Fair Trade Learning Evaluation of a Global Partnership

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, evaluation of global service-learning (SL) programs has been highly focused on student outcomes, rather than community impact. Less documentation exists regarding the impact of SL on the partnerships between the community and higher education. The purposes of this case study are to present the concept of Fair Trade Learning (FTL) as it relates to global SL and demonstrate how the FTL Rubric can be used to evaluate a new global partnership.

　　Keywords: community engagement, cultural competency, global service learning, host-community partnerships, program evaluation

According to the Open Doors Reports (2010; 2019) by the Institute of International Education, the number of United States students who studied abroad for academic credit increased by approximately 31% from 2008/2009 to 2017/2018 with many of these students engaging in global service to communities during their time abroad. This type of experiential learning is highly valued in disciplines associated with the health professions (e.g., nursing, medical, public health) as students usually work in low-resource countries. Predominantly, nursing researchers have focused on demonstrating the impact of these global experiences from the perspective of the students (Amerson, 2010; Amerson, 2012; Amerson & Livingston, 2014; Dyches et al., 2019; Kohlbry, 2016); meanwhile, negligible literature exists to evaluate the impact of these experiences from the host partner's or community's perspective. Ideally, higher education institutions and local partners develop a partnership to incorporate global service with the host community. But how does one measure success in developing this type of global partnership? The purposes of this case study are to present the concept of Fair Trade Learning (FTL) as it relates to global service learning (GSL) and demonstrate how the FTL Rubric can be used to evaluate a new global partnership.

BACKGROUND

Study abroad programs are often marketed as GSL experiences. According to Hartman and Kiely (2014), five core qualities distinguish GSL, which include commitment to promoting intercultural competence, analysis of power and privilege, promotion of volunteerism, designation as immersive, and innovation through civic and global engagement with local communities. GSL relies on the promise of reciprocal relationships with both partners benefiting equally (Voss et al., 2015). Furthermore, universities along with host-community partners have a moral obligation to objectively oversee their alliances and provide safeguards to protect host communities from exploitation.

The growing popularity of GSL programs has prompted the examination of higher education programs-host community partnerships to ensure transactional and sustainable relationships. In the past, evaluation of GSL programs has been highly focused on student outcomes, rather than community impact (Lillo, 2019). Prioritization of student gain has been at the forefront of study abroad experiences since their conception. It is well documented in academic literature the positive influence of service learning (SL) on student experiences, such as increased global knowledge, cultural exposure, and implementation of learned skills in the community (Amerson, 2012; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017; Voss et al., 2015). Yet catering to the U.S. counterpart in global partnerships may evoke feelings of superiority related to the colonialist mindset of the past in those communities (Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017). Less documented is the impact of SL partnerships on the host communities that higher education systems are partnering with.

An additional area to be improved is the lack of evaluation from all parties. Voss et al. (2015) examined the development of a theoretical framework when evaluating mutual benefits in community-academic partnerships. The findings resulted in key components of partnerships to be "mutual decision-making, shared goals, reciprocity and meeting community needs" (Voss et al., 2015, p. 395). However, when reviewing previous literature, Voss et al. (2015) found most evaluations to be ambiguous and anecdotal, with no measurable way of evaluating the effectiveness of the partnership. Jordan, Chazdon, and Alviz (2016) acknowledge the irony that exists in evaluation of partnerships, in that program developers may independently evaluate community impact without input from community members. A partnership will be truly evaluated once community members and local partners are involved in the evaluation process as integral stakeholders instead of recipients of service. GSL needs guidance and practical methods for forging reciprocal relationships, without jeopardizing host communities who are intended to be served.

Hartman, Paris, and Blache-Cohen (2014) recognized this gap as well. Resulting from the researchers' extensive experience with global learning and service, a set of ethical standards for international volunteer tourism was developed. These standards form the basis of FTL, a method of achieving optimal relationships by encouraging more conversation about partner interests and needs to increase "intentionality" of GSL programs with a major focus and feedback on community outcomes (Hartman, 2015). Similar to fair trade in the economic sector, FTL aims to protect all involved parties in the partnership and to guide improvement and reciprocity among the parties. Core principles, student-centered standards, and most importantly, community-centered standards have all been outlined within FTL.

FTL Framework

The FTL Principles focus on eight core principles, which include: (a) dual purposes, (b) community voice and direction, (c) commitment and sustainability, (d) transparency, (e) environmental sustainability and footprint reduction, (f) economic sustainability, (g) deliberate diversity, intercultural contact, and reflection, and (h) global community building (Hartman et al., 2014). Dual purpose requires a balance between the needs of the community and learning objectives of students, thereby allowing for mutually agreed upon goals of equal value for both organizations of the partnership. Community voice and directive protect the rights of the most vulnerable within the local communities by facilitating community members to give direction and feedback. Commitment and sustainability cultivate clarity of expectations for the maintenance of the partnership for a prolonged period of time, preferably at least three to five years. Transparency suggests that both partners should understand how decisions are made and funds are spent. Environmental sustain-

ability and footprint reduction are maintained by being cognizant of environmental initiatives and seeking ways to mitigate the carbon footprint during travel. Deliberate diversity, intercultural contact, and reflection promote intercultural learning followed by reflection and encourage diversity among participants. Global community building focuses on bidirectional learning to benefit the local communities, while promoting learning opportunities for students to become global citizens.

These core principles are further divided into community-centered and student-centered standards that both play a vital role in the success of the partnership (Hartman et al., 2014). Community-centered standards focus on purpose; community preparation; timing, duration and repetition; group size; local sourcing; direct service; and reciprocity. These standards help to ensure positive outcomes for the community and its members. Annual evaluations of the partnership and memorandums of understanding facilitate clarity of the expectations when students enter the community. Community members are prepared to accept students, and group sizes are appropriate to alleviate burdens on the community. Local sourcing takes advantage of the assets within the community and provides economic benefits for host families and local restaurants. Students engage with community members to provide services, but only when students have the training and skills to provide care that is truly beneficial to members of the community. Finally, community outcomes are of equal value to student outcomes, thus both parties of the partnership receive equitable benefits. Student-centered standards represent the student side of the partnership with similar components, including purpose, student preparation, connection to course work and learning, challenge and support, program length, instruction and mentoring, communication skills and language learning, and preparation for a healthy return home (Hartman et al., 2014). These standards facilitate student growth through experiential learning using service learning and reflection

best practices, knowledge of the host country, linkage between course objectives and cultural activities, student engagement at the local level with communities, opportunities for language acquisition, and support when returning to the home university. These principles and standards ensure impartial assessment of the partnership for community-university engagement, and represent the goals of both partners in developing a collaborative partnership that emphasizes reciprocity, community-driven decisions, transparency, sustainability, and capacity building.

In a review of study abroad programs for college students, Hudson and Morgan (2019) found that students who stayed with host families were more likely to immerse more fully into the local community. This data reflects the ideology suggested by Hartman and Kiely (2014) that immersion is necessary for adequate 'disruption' which leads to transformation in the student. Furthermore, improving students' knowledge before a trip addresses a concern raised by Larkin (2018) that partners from developed countries often do not address their own privilege and the bias it places over the partnership. Recognizing this privilege may mitigate the potential for exploitation in low-resource countries. Local sourcing and transparency ensure no dominance is asserted over one partner by the other and that allotment of funds is readily available to all members of the partnership (Hartman & Chaire, 2014). Continual comm-unication and free expression of concerns, values, and needs from both partners are crucial to a successful relationship.

Description of the Partnership

The Clemson University Global Health Certificate Program (GHCP) enables students from health-related disciplines to experience cultural immersion in a foreign country using a multifaceted approach in low-resource countries. The curriculum is designed to meet the Interprofessional Global Health Competencies developed by the Consortium of Universities for Global Health for global

citizens (Jogerst et al., 2015) and specific competencies at the basic operational level by engaging students through GSL and strategically designed education activities.

The certificate program offers an in-depth curriculum that addresses not only global health, but seeks to engage students through service with vulnerable or indigenous populations. The curriculum for the GHCP requires 12 credit hours for completion. The program consists of six credit hours of core courses focusing on social determinants of health, leadership, and collaboration with a unique focus on low-resource settings; three credit hours of a supporting requirement from a social science or foreign language; and culminates in a three-credit capstone experience where students are immersed for one month in a low-resource country (Amerson, 2019).

In 2019, the capstone learning experience was held in Guatemala in partnership with Nursing Heart, Inc. (NHI), a nonprofit organization based in Antigua. Students live with host families, attend 10 hours of Spanish lessons weekly from a local language school, and participate in fieldwork and excursions with NHI in rural communities approximately two days per week. The curriculum and activities promote cultural humility and education by exposing students to indigenous lifestyles and beliefs. This certificate program not only provides students with the skills to address health disparities in international settings, but also prepares students to work with an increasingly diverse population in the United States.

NHI is a 501(c)3 organization focusing on core values that include service with a humble heart, trust within the community, respectful competence based on the wishes and needs of the community, and safety with hospitality for both communities and visiting students or health professionals. The organization seeks to respond to the health needs of underserved communities in Guatemala by engaging advance-practice nurses, nursing students, and other providers primarily from the United States. The desire is to build partnerships that foster hope through the public health of communities and participants. Therefore the organization has a dual mission: to improve the health of underserved communities in Guatemala, and to develop nurses to face global public health challenges by personalizing programs through trusted partnerships.

The global health partnership with Clemson University has carefully developed intercultural activities for students to visit underserved communities in Guatemala to share in a rich cultural exchange. A curriculum was designed by first listening to the values, needs, and wishes of the communities served and responding through collaboration with faculty and local leaders to provide beneficial services for both parties. Undergraduate nursing students have the opportunity to gain exposure to the processes used by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver health care in Guatemala. Non-licensed students observe and participate in clinics with those providing the care. It is important to note that participation is limited to activities that are appropriate based on the educational background and training of each cohort of students. Often "wellness checks" are arranged in culturally indigenous primary school communities, thus allowing partici-pants to have an opportunity to impact and learn about these communities. Post-trip evaluations submitted to the NGO suggest that students return home excited about the possibility of working internationally through-out their nursing careers. Findings from the post-trip participant evaluations are supported by an earlier study, which found that students returning from Guatemala desired to continue international service post-graduation (Amerson, 2012).

Other activities that are part of the curriculum include national hospital and local clinic tours, along with opportunities for talks with local nurses. In addition, NGO representatives lead discussions related to politics, socioeconomic status, education levels, and the health system of Guatemala. These education sessions expose students to a

broader understanding of the population they are serving and of global health nursing at large. Some community members invite students into their home for visits, which are always eye-opening and grounding experiences. Standard practice for NHI is to use as many local resources as possible (e.g., employing women from the community to prepare meals, eating in local establishments that employ local workers, utilizing resources of local businesses and Guatemalan translators, and involving local nurses/nursing students in health and medical clinics). As part of the unique program with Clemson University, students participate in a homestay, thereby allowing for a more personal and deepened cultural experience. On completion of any of the programs offered by NHI, the staff maintain contact with the communities and leaders by visiting them 2-3 times per year. This builds on the trust and commitment to a long-term partnership.

APPROACH

Building from the FTL framework, Hartman (2015a) developed the FTL Rubric to provide a mechanism for self-study and reflec-

tion by communities in collaboration with universities. Utilizing a participatory evaluation approach, one where both stakeholders and participants perform the evaluation (Saalman, 2020), allows for a more inclusive review of programs by including evaluations from both parties. The process of evaluating the new global partnership between NHI and the GHCP began by employing the FTL Rubric (Hartman et al., 2014), which evaluates 13 criteria. These criteria include (a) common purposes, (b) host community program leadership, (c) rights of the vulnerable, (d) host community program participation, (e) theory of change (community), (f) theory of change (students), (g) recruitment and publications, (h) communication, (i) learning integration, (j) local sourcing, environmental impacts, and economic structure, (k) clarity of commitment and evaluation of partnership success, (l) transparency, and (m) partnership not program. Hartman (2015) delineates the criteria based on four levels: entry, intermediate, advanced, and ideal. Table 1 provides definitions of the 13 criteria based on an "ideal" partnership. Readers who are unfamiliar with the FTL Rubric are encouraged to refer to Hartman's work for more details.

Table 1. *Definitions of Indicators*

Indicator	Definition based on "Ideal" Partnership
Common Purpose	Mutually established long-term goals
Host Community Program Leadership	Community members have teaching and leadership roles, research efforts are community-driven and co-owned
Rights of the Most Vulnerable	Vulnerable populations are recognized, and appropriate processes are in place to protect their rights
Host Community Program Participation	Age-appropriate peers from the community have access to participate in the program

Theory of Change (Community)	Partnership motivations for community outcomes are identified and welcomed by diverse community stakeholders
Theory of Change (Students)	Partnership motivations for student outcomes are identified and welcomed by diverse community stakeholders
Recruitment and Publications	Recruitment materials and social media promote education and portray ethical engagement in communities
Communication	Clear lines of communication between the University, NGO, and community are identified and communication is ongoing throughout the year
Learning Integration	Cross-cultural learning and personal growth are facilitated before, during, and after the study abroad experience
Local Sourcing, Environmental Impact, and Economic Structure	Services and products are purchased locally when possible, all partners discuss economic and environmental impact for the community, economic impact is shared among community members when feasible
Clarity of Commitment and Evaluation of Partnership Success	Ongoing and clear dialogue about the continuation of the partnership, clear expectations of when the partnership may end
Transparency	Budgets and economic impact are publicly available as appropriate and shared among partnership members
Partnership not Program	Timelines and commitments extend beyond a single episode

Utilizing the FTL Rubric, each partner independently ranked the partnership based on 13 indicators that represent the goals of both organizations. Each indicator was ranked based on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4. A ranking of 1 represented entry level, 2 represented intermediate, 3 represented advanced, and 4 represented the ideal attainment of the indicator. A Likert scale is frequently used to measure attitudes or opinions. Using a Likert scale with 4 points avoids a neutral response, which is common with odd number point scales (i.e., 5-point or 7-point scale). Responses indicating entry or intermediate level are not meant to reflect negatively on the partners, but rather to represent the current attainment of goals for the partnership.

The NHI administrator along with five staff members reviewed and ranked the partnership based on the indicators of the FTL Rubric. Representing the university partner, faculty of the GHCP and three students who previously participated in the capstone course in Guatemala completed the FTL Rubric to rank the partnership based on the same indicators. The responses were tallied, and a frequency table was constructed to reflect the responses from the university partner and the NGO (see Table 2 for the FTL Rubric Responses). Due to the qualitative nature of the rankings (ideal, advanced, intermediate, entry), the mode/s for each indicator were identified. The mode is the most commonly observed value in a set of data. In lieu of a mean,

Table 2. *FTL Rubric Responses*

Indicators		Entry (1)	Intermediate (2)	Advanced (3)	Ideal (4)
Common Purpose	CU	0	**3**	1	0
	NHI	1	**2**	**2**	1
Host Community Program Leadership	CU	0	**3**	0	1
	NHI	0	**4**	1	1
Rights of the Most Vulnerable	CU	0	0	0	**4**
	NHI	0	0	**5**	1
Host Community Program Participation	CU	0	**3**	0	1
	NHI	1	2	**3**	0
Theory of Change (Community)	CU	0	**3**	1	0
	NHI	0	**2**	**2**	**2**
Theory of Change (Students)	CU	0	0	**3**	1
	NHI	0	1	**3**	2
Recruitment and Publications	CU	0	**2**	1	1
	NHI	0	1	2	**3**
Communication	CU	0	0	**3**	1
	NHI	1	1	1	**3**
Learning Integration	CU	0	0	1	**3**
	NHI	1	0	**3**	2
Local Sourcing, Environmental Impact, and Economic Structure	CU	0	0	**4**	0
	NHI	1	1	**2**	2
Clarity of Commitment and Evaluation of Partnership Success	CU	0	1	**3**	0
	NHI	0	0	**4**	2
Transparency	CU	0	0	**4**	0
	NHI	0	**3**	2	1
Partnership, not Program	CU	0	0	0	**4**
	NHI	0	2	**3**	1

*****Bold** numbers represent the mode/s of each indicator. NHI (n=6) CU (n=4)

the mode has been utilized to reflect the responders' views for the current state of the partnership and to suggest the degree to which they believe the partnership was able to meet the indicators of the rubric while adhering to the core principles of FTL. During the ranking process by Spanish-speaking staff of NHI, a possible disconnect between meanings of the core principles may have resulted from language barriers, as the FTL Rubric is currently only available in English. One of the NHI faculty did informally translate the FTL Rubric to other staff members with minimal English reading skills. An official Spanish version of the FTL Rubric could significantly benefit the accuracy of results for analyzing partnerships in the future.

Next, the partners (NHI administrator and director of GHCP) shared the ranking responses and discussed the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each partner. Each partner independently and collaboratively developed future recommendations based on the rankings for each indicator.

FINDINGS

Through the collaborative evaluation process using the FTL Rubric, two sets of rankings were analyzed. The responses from each partner and the mode/s for each indicator are shown in Table 2. The responses for each indicator from both organizations suggest the overall level of the partnership is classified between (2) intermediate and (3) advanced. Based on these results, recommendations for each indicator were compiled based on core principles of FTL, including concepts of shared ownership, communication, and economic footprint.

Core Principles of FTL
Core principles in FTL encourage a common purpose with a long-term vision for a partnership, not just simply a one-time program. Furthermore, protection of rights for the vulnerable, transparency, learning integration, and global civic commitment are salient core principles. Recommendations for

common purposes suggest the university faculty share a more comprehensive long-term vision of the GHCP with the "new" administration and staff of NHI. Both partners will continue to discuss the long-term vision when looking at redesign or updates of the partnership after the initial pilot program in 2019. The indicator *partnership not program* suggests that while the GHCP faculty are aware of the expectation that the program is a long-term, ongoing relationship, they recognize that NHI staff may not be fully aware that faculty of the GHCP desire a long-term partnership. Some of the universities who currently work with NHI do not adhere to a definite long-term plan for partnerships. However, this intention integrates well with NHI, as the organization's model of care is long-term partnerships with communities, which requires long-term commitment from United States partners like the GHCP.

The results for *rights of the most vulnerable* suggest that the partnership is highly focused on maintaining the rights for marginalized populations (i.e., indigenous populations). Recommendations are that both partners will continue to document and assess the needs of the population to ensure care and attention to rights of the indigenous populations within the community. Results for the indicator related to *transparency* suggest a high level of success among the GHCP procedures and students (e.g., study abroad fees, program fees), and NHI will continue to be transparent by making time to discuss openly and share actual budget information with the GHCP. Furthermore, transparency of fees should be shared with community members who represent local indigenous populations.

The results of the *learning integration* indicator demonstrated a strength of the program with functioning at or near the advanced level. The *theory of change* indicator related to students suggests that intercultural skills, empathy, and global civic understanding are strong components of the GHCP.

Shared Ownership

For *host community program leadership*, it is recommended that NHI place greater emphasis on community member leadership by allowing more diverse input when possible, as well as discussing the common program purpose with community members and empowering them to lead education sessions instead of being driven primarily by NHI. For *host community program participation*, both partners will strive to increase opportunities to connect with locals of the same age group. In addition, preliminary discussions for collaborative activities have been initiated with a local university in Guatemala.

The indicator *theory of change related to the community* suggests a need for improvement. In the future the university faculty will share and discuss the model of service and partnership (i.e., Conceptual Model for Partnership and Sustainability) upon which the GHCP is built, and NHI will share this model and seek feedback from community members when seeking collaboration for future program development.

Communication

Overall, *communication* appears strong based on responses. The partnership will be improved by sharing more details with community members about the reasons for the partnership, and NHI will describe more clearly to faculty and students the practices and specific interactions of the local communities and their partnership building activities within communities. To improve written communication for *recruitment and publications*, the GHCP website will be continuously reviewed to ensure responsible and ethical photographs and statements. Student guidelines are in place regarding the ethical use of photographs of patients or staff of NHI. In the future, NHI and students of the GHCP will revise the final video project created by students in 2019 to incorporate the elements of a conceptual model for partnerships. Conversations with NHI administration and the Spanish school throughout the year

could be further improved by input from community members as appropriate.

Other future goals will include ongoing reciprocal communication between the university and NHI, with both partners providing consistent communication throughout the year, rather than in the last few months prior to the trip. In addition, students asked for more information and communication of events and agenda several weeks prior to arrival, when feasible. For *clarity of commitment and evaluation of partnership success*, the indicators suggest an advanced level of functioning, but communications could be improved and the markers that constitute success for each organization could be more clearly defined.

Economic Footprint

The results for *local sourcing, environmental impacts, and economic structure* suggest that this element represents another program strength. The GHCP is designed to utilize local resources, including host families rather than hotels. Small, family-owned hotels are used, and meals are eaten in local restaurants when traveling outside the Antigua area. In addition, Spanish language lessons are provided through an established partnership with a local school in Antigua. Moreover, NHI has a strict community support goal and a mission focused on supporting local businesses. In the future, both organizations will continue to strive to include more community members and their associated businesses when possible.

LIMITATIONS

One clear limitation is the lack of a formally translated FTL Rubric. Anecdotally, other organizations have used the rubric with Spanish-speaking organizations, but no formal Spanish version was available at the time of the evaluation. The partners acknowledge that communication barriers could have influenced the rankings by Spanish-speaking staff members of NHI. One major recommendation

for future partnership evaluation is the need for a validated Spanish version of the FTL Rubric to enhance understanding of indicators and to ensure accurate ranking. The small sample size represents an additional limitation; therefore, the findings may not allow for generalization to other communities and partnerships.

A second potential limitation exists in the FTL Rubric. The rubric fails to include an indicator focusing on the university program leadership. The rubric could be strengthened by adding a *university program leadership* indicator to complement the *host community program leadership* indicator, thus demonstrating the reciprocal evaluation of both programs working together for a common goal. The failure to evaluate the university program leadership may perpetuate the colonialist mindset associated with higher resource universities working in low-resource settings. In a critique of the FTL framework, Larkin (2018) suggests that educational institutions should engage a lens of complicity, which explores the practices that pro-mote inequality or poverty. Institutions should continue to evaluate their own actions that may oppress others in vulnerable communities.

CONCLUSION

This case study provides a guide for other higher education institutions and community partners who desire to appraise their own global partnerships as well as domestic partnerships. Through the collaborative evaluation of a new global partnership, strengths and areas for improvements were determined. Based on the evaluation results, areas of strength include rights protection of the vulnerable, communication, learning integration, local sourcing, and the expectation of a mutual partnership beyond the typical GSL program. The areas for improvement include host community program leadership and participation, transparency, and common purposes. Each of these areas will benefit from strengthening communication between the

GHCP, NHI, and the community members of Guatemala. Building on the ideals of FTL, the higher education partner and the host-community partner will continue to develop a program with essential elements of reciprocity, transparency, and sustainability. Furthermore, the needs and input of the community must play an equally important role in decision-making when designing a global partnership with an institution of higher education. The concept of fair trade requires that lesser developed countries should have fair compensation for the products they produce for developed countries. This concept is also applicable in domestic partnerships with local communities with limited resources. Higher education should expect no less from low-resource countries and communities that share their valuable resources, time, and learning experiences with GSL students from the United States or other higher-income countries. Fair trade is not limited to economic resources and must include educational resources as we strive for a more equitable world with social justice for all communities.

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