Reflections on a Collaborative Project between Elementary Students from an International School and Students from a Host Country

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Abstract:
This thesis is an autoethnographic self-study intended to create conversations amongst educators teaching in international schools overseas, and to possibly bring about change in the way we, as expatriate teachers, view service learning; in the way we attempt to incorporate the host culture, and in the way we promote intercultural literacy with young students. The participants in this study included 17 international school students, aged seven to nine, who collaborated with 25 local students of the same age, on five separate occasions to plan and implement environmental projects in the local community. While mainly project-based and experiential, responsible citizenship through environmental activism added the element of service learning. The service-learning component met the curricular standards of citizenship in social studies and the environment in science. Teaching the concept of responsible citizenship to young students who are not actually citizens of the country in which they are residing, is a complex task for an educator. Research on integrating the participation of students from the host culture with elementary students in an international school setting, is scant and therefore invites further research. This is the story of my journey as an expatriate living in a fascinating country, and my attempt to navigate through the implementation of this multi-faceted project. The study revealed the importance of authentic relationships and reflective practice as the most necessary components for this type of research project.

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The discussion on effective collaboration between NGOs and schools was also of great interest. Many of the working group members both work in the educational system and act as the leaders of community organizations. Project-based learning is a teaching method that helps students gain knowledge and skills by investigating the answer to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Constructivism is an educational paradigm that learning is an active, constructive process. The International CyberFair is a collaborative, project-based learning program that empowers schools, youth organizations, and their local communities to share resources, establish partnerships, and work together to build a strong and supportive community. Objectives of international school projects. Before a school project is started, it is important to clarify and discuss the main objectives, issues and framework for the school partnership with everybody involved. Common objectives: Exchange of ideas. If schools from countries work together which had or still have a relationship prone to conflicts, such a cooperation can have a unifying effect and can help to break down prejudices and animosities. In which language(s) do we want to or can we communicate? It is important that the age difference between the students working on a common project is not more than one year either way be-cause interests, levels of language ability and knowledge vary considerably in these age groups.