How to Incorporate International Service Learning into a Business Study Tour

SOUTHEAST ASIA STUDY TOUR 2010

A CASE STUDY OF THE ALBERS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

QUAN LE
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

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Motivations

- International service-learning has gained popularity as higher education institutions aim to graduate more global-minded and civically engaged students (Crabtree, 2008)
- Most international service learning programs are designed to be long term
- And in most cases, courses are offered in the social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, education, history, and in medical and public health related fields
Objectives

- The objective of this study is to examine how service learning can be effectively incorporated into two-week business study abroad programs.
- Referencing the Southeast Asia Study Abroad program in 2010 to provide lessons learned and propose strategies for future successful international service learning programs in our business school.
Research Questions

- Is there a place for service learning projects in a business study abroad program?
- If so, how should it be integrated into the program?
- How the host organization is impacted by and benefitted from international service-learning?
- What do business students actually learn from a service learning project?
- How will a service learning project influence their personal and business careers?
Methodology

- We will analyze the reflection papers and describe how international service-learning can be incorporated into a business study abroad program.
- The survey questionnaires and the reflection papers will be content analyzed.
The Nature and Objective of the SEA Study Tour

- 17 students participated in the program - 13 female and 4 male
- Southeast Asian countries – Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Thailand
- Two courses: International Economics and International Entrepreneurship Marketing
- Attend three pre-departure meetings, keep a daily journal, write three reflection papers, complete two surveys, and write a final group term paper on a subject they signed up for credits.
The academic components of the study abroad program took place in Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok.

The cultural excursion components took place in the Mekong Delta, Angkor Temples, and Pattaya.

The service-learning component took place in Siem Reap.
Our study abroad program presented an opportunity to include service learning in a developing country that has been ravaged by war and poverty.

- Host organization – Jesuit Service Center in Siem Reap
- Planting trees in two rural village schools and assembling wheelchairs for landmine victims
- Students also raised over $2000 for education and healthcare projects
International Service Learning Projects

- Service learning offers a “complacency shattering” or “soul searching” experience, through which students can learn by reflecting on their experience (Grusky, 2000)
- Most business students have not witnessed the levels of damage and poverty, thus we are interested in their reactions and, more importantly, what they may think they can do about the conditions and helping the people.
- Our goal is to help business students see the world in a different way and take action, whether at home or abroad.
International Service Learning Projects

- Consistent with the mission of home institution Seattle University – “empowering leaders for a just and humane world”
- And the mission of the Albers School – “providing an integrated business education for ethical and socially responsible leadership”
The Surveys

- We conducted two surveys for this research – The pre-trip survey and the post-trip survey.
- The pre-trip survey has 6 questions and the post-trip survey has 14 questions.
- The ranking of each question from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “absolutely disagree” and 5 representing “absolutely agree”.
Pre-Trip Survey

- Overall, the students agreed on the perceptions of the importance of community service and believe that most people can make a difference in their community.
- Undergraduate students are more enthusiastic about the idea of combining service learning with coursework in more classes in Albers School compared to graduate students.
- This is not surprising because most undergraduate students are full-time while graduate students are in the part-time evening program with less opportunity to participate in service-learning classes.
“The academic service learning project I’m participating in as part of the Southeast Asia Study Tour is an integral part of my experiential learning at Seattle University.”

ID#781

“I believe that service learning will be an interesting parallel to our other planned activities that are more business-oriented in Southeast Asia.”

ID#089
Several students raised some concerns about what they are about to experience.

“I don’t think I’m prepared to witness the poverty and physical dismemberment that we will witness in Cambodia.”

ID#278

“My main concern with this activity is that it will require me to face the realities of a daily life that is so different from what I am used to here in the United States.”

ID#089
One of the benefits of international service learning is that students will undergo some transformation in their thoughts and actions after experiencing what life is like outside of their comfort zone (Gains-Hanks and Grayman, 2009).

The post-trip survey helps us to answer the questions:

- What do business students actually learn from a service learning project?
- How will a service-learning project influence their personal and business careers after they returned home?
Post-Trip Survey

- Students like the idea of integrating service learning into more classes in the Albers School

  “I believe it is important to incorporate philanthropy into business and it is important for Seattle University to continue to exercise it through school activities, when appropriate. The Jesuit service day in Cambodia was a great way to practice what we advocate.”

  ID#842

  “In a [service learning] program that emphasizes sustainability and ethics – this was a powerful lesson that beats a textbook or class discussion any day.”

  ID#702

  “I may never do business in Cambodia, and may never even visit again, but what this [service learning] project did was heighten my awareness of culture, human needs, human survival, politics and history.”

  ID#702
The students feel somewhat “neutral” and “agree” with the statement that they can make a difference in the community through service learning in a developing country.

“Just a small about of money can give a landmine victim and his family a new life with the purchase of a wheelchair. I wish more people would realize that the extent to which their contributions would make a difference in a third world country. Therefore, the trip has strengthened my commitment for promoting social justice.”

ID#990
The students also feel somewhat “neutral” and “agree” with the statement that as a result of my service learning experience, they have a better understanding of their role as a global citizen. However, they believe that the project is relevant to them.

“I believe that the project is relevant to MBA students, especially in a world that is becoming more global as well as more socially responsible.”

ID#702
The students respond highly on the last question that they would encourage other students to participate in study tour with service-learning projects.

Overall, they think international service-learning is a worth addition to business study tour.

“It was a unique service-learning day. I feel like I received more out of this day than other service learning classes I have taken.”

ID#061
Smith-Pariola and Goke-Pariola (2006) argue that a well-structured reflection program is the key enabler for students to get the most out of their service learning experience.

The content analysis of the reflection reports helps us to address:

- How the host organization is impacted by and benefitted from international service-learning?
- What do business students actually learn from a service learning project?
## Content Analysis - Prefection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 17</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you personally expect to get out of this service learning experience?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to learn more about daily life in Cambodia and increase my sense of connection with the locals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to improve personal development and knowledge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would to help those in a less fortunate situation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to gain an understanding of the Jesuit mission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do you have any concerns about this activity? If so, what are they?**

| I'm worried about not being fully prepared for the service learning projects in Cambodia | 11 | 65% |
| I'm worried about the interaction with the locals | 4 | 24% |
| I won't be able to make a meaningful impact | 3 | 18% |
| I'm worried about the Jesuit Service not living up to my expectation | 2 | 12% |
## Content Analysis – Initial Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial thought</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting trees and interacting with the children were one of the highlights of the service learning experience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembling wheelchairs were not only a physical exercise but also an exercise of heart and mind</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This was overall a positive experience of Jesuit Education at Seattle University</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reaction to extreme poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt uncomfortable with the poverty I observed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have had a more long lasting impact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The visit to the villages to plant trees at rural schools with the children could have been better organized</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More clear instructions should be given to assemble wheelchairs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Content Analysis – Post Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall experience of service learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the service learning activities of this trip</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service learning activities were beneficial for us as business students and the local community we served</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service learning activities can be improved through better organization and coordination with the Jesuit Service</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service learning activities encouraged me to make some self-reflection and helped me increase awareness/concern for the less fortunate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We learned more about Cambodian people and their culture through service learning activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Going forward I will remember this experience, and it will sharp some of my decisions with regard to future service work in my community and elsewhere.”

ID#657

“Nearly a month after completing the service learning project in Cambodia I still think of that day as the most impactful one of the trip. When telling others of my time in Southeast Asia I immediately think of our volunteer work, the people we met with and the stories we heard – and that is what I share first.”

ID#702

“The service learning day has given me a different perspective on the multi-faceted complexities of poverty. I have certainly considered returning to the Jesuit Service in Cambodia for a few months as a volunteer or volunteering in another developing country for a similar organization.”

ID#551
Lessons Leaned

- Is there a place for service learning projects in a business study abroad program?
  - Yes. Students would like to have service-learning component in business study abroad program in the Albers School
- If so, how should it be integrated into the program?
  - Reflection is the key to success
  - Develop a close relationship with the local community in important
- How the host organization is impacted by and benefitted from international service-learning?
  - international service learning as a partnership of equals rather than the “paternalistic paradigm”
Lessons Learned

- What do business students actually learn from a service learning project?
  - Leadership skill, compassion for the poor, ethics and sustainability

- How will a service learning project influence their personal and business careers?
  - Need longitudinal data to measure long term impacts
    - Undergraduate students are more idealistic
    - Graduate students are more realistic
Service Learning in Cambodia
Building Wheelchairs
Planting Trees
Graduate Honorary - Tun Channareth
Thank You

Q&A