Assessing Agricultural Study Abroad Impacts on Student's Global Competence

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Introduction

U.S. students travel abroad to gain cultural experience and grow in global citizenship (Hoeflinger, 2012). Study abroad (SA) experiences are a high-impact pedagogical tool and have been proven to benefit the participants (Ruth et al., 2019). Students are choosing less traditional, short-term SA options over more extended programs (Institute of International Education, 2019). This quantitative study aims to measure Global Competency (GC) among agricultural students before and after an international experience. The independent variable data will be presented from two universities that traveled abroad in the summer of 2023, while the dependent variable will be derived from the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment (GCAA®). The central research question, "Does a student's GC level increase after an agricultural-focused SA experience?" guided the study.

Conceptual Framework

The GCAA® Model comprises eight dimensions divided into internal and external dimensions (Global Competence, 2023). The internal dimension includes the domains of self-awareness (SA), attentiveness to diversity (AD), risk-taking (RT), and open-mindedness (OM) (Global Competence, 2023). The external dimension is made up of the domains of global awareness (GA), historical perspective (HP), intercultural capability (IC), and collaboration across cultures (CAC) (Global Competence, 2023). The GCAA® assessment is used across education, nonprofits, business, and government sectors.

Methodology

A pre-and post-assessment strategy was implemented to collect data through the GCAA®. The GCAA® consisted of a pre-designed validated measurement tool produced by Global Competence Associates (GCAA® Design, 2023, p. 1). The assessment includes multiple-choice and Likert-scale-type questions. The population included 31 college students ($N = 31$), including 13 students from Texas Tech University who traveled to Greece ($N = 13$) and 18 students from Wilmington College who traveled to Kenya ($N = 18$) in the summer of 2023.

Results & Findings

Thirty-one students ($N = 31$) were in short-term study abroad programs. Because participation in this research was optional, researchers had 22 students ($N = 22$) participate in the pre-assessment. Their group mean for internal readiness (IR) was 70.9 ($M = 70.9$) with a standard deviation of 6.1 ($SD = 6.1$). The group mean for external readiness (ER) was 62.9 ($M = 62.9$), with a standard deviation of 16.9 ($SD = 16.9$). Participation in the post-assessment decreased, with only 18 students completing it ($N = 18$). The post-assessment data showed a group mean of 71.5 ($M = 71.5$) with a standard deviation of 7.9 ($SD = 7.9$) for IR and a group mean of 61.1 ($M = 61.1$) with a standard deviation of 15.1 ($SD = 15.1$) for ER. Following the pre- and post-assessment, there was an increase in group means for RT, AD, and CAC, while

there was a decrease in group means for SA, OM, HP, GA, and IC, as displayed in the tables above. Tables 1 and 2 represent the group means and standard deviations (SD) for the pre- and post-assessments completed by students.

Table 1

Overview of Global Competence Score Pre-Assessment (N = 22)

	IR	SA	RT	OM	AD	ER	HP	GA	IC	CAC
Mean	70.9	76.0	70.8	74.7	64.0	63.9	50.8	54.9	72.3	70.6
SD	6.1	6.9	8.7	9.4	9.3	16.9	22.4	20.4	15.8	23.9

Table 2

Overview of Global Competence Score Post-Assessment (N = 18)

	IR	SA	RT	OM	AD	ER	HP	GA	IC	CAC
Mean	71.5	73.6	71.5	73.1	68.5	61.1	47.5	52.5	69.7	73.3
SD	7.9	12.7	11.3	9.1	7.9	15.1	32.1	12.6	18.9	18.3

Conclusions

It can be concluded that while there was a slight increase in IR and ER overall, there was not an increase in the majority of the eight domains that make up the GCAA® model. However, this data reflects what is expected by the GCAA® because of the short time that students spent abroad and the experience they have had or have not had in their individual lives thus far, which impacts their scores in the eight domains of the GCAA®. The pre-assessment totals ($N = 22$) and post-assessment totals ($N = 18$) indicate to the team that lower participation rates increase SD in the study.

Implications & Recommendations

The implications of this study show that SA programs have the ability to impact a student's GC. While the results of this study did not show significant growth in a student's GC, it gives scholars and practitioners an outlook on the possibility of the impact that SA programs have on an individual's life. It provides an outlook for future program development ideas, research, and innovation. Researchers recommend that SA programs continue to use the GCAA® to measure students' global competence before and after an SA experience. Programs should align with the eight dimensions of the GCAA® model. Based on the results, researchers recommend using this assessment primarily for programs with extended stays in visiting countries, such as SA programs extending beyond two weeks. Additionally, future research should continue to investigate GC through short-term agricultural-focused SA programs over multiple years to determine how these programs impact a student's GC.

References

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