professional school librarians seriously lags. Swedish universities with librarianship programs include Borås, Linneaus, Lund, Umea, and Uppsala. A 2018 report underwritten by the National Library focused on library science as a profession and addressed education and research. The report pointed out the need for professional librarians, and noted the general consensus about the librarianship programs as to professional competencies. Nevertheless, they recommended more coordination and a single national structure for continuous professional development. Unfortunately, the report barely mentioned school librarianship.

Sweden's post-secondary librarian preparation exists at three degree levels: bachelor, master, and doctorate. The bachelor's degree is usually 180 EU (European Union) credits, which translates into three years of full-time study. This degree is usually the entry point for public librarians in Sweden, but may be the baseline for school librarians as well. However, the master's degree (typically 120 EU units) is the preferred level for most professional library positions in Sweden as it is in the U.S., including for school librarians. Pedagogy is seldom part of the curriculum, so school and academic librarians are often not prepared to instruct or develop curriculum. Doctoral students usually become academic faculty or researchers, and some become administrators. Classroom teachers are required to be certified; some of them who become school librarians earn a library science master's degree, others take extended education courses (Borås offers four such courses, and is the leader in school librarianship), while others work in the school library without any library preparation or prior experience.

With its seventy employees and more than a thousand students, the University of Borås's School of Library and Information Science (UBSSLIS) is the largest, leading institution within Sweden for preparing professional librarians at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level. They offer both on-campus and distance programs, as well as individual elective courses specifically on school librarianship. Some of those courses are delivered in English. No other Swedish university prepares school librarians.

Work at Borås Högskolan SSLIS

Pre-Existing University-Related Efforts

The Borås Högskolan School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) offers a bachelor's degree in library science, a campus-based master's degree in library science (Culture, information and communication), a distance-based master's degree in library science (Digital library and information services), and a doctoral program. The school exists within the

Faculty of Library, Information, Education and IT, so offers related courses that vary between being more pedagogical or more technical in nature.

The seventy faculty members of the SSLIS themselves reflect a wide range of specialties, from political science to ebooks. Twenty faculty members are involved in teaching courses that involve school librarian preparation. Some members focus more on research, and others expend more of their energy on teaching. The faculty are divided into four research groups, or ”brands”: information practice; knowledge infrastructures; library, culture and society; and social media studies. These groups meet regularly to discuss current readings and research, and they collaborate on projects. I was particularly impressed with the amount of international research collaboration. The Swedish and EU governments offer a variety of grant opportunities for faculty. The library programs are largely theoretical, but faculty often share courses, and guest speakers such as practitioners are common. Monday research seminars give faculty opportunities to share their work, and their open oral doctoral defenses are also good opportunities for SSLIS members to share ideas. Borås also holds symposia that are open to the larger community, such as their one-day conference on MIK (media and information competencies). On an informal, social level, the school has a commons room centrally located in which faculty meet for free beverages, weekly gudfika (coffee “happy hour”), and frequent events (including birthday celebrations). This central space facilitates and reinforces school-wide communication and collaboration.

For their curriculum, the SSLIS faculty meet yearly to schedule the following spring and fall courses. They also have a retreat to work on curriculum issues. Courses are usually set in order for a three-year plan, with electives offered yearly. Each course lasts one to two months, and students generally take one course at a time. Online courses may include a face-to-face orientation or may not. Face-to-face courses usually include lectures and hands-on workshops (e.g., Internet searching). Course coordinators have the freedom to decide how many face-to-face contact hours to provide as well as how to time them (which can range from 2-3 times in a week over the course of five week to a preponderance of independent work). The yearly scheduling process occurs over two consecutive days, during which all course coordinators independently upload their course schedules; the dates and times for each class session should not overlap with other courses in the same program so there is an incentive to upload the course dates and times quickly. Bachelor level courses usually hold 40-60 students while graduate seminar typically need at least fifteen students. The program budget takes into account the number of students and number of hours as well as the type of work that the faculty member does (guest lecturing, grading exams, etc.).

As for the courses themselves, students have a final exam (or project-essay), which they have to pass. By national regulation, they have five chances to pass the exam, but the teacher can decide the timing (e.g., three times during the first month, then maybe a month or two later and a last time a semester later). Most courses include a couple of other smaller assignments to submit earlier; students may be given an A-F grade for these. However, it is possible to not do the assignments and still pass the exam and get credit for the course. The typical course grade is pass or fail, with teachers sometimes giving “pass with distinction.” For master’s degree students, there is one research course that students have to pass before they can start their thesis, which is a degree requirement.

School Library Curriculum Issues and Efforts

By the end of 2020, the school librarianship program needed to be overhauled, so the study's timing was good. The program course coordinators began examining current curricular practices in light of new national school curriculum and the need for more school librarians.

At the time of the study, students were free to take whatever elective course they want; there was no "track." To address the need for school librarians and to optimize their preparation, the faculty considered creating a school librarian track. Current elective courses about school libraries included:

- C3BUB1 Using ICT in Educational Library Services
- 31BSF1 School Libraries: Function and Activities
- 31DIP1 Information Literacy and Learning

The following courses were targeted to teachers and librarians' professional development:

- C315R1 Role of School Librarians in Learning Environments
- 11M100 Media and Information Literacy in Education
- C3F161 Promoting Literature in the School Library
- C3FIN1 Information Seeking and Critical Thinking in Educational Contexts

LIS programs overall seem strongest in information practice; that is, the strongest courses teach theories about information behavior and its context and include some applications. In asking program pre- and in-service school librarians about content approach, the faculty discovered that the respondents generally wanted a greater emphasis on practice than these courses offered up to this time. Especially given the new national curricular emphasis on school librarians' role in teaching media and information literacy, the faculty thought that the school librarianship program would benefit from expanding its content on media literacy and on instructional design; many pre-service school librarians have no teaching background, so the latter subject is crucial for them.

In the process of the study, the program faculty also considered other changes in practice. Of particular interest were service learning, field experience, and advising; none of these features were part of their students' experience. Faculty thought that service learning and advising were feasible ideas to incorporate into their programs.

As noted above, a great need for school librarians has resulted in school principals sometimes hiring classroom teachers without a library science background. As no school librarian credentials exist, the library science degree is the only official path to expert status, but the need far outweighing the number of available graduates, alongside the current employment of a number of school librarians without this qualification, calls in to question the needfulness and/or appropriateness of the standard library science degree for school librarians. Therefore, the question arose among the school librarianship faculty: could a program be established that would leverage classroom teaching experience to shorten the number of courses need to become a knowledgeable school librarian? At the beginning of the study, collaboration between SSLIS and teacher education programs was just starting, and already seeing the fruits of their efforts. Such interaction benefits both programs and facilitates in-service collaboration. To facilitate future efforts, teacher preparation programs and syllabi, were examined to discern possible overlapping and related courses, particularly in terms of literacy and instructional design.

Motivated by the national pronouncement of the need for more school librarians, the program faculty had already talked with school librarians to imagine ideal curricula, and they recognized the need to reach out to school classroom teachers. They liked the idea of a course "package" for existing classroom teachers instead of a credential, since the latter does not exist and a new program is very difficult to create. Over a decade ago, they had offered a similar kind of course package, which was popular, so they thought that a new round of course packaging would be useful now, especially as principals and rectors are being trained in the need to support school libraries. They liked my idea of providing a more condensed course on resource organization. I had also suggested a new course, and found out that the school librarian program had just created a similar one to that which I had suggested, so it was a confirmation for all of us. Nevertheless, the faculty member who created that course is using my idea to polish her course.

At the beginning of the study, students were free to choose electives but had no assigned program advisors, so they might not think strategically or know the best courses to take. To optimize their preparation, it was suggested that career pathways be developed, focusing on school librarianship. Based on a literature review and discussions with school librarians, three educational pathways for school librarianship preparation were proposed, with a baseline requirement of a bachelor's degree. Talks with school librarian practitioners and consultants in three areas of Sweden indicated that they all liked the idea of a 60-unit track or "course package" for school teachers that would enable them to serve as school librarians (being clear that they cannot function as a professional librarian in other library settings without additional qualifications). The school librarian program faculty discussed the proposed school library track proposal. The three tracks are outlined below:

*Pathway 1: Bachelor's degree in library science (Bibliotekarie)

4 elective courses:

- Role of school librarians in learning environments
- Media and information literacy in education
- Promoting literature in the school library
- Using ICT in educational library services

*Pathway 2: Master's degree in library science: Culture, information and communication

4 elective courses:

- Role of school librarians in learning environments
- Media and information literacy in education
- Promoting literature in the school library
- Using ICT in educational library services

*Pathway 3: School Librarian Certificate (Pre-requisite: current teaching certification)

Library science courses:

- Library and information science as research and professional studies (7.5 EU units)
- Classification (7.5) OR Content Management (7.5) [possible 7.5 credit course on resource organization that addresses cataloging, classification, controlled vocabulary -- which are three separate courses presently]
- Knowledge organization 2 (7.5)
- Methods and tools in libraries (7.5)
- Methods and tools in libraries 2 (7.5)

School librarian specialization:

- Role of school librarians in learning environments (7.5)
- Media and information literacy in education (7.5)
- Promoting literature in the school library (7.5)

In the process, it was recommended that the same courses be taught for the face-to-face, distance, and practitioner programs, which would again streamline the curriculum and make it more equitable – as well as optimizing the program's alignment with the national reports and recommendations for school librarianship preparation. It was also suggested that the program map its curriculum, starting with the national recommendations for school librarian functions and their competencies to implement those functions. Then those competencies can be addressed in the various courses, which can also facilitate their assessment.

The coordinating faculty also discussed lengthening all of their courses to two months instead of five weeks, which was the existing norm in order to give more time for students to do more substantive projects, reflect on their learning and show progress within that course (Ferguson & DeFelice, 2010; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Sheldon & Durdella, 2010). Lengthening the time also eases course planning and delivery. There was a concern that lengthening the time would result in fewer courses, but they realized that students could take two courses simultaneously where presently students tended to take just one course.

These ideas were discussed in full during the school librarianship faculty curriculum revision retreat, which involved all the teaching faculty. The attendees met in small groups, organized by course, to review and revise curriculum to expand and deepen learner engagement. A tentative three-year master's program course schedule was then shared. The next day, three faculty members gave presentations on current and future library trends and on knowledge organization. Afterwards, faculty met in four cross-curricular groups to map curriculum for a three-year bachelor's program and then presented their plans. Each group had a slightly different version and approach, which reflected a lack of referring, during group activities, to the program learning outcomes. Such all-faculty program meetings are held annually, with coordinators meeting at least twice a semester. Because of the number of programs offered and the observed need for major curricular and delivery changes, the faculty decided to meet more regularly until they could tighten up these programs more clearly and differentiate them more systematically.

Update and Conclusions

At the same time that school librarians shake their heads about the need for school librarians – and the uneven quality of current staff – those same school librarians are creatively engaging their school communities with innovative, meaningful learning activities and quality collections. Site school librarians, library educators, and supporting government personnel are on the lookout for relevant resources and are initiating projects to improve school library programs.

In the midst of changing dynamics, it can be difficult to find equilibrium, but school librarians do not seem to be panicking. Rather, they are working at a scale that they are comfortable with. Some efforts are deployed quickly on the national level, such as workshops for principals to become more aware and knowledgeable about school library functions and needs. Other tasks, such as establishing qualification baselines and credentialing school librarians, may require greater incentive to fuel the effort. Many structures are in place but need systematic coordination in order to insure high-quality school library service for every student.

Since the time of the study with Borås faculty, their pre-service librarian programs has been redesigned and two new versions, one on campus and one at a distance, is starting in August of 2020. In parallel, they have continued to discuss a school librarian program for practicing librarians who do not have school librarian training. As the school librarian program coordinator stated in a recent correspondence, "Now we'll just tie it together into one whole."

In sum, school librarianship in Sweden can serve as a microcosm to see the factors and dynamics of change and how to deal with such change Especially as few countries in the world have university library programs with a track or specialization for school librarians, the process and product will hopefully inform and inspire them.

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About the Author

Dr. Lesley Farmer, Professor at California State University (CSU) Long Beach, coordinates the Librarianship program, and was named as the university’s Outstanding Professor. She also manages the CSU ICT Literacy Project. She earned her M.S. in Library Science at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and received her doctorate in Adult Education from Temple

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Culture Bump™: A Toolkit for Culture & Communication From Books and Boxes to Digital

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Abstract

In a time of increased need for digital support in internationalizing curriculum and acquiring global skills, the Culture Bump™ Approach is an idea whose time has come. This paper is the adaptation of a presentation at the 2020 Spring Phi Beta Delta 34th Annual International Conference that described the three stages involved in the tool's evolution: creation of a face-to-face cross cultural course at the University of Houston in 1978, its appearance as a multi-media boxed Toolkit in 2004, and now an online course at Auburn University in 2020. The authors describe the changes in each stage that contributed to the effectiveness of the course as well as the explicit changes that were necessary to move from face-to-face training onto a fully digital platform. Finally, they provide specific examples of how online access to *Culture Bump™: A Toolkit for Culture & Communication* can be a resource for faculty members in various disciplines to teach not only cultural and communication skills but secondary skills of self-reflection, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, detachment and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: cross-cultural, intercultural, emotional intelligence, common ground, digital learning, on-line courses

In a time of increased need for digital support in internationalizing curriculum and acquiring global skills, the Culture Bump™ Approach is an idea whose time has come. This paper, an adaptation of a presentation at the 2020 Spring Phi Beta Delta 34th Annual International Conference, describes the three stages involved in the evolution of a face-to-face cross cultural course at the University of Houston in 1978 through its conversion to a multi-media boxed Toolkit in 2004 to, ultimately, its current, online iteration at Auburn University in 2020. It gives practical guidance in how to transition from a traditional intercultural, face-to-face course with a textbook to a boxed, multi-media Toolkit and finally to an entirely online program. This analysis begins with an exploration of the three historical stages that ultimately resulted in the online *Culture Bump™: A Toolkit for Culture & Communication*, along with the specific lessons learned in the transitions. Finally, the article provides specific guidance as to how higher education instructors can use elements of the online *Culture Bump™: A Toolkit for Culture & Communication* as resources in classes that range from sociology to nursing to veterinary studies.

In order to understand the development of the Toolkit and its application for higher education today, it is necessary to understand some definitions.

Definitions

Culture Bump™.

A culture bump™ is simply a cultural difference. According to Archer (1996), "A culture bump™ occurs when an individual from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture" (pp. 170-171). Archer & Nickson (2019) enlarge on that definition when they describe a culture bump™ as, " ...those things that catch our attention—things that we find "odd," "different," "rude" or even "aww nice"—things that we do not expect" (p. 9). This simple definition has evolved into a theory that explains the relationship between stereotypes and a "bump" as well as an 8-Step protocol to deconstruct a culture bump. The 8-Step Protocol consists of the following steps:

1. Pinpoint the culture bump™
2. Describe what the other person(s) did
3. Describe what you did
4. List the emotions you felt when the bump happened
5. Find the universal situation in the culture bump™
6. Describe what you would do or would expect others to do in that universal situation
7. List the qualities you feel that action demonstrates
8. Ask or think about how those qualities are demonstrated by other people

Culture Bump™ Approach

The Culture Bump™ Approach uses this culture bump™ theory and 8-Step protocol as the organizing principle for developing intercultural competence in six areas: (1) cross-cultural communication, (2) cultural adjustment, and understanding (3) cultural perceptions, (4) cultural values, (5) human commonalities and (6) emotional intelligence. This list of competencies uses personal experience as the entry into understanding these six aspects of cultural differences, which literally represents a paradigm shift from understanding cultural characteristics as a means of dealing any type of cultural difference to dealing with the specific difference itself. This approach has provided the underlying structure for the Toolkit from its inception as a course at the University of Houston in 1978.

The First Stage: 1978-2002

University of Houston Language & Culture Center (LCC)

In 1975, Dr. Joyce Valdes founded the intensive English as second language program Language and Culture Center (LCC) at the University of Houston. In 1978, she instructed one of her teachers, Carol M. Archer, to do a review of the best practices in teaching cross culture communication and, based on that, to develop a course that would provide cross cultural instruction for upper level ESL students as well as American students and other LCC teachers. To that end, Archer attended and was certified by Stanford University Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication, in corporate training design and implementation, attended an intensive workshop with Dr. Pierre Casse of the World Bank, and observed the University of

Texas ESL program. She blended these approaches with her own Culture Bump™ theory and methodology into a course designed to develop cross cultural competencies coupled with ESL support.

The first class was taught in Fall 1978 and consisted of units about perceptions, cultural values (using Casse's (1980) Staircase and Roller Coaster Models as well as Hoopes and Ventura's (1979) list of cultural values), communication styles, the cultural adjustment cycle, different orientations toward time and space, and a synopsis of Stewart's (1972) explanation of American cultural patterns. In this respect, the course followed the outline of a typical cultural orientation program in the corporate world, which was also the outline in most intercultural communication textbooks. However, students in her course also studied units on culture bump™, the theory underpinning the idea of a culture bump™ and practiced the 8-step protocol for dealing with their own culture bumps. T

By 1991, Archer had gathered these various concepts into an ESL reader entitled *Living with Strangers in the USA: Communicating beyond Culture*. In this text, the traditional content was woven together with ethnographic stories from the point of view of students from different countries —including the USA—and the teacher of their cross-culture communication class . These students sharing that cross-culture communication class provide a global view of these intercultural topics. Lili from People's Republic of China demonstrates the stages of cultural adjustment with letters to her grandmother written over the space of a semester; Nobuhito from Japan provides an opportunity to understand different cultural styles of communication. Aziz from Saudi Arabia and Brian from the USA offer two very different perceptions about a shared experience. And Luz Maria from Colombia provides an understanding of the theory behind the culture bumps that fueled their differing perceptions. Alfred's story highlights cultural values from his native Venezuela and also examines different cultural values from other countries in the world. Phi from Viet Nam introduces the reader to different cultural orientations to space, and Nejwa from Syria does the same for cultural orientations to time. A final chapter provides a comparison of American individualistic values and collectivism values as they are manifested in relationships among the eight students and with their teacher.

The Second Stage: 2002 - 2009

University of Houston Continuing Education

The second stage of development was in response to the attacks on September 11, 2001. A collaborative effort between Carol Archer, the Office of Tech Transfer and Innovation (OTTI) and the Office of Continuing Education (OCE) at the University of Houston resulted in a multi-media boxed Toolkit for Culture & Communication. The OTTI and Archer developed this product based on the 25 years of experience of face-to-face training of international and American students and teachers at the LCC, and it was marketed through OCE.

The boxed version of the Toolkit was highly interactive, including games, posters and videos. The content areas and games were demonstrated and explained by four Culture Bump Guides - Buki from Venezuela, Katie from Korea, Josh from the USA, and Mazen from Syria.

They were featured in a DVD which also contained a short movie based on the story of Brian and Aziz from the text, *Living with Strangers in the USA*.

This new boxed version of the Culture Bump™ Approach to cross cultural communication reflected the research and experience of the previous decades of experimentation with global audiences. As a result, it retained the basic modules of Perceptions, Cultural Adjustment, Cultural Styles and Communication Styles. However, realizing the need for more understanding of the function of emotions in cultural competences, a module for understanding and developing emotional intelligence was added. In addition, a module called "Universals" was added that clarified specific areas of human connection and commonality. In this boxed version, the Culture Bump Approach™ was fully integrated into each of the other subjects as well as being treated as a separate subject.

Furthermore, the new boxed version was designed to move beyond its ESL and language learning roots and was marketed to corporations, school districts, and community organizations. In these programs, the basic modules were able to be applied to situations beyond national cultural differences. They were also used to understand and transcend gender, religious, socio-economic, and even blue/white collar differences.

The Third Stage: 2011 - Present

Auburn University's Biggio Center and Center for Educational Outreach & Engagement

The third stage of development began in September 2011 as a collaborative effort between Carol Archer and Auburn University's Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. From March of 2011 to March of 2014, the Biggio Center used the Toolkit extensively at Auburn and other universities in faculty development as well as in a "Train the Trainers" Program for professionals from a variety of disciplines—from military trainers to educators to personal coaches. In 2019, Auburn's Center for Educational Outreach & Engagement translated the Toolkit into an on-line version in order to reach a much wider audience. The year-long project was completed in April, 2020, when Auburn's Office of Professional & Continuing Education began offering the Toolkit to students, teachers, and the community at large.

Lessons Learned in the Three Transitions

First Lesson

While it may seem obvious, the first "ah ha" moment was realizing that "hands-on material" such as books or workbooks and other interactive materials provide a comprehensive learning experience. Books encourage the reader to spend more time absorbing and self-reflecting. In other words, the first two versions of the Toolkit were hard-wired for critical thinking and acquiring knowledge—not just information. In contrast, on-line learning is much less inferential. Learning online encourages the viewer to skim the text quickly and look for keywords and quick information.

Second Lesson

In order to provide a comprehensive online learning experience, it is important to use visual cues that help the viewer pause and self-reflect. Some of the visual cues that were implemented in the online Toolkit include pop-ups used in various ways. Examples of ideas were added in the form of a text box that popped up when the mouse hovered over a particular word rather than simply being a part of a long passage. Another type of visual cue was memes that were pulled from previously watched videos and inserted into passages of text. Still another type of visual cue consisted of frequent changes in font size, color, and type.

Third Lesson

In moving from text to digital, it is important to fill in more blanks than would be necessary in a textbook. For example, the topic of perceptions has been present in all three versions. However, in the textbook, *Living with Strangers in the USA: Communicating Beyond Culture*, all that was necessary was a chapter that presented several basic assumptions about perceptions. Essentially, the text stated that we human beings perceive the same things in different ways because of our cultural backgrounds, our life experiences, and our language. In addition, the same story about a meeting between Brian from the USA and Aziz from Saudi Arabia was presented in two separate chapters but told with background information about each young man and their very different perceptions of the same meeting. In the book, the reader is allowed to reflect on how each of the two is disappointed in the meeting. However, in the boxed version of the Toolkit, the story of the meeting is told in a 10-minute movie. The movie script follows the story in the textbook very closely, but, in the boxed version there is a second alternate ending that shows how the two young men could face their culture bumps and have a conversation that connects rather than separates them.

In addition to the basic assumptions that were written in the textbook, the boxed version has an activity in which participants look at the same poster and record their perceptions, which they then share with one another. There is also a video of the Culture Bump™ Guides talking about their perceptions of the same poster. In this way, the participants actually experience having different perceptions from other people. Next, they read the actual story from the point of view of the people in the poster. Afterwards, in the on-line Toolkit, they are also shown exactly how to separate cultural bias from individual bias and find the human commonality in the real story. Finally, they practice the Culture Bump™ steps in relation to their own perceptions.

The content in the textbook, the boxed Toolkit, and the digital Toolkit is basically the same—a theoretical explanation about perceptions and an example. However, this basic information is translated through three versions with visual cues, activities, and providing complete contextual information in order to meet Culture Bump's mission. And the *Culture Bump™: A Toolkit for Culture and Communication* has the tools needed for humans to find common ground.

The Toolkit as a Resource

The past decade of using the Toolkit at Auburn University for faculty development provides specific examples of how it can serve as a resource for faculty members in various disciplines, to teach not only cultural and communication skills but secondary skills of self-reflection, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, detachment and emotional intelligence. This, coupled with its ease of access, makes the Toolkit and modularized curriculum an online option for faculty in various disciplines to provide their students cultural and communication skill development.

This approach has been used at Auburn University with both graduate and undergraduate students. Executive MBA students completing a marketing course while preparing to visit multi-national companies in South Africa were able to see both professional and personal results. Using the Toolkit, the MBAs' professor was able to provide a set of tools and modules for the students to study and apply to cross-cultural communication, cultural adjustment, and cultural perceptions. In this case, the application for students was two-fold. Students were able to apply the modules to the learned concepts of international marketing, while also applying them to their preparation for a personal experience in a foreign country.

In the School of Nursing, a professor of fourth-year students incorporated six modules of the Toolkit with their curriculum in preparation for their nursing practicum in marginalized communities and third-world countries.

In a third example, Dr. Nickson asked students in the Africana Studies 2000 course to select modules from the Toolkit and align them with course themes, giving them greater context and connectivity. For instance, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade viewed through the lens of Toolkit modules informed students of the perspective of the Africans newly initiated to chattel slavery.

In a final example, in August of 2020, the Alabama Department of Education provided 50 online Toolkits and 300 individual modules from the Toolkit for professional development in the areas of culture and communication for teachers across the state of Alabama.

Over this 10-year period faculty members from Nursing, Africana Studies and Business have used the modules to increase their students' knowledge and experience in the areas of communication, cultural values, human universalities, emotional intelligence, and cultural differences, thereby enhancing the academic experience for them.

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About the Authors

Dr. Carol Archer is an experienced international trainer with a history of working with nonprofit and for-profit organizations. She has a strong business development and professional background. Dr. Archer has served as a cross-cultural trainer and coach, faculty developer, and cross culture communication and language consultant. She received her EdD from the University of Houston in 2006, where her dissertation was entitled: A Qualitative Study of the Communicative Experiences of a Venezuelan and a North American. In addition, she founded and developed the Culture Bump Approach to managing differences.

Dr. Stacey Nickson has served as an educator and educational administrator in higher education and K-12 systems during the past four decades. She also administers the Auburn University partnership with Culture Bump Approach©. She was awarded a Fulbright in 2012 and she served as a Fulbright Specialist at the University of Cape Town's Center for Higher Education Development in South Africa in 2013 and a Fulbright Specialist at the University of Cape Coast's Basic Education Department in Ghana in 2017. She is the past president of the Alabama Fulbright Association. Dr. Nickson earned a bachelor's degree from Indiana University-Bloomington and a doctorate from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Dr. Nickson's publications reflect her research interests and include book chapters and journal articles on preparing faculty in South Africa, cross-cultural communication across disciplines, diversity leadership and technology, and learning theories.

Journal Description

International Research and Review is the official journal of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. It is a multidisciplinary journal whose primary objectives are to: (1) recognize, disseminate and share the scholarship of our members with the global academic community; (2) provide a forum for the advancement of academic inquiry and dialogue among all members and stakeholders; and (3) cultivate support for international education among campus leadership by working with university administrators to expand the support for international education among campus leaders.

IRR is a peer-reviewed electronic journal providing a forum for scholars and educators to engage in a multi-disciplinary exchange of ideas, to address topics of mutual concern, and to advocate for policies that enhance the international dimension of higher education. Articles should focus on studies and systematic analyses that employ qualitative, quantitative, a mixture of both methods, and theoretical methodologies from an international scope. Both pedagogical and andragogical perspectives in teaching and learning are welcome.

The Journal reaches out to an audience involved in matters touching all areas of international education, including theoretical, empirical, and normative concerns and concepts as well as practices. It includes stakeholders, practitioners, advocates, as well as faculty, independent researchers, staff, and administrators of programs and institutions engaged in the field. The editor welcomes manuscripts that address the following concerns:

International studies and perspectives
Review of current literature pertaining to international studies
Initiatives and impacts in international education exchange
International program development at American colleges and universities
Internationalizing of curricula: policies, programs, practices, and impacts
International business education
Comparative international education issues
Curriculum development in area studies
Legal issues in the development of international programming
Other related topics

Peer – Review Process
All manuscripts will be forwarded to the Editor for initial review of its relevance of theme, significance, and over-all quality. Manuscripts which fit the aim and scope of the Journal, and are of sufficient quality, will then be forwarded to two anonymous reviewers. At the end of the review process, authors will be notified of any comments that the reviewers have made. They will also make a recommendation regarding whether to accept, revise and resubmit, or reject the paper.

Publication Frequency
The IRR is intended to be published twice per year, but will be published more often as additional articles are received. The *Proceedings of Phi Beta Delta* will be a separate publication of Phi Beta Delta but published in the same volume as the IRR. It will include conference papers, speeches, commentary, and other information about the society.

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Author Guidelines

International Research and Review is the official journal of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. It is a multidisciplinary journal that (1) welcomes submission of manuscripts reflecting research representing *all areas of study* that promote the international and global dimensions of institutions programs (including both policy, practice, and debates) and individual experience of engaging in international education; (2) welcomes articles on current issues of the day regarding international education: the practice, curriculum, institutional issues, faculty and administration management, and cultural aspects and; (3) welcomes book reviews, and reviews or critiques of current literature.

The increasing interest in international opportunities and promotion of scholarship in this shrinking world create new challenges. This purpose of such a publication is to contribute and engage in the conversation related to the broad frames of international education, internationalization, and international scholars. It is hoped that the Phi Beta Delta annual conference and will provide an environment where students, staff, faculty and interested groups can highlight their scholarship in these areas. The conference also serves as a forum for acquiring new ideas, conceptualizations, best practices, as well as discussion on these and other issues of international education.

Research articles may employ qualitative, quantitative, plural (mixed-methods), and theoretical methodologies from an international scope. Both pedagogical and andragogical perspectives on the international experience of teaching, learning, and cross-cultural interchange are welcome. It is recommended that manuscripts be submitted with 4,000-7,000 words. As of the Fall 2020 issue, submitted articles must use the bibliographic and formatting standards found in the **APA 7th edition (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition).**

Authors whose articles are accepted for publication are required to ensure that their data are fully accessible. Authors of quantitative empirical articles must make their data available for replication purposes. A statement of how that is done must appear in the first footnote of the article. Required material would include all data, specialized computer programs, program recodes, and an explanatory file describing what is included and how to reproduce the published results. The IRR is published four times a year on-line by Phi Beta Delta, Honor Society of International Scholars.

Please send your submissions to the Director of Publications at: ms@smitheeassociates.com

Submission Preparation Checklist

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors that do not adhere to these requirements.

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration.
2. The submission file is in Microsoft Word document file format.
3. All URL addresses in the text are activated and ready to click.
4. The text is double-spaced; uses a 12-point font; *employs italics*, rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures, and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end.
5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements of the APA, 7th edition. **(Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition).**

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- ***Name, institute affiliation, mailing address, and email address for all authors***
- Paper title
- Abstract
- Keywords
- Introduction
- Body of paper
- Tables, figures, etc. (if applicable)
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- Brief bio of each author (one paragraph, no more than 100 words)
- References

Nota bene: Below are some issues authors should attend to:

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4. Use *italics* when you want to emphasize concepts or words.
5. Use the *automatic* hyphenation function to keep the character and word spacing at a minimum. In Microsoft Word, users can automatically hyphenate documents by altering the options within the program. The location of the automatic hyphenation option varies depending on the version of Word you are using. In Microsoft Word versions 2007 and 2010, it is found by clicking on Page Layout, Page Setup box, hyphenation. In Microsoft Word 2003, it is located in the "Tools" menu under "Language." Automatic hyphenation is also available in earlier versions of Microsoft Word. Reference the Help menu in the program you're using if you need help with either automatic or manual hyphenation.

Phi (philomatheia) -love of knowledge

Beta (biotremmonia)-valuing of human life

Delta (diapheren)-achieving excellence

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