Compassion in Study Abroad

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COMPASSION AS A THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

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Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr:

“Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education.”
World-Readiness Standards (ACTFL)

Interact with cultural competence and understanding: relating cultural practices and products, on the one hand, to cultural perspectives, on the other.
Global Learning: “Engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one’s own … how one’s place in the world informs and limits one’s knowledge”

Perspective Taking
Intercultural Knowledge:
“Interprets intercultural experience from the perspective of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that integrates the feelings of another cultural group”

Empathy
Global Competence (Asia Society)

4 Domains of Global Competence

- Investigate the World
- Recognize Perspectives
- Communicate Ideas
- Take Action
Charter for Compassion
Communicative Competence

Hymes
Additional Dimensions of Communication

- Paralanguage - pitch, rate of speech
- Proxemics - space between us
- Oculesics - eye contact
- Kinesics - facial expressions, gestures
- Haptics - touch
- Silence - pause culture

Chaney and Martin
Intercultural Competence (1)

ICC is a complex of abilities needed to perform ‘effectively’ and ‘appropriately’ when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself.

(Fantini)
Intercultural Competence (2)
Intercultural Competence (3)
Chomsky: Competence vs Performance

What we know
(can't be measured)

What we do (can be measured)

Attitudes

Skills
Compassion = Intercultural Performance

- Investigating
- Cultural Self-Awareness
- Empathy
- Perspective Taking
- Interpreting
- Participating
- Building cultural bridges / Advocating for intercultural understanding
We must count what we value, because by default, be value only that which we count.
COMPASSION IN THE PROGRAM: PRE-DEPARTURE

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Pre-Departure Programming & Compassion 1

• Benchmarks
  • How does the study abroad experience impact your students?
  • Does the experience move the needle in a positive direction?
Pre-Departure Programming & Compassion 2

• Tension - Selfishness vs. Compassion
  • Balance between “developing oneself” and “concern for others”
  • Personal and professional development vs “voluntourism”
  • Striking the right tone – academic rigor and helping the less fortunate
• Opportunities
  • Reframing existing pre-departure programming
  • Establishing a new approach that incorporates the role of compassion within the framework of an academic study abroad program
Intercultural Competence Workshops in PDO

- Assessment - application essay responses, inventories, et al.
- Pledge - the value of “creeds” and “credos”
- Reflection and goal setting
- Action plan and personal mission statement
- Guided introduction to “What is Culture”
  - Iceberg theory time
- Intentional approach - presenting opportunities to engage in compassionate activities within study abroad programs
Additional Activities to Consider

- Language boot camps and survival language classes
- An orientation before the orientation
- Role of host institution in PDO and on-site orientations
- Online and on-site buddies
COMPASSION IN THE PROGRAM: DURING STUDY ABROAD

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Volunteer Work - Teaching at a Refugee Center in Heidelberg

• Special topics course “Refugee Crisis: A Multi-Disciplinary Policy Perspective on European Refugee Crisis”
• Support for refugee families and on-site social workers
• Learning and playing activities during 3 mornings / week
• Students are responsible for:
  • Project management
  • Fundraising
  • Lesson plans and instructions
  • Social Media, PR, and Event Planning
About the Course

- Interdisciplinary to examine the challenges that arise from the large-scale human migration and asylum processes
- Conducted in four main ways:
  - Theoretical background (history, policies, asylum laws, migration and integration policies)
  - Service learning (3x week, 4 hours in 3 groups)
  - Reflection
  - Presentations during a bi-annual symposium
Learning Goals and Outcomes

• Engage in a meaningful way and develop emotional skills such as empathy and compassion
• Develop self-awareness and leadership skills
• Foster intercultural communication skills and embrace other cultures
• Gain geographical know how and learn about world politics and conflicts
• Utilize theoretical knowledge and transfer it into practice
• Cultural Immersion through interaction with local NGO’s and other volunteers
From a Student Perspective

- Interaction with families and children of all ages, cultures, and languages
- Work side-by-side with Caritas, a German non-profit organization
- Establish relationships through stories, similarities, and learning experiences with refugees from around the world
- Share smiles and laughs with children through participating in our daily activities
- Sense of pride for the meaningful and impacting work they do
Liberal Education and America’s Promise - LEAP program

• Essential learning outcomes defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities:
  • Integrative Learning
  • Creative Thinking
  • Problem Solving
  • Team Work / Collaboration
Challenges and the Future of the Program

• Sustainability
  • Constantly adapting to the current situation
  • Continuous collaboration with local NGOs and reaching out to other projects to build the program to include more than one project

• Cultural differences and sensitive issues

• Reflection time is crucial to digest the lessons learned

• Increased monetary support from the CEPA Foundation
COMPASSION IN THE PROGRAM: POST-RETURN

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Returning Home - Processing the Experience

- 2008 - Michigan State “Unpacking” Study and Lessons from Abroad
  - What impact have these initiatives had on returnee programming?
- Assessment Data Collection
  - Documenting the movement of the needle
- Campus Celebration
  - Euphoria…

- Small Group Debriefings
  - Often not so euphoric, but important for personal development
- Opportunities to Share Stories and Apply New Knowledge
  - Helping students prepare their presentations to “the next generation”
TECHNOLOGY FACILITATES THE WORK

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Overview

• The power of technology and media
  • Finding Others
  • Global Reach
  • Acceleration - speed with which digital information travels

• Technology for study abroad
  • Negatives
  • Positives
  • It’s about reasonable and responsible use

• 4 Categories of technology use:
  • Exploration and Self-Development
  • Communication
  • Self-Expression
  • Activism
1. Technology for Exploration and Self-Development

Pre-departure

- Technology can assist students in immersion of a place
  - Geography, environment, plants, and animals
  - Culture, daily life, food, music, religion, and art
  - Government, politics, regulations, technology infrastructure, and freedom/access to information

- Facilitating Technologies
  - Online learning management systems
  - Online tutorials
  - Local radio feeds - Sound Garden Radio App
  - Online news feeds
  - Images
  - Web conferencing
  - Facebook, Twitter, blog, and internet searches
  - Virtual reality
2. Technology for Communication

Where we form connections we attach emotionally; where we attach emotionally we have empathy and compassion.

- Technology facilitates:
  - Connections, friendships, and understanding of one’s personal life.
  - Home connections

- Facilitating technologies:
  - Mobile technology
  - Social media
3. Technology For Self-Expression

How do I feel? What have I learned? How has this experience changed me?

- Passion is often revealed through self-expression
- Technology facilitates self-expression through constructive and reflective activities:
  - Media projects, written journals, photo journals, and blogs
  - Create during study abroad as an outlet while information and experiences are in the forefront
4. Technology for Activism

Post-departure

• Facilitating post-departure proaction - Changing the world (or a part of it)

• Technology can be used to keep students engaged and turn their experiences into action after returning home.

• Connection to people abroad.

• Special interest groups.

• Activism - spreading the word.
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THANK YOU