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A Comparative Study of International and American Study Abroad Students' Expectations and Experiences with Host Countries in Selected Institutions of Higher Education

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL AND AMERICAN STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES WITH HOST COUNTRIES IN SELECTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This was a comparative study of international and American study abroad students' experiences and expectations with the host countries. The rationale for this study was to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad and to understand whether their expectations of the host country have an impact on their experiences. An opportunity sample of American study abroad and international students was selected from the United States student population and their expectations and experiences of the host country compared.

The study addressed 6 research questions, using a mixed-method approach. The principal instrument for the investigation was the Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire conducted online. Associated hypotheses with the research questions were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Paired samples t-tests at an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive statistics. The open-ended questions were analyzed according to established qualitative techniques. The survey was completed by 421 respondents comprised of 155 international students, 252 American study abroad students, and 14 unknown labeled as others.

The results of this study identified language fluency, building relationships with the host nationals, learning about a new culture, and personal change as significant expectations of the students. Overall, the students reported being satisfied with the services provided. International students were slightly more satisfied with access to support services than the American study abroad students. American study abroad students had experiences that closer matched their expectations of study abroad than was the case for international students.

INTRODUCTION

According to Open Doors, the annual report on international education published by the Institute of International Education (2009), new international student enrollment increased 15.8% than the previous year for the first time at U.S. institutions in 2008.

Considering the vast number of students attending institutions outside their home countries, it is imperative that the higher educational experience be studied within the context of students' expectations. This is essential because students

evaluate their experiences of education within the context of their expectations and use this evaluation to assess satisfaction of the institution.

For those students enrolled in study abroad programs, the transition from citizen to foreign national presents levels of personal development and maturity as well as stressful demands that were evident in the students' personal experiences. Such an experience, according to Neill (2005) "is to be judged by the effect that experience has on the individual's present, their future and the

extent to which the individual is able to contribute to society" (para. 9).

For international administrators and recruiters, there is no lesson plan to follow when dealing with students studying abroad (Smith, 2005). Therefore, each student's experience ought to be examined within the confines of the specific circumstances and the available resources present in the institution. Smith suggested the lack of a curriculum or guiding plan forces educators to fall back on core values. In most instances, these values were used to reflect and formulate judgments that might best suit learners engaged in a common experience (Smith). American institutions represented an opportunity for international students to learn about a foreign culture while earning a degree (Hoffa, 1998). In the same way study abroad programs offered students the experience of broadening their knowledge of other cultures, living and understanding foreign cultural norms, and appreciation of worldly differences (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993). As a result of their unique experiences, international and American study abroad students present an opportunity for in-depth comparison of their cross-cultural experiences.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although in recent years there has been research done on students' experiences (e.g.: Barger, 2004; Hellsten, 2002; Zeszotarski, 2003), very few studies have focused on comparing the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad students in host countries. Based on Hellsten's research, international students and American study abroad students viewed the study abroad experience as an investment in their personal, professional, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic development. The students expected socialization and cultural integration in the host environment, to bring about faster learning outcomes. In a sense, they were learning from experience and adapting to environmental change.

As Neill (2004) suggested, learning from experiences often results in a direct participation in the events of life, in this case the study abroad experience. Thus, a void exists in the literature on international and American study abroad students experiences in host countries. Because the experi-

ences of these students are not only important for student recruitment and retention but also for student affairs professionals, the international community, and school administrators, it is essential that colleges and universities use student data to better understand, improve, and change campus environment, thereby creating settings more conducive for student development.

The rationale for this study was to acquire a deeper understanding of different experiences of students who study abroad (international and American students) and to understand whether their expectations of the host country have an impact on their experiences. The study further assessed the similarities and differences of international and American study abroad students' experiences. In this sense, students' experiences and expectations are indicators of the institutions' responsiveness to students' needs and acts as a measure of institutional effectiveness, success, and vitality. Measuring students' experiences is important for maintaining and increasing enrollment and making better informed decisions in the areas of student recruitment and retention.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Students attend institutions overseas for various reasons, the least of which is global educational experience (Hoffa, 1998). As part of the globalization initiative among institutions of higher education, research suggested that, American institutions were increasingly encouraging their students to study in other countries so they could obtain a broader perspective of the world (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Similarly, the literature reported professional development as one of the major reasons international students chose to experience study abroad in the United States (Hellsten, 2002). Additionally, according to Goodman and Kaufman (n.d.), students who studied in other countries had the opportunity to experience cultural differences, gain an understanding of how others view their country, and are better able to share their values with the host country.

This study is the first comprehensive study that compares the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad stu-

dents in their host countries. Significant investigation of existing literature was done to identify similar studies and none was found. This study is also significant because it is the first reported view of international and American study abroad students' expectations and experiences in a host country. This study can promote interest in organizing, formulating, and disseminating clear and revised policies to address student learning developmental goals as they relate to the expectations students desire in a study abroad setting and the experiences they encounter. This study can also bridge the gap in research regarding the experiences and expectations of international and American study abroad students in host institutions.

By conducting this study, feedback was obtained from the students on the importance of experience in their personal and professional growth. From the study's findings, higher education administrators may get a better understanding of international students' expectation of American higher education institutions and use this information to facilitate a more rewarding experience for study abroad students. In addition, feedback from study abroad students will help administrators better prepare students for prolonged stay in a foreign country. Although expectations may differ considerably among individuals, there are standard expectations of what an institution should provide and what the student should expect. Unless their expectation can be made compatible with their experiences, students will find difficulty in achieving the developmental outcome of the learning experience.

DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to participants who were international students currently enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the United States and also to American students enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the United States who have embarked on a study abroad program within the last 5 years. The students were able only to describe their own experiences and expectations. The feedback from the students was limited to responses surrounding their experiences and expectations of higher education campuses. Contact with the students was

done through third parties (international study abroad coordinators). Therefore, generalizations of the findings of this study may not be applied to all international and American study abroad students in higher education.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework for foreign students' experiences can be formulated using the experiences of international and American study abroad students along with the existing theory of Kolb's experiential learning model and Dewey's work on education and experience. It is also reasonable to apply Kurt Lewin's force field theory to study abroad programs, which reports that behavior is a function of both the individual and the environment (Owens, 2000). The environment the students are in will influence their learning experiences and provide opportunities for informal learning.

The experiences of the learner are shaped both by the informal and formal learning processes. In a sense, study abroad can be classified as a mix of both informal and formal learning. Students enrolled in study abroad programs are afforded the opportunity to evaluate their total learning experiences in a formal and informal learning environment. Therefore, the experiences of international and American study abroad students are an opportunity for positive reflective observations for educators.

KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Kolb (1984) indicated that humans were unique in the sense that adaptation does not only occur in the physical but also in the learning process. Kolb stated, "We are thus the learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting in the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds" (p.1). Kolb indicated that the focal point of learning should be immediate personal experience. He suggested that personal experience provided the texture, meaning, and life to abstract concepts. Kolb indicated that with personal experience one can test as well as question the validity of an idea discovered during the learning process. He stated, "Knowledge is continuously derived from

and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (p.27).

OVERVIEW OF JOHN DEWEY’S WORK ON EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

Dewey (1938) contended that knowledge and skills gained in one situation are used to understand and deal with future situations. This synthesis is part of the learning process encountered throughout life. Dewey (1938) suggested that an experience is derived from the interaction of an individual and the immediate environment. The environment, according to Dewey, can be an event under discussion, a book being read, or toys that one interacts with.

Dewey theorized that from the interaction of the principles of continuity and interaction experiences arose (Neill, 2005). Dewey’s continuity principle was based on the idea that an individual’s future is influenced, for better or worse, by each experience, and the principle of interaction was based on a situation influencing the experience of an individual (Neill, 2005).

ASSUMPTIONS

In this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The students had preconceived expectations before they left their home countries for the host institutions.
2. International students knew they had to adapt to a new culture of learning.
3. Students were willing participants in study abroad program

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of international students study abroad?
2. Is there a difference between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students?

3. Do experiences of international students in America differ from those of American study abroad students?
4. Do expectations of international students in America differ from expectations of American study abroad students?
5. To what extent are international and American students’ post-study abroad expectations similar or different?
6. What programs or interventions do international and American study abroad students say will make their experiences more meaningful?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was a comparative study of international and American study abroad students’ experiences and expectations with host countries. The purpose of the study was to investigate international students in America and American study abroad students in an attempt to compare both groups’ experiences and expectations as they relate to studying in a host country. According to Babbie (1989), we live in a world that consists of two realities, experiential reality and agreement reality. Experiential reality is knowledge from a direct experience while agreement reality is knowledge that is generally believed to be real by the majority. For scientific purposes, accepted reality (experiential or agreement) must have “both logical and empirical support” (Babbie). The study attempted to capture both the internal and external reality of students’ experiences and expectations about the host countries and thus it was appropriate to use both methods to analyze the information. Quantitative methods generally consider external reality; things that can be measured and seen. Qualitative methods consider internal reality; feelings, and perceptions of individuals.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative methods of research). The

quantitative tests enabled measurement and comparison of students’ responses to questions posed in the survey instrument, whereas the qualitative method enabled the researchers to gather insights into what students were actually experiencing. Creswell (2003) defined a quantitative study as a study to test a theory using strategies of inquiry in order to determine whether predictive generalization holds true by using statistical procedures. In contrast, he defined a qualitative study as understanding a human or social problem using strategies of inquiry such as narratives to build a holistic picture from the individual’s perspective.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The population for this study comprised of international students currently enrolled in selected higher education institutions located in the United States and American students enrolled in selected higher education institutions located in the United States who have been on study abroad programs within the last 5 years. Eight institutions for this research were chosen based on enrollment of international and study abroad students as well as willingness to participate. These institutions were University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University, University of Maryland (UMBC), Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, Georgia State University, Duke University, and Old Dominion University. The target sample size was 500 respondents. The number 500 was chosen because the study used a mixed methods approach and for manageability purpose 500 was deemed the cutoff point.

It was not realistic to survey all study abroad students (international and American) in the United States, so an opportunity sample was taken. The opportunity sample represented the targeted population of institutions willing to take part in the study. All appropriate approvals were obtained from the East Tennessee State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Appalachian State University; University of Maryland (UMBC), Minnesota State University Moorhead, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, Georgia State University, Duke University, and Old Dominion University Institutional Re-

view Boards for research with human subjects. Because of the nature of the study, confidentiality had to be maintained to ensure students were comfortable responding to the survey.

INSTRUMENTATION

A Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire designed to assess students’ expectations and experiences of host countries while on study abroad programs was utilized. The Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire was conducted online with the dual purpose of collecting quantitative as well as qualitative data. See appendix A

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

Information from the Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire was used to analyze the students’ responses in this study. Data was reported with the assistance of tables. The gaps between experiences and expectations were calculated. The study addressed six research questions. The research was conducted using an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive statistic and frequency counts. The primary variables studied were students’ experiences and expectations. The following null hypotheses were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Paired sample t-tests.

- Ho11: There is no difference between international students’ mean expectations scores and their mean experiences scores of their stay in the United States.
- Ho12: There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female international students.
- Ho21: There is no difference between American study abroad students’ expectations and their experiences with their host country.
- Ho22: There is no difference between mean experience scores for male and female American study abroad students.
- Ho31: There is no difference between mean experience scores for international students in America and mean experience scores for American students in study abroad programs.

Ho41: There is no difference between the expectations of international students in America and expectations of American students in study abroad programs.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

The research questions were also analyzed with the aid of qualitative methodology. The study involved analyzing students' responses from the online survey to capture the students' perception of their expectations and experiences of the host country. Data for the study was collected from via the online survey tool. The responses from the survey were analyzed to gather information on pre- and post-study abroad expectations as well as deeper insight into students' experiences. The following questions from the survey was analyzed manually and sorted into themes:

- Q31: What programs or services were the most meaningful or helpful on the host campus?
- Q42: What were your initial expectations for the study abroad experience?
- Q43: How have your expectations changed? Explain new expectations, if any?
- Q44: Please describe your experiences with the host institution?
- Q45: What programs or interventions do you think would have made your experience more meaningful?

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this study the researchers sought to answer six research questions related to the expectation and experiences of the host country of international and American study abroad students. Data for this study was compiled from the results of an online survey instrument (Appendix A). Responses were separated based on student groups so that the group scores could be compared. Independent t-tests and paired samples t-tests were used to analyze the data. The open-ended questions were analyzed according to established qualitative techniques. The qualitative techniques used in the study were a mix of descriptive account and category construction. By analyzing the data, themes were identified and developed.

The following null hypotheses were analyzed using Independent sample t-tests and Pearson Product-Moment correlations. The research project addresses six research questions. The research was conducted using an alpha level of .05 and the results were described using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. The primary variables under study are students' experiences and students' expectations.

- H1: There is no relationship between international students' expectations and their experiences with the host institution.
- H2: There is no difference between mean experience score for male and female international students.
- H3: There is no relationship between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with the host institution.
- H4: There is no difference between mean experience score for male and female American study abroad students.
- H5: here is no difference between the experiences of international students and study abroad students.
- H6: There is no relationship between length of stay and experience.
- H7: here is no difference between mean experience score for international students and mean experience score for American students in study abroad programs.
- H8: There is no difference between the expectations of international students and American study abroad students.
- H9: There is no relationship between length of stay and expectation.
- H10: There is no difference between mean expectation score for international students and mean expectation score for American students in study abroad programs.

The procedures used for testing the research hypotheses is documented in table 1 below. All analyses and mathematical computations was completed using Version 11.5 of SPSS (SPSS, 2003).

Table 1 documents the research questions the associated hypotheses and the test that was conducted. Descriptive (rather than measurable) data was collected from questions 5 and 6. Therefore these research questions have no associated hypotheses. The researchers also analyze themes from questions 52 and 55 of the survey instrument to answer research questions 5 and 6.

QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

Descriptive statistics and frequency counts were employed to describe the expectations and experiences of study abroad students. A five point scale measuring to what degree the respondent believed that the items matched his or her experiences and expectations was used with (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The expectations and experiences were assigned a score based on items on the

Research Questions	Hypothesis		Test
Is there a relationship between expectations and experiences of international students?	H1	There is no relationship between international students' expectations and their experiences with the host institution.	Correlation
	H2	There is no difference between mean experience score for male and female international students.	Independent sample t-test
Is there a relationship between expectations and experiences of American study abroad students?	H3	There is no relationship between American study abroad students' expectations and their experiences with the host institution.	Correlation
	H4	There is no difference between mean experience score for male and female American study abroad students.	Independent sample t-test
Do experiences of international Students differ from those of American study abroad students?	H5	There is no difference between the experiences of international students and study abroad students.	Independent sample t-test
	H6	There is no relationship between length of stay and experience.	Correlation
	H7	There is no difference between mean experience score for international students and mean experience score for American students in study abroad programs.	Independent sample t-test
Do expectations of international students differ from expectations from American study abroad students?	H8	There is no difference between the expectations of international students and American students in study abroad programs.	Independent sample t-test
	H9	There is no relationship between length of stay and expectation.	Correlation
	H10	There is no difference between mean expectation score for international students and those for American students in study abroad programs.	Independent sample t-test
To what extent are international students and American students' post study abroad expectations similar or different?		Survey Question 52	Descriptive
What programs or intervention international and American study abroad students say will make their experiences more meaningful?		Survey Question 55	Descriptive

survey instrument. The expectation score was created by summing 10 items on expectations from the Cross-Cultural Participant Questionnaire.

The 10 items on expectation from the questionnaire were socialization and cultural integration, experience increase global awareness, leadership skills & career advancement, increase cultural knowledge, differences in people and culture, formal friendships with the host nationals, host language confidence, support network in the host community, better career opportunities at home, and personal changes. Likewise the experience score was created by summing the responses of the students' experiences of the 10 experience items. The experience items were identical to the 10 expectation items identified earlier.

As part of the analysis of the data, gap scores were calculated for specific items in the questionnaire. The gap score was the difference between expectation scores and experience scores. Gap scores provide institutions with an easy method of identifying areas where significant differences between expectations and experiences lie. These gaps allow administrators and policy makers to identify specific areas for change or improvement. Paired samples t-tests and independent t-tests were used to evaluate differences in mean. The data were evaluated with an alpha level of .05.

The survey, completed by 421 respondents, was broken down as follows, 155 international students, 252 American study abroad students, and 14 others. The 'other' category was students who were unsure of how to identify students status. Some were international students enrolled in United States institutions on study abroad programs in other countries, others were American students no longer enrolled in school and some just chose to identify themselves as 'other.' Only the responses of the international and American students were used for the study. The international students who responded represented 54 countries and the American students studied in 34 countries. The responses from the 'other' category were discarded.

The largest response to the survey came from American study abroad students with 59.9% of the responses; international students represented

36.8% and other represented 3.3%. The exact number of graduate, undergraduate and gender profile of the students could not be recorded because not all the students reported their student status and gender. A breakdown of the demographic details that were obtained from the questionnaire can be found in Table 1

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The review of the literature revealed that study abroad students measured their experiences using several variables according to research (e.g., Chen, 1996; Hellsten, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). These included cross-cultural interaction, language confidence, friendship, support network, and host community. Additionally, students gain added learning experiences by associating with others from different cultural backgrounds and of different ethnicities.

The results of this study identified language fluency, building relationship with the host nationals, learning about a new culture, and personal change as significant expectations of the students. The findings of the study confirmed earlier research of Chen (1996) and Hellsten (2002). In Chen's research students had various reasons for studying abroad including individual growth, cross-cultural learning experience, and international understanding. Hellsten documented the experiences of international students in Australia and reported that these students wanted their expectations to match their experiences.

The study found that students frequently bonded with other international students or nonnative students. Both American and international students reported having trouble establishing friendships with the host nationals and the students reported establishing closer connections with students in similar situations. The results of the study were consistent with the studies by Chen (1996), Hellsten (2002), and Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002). These researchers identified the importance of friendship in helping students adjust to a new environment.

While concern over language fluency was an issue for most of the students, the students did not indicate whether lack of fluency in the host language led to social isolation and adjustment

issues as indicated in a previous study by Phillips (2005).

The research of Trice (2004) and Peterson et al. (1999) emphasized the importance of social interaction with the host nationals. Trice's research found that students with similar cultural background to host nationals interact more with the host nationals than those with different cultural backgrounds, while Peterson et al. identified the development of international 'ghetto' when visiting students are isolated from host nationals. My research confirmed the issues laid out by Peterson et al. and Trice. The students (American and international) reported bonding more with other international students because of shared experiences and difficulty establishing friendships with the host nationals.

The study found international and American study abroad students had to make adjustments to the host institution. International students indicated that their experiences with faculty were mixed, while American students expressed surprise about the formality of the classes and professors. Unfamiliarity with the university system led to frustration for the students working out class schedules and registration issues. Both international and American students indicated that support was lacking when it came to identifying and locating certain resources on campus.

The results from the research confirmed the studies of Bennett (1988), Chisholm and Berry (2002), Lee (1997), and Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002). Bennett (1988) indicated that American classrooms relied heavily on discussion and inquiry, as opposed to self-directed learning, leaving students ill-equipped for the sort of everyday self-directed experiential learning faced abroad. Rajapaksa and Dundes also revealed that students on study abroad programs found different classroom experiences from their home country. Lee attributed feelings of discomfort in the classroom to culture shock.

Overall, the students learned to adapt and make the most of their learning experiences. This confirmed Murphy-Lejeune's (2003) research that affirmed that students must adapt and transform as necessary in order to maximize the experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The following recommendations for practice were given based on the study's findings:

1. Address areas where significant gaps exist between experience and expectation.

Administrators should investigate where significant gaps exist between expectations and experiences. Areas where students had high expectations and these expectations fell short of the experiences are grounds for investigation by policy makers. Areas where expectations were lower than experienced provides another area of opportunity for investigation. By investigating the actual experiences administrators are better able to plan pre-departure orientations to better prepare the students on what to expect. By analyzing gaps between expectations and experiences administrators can provide better service to the student population.

2. More extensive pre-departure preparation and orientation.

Students should be given at least a 2-day course on living in and dealing with different cultures. Longer orientation sessions that provide realistic material on living in a foreign country will better prepare students to have realistic expectation and provide them with the right frame of mind to maximize the experience. Students who intend to go on study abroad programs should research the country and the culture as much as possible. Movies, newspaper, and novels are important source of information; they can aid the student in identifying cultural norms that they might find unsettling (Hoffa et al., 1993). Forearmed is forewarned, with advance knowledge

of the culture, students are better able to adjust and derive maximum benefit from their experience.

3. Increased involvement of international students in campus events.

International students indicated wanting to be included and involved in campus events. These students are willing resources, rich in knowledge about countries that host study abroad students. International students also enrich the campus environment and provide an understanding of how other societies view America and Americans. Administrators should make use of this available resource (international students), by having them take part in pre-departure workshops for students going on study abroad, as well as being available to help students understand different cultures.

4. Increased preparation and planning.

Lack of structural or systematic planning and preparation is often blamed for the failure or dissatisfaction of students with the host institutions. This failure or dissatisfaction results from the inadequate preparation on the part of the students, as well as the institution. The institutions, therefore, need to view data about students' experiences (e.g.; Chisholm & Berry, 2002; Hellsten, 2002; Trice, 2004; Zhao et al., 2005) to see if there are gaps between expectations and experiences. If gaps exist, then the institution should identify interventions that can be employed to minimize these gaps. Identifying the expectations and experiences of students is only the first step in the process. Institutions concerned with study abroad programs must go a step further by creating an orientation program for all involved and developing a knowledge

base of different cultures and culture specific situations. Subsequently, gaps in training for personnel to match expectations with experiences can also be identified from students' analyses of their exposure to a host culture.

5. Make students feel welcome.

Institutions have an obligation to involve, serve, and retain the students they recruit. One of the ways of doing this is to make students feel welcome by providing services and support that help students better adapt to the host culture. Family friend programs and housing for families are areas that can be implemented to assist students better adjust to living in a foreign country. Administrators can also provide the students access to the host culture by directing them to historical sites, museums, cultural events, and traditions of the host country. Additionally, administrators can provide programs where the students are able to share about their culture and interest with the campus population or even the host community. Making students feel welcome is about ensuring students feel at home in the host culture.

The following recommendations for further research:

1. A qualitative study should be done with a small focus group of international and study abroad students to pinpoint areas of the study abroad experience that needs improving.
2. An evaluation of the support services available to students as well as the support services students want from host institutions should be done.
3. Further study should be done on preparing students on transitioning into a foreign institution.

4. A comparative study of students embarking on multiple study abroad initiatives to determine whether their expectations and experiences are similar.
5. A comparative study of study abroad undergraduates and graduates students should be done to determine differences in expectations and experiences.
6. A study should be done on the language ability of students embarking on study abroad. This may include investigation of the student's home language, relationship of the student's native language to the host language as well as what exposure to the host language students have.

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