Using Service-Learning in Educating for Sustainability in Higher Education: Wu Zhi Qiao – Bridge to China Project

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bridge x service-learning
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we need to get something done...
What is Wu Zhi Qiao?

- ethos: bridge to China that never ends
- Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation registered in 2007 (no: 91/8739)
- started with two goals: bridge for people & bridging people
building physical + mental bridges
Objectives

• improve lives of underprivileged villages in remote areas of Mainland China
• inspire respect, appreciation & preservation of local culture & environment, promulgate concept of sustainability
• provide university students a real life experience of executing a service project which has direct impact
• foster better communication, mutual understanding & integration between Hong Kong & the Mainland
University teams

- **student-oriented**: students’ intrinsic motivation lead
- **teaching staff supervision**: supervised by teaching staff from relevant faculties & departments
- **inter-university initiative**: mutual learning, sharing & support among universities
- **student development**: enhance understanding of the Mainland, contribute to the needy with their own hands, develop strong integrity & commitment to society & life
25 institutions from HK, Mainland & overseas

Institutions with WZQ teams:
• Chongqing University
• Chongqing Jiaotong University
• Kunming University of Science & Technology
• Minzu University of China
• Peking University
• Sichuan University
• Tsinghua University
• Xi’an Jiaotong University
• Xi’an University of Architecture & Technology
• Tunghai University
• University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
• The Chinese University of Hong Kong
• Chu Hai College of Higher Education

• The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
• The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology
• Technological & Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong
• The University of Hong Kong

Institutions participated in WZQ projects:
• Hefei University of Technology
• Nanjing University
• Stanford University
• Southeast University
• The Open University of Hong Kong
• Tongji University
• Wuhan University of Technology
Bridge & community projects

>2,800 volunteers to complete 44 projects,
including 37 footbridges,
3 village community centers,

benefitting

>52,000 villagers
in underprivileged areas of 7 provinces
some of our bridge projects
CUHK Golden Jubilee
WZQ@Gansu >

< Tsinghua-HKU Centenary
WZQ@Yunnan>
gabion bridge to improve commutation safety with appropriate technology, sustainable design and skill

stone arch bridge: fully utilised local materials & traditional construction method to promote sustainability
one-span bridge entirely made with recycled steel from a truck
and many more...
other than bridges,
we also improve lives through...
WZQ village improvement projects

- community centre construction
- pathway improvement
- pavilion construction
- basketball court establishment
- furniture repair
- household improvements
- electrical safety workshop for villagers
- public health
  - hygiene
  - toilet
  - environment
we built 54 anti-quake rammed earth prototype houses
we have a focus on sustainability
Sustainability education outside classroom

- **student participation**: to blend in tradition & modern technology
- **local village participation**: for students to pass on skills & knowhow
- **eco-method** relevant to local cultural & environmental context
- execution: **affordable & basic technology**
everyone is happy!
we all learn, improve & grow with projects
Training & interflow activities

• WZQ University Team Interflow Camps: foster mutual communication, learning & experience sharing, enrich understanding of rural development & ecological architecture etc.

• Wu Zhi Gatherings: talks organised by university teams to share WZQ projects, e.g. sustainable architecture, project management, China development, team building & communication skills, etc.
from ‘Bridge for People’

to ‘People as Bridges’
Building bridges of multiple functions

- **Bridging Culture**
  Appreciation/ Respect of local culture

- **Bridging Knowledge**
  Knowledge transfer/knowhow/skill technology advancement

- **BRIDGE TO CHINA**
  Village Improvement Project: Bridges, houses, infrastructure, sanitary, water supply, waste treatment, public health, cultural heritage conservation, etc.

- **Bridging Resources**
  Volunteering, collaboration

- **Bridging Universities**
  Intervarsity

- **Bridging Discliplines**
  Inter-disciplines

- **Bridging Income Gap**
  Charity
Wu Zhi Qiao =

service-learning + sustainability education
WZQ as service-learning for sustainability education

- total service-and-learning experience in non-traditional classroom setting
- nurture commitment and care of youth by experiencing hardship of villagers
- instant gratification: helping people help themselves
helping people help themselves

= instant gratification
Student reflections – Hong Kong

Carol ZHAO (HKU): ‘I will never forget the pride and excitement that stuck me when I saw people walking on that bridge. I guess this is something truly unforgettable’

Iris TSANG (CUHK): ‘I’m now looking forward to similar opportunities in the future as taking part in this WZQ volunteering trip gave me an experience that I can get from nowhere else – touching the others’ hearts and be touched, changed in order to make changes’

Grace KWONG (CUHK): ‘this experience will be the starting point of my participating in volunteer work’

CHAN Chun Yu (CUHK): ‘I’m so glad that this holiday has been well spent, as I’ve accomplished a meaningful deed’
Student reflections – Hong Kong

Christy LAM (PolyU): ‘whether we are from Hong Kong or Xi’an, we are like a family’

TAM Hoi Ching (CUHK): ‘we might never see one another again, but this WZQ will always keep our hearts together’

LAM Wai Ming (PolyU): ‘WZQ improved the village’s environment. It connected us. It founded our relationship. It aroused our sense of unity’

Heidi CHAN (CUHK): ‘through out the construction of the bridge, I was so touched to realise that this world is very much filled with love’
Student reflections – Overseas

Cindy FUNG (United World College of the Adriatic, Italy): ‘I’ve met amazing friends across Mainland China and Hong Kong. I’ve eaten very simple but wonderful food (with no MSG!). I’ve gotten to play with the kids in the village everyday. I’ve delightfully discovered that I’m stronger than I thought. In more ways than one, tangible or not, I’ve taken the WZQ back with me’

Jayne SO (UCL): ‘I’ve gained much more than I could have asked for over the nine days’

Li Chuan (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): ‘this project is the ignition of a spirit they will carry throughout the rest of their lives – the spirit of benevolence and giving’
Student reflections – Mainland

LI Kwan (Xi’an Jiaotong University): ‘we’ve gained a lot more than what we’ve sacrificed because we’re working together’

YANG Lu (Xi’an Jiaotong University): ‘like what “Qiao Yi” menas, the process of building a bridge was a very invaluable memory for all of us. It was also a very invaluable experience for WZQ’
Thank you!

www.bridgetochina.org.hk