

Cortnie Brooks

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Dear Human Resources team,

It's 2015, and I step off a plane in Phnom Penh. It is my first time in Cambodia, but I have dreamt of this moment for a long time. I had practiced the language the best my foreign ears could learn without being in-country. Eight hours and 300km later, I am in Battambang, where I will live for three months. I soak in everything, the culture, the history, the language, everything that made up the beautiful complexities of the Khmer people.

The first day of my class in Battambang culminated in discussions on cultural teaching philosophies and informal introductions to the seven languages spoken by the teachers taking my class. While I was there to train language teachers, I ultimately walked away, having learned more about cross-cultural collaboration, knowledge production, and pedagogy. This invaluable lesson has continued to inform my approaches to working with teachers globally.

I am the director of the TESOL department at Youth With A Mission Montana. I have trained teachers in this department since 2009 and began leading the department in 2011. Over the years, my department has trained over 400 English teachers, consulted international organizations on education policies, and pioneered three new TESOL schools. I have also focused on creating resources to help refugees and language learners feel confident and comfortable in their classrooms and beyond as they influence their communities. I have significant experience teaching adult learners, most of whom are from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. I have held seminars and workshops in Southeast Asia on international development, educational pedagogy, practices and theories, intercultural communication skills, inclusive education, outcomes and assessments, and classroom management practices.

Additionally, I have worked with young adults volunteering internationally under challenging scenarios and helped them adapt to the shock of being in unfamiliar places and adjusting to the cultural norms of their location. I have helped survey the needs of sites and prepare their volunteers accordingly. Working alongside multicultural educators, I am keenly aware of the capacity needed to acknowledge, understand, and engage in honest discussions with diverse communities to accomplish mutual goals. I also understand the need to elevate the voices of practitioners on the ground whose experience and specialties are uniquely accustomed to the context. While this experience is informal education and is not rewarded through a diploma or certificate, the learning that has taken place is more than can be learned in the classroom.

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I recently obtained my Master of Arts in Education with distinction from the Institute of Education (IOE) at University College London. The IOE has been ranked first in the world for several years running. My studies have focused on the intersection of education, conflict, and ethnicity within various contexts. Most notable was my research on the Language of Instruction (LoI) in Myanmar, SDG 4's contributions and shortcomings in education for Yazidis in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Inclusive Education policies for refugees in Jordan. My Bachelor's degree concentrated on Anthropology, Sociology, and Political Science; most of the time was devoted to policy creation and implementation, international development, and cultural studies.

My extracurricular activities have included facilitating workshops on Education in Emergencies for UCL and holding a volunteer academic representative position for my program. As a liaison between faculty and students, I found solutions that built trust and cooperation amidst a culturally and linguistically diverse body. This was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic when students and faculty faced significant communication and educational services obstacles.

I would love to discuss how I might contribute to your team, helping people achieve their dreams through education. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest Regards,

Cortnie Brooks