A Community Approach: Overcoming Resistance and Taking Intercultural Interventions Beyond Curricular Solutions

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Background: Intercultural Learning at CIEE

• Growing realization of importance of intervening in study abroad participants’ intercultural learning

• Seminar on Living and Learning Abroad (SLL), 2007 - 2008
  • Two-credit, semester-long intercultural course
  • Curriculum developed by CIEE
  • Taught on-site by resident staff
Underlying Pedagogy

- Holistic Learning
  - Affective
  - Behavioral
  - Cognitive

- Sanford’s Challenge/Support

- Intercultural Development Continuum

- Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory
Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)


Concrete Experience (Experience)

Reflective Observation (Reflect)

Abstract Conceptualization (Make meaning)

Active Experimentation (Try it out)
Challenges:
• Making it mandatory didn’t work
• Many instructors not comfortable teaching the course
• Realization of the importance of instructors’ own intercultural development

Response:
• Course became elective
• On-going, one-on-one coaching for instructors
• Increasing focus on instructors’ intercultural development
Taking Stock (2013)

• Feedback from key stakeholders (ACB, students, instructors, Academic Affairs, etc.)

• Primary Challenges Identified:
  • Credit transfer challenges
  • Mandatory vs. self-selection issue
  • Instructors need to be in ethnorelative stages of intercultural development for course to fully succeed
  • Instructors need more resources, training, and support
  • Importance of supporting language learning
New Intercultural Initiative: Overview

Two Curricular Components:
• Embedded intercultural learning component
• Three-credit course: “Intercultural Communication & Leadership”

In Addition:
• Instructor support and development program
• Language commitment program
Part I. Embedded Intercultural Learning Component

- Fully developed intercultural curriculum adaptable to specific location
  - Students acquire culture-general transferrable skills while learning about and from the local cultural context

- Basic framework that is embedded into the particular program

- Intended to reach all students on program

- Approximately 12 hours over course of semester

- Not-for-credit
Part II. “Intercultural Communication & Leadership”

- Advanced three-credit intercultural elective course
- Curriculum builds on that of embedded component
- Listed as Communication course
- Emphasis on leadership (especially leadership of self)
- Increased academic rigor
Increased Facilitator Support & Training

• Semester-long online development course for facilitators
  • Individual work
  • Partner work
  • Five “live” plenaries

• Emphasis on developing their own intercultural leadership practice

• Helps build an intercultural teaching/learning community and a shared language

• Continued one-on-one coaching and support
New Intercultural Learning Initiative

Three-Credit “Intercultural Communication & Leadership” (ICL) course

Embedded Intercultural Learning Component
Expanded Learning Objectives

SLL Learning Objectives

• Cultural Self-Awareness
• Cultural Literacy
• Cultural Bridging

ICL Learning Objectives

• Self-Awareness
• Cultural Literacy
• Cultural Bridging
• Developing an Intercultural Leadership Practice
# Addressing the Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit transfer</td>
<td>3-credit Intercultural Communication course more transferrable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-selection issue</td>
<td>All students get some intercultural learning; interested students get more in-depth training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor support</td>
<td>Increased training; focus on instructors’ intercultural development</td>
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<td>Support language learning</td>
<td>Curriculum translated into Spanish; French and possibly Arabic to follow</td>
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Gradual Roll-Out

Initial Sites Fall 2014:
• Alicante, Spain
• Berlin, Germany
• Havana, Cuba
• Istanbul, Turkey
• Legon, Ghana
• Prague, Czech Republic
• Rennes, France
• Nanjing, China
• Seoul, South Korea

New Sites Spring 2015:
• Amman, Jordan
• Buenos Aires, Argentina
• Cape Town, South Africa
• Dakar, Senegal
• Dublin, Ireland
• Guanajuato, Mexico
• Lima, Peru
• Lisbon, Portugal
• Madrid, Spain
• Palma de Mallorca, Spain
• Seville, Spain
• Stellenbosch, South Africa
• Uppsala, Sweden
An Update

Successes:
• Average IDI change score for students in the ICL: +6.24
• Very positive student evaluations
• Increased buy-in from instructors
• Instructor training very well-received

Challenges:
• Enrollment in ICL course
• Effectively embedding intercultural learning into the program requires time and experimentation
• Assessing learning in embedded component
“I think this course was fantastic! Highlight of my education abroad, it really allowed me to engage with my surroundings and as the course went on I was able to take things that I learned through this course with me on my weekend travels.”
--Student in Prague

“This course helps you identify your feelings and struggles that you are going through while abroad but it also helps you process through these things. It helps you see the perspectives of the people you are living among.”
--Student in Legon

“I am super thankful for this course. I have done more personal reflection on this experience than I ever have in my life, and this course has given me the tools to do that.”
--Student in Rennes
THEMES
Lessons Learned

• This isn’t easy!

• Students don’t know what they don’t know
  • Importance of integrating intercultural learning into the program
  • Need to bridge cultural gap between educators and students (need to have a “hook”)

• Faculty/staff buy-in not a given, but very important
Lessons Learned

• Good curriculum necessary but insufficient condition for success

• Importance of skilled facilitation
  • Understand content/theory
  • Comfort with pedagogy
  • Facilitator’s intercultural development

• It may not be easy, but it’s worth the effort!
Discussion Questions

1. How can we bridge the gap between what we believe about student learning abroad and what the students themselves believe? How can we get more students interested in participating in intercultural learning initiatives? What are some possible “hooks”? 

2. What challenges do you face at your institution and how could you increase buy-in among faculty and staff to create more support for the active facilitation of students’ intercultural learning?

3. Where and how might you integrate intercultural learning into the work you are currently doing?
References & Recommended Readings


