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Study Abroad: Academic Enrichment Without Outsourcing

Abstract:

International travel for academic study has come to characterize higher education over the last century. It takes a variety of forms. But the dominant current of international scholars has been from the academic periphery to the center. Major U.S. universities facilitate this flow through recruitment and scholarships. Internationalizing higher education maximizes the pool of applicants and, at the graduate level, reflects the interest of universities in obtaining the most qualified research assistants at a time when academic programs are closely associated with private business and the commercial applications of technology. The contemporary rationale has shifted from the liberal arts and humanities to accommodating economic globalization. Rather than aiming at familiarity with distinctly foreign societies, it focuses on transnational commonalities in business, technology, and regulation. English is likely to be the language of instruction, even outside the Anglo-sphere. Faculty interpreting international education in the older humanistic tradition of critical and holistic inquiry into cultural diversity face a challenge. One response has been the development of faculty-led study abroad experiences that focus on the authentically foreign: ways of life on the margin of international commercial integration and cultural homogenization. This paper, after

mapping some of the historical currents and structures of international education, describes one such study abroad initiative, SUNY Plattsburgh's Southern Mexico Program.

Introduction

International travel for academics has come to characterize higher education over the last century. It takes a variety of forms. Just before and immediately after 1900, post-graduate study for Americans focused on German and French universities and gave U.S. scholars a ladder for career advancement in academia and industry not generally available at home. The direction of doctoral travel has now reversed and American graduate schools host increasing numbers of foreign scholars. Between the conclusion of hostilities and the formal peace treaty ending World War One, France developed cultural programs at the collegiate level to occupy otherwise idle U.S. service personnel. This initiative was repeated after World War Two when American soldiers used the educational benefits of the G.I. Bill to support their study in France and Western Europe. In the inter-war period, colleges in the United States organized faculty-accompanied foreign study in Europe for their undergraduates. The goal was to provide them with credentials in business, foreign policy, and the European languages. Programs were long-term and based on the liberal arts. Women's colleges quickly assumed the lead in what became known as the "junior year abroad". Later, with the creation of the European Union, its member states vigorously promoted cross-border study to consolidate a continental identity and an enhanced labor pool. China's opening

to the West in the 1970s was followed by state-sponsored study abroad as a scientific bootstrap policy aimed at technology transfer.

The flow of international scholars has been from the academic periphery to the center. The academic core now coincides with the member states of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, which includes the United States. Major U.S. universities facilitate this flow through recruitment and scholarships.

Internationalizing higher education maximizes the pool of applicants and, at the graduate level, reflects the interest of universities in obtaining the most qualified research assistants at a time when academic programs are closely associated with private business and the commercial applications of technology. While study abroad was once justified as promoting world peace and international understanding, the rationale has shifted. The contemporary justification is much more commercial and reflects the increased economic integration of the world and a change in the understanding of globalization. Rather than aiming at familiarity with distinctly foreign societies, it now focuses on transnational commonalities in business, technology, and regulation. English is more likely to be the language of instruction, even outside the Anglo-sphere. Where once a global vision meant familiarization with distinctly foreign cultures accessed through linguistic immersion, it now means facility in working with the institutional architecture of internationalism.

Faculty interpreting higher education in the older humanistic tradition of critical and holistic inquiry into cultural diversity face a challenge. One response has been the development of faculty-led study abroad experiences that focus on the authentically

foreign: ways of life on the margin of international commercial integration and cultural homogenization. This paper, after mapping some of the currents and structures of international education, includes a brief description of one such study abroad program.

International Study: A Rising Tide

The flow of students across national boundaries provides a measure of the extent and direction of globalization in higher education. In 2009, approximately 3.7 million students crossed national frontiers to undertake tertiary study, up from 1.1 million in 1980 and 2.1 million in 2000. Since 2000, the number of foreign students in the world's universities is up 77% (OECD 2011: 319). China sends the most students, 18.5% of the total studying in countries that comprise the most developed economies, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while the US sends just 1.8% (OECD 2010: 1). There were nearly 20 million students enrolled in higher education in the U.S. in 2009/10 and of these 270,604 studied abroad, 1.4%. As a proportion of U.S. students awarded bachelor degrees that year, the percent involved in foreign study was much higher, 14% (IIE 2011e). As a region, Asia exports 52% of the international students and the dominant pattern within the world academic system is movement from the periphery toward the center or the OECD countries (OECD 2011: 318-320). Approximately 20% of all international students from the non-OECD area come from China, and about 22% of these students study in the United States (OECD 2011: 327). There are 2.6 foreign students studying in the 21 European Union countries for each European studying abroad (OECD 2011: 318). Data on academic level from

Open Doors indicates that a surprising 45.8% of international students in the United States were in graduate programs in the 2009-11 period. (IIE 2011c).

The impact on the educational sector of receiving countries varies but can be substantial. International students account for more than 10% of college enrollments in Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. In ten OECD countries, including the United States, at least 20% of students in post-baccalaureate programs are foreigners (OECD 2011: 319) while approximately 40% of all doctorates in engineering and natural science awarded in the U.S. were earned by foreign students (Zupanc and Zupanc 2009: 51) . Nation-state policy plays a role in channeling the flow of these students. In the case of China, the state initiated a program in 1978 to select and send exceptional students abroad for study in the hope that they would return with the technological expertise necessary to accelerate China's industrial development and reduce its dependence on foreign sources (Pan 2011). Such a strategy sought to turn a short-term "brain drain" into a long-term "brain gain" and depended on the willingness of international students to return home. Such an expectation runs counter to the interests of receiving countries which may wish to retain these well-qualified workers. University-to-university foreign study places students in an institutional culture that enhances individuation and career entrepreneurship rather than national identities. In any case, the result is mixed. Figures compiled by Education at a Glance indicate that at least 30% of international students studying in Canada, France, the Czech Republic and Australia changed their visa status to remain in those countries as non-students (OECD 2011: 329). Australia, Canada, and New Zealand encourage foreign students to stay by

awarding them additional points toward permanent residence status while Finland and Norway credit the years of residence as students toward eligibility for naturalization; France does the same when study has been in advanced degree programs (OECD 2011: 328). China subsequently opened the gate for departing students on an individual and self-funding basis (Pan 2011) suggesting that the decision to repatriate will be less pressured. At the same time, opportunities have greatly expanded for such students in China as transnational corporations have multiplied their production facilities and transferred relevant technology.

The European Union has a well-developed system of internal tertiary student mobility that promotes a European-wide identity consistent with the goal of EU political and economic integration. This is ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students). Established in 1987, it currently involves over 2000 institutions of higher learning. It allows students to pay no more than the tuition assessed by their home institutions and to receive grants to cover extra living expenses involved in a foreign residence (Zupanc and Zupanc 2009: 53). The economic goal is clearly to add human capital to a pan-European labor force. Several of the Scandinavian countries, Finland in particular, treat tertiary education as a public service within the welfare state perspective, charging domestic and foreign students no tuition at all. While this advantages Scandinavian students studying in Italy or France, it has led to a negative balance in student exchange and an economic burden on Finnish university budgets. Off-setting this are economic gains for the non-education economy--housing, food, entertainment, transportation--associated with each foreign student. While foreign

figures are not available, Open Doors estimates that each foreign student in New York state puts \$2,300 a year into the general economy (IIE 2010). But because such gains are not captured by the host education system, in Europe at least, a trend has developed toward imposing tuition costs where they were previously missing and adding a premium on foreigner students.

Some states have approached the international flow of students as an explicit opportunity to make a favorable adjustment in their balance of trade. This is the case in Australia where 24 foreign students are enrolled at the university level for each individual Australian studying abroad. The ratio is about 11:1 in the United States and the UK (OECD 2011: 327) Very favorable balances in Australia and New Zealand exist despite higher tuition assessed on students from outside their combined educational sphere. It would appear that proximity to the Asian mainland, social peace, an attractive climate, and instruction in English are the main attractions to study in the antipodes. The U.S., while having high levels of tuition and fees, imposes no additional costs on foreign students, either in private universities or in public institutions where they are treated as out-of-state students for tuition purposes. The dependence of U.S. doctoral programs in the sciences on foreign students is, as noted above, substantial. Of all foreign students in the U.S. 23% obtain their primary funding from the host university, a figure that is likely to be weighed in favor of post-graduate students. (IIE 2011e).

Figures from Open Doors 2011 indicate that there are currently almost 79,000 foreign students studying in New York state universities, up 3.6% from the previous year. Foreign enrollments are led by New York University, Columbia, SUNY at Buffalo,

Cornell, and SUNY Stony Brook, in that order. Twenty percent come from China, and about 15% each from India and South Korea. (IIE 2011f). In all, New York institutions enrolled 23,000 students in foreign universities in the 2009-10 year, less than one student for each three taken in. Of these in-coming students from abroad, about 60% of the total in the U.S. are enrolled in university programs studying business, engineering, the physical and life sciences, or math and computer science. Another 4.5% are studying English. Only 2.2% are enrolled in the humanities (IIE 2011d). They are clearly not coming for immersion in American culture, academically speaking, so much as gaining credentials in a global economy that is organized around capitalist economics, technology, and English.

U.S. students are also averse to immersion in the foreign aspects of overseas locations. More than 20% of U.S. students studying abroad do so in English-speaking countries; the UK leads as the destination of 12.1% of Americans in between 2008 and 2010 (IIE 2011g). Scandinavia has developed entirely English-based instruction for foreign students. And few Americans enroll in foreign language fields of study while abroad. In fact, just 5.8% did, a decline of 1.2 % from the previous year. The most popular academic areas for U.S. students in foreign universities in 2009-10 was social science at 22.3% and business/management at 20.8%. But 20% of students from the United States studying abroad majored in either Humanities or the Arts, a gain of 18.2% over the previous year. If American students are averse to foreign language study while away from home, they are relatively more interested in studying the humanities than international students coming into the U.S. Very few U.S. students study agriculture

abroad, only 1.3%, although that field showed the sharpest gain, 22.8%, over the previous year. (IIE 2011e).

Evolving Patterns of International Study and Higher Education

In the decades immediately following World War II, the United States played the role of center in the international system of academic travel and the generation of intellectual capital commercialized by industry. That system was less than globally inclusive. The Soviet bloc and China were autarkic economies and effectively closed off for academic purposes from much of the world. Africa and Asia remained oriented toward their present or immediately-past colonial centers, Latin America was enjoying success with a policy of import substitution plus industrialization, ISI, that used state investments to expand all sectors of the economy, including the tertiary education sector. The huge size of tuition-free National Autonomous University in Mexico City is a striking example. And countries in the non-capitalist orbit--Cuba and North Korea--were largely boycotted by the U.S. for academic as well as trade purposes. But Europe and Japan were immediately within the U.S. academic sphere in a pattern promoted by the Fulbright Program funding scholarly exchange. More generally, the fact that in the immediate post-war decades industrial, business, and communications innovations were concentrated in the United States made it the goal of choice for foreign scholars. A ratio strongly in favor of incoming over outgoing students developed, especially at graduate-level institutions. This has remained the case, with U.S. graduate education in the sciences heavily dependent on an international body of student researchers. Asia's

late adoption of the dominant moderist paradigm equating development with industrial capacity and innovation accounts for its headlong plunge into the river of international scholarship. Finally, as industrial production has shifted toward intellectual capital rather than manual labor as key inputs, symbolized by an increasing reliance on computer-controlled robotics, and global agriculture has adopted a capital and machine-intensive format, labor market premiums have gone to those credentialed in science, technology, and business. A greater percentage of the world's populations have sought higher education within a global market of providers. As of 2007, the World Trade Organization members were negotiating a General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) that included tertiary education. As specific agreements are arrived at, they will prohibit national preference, for example in student selection, faculty hiring, and subcontracting of university services (Stromquist 2007: 83). The pressure from the WTO as well as career aspirations among students will continue to reduce barriers to international university study and increase its volume.

The relationship between the university and the economy has shifted, especially in the United States, following the Bayh Dole Act of 1980 (Patent and Trademark Act Amendments of 1980). This law allowed universities to patent innovations created using public funds and encouraged their collaboration with commercial concerns to promote their use. The act has been embraced by university administrators and the private sector, including the Association of American Universities and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (AUTM webpage). This act merged the interests of the corporate sector and universities in orienting post-graduate education toward reliance

on outside funding of research with commercial potential. It has been championed by the neoliberal economic establishment, including *The Economist* (2002). Critics, however, contend that it has compromised the intellectual autonomy of the university, introduced sharp inequities into faculty ranks, and bent research toward immediate-to-middle term profit at the expense of intellectual reflection in the humanities (Aronowitz 2001). What is clear is that this act shifted the mission of the university toward the generation of knowledge defined by Baconian empiricism and free market economics.

The role of international study in higher education wasn't always so tightly bracketed by economic considerations. At the end of the 19th century, out-going students from the United States focused on Germany and graduate-level instruction in the sciences. American universities were less developed at the graduate level and European doctoral degrees conferred clear career advantages for American academics and scientists. Foreign academic study for a doctoral degree in the years between 1890 and 1914 took a year or several years and necessitated foreign language proficiency as well as scholarly ability. Returning academics enriched American higher education (Walton 2010).

The mass participation of Americans in foreign study at the undergraduate level began at the end of World War I. Thousands of American soldiers were concentrated in France in the six months between the cease fire and the signing of a formal peace treaty in late 1918. The French government and that of the United States cooperated in offering them courses at French universities, principally the Sorbonne. Most took a program in French culture, the *Cours de Civilisation*, taught in English. While having

potential credit value at American colleges, it was designed principally to strengthen U.S.-French diplomatic ties through “soft diplomacy”. It was also intended to keep idle American soldiers out of trouble (Gore 2005: 37-38).

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the University of Delaware sought to build on this French experience and initiated a program to send undergraduates, principally in business and diplomatic concentrations, for a year’s study in France. It was underwritten financially by the Du Pont family, based on its value as a business and political background (Gore 2005: 83-87). During the same period, the European financier and philanthropist, Albert Kahn, initiated a program of fellowships for European and later Asian and American students to study abroad, the Around-the-World Scholarships (Gore 2005: 39-45). The understanding was that such travel would facilitate world peace through international understanding. The Delaware program became a model taken up by other institutions, in particular the women’s colleges Smith and Sweet Briar (Gore 2005: 58-87). Their year-long programs brought female undergraduates to Europe and especially France. The academic focus was on the humanities, emphasizing the education of foreign language teachers. While students were somewhat sheltered in congregate and program-specific residences, they were expected to experience cultural and linguistic immersion. Study abroad offered them an important qualification for jobs as public school and college teachers. Thus the “junior year abroad” was born (Gore 2005: 38-71). It represented a willingness among students to undertake long-term study abroad so as to understand what were considered distinctly different societies and cultural traditions. The goals, though based on the liberal arts, included an expected

career payoff for participants. Due to the gendered nature of American economic opportunity and of social responsibilities--men expected to be responsible for business, industry, and politics and women for the home, public schools, and the arts--long-term study abroad became associated with women and the humanities in the public mind: cultural tourism or “the grand tour” (Gore 2005: 24-41).

The Structure of Globalization and the International Flow of Academic Labor

The institutional skeleton of the contemporary configuration of the globe was set in place by the Bretton Woods institutions created in 1944. These addressed politics, trade, finance, and ultimately scholarly activity. The United Nations was to focus on diplomatic alternatives to armed conflict. The more regional organization, NATO, addressed Western security interests. But the central paradigm for understanding the relations among nations was liberal economics. The growth of formal economies was expected to alleviate material poverty and convince the unaligned and formerly colonized countries to adopt liberal economic policies rather than command economies and non-Western political alliances. The foundation of economic expansion was understood to be technological innovation for which foreign capital was required. Capitalist entrepreneurs were expected to be coordinators of global economic activity, maximizing its efficiency by mobilizing labor, capital, and natural resources--the factors of production--on a global basis. State-centered policies of tariff protection, subsidies, and regulation were simply impediments to this process (Rostow 1960; Wolf 2004).

Three institutions addressed the economics of the post-war global order. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), later the World Trade Organization (WTO), was a negotiating table at which agreements to eliminate barriers to international flows of finance capital and goods were to be incrementally achieved and the divergent approaches to the protection of real and intellectual property were to be “harmonized”, with disputes adjudicated behind the scenes at a global forum. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now The World Bank (Bank), was designed to use member state contributions as loans to build the physical infrastructure required for economic development in areas where the market didn’t function. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was to use funds as ballast to the global system, sluicing loans from contributing states to re-balance national trade deficits in the short run until market forces inevitably forced a correction. These organizations have grown in power and reach since their founding and the collapse of political economies organized around non-neoliberal models (the Soviet Union) and ISI protectionism (Latin America, India). Even the welfare-state model of capitalism has been eclipsed, its achievements in Europe and the U.S. under assault or eroded.

The growth of the Bretton Woods institutions has been accompanied by mission creep. The Bank turned from the reconstruction of Europe, a task accomplished by the Marshall Plan, to funding large-scale infrastructure projects in the Third World with little thought to local definitions of “development” (Sachs 1992). The IMF became the gate keeper for all Bank and private international development loans, imposing structural adjustment “conditionality”. This follows the neoliberal template: forced sale of state

enterprises, reduction of welfare programs and state subsidies to business and agriculture, and reduction of effective wages and domestic demand through currency revaluation. The priority was the growth of the export sector so that its own and private bank loans would be repaid (Stiglitz 2002). As with loan inter-conditionality, the Bretton Woods institutions operate in harmony with one another as well as with most UN agencies focused on development and trade, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization. In some cases the results, as with the steep rise in pharmaceutical prices following GATT/WTO agreements to harmonize intellectual property regimes, was catastrophic for African AIDS sufferers (Stiglitz 2002:8).

This approach to globalization has been promoted by the United States, which exercises an effective veto power in the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank, and NATO. Its tariff-reduction agenda, however selective, has dominated the policies of the WTO. And the U.S. hosts the headquarters of the first three of them. The U.S. dollar, even after its delinking from a fixed value in gold by the Nixon administration in 1971, remains the de facto international currency giving the U.S. government enormous monetary advantages and the U.S. financial sector stability (Freiden 2006: 339-346). The IMF, Bank, and WTO articulate and operationalize this global vision in conformity with what is known as the “Washington Consensus” on the value of neoliberalism. While hegemonic, it doesn’t follow that that paradigm has been successful, even in its own terms. The number of the world’s poor increased by 100 million in the 1990s, even as the world economy grew by 2.5% annually. Monetary instability associated with speculative “bubbles” caused by the flow of “hot money” has accelerated (Stiglitz 2002:

5-7). Nor have global institutions as presently structured successfully addressed what might be the most important contradiction in the modernist model. Development continues to be measured by economic growth in a finite planet where resources are either non-renewable or, if living, being driven toward exhaustion. Nature also remains a finite “sink” for pollution. The capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gasses without climate-disrupting consequences has been exceeded with no end in sight. Nor has the Marxian labor contradiction been solved. That is, capitalism seeks technology that enhances productivity at the expense of labor, resulting in unemployment that appears more structural than cyclical. Even the OECD seems unable to achieve full employment, even as robotics spread from manufacturing to services to warfare (Simpson 2011). Nonetheless, the neoliberal paradigm stands astride the globe without serious intellectual competition.

Globalization and Global Culture

Modernism as presently understood is also a cultural phenomenon. It valorizes capital accumulation as a universal standard in all social spheres and locations. Consumer individuation characterizes an increasingly commercial culture where marketing and technology drive a dynamic of creative destruction (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994). While cheap travel and instant communications bring foreign cultures closer at hand, they are simultaneously exposed to homogenizing forces of transnational production and signification. The enhanced choice that global connectivity gives to the consumer (Cowen 2002) is more than offset by the destruction of the

diverse social foundations that cultural diversity requires: distinct local economies and place-based ways of life.

In this more homogenized and centrally-determined pattern of human existence, competitive educational systems must adapt. As with the Bayh-Dole Act in the United States, they compromise their institutional autonomy for market rewards. It is not surprising that the global economic treadmill gives educational priority to business courses, the physical sciences, and technology. Both students and institutions have adjusted to this altered understanding of schooling least they fall to the side of the road.

The transnational corporations that grew robust on the scaffolding of the Bretton Woods institutions compete in an arena that favors scale and comparative advantage. Their “global supply chains” treat labor as bereft of parochial characteristics: identities based on place, local culture, and gender. As a factor of production, labor’s value is determined by its capacity to facilitate global enterprises and standardized markets. Alternative architecture around which to build a meaningful life must cope not only with the dominance of global institutions but the smothering effect of its ideology. As a set of ideas identified with inevitability and a universal future modernization presumes the displacement of the old by the new. Under this assumption, efficient educational systems and savvy students will deemphasize the study of what makes a particular society distinct--its language, expressive arts, history, literature, philosophy, religion, and cuisine. Compared with the universal language of technology, neoliberal economics, and English, the specifics of local cultures are a detritus, the irrational

legacy of pints and pounds in an era of metric measures. The internationalized campus accelerates this realization in the area of cultural reproduction.

Social solidarities outside the institutional architecture of the capitalist world system persist, none-the-less. They include geographically inclusive local community, the regulatory and social support systems of particular states, and cooperative business enterprises. They are tolerated to varying degrees because they dampen the discontent of those on the margins. Thus they aid in maintaining social peace at only an opportunity cost to transnational corporations. But the global system also includes formal mechanisms for its defense and expansion. These now include systems of ubiquitous surveillance in public places and interdiction in even remote locations. These are knowledge and technology-intense systems with a cultural overlay in their own right that includes a valorizing narrative of security. And they comprise an additional ladder of opportunity for students and educational establishments to exploit.

If yesterday's tools, social organizations, farming systems and modes of manufacturing have no intrinsic value in the neoliberal calculus, they may have value indirectly. Historic districts, archeological sites, "lost tribes", and re-worked industrial buildings can ring the real estate and tourism cash register. When accompanied by indigenous craft production and exotically clothed, they support the "hospitality industry" and the recolonization of previously discarded regions. Suitably packaged--for example, the 'Mayan Riviera', they provide a veneer of multiculturalism to study abroad students seeking a quick and shallow dip into diverse societies. The culture of globalization has space for homage to the past, real or fabricated, and ideally stripped of the capacity for

autonomous challenges to the global order. The historical and the exotic, presented as continuity over extended time-lines, constitute psychological ballast in a world otherwise fraught with ceaseless change and insecurity.

What does this mean for global education? While increasingly willing to cross national frontiers in pursuit of labor force credentials, instrumentally rational academics will want to locate their studies in the strongest currents of the economy. They will migrate toward the disciplines central to global culture: business, finance, science, and technology. Because English and technologically-embedded communication are the international language, such students and study abroad programs will emphasize global commonalities. It will not be cost-effective for practical-minded students to venture very far from the global mainstream. And when they do, short-term exposure will be more efficient than immersion in a peripheral culture, except for those who specialize in merchandizing it.

Statistics on study abroad bear out this analysis. The global flow of students is toward the English-speaking world. At the graduate level in particular it is toward the sciences, technology, and business. For undergraduates, it is also increasingly short-term. In 2009-10, 56% of U.S. students going abroad for academic study did so in short-term programs held in the summer or lasting 8 weeks or less. Of those leaving the country, only 3.9% stayed an entire year or more (IIE 2011e) and only 35.8% stayed abroad a full semester in 2009/10. (IIE2011a). If study abroad is increasingly a matter of wading in the shallow end of the cultural pool it is because globalization has sought to drain that water of consequential difference.

As academic consumers weighing study abroad options, students have been effectively socialized. Graduate students concentrate in the most prestigious foreign universities where the best research infrastructure can be found and the best credentials obtained. Those in doctoral study in the U.S. in 2010/11 sought out relatively few universities, the top choice being the University of California which hosts almost three times the number enrolled in the 40th choice, Syracuse University. Within the State University of New York system, only Stony Brook makes the top forty, at number 36 (IIE 2011b). This concentration facilitates career networking as well as intellectual capital formation. It is interesting that where local conditions--the town around the gown--conflict with the expectations of international students, exemplary facilities may not suffice as an attraction. In these circumstances, a more globally-central academic culture and faculty may have to be imported and protected. This bubble strategy--separating the university from the impacts of its foreign location--was used by New York University in the construction of its Abu Dhabi campus. Already the third choice for international doctoral students studying in the U.S., NYU entered the Middle Eastern market in 2007 but avoided true cultural immersion. The parent campus exports most of the faculty and the physical facilities are located on an island 500 meters off the Arabian coast. The university plans to share this island enclave with the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. (NYUAd web page.)

A Critical Approach to Study Abroad

Given the above considerations, how should an undergraduate study abroad program based in the United States be organized to maximize the potential of its location? The need for broad foreign exposure certainly persists, even as technical and business-based programs abroad concentrate on preparing students for the global economy. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, effective study abroad requires a liberal arts foundation that not only “addresses international interconnection and interdependence” but also “inequality, injustice, and American power--at home and abroad” (Hovland 2009). The AAC&U builds its case on the basis of focus groups of business persons. Employers in these groups reported that their employees who were recent American graduates were poorly prepared in the global knowledge needed for advancement. Study abroad that does not include language, the arts, and “engagement with the big questions, both contemporary and enduring”, does not meet the expectations of AAC&U. But given the shift away from foreign language study and toward short-term exposure, it would appear that championing of the liberal arts in study abroad is honored more as rhetoric than reality.

Critical programs providing international education require students to consider the contemporary configuration of globalization as a problematic, not the inevitable course of history. Such programs should include institutions and phenomena that lie outside the global hegemon. Given the progress of global integration, exceptions are not likely to be simply “survivals” maintained by inertia and “the cake of custom”. Rather, they represent the conscious resistance of groups and individuals who have seen the local consequences of inclusive markets and international institutions. Raising

awareness of alternate agendas through study abroad is more than delineating the shortcomings of globalization, however. It includes familiarizing students with quite different paradigms for individual and collective development. A partial list would include state programs for the provision of social services outside of markets; cooperative systems of manufacturing, farming, and retailing; the organization and management of real property and the environment on a community basis; governance without party structures or ballot box ritual; the value of locally-sourced street markets over chain supermarkets; apprentice systems of education; plant-based approaches to the healing arts; and in situ conservation and development of crops by small farmers. A critical SA program might highlight philosophical insights embedded in non-English literature, poetry, dance, and drama. The list is long. And once the lens of orthodox globalization is shed, it is more visible.

International education that includes a critical perspective requires flexibility and strong faculty support. It cannot be packaged as a standard product and outsourced to a foreign university. While it requires host-country partners, these need not be universities providing a complete package. Non-governmental organizations promoting human rights advocacy groups, appropriate technologies, cooperative and fair trade economics are particularly valuable collaborators as are local communities. Where government departs from the neoliberal format, it too can provide important resources for international education.

Learning shouldn't be a one-way process, especially abroad. Placement in organizations that allow AS students to make a contribution to the host society is not only a matter of equity but an important mode of leaning.

Finally, effective study abroad programs should provide the opportunity for students to devise and answer their own scholarly questions. This can involve major independent research or smaller projects, each mentored by faculty-in-residence and assisted by local experts. Data-gathering should include the collection of primary information through participant observation, interviews, and other ethnographic tools as well as the analysis of statistical data and prior scholarship. This goal is less likely to be achieved if the entire study abroad experience involves foreign university courses. All of the above considerations support study abroad of some significant duration.

The Southern Mexico Program at SUNY Plattsburgh

Two faculty members including the author, one in History and one in Sociology, initiated Plattsburgh's Southern Mexico Program in 2001. Until its termination in December 2012, it brought students from a variety of disciplines and universities to the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas for a semester-long investigation of social life and culture in an era of globalization. The local partner institution, Centro de Encuentros y Diálogos Interculturales (CEDI), has two areas of activity. It works with local residents through its Universidad de la Tierra (Unitierra), on projects such as the installation of composting toilets, solar ovens, urban gardens, and local radio and video production. It also works with a number of American universities to provided classroom space, a

library and internet support, homestay arrangements with local families, travel logistics, and native Spanish instructors providing immersion language instruction in Spanish. The locally-embedded aspect of CEDI allows it to enrich the experience of American students by providing access to local experts and activists who facilitate student research, organize informal language interchanges with local students, and provide class lecturers on a variety of specialized topics.

As Plattsburgh faculty, we crafted our semester program in partnership with the CEDI staff. The semester began with an orientation weekend for building group cohesion and familiarization students with the locale and program. This retreat, held at an organic demonstration farm within walking distance of significant Zapotec ruins, allowed students to experience both the old and new in indigenous culture. Students then began eight weeks of immersion, Spanish building on their prior backgrounds. The course of instruction in Spanish was taught by native speakers and designed in consultation with Plattsburgh language faculty. Its immersion aspect was facilitated by homestay residence with Mexican families, weekly trips to rural communities and organizations, and the *intercambio* dialogue with Mexican university students. By week three, the lectures and guest speakers in the concurrent courses transitioned to Spanish. Concurrently with language, students took Community and Culture, an omnibus course in Mexico history and social conditions taught by Plattsburgh faculty and CEDI staff. It focused on the rural and indigenous south of the country and the impacts of NAFTA and other globalizing dynamics on community organization, the environment, migration, culture, and the economy. Students preparing for independent

research projects took a course on ethnographic techniques as well, provided by Plattsburgh faculty and CEDI staff.

In day-long, multiple-day, and week-long trips, we visited NGO projects addressing the hearing-impaired and developmentally-challenged children from the city as well as maternity hospitals, schools, women's textile cooperatives, and soil restoration projects. These windows on local ways to envision health and development were particularly useful for nursing and education students as well as those contemplating social service work. Travel to indigenous communities in both Oaxaca and Chiapas brought students into contact with women's weaving cooperatives, community-based economic projects that bottled water and raised fish, efforts at soil reclamation, and in the case of Zapatista communities, autonomous community governance, health care, and schooling. These trips became concrete locations for students who went on to carry out independent research projects during the final five weeks of the semester.

We obtained a USDE grant in 2008 that enabled the program to expand its curriculum to more systematically incorporate students in four areas of professional studies at SUNY Plattsburgh: Nursing and Nutrition, Childhood Education, Adolescence Education, and Social Work. Because of the complexity of these programs of study imposed by outside certification agencies, few of these students were able to schedule a semester abroad under ordinary circumstances and still graduate in four years. By working with department faculty we were able to overcome some, but not all, of these scheduling challenges. Preparation for this program evolution involved building a team

of faculty from the four departments involved, providing dedicated instruction to them in Spanish, and bringing them to Oaxaca for a ten-day familiarization experience. Team members also brought speakers to the Plattsburgh campus addressing Latin American topics germane to their respective majors: folk medicine practices and beliefs for nursing students; the schooling experiences of indigenous children from rural areas for education majors, and so forth. Each member of the team enriched a current course in their department with Latin American content and served as the departmental advisor for prospective students wishing to know more about the Southern Mexico Program. Grant funds were made available to build up library holdings supporting each of these programs.

Several concerns informed our move into areas of professional studies. We wanted to promote cross-cultural fluency among teachers, health workers, and social workers in the United States whose client base was being increasingly shaped by immigration from Latin America. A second goal was to make these service students aware of alternative approaches to the organization of community support systems found in Mexico, from rural clinics and specialized urban facilities for the developmentally-challenged to the education and practice of midwives. Mexico's partnership approach among medical, educational, and social welfare programs was particularly revealing as an innovative approach, as was community integration of the developmentally challenged. The context for undocumented migration to the U.S., as well as programs to enhance community vitality for those remaining, were of particular significance to our students in sociology, anthropology, and the professions. In fact, our

third goal in expanding the Southern Mexico program was to provide students preparing for professional service with the larger framework of globalization, including NAFTA, within which to understand the flow of immigration from Central America as well as Mexico into the United States. Providing the interpretive context for the “push” factor in migration is especially important at a time when this issue is on the front burner of policy discussions as well as one that shapes the working experience of US teachers, health workers, and social welfare practitioners.

The grant supported planning for the integration of students in professional programs into Mexican agency and school placements during the final five weeks of the semester. The placement of nursing students was particularly challenging due to issues of clinical supervision and the high number of their required courses. We addressed this with distance learning technology and a short-term visit from a member of the Nursing Department faculty.

As evaluated by the students themselves, the faculty-in-residence, ACTFL measurement of the increase in their Spanish competency, and by an outside evaluator contracted through the USDE in the last two years, the program was successful. The academic work was challenging. It began with reading assignments distributed in the summer before leaving for Mexico and included weekly papers and a final oral presentation that allowed students to process their experiences from multiple academic perspectives. Liberal arts students undertook substantial independent study projects. Faculty mentors took them through steps from project proposals to first and second drafts over a period of five weeks, and completed major papers. Topics included an

historical analysis of Oaxaca's municipal water system, varieties of midwifery, plant medicine in use today, indigenous self-governance using Usos y Consumbres, tourism and the Guelaquetza Festival, women's textile cooperatives in Teotitlan del Valle, and women's participation in the teacher-led strike that shut down the city for much of 2006. Clinical and school placements were particularly meaningful for professional students. Nurses worked with health teams in carrying out inoculation programs and community sanitation surveys. Education students assisted in the daily curriculum and ran classes for English learners. Student participants characteristically called it a "formative experience" shaping their career goals and preparation for teaching, nursing, environmental work, and social work.

The Southern Mexico Program existed as a stand-alone experience for students, leading to 18 SUNY Plattsburgh credits and satisfying a portion of the General Education requirements. For students in professional studies, it was the main part of a new minor in Latin American Studies for the Professions. Two campus courses completed this minor, an existing Introduction to Latin American Studies and a new course developed to serve the minor, Latinos/as in the United States. Along with the course in each of the professional studies programs enhances with additional Latin American Content, the course on US Latino groups and their experience was designed to reinforce and deepen the study abroad semester as a critical intellectual experience.

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