Send Me on My Way: Global Engagements in a Virtual World

Abstract:

Global immersion and experiential learning are valuable elements of university programs, as they provide 'real world' experiences and unique perspectives for student growth. Yet, COVID-19 have placed constraints on how to develop and deliver these types of engagements. In this session, we describe three types of virtual global engagements, including a guest lecture, a mini study abroad, and an internship. The session will include a simulation of an abroad engagement, reflections from participants, and recommendations for developing customizable engagements. At the end of the session, participants will be able to apply a framework for designing distinctive virtual global immersion experiences.

Keywords: Global, virtual, experiential

Introduction

Global immersion and experiential learning are important features of university programs, as they provide valuable experiences and skill -building opportunities for students (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). A critical aspect of global engagements is being "live", or the immersion aspect that comes with visiting new locations, interacting with different people, and learning about new cultures first-hand. The COVID-19 environment, however, has placed constraints on the 'live' aspect of these engagements, creating challenges for the delivery of an immersive experience. In an effort to continue to provide opportunities for global immersion and engagement, we partnered with a social enterprise to co-create a diverse set of virtual global course components and programs.

The distinct virtual global engagements were developed within three different content emphases, including negotiations, microfinance, and social entrepreneurship. Additionally, they each provided different types (e.g., within a course versus stand-alone) and levels (e.g., one-time to long-term) of engagement for students. A variety of formats and assessments were also utilized to meet the varying student learning objectives of the courses. The purpose of this session is to provide an overview of the design and delivery modes for various virtual global engagements and a demonstration, through a simulated virtual experience, to mimic the participant experience. At the end of the workshop, attendees will be able to:

1. Describe a framework for designing a variety of virtual global immersion experiences.

2. Differentiate between options for virtual abroad content, format, and assessments.

3. Identify the challenges in developing and delivering virtual global engagements.

Theoretical Foundation and Implications for Teaching

Global experiential education provides students the opportunity to more fully develop critical competencies (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004), such as critical thinking, decision-making and communication skills (Bruni-Bossio & Willness, 2016). Additionally, these types of programs help foster creativity and empathy (Nissley, 2010; Welsh & Dehler, 2012) and improve cultural intelligence (Ng et al., 2009). Global experiential opportunities also enable students to develop further both their global psychological (e.g., passion for diversity, global self-efficacy) and social (e.g., intercultural empathy, interpersonal impact) capital, essential skills for leading in a global arena (Javidian & Bowen 2007; Walker, 2018).

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for our simulation and overview are focused on a virtual global engagement experience that may be integrated within a course or delivered as a stand-alone program. While the models provided were developed and utilized for undergraduates, they may be easily adapted for use at the graduate level. The primary learning objectives are: Compare and contrast various virtual abroad engagements, including identifying how they might be appropriately applied to different learning contexts.

Overview of the Global Virtual Exercise

The session will begin with a simulation of a virtual global engagement. In collaboration with Human Connections, a social enterprise out of Bucerias, Mexico (humanconnections.org), these materials included both live and asynchronous sessions and utilized a variety of technologies, including WhatsApp and Yellow Dig. The abbreviated study abroad experience will be a compilation of the content, formats and assessments utilized across the various engagement experiences, and will include four components. The first component includes a

video tour of the town, hosted by community leaders, including interviews with local entrepreneurs in their homes and places of business. The second component includes a sample of the guest lecture and subject matter expert on social entrepreneurship, discussing cross-cultural relationships and negotiations. Demonstrations of the techniques and technology used to engage students in home stays and community building comprise the third component. The last component entails participants completing both pre- and post-reflections.

The simulation will be followed by a discussion and debrief from the participants' perspective, including a discussion among the attendees, as well as reflection videos from students who participated in these global engagements.

Session Description

The session will begin with introductions, a discussion of the use of traditional global engagements and adapting to a virtual environment, a simulated virtual global engagement activity, and a debriefing of the participant experience. Following the simulated virtual global activity, we will provide an overview of the different alternatives for virtual global engagement experiences, including the process for selecting content, assessments, and formats. We will conclude the sessions with lessons learned and recommendations for future developments. We propose the following schedule:

I. Introduction (20 minutes)

    a. Facilitator and audience introductions

    b. Importance of global engagement, motivation for development of virtual experience

    c. Simulated Virtual Global Engagement activity

    d. Discussion of participant experience

II.   Discussion of types of Global Virtual Engagements (25 mins)

     a.   Virtual Global Guest Lecturer

     b.   Virtual Study Abroad (mini)

     c.   Virtual Global Internships

III.   Lessons learned and Suggestions for Future Developments (10 mins)

IV.   Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Time Requested

60 minutes

Resources Needed

Internet, Computer

Application to Conference Theme

The virtual global engagements fully capture the "tradition meets technology" theme as technology allowed for innovation in the development and delivery of both traditional and new student learning experiences. We aim to provide a framework for (1) adapting traditional global engagements to a virtual experience, (2) facilitating different levels of student engagement experiences, and (3) leveraging global partners in the co-creation of these experiences.

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