

The Importance of Identifying Learning Outcomes Achieved by Graduate Students Who
Participate in Graduate Short-term Study Abroad Programs – History and Context

Aracelie L. Castro

George Mason University

CTCH 792 – Current Trends in Higher Education

Professor Jaime Lester

June 25, 2014

The Importance of Identifying Learning Outcomes Achieved by Graduate Students Who Participate in Graduate Short-term Study Abroad Programs – History and Context

The United States (U.S.) Higher Education Act of 1965, or HEA, (Public Law 89 – 329) detailed many programs prominent in higher education today, including Title VI – International Education Programs and Title VII – Graduates and Postsecondary Improvement Programs (Higher Education Act of 1965). Title VI detailed domestic programs that focused on foreign language development and intercultural studies while Title VII programs have been updated over the years and most recently added U.S.-Brazil programs, U.S.-Russia programs, and North American programs. One example of the North American programs the White House announced in 2011 and headed by the U. S. Department of State is the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* initiative “...aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the hemisphere and the prosperity that it can generate” and whose goal is to “...reach 100,000 student exchanges annually in each direction between the United States and the countries of the Americas” (State Department, 2014). Governments, private sector companies, and higher education institutions intend to collaborate in order to achieve the objectives of the initiative.

Based on the above mentioned law and current example, we see that internationally-focused education is not a new concept, but the internationalization of campuses – the process of integrating international dimension into institutions (Ward, 2013) – has become more relevant. Since the year 2000 and in response to globalization, the U.S. government and higher education institutions have pressed for more internationalization of campuses (Lincoln Commission, 2005; Stroud, 2010). As Cabrera and Unruh (2012) stated in their book *Being Global: How to Think, Act, and Lead in a Transformed World*, “... it is clear how much more connected, interdependent, and multidirectional our global world is today than at any time in the past” (p. 2).

Our communities expect that higher education institutions are taking steps necessary to prepare graduating students for the “...inclusive, multidirectional, interlinked, and hugely complex” (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012, p. 2) global workforce. However, issues still need to be addressed in order for campuses to be successful at internationalization and preparing students for a globalized world. Higher education institutions have to focus on developing globally competent citizens of the world as part of students’ higher education and to recognize that study abroad programs can impact campus internationalization.

The public perception of study abroad programs being opportunities for students to spend their junior year in another country partying and drinking while underage persists (Woolf, 2007). Many questions arise as to the actual learning that comes from study abroad programs, and so institutions now draw more attention to the outcomes of study abroad programs, such as how students grow and develop and how study abroad impacts career-related decisions (Ghose, 2010; Kavas, 2013; Zhang, 2011). While educators agree study abroad programs should not be the only component to a successful campus internationalization effort, many also think study abroad can be a starting point for students, faculty, and staff to emphasize internationalization efforts on their campuses (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009; Stearns, 2009).

The number of students studying on traditional junior year abroad programs is decreasing as short-term study abroad programs (lasting eight weeks or less) are increasing. Short-term abroad programs are often aimed toward non-traditional groups, such as graduate students, who are typically older, work full-time, and/or have spouses and children (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998; Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes [GLEO], 2013; Lei & Chuang, 2010; Polson, 2003; Sachau et. al, 2009). Institutions started implementing short-term study abroad programs, and during the 2011-2012 year, U.S. higher education students participated in more short-term

programs for credit than they did during the 2010-2011 year (Institute for International Education [IIE], 2013). However, despite the growing popularity of short-term study abroad programs, only 14 percent of the nearly 283,000 U.S. students who studied abroad 2010-2011 were graduate students (IIE, 2013). This introduction explores factors that might affect learning outcomes of graduate students who participate in graduate short-term study abroad programs. From the information reviewed, institutions will begin to identify graduate-related learning outcomes that result from graduate students participating in short-term study abroad. Higher education institutions will be able to incorporate the learning outcomes identified into designing future short-term study abroad programs so that more graduate students will participate knowing the programs are worthwhile as part of the students' educational programs.

Increasing and Diversifying the Number of Students Who Study Abroad

Globalization is a phenomenon of the world, not simply of higher education institutions. In order to keep pace with the constantly changing world, campuses will need to rely on broader approaches than in years past. Previously, higher education internationalization efforts focused on social sciences, humanities, and business (IIE, 2013; Stearns, 2009). Foreign language acquisition, international/multicultural initiatives, and study abroad programs were common components campuses used – often without intentionality – to attempt to bring global knowledge to their American students (Stearns, 2009). Study abroad, the most widely used method to educate students in a global context, no longer consists only of the traditional demographic of White, female, twenty-something, undergraduates studying abroad during her junior semester or year in a Western European country (IIE, 2013). Study abroad now encompasses many types of programs –short-term (summer or eight weeks or less), mid-length (one or two quarters or one semester), long-term (academic or calendar year) (IIE, 2013), service component, for credit, not

for credit. However, despite the growth and prominence of study abroad programs, they can no longer be for the few or the elite, if campuses want their internationalization efforts to result in more diverse student participation that is representative of the world population.

Higher education institutions must also expand international dimensions to non-traditional areas in order to make internationalization a true priority, and this includes remembering their graduate student populations. Graduate students often juggle the demands of adulthood (including parenting, full-time employment, and elder-care) with those imposed by seeking an advanced degree (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998; Polson, 2003; Sachau et. al, 2009). Student success is influenced by a realistic assessment of loads – responsibilities and mental burdens demanded of the students, external (involving family, work, and community responsibilities) and internal (related to personal aspirations, desires, and expectations). Research findings indicate that graduate students have different motivations and concerns for selecting a program of study than their undergraduate counterparts (Lei & Chuang, 2010) – upon whom most of the research is based. Graduate students are more invested in the programs they select and often more willing to research varying programs based on academic support, research opportunities, and reputability of a school (Lei & Chuang, 2010). Higher education institutions will need to scrutinize details that are concerns to graduate students – such as school reputability and professional support – in order to make study abroad more appealing to this non-traditional group.

Globally Competent Employees

According to Peppas (2005), "Globalization is here to stay and companies across the world are realizing the importance of having employees with a global mindset" (p. 143). Likewise, in *The Landscape of International Experiences: 2014 Research Report*, the

Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes (GLEO) project team stated that “As the world becomes an increasingly interconnected global community, it is essential that today’s graduate students develop international perspectives and the ability to work with others in diverse settings” (GLEO, 2014). In today’s globally competitive markets, businesses desire and appreciate job candidates who have invaluable historical and cultural knowledge of an area, language, or people and use that knowledge to better understand the world around them. Ideally, the employees would also share their analyses and thought processes with others who might not have or share the same awareness. In other words, businesses want globally competent employees (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012; Hunter, 2004; Peppas, 2005; Stearns, 2009; Stroud, 2010; Zhang, 2011), and higher education institutions are expected to help teach students the skills and abilities necessary to become such employees (Ghose, 2010; Hunter, 2004; Leask, 2009; Peppas, 2005; Stearns, 2009).

Higher education institutions and businesses realize there are many benefits to encouraging students to study abroad. Ghose (2010) stated several leading universities, like Yale and Stanford, are adding study abroad requirements to their business programs. Research also states that students who study abroad develop cultural awareness that extends beyond their time spent abroad (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009). Students tend to become more involved in their communities, more interested in global affairs and organizations, and more capable of communicating when faced with barriers (Ghose, 2010; Paige et al., 2009; Zhang, 2011). Similarly, “One of the four essential learning outcomes of a liberal education advocated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities is for students to develop a sense of personal and social responsibility” (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009, p. 27) and “The traditional-aged student needs to develop and internalize a global perspective into her thinking, sense of identity,

and relationships with others” (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009, p. 27). Therefore, in addition to developing globally competent employees as part of their duties in higher education institutions, educators and administrators also want to develop global citizens who consider more than themselves in their decision-making processes indicating students’ awareness of personal and social responsibility. Becoming a global citizen reaches beyond the development of global competence and into developing habits of mind and ways of thinking (Stearns, 2009). After students develop their senses of cultural and personal awareness, they must then learn to apply that knowledge to their thought-processes and in turn, to their actions.

Businesses for which students will work in the future also recognize the potential savings in time and funds when they hire people who already have the fundamental, transferable skills for working in diverse business environments (Ghose, 2010; Peppas, 2005; Zhang, 2011). Savings for an organization then equates not only to higher profitability, but also to greater social capital, and hiring global citizens will likely remain a key benefit for businesses as they continue to face financial and ethical challenges in the world economy (Ghose, 2010). To maintain and/or improve partnerships with business communities, higher education institutions will need to develop and implement new study abroad programs that continue incorporating aspects of global competency and global citizenry, and that also appeal to greater numbers of students.

Graduate Student Outcomes

Literature related to outcomes for undergraduates studying abroad discusses students understanding of themselves and other cultures, how students frame cultural experiences through new lenses, students’ heightened interest in future international travel and study, and an increased interest in learning about other cultures. However, research regarding potential outcomes for students participating in short-term study abroad is lacking (GLEO, 2013; Jones,

Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus, Skendall, 2012; Peppas, 2005), and it is unclear whether the same learning outcomes result from graduate student participation in study abroad programs – particularly short-term graduate-level programs. John Dirkx, Mildred B. Erickson Distinguished Chair in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education and a professor at Michigan State University leads the Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes: The Landscape of Graduate Study Abroad (GLEO) Project. The project – the first systematic study of graduate-level study abroad – will produce “a comprehensive inventory and taxonomy of study abroad programs” (GLEO, 2014). Michigan State University hosted the Erickson Global View Symposiums – Globalizing Graduate Education: The Role of Study Abroad and Internationalizing Graduate Education: Focusing Discourse, Defining Knowledge, Enhancing Practice – in February 2013 and March 2014, respectively. Because the literature stated how undergraduates’ and graduates’ needs differ (Gardner, 2010; Leask, 2009), their learning outcomes might differ, as well. Though literature specific to graduate student outcomes from short-term study abroad programs may be lacking, adult learning outcomes and short-term study abroad literature does exist and may parallel the yet discovered results related to graduate students.

References

- Cabrera, A., & Unruh, G. (2012). *Being global: How to think, act, and lead in a transformed world*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Chickering, A., Braskamp, L. A. (2009). Developing a global perspective for personal and social responsibility. *Peer Review, 11(4)*, 27-30.
- Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program. (2005). Global competence and national needs: One million Americans studying abroad. Washington DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.aifs.com/pdf/lincoln_final_report.pdf
- Fischer, B. A., & Zigmond, M. J. (1998). Survival skills for graduate school and beyond. *New Directions for Higher Education, 101*, 29-40.
- Gardner, S. K. (2010). Faculty perspectives on doctoral student socialization in five disciplines. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 5*, 39-52.
- Ghose, N. (2010). Enhancing global competitiveness through experiential learning: Insights into successful programming. *American Journal of Business Education, 3(7)*, 1-5.
- Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes (GLEO). (2013). *Education abroad*. [Web page]. Retrieved from <http://education.msu.edu/ead/outreach/gleo/>
- Graduate Learning Experiences and Outcomes (GLEO). (2014). *The landscape of international experiences: 2014 research report*. Retrieved from <http://education.msu.edu/ead/outreach/gleo/>

Higher Education Act of 1965, Public Law 89-329. Retrieved from

www.house.gov/legcoun/Comps/HEA65_CMD.pdf

Hunter, W. D. (2004). Got global competence? *International Educator, Spring*, 33-39.

Institute of International Education. (2013). Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2001/02 - 2011/12. *Open doors report 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data>

Jones, S. R., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Ireland, S. M., Niehaus, E. Cliente Skendall, K. (2012). The meaning students make as participants in short-term immersion programs. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*, 201-220. Doi: 10.1353/csd.2012.0026

Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*, 205-221. Doi: 10.1177/1028315308329786

Lei, S. A. & Chuang, N., (2010). Demographic factors influencing selection of an ideal graduate institution: A literature review with recommendations for implementation. *College Student Journal, 44 (1)*, 84-96.

Nesheim, B. E., Guentzel, M. J., Gansemeyer-Topf, A. M., Ross, L. E., & Turrentine, C. G. (2006). If you want to know, ask: Assessing the needs and experiences of graduate students. *New Directions for Student Services, 115*, 5-17. Doi: 10.1002/ss.212.

- Paige, R. M., Fry, G. W., Stallman, E. M., Josi, J. & Jon, J. E. (2009). Study abroad for global engagement: The long-term impact of mobility experiences. *Intercultural Education, 20*, S29-S44. Doi: 10.1080/14675980903370847
- Peppas, S. C. (2005). Business study abroad tours for non-traditional students: An outcomes assessment. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 21*, 143-163.
- Polson, C. J. (2003). Adult graduate students challenge institutions to change. *New Directions for Student Services, 102*, 59-68.
- Poock, M. C. (2004). Graduate student orientation practices: Results from a national survey. *NASPA Journal, 41*, 470-486.
- Sachau, D. A., Brasher, N., Fee, S. (2009). Three models for short-term study abroad. *Journal of Management Education, 1-25*. Doi: 10.1177/1052562909340880
- Stearns, P. (2009). *Educating global citizens in colleges and universities: Challenges and opportunities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stroud, A. H. (2010). Who plans (not) to study abroad? An examination of U.S. student intent. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14*, 491-507. Doi: 10.1177/1028315309357942
- Ward, H. (2013). *Campus Internationalization*. [PowerPoint slides, Class presentation].
- Zhang, Y. (2011). CSCC Review Series essay: Education abroad in the U. S. community colleges. *Community College Review, 39(2)*, 181-200. Doi: 10.1177/0091552111404552