

Zh.Sagyndykova

*Sh.Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University
(E-mail: aykasag@mail.ru)*

Developing intercultural competency: study abroad experience

One of the important factors in the development of intercultural competence is training abroad, so you need to remember the importance of carrying out a number of procedures for successful assimilation, adaptation of students, as it further builds strong leaders and prepares professionals with a global mindset.

Key words: internationalization, study abroad, intercultural competence development.

The relevance of the research on intercultural competency development became obvious now. Kazakhstan sent 2 thousand of students via academic mobility to study abroad, educated more than 10 000 of Bolashak recipients abroad, trained thousands of faculty and administrative staff at the foreign universities. The result of it as the Ministry of Education states in the mission and vision will be the highly educated, competitive and intelligent nation [1].

Merriam Webster Dictionary construes «competitive» as to be more successful than others are, while «intelligent» means the ability to learn and understand things or deal with new or difficult situations [2].

Accordingly, the government seeks to prepare the nation that should be acknowledged, brilliant and armed with skills to handle the challenges and hurdles. In Introduction to the Strategy of academic mobility to 2020 of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there is the goal that highlights the necessity of higher education development with respect to global tendencies and world labor market. The strategy of Mobility is the document that determines the priority directions of academic and cultural internationalization of the Kazakhstani higher education through Bologna process instruments' enhancement [3].

What is internationalization from the point of view of the Kazakhstani priorities? Among the definitions of internationalization put by outstanding professors Knight, de Wit, Altbach, the most appropriate one for the research is given by David Killick. He determines «the internationalization of higher education constitutes a complex set of processes which are identified by and incorporated into the activities of an individual institution through which all its students experience their subject as globally situated, their peers as equals, and perspectives as always challengeable, and graduate as global selves, with the confidence and the capabilities to make their way among diverse others on the basis of a critical awareness of the impacts of their actions» [4].

Having settled the goals in internationalizing the higher education in Kazakhstan, we generally tend to speak about its instruments and rarely about its outcomes and assessment.

However, the world changes exponentially so that in order to correspond to the global challenges it is necessary to build the capacity of the global citizens, global leaders. Obviously, educating global leaders overlaps with intercultural competency, thus Justin A. accentuates the need for global competent leaders dominates the requirement for the technology and finances, the leaders, who are experts in globalization.

One of the success factors for the corporation is having the knowledgeable global leader with the constant intercultural competency growth because «need for globally minded and interculturally competent leaders is not only a reality in virtual global teams; it is needed in the multicultural context of regional teams and organizations as well» [5; 5, 6].

The most leaders and leadership comprehend the necessity for preparing students with the global market requirements is crucial, yet, the idea of how to implement this education is vague. It is becoming that the institutions should approach this need and be oriented to accept the reality of globalization and be ready to develop interculturally competent leaders [5].

Internationalization of Higher education in Kazakhstan promotes its main instrument as academic mobility. While sending students abroad we should clear understand why we send our students, what are our expectations, what knowledge we want them to pursue. However, it is conspicuous that when sending students abroad the universities target the students for the successful integration into the academic education, no attention paid to the intercultural competence development. Consequently, the student when going abroad to study discover cultural, emotional, psychological and behavioral hurdles that make him an expert in international education. Intercultural learning is not an easy process that students required to obtain before, during, and after a study abroad experience, no matter how long the sojourn is. Living or being in the host culture

does not automatically produce interculturality. Many internationalization models ignore this fact; administrators are often engaged in increasing the numbers of exchange students, largely do not paying attention to the barriers that may hinder the learning process (e.g., high levels of ethnocentrism, low tolerance for ambiguity, culture shock).

In this age of increased global interconnection, it is vital for interculturalists, applied linguists, and study abroad researchers to find out the most productive ways to encourage students towards higher levels of intercultural sensitivity and sociopragmatic awareness both at home and abroad. Today, intercultural competence is as important as language competence and one cannot assume that they will develop simultaneously. As educators, we have to empower students to become competent, sensitive global citizens and professionals [6].

Here, I would like to highlight the necessity of students not being prepared to challenges but being aware that the experience he gains will be transformative for him to become a global leader.

Thus, the universities should be mindful of the importance of intercultural competency, but only few universities conduct assessment and evaluation process pre- and post-tests of the study abroad experience. Darla K. Deardorff states that fewer universities elaborated the mechanisms of outcomes measuring of intercultural competence [7].

Deardorff designed the Intercultural Competence Model where she represents the process of intercultural development as a constant process of individual development with the opportunity to rethink and re-evaluate the intercultural competency over the time. The critical thinking skills is another central element in assessment ability because it stimulates the evaluation of the knowledge acquired. Openness, respect and curiosity are the attitudes, which have a great impact on the intercultural development. The last aspect of her study is the ability to see from other's perspectives [7].

Tracy Williams developed the Reflective Model of Intercultural competency, which contains questions with the aim to collect data about students' learning outcomes and reflections from study abroad. The model is a new approach to assess the study abroad results [8; 289–306].

The data reveals that students' responses grouped in four categories: increased understanding of international and cultural issues, broadened flexibility, expanded open-mindedness, curiosity and enhanced critical skills. The students indicated that they gained the cultural and global awareness from perspectives of the host's values, views and culture; developed adaptation skills in handling with difficulties; comprehended significant transformation in creativity and openness. The study abroad experience encouraged the students to learn more about others and increased the desire to be globally aware [8].

Deardorff's survey proves the same «One surprising result of this study was the specific skills that emerged through consensus, which included skills to analyze, interpret, and relate, as well as skills to listen and observe. Cognitive skills emerged, including comparative thinking skills and cognitive flexibility. These skills point to the importance of process in acquiring intercultural competence and the attention that needs to be paid to developing these critical skills. It is important to note that only one element received 100 % agreement from the intercultural scholars, which was «the understanding of others' world views» [7].

The US academia is seeking for intercultural competence, the ability to feel at home at other societies as one's own, experienced and skilled for working abroad and personal growth to meet the requirements of the Council of Academic standards in higher education [9].

Madeleine Green states «while international education administrators can play a facilitating role, a successful assessment effort must be owned by the faculty, with the support and engagement of institutional leaders, administrators, and governance structures» [10].

Consequently, the intercultural competence is a process that lead to development of various intellectual skills of the students and requires the constant assessment and evaluation. In addition, methods of assessment vary from individual to group works, from academia to administration levels, from scientific to experimental.

The results of the administrators' participation in the last round of the Delphi study indicated that administrators achieved 100 % agreement on four specific assessment methods: observation by others/host culture, case studies, judgment by self and others, and student interviews. Administrators were nearly unanimous (95 %) in using a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess students' intercultural competence. The following assessment methods also received 95 % acceptance among administrators: analysis of narrative diaries, self-report instruments, other-report instruments, triangulation (multiple methods), and a bottom-up approach involving such techniques as focus groups, dialogues, and workshops [7; 243].

In the research of how to develop intercultural competence among graduate students revealed «teaching development programs with intercultural communication components provide an excellent opportunity to foster the skills that graduate students will need after graduation». The outcomes of the research firstly,

demonstrate the ability of graduate students to evolve intercultural skills in the period of studies; secondly, exposes the positive effect of two teaching development programs at the Canadian research university, which describes how students utilize their new adopted skills on intercultural competence in their graduate study and research. Eventually, the research manifests the benefits of the students in the preparation to become the global employee. The teaching program (The Teaching Assistant Training Program, TATP) designed for the graduate students, the half of them are international students with the aim to be integrated in the courses of design, marketing strategies, facilitating class discussions, and active learning. The intercultural component in this program is a two-hour video case study on teaching in the intercultural classroom [11, 12].

Observing the literature under the research it is necessary to formulate the important steps to achieve the goal of the strategy of the preparing the professionals with global mindset.

First, it is vitally important to design the operational plan in implementing the strategy, which will contain the detailed analysis of the global market requirements and challenges. Second, it is crucial to devise the pre-test and post –test instruments of study abroad program assessment, as well as the follow-up experimental mode observance (proved by the psychologists it has a positive impact on the outcome). Finally, intercultural competence should be recognized as a student achievement of internationalization, thus the university curricula should contain the instruments (curricula, orientation workshops, case studies and various assessments) to develop intercultural competence. Furthermore, every higher education institution should establish its own strategy oriented to educate global experts contributing in the country and beyond.

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Ж. Сағындықова

Шетелде оқыту арқылы мәдениетаралық құзыреттілікті дамыту

Мәдениетаралық құзыреттілікті дамытудағы маңызды фактордың бірі шет елдерде білім алу болып табылады. Сондықтан да қазақстандық университеттер студенттердің болашақта жаһандық мәселелерге араласа алатын маман екенін есте ұстап, соған сай дайындаулары керек.

Ж. Сағиндықова

Развитие межкультурной компетенции посредством обучения за рубежом

Одним из важных факторов развития межкультурной компетенции является обучение за рубежом, поэтому необходимо помнить о важности проведения ряда процедур для успешной ассимиляции, адаптации студентов, так как это в дальнейшем формирует сильных лидеров и готовит специалистов с глобальным мышлением.

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