Journal of International Students

Study Abroad and Cultural Learning Through Fulbright and Other International Scholarships: A Holistic Student Development

Madalina Akli, PhD,
Assistant Director of Fellowships and Undergraduate Research
Rice University, Texas (USA)

Abstract

This article focuses on one piece from the complex puzzle of internationalization, namely the intercultural learning during education abroad. It departs from a critical reflection on American student applications for the Fulbright program and uses the application process for Fulbright scholarship as a lynchpin for other study abroad scholarships for American students. It shows how the stages of before, during and after education abroad can be comprehensively integrated into a holistic process of student development in American universities. This process has the ultimate goal of helping American students function in an international context and redefining their world view to encompass the notion that cultures can be understood relative to one another.

Keywords: Study abroad, global citizen, culture, student advising, and scholarships

I started reflecting on intercultural learning and strategies to enhance intercultural competence after reviewing a certain number of American students' application statements for the Fulbright program to study and research abroad. I carefully read the description of the Fulbright and it is emphasized that this program "promotes cross-cultural interaction and mutual understanding through engagement in the community and on a person-to-person basis in an atmosphere of openness, academic integrity, and intellectual freedom. Since the primary aim of this scholarship is to further mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, an applicant should demonstrate a clear commitment to the host country community" (Fulbright U.S. student program, 2011).

During the evaluation process, a reviewer assesses, among a complex set of factors, the following: the feasibility of the proposed project, academic and professional record, language preparation, and personal qualifications. However, the vision of the Fulbright program is much larger than these worthy outcomes. It promotes "the expansion of the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception to create true and lasting world peace. Toward this end, it is important that not only a student's academic potential be considered but also that a student shows interest in acquiring a substantive experience of another culture for which he does not already possess extensive prior experience" (Manual for Fulbright advisors, 2011, p. 5).

I read the application statements with these guidelines in mind. During the process, I came across diverse approaches to potential interactions with a host culture. Some students accurately stated that their motivation to go abroad was to learn about a foreign culture. They gave compelling explanations about why they chose a given country and how that choice may impact their personal life and career, gave examples of aspects they are curious to explore and mentioned specific activities, which they envisioned would be helpful to approach and interact with members of the host community.

Other students addressed the cultural aspects superficially, in a couple of general sentences, such as: "I plan to immerse myself in the community," "I want to further myself as a 21st century researcher," "I want to connect with people of a culture I am largely unfamiliar with." A few other applicants stated reasons, which demonstrated a seeming lack of reflection on the true purpose of a study abroad, such as "I would like to immerse myself in Spanish culture because Spain is known for its laid-back culture and easy going way of life," "I want to study in Paris because I can go to a boulangerie first thing in the morning and return home with baguettes and croissants," or "I want to study

 ISSN: 2162-3104 Print/ ISSN: 2166-3750 Online
 http://jistudents.org/
Spring 2013 Vol. 3 Issue 1

abroad to make my friends jealous." Some other applicants failed to make clear connections to the benefits of being exposed to a new culture, such as: "My program abroad will complement my education in the U.S nicely."

In this context, I started to investigate the cultural learning aspects of a study abroad experience, to research strategies to enhance students' cross-cultural experience before, during, and after the education abroad and to identify ways to stimulate and integrate learning at various stages of the experience. In addition, I developed a broader perspective on approaches to cultural learning and how one perceives it both from a pragmatic and philosophical point of view.

Culture, Learning, and Sharing

First, I think it is useful to make the distinction between culture and civilization, to define what culture is and to return to the basics, particularly to anthropology. Second, in the context of international education, it is equally helpful to present cultural learning as a clear and worthy benefit of a study abroad, in addition to a student's academic development as evidenced through course work and research.

I have noticed that the confusion between culture and civilization is common in our students' minds. Swami Maharaj (2012) presents civilization as the betterment of ways of living. It includes technology, politics, division of labor, food, dress, urbanism, transportation systems, progress in agriculture, and long-distance trade. All of these can be grouped under the category of improved conditions of life. In turn, Maharaj (2012) argues that culture encompasses meaning systems, beliefs, symbols, values, language, customs, behaviors, memories, and religion. From this dichotomy, one understands that civilization cannot grow and exist without culture. Culture, which refers to the inner refinement of a person can exist in itself and precedes civilization. Furthermore, civilization is the result of culture and consequently cannot exist if it does not possess a certain culture. It is through culture that humans started to live in groups and advanced in human society. As an example, one may be poor and considered uncivilized but he may be infused with culture. Conversely, Maharaj concludes that a wealthy person may be considered civilized but he may not be cultured.

I believe that civilization is tangible and captured in photographs and encyclopedias while culture is intangible, therefore immaterial. When students use these two terms interchangeably, it may be an indication that they inaccurately believe they can study a foreign culture by reading books and doing research in the library about a given country. I argue that these books present the civilization and not the culture of that country. While the study of aspects of civilization in the library is a good start, it is far from being sufficient to become inter-culturally competent.

I also consider that cultures are not static entities; they overlap and interact. One of the obstacles to intercultural dialogue that I have witnessed during my interactions with students is the propensity for them to conceive of cultures as fixed identities. I tell these students that cultures are like clouds, coming together and moving apart, and that they have to travel abroad to interact with foreign cultures where the movement takes place.

It is important to underscore the fact that people acquire rather than inherit the aspects of a culture, and that it is transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Kottak (2010) explains that culture is learned directly within a group, by interaction of its members through the process of enculturation or internalizing a cultural tradition.

Additionally, a culture may also be learned indirectly through observation and unconscious absorption. Kottak (2010) gives the example of North Americans who acquire their culture's notions about how far apart people should stand when they talk through a gradual process of observation, experience, and conscious and unconscious behavior modification, rather than being told explicitly to maintain a certain distance. "No one tells Latins to stand closer together than North Americans do. They learn to do so as part of their cultural tradition" (Kottak 2010, p. 24). Another characteristic of a culture from Kottak's point of view that culture is acquired through sharing: as members of diverse groups, humans share beliefs, values, memories, and expectations. Enculturation unifies people by providing individuals from the same culture with common experiences. When outsiders to that group get inside their circle to learn about a foreign culture, they start a process of acculturation.

Acculturation is a mechanism of intercultural exchange that results when groups have firsthand contact with one another. In international education, the equivalent of acculturation is cultural learning, when students learn through direct interactions within the host country's culture, as opposed to through indirect exposure in books or on the Internet. When study abroad students immerse themselves in a foreign culture they have the opportunity to de-provincialize

their mind and try to interpret cultural symbols, investigate social issues and daily practices and understand people who are different from themselves. Moreover, these students may observe inevitable tensions among human beings who are different from one another and stretch themselves into new ways of thinking.

When students are mindful about their study abroad experience, they have more chances to distance themselves from an ethnocentric position, where they perceive the world only through the lens of their native cultures. Students gradually develop empathy for a foreign culture and, as a direct consequence of intercultural learning, they are more likely to develop new attitudes, such as flexibility, openness, and ethnorelativism; all of which shape their perceptions of cultural plurality and the coexistence of multiple viewpoints.

In Ilana Kowarski's (2010) article on how to help students translate the benefits of study abroad, one interviewee says that exposure to a different culture does not only give students insights into alternative perspectives, but also into their own identities. Another interviewee rightly affirms that "oftentimes our own cultures are invisible to us until we encounter other cultures; the dominant culture names the other culture, but it doesn't name itself" (para. 19).

Related to gaining self-awareness when studying outside national borders, Montgomery (2010) discusses the concept of knowing the foreigner within ourselves. Drawing on arguments from existentialist philosophy as represented by Jean-Paul Sartre and Julia Kristeva, Montgomery invites us to reflect on the mistrust, fear, and prejudice that surround our interactions with other cultures. Montgomery cites Kristeva who argues that "when we are in contact with a foreigner, our consciousness of hidden aspects of our own identity is raised, and it is our hatred of the strange within us that initiates conflict toward others" (p. 39-40). Kristeva concludes that to achieve global tolerance, it is necessary to recognize this "otherness" in ourselves.

Cultural learning abroad is an element that is as important as academic achievement in the overall education of a student. Cultural competence should be emphasized as such during advising sessions, underscored by study abroad scholarship committees, and anticipated once the student returns to his home institution. Advisors and faculty should raise the bar for education abroad and set up clear expectations for students, particularly when they receive financial support to study abroad. While the aim to become an effective researcher is a legitimate one, so is the aim to become an inter-culturally competent citizen and thus, it deserves equal attention.

Moreover, the cultural learning component equally empowers both the students and their universities. This component is important in the larger puzzle of internationalization of a university: "When judging from an institutional perspective, the internationalization can augment learning and research capacity, it may help to support institutional repute and attractiveness, and it may be seen as a device to counterbalance demographic and funding challenges" (Kohler, 2011, p. 14). Along the same lines, Celeste Schenck, the president of the American University of Paris, affirms that "what ultimately will separate good universities from great ones, is not the criteria of the rankings, not the facilities, not the number of books in the library, not the size of the endowment, but their capacity to develop the world citizenship of their students in an era where, as borders fall, identity politics escalate" (Schenck, 2009, para. 20).

The Development of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural learning or the acquisition of knowledge about a new culture points to complex research in cognitive development, which seeks to answer the questions of how humans learn and make sense of the world around them. More specifically, theories in cognitive sciences address the issue of how do we move from what we know toward what is not known. For example, Vygotsky (1978) argues that an individual always constructs meaning in relation to the socio-cultural context in which he develops. Vygotsky's notions of socially situated learning and the construction of knowledge have been embraced by modern cultural psychology, which is based on the premise that human cognition is mainly social and cultural.

Researchers in cognitive linguistics and neuroscience shifted their attention from the social foundation of learning to the mental abilities of humans to construct meaning. Linguists including Lakoff (1980), Turner (1987), and Johnson (1987) see language as an important source of information not only for the construction of linguistic meaning, but also for the way in which we think and act. For example, they show how metaphors form coherent mental systems according to which we conceptualize our everyday experience and how they emerge directly from our physical interaction with the environment and cultural interaction with others. More generally, this

idea that a complex system of cognition lies behind forms (linguistic and non-linguistic) in our minds, is at the heart of the cognitive approach to meaning creation.

From a practical perspective of an advisor, the trajectory of intercultural learning before, during and after the international opportunity begins in the advising sessions about the study abroad scholarship. The advisement meeting ideally takes place a couple of months before the application deadline and approximately one year before the study abroad program starts. At this early stage, students simply express interest in studying abroad. Often, they do not have a clear idea about where, how, and especially why they would like to study abroad.

During the early advising sessions, students should be encouraged to reflect on their expectations and motivation prior to the study abroad experiences. Probing questions for reflection could include: Why do you want to study abroad? How will this experience fit into your overall educational plan? What are the long-term effects you expect your overseas experience to have on your life? Have you had any direct contact with other cultures? How willing are you to learn how to speak the target language? How is a study-abroad student different from a tourist? How will you want your host to learn about you and about the United States?

These questions are pertinent for Fulbright scholarships in particular, but could be used in the application process for any international scholarship. The reviewing committee should ensure that students have a well-defined research project, that they want to serve as a cultural ambassador of their native country abroad, and that they have designed a plan for how they will be interacting with the community. If, for example, the research project is brilliant and the culture component is missing, then one may ask why the student does not carry out his research at an institution in the U.S.

Oftentimes the research component is easier to write than the cultural component, because students reflected longer on the first one, took classes in the field, and are therefore more prepared to design a research project in terms of feasibility, resources, and outcomes. However, it is more difficult to address the cultural learning because although one intrinsically feels it is good to study abroad, one needs more time to answer the above-mentioned questions. Usually, for those students who take the time to see an advisor well in advance of the application deadline, this process of reflection translates into several drafts, which come down to a coherent proposal in terms of research, interaction with the host culture, support in the country of destination, and outcomes.

In addition, an advisor has to take into account some other individual aspects. Some students are naturally curious while others are less so; some students interact with people different from themselves easily, others do not; some are more adventurous while others are more reserved; some studied previously abroad while others are new to the experience. These complex factors influence the way students approach a study abroad program and write their statements of purpose.

An advisor should understand the larger and more complex picture of what it means to think and act outside the box. Slimbach (2005) argues that the movement "outside the box" of our cultural experience is not natural. He further states "what are natural are prejudice and provincialism, ethnocentrism and exclusion. We 'naturally' prefer our 'own kind' over 'the other' and tend to consider the limits of our own field of vision as the limits of the world. We should understand this temptation toward ethnocentrism as tied to our existential condition," (p. 214). Slimbach further develops this line of thought by saying that we do want to be different, we do want to transcend our natural selves, however he emphasizes that "we want to see with other eyes, to feel with other hearts. But we find that the primary impulse is to maintain and aggrandize ourselves. The secondary impulse is to go out of the self, to correct its provincialism, and heal its loneliness" (p. 215).

Strategies to Promote Intercultural Learning

In an effort to democratize these challenges, raise awareness on the significance of study abroad and enhance students' writing quality, I organize an annual Fulbright Week event and teach a workshop on how to write a successful statement of purpose for study abroad scholarships. The Fulbright Week is part of a larger effort of the Office of Fellowships, together with other events (such as the U.K. Week), and it precedes the scholarship application deadline by seven months. These events are strategically implemented to give students ample time to think about the application process, the choice of the country to study, their strengths, the feasibility of the project in a particular country and the expectations set for a prospective international student.

In the workshop, in addition to presenting writing strategies for a study abroad scholarship application

and discussing examples of successful applications, I also explain that study abroad is not an exception in the U.S. educational system. On the contrary, it is encouraged and there is strong institutional determination to make it the norm. International students are expected not only to study hard but also to serve as cultural ambassadors of their country and university while abroad. To support my argument, I compare the number of American students studying abroad with students from other regions of the world and place the study abroad in a comprehensive perspective of strong diplomatic desire from both national and institutional levels to send American students to study outside U. S. borders. In this line, I talk about national endeavors to augment the number of students going abroad, such as the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Act, the strategic plan of internalization of the U.S. Summit for Global Citizen Diplomacy, and institutional endeavors toward the same-above mentioned goal, such as our own university's vision for international education.

I give this general introduction in the workshop to get students thinking in a larger context and make them aware that there is a well-determined goal behind the growing opportunities to win a scholarship for study abroad, a goal which is strategic, encompassing, and which goes further than one's short term interests (such as fulfilling credit requirements) or the prestige of international education (such as a scholarship to Oxford versus other universities).

Enhancing intercultural learning through the students' developments during and after education abroad can be integrated into a holistic approach to international education. In the interest of instilling cultural insight in students, Kahn (2010) has developed the following successful visual methods that she used to teach during a study abroad program in Jamaica.

Kahn required her students to draw and write visual field notes; each student draws a picture or image that describes a moment of discovery from each day. In the guidelines of the syllabus, the instructor mentions that this can be a moment of dissonance or cultural confusion. The students write a few sentences about this image, why it is significant and how it is unique to Jamaican culture. The aesthetics are not graded but the students' efforts to use the visuals to make connections about a topic are evaluated. Another example from Kahn (2010) is the use of discovery kits, which her students make to represent Jamaican culture in a local and global context. These discovery kits are teaching resources for K-12 educators who use them in classrooms to discuss particular cultural practices from around the world. In addition, she reports that the process of creating the kits, which include books, presentations, images, and objects are invaluable for promoting an understanding of culture and global awareness. They engage in discussions about what represents Jamaican culture, what objects are most significant in the lives of Jamaicans, what type of people should be interviewed as representatives of contemporary Jamaica, and how the culture should be depicted. Kahn argues that it is in this process of creation of the discovery kits that the students are transformed from recipients to producers of knowledge.

When promoting visual methods during the study abroad experience, Kahn (2010) draws connections between visual thinking, breaking down barriers (e.g., academic, cross-cultural, pedagogic), and global understanding. She argues that "visual methods challenge students' positions of authority. Students have the opportunity to work through and embody a critical understanding of culture as constructed of invisible flows and intersections that provide meaning to the visible. Visual methods encourage students to become immersed in a holistic phenomenological experience where they intuitively feel, live, understand their position in the world" (para. 2).

Self-reflection serves as the last stage in a three-stage process (i.e., before, during and after study abroad). During this stage, students engage in a debriefing of their experiences by addressing a set of questions aimed at the development of their intercultural competence. These are some questions currently used by study abroad advisors: What did you learn about yourself? Has this experience and your new understanding of a foreign culture changed any ideas about your future profession? What lessons can you take from this experience to make you a better professional? Has this changed your ideas about education? Has it changed your understanding of your own community? What is a global citizen in your opinion? What stereotypes did people have of you and were they changed? This list of questions may be longer and also organized by themes, such as cultural stereotypes, professional impact, personal life, and others.

Several programs administrating scholarships for international study, which require a follow-up project report, share the same endeavor of engaging students in a post-program reflection. The two examples I will describe, one institutional and one national, are the

Nanothechnology Study Program in Japan (or NanoJapan) and the Gilman International Scholarship.

Participants in NanoJapan carry on a project upon their return to the U.S. The idea that sustains this initiative is that students benefit from intercultural learning and become valuable sources of information for the next generation of undergraduate students when they come back.

Students who complete the NanoJapan program are part of the internalization-at-home process, which aims to provide international exposure to students who remain at home by bringing back and sharing with them experiences lived abroad. Consequently, returning students are required to carry out a follow-up project that broadly promotes NanoJapan to home institution students or to high school students in the community. The goal is to encourage home students to pursue international study and research opportunities abroad and more specifically, to pursue study and research in Japan in the field of nanotechnology. All projects are completed during the academic year following participation in the program; projects include on-campus presentations about NanoJapan within student organizations or hosting an information table at a campus study-abroad fair or giving a presentation at a local school about international research opportunities available to engineering students (NanoJapan IREU, 2012).

Similarly, the Gilman International Scholarship, administered by the Institute of International Education, requires participants to implement follow-up projects to promote international education at the students' home institutions or in their home communities. The follow-up project is a chance for the students to give back by inspiring others to pursue their own experiences abroad. Student blogs represent one creative and interactive approach initiated by students. One student created weekly videos documenting her experience in London; home students could ask her to visit places they want to see virtually in London and the study abroad student would record and uploads them on her blog. Through blog interactions, students at home could also ask the student abroad to demystify misconceptions about the people of London by asking them questions related to stereotypes. This follow-up project gained so much popularity that several of the videos have been viewed thousands of times. Another student who traveled to Thailand made an on-line diary where she spoke about her experiences, Thai culture, classes, and the Gilman scholarship.

These examples are only a few among many; they are not exhaustive. On the contrary, this selection can stimulate one's creativity to imagine new ways to support students in a study abroad program as they develop intercultural competence in the host country, serve as ambassadors of their home countries and become fonts of cultural knowledge to be shared once home. The schema of before, during and after the international program must be emphasized. In many cases, this holistic process falls apart because these three main stages are uncoordinated, separate or discrete. Understandably, the comprehensive unfolding of the international education process may be a challenge for offices and school divisions. There are various reasons (e.g., funding, logistics and communication) and they are no doubt legitimate in many cases.

I often read posts on international education associations' websites indicating concerns about the quality of student cross-cultural preparation and the resemblance of study abroad programs to tourist sojourns. From this perspective, Richard Slimbach argues:

> One of the great paradoxes in higher education is that intelligent young people invest tens of thousands of dollars to be tutored in academic disciplines that touch virtually all aspects of their lives except the critical area of moral purpose. When it comes to this, most universities leave them alone. The fallout from this deficit is increasingly being born by global educators. Reluctantly they must face the uncomfortable fact that there's one thing worse than not sending students abroad: it's sending them immature, ill-prepared, and myopic students whose presence in an overseas community affects more harm than good. (2010, p. 43)

If the distance which must separate these two types of travelers, mindful students versus sight-seeing students with a syllabus, is a main preoccupation of a university engaged in the internationalization process and if education plays a key role in developing the ability to conduct inter-cultural dialogue, I believe that educators should act purposefully toward the integration of all elements of the holistic intercultural student development. This requires attention to prerequisites for study abroad, guidelines while abroad, and follow-up commitments when the students reenter the home country. When a university offers a significant number of study abroad scholarships, it inherently embraces the strategic determination of sending American students abroad and receiving international students at the home institution to initiate the process of educating

tomorrow's global citizens. Through promoting internationalization in higher education, universities recognize that not only are academics important to pushing the frontiers of knowledge but that intercultural learning is also a main component in student education.

This institutional purpose must be steadily carried out through every stage of the study abroad process from the early advising before the program starts to the actual study abroad experience and upon the students' return. This is indeed the scenario in many cases; however, in other cases the purpose may be forgotten along the way. In one potential scenario, a student may compete fiercely for a scholarship, win and receive support for a nine month study abroad opportunity. Upon successful completion of the program, the student may only be required to bring back the copy of the airplane ticket, with no incentive for self-reflection or sharing of the newly acquired cultural knowledge. As advisors, staff and faculty members, we can learn from examples of good practices to address students' development comprehensively. The collective aim is to augment the number of American students studying abroad, to enhance the quality of their experiences, and to help them become global citizens who can contribute significantly to promoting intercultural competence.

The Global Citizen: From Philosophy to Practice

Cultural learning is an ongoing process, which shapes students' perspectives and promotes their involvement in communities as global citizens. Global citizenship is a metaphor, which helps us conceptualize a set of skills and a philosophy to function as world citizens. It is a metaphor because it blends two concepts: the concept of having a citizenship with a passport, civic responsibilities and rights and the concept of global, or in other words, world belonging. The concept of living globally is more difficult to understand and this is why it is blended with the conventional and familiar concept of citizenship. However, the global citizen does not have a passport, does not go through the immigration interview, and does not pay immigration fees.

International educators are concerned about the quality of students' interactions with people across cultures because the ultimate outcome of the intercultural learning process is the transformation of students into global citizens. While this idea may seem new and trendy, one may be surprised that the first who launched it was Diogenes Laertius in the 3rd century A.D. When he was asked where he came from, he said "I am a citizen of the world." Nussbaum (1997) traces back the roots of the phrase 'citizen of the world' or 'kosmopolites' back to ancient Greek thought. She explains that the Stoic philosophers (3rd century A.D.) further developed the image of cosmopolitanism, or world citizen, and distinguished between two communities: the local community of our birth and the community of our aspiration. Other philosophers were also explicitly interested in multicultural education. Herodotus examined the customs of other countries to understand their ways of life and to attain a critical perspective on his own society; Plato alludes to the study of other cultures such as Sparta, Crete, and Egypt; Aristotle instructed his students to gather information about forms of political organization in the known world and to write historical descriptions of these regions.

Nussbaum analyzes Diogenes sentence from the perspective of the philosopher's exile from his native city. He refused protection from the reach for fear of losing freedom and lived in poverty, in a tub in order to indicate his disdain for convention and comfort. Nussbaum explains that Diogenes invites us to consider ourselves citizens of the world and to a certain extent to become philosophical exiles from our own ways of life, seeing them from the vantage point of outsiders. Only from this critical distance can one become a philosopher. Nussbaum (1997), using Diogenes example, further explains that:

> A stance of detachment from uncritical loyalty to one's own ways promotes the kind of evaluation that is truly reason based. When we see how many different ways people can organize their lives, we will recognize what is deep and what is shallow in our own ways and will consider that the only real community is one that embraces the entire world. The true basis of human association is not the arbitrary or the habitual; it is that which we can defend as good for human beings – and Diogenes believes that these evaluations know no national boundaries. (p. 55)

The idea that study abroad promotes common good for all human beings is actively promoted among international educators. Most notably, Slimbach (2010) argues that "merely learning about the world is not enough. Global learning must be not only in the world but also for it" (p. 24). Slimbach focuses our attention on how education abroad can promote the common good through healing of a broken world, an idea originally articulated by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas and fully articulated in the 1948 Universal

Declaration of Human Rights.

Kofi Annan (2003), United Nations ex-Secretary General, orients the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders, when he says "we recognize that we are the products of many cultures, traditions, and memories; that mutual respect allows us to study and learn from other countries; and that we gain strength by combining the foreign with the familiar" (p. 1). The educated global citizen of tomorrow must be familiar with problems the world is facing: political instability, energy distribution, human crisis and underdevelopment, poverty, inequalities, and lack of protection of basic human rights. The profile may seem idealistic; however it is an attainable ideal.

Slimbach (2005) points out that realizing this ideal requires taking students outside the traditional classroom. He recognizes that the classroom is a valuable space for structured knowledge; however it does not stimulate cultural conditions in real space and time. Consequently, he draws up the portrait of the global citizen and enumerates the main competencies and skills he or she possesses:

1. "Perspective consciousness: the ability to question constantly the source of one's cultural assumptions and ethical judgments, leading to the habit of seeing through the minds and hearts of others."
2. "Ethnographic skills: the ability to observe carefully social behavior, manage stress, and establish friendship across cultures, while exploring issues of global significance, documenting learning, and analyzing data using relevant concepts."
3. "Global awareness: a basic awareness of transnational conditions and systems, ideologies and institutions, affecting the quality of life of human and non-human populations."
4. "World learning: direct experience with contrasting political histories, family lifestyles, social groups and religions based on immersed interaction within non-English speaking, non-Americanized environments."
5. "Foreign language proficiency: a threshold-level acility in the language used by members of at least one other culture."
6. "Affective development: the capacity to demonstrate personal qualities "of the heart" (empathy, flexibility, humility, initiative within specific intercultural contexts in which one is living and learning)." (p. 206)

Given this characterization of a global citizen, one understands that the journey of a study abroad student in becoming a well-rounded representative of not only the home country, but now also the host country is a continuous one involving self-reflection and identity construction. One cannot really prove global citizenship or intercultural competence with a piece of paper or credentials; one cannot measure or assess global citizenship through surveys or search for it in databases. Attaining global citizenship is not instantaneous but rather ongoing, like a journey toward a far off destination, with check points, route revisions, reflections and evaluations along the way.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on one piece of the complex puzzle comprised of internationalization, namely cultural learning during education abroad. It grew out of the advising process through which I realized that students often lack reflection on the purpose of international education, regardless of previous study abroad experience. I propose that the elemental stages of before, during and after education abroad be comprehensively integrated into a holistic process for student development. This process has the ultimate goal of helping students reshape their worldview and appreciate that their perspectives of the world represent only a fragment of reality; cultures must be explored and understood relative to one another. In the ongoing effort to educate global citizens, institutions of higher education should focus on promoting and supporting collaborations among advisors across multiple offices in the university with intersecting priorities (e.g., scholarship offices, study abroad programs, centers for civic engagement). Through these collaborations and keeping in mind the holistic process outlined in this paper, effective approaches for cultivating intercultural competence will be developed, implemented, evaluated and shared.

References

Anan, K. (2003). In America's Interest: Welcoming international students. Report of the strategy task force on international student access. NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Retrieved from http://www.nafsa.org/public_policy.sec/public_policy_document/international_student_5/in_america_s_interest/

Fulbright U.S. student program. (2011). Retrieved From http://us.fulbrightonline.org/overview_program.html?page=us/overview_program

Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind*,Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Kahn, H. (2010). *Visual methods for international education. Working paper for NAFSA Conference*, Retrieved from proposals.nafsa.org/Abstract_Uploads/1387.61212.gs001.pdf

Kohler, J. (2011). Review of Handbook Internationalization, *Forum*, EAIE: European Association of International Educators, Spring*, 14-15*.

Kottak, C. P. (2009). *Mirror for humanity. A concise introduction to cultural anthropology*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Kowarski, I. (2010). *Colleges help students to translate the benefits of study abroad*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Help-Students-to/123653/

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press

Maharaj, S. S. (2012) *Culture and Civilization*. Retrieved from http://www.hinduism.co.za/culture.htm

Montgomery, C. (2010). *Understanding the international student experience*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmilan.

Manual for Fulbright Program Advisers. (2011). New York, NY: Institute of International Education.

NanoJapan IREU. (2012). International Research Experience for Undergraduates. Retrieved from http://nanojapan.rice.edu/educationOutreach_nanojapan_ireu.shtml

Nussbaum, M. (1997). *Cultivating humanity. A Classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schenck, C. (2009). *Inaugural Speech*. Retrieved from http://www.aup.edu/main/administration/president/speeches/InauguralSpeech.pdf

Slimbach, R. (2010). *Becoming world wise. A Guide to global learning*, Sterling, VR: Styllus.

Slimbach, R. (2005). The transcultural journey. *Frontiers:The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *11*, 214-230.

Turner, M. (1987). *Death is the mother of beauty. Mind. Metaphor. Criticism*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: the development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

About the Author:

Madalina Akli is the Assistant Director of the Office of Fellowships and Undergraduate Research at Rice University (Houston, Texas). She advises students on study abroad scholarships and international research opportunities. She graduated from Rice University with a PhD in French Studies (2007) and a M.A. in Linguistics and Translation from Sorbonne University (2001, Paris, France). After graduation, she worked as an Assistant Professor and taught classes on French language, culture and society. She can be reached at madalina_akli@yahoo.com

How to Cite:

Akli, M. (2013). Study abroad and cultural learning through Fulbright and other international scholarships: A holistic student development. *Journal of International Students, 3*(1), 1-9.