

## Educators' Delegation to China Report, 9-21 October 2018

Ten school leaders, one Confucius Institute leader: a group of strangers and 13 whole days together in a 'foreign' country ... what could this mean?

*The highlights were many. It was a fantastic group of Kiwis to travel with – everyone was easy company and kept an eye out for each other.*

Confucius Institute's annual Educators' Delegation to China ranked 10/10 on satisfaction with everyone – a success to be proud of! The group included principals and deputy principals from Whangarei down to Waikato, from primary and secondary schools and from different backgrounds and understandings but with a common goal 'to experience China to better promote Chinese in schools'. Thanks to Hanban (CI Headquarters) for their kind generosity in sponsoring the trip and Fudan University for coordinating the programme.



The trip included visits to schools, NZ Embassy, NZ Central, Zespri, Hanban, Fudan University ... and a number of significant cultural sites – modern and traditional - with The Great Wall being one of the highlights for all.

*The trip was extremely well organized, informative and fascinating. The balance of activities, visits and school visits was well thought out and exceptionally informative. The sight-seeing was complemented by great guides and excellent support from Janine. I thoroughly enjoyed the local flavour that each city had and it was interesting to experience the diversity of culture, environment and food in each area.*



*Speaking with members of the NZ Embassy in Beijing (including the Ambassador, Clare Fearnley), and NZ Central and Zespri in Shanghai, provided greater understanding of the political and business relationship between NZ and China. New Zealand is highly regarded as a business partner, and a comment often made by Chinese people we introduced ourselves to was that they loved New Zealand for our baby milk powder.*

*We had so many wonderful experiences it is hard to pick the overall highlight. The opportunity to see an education system so different to ours yet see kids that are just kids was great to see. To visit places that I had only ever heard of was amazing.*

Painting the boardwalk along the Qiantang River drew the media and local crowds with their cameras and microphones but also demonstrated the fantastic ‘teamwork’ and collegiality of the group as they all ‘mucked in’ to produce a Kiwiana display to showcase and leave as their imprint in Hangzhou, a city striving towards environmental sustainability.

*The travel days gave some understanding of life in the rural setting, and the degree of development across that section of the country. China is certainly on the move in terms of building satellite towns and infrastructure.*



*I feel privileged to have been a part of the Educators Delegation to China. Janine and the team packed the itinerary and every experience was worthwhile in achieving the aims of the tour. Every day was ‘full-on’, but so interesting and enjoyable that I did not realise how tired I was until I got home.*

School visits, lectures on China, connecting with Chinese counterparts and fellow New Zealanders all contributed to raising the group’s awareness of what China is all about and to making connections with new faces to support future personal and professional relationships and goals.

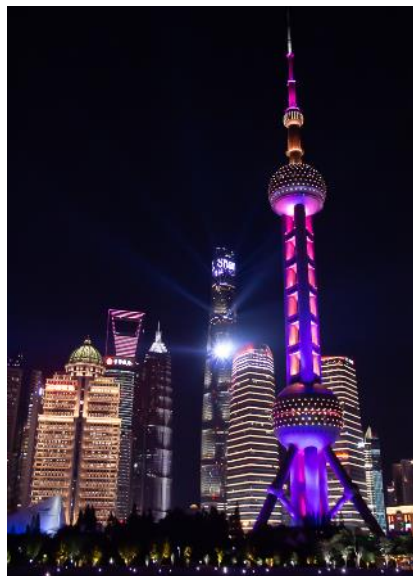


*The schools we visited were happy to showcase the areas with which they were proud. Each school celebrated its history and values through its landscaping or visual displays. We visited classes and were able to speak with some of the students.*

*The knowledge I gained from listening and being in these environments made for lots of learning and questions to learn more. The opportunity to have a meal with these people was an added bonus. The stories they shared in these settings helped my understanding of Chinese culture grow quicker.*

With a programme spanning four cities – Beijing, Hangzhou, Wuhan and Shanghai – and limited time, the group was only able to taste a fraction of the diversity that China offers.

*It goes without saying that the ancient cultural sites we visited were a highlight of the trip and it would be difficult to choose between sites such as The Forbidden City and the village of Wuzhen. However, modern China, in its many and varied faces was equally fascinating.*



A little free time was available for individuals to explore at their own leisure with quick shopping expeditions made as well as walks in the morning around the park or lake to observe and engage with locals.



*During a couple of our morning walks we would come across little gardens and temples where people would be exercising or sitting quietly. I loved the Tai Chi, watching it and joining in. That was very special.*

*Before the tour I had the impression that the Chinese were rather formal and reserved and I wondered if they might be suspicious of westerners. However, I found them to be warm, friendly and welcoming. I was struck by their ease and gentle humour.*

Days were long and full with all accommodation, meals and in-country travel included and a debrief at the end of each day to share reflections. A knowledgeable guide accompanied the group at all times as well as a tour leader from Confucius Institute.



*While at times I felt the days were too long in hindsight it was a real highlight.*

*The wonderful variety of food that we ate also made a lasting impression, though not on the waistline! Everyday brought new culinary delights from dumplings to whole chickens baked in clay to hotpot to toffee coated crab apples on a stick.*



*Personally, I have learnt a great deal from the trip and I have had some of my preconceptions challenged. I cannot claim to know and understand China, but I do know and understand far more than I did.*

Going forward, there are many actions in the minds of each in the group – some similar, some different, some challenging and some simple such as putting up Chinese signage.



*It is difficult to measure the overall impression from the trip. There is a huge difference in our assumptions before the trip of what we knew about China and now after 2 weeks of thinking and absorbing new understandings we can realise how little we knew, how much we learnt and how much more there is still to learn and understand. The overall effect is a much firmer base when planning for further connections and how to deliver Mandarin and learning about China more effectively.*

*I found the post trip meeting really valuable. We had had time to reflect, time to discuss our plans with staff and BOT's. To summarise our reflections and hear each other's range of plans going forward was useful.*

*The impact for our school is on-going. The impact has begun at that personal level for me. The role of China in our global environment, China's story and the possibilities for connection through education were areas of learning for me. This is also having a benefit and impact for my whanau. The transference of this into our kura is ongoing.*

*It was truly an amazing experience and has certainly opened my eyes even more to the benefits of having Mandarin in Schools and short and long term impacts this can have on the learners' lives.*

To try and summarise the benefits and impact for each individual is too difficult. The best thing to do is to experience it for oneself ... The Educators' Delegation is usually held each year. Please apply.



**Delegation participants 2018:**

Chris Herlihy	Glen Taylor School	Auckland
Colleen Margison	Mellons Bay School	Auckland
Deborah Ward	Mangere College	Auckland
Gowan Ditchburn	Waiuku College	Auckland
Kym Lenihan	Woodstock Primary School	Hamilton
Justine Driver	Sunnyhills School	Auckland
Linda Barton	Long Bay Primary School	Auckland
Maree Bathurst	Albany Primary School	Auckland
Marsha Copping	Goodwood School	Cambridge
Paul Botica	Whangarei Intermediate School	Whangarei