



MOEI 2008: Report

MOEI – the Migrant Outreach Education Initiative – was launched by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong in 2008. MOEI provides intensive English-language education for migrant children and adults along the Moei River section of the Thai-Burma border. Based in Mae Sot, MOEI works particularly closely with individuals from the Karen ethnic group. By recruiting undergraduate students as interns and volunteers, MOEI boosts engagement with Burma and promotes student advocacy. By operating alongside NGOs with deep local knowledge, it complements existing work in migrant communities.

Overview

In 2008, 22 students from universities in Hong Kong and the UK first undertook one week of training in late June, and then till early August delivered six weeks of intensive English classes to 700 refugees and migrants in 11 schools. Three schools were in refugee camps, one was in a clinic, and another was in a safe house for political fugitives. The remaining MOEI classes took place in migrant schools in Mae Sot and Chiang Mai. In 2008, teaching with MOEI proved to be extremely hard work. It was also immensely rewarding. Every intern and volunteer was very positive about the programme. For some it was a life-changing experience. The programme was also well received by schools and the community.

Participants

The first cohort of 22 MOEI participants was drawn from universities in Hong Kong and the UK. In Hong Kong, 10 students came from the University of Hong Kong, and 3 from

Hong Kong Institute of Education – thanks to colleagues for liaising with MOEI. In the UK, a total of 9 students came from the Universities of Bath, Cambridge (2), Kent (2), Manchester Metropolitan, Sheffield (2) and Warwick – thanks to colleagues who spread the word about MOEI on their campuses. All but two participants were registered on undergraduate programmes. The other two, Sarah Kim and Diana Parker, were US citizens registered for one year at Hong Kong Institute of Education. They came into the MOEI programme as expert volunteers, having just completed a year as teaching assistants in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Students from The University of Hong Kong took the programme as an internship. Everybody else was a volunteer.

Training

In the week of June 23-27, Hugh Cory conducted an intensive training workshop in English-language teaching. Hugh has a wealth of experience both in English-language education across much of the world, and in teaching and training up and down the Thai-Burma border. His input was invaluable in training the MOEI teachers, and in liaising both before and during the training week with schools about teaching placements.

Teaching

In-class education took place for six weeks from June 30 to August 8. In general, MOEI teachers had about four hours of classroom contact per day for five days a week, though there were many variations on this pattern. Throughout the teaching period, Sarah Kim and Diana Parker did a wonderful job of supporting teachers in Mae La refugee camp and Mae Sot. They also taught classes themselves. In Chiang Mai, Meg Eberle, a research assistant at The University of Hong Kong, provided necessary support to the MOEI teachers. In Nupo refugee camp, MOEI interns and volunteers were well looked after by the local coordinator, John Glenn. Typically, MOEI participants taught in one school for the first three weeks of the programme, and then switched to another school for the second three weeks. The number of teachers allocated to each school changed slightly from one segment to the other, but was broadly as shown in the table below. The Teachers column adds to more than 22 because a small number of MOEI interns and volunteers spent half a day in one school, and half a day in another.

<i>Location</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Students</i>
Chiang Mai	School for Shan State Nationalities Youth	1	30
	Teacher Training for Burmese Teachers	2	10
Mae La Camp	Anglican Language and Computer Centre	1	80
	Leadership and Management Training Centre	3	70
Mae Sot	Boarding High School for Orphans and Helpless Youths	2	40
	House 52	2	20
	Hsa Thoo Lei School	4	120
	Mae Tao Clinic	3	80
	Minmahaw Education Foundation	2	20
	Social Action for Women High School	1	30
Nupo Camp	English Speaking Course	3	180

Organization

MOEI 2008 was organized by the University of Hong Kong, which recruited and liaised with all participants and took care of legal matters by requiring participants to sign a contract with the University. From start to finish, Child's Dream (an educational charity registered in Thailand) acted as project consultant, and liaised with schools and NGOs in the border area – special thanks to Daniel Siegfried and Thomas Brittner. In the preparatory stage, Hong Kong-America Center (an educational NGO based in Hong Kong) assisted with outline planning, and facilitated recruitment at Hong Kong Institute of Education – special thanks to Glenn Shive. In the delivery stage, Hugh Cory, Sarah Kim and Diana Parker performed key organizational tasks. Many NGOs in the border area were immensely helpful to MOEI.

Funding

Core funding for MOEI was provided by two main donors associated with the University of Hong Kong. Their donations were used to cover major programme expenses, such as organizational costs, some transport costs, training costs, and essential classroom materials for teachers. They were also used to provide partial scholarships for the 10 MOEI interns from the University of Hong Kong, and to cover major expenses for the two expert volunteers. Additional funding was provided on an ad hoc basis to individual participants by Hong Kong-America Center, Hong Kong Institute of Education, the University of Bath and

the University of Cambridge. MOEI did not provide scholarships for participants recruited from universities outside Hong Kong.

Evaluation

Formal evaluation undertaken with MOEI participants and partners indicates that the programme was successful. There were minor problems here and there, but no major issues. MOEI participants were uniformly positive about most aspects of the programme, as were the schools in which classes were given. It seems highly likely that MOEI interns and volunteers will become advocates for Burma when they return to their university campuses. Several linked issues raised by both teachers and schools related to the teaching placements. Just about everyone agreed that placements should run for eight weeks instead of six, that teachers should not switch placements half way through but rather stay in one school throughout, and that teaching should begin closer to the beginning of June. Many MOEI teachers argued for some pre-programme training, and for advance information about Mae Sot, Burma and Burmese migrants in Thailand. Some schools asked if MOEI could run more frequently than once a year. These points will all be addressed in future programmes.

Future

Currently, plans are in hand to implement MOEI 2008-09 and MOEI 2009. MOEI 2008-09 will capitalize on the different academic schedule in the southern hemisphere to recruit volunteers from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The provisional schedule is:

Wednesday December 10, 2008 – Saturday December 13, 2008	Training
Monday December 15, 2008 – Friday February 6, 2009	Teaching
MOEI 2009 will mirror MOEI 2008, but will have a longer teaching schedule:	
Monday June 8, 2009 – Friday June 12, 2009	Training
Monday June 15, 2009 – Friday August 7, 2009	Teaching

As before, the University of Hong Kong will make use of academic contacts to recruit undergraduate students to the programme – many thanks in advance for assistance.

Professor Ian Holliday

MOEI Programme Director/Dean of Social Sciences

The University of Hong Kong

August 2008