

DEVELOPING GLOBAL COMPETENCY AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS STUDENTS THROUGH GLOBAL SERVICE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

As a form of study abroad and experiential learning, global service learning programs are increasingly becoming a rich experiential and ethical learning model for business students (Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011; Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011). While global service learning is on the rise, research on the experience and outcomes of global service learning is limited (Pless & Borecká, 2014). There is narrow discussion on the ways global service learning effects global competency, ethical decision-making, and career integration. This paper describes the results of a mixed methods research study indicating significant gains in the global competency and ethical leadership skills of business students enrolled in a global service learning course and the Certificate Program of Leadership and Ethics. This paper also presents recommendations for future research, program development, and career integration emphasizing the benefits of global service learning for business students.

BACKGROUND

Our interconnected world demands globally competent workers. Careers increasingly require cross-cultural skills, international travel and placement, and the development of ethical and sustainable global partnerships. Over the past two decades, global service learning programs for undergraduate business students have emerged to develop ethical skills alongside global competency skills (Pless et al., 2011). While some literature documents the program models, few studies report empirical findings relating to global competency, ethical leadership, and transferable skills (Alonso Garci-a & Longo, 2017; Hasbún et al., 2016; Pless et al., 2011).

Research on global competency confronts additional limitations as the field suffers from a one dimensional quantitative focus with methodologies limited in scope and static in nature (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2015; Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, & Liu, 2016). Different tools, assessments, and metrics may exist, but few studies report strong internal validity, utilize longitudinal designs, and demonstrate replication (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2015; Griffith et al., 2016; Heinzmann, Kunzle, Schallhart, & Muller, 2015). A number of researchers suggest developing robust methods when assessing global competency (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2015; Bucker, Furrer, & Weem, 2016; Griffith et al., 2016). Some scholars advocate for mixed methods within global competency research (Alizadeh & Chavan, 2015; Griffith et al., 2016; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). This research project attempts to answer both these calls as well as address gaps in existing research and practice. By incorporating longitudinal mixed methods, this research aims to develop a more complete picture of how to enhance and measure the impact of global service learning on the development of global competency, career-relevant knowledge, and ethical awareness for undergraduates.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This paper presents the results of a mixed methods research study on business students enrolled in global service learning course and the Certificate Program in Leadership and Ethics (CPLE). As the only program of its kinds in the country, the CPLE program provides undergraduate business students an integrated and sustained program of study of the relationship between leadership and ethics. The program curriculum is based on the assumption that an emphasis on leadership, without proper

consideration of ethics, will not generate leaders who approach their roles with a sense of responsibility and accountability. The global service learning course emphasizes CPLE curriculum approach to leadership and ethics within the global context providing students with an ethical and responsible global leadership experience. The global service learning program requires that students participate in a service learning project with partner organizations located in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Matelot, Trinidad, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The specific projects give students the opportunity to use their business skills to make a difference in communities around the world emphasizing the reciprocal responsibility in ethical partnerships. Students study the foundations of service learning, with an emphasis on identifying solutions to business problems that affect the community. In particular, students learn how to apply business skills to make a difference in the community and develop global competency and professional transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and understanding different cultural contexts.

The authors used concurrent transformative design involving quantitative and qualitative content analysis of undergraduate business students' global service learning blogs (Creswell & Clark, 2017). We used ProSuite Software, a mixed methods text-analytics software package, to clean, organize and analyze the student blogs (Provalis Research, 2016). Secondary data containing student demographic characteristics was assigned to each blog including gender, race, nationality, academic achievement, student involvement, international travel experience, and study abroad program type. The results indicate gains in students' global competency and ethical leadership following participation in global service learning. This conference session further describes the outcomes of global service learning on students' global competency, ethical leadership, and transferable skills.

The goal of this paper is to have participants consider global service learning as an effective experiential learning model to teach business students ethical and transferable skills necessary for a global workforce. Participant learning objectives include: (1) understanding global service learning; (2) understanding the results of a mixed-method survey indicating significant gains in business students' global competency and ethical leadership; (3) learn strategies to understand and strengthen global service learning programs; and (4) envision future research projects and global service learning programs.

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