

# **Fostering Global Citizenship Education Through Reflective Practice**

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In the last few decades, the popularity of international education programs has grown exponentially (IIE, 2017). Fueled by increased globalization, institutions of higher education have revamped mission statements to include a focus on global learning and a worldview perspective. With the mounting interest in studying in remote destinations, service-oriented programs, adventure packages, and multi-city expeditions (IIE, 2017), universities must now offer boutique study- and service-abroad programs in previously untapped locations. Although the broadening scope of global learning has merit, institutions must be thoughtful in developing culturally-sensitive programming. Striking a balance between providing students the transformative experiences that hone knowledge and skills in the global market, without exploiting local communities or ignoring historical contexts of oppression, requires a thorough examination of current and future practices. One way to encourage long-term transformational learning is to supplement global learning with reflective practice.

## **Paper Objectives**

Administrators and faculty involved in global studies initiatives should be able to discern whether their institution's approaches to international education evoke deep, transformational learning that continues beyond the course of the program or academic year. Examinations should center on the value of connecting study abroad experiences in their various forms with reflective practice. Examples of materials that ought to be reviewed include sample instructional plans for

incorporating reflection and learning activities that offer educators the opportunity to develop international programs that speak to a diverse audience. Consideration of John Dewey's (1938) reflective process, Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, and Mezirow's (1981) Transformative Learning Theory provides three theoretical frameworks of reference on which educators might base their intended learning outcomes.

The objective of this paper is to encourage dialogue among administrators and faculty regarding:

1. Integrating reflective practice into study- and service-abroad programs as to make them more impactful;
2. Creating international study programs that promote global citizenship education by encouraging self-reflection and discouraging inequity and social injustice;
3. Developing international study programs that dispel postcolonial approaches in education, specifically with regard to service-abroad; and
4. Sharing methods of assessing long-term transformation of student perspectives of cultural differences.

### **Theoretical Frameworks for Guiding the Discussion**

John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938) substantiated the relationship between reflection and education. As Dewey explained it, experience results from the interplay of continuity and interaction. Through reflection, one can predict consequences of future actions based on previous experiences. Reflective practice occurs at many levels, throughout the learning process. Boud (2001) argues that pre-event (anticipatory) and post-event reflection prove beneficial for deep, lifelong learning and facilitate the meaning-making process. Similarly, Rickards & Guilbault (2000) note that

in reflection—past experiences, prior learning, personal frameworks, and performance can be engaged and analyzed, resulting in some combination of new learning, frameworks, and constructs; deeper understanding of personal capacity; and readiness for new and diverse contexts. Specifically, reflection on experiential aspects of learning, performance, and interactions becomes a richer source of learning (p. 18).

Relatedly, Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory suggests students learn best by thinking creatively and experimenting actively; reflective practice ties these processes together. The four stages of Kolb's learning cycle are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Like Dewey, Kolb (1984), viewed the learning process as transactional. In later iterations, Kolb and Kolb (2005) expanded upon this notion, adding that "immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections" (p. 194). Kolb and Kolb (2005) recognize that from these reflections emerge new, "abstract concepts" and "implications for action" that guide the creation of new experiences (p. 194). Simply put, reflection can be thought of as "a process of turning experience into learning" (Boud, 2001, p. 10). Kolb's framework incorporates transformative learning theory, adult education theory, behavioral psychology, leadership development, and constructivism.

According to Mezirow's (1981) Transformative Learning Theory (cited in Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) disorienting dilemmas can trigger transformative learning experiences. Common in international students, disorienting dilemmas often occur where cultural differences exist—short- and long-term study abroad programs may also incite a similar reaction (Peabody & Noyes, 2017). Yet through reflective practice, students learn to adjust and overcome, as it assists students with making connections, allows learners to develop their own identity through identifying with someone else, and "emphasizes the value of both experience and reflection" (Osterman, 1990, p. 144). Through rational discourse and constructive feedback,

learners may achieve feelings of inclusion, resulting in deeper emotional meaning-making (Peabody & Noyes, 2017) and increased self-confidence (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Altogether, this process encourages individuals' reintegration into society with a "new, transformed perspective" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 136).

### **Reflective Practice in Global Education**

More broadly, the reflective process enhances the understanding of the context in which problems are identified (Copeland, Birmingham, de la Cruz, & Lewin, 1993; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Zeichner & Wray, 2001). It can lead to genuine thinking and an appreciation of new values (Eynon & Gambino, 2017; Penny Light, Chen, & Ittelson, 2012; Reynolds & Patton, 2014; Rogers, 2001).

At a macro level, reflecting on the experiences of others promotes empathy and encourages socially-just behavior (Najmabadi, 2017). Where disorienting dilemmas occur, reflective practice eases tension by allowing students to take a step back and evaluate what has been learned as it relates to intended learning outcomes (Boud, 2001; Eynon & Gambino, 2017; Osterman, 1990).

Furthermore, reflection in learning assists students with making vital connections. These may include associations between curricular work and personal experience or across disciplines, courses, and programs (Reynolds & Patton, 2014). Connections may also be made across cultures, races, or socioeconomic statuses through communication and shared experiences, which in turn promote a sense of community (Osterman, 1990).

Recently, the role of reflection in experiential learning opportunities and high-impact practices has consumed academia. Cohort- and community-oriented programs such as service-learning and study abroad have enjoyed rapid growth in the last several years, elevated by research emphasizing their developmental benefits (Kuh, 2008a). Specifically, research tying reflection and experience to personal development supports claims that students who participate in place-based

educational activities, such as study- and service-abroad, cultivate meaningful relationships with the learning environment (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Kuh, 2008a).

Importantly service-learning and study abroad introduce students to communities and cultures that differ from their own. These types of experiential learning environments foster thoughtful self-analyses in a place where students are already urged to conduct critical examinations of their values and beliefs (Kuh, 2008b; Schwartz, n.d.). Such interactions challenge students to alter their perspectives and increase feelings of empathy; they may also encourage moral reasoning (Berner, 2015; Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Kuh, 2008b). Additionally, intercultural and intercommunity engagement positively affects attitudes about social justice and civic responsibility (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013).

### **Statistical Evidence Supporting the Discussion Topic**

Service- and study-abroad programs are arguably among the most enriching and life-changing experiences for students. Significant increases in participation rates over the last two decades indicate the growing popularity of international co-curricular programs in secondary and postsecondary institutions. The Institute for International Education (IIE)—the foremost industry leader on study abroad data management (Dreier et al, 2014; Henderson & Sorensen, 2015)—captured through *Project Atlas* myriad data for the more than 325,000 U.S. students, or 1.6% of the entire domestic higher education population, who participated in study abroad during the 2015–16 academic year (2017). This figure represents a 46% increase over the last 10 years (IIE, 2017), and a staggering 240% increase from 20 years ago (*Chronicle*, 1997, as cited in Hoye, 1999; Hoye & Rhodes, 2000). At the current rate of growth, universities could see up to 5% of their total populations participating in some form of international study by the year 2025.

## **Growth and Effect of Participation**

One factor that has contributed to the continual increase in study abroad participation is the recognized value of educating students as global citizens and scholars (Dreier et al, 2014; Johnson, 2005). Technological improvements, e.g. the Internet, air travel frequency, satellite connectivity, et cetera, have created a high demand for workforce personnel equipped to interact effectively and empathetically with an advancing global market. According to a 1999–2000 study, students who participated in at least one study abroad program were more compassionate, understanding, and culturally aware than students who had studied solely within the United States (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). Similar results were later replicated through the IIE's *Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program Alumni Tracking Study Report 1* (2016). The report followed study- and service-abroad Fellows over a 10-year period to see how or if their experiences abroad affected, for instance, their choice of career, continuation of global outreach program participation, and relationships with citizens in foreign countries (IIE, 2016).

In addition to tracking the number of U.S. students studying abroad, *Project Atlas* also collects an extensive amount of data on types and lengths of programs, destinations, and duration of study, as well as other critical demographic information. Similarly, these statistics reveal important shifts in student interests. For example, host regions are no longer solely located in the developed cities of Western Europe but have expanded to include underdeveloped and developing countries, where opportunities for global- and experiential-learning are in abundance. In recent years, these once remote locales have become more accessible, both financially and logistically (Dreier et al, 2014; IIE, 2016; Gordon, 2006; Hoye & Steinberg, 2001).

## **Identifying Room for Improvement**

When developing international programs, administrators and faculty should contemplate the following questions:

1. Identify examples of inequitable or socially-unjust behavior in study abroad programs.  
How does the program being considered avoid replicating these examples?
2. Does the program's structural and instructional plan include activities that fall under the purview of global citizenship education? Cite examples.
3. How does the program being considered align with "Best Practices" for global learning?

At the institutional level, administrators and faculty should consider the following for ensuring students' experiences abroad garner rich responses, both academically and emotionally:

1. What types of international education programs does your institution currently offer?
2. In what ways might you modify these programs to include a reflective-practice component?
3. Does your institution currently have a method for assessing transformational learning experiences in the short-term? Long-term?
4. What are your recommendations on how to make global learning programs more socially just?

### **Conclusion**

International education programs are on the rise. As the world becomes more interconnected, the demand for a globalized workforce thusly multiplies. Likewise, student interests are diversifying. The growing popularity of student travel to remote locations means increased opportunities for institutions hosting service- and study-abroad programs to introduce students to cultures previously viewed as exotic or "the other." As a result, institutions have come to understand the immeasurable value these programs can add to secondary and postsecondary education. After all, increasing students' cross-cultural awareness has societal and educational benefits alike. However, programming that focuses solely on obtaining knowledge and skills for the global market economy threatens to perpetuate social injustice and inequity by exploiting local

communities. Institutions must take care to ensure students are processing international experiences in a way that promotes meaning-making, challenges students' perspectives, and fosters deep learning. Study abroad programs that fail to include a reflective component do students a disservice and hamper opportunity for maximizing educative and transformative potential. By taking part in an in-depth review of current and future practices in program development, administrators and faculty can ensure that students' experiences translate into long-term socially just behaviors that support impactful and sustainable global citizenship education.



## **Sample Course Description and Instructional Plan**

### **Artists and Their Regions: An Honors Capstone Course**

Built on the idea that learning through experience can have a lasting and deep-rooted influence on educational outcomes, the Artists and Their Regions (AATR) course offers students a bimodal way to learn about the history, culture, and peoples of a specific region through colloquium-style discourse combined with an in-depth field experience.

#### **Program Design and Instruction**

Students enrolled in this capstone course will meet periodically during the fall semester to examine the literature, art, and archaeology of Ancient Egypt. Additionally, over Thanksgiving break, participants will travel abroad for a culturally-immersive excursion through Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor. Course curriculum includes works that span “from Plato to Percy Bysshe Shelley and from the Bible to The Great Belzoni” (Honors College, 2018, pp. 12, 44). Visits to historical and modern sites during the trip cement what students study in the classroom and the types of discoveries that place-based learning opportunities provide.

Furthermore, reflections on students’ learning take place at key points throughout the semester, culminating in a cumulative portfolio of learning activities to be curated at the students’ discretion. Examples of artifacts chronicled in “excellent” portfolios include students’ weekly reflections, including markups from instructors and peer-to-peer feedback; pre-post surveys and reflections, as well as students’ final self-assessment essays (see sample Instructional Plan); select photographs and daily journal entries from the trip; news articles and responses to current events leading up to the trip (a minimum of eight); and evidence of students’ partaking in self-directed learning activities, such as independent visits to museums, notes from international-exchange dinner interviews with American University in Cairo (AUC) students, and “Thank You” letters written to

scholarship donors, Embassy officials in Cairo, and other stakeholders responsible for the AATR course's support.

### **Program Planning Through a Mixed-Methods Approach**

Planning for AATR occurred through a blend of conventional and practical approaches. Development of the syllabus and the curation of texts and other works has followed a more traditional tack—a step-by-step process that organically comes together through thoughtful consideration of thematic content. Trip coordination, however, required a pragmatic approach with careful attention to detail and a great deal of foresight. We began by contemplating logistics, often working backward with questions such as: “How many students can we fit in one tour bus *with* luggage?” and “With what size group do we get the best discounts with Airline X?” We then factored in what students might realistically pay for a 10-day versus 14-day trip, where the break-even point of cost exists, and how much scholarship funding we could realistically offer. More importantly, we gave considerable thought to the ratio of students-to-value. As the trip's purpose is to introduce students to new cultures and environments while also ensuring they are effectively processing all they take in, we felt it was important to keep the group size smaller than a traditional two-week, open-to-all, early-summer study abroad.

From there, we needed to construct at least two itineraries for the on-the-ground component. One version followed what we considered “ideal” conditions; subsequent versions consisted of contingency plans and what-ifs that we felt were crucial to travel in a war-adjacent country. Finally, based on my own personal experiences within the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region and as the director of the Model Arab League for the last five years, I composed a learning unit focused solely on cultural sensitivity, ethics, and etiquette.

**Constructing Program Goals and Objectives.** The goals and objectives of the AATR course are two-fold. First, the course services a societal need in that we aim to foster global

citizenship by promoting peer-to-peer interactions at an international level, and to bring down cultural barriers by helping students overcome misconceptions and preconceived notions of “the other.” To this end, students will pair with a peer from the American University in Cairo during an international-exchange dinner hosted at a local restaurant in Old Cairo on the first full night in Egypt. Students will take turns conducting interviews and acting as interviewees in two 20-minute sessions. The purpose of the exercise is to aide students in gaining an understanding of differences in ethnicity, religion, and culture, and discover where individuals’ similarities lie.

Thus, AATR also meets educational- and personal-development needs by teaching cross-cultural awareness, introducing new experiences, challenging students’ comfort zones, honing research and critical-thinking skills with class assignments, and utilizing reflective practice to enrich students’ learning experiences. In addition, students will develop interpersonal and professional skills such as team work and collaboration. In this respect, the objectives of the course align with those of the University’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for Co-Curricular and Community Engagement.

**Limitations.** The success of the course in helping students identify and overcome misconceptions and preconceived notions about cultures different than their own is tracked through self-assessment essays and reflections drafted by the students. Hence, a major limitation of this method of andragogy stems from the perceived power-oriented relationship between students and instructors. For example, students may alter their evaluations in an effort to please the professors. For this reason, the instructors will remind students regularly that the opinions presented in their essays bear no weight on their grades. Instead, the focus centers on the students’ ability to grapple with reflective practice as a learning technique.

*From the Honors College Fall Course Book:*

Artists and Their Regions

Course Number: HON XXXXH

Instructor: Professor 1 and Professor 2

Class Number: XXXXX

Days and Times: MWF 10:00AM – 11:00AM

We will study the great works of literature, art, and architecture of ancient Egypt (3000 to 1100 BCE) together with several classic outsider views of Egypt: from Plato to Percy Bysshe Shelley and from the Bible to The Great Belzoni, the Italian circus strongman who made a number of important early Egyptological discoveries. Over Thanksgiving week, we will travel to Egypt to visit the antiquities and to observe firsthand the enduring meaning of one of the world's oldest civilizations for the nearly 100 million people who live in Egypt today. Special requirements for the course: trip fee (scholarships are available), passport (must be valid through 5/23/2019), Egyptian entry visa fee (\$25), some meals and entrance fees in Egypt, registration with Office of Learning Abroad, and travel insurance. See website for more information and to register for the trip. Space is limited.

## *Instructional Plan*

### **Assignment Description:**

*Pre-post trip reflections.* Students will be asked to write one-page reflections at three points during the semester: on the first day of class (preconceived notions), immediately prior to the trip (based solely on the knowledge they gained in the class), and on the final day of travel (after being exposed to the environment). Prompts will address students' perceptions of Egypt and will include questions about the people, food, infrastructure, clothing, and culture. Students will then be asked to compare their responses over time and write a 5-page self-assessment essay on how their perspectives did or did not change over the course of the semester.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students who complete pre-post trip reflections will be able to identify the following:

1. How do students' relationships to "place" affect learning?
2. Does exposure to culture promote understanding?
3. What role does reflective practice play in students' personal perceptions?

### **Assessment Plan:**

Instructors will use Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory to identify recurring themes or patterns in students' responses.

### **Time Required for Each Reflection:**

Maximum of 10 minutes for the one-page reflections. Students may spend up to two hours on the comparison and evaluation paper.

### **Resources Required:**

Students will use the computer lab in the Honors College to draft and submit reflections. Laptops are also permissible.

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