

AN ACTIVE LEARNING PEDAGOGY FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: FULL IMMERSION IN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Only 3% of American undergraduates study abroad in any year, about 250,000 total with around 18% being business students. Almost half of freshman students state an interest in studying abroad and 75 percent of adults believe students should study overseas for some period of time. However, about half of college students think they don't have enough time or money to study abroad. This being the case, short-term overseas travel programs are especially suitable for a great many college students.

Research literature almost universally praise the benefits of study abroad. Schuster et al. (1998) states that students need to personally experience foreign countries to understand them. Clarke et al. (2009) empirically showed that students who studied abroad gained higher levels of intercultural ability and became more globally aware. Erffmeyer and Al-Khatib (1997) state that study abroad students had higher levels of political and cultural understanding as well as a higher graduation rate.

There are only a small number of study abroad studies; non-quantitative literature has mostly focused on study abroad logistics and not on educational content. Orvis and Wajda (2008) state that study abroad has greater impact if students can go beyond classroom teaching. Williams (2005) states that study-abroad programs in and of themselves are not adequate but combining direct cross-cultural interaction will maximize intercultural communication learning. Study abroad students that interacted directly with host nationals made the greatest gains in cross-cultural knowledge and expressed the most satisfaction with the international experience. Brice (2012) finds that real-life cultural immersion incidents, with faculty directed analysis, will enhance international student programs along with the usual visits, seminars, and other constructed student activities.

Two Management professors from California State University Dominguez Hills accompanied two students to Ethiopia for three weeks. The student's purpose was to experience and analyze Ethiopia's cultural and business environment which was done via intensive interaction with administration, faculty and students at the private US College in Shashamene Ethiopia and by exploration in Addis Ababa, Shashemene, and Ethiopia's Rift Valley area. Background information and research approaches were provided by the two professors whose respective fields of expertise were International Management and Organizational Behavior. The research purpose of including the students was to answer the question: would a short full-immersion study-abroad experience that involved intensive day-to-day interaction with host nationals, be effective in conveying the same essence of a traditional semester-abroad. Students self-reported their pre-journey expectations, stereotypes, and possible cultural bias's. Hofstede's culture dimension scores were used as a starting point for analysis and students identified areas of management behavior that corresponded to strong differences between Ethiopia and the US. Using student reports along with in-depth interviews, strong alterations in analytical approach and cultural understanding of both Ethiopia and the student's home culture were observable in both students.