

Harnessing Cultural Intelligence Research to Imagine the Future of Education Abroad

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Abstract

Those of who have traveled extensively across borders have experienced the development and shifting in our worldviews and perspectives that arises from exposure and engagement across social, cultural, political, religious, and value boundaries. However, short-term education abroad programs have been criticized for the superficial nature of engagement resulting in “glorified” tourism rather than cultural immersion, and a lack of learning outcomes, especially in intercultural learning, critical reflection, and expansion of intercultural capabilities. What is often missing is a foundation in good intercultural competence science and practice. Cultural intelligence is the capability to function and relate effectively in culturally diverse situations (Earley & Ang, 2003). In the vast literature on intercultural theories, cultural intelligence (CQ) stands out because of the rigorously researched and theory-based approach to understanding cultural interactions and has shifted our intercultural discourse from merely describing difference towards developing the capabilities to successfully negotiate such differences (Leung, Ang, & Tan, 2014). This oral presentation captures the success of four education abroad experiences for secondary and university students to Singapore and Malaysia using CQ as a theoretical framework. Participants will learn examples of how every experience, activity, and assignment in this experience has a goal of developing one or several of the CQ factors: drive; knowledge; strategy; and action. Photos and participant voices will illustrate how students practice their CQ capabilities while discovering the science and practice of CQ, demonstrating the power of harnessing CQ research to imagine a future of maximizing education abroad.

Keywords: cultural intelligence; intercultural competence; learning abroad; study abroad;