



VT World Connections

Center for Research and Development in International Education (CRaDIE)

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Price and Tlou Traveled to Malawi to Explore Vocational Training

In May, Dr. Josiah Tlou and Dr. Bill Price traveled to Malawi to learn how vocational training is currently delivered and the feasibility of reinstating vocational training in primary and secondary schools. They were accompanied in-country by Absalom Phiri and Ndalapa Mhango, two Virginia Tech doctoral students, who were home doing dissertation research. During their visit they met with educational leaders in the Ministry, TEVETA leaders, university faculty and administrators, model primary and secondary school faculty and administrators, and industry personnel.

Although there was widespread support for reinstating vocational concepts into Malawian primary and secondary schools, lack of resources continues to erode vocational offerings even at the two-year technical colleges, which should provide the country with the trained personnel ready for industry and management.

A major recommendation that emerged from their visit was that funding should be sought to develop a comprehensive plan with key stakeholders for reinstatement and expansion of vocational training. Such a plan could then be used to seek the funding needed for implementation.



Guy Kawanga, principal of Soche Technical College, watches as young women and men learn masonry.

Kelly Went to Central Asia with Legacy International Grant

For three weeks in April, Patricia Kelly accompanied Marlene Ginsberg from Legacy International to Central Asia to interview and select twelve participants for an exchange program focusing on civic education and responsible governance. CRaDIE is a partner with Legacy in this endeavor, and David Hicks is serving as a consultant on citizenship education and will present workshops here at Virginia Tech to the selected group during fall semester.

Participants were interviewed in Almaty, Kazakhstan; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; and Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Ginsberg and Kelly met with U.S. Embassy officials in all three countries, the Minister of Education in Bishkek, Aga Khan Development Network officials in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, UNESCO in Bishkek, and the USAID missions in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



Here the seat of government in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, shows why Dushanbe is called "the pastel city" with its many multi-hued buildings.

The universities that are assisting with the project are Kazakhstan Pedagogical University, International University of Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan State Pedagogical University. In Spring 2006 Dr. Asylbek Aidaraliev, President of International University of Kyrgyzstan visited Virginia Tech and signed an MOU. Bishkek Humanities University contacted Kelly on this trip and has signed an MOU with Virginia Tech.

In meetings with universities, we learned that some universities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are moving to the Bologna system, which is an international accreditation process that will recognize the university degrees in 400 other universities worldwide. The accreditation process involves moving to a credit system, more interactive teaching, and student independent work/research. The Soviet system is based on points given on exams sometimes over a year's work, where one professor shepherds one group of students (perhaps a dozen or so) through all four years of their study. Such a system provides accountability but also limits students' exposure to a university's expertise overall. Part of the problem now is that these Central Asia universities in the Bologna system are still holding on to the Soviet system; therefore, students and professors are complaining that having to accommodate both systems is burdensome and nonproductive.

Talks Continue with Egypt for Potential Partnering Opportunities

Sedki Riad, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Director of VT-MENA Program, has been working with CRaDIE and OERO (Office of Educational Research and Outreach) to broaden Virginia Tech's activities in Egypt. In 2006, CRaDIE and OERO joined together to write a white paper "Fostering Interactive Teaching and Learning with ICT," which Riad took to Egypt for discussion. As a result a proposal, "Educator Exchange Workshops (E²W): Reforming Instructional Practice through Interactive Teaching and Learning" was written. No action has been taken on this proposal as yet.

In February 2007, CRaDIE responded to the Democracy Initiatives Program Announcement (DIPA) from the U.S. Department of State for capability statements for the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Partnering with Legacy International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Lynchburg but with experience in the international arena, and Futures Alumni, a NGO based in Cairo, Egypt, with nationally recognized expertise in program development and outreach. CRaDIE submitted a capability statement for Egypt that focused on developing leadership skills among youth and civic education. In April, the Center was notified that it had been accepted to receive grants until 2010, based on regional or country-specific interest and needs as determined by the U.S. Government. The award pool is up to three million dollars.

Riad and John Burton hosted Dr. Galal Said, President of Fayoum University, and Dr. Abdallah Bazaraa, Director of Egyptian Cultural & Educational Bureau in DC, for a campus visit on May 7, 2007. They were interested in exploring collaboration efforts in Education among other areas. As a result of that visit, Burton traveled to Egypt to meet with various parties to determine mutual interests.

"It was the best whole school integration of technology I've seen."

Despite Cairo traffic and taxi rides that Burton claims were "nothing like it in my experience," he met with the President of MUST (Misr University for Science and Technology), who is planning to establish a college of humanities, including a school of education.



John manages to get away to enjoy the pyramids in Egypt.

He is interested in help from Virginia Tech to design curriculum and to train instructors in current pedagogy. The new college has passed his board, and Burton says, "We are now talking."

As a result of discussions with the Egyptian Minister of Higher Education and many of his undersecretaries about a new education thrust involving student centered, interactive, problem-based, technology infused education, a grant "Modern Schools for Egypt: A Proposal for a Model Teacher Preparation Program Offered to the Education Development Fund" was submitted.

While in Egypt, Burton visited one of the Futures Schools, run by a NGO that is a partner of CRaDIE. In this private, technology centered school every student had a computer, every class had a smartboard that the teachers used; lessons, homework, grades, etc. were available on-line and by cell phone. Burton said, "It was the best whole school integration of technology I've seen. The head of the system is interested in courses to train the trainers so that all of his schools (American, International, German, etc.) can go technology heavy."

Burton met with faculty of Alexandria University and later its president, Dr. Hassan Nadir Kheirallah. They discussed collaborative programs to market within and outside of Egypt to other Arab nations. On July 16, Dr. Kheirallah came to Virginia Tech for further discussions. At this writing, the last proposal has been re-submitted with a revised budget.

Malawi Study Abroad

Students from Virginia Tech left for Malawi Study Abroad in June accompanied by students from Radford University and North Carolina A & T. (See <http://www.cradie.soe.vt.edu/studyabroad/index.html> for the 2007 announcement.) The emphasis of this Study Abroad program was to study the impact of culture on teaching and learning in Malawi, a sub-Saharan African country.

In addition to students' teaching in schools, reading and discussing materials related to history and culture, and visiting villages and museums, they carried out service learning projects in their schools. A feeding program at Malemia Primary School was re-instituted with contributed funds and a school library was established with materials brought from the U.S. At Domasi Demonstration Primary School the school library that had been established in earlier visits was upgraded. In previous years, a series of maintenance projects had been carried out at Domasi Government School. As a result the school has established a Maintenance Committee with community support. Study Abroad students met with them and contributed to the committee's planned projects.

Because students expressed an interest in returning to Africa in some capacity, an informational seminar was arranged. Jeff Sykes, an IFESH (International Foundation for Education & Self-Help) teacher stationed at Domasi College of Education, discussed how IFESH places teachers in sub-Saharan Africa.

IFESH also has a program that provides recent college graduates and graduate students an opportunity to work overseas for nine months as International Fellows (see <http://www.ifesh.org/fellows.html> for a full description). Another opportunity that emerged was teaching at Tiyamike Mulungu Center, an orphanage with a well-run primary school and secondary school in development. They will provide lodging for volunteers. (See <http://www.freewebs.com/tiyamike-center/index.htm> for more information.)

This year students were also able to visit Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during a stopover on the way back to the U.S.

Kenya Responsible Governance Training Postponed Until Fall Semester

Events of April 16 necessitated rescheduling training in Kenya, the first stage of "Citizen Exchange Between the United States and Kenya," a grant awarded to CRaDIE by the US Department of State to develop a dialogue on accountability and transparency in governance. As a result, Hicks, Tlou, and Kelly will travel in September/October to Nairobi to conduct a workshop and select ten Kenyan participants to come to the United States in spring 2008 to live with families and to learn the workings of democracy first-hand.



Village women prepared porridge for the Malemia Primary School pupils on the morning that the feeding program was restarted through contributions from Malawi Study Abroad students.

During last year's Study Abroad, Malemia teachers were paying for the feeding program, but because salaries are approximately \$30 per month, they could no longer take from their own families even though the needs of their students were so great. The signs of malnutrition are quite evident throughout the school.

Porridge is a thin mixture of water, ground maize, and a little sugar. Pupils bring their cups to school for the twice per week feeding. Because school officials want to stretch the contributed funds as far as possible, they are limiting the amount of sugar and not including ground nuts (peanuts) flour, which would provide a source of protein.

Ndalapa Mhango, a Virginia Tech doctoral student from Malawi and a former head teacher in a school with a feeding program, estimated that the cost of making the porridge with appropriate amounts of sugar and ground nuts flour would cost approximately \$20 per day. For the 1,000 pupils at Malemia, that means each feeding would cost two cents per pupil.

Study Abroad students will continue to raise money so that the porridge made will provide the needed sustenance to provide for healthy growth of bodies and brains. The money will be sent through a Primary Education Advisor in the District Education Office that works with the school.

Burton Goes with Educational Leadership Group to China



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Please submit items and activities of interest to kellyp@vt.edu for the Fall Semester issue.

In June nineteen educators -- primarily superintendents, central office administrators, and principals from across the United States -- departed for the 13th China Educational Leadership Conference. The force behind the Conference is David Alexander, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Chair at Virginia Tech, assisted by Jianliang Wang, a professor at Western Kentucky University. The program is designed to study the Chinese educational system in relation to its culture and history. During the two-week trip participants met ministers of education, visited schools and universities, and toured significant historical and cultural sites such as the Great Wall, Ming Tombs, the Summer Palace, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City in Beijing, and Terra Cotta Warriors in Xi'an.

This year John Burton, Director of the Office for Educational Research and Outreach, attended the conference. When asked how he reacted as a tourist, John said, "The 'newness' of Beijing with its high-rise condos, eight-lane highways, subways, and trains was impressive." He went on to point to the usual historical sites on the itinerary as highlights of the trip, but noted also Xi'an's intact wall and its Muslim market as important to visit. He saw "many, many evidences of skilled artisans and lots and lots of labor."

As an educator, John valued "meeting some of the secondary students, seeing their dorm rooms and their classrooms."

He said, "There were many smart, motivated young people from wealthy parents." However, he commented further, "As we've seen in Africa, including Egypt, China's education system is driven by the test that is used to select folks for the universities. There's a great deal of memorization, very little play. Parents are even more driven [than students] so there is no free time at night, on weekends, or over summer vacation."



Burton with Vickie Martin from OERO, who accompanied the group to assist Alexander.

Allen and Tlou Meet with Foundations Consortium in New York

Wallace Allen, Associate Director for Corporate Foundations at Virginia Tech, and Josiah Tlou, Director of CRaDIE, traveled to New York in early July to meet with Susan Grant Lewis, Coordinator of Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, which is a consortium of foundations. The purpose of their meeting was to discuss opportunities for funding that might be available through the partnership or through individual foundations.

The Partnership is located in The Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and is comprised of the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation. Together they have made available 200 million dollars to support partnership initiatives of universities in Africa.

As a result of their visit, some inquiries have been sent to specific contacts.

Grants Submitted

In addition to grants already mentioned in articles throughout this newsletter, the following grants were submitted during Spring Semester 2007 but were not funded:

"Summer Institute for English Language Educators (SETI) from South Africa," submitted to Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, \$195,145.

"Comprehensive MAED for Mexican Teacher Educators (K-9)," TIES U.S. – Mexican University Partnerships, \$147,000.