

ALL PAKISTAN, ALL THE TIME

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After a seven-month marathon of course development, meetings, and a retreat dubbed “All Pakistan, All the Time,” I was feeling overwhelmed with the prospect of teaching a completely new International Foundations course on Pakistan during Fall Semester 2008. The course was theoretically ready to be taught, but I felt far from ready to actually teach a group of freshman about a country that had been, not many months before, little more than a colored swath on a world map to me. Then I learned that there was to be a teaching group for our course. I wondered how a teaching group would work, and whether it would be worth one hour of my time each week. Was this to be just more of “All Pakistan, All the Time”?

Throughout my experience of teaching Russian in college, I have worked with one or two other faculty members in what could be described as an informal teaching group. When I have questions or problems, or just need encouragement, my comrades are always willing and able to help. Our “teaching groups” are not formal organizations; we never have scheduled meetings, retreats, agendas or the like, but just chat, coordinate schedules, exchange ideas and share resources as needed. Did I need a formal teaching group to make the Pakistan class a success?

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I was pleased to learn, as Fall Semester 2008 began, that the same development team would become the teaching group for our Pakistan class. We had gelled as a development team, which made the transition into a teaching group seamless. One of the very first tasks with which we had been charged at the beginning of the development process was to select the focus country for our course. While the other two International Foundations courses were focused on global issues, regions, and multiple countries (namely, the Developing World and the Middle East), we were to select a single country on which to base our entire course. We knew we needed to choose a country that was not well known to our students but that would be intriguing and significant from many perspectives. These criteria quickly eliminated most countries from which we have a steady flow of returned LDS missionaries. The rise of militant Islam and the current war on terror were also discussed and pointed us towards South Asia, specifically Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and India. After several weeks of discussion and deliberation, we chose Pakistan as the focus of our course.

But why Pakistan? None of us knew much about the country, yet the more we considered which of the South Asian countries would be the best fit for our class, the more Pakistan percolated to the top.

Each member of the development team considered the pros and cons of each of the countries through the lens of his own expertise—from geographical, religious, linguistic, historical, and economic points of view—and shared these perspectives with the group. Current events were also an important aspect of the decision, as Pakistan seemed to be in the international news on almost a daily basis. Ultimately, there were many reasons why we settled on Pakistan. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world (ahead of Russia, Japan, Mexico, etc.), is a relatively young country with ancient roots, and is located on the crossroads of conflict, both contemporary and historical. Politically it has alternated between democratically elected leaders and military dictators, yet has an abiding sense of loyalty to the concepts of democracy and constitutional government. Pakistan has nuclear weapons, as does its archenemy India, and has fought three wars with India over Kashmir. Osama bin Laden is allegedly harbored within its borders, yet Pakistan is a crucial U.S. ally in the war on terror. Islamic militants within and without its borders pose a serious threat to both the stability of the country and to the world community at large. Linguistically and ethnically, Pakistan boasts great diversity and often struggles to find a sense of identity despite the fact that the country is overwhelmingly Muslim.

Having come to a consensus on Pakistan, our group then dived into the development process with a unity of purpose and focus. The foundation for how our group would function was laid in the early days of the process: none of us knew everything about Pakistan, so we divided up the course content and worked to become the experts on our topics for the group. A significant portion of the rest of the development process consisted of teaching each other what we were learning. We felt like young students tackling a new and challenging topic. Not only did we prepare course documents and reading material for our students and each other, but we also presented what we had learned about our topics at our weekly meetings. We were a learning group at this point, not yet a teaching group. There was also a steady stream of email flowing—new web resources we found, news articles, scholarly essays, books, DVDs, and anything related to Pakistan. The Learning Model was the template for everything we did, from preparing topic presentations, teaching one another, and a great deal of pondering, especially about what on earth we were doing developing a course on Pakistan.

So, as we met right before the first semester of teaching the course, the purposes of the teaching group became very clear to me: to facilitate and enhance the teaching of the course, to support and encourage one another, and to continue to teach one another about the remarkable and sometimes baffling place that is Pakistan.

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FACILITATE AND ENHANCE

Much of the facilitation of teaching our course is accomplished via email, phone calls, I-Learn, and our weekly teaching group meeting. From the outset, email became an important sounding board for our group. We would bounce ideas, news stories, and web resources off each other and get the group's feedback between meetings. An occasional phone call with a plea for technical assistance on I-Learn also furthered the development of the course and reduced technologically induced stress. Early on we decided that we would teach the course using a common calendar, syllabus, grading rubric, and I-Learn site. Since there was no textbook available for teaching such a course, we created all the course materials individually, but shared what we created with the group. Having all the materials available on one central I-Learn site allows each group member to share and update his own contributions to the course, as well as benefit from others' contributions. The decision to work collectively and pool all of our resources on one I-Learn site has had a significant impact on the course and how we approach teaching it. The course is qualitatively better because of the contributions of all involved—none of us could have created the course alone. As a result, there is greater depth and quality to the course materials provided to the students on our I-Learn site. When a member of the group finds a great new web resource, or updates the instructions for a case study, he simply goes to I-Learn and adds a link to our site or updates the appropriate file. What benefits one benefits all. There is also a unity of purpose and approach to teaching the course: each in the group is literally working from the same page.

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The logistics of making the course happen require each member of the teaching group to fulfill various roles. A role shared by all is ongoing course design and improvement of course materials. Everyone in the group contributes “digging deeper” web resources to our I-Learn site, resources that help students deepen their study of topic areas in the course, such as religion, language, history, and politics. We also critique and improve case study instructions, disciplinary “backgrounders” (readings on course topics), major assignments, and student assessments.

There are unique contributions that each member makes as well. Rob Eaton, from Religious Education, has been the group leader from the development stage to the present and keeps the group on track with a brief agenda at our weekly meetings, in addition to taking care of administrative issues that need attention. Rob developed our religious, political, and modern history course materials and oversees the ongoing development of all course materials, asking for volunteers to create or update needed materials. He keeps our meetings upbeat and productive.

Theron Josephson, from Geography, developed our materials on geography, ancient history, neighboring nations, and the devastating 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. He volunteered to develop the self-assessment and evaluation rubrics for the student case study writers, allowing them to evaluate their own contributions to their group's case study. Nearly all such course material development projects are undertaken on a volunteer basis—everyone contributes in his own way.

Allan Walburger, from Economics, developed our economics materials and case studies that deal with real-world application of economic principles. Hailing from Canada, Allan has helped our development and teaching group to keep a broader, less U.S.-centric view as we developed and now are teaching the course. Although Allan has not yet begun teaching sections of the course, he has continued to teach us about economics by providing in-service training at group meetings and by further developing course materials dealing with economics.

As a linguist, I developed the language and ethnicity materials, along with a few related cases. My main responsibilities within the teaching group have centered on developing and maintaining our I-Learn site and occasionally providing an I-Learn tutorial at weekly meetings. In addition, I have been involved in the development of the online version of the course that will go live in the near future. Fortunately, we have been able to adopt nearly all of the course material and online resources that have been developed for the face-to-face course, greatly facilitating the development process.

Todd Hammond, from Religious Education, and Steve Hunsaker, from Foreign Languages, joined our teaching group after the development phase had ended, and have both made significant contributions by improving course materials as they both bring their own background, expertise, and ideas to the table. Todd has helped the group focus on fundamentals and how to inspire students to see applications of course principles in their own lives. He often asks us to clarify and enumerate the fundamental principles that we want students to learn from various course topics. Todd, like everyone in the group, has helped write and refine the mid-term and final examination questions, and has specifically developed questions from our capstone case study, Greg Mortenson's bestseller, *Three Cups of Tea*.

Steve has helped the group apply Learning Model principles in the course, specifically by helping us match course activities and assignments to desired outcomes. To this end he is developing a concept mapping exercise to use at the beginning and end of the course, which will help us gauge how well students are mastering the major concepts of the course. This is not an exhaustive list, of course, of each group member's

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contributions and responsibilities, but rather attempts to illustrate how everyone contributes to making the course a success.

One of the true blessings of working in a teaching group is the opportunity to enhance the course in unexpected ways. For instance, during the first semester of teaching the course, we learned that the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Husain Haqqani, would be speaking during International Education Week at BYU. Mr. Haqqani, an advisor of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, was appointed ambassador to the United States during 2008. Through contacts with colleagues at BYU, we were able to arrange for several members of our group to attend Mr. Haqqani's two lectures and a luncheon in his honor. There were several Pakistani students who attended the luncheon with whom we were able to chat informally over lunch. We also were able to meet with Mr. Haqqani in private immediately after the luncheon for the better part of an hour.

As we returned to Rexburg and to our Pakistan classes, we, as a teaching group, were able to share some of the insights and impressions that we gained on the trip with our students, thus enriching their educational experience. For instance, some of the Pakistani students at BYU shared with us how many similarities they find between Islam and Mormonism, from fasting to modesty, charitable giving to abstinence from alcohol. They feel very much at ease surrounded by other students who also take their religion seriously. Omer, from Lahore, Pakistan, told us about how his roommates go out of their way to be respectful and accommodating of his religious beliefs. "Muslims and Mormons have more in common than you would think," he told us. Our interactions with these young people greatly informed our impressions of faithful Muslims and how people from very different backgrounds can find much in common.

An important insight we gained from Mr. Haqqani concerns how the leaders of Pakistan play a careful balancing act between mosque and military—between courting military support and increasing the influence of religious factions—as they deal with threats both from within and without. This has helped bring our course materials on modern Pakistani political and military history into clearer focus both for us and our students. Working separately, it is likely that most of the teaching group would never have heard about Mr. Haqqani's visit, and thus would have missed out on a unique opportunity to learn more about the Pakistani people and enhance our students' understanding of Pakistan.

Another such enhancing event occurred during Winter Semester 2009, when the group leader, Rob Eaton, invited a former ward member of his, Beverli DeWalt, to come and speak to our classes. Ms. DeWalt, it turns out, was recently stationed in Pakistan with the U.S. Foreign Service and has also spent time in Afghanistan working to help this

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war-torn country get back on its feet. Her presentation and discussion with the students was outstanding and helped the students feel a closer connection with the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan as she shared personal experiences and photographs from her work there. All of our students benefited from Ms. DeWalt's visit.

SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE

Our teaching group is probably one of the more unusual groupings of faculty on campus, especially since none of us is an expert in the subject matter. Hence, supporting and encouraging one another is a vital function of the group. Each week we share and discuss in our meeting how the past week's classes went. We share success stories as well as failures and flops. Sometimes the successes come in the form of an outstanding case study written by students or an oral presentation by a student on a course topic that helped his or her classmates to better understand a new or difficult concept. These oral presentations often include a digital slideshow, which we save and post to the I-Learn site to share with the rest of the teaching group. Often we find that students teach us new information about our course material, which reminds us that we are all learners in this type of venture. Failures and flops may include a poorly written case study by students, or a class discussion that just never seemed to get going the way we would like. As a teaching group, we share ideas each week about how to improve the quality of case studies and how to make class discussions and activities truly help the students learn and enjoy the class. We are keeping a teaching blog on I-Learn for each class period in which we record and share these ideas and suggestions with each other.

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In weekly meetings we also share ideas on how to implement Learning Model principles in the course. Each member of the group brings a wealth of varied experience to the table, which helps us make the course significantly more effective than would ever be possible if we were to go it alone. We rely on one another for support, ideas, tips, I-Learn tutorials, course materials, handouts, and encouragement.

TEACH ONE ANOTHER

Nearly everything we do in the teaching group centers on the Learning Model principle of teaching one another. This third objective of our teaching group is accomplished mainly in our weekly meetings. It began, as discussed before, during the development stage of the course. We knew very little about Pakistan, and so we started from scratch to become more knowledgeable on our assigned topics. We then taught each other what we had learned. This same process continues in the teaching group today. After reviewing the past week's topics and our teaching

approaches to them, we turn to those of the following week and share additional insights about the topic. Often there will be questions about a topic that another member of the group can answer, or there will be outstanding resources that another group member has found that he then shares with the group. In fact, some of the best web resources have come from assignments where we ask our students to “dig deeper” into the course materials and concepts. For instance, in a recent meeting, a member of the group told us about an excellent documentary that a student had found and shared in an oral presentation about the circumstances surrounding the mysterious death of one of Pakistan’s leaders, General Zia, in 1988. We all teach one another, “that all may be edified of all” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:122).

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Our teaching group is, in many ways, a continuation of the course development process, and continues to center on improving the course, supporting one another, continuing to learn, and teaching each other. The collegiality and selflessness with which our group gives, serves, and shares inspires me to be a better teacher. My students have been blessed by the great work done by my fellow Pakistaners, and, as I reflect on the work of the teaching group, more of “All Pakistan, All the Time” is fine by me—it is how this Foundations course has become a reality. Our hope is that it helps students appreciate how the nations of the world are interconnected and that we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father. ☺