Impacts of Intentional Design on Sport Management Student Outcomes from a Short-Term Study Abroad

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In sport management, Danylchuk (2011) has promoted the value of study abroad experiences as one way to enhance the internationalization of sport management students. She argued these types of experiences “will prepare them to succeed in an increasingly globalized world” (p. 1). Traditional study abroad trips provide numerous experiences that can accomplish these goals. These trips push students out of their comfort zone, providing opportunities for both academic and personal growth (Douglas & Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Kimberly, Gwen & Chad, 2002; Sobania & Braskamp, 2009).

Colleges and universities across the US are investing considerable time and resources (e.g., faculty time and pay, subsidized costs for students) into study abroad programs. This is particularly true for short-term study abroad programs which are defined as any educational trip abroad lasting fewer than 8 weeks (Interis et al., 2017). This format has advantages in comparison to the more traditional semester or yearlong experiences (e.g., lower cost and time commitment; Carley & Tudor, 2006). In fact, in the past ten years the number of students studying abroad has increased by nearly 50%, predominantly due to participation in short-term study abroad opportunities (Institute of International Education, 2018). In 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 students were almost twice as likely to participate in a short-term rather than a semester or yearlong study abroad trip (IIE, 2018).

Although investment in study abroad has increased, attention to assessing student outcomes has not (Lemmons, 2015), particularly in short-term programs. The conditions that create growth during long-term trips likely do not exist with short-term trips. However, Kamdar and Lewis (2015) and Spencer and Tuma (2002) argued that intentional pre-trip seminars and activities along with more extensive intellectual preparation and reflection throughout the trip could enhance student gains in skills and knowledge typically associated with traditional longer duration trips.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of an intentional pre-trip and in-trip design on a short-term study abroad experience for sport management undergraduate students. Following suggestions from the study abroad literature we designed four hour-long pre-trip sessions meant to maximize the potential for academic and personal development (Carley & Tudor, 2006; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015; Perry, Stoner & Tarrant, 2012). Topics for these sessions ranged from cultural diversity to global self-awareness to self-regulation to background information on both the sport and culture of the countries visited. We also designed preparatory sessions regarding sport and culture within the trip. Then, before, during and after the trip, students (n = 24) responded to a total of ten journal prompts regarding personal and educational outcomes of their experience.

Currently, data collection is complete, and journals will be coded using an emergent category strategy to investigate reported academic, personal or international growth outcomes (Creswell, 2013). The results are expected to inform sport management educators on the effectiveness of intentional short-term study abroad supplements, and have the potential to enhance student outcomes on short-term study abroad experiences within and outside of sport management.