Qualitative Study Results on Student Learning from International Immersion Experiences

ACPA National Conference
March 31, 2014

Meredith Carpenter, University of Maryland
@MeredCarpenter
Jay Garvey, Ph.D., University of Alabama
@JasonCGarvey
#UMDGlobalExp
#ACPA2014
OUTLINE

• Introduction
• Global Experiences
• Assessment
• Relevance to practice
Attendees in this session will have the opportunity to learn about ...

- best practices to enhance student learning during global learning experiences
- simple and complex strategies for assessment
- findings from our study
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Greater collaboration and understanding\textsuperscript{1,2,3}
- Self-awareness, empathy, and openness\textsuperscript{4,5}
- Culturally-sensitive communication\textsuperscript{5,6}
RATIONALE & CONTEXT

• Relationship to strategic plan
• Structure and function of committee
• Emergence of Global Experiences
• Department politics
Two types of short-term international immersion experiences

**Service**
- Dominican Republic (2010, 2011)
- Nicaragua (2012)

**Leadership and cultural immersion**
- Oman/Qatar (2010)
- Scotland (2011)
- Morocco (2011)*

* Not covered in this study
IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

- Tailored for student leaders and employees
- Emphasis on experience, not “tour”
- Incorporation of trip components
- Focus on learning outcomes
OUR GLOBAL EXPERIENCES

TRIP LEADER PERSPECTIVE

• Partnering with organizations
• Administrative functioning
• Reflection
LEARNING OUTCOMES

• Inclusive process between committee co-chairs, trip leaders, and assessment coordinator

• Examples:
  • Participants will be able to describe how their multiple identities influence their leadership style
  • Participants will give examples of how their understanding of the Community Living Principles were challenged and/or supported during their service learning experience
• To compare short-term service learning and cultural immersion experiences in achieving student outcomes related to the values of the Department of Resident Life at UMD
ASSESSMENT DESIGN

• Team of 6
• Pre- and post-test surveys
• Focus groups
METHODS

- Pre-test
  - Open-ended questions
- Post-test
  - Open-ended questions
  - Likert-scale items
METHODS

• Focus groups
  • Multi-site study\textsuperscript{7}
  • Theoretical propositions
  • Team analysis approach
  • Between- and within-site contexts
FINDINGS: LIMITATIONS

• Findings are context- and institution-specific
• Quantitative data reviewed for trends, not descriptive statistics
• Financial and administrative support may not be possible for others
FINDINGS

• Pre- and post-tests
  • Overview was positive and useful for program evaluation purposes
  • Overall: Consistent with focus group data
  • Individual level – initial findings positive
  • Limited small sample size
• Theoretical propositions from focus groups
  • Lens/Filter
    • Cultural experiences and insight
  • Internal insights
    • Learning opportunities
    • Understanding of self
    • Leadership
  • Connections with others
    • Interpersonal interactions
    • Service
    • Community development
• Additional themes
  • Administration and finance
FINDINGS: COMPLEX

LENS/FILTER

• Cultural experiences and insight

“[Often] we only see what’s put in front of us, we only hang out with people who are like us. So this is an opportunity to move out, learn some things and come back, branch out and force people around [us] to also branch out, especially if they’re in a leadership position within their student group.”

-QOF3
THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS: Internal Insights

- **Learning Opportunities**: Global Experiences incorporate intentional strategies and experiential learning to enhance student knowledge and insight.

- **Understanding of Self**: Global Experiences enhance students’ self-awareness, understanding their identities and possibilities for their futures.

- **Leadership**: Global Experiences enable students to learn and apply leadership skills both during the experience and upon returning to the U.S.
“…I learned that I have stereotypes I did not know I had. Like I am an RA I figured I was trained against this. But I expected redheads and a lot of sheep there, and there weren’t.”

–P1: Scotland
FINDINGS: COMPLEX

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS: Connections with others

- **Interpersonal Interactions:** Global Experiences facilitate interpersonal interactions, resulting in opportunities for communication and building connections.

- **Service:** Global Experiences provide opportunities for students to learn about serving others, mutuality, and partnering service organizations.

- **Community Development:** Global Experiences enable students to experience, examine, and compare various communities and the ways in which people interact with these communities.
FINDINGS: COMPLEX

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS: Connections with others

“It was just amazing to see that you could just be from completely different sides of the world but there are still similarities. We went to class with these students. They’re still on Facebook as the professor is talking.”

– QOF3
THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS: Additional Themes

• **Administrative Support:** Administrative support and structure affect students’ Global Experiences.

> “I thought the logistical portion of the meeting were helpful like knowing transportation and the passports forms.”

-NICM5
ESTABLISHING & COORDINATING SIMILAR PROGRAMS

- Administrative support, communication, recordkeeping
- Logistical considerations for own campus and host site
- Realistic goals and timeline
- Establishing buy-in and support
ENHANCING STUDENT MEANING MAKING

• Learning outcomes drive intentional learning opportunities
• Provide repeated opportunities for reflection
• Strategically incorporate assessment
AUDIENCE REFLECTION

• What schools are engaged in similar work? Please share your best practices.
• How applicable are the study findings to programming efforts on your own campuses?
• What other suggestions do you have for enhancing student meaning making?
• **Jason C. Garvey, Ph.D.**
  Assistant Professor, Higher Education
  Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies
  University of Alabama
  [jcgarvey@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:jcgarvey@bamaed.ua.edu)

• **Meredith Carpenter**
  Coordinator for Human Resources
  Department of Resident Life
  [mcarpent@umd.edu](mailto:mcarpent@umd.edu)

[www.reslife.umd.edu/globalinitiatives](http://www.reslife.umd.edu/globalinitiatives)
www.outreach360.org
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