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Measuring Intercultural Competency of WMU Study Abroad Students

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“Measuring Intercultural Competency of WMU Study Abroad Students”

Assessment in Action Conference, 2018

Western Michigan University

Presenters: Ryan Rounds and Lee M. Penyak, Ph.D., WMU Study Abroad

Introduction

Students who study abroad show cognitive gains, enjoy greater pre-graduation academic success, find employment more readily, and gain acceptance into preferred graduate schools (UCMerced).

Western Michigan University sends ~600 students on long- and short-term faculty led study abroad programs each year. Most claim that their experience was “life-changing.”

In what ways have students changed? Do our study abroad programs actually provide opportunities for students to transform themselves into global citizens? Have they acquired intercultural competencies (ICC)?



Miranda McDowell, “Education and Health Across China From Kindergarten to College,” Summer I, 2017.

Objectives

- Use Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) to assess intercultural competency of study abroad students.
 - Understand how students think (cognitive), how they view themselves (intrapersonal), and how they relate to others from different cultures and backgrounds or who have different values (interpersonal).
 - Understand how experiences influence learning.
 - Understand if and how students develop global perspectives.
- Send Study Abroad outreach specialist to the “Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence” in Tucson, AZ (2018) to learn how other institutions encourage ICC and assess ICC in their programs.
- Conduct focus-group interviews with returnee students to determine how their study abroad experiences may have influenced changes in GPI results from pre- and post-test administrations.

Method and Process

What is the GPI? Used by nearly 200 educational institutions in the U.S., this web-based assessment measures intercultural competence, global learning, and study abroad experiences. GPI provides data collection, reporting, and national norms to help meet assessment, benchmarking, and accreditation needs. GPI is currently housed at the Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE), a unit of Iowa State’s School of Education.

GPI assesses three dimensions related to global learning and development; each dimension has two scales:

Cognitive

- **Knowing Scale:** Recognizing the importance of cultural context in judging what is important to know and value.
- **Knowledge Scale:** Understanding and being aware of various cultures and their impact on society.

Intrapersonal

- **Identity Scale:** Being aware of and accepting one’s identity and sense of purpose.
- **Affect Scale:** Respecting and accepting cultural differences and being emotionally aware.

Interpersonal

- **Social Responsibility Scale:** Being interdependent and having social concern for others.
- **Social Interactions Scale:** Engaging with others who are different and being culturally sensitive.

A 70 question pre- and post-test offered to 600+ students administered via hyperlink. Sample questions include:

1. Most of my friends are from my own ethnic background.
2. I feel threatened around people from backgrounds different than my own.
3. I can discuss cultural difference from an informed perspective.
4. I enjoy when my friends from other cultures teach me about our cultural differences.

Dissemination

Results shared with faculty directors and study abroad area specialists to guide conversations related to student learning and program improvement.



Krystl Sladovnik, “Cultural Connections in Senegal,” Summer I, 2017.

Outcomes

- Fortify the 3rd pillar of the University, Global Engagement, by using data to guide conversations on institutional effectiveness.
- Redesign Study Abroad pre-departure orientations.
- Assist faculty and the Haenicke Institute for Global Education in developing ICC learning objectives.
- Redevelop initial and final Study Abroad program proposals to facilitate the incorporation of ICC into faculty-led programs.

Source and Suggested Readings

Iowa State University Global Perspectives Inventory:
<http://www.gpi.hs.iastate.edu/>.

Anderson, Christine L., Lorenz, Karl, and Michael White. “Instructor Influence on Student Intercultural Gains and Learning during Instructor-Led, Short-Term Study Abroad.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XXVIII (November 2016): 1-23.

Laliberté, Nicole, and Charlene Waddell. “Feeling Our Way: Emotions and the Politics of Global Citizenship in Study Abroad Programming.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XXIX:2 (November 2017): 79-93.

Nguyen, Annie. “Intercultural Competence in Short-Term Study Abroad.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XXIX:2 (November 2017): 109-127.

Strange, Hannah, and Heather J. Gibson. “An Investigation of Experiential and Transformative Learning in Study Abroad Programs.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XXIX:1 (April 2017): 85-100.

Williams, Tracy Rundstrom. “Using a PRISM for Reflecting: Providing Tools for Study Abroad Students to Increase their Intercultural Competence.” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XXIX:2 (November 2017): 18-34.