

**Course: EDD8013 Qualitative Research Methods****Semester 2, 2016-17****Course Lecturer: Greg FAIRBROTHER (Dept of SSC)**

The course I taught that was integrated at a relatively late stage into the TDG project was the postgraduate course, “Qualitative Research Methods.” The class comprised 62 students in the EdD, MPhil, and PhD programmes from all three Faculties of the university. Approximately half of the students were from Mainland China, half from Hong Kong, and a few from other nations (Pakistan, Uganda, Malaysia, Singapore). Global issues were not a substantive or central concern of the course – as identified in the preliminary information provided to the TDG team, the secondary global elements of the course were:

1. All course readings come from an implicitly global perspective, being based on perspectives and research mainly from North America and Europe
2. Students are encouraged to seek out readings related to their research that can provide an international comparative perspective on their research topics
3. Small group and whole class discussions are a core component of the course, involving local (Hong Kong), Mainland, and international students.

Students in the course would have been exposed to global influences mainly through the required and recommended readings. The primary required text for the course was [Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications]. All of the examples of qualitative research discussed in this text were from research conducted in North and South America, including research among various ethnic minority populations. The secondary required text for the course, [Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications], similarly drew from examples of research mainly conducted in North America. Through their first and last written assignments, students were required to integrate the research design and implementation ideas from these texts with their own research interests, which would engage them in a kind of cross-cultural reflection (originally Western research paradigms applied to largely non-Western [Chinese, Hong Kong, Malaysian, Ugandan, etc.] contexts). It must be noted that the salience of this cross-cultural analysis, as a cross-cultural analysis, was most likely quite implicit.

Students were also strongly encouraged to seek out secondary literature on their research topics, and it is likely that much of the literature that they identified would have come from primarily Western contexts, again providing an implicit cross-cultural basis for comparison with their own ideas for research in Hong Kong, China, and other nations. A few of the students, however, were interested specifically in certain cross-cultural (global) issues including diaspora, cross-cultural

communication in the classroom, cross-cultural influences in popular media, the implementation of globalized educational leadership trends in local contexts, the experience of non-local students in Hong Kong universities, and others.

The lectures I provided illustrating qualitative research design and methods were largely drawn from my own and my students' research in Mainland China and Hong Kong, providing a possible basis for students' cross-cultural comparison with their own readings and ideas.

Small-group discussions were an integral component of the course, and each of the groups was purposely formed by myself to include both local and non-local students in order to expose students to cross-cultural perspectives. The possibility for cross-cultural fertilization presented itself both from the fact that the students' cultural backgrounds differed, but also from the fact that among them were students conducting research on the cross-culturally relevant topics mentioned above. In the course of the discussions each week, students were asked to share their own research ideas and accept questions and feedback from their groupmates.

In sum, the attention to global or cross-cultural issues in the course *Qualitative Research Methods* was largely implicit and almost surreptitious. It will be interesting to see the results of the pre-course and post-course questionnaires to examine whether such subtle influences may have had an actual impact on students' attitudes.