Developing Co-curricular Volunteer Opportunities Abroad:

Canadian and Southern African Partner Perspectives on the Benefits and Constraints of a Guided Learning Approach

A Study Leave Project

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Executive Summary

The aim of this project is to outline some of the issues surrounding the placement of volunteers in the field both from existing and potential partners in Canada and in southern Africa; and to identify some key elements to be included in a guided learning component for a co-curricular international volunteer program for Queen's students with the desired outcomes of deepening their sense of their own cultural identity, and those of the cultures and communities that they visit. In order to achieve this project goal I took the following steps: reviewed the literature in the area of volunteer programs abroad and guided learning programs; carried out a short survey and conducted interviews; and made recommendations for the establishment of a guided learning process in conjunction with a co-curricular volunteer program that is embedded within the Global Citizenship Program.

The study identifies some of the key issues concerning an institution's involvement in the design and delivery of volunteer programs abroad. They include issues identified through my personal experience in the field; those identified in the literature; and those that were identified by host partners through the survey and interviews. The review of literature identifies a number of issues surrounding the development and implementation of volunteer programs abroad that are addressed individually. For the most part these can be classified as design and ethical issues. While many of the issues identified in the literature raise critical issues about the nature and impact of volunteer programs abroad, the survey and interview responses were generally very supportive of them. In terms of the research findings, on a positive note, Allport (group contact theory) and more recently Vande Berg say that significant intercultural learning can take place on the part of students if the conditions are correct and the learning support is in place. It is this vantage point that this study takes in light of recent findings about the impact of implementing a guided learning approach in volunteer and study abroad programs. However it is important for an institution to address the ethical issues raised in the literature. For example, in order to ameliorate a systemic imbalance in the flow of resources, some institutions and programs have developed a set of ethical guidelines to ensure that both the institution and their partners in the South are in agreement as to the aims and process of the program and to forge a program structure that commits an institution to the transfer of appropriate resources in order to ensure that the host partner is recognized for its contribution. It is recommended that Queen's follow this same approach to the establishment of co-curricular volunteer programs.

The issues noted through the results of the surveys and interviews fall into two main areas: operational and program outcomes. As such these issues differed from the concerns of the literature that were more theoretical in nature. Several challenges were identified in the literature regarding the implementation of a guided learning approach. While these are very valuable with regard to the establishment of a guided learning program, the interviews and survey indicated that this type of approach was not common among the group.

In light of the findings, 13 recommendations are made for the consideration of the Vice-Provost and Dean (Student Affairs) regarding the establishment of co-curricular volunteer programs and a guided learning approach including a recommendation that a co-curricular volunteer program be established in conjunction with the Global Citizenship Program.

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1. **Introduction**

Queen's University is in the process of defining how it will achieve the bold goals pertaining to internationalization as outlined in the Principal's paper, *Where Next? Toward a University Academic Plan;* and, more recently, under the *Queen's University Academic Plan 2011*. Specifically with regard to opportunities for students abroad, in *Where Next?* the Principal notes, as one of the four principles to build upon, that:

> *We must seek to support local and regional economic development and then look beyond our location in Kingston and Canada to seek our place in the world, by providing **international educational experiences for our students, research collaborations for faculty, and service beyond our national borders**.* (Principle 4)

This statement highlights international placements for students as a priority for the university and the future development of our internationalization plan. Generally the emphasis of our internationalization efforts has been on developing exchange partnerships, or in the case of study abroad a few specialized programs including the Bader International Study Centre (BISC), Queen's–Blyth Worldwide (QBW) and some specific departmental field schools. However, all of these study abroad options are for academic credit; whereas options for students to volunteer or intern abroad in a non-academic program have for the most part had little attention. Programs such as Queen's Program for International Development (QPID), Queen's Health Outreach (QHO) and the Pathy Family Foundation Leadership Program stand out as exceptions. Hence one of the avenues for exploring the options that we can initiate if we wish to serve our students better is through deepening our programming in the area of non-academic international volunteer positions.

In the *Academic Plan 2011* the University identifies that the "strong tradition of leading research, teaching excellence, and student engagement … and its breadth of co-curricular opportunities for students…facilitate a transformative learning environment within a research-intensive environment" (p.2). Within the document, these elements find root in the Four Pillars including "The Student Learning Experience" and "Reaching Beyond: Globalism, Diversity, and Inclusion at Queen's". Of importance in this statement is the identification of "co-curricular opportunities" as part of the transformative learning experience. From these examples of the Queen's discourse around future developments in the internationalization process, it is foreseeable that we will have increased demand for additional co-curricular opportunities over the next few years, especially in anticipation of a Global Citizenship/Leadership Program being put in place following the development of the *Internationalization Implementation Plan*.

In addition, the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) has been developing programs to train students to become interculturally competent. Over the past 5 years, not

only has the staff taken training in facilitating workshops and sessions in intercultural competence, but also we have trained in the delivery of a number of programs and instruments in this area including administration of the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) and delivery of the Sociocultural Competency Training (SCT) program. It is clear from the theory and practice in this field that in order to deepen one's understanding and application of intercultural skills there is a need to engage in reflective practice and guided learning. Studies involving short-term student placements abroad have shown that students returned from abroad with limited progress in developing intercultural competence unless a program of guided learning was in place. This finding has specific implications for any academic plan that aims to increase the numbers of students going abroad. If we wish to engage our students more effectively in the intercultural dimension of their experience, then we will need to change how we are preparing and supporting them by increasing the resources and support services for guiding them through their experience abroad. The same research finding will also apply to co-curricular programs that place students abroad.

2. Project Goal

The aim of this project is to outline some of the issues surrounding the placement of volunteers in the field both from existing and potential partners in Canada and in southern Africa; and to identify some key elements that may be included in a guided learning component for a co-curricular international volunteer program for Queen's students with the desired outcome of deepening their sense of their own cultural identity and those of the cultures and communities that they visit.

3. Background

This study project originates both in the plans for Queen's to increase co-curricular volunteer opportunities abroad for students through a Global Citizenship/Leadership Program, and because of the challenge of providing support for these students in learning about themselves and the cultures and communities that they visit.

This study project, however, does not aim to be an academic study of the theory and practice surrounding co-curricular volunteer placements abroad; nor does it aim to determine a program structure or guided learning framework. Rather the project will outline some of the issues identified through the reading of current literature in the field and from interviews with existing and potential volunteer program partners in Canada and in southern Africa which surround the placement of volunteers in the field; and will frame some of the key elements of a guided learning approach which can contribute to deepening the experience and growth of those students involved in a co-curricular volunteer program in light of the readings and the comments by partner organizations.

Of significance in preparing co-curricular placements for Queen's students is the identification and engagement of community partnerships within which students will volunteer both in Canada and abroad. It is critical to any of these partnerships that there is a

mutual understanding of the aims and proposed learning outcomes of the programs that will accommodate the students. Among the learning outcomes that Queen's would bring to the table is the desire for our students to more effectively engage the intercultural dimension of their experience. In order to accomplish this goal one aspect of the proposed program would be the implementation of a guided learning component.

Given that this move toward a guided learning approach is relatively recent addition to the study abroad and service learning experience, this study will seek to determine if the existing partnerships currently have some form of guided learning built in to their program; if so, how can we learn from it and/or build upon it, and if not, would they be able to accommodate the addition of a guided learning dimension to their program. With this in mind, this project will seek to identify partner perspectives - both Canadian and Southern African – on:

- the key objectives in setting up volunteer programs;
- the benefits and constraints that are faced in preparing and hosting students;
- the existence of or ability to implement a guided learning component within their programs; and,
- recommendations for improving the programs with specific reference to the ways we might deepen the intercultural experience of the volunteers.

4. Assumptions for Survey and Study Trip

There are a number of assumptions that underlie this study project and influence both the survey and the interviews in the field. These are:

- volunteer programs abroad are essentially a good thing as they offer students the opportunity for transformative experience that can bring about "shifts in their attitudes and behaviours, including a heightened understanding of their host community, a desire for cross-cultural understanding and a commitment to the idea of global citizenship (Chant, 2011, p. 1)."

  In very broad terms students are taught social responsibility and intercultural sensitivity but it is possible to identify other learning objectives. At least some of the following outcomes are identifiable:
  - *An enhanced understanding of how social, political or economic systems function gained through participation and observation,*
  - *An insight into the processes of negotiation and conflict resolution,*
  - *Problem analysis (and perhaps problem solving), …*
  - *Empowering students to take control of their own learning,*
  - *Civic skills, such as learning about the realities of power and privilege, and social empathy* (Woolf, 2008, p. 27)

- the cultural dimension is recognized as an essential part of the volunteer experience;
- partners will be interested in learning about and possibly adding the guided learning dimension to their programs; and,
- the research and literature for academic related internship and volunteer programs – generally referred to as 'service learning' – for the most part also pertain to co-curricular volunteer programs.

5. A Word about Definitions

This study uses many definitions that require further explanation. However, the list became too long for the body of the study. The reader can find the complete list of definitions and explanations in Appendix I. It should be noted that my use of the terms 'volunteer', 'participant', 'student' and 'intern' are interchangeable when I employ them in this report.

6. Method

To achieve the project goal I took the following steps:
- reviewed various readings and research that encompass both volunteer work and the broader field of 'international service learning';
- reviewed literature on guided/reflective learning and practice that support study abroad and volunteer placements;
- developed discussion questions for collecting partner responses;
- identified and confirmed contacts in Canada and in Southern Africa for the discussions;
- carried out and documented the discussions in person and/or electronically;
- outlined a guided learning process to support the development of a co-curricular international volunteer program for Queen's students; and,
- reported on the findings and recommendations that may help to guide the establishment of the Global Citizenship Program and the placement of participants both internationally and domestically.

Perhaps the most important part of the project was the visits to and discussions with a number of established internship and volunteer programs both in Canada and in southern Africa. Underlying these discussions were several questions that served as the basis for the discussions:

1. What are the key learning outcomes for students who participate in partner program(s)?
2. If gaining intercultural competence through volunteering abroad is one of the partner program's student learning outcomes, how do we achieve this?
3. What are the key challenges in implementing volunteer/internship programs?
4. Do our partners have recommendations for improving our programs?
5. Are the partners familiar with a guided learning approach to supporting student development?[1]
6. What are our partners' thoughts on having guided learning as part of volunteer programs?

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[1] A guided learning approach involves a mentor or instructor who interacts at regular intervals with the student volunteers while they are at all stages of their volunteer program to facilitate guided inquiry into their experience through reflective questions and reference to their knowledge and critical resources.

7. Anticipated Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes for this project include the following:
- expand my personal understanding of the literature in the field of service learning and guided/reflective learning programs;
- expand my personal understanding of how our partners see the role of volunteers;
- meet our partners and learn about the volunteer programs that they have in place;
- enhance relationships between Queen's University International Centre (QUIC)and the program partners on campus, in Kingston and in Southern Africa;
- research the key elements and frame a guided learning process that will deepen the students' sense of their own cultural identity and the cultures and communities that they visit; and,
- deliver a report to the Vice-Provost and Dean (Student Affairs).

8. Key Issues Surrounding Volunteer Programs

This section identifies some of the key issues concerning an institution's involvement in the design and delivery of volunteer programs abroad. They include issues identified through my personal experience in the field; those identified in the literature; and those that were identified by host partners through the survey and interviews.

Personal Experience

Over the 40 plus years that I have worked in the international education field I have participated in a number of volunteer programs ranging from those sponsored by religious organizations and NGOs through to university and individually designed efforts. For the most part, these programs were largely self-directed learning with pre-departure briefing at the front end and some re-entry debriefing as follow-up. The observations that I have made from my experience are:
- previous experience in volunteer programs may help in making the volunteer experience positive, but it is not a guarantee of that outcome;
- even if a participant is immersed in a cultural setting, it does not guarantee that the experience will result in significant positive intercultural learning;
- assistance from a mentor or outside referee is necessary if participants are to gain perspective on their experience(s) and increase the opportunity to deepen their cultural experience; and,
- participants in short-term volunteer and study abroad programs require guidance in understanding their encounter with another cultural group if the experience is to move beyond cultural tourism especially if the program is for 3 weeks or less.

More recently some issues that I personally identified as problematic in the application of a guided learning approach to volunteer programming are:

- determining how long a sojourn abroad must be in order for volunteers to benefit from the intercultural aspect of the experience;
- creating an environment conducive for reflection so that the participants fulfill their responsibilities for the guided learning dimension of the program; and,
- selecting and training the mentors so that they are able to conduct the guided learning dimension of the program effectively.

These personal observations and issues were reflected at least in part in the work by Vande Berg and other recent researchers who were looking at the question of guided learning in volunteer or service learning programs, and in the discussions with host partners in southern Africa.

The Literature

The literature outlines a number of issues surrounding the development and implementation of volunteer programs abroad. These are addressed individually below. For the most part these issues can be classified as design and ethical. Please note that any reference to 'service learning' is taken to equally pertain to co-curricular programs.

Service Learning and volunteer programs must be connected to an academic department!

There is a significant amount of literature that notes that in the university setting if a volunteer program is to be set up, it must be closely linked to the students' academic program in order for the program to have integrity and for it to be widely accepted as a worth while learning exercise.

> *Like any other educational activity, service-learning requires significant resource investment. Unless it takes itself seriously and is considered to be serious in the wider community, the necessary resources will not be invested and the enterprise will be consigned to the underfunded backwaters of the academic environment as a harmless but hardly crucial pastime indulged in only by the committed few* (Woolf, 2008, p. 25).

> *The arguments for the value of service-learning are frequently made in non-academic terms enforcing the sense in traditional academia that, while this is a "good thing," it may be of peripheral interest. As a consequence, the emphasis on service (rather than learning) and on cross-cultural understanding in an international context undermines the credibility of the activity. That soft-centred rationale is on its own, simply, not good enough if the broader academic community is to be convinced of the essential seriousness of the endeavour* (Woolf, 2008, p. 26).

In many university settings the essential link between academic programs and service learning or volunteer program opportunities may be the only way to establish the value and validity of these types of programs on campus. However at Queen's there is already a strong history of student volunteerism that complements our academic programs including volunteer programs situated abroad. The key in developing a Queen's co-curricular program may be not so much one strongly embedded in the academic programs such as the exchange programs but one that is linked to the various departments through strong communication

about the potential learning outcomes and the contribution that students who have been involved in such a program can offer within the academic setting. As Crabtree notes

> *If [international service-learning (ISL)] is part of co-curricular programs in offices of campus ministry or in student affairs divisions, it is incumbent upon ISL leaders to build the bridges to faculty and academic programs* (Crabtree, 2008, p. 24).

Volunteering Abroad and other programs of this type are not working!

This issue is perhaps the strongest argument against setting up volunteer programs abroad. In a world where results and outcomes are the key to assessing the success of a program, the claim that in general this type of program is not producing positive results either as an instrument of personal learning or as a means of internationalizing our campuses, may be seen as a fundamental deterrent in moving in this direction. There is growing evidence that this position is accurate with regard to our past initiatives.

> *Whether or not this leveling-off in study-abroad participation is an anomaly or the beginning of a trend, it doesn't change the reality that an intense focus on increasing the number of students abroad has not produced the broadly internationalized populace of college graduates that many originally envisioned* (Salisbury, 2012, p. 2).

> *… [S]tudents immersed in the study abroad environment were not learning as well as expected* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 35).

However, on a positive note, Allport (group contact theory) and more recently Vande Berg say, that significant learning can take place if the conditions are correct and the learning support is in place. It is this vantage point that this study takes in light of recent findings about the impact of implementing a guided learning approach in volunteer and study abroad programs.

How can students learn if their mentors and instructors are not further along in their intercultural development than the students?

The demands on the mentor are significant, whether faculty members or local resource people. Without significant training in mentoring and reflective practice for the mentors so that they can progress in the development of their intercultural competence, success in achieving deeper intercultural skills and knowledge on the part of the volunteers will be limited.

> *Train cultural mentors in the theory and practice of intercultural teaching and learning. This investment of time and other resources will ensure that those serving as cultural mentors will be effective in this challenging work* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 416).

This is a very real challenge and without significant resources being applied for the training of mentors whether they reside in the home culture or host culture, it will be hard to achieve the targeted learning outcomes.

Ethical Issues

There are a number of ethical concerns that need to be recognized and addressed in the institutional discourse and program planning before the volunteer programs can proceed. Among these are: the allocation of scarce resources away from the partner programs to support the volunteers; the focus of the outcomes being on the volunteers' personal growth rather than supporting the aims of the host organization; and the predisposition of the benefits of the programs to accrue to the institutions situated in the global North given that they have the resources and the power.

They use the scarce resources of their hosts abroad!

Some faculty members involved in teaching and researching the international development debate will point out that volunteer programs abroad have in their design the propensity to benefit institutions such as Queen's even if the learning outcomes state that they aim to share resources with NGOs in the global South through the volunteer input. Volunteers

> *may utilise scarce resources, especially support from indigenous NGOs, and unduly encroach on the social relations of both host organisations and local communities. More importantly, there are ethical implications to Canadian/Northern involvement with people in dire circumstances in order to learn* (Tiessen and Heron, 2012, p. 48).

In order to ameliorate this systemic imbalance in the flow of resources, some institutions and programs have developed an ethical framework to ensure that both the institution and their partners in the South are in agreement as to the aims and process of the program and to forge a program structure that commits an institution to the transfer of appropriate resources in order to ensure that the host partner is recognized for its contribution.

One example of the type of principles that might be included in an ethical framework is:

> Principles for ensuring mutual co-operation and control of projects and partnerships

> 1) Co-determination
>   Mutual sharing of the control of projects and partnerships is the goal between and among global partners.
>
>   To avoid control of projects, partnerships and resources by partners in the global North, all initiatives should be developed first by identifying the interests of the partners in the global South and thereafter determining the direction of the initiative through co-operative planning and decision making.

2) Reciprocity
The intention of international projects and linkages is to promote mutual exchange of information and learning.

Because there is a history of power and expertise in the global North that can skew the control toward the northern partner, equity within projects and partnerships must be established through a well-defined written plan with negotiated details for implementation.

3) Full compensation for all contributions
The contributions to the project or partnership by partners in the global South require recognition and full compensation to ensure resource equity.

When we pay for the contributions of a partner in the global South payment should be based on the market rate in Canada.

Adapted from a CBIE conference presentation in the 1990's by Lea Caragata, Associate Professor of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University.

It is all about the students' personal growth!

The following quotations from development studies literature aptly point out that the main beneficiaries of volunteer programs abroad are overwhelmingly the volunteers and their personal growth.

> *[T]he researchers found that "egotistic" motivations such as career development and job-seeking ultimately overshadowed altruism. "The biggest surprise for me was that the desire to help others ranked really low," said Dr. Tiessen. "It was probably one of the lowest ranked motivations compared to more personal development factors like skills-development, resume-building, and adventure and travel* (Chant, 2011, p. 1).

> *The emphasis on personal growth as noted by the youth participants in the present study, however, raises important questions about who matters when we measure the benefits of international development volunteering programmes. Personal growth is an important positive outcome for Canadian youth but it is not the primary impact one might expect from international development programmes. We need to question whether personal growth of young Notherners is the core development impact we are pursuing.* (Tiessen and Heron, 2012, p. 49).

> *A first cross-cultural experience is more likely to produce personal growth than to increase in-depth cultural and global understanding* (Kauffmann et al, 1992). (as quoted in Tiessen and Epprecht, 2012, p. 4).

> *The common theme running through this literature, however, is that benefits are largely accrued among the Canadian youth who travel abroad and measured in terms of personal growth and skills development. The one-directional nature of perceived benefits is central to the ethical dimensions of learn/volunteer abroad programs.* (Tiessen and Epprecht, 2012, p. 5).

It follows as noted above that an ethical framework for the establishment of such programs will help to ensure that the individual understands that the role that they are playing in the achievement of the stated program outcomes will certainly include recognition that they will experience personal growth; however, primary among the goals is the support of and engagement with the partner goals and activities. A thorough selection process and orientation programs both pre-departure and in-country can assist in making this happen.

The benefits all end up with our students and institutions because we have the power!

Once again the challenges of creating a program between partners in the global North and South that aims toward equal contribution and benefits are significant.

> *Cross-cultural [interaction] which is initiated and directed by the more powerful of the two cultures (for power difference is always part of the cultural differences) always runs the risk of reducing the weaker to the canvas upon which the stronger represents itself and its power* (Crabtree, 2008, p. 149).

Again clear dialogue between the partners is important so that the ethical and development principles can be set in advance of the design and implementation of the program.

Short-term programs are just voluntourism. Nothing substantive can be learned in just 2 or 3 weeks.

Traditionally it was thought that the longer a volunteer was in the field the more chance was that they would grow interculturally. Conversely there was a stigma against short term volunteer programs as being mainly touristic and development voyeurism. In recent years due to economic and health and safety concerns institutions have been opting for shorter programs hence coming under criticism as being superficial.

> *[However] the research carried out in the Georgetown consortium study indicated that the length of the program as originally thought did not affect the amount of intercultural competence that the students gained. Regardless of the length of the program the most predictive of intercultural development is cultural mentoring, that is "guided reflection on the students' cultural experience"* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 37).

In another study the researchers found that

> *The true test of any educational experience is the extent to which students integrate their new knowledge and understanding into their lives. As the results of this study show, the extent to which students learn from a short-term study abroad experience may depend more on what those students do after they have returned home than on anything they did while abroad. All students in this case study integrated their experiences into their lives in some way. The difference was the degree to which this integration occurred.* (Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus, 2011, p. 223).

With this in mind should Queen's decide to move to establish co-curricular volunteer programs abroad the implementation of a guided learning dimension both during and following the program is recommended to enable the participants to move beyond the voluntourism experience.

Survey and Interviews

The issues noted through the results of the surveys and interviews fell into two main areas: operational and program outcomes. As such these issues differed greatly from the concerns of the literature that were more theoretical in nature. On the operational side the issues that were raised by the respondents to the survey and interview questions included:

- finding partners who will fulfill the required responsibilities to make the partnership successful;
- identifying and selecting suitable candidates to become participants in the volunteer programs;
- identifying the skills required to assist partner organizations appropriately and to match volunteers with skills to meet those needs;
- determining how long a sojourn abroad must be to benefit the partner organization; and,
- identifying tasks that were able to be accomplished by the volunteers with the skills and the time that they had available.

On the program outcome side, the majority of the responses pointed out the great value of the volunteers and the role that they played in enabling the host organizations to meet their goals. One organization paid tribute to the high quality of the Queen's volunteers and their ability to mix with the community as well as produce high quality results. However the issue that was mentioned consistently was the length of time that the students could give to the programs in that they were just adjusting to their new home and had just been trained enough to be effective when they were preparing to leave. One respondent felt that the shortest time a volunteer should participate for in their organization should be 3 months. While our current co-curricular programs vary between 2 and 12 months, the majority of the students go for less than 3 months. Following the design of the Pathy Family Leadership Program the design of a new program should allow for an extended stay of an additional semester as a volunteer.

Interestingly none of the interviews betrayed the hosts' feelings that the volunteer programs created an ethical or power shift in their lives. Regarding resources, all of the partners - both Canadian and those in southern Africa (except the Pathy Foundation program which has significant donor funding) - recognized that funding and staff time were limited. However, there was no indication that the hosts felt that the volunteers were using resources that could be applied elsewhere. In almost all cases they felt that it was a mutual exchange of energies and a clear skills investment on the part of the volunteers. In one case the inequity in the resource allocation was dealt with by a payment by the volunteers to the host program. One partner did mention, however, that African organizations that are dependent

on volunteer and aid assistance are not likely to prejudice the help that they can receive by making a report as to the negative impact(s) of volunteers on their programs.

From the host organization's point of view volunteers come to give their skills and energies, but the organizations also recognize that the volunteers must get some benefit beyond their work. This includes planning the volunteers' work agenda and tasks with breaks and field trips that allowed them to experience more than just their work in the office and to travel to see the local sights.

Generally the "it is all about me" posture was not as operative as one might have assumed on the part of the volunteers. In fact it was clear that the volunteers from Queen's adapted to the goals of the organization, contributed where they were needed, and accepted that they were working in a host community that had values and customs that were not their own. This experience within the community was recognized by their hosts, and it garnered tremendous respect for the interns.

With regard to the link between the volunteers and a university program, it was clear that Queen's reputation and authority was a significant benefit for the host organizations. It is also clear that Queen's was benefiting from the quality of the ambassadorship that the volunteers were performing in their placements. In any co-curricular volunteers program that is designed and implemented by Queen's the link to the university and its academic objectives should remain strong and be articulated as such.

9. Feedback on Guided Learning

The implementation of a guided learning dimension and its mentored reflective practice within a volunteer program can result in a wide range of positive outcomes.[2] While recent literature is quite clear about the co-relation between the intervention of a mentor or instructor in the student's volunteer experience and the degree of growth in their intercultural competence, the question remains as to whether our volunteer program partners are engaged at that level.

The Literature

Various authors and researchers have pointed out how the addition of the guided learning approach has led to significant growth in the students' intercultural competence. This process is of course not without its challenges.

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[2] See footnote 1 on page 7, and 'guided learning' and 'reflective practice' in Appendix I.

Adding a guided learning dimension to a volunteer program requires planning and structure.

The test of guided learning approach within volunteer program may not be so much in its theory but in its operational design and goals. Success lies in recognizing that intercultural growth for the vast majority of our students is not accidental, but lies in careful planning and the targeted application of resources.

> *Two factors lead to the clear development of cross-cultural competence in the American student groups: as much direct, authentic contact with the host culture as possible, and skillful mentoring which guides, informs, inspires, and stimulates the experiential learning process* (Engle and Engle, 2003,) (as quoted in Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 40).

> *[The guided learning dimension or] intercultural intervention [can be defined] as intentional and deliberate pedagogical approaches, activated throughout the study abroad cycle (before, during, and after) that are designed to enhance students' intercultural competence* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 29).

Reflective learning requires discipline and training to work well.

From all accounts the implementation of a guided learning approach in volunteer programs is challenging. It not only requires that resources be dedicated to the program but it also requires that both staff and students make it a priority to engage in both the learning and the practice surrounding the process of reflecting on the experience and learning. Several authors have noted this requirement.

> *The central premise underlying the program's service-learning theory is that experiential dissonance combined with critical reflection and deeper connections with community through service-learning activities will lead to profound changes in students' worldview. The transformative vision embedded in the course pedagogy is that after participating in service-learning …, students will work to transform lifestyles, relationships, institutions and policies that perpetuate political oppression, economic disparities, and persistent global poverty* (Kiely, 2004, pp. 8-9).

> *First of all, students need to experience difference and then they need to process intentionally their experiences of difference to construct meaning from them. Service-learning often puts students in situations with people who are economically, socially, ethnically, and/or culturally different from themselves. Effective service-learning builds in the reflection time and learning processes to think through these experiences of the actual service project as well as the deeper meanings associated with them... Finally, if students involved in service are to reduce their own ethnocentric beliefs and move along this developmental continuum, they need to work through ethical choices that often emerge within service situations as issues of justice* (Westrick, 2012, p. 282).

Brockbank and McGill have explained how reflective practice involves reflective dialogue that 'engages the person at the edge of their knowledge, their sense of self and the world as experienced by them' (1999, p. 57). This leads to assumptions and understanding about self and the world being challenged. In addition it is inherent in the concept that everyone has to make his or her own journey. Thus reflection forms the bridge between a course of study and personal experience and is a highly individual and, I would venture, often very motivating learning activity (Cox, 2005, p. 461).

Many faculty members bristle at the use of "reflection" in academic learning, yet effective [Service Learning] SL pedagogy requires it. The nature of the cross-cultural encounter, awakening of global awareness, powerful cognitive dissonance that often results, and immense personal growth that becomes possible are each phenomena with enormous disruptive as well as transformative power (Adler, 1975, 1985; Kim, 1995). It would be unethical for us to be unprepared to manage these changes in/for ourselves in addition to helping our students process them. In fact, all of these pedagogical approaches require the teacher to be engaged in a reflexive and recursive praxis; in these pedagogies, we are not only facilitators and teachers, we become co-learners and subjects of analysis. Reflection in SL pedagogy "offers the opportunity for faculty to find deeper meaning in who they are, why they teach, and how to bring their personal and professional insight to bear on society" (Birge, 2005, p. 203). In Brookfield's (2000) words, "we teach to change the world" (p. 1). Thus, critical reflection is not merely a powerful teaching and learning tool, it is a way of life for committed teachers (Brookfield, 1995). (Crabtree, 2008, p. 28).

One must question as to whether there is a significant hurdle hidden within the discipline that is required for success - the hurdle of *intentionality.* Both partners in a volunteer program may find difficulty with this process but for different reasons. The university - its administrators, faculty and staff - because of the resources and personal commitment required for such an endeavour, and the host partners because of cultural and organizational factors.

Trained mentors are essential for the success of a guided learning program.

This note directly addresses a query regarding the intercultural competence of faculty and mentors who are working with the student volunteers in order to increase their intercultural growth. The literature is very clear about the need for faculty to be trained for the task. Exposure to various cultural settings and/or a successful academic career is not sufficient to equip the designated mentors for the task of facilitating a guided learning dimension to volunteer programs abroad.

… [M]erely exposing students to events, whether 'experiential' or not, is no predictor that they will learn from them. They need someone to intervene strategically in their learning, someone who can help them reflect on, hypothesize about and actively test those hypotheses. As Hunter puts it, 'Programs that do not rely on the haphazard chance of student engaging in this process on their own, but instead very intentionally organize learning activities to encourage it, inevitably will be better poised' to teach effectively (2008. p.99). We suggest, again, that the second intervention in this case will involve a well-trained cultural mentor who can help students to develop the intercultural concepts

and skills that will allow them to learn through the internships, field experiences and other experiential activities that their programs provide (Vande Berg, 2009, p. 14).

The presence or absence of a cultural mentor who meets frequently with students may be the single most important intervention that one can make in student intercultural learning abroad (Vande Berg, 2009, p. 11).

A mentor might help students manage perceptions of cultural similarity and dissimilarity – students learned best when they perceived that the cultural differences they were experiencing were neither 'very different' nor 'very similar' to their home culture (Vande Berg, 2009, p. 12).

The preparation of cultural mentors, whether they are faculty, in-country professional staff, or others, is an essential part of student success in study abroad (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 53).

Deep learning involves faculty and students coconstructing knowledge, with teachers helping students become more self-aware and able to shift frames of reference (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 414).

Survey and Interviews

In the surveys and interviews, fruitful responses with regard to the questions pertaining to a guided learning approach to volunteer programs proved to be rather sparse. I proceeded to the questions in that area only if the respondents indicated that they included an intercultural aspect to their program. Only three surveys and interviews dealt directly with the prepared questions:

- Are the partners familiar with a guided learning approach to supporting student development?
- What are our partners' thoughts on having guided learning as part of volunteer programs?

In three more cases, the intercultural aspect of the program was discussed in enough detail that it became clear that it would be possible to work toward a guided learning dimension, but it would require additional discussion that did not seem appropriate at the time. Perhaps the dominant mood of most interviews was that the vast amount of time and resources for all partners was directed toward the volunteers while settling in and developing a work plan with intercultural issues being secondary and incidental.

An observation by one of the partners was that the dialogue around the work that they were doing in conflict management reflected the same process and outcomes that I was talking about achieving through a guided learning process for gaining intercultural competence. They felt that the process for raising the awareness of the volunteer to the issues involved in managing a conflict situation in many ways paralleled the work a mentor would do in the guided learning program.

Another comment pertaining to a guided learning process was that whatever the approach the partner took to working with the volunteers, it was important to impart the importance and value of the role that the volunteer was playing in the life and work of the partner organization. In this way the volunteer became more aware and more involved in the learning process.

10. Elements of a Guided Learning Program

The introduction of a guided learning dimension into a volunteer program is an intentional exercise. There has been significant research done on how to best implement a program of this type. Extracting the key elements from this research can be challenging for a program if it is to be kept manageable and effective given limited resources. Some examples of the research material are found in Appendix VI.

This section of the study will lay out the key elements that can be considered when designing a guided learning dimension for a co-curricular volunteer program. These elements can be implemented for programs taking place both at home and abroad. However, the comments will focus mainly on the option of a volunteer program abroad.

The section below will address key items that face the designer of a guided learning dimension to their program including: Program Learning Outcomes and Program Structure; Training Mentors; Reflective Questions and Reflective Journals; Assessment.

Program Learning Outcomes and Program Structure

As mentioned above, research findings indicate that students are not gaining the intercultural skills that institutions thought that they were achieving simply through contact with their hosts. The intention of the learning outcomes that are planned for students who are engaged in a guided learning approach is to enable growth in intercultural competence. Most sources indicated that while in an intercultural setting most participants required clear and structured learning outcomes to benefit from their experiences. The outcomes must also take into account that the learning process is "experiential, developmental and holistic" (Vande Berg et al, 2012, p.396) since they are not only learning at the level of skills development for a specific culture but also are learning about the overall ways of knowing that govern our learning process.

> *We recommend that students and supervisors should use the framework in developing learning outcomes in order to make the learning processes during international internships more structured and more diverse. Of course there are more ways of structuring learning processes, such as more tightly organized international internship programmes or instructions for supervisors. Furthermore, as we argued in a previous study, not all of the students will be capable of designing their own learning processes and many will need support from supervisors to achieve self-directed learning. At the same time supervisors will need appropriate skills to be able to facilitate students' self-directed learning. Findings from empirical studies indicated that experienced supervisors did not manage a sudden, complete change from 'transmitters of content' to 'coaches of students' learning processes'. Structuring learning processes by providing suggestions for learning outcomes,*

based on a framework of desired learning outcomes, seems to be a good (cost) effective first step. Another interesting, (cost) effective approach might be to develop the learning outcomes of the framework into 'task-based learning' (Niemantsverdriet et al., 2007, p. 78).

Learning about the cycle of learning is critical to the pre-departure stage of the program.

In general, students in study abroad programs should know the learning cycle and be metacognitive about it, blending the cycle with their new daily life and experiences… Preparation for the study abroad experience should include developing the habit of intentional introspection by the student, followed by actions that test new ideas and awareness of this process, both by students and by faculty advisors (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 183).

The learning cycle is embodied in the work of David Kolb.

Kolb was highly influenced by the research conducted by Dewey and Piaget in the 1970s. Kolb's reflective model highlights the concept of experimental learning and is centered around the transformation of information into knowledge. This takes place after the situation has occurred and entails a practitioner reflecting on the experience, gaining a general understanding of the concepts encountered during the experience and then testing these general understandings on a new situation. In this way the knowledge that is gained from a situation is continuously applied and reapplied building on a practitioners prior experiences and knowledge (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflective_practice).

Kolb documented a learning cycle that identified four types of learning styles – concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Learners have a preferred style or styles that they use to engage the learning process. Some learners use only one style while others move between styles depending on the situation. By understanding how students learn it is possible for a mentor or instructor to craft the learning situation to meet the needs of each student. In addition by learning about experiential learning and their particular style(s) of learning students and teachers can learn to manage how they engage a learning situation in order to achieve their learning outcomes.
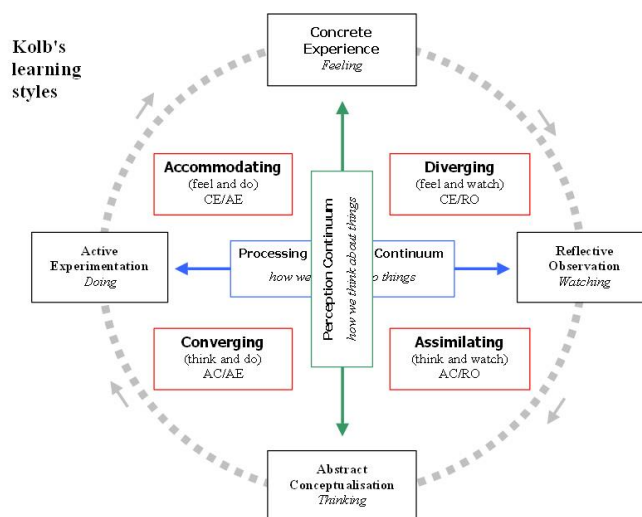
© concept david kolb, adaptation and design alan chapman 2005-06, based on Kolb's learning styles, 1984
Not to be sold or published. More free online training resources are at www.businessballs.com. Sole risk with user.

By making Kolb's work a part of the pre-departure preparation for a sojourn in the field, learners will be more aware of how they approach new situations and offer them new options for engaging the experience. Michael Vande Berg et al point out that "In the course [preceding the in field placement], students become aware of their habitual responses to cultural commonality and difference, and second it teaches them to reframe their experience consciously (2012, p. 404)."

The program outcomes for a volunteer program abroad should serve to enable the students to pace themselves during their stay so that they feel and know that the experience is both manageable and productive at a community and personal level.

The program should also be structured so that at each stage of the experience the students are learning the appropriate information and skills that will enable them to succeed during that stage and to prepare them for the next stage.

> *International education starts from the premise that learning is multidimensional. Study abroad programs foster intellectual growth, language and communication skills, as well as cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal growth. Field experience, internships, and service-learning lie at the intersection of all of these objectives and, when well structured, reinforce a student's learning at least as much as any other aspect of an academic program. The key is to have an organizer who understands and effectively implements experiential education theory, who challenges students to reflect on their experience on a continuing basis, and who enables the students to link experience with context, thus achieving "deeper learning"* (Steinberg, 2002, p. 223).

Training Mentors

As noted when the various issues were discussed, one of the most difficult aspects of designing this type of program is the selecting and training of mentors. The challenges include:

> **the diversity of roles;**
> *With fully self-directed learning, supervisors still have different roles to play, such as those of coach, expert, consultant and role model* (Niemantsverdriet et al., 2007, p. 70).

> **appropriate intervention in the student learning process;**
> *The research evidence and disciplinary evidence also strongly suggested that unless someone or something intervened in the learning of students abroad, helping them become aware of how they habitually frame events, and helping them develop the capacity to reframe events in ways that are effective and appropriate within a new cultural context, most of them would continue to experience events through that original frame* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 388).

> **the unique nature of the program;**
> *Most instructors struggle in learning to teach a course that is experiential, developmental, and holistic.* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 396).

Reflective Learning and Reflective Questions

A critical element in a guided program is the use of reflective learning. This is "the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective. We suggest that this process is central to understanding the experiential learning process (Boyd and Fales, 1983, p. 99)." In many ways this is the key dynamic in the guided learning approach. Experience is viewed from differing perspectives in order to determine varying meanings.

> *Reflecting on our experience, becoming aware that the meaning we assign to experiences may be very different from the meanings that culturally different others assign to those same experiences, is one of the keys to being able to shift perspective and adapt behaviour, and ultimately to interact more effectively with culturally different others* (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 400).

In order to facilitate this process several researchers have generated reflective questions, and in some cases whole frameworks, that are used at the different stages of the program by the participants to examine their ideas and feelings about their experiences in new cultural context. Among these are Gibb's reflective model, Vande Berg's guided learning questions, the Australian Curriculum of New South Wales on reflective learning, the University of Essex guidelines for interns in Latin America, and the work on reflective journals by the Centre for Community Service Learning. Excerpts from these works are found in Appendix V.

Assessment

In order to determine to what extent the students are benefiting from the guided learning approach the overall program structure should include means of assessing their growth. Vande Berg recommends the use of "the IDI and Kolb's Learning Style Inventory both of which provide valuable information about the capacities and learning preferences of the individual students and of the group as a whole (Vande Berg, Paige and Lou, 2012, p. 402)." QUIC currently has staff members trained in the administration of the IDI that could be employed at both the outset of the program and during the debriefing. Kolb's learning style inventory, if applied initially, could assist mentors in understanding how the individual students approach their learning naturally and could afford the mentors options for recommending ways of deepening that learning process.

The call for more rigorous means of assessment is growing in US circles as the results of the research on measuring intercultural competence become more available. L. Engle, a seasoned researcher on study abroad and learner outcomes, recently

> *criticized the field's emphases on student satisfaction as opposed to measurable learning and growth, on inclusive access versus selectivity and merit, and on the provision of familiar comforts rather than exposure to difference.*

"The solution to bringing more identifiable value to our field, value that students can experience and their future employers recognize, hinges on simple, powerful principles we in this room can systematically bring to bear: intentionality, expressed in lucid mission statements and in clearly targeted learning outcomes geared to each study abroad program we organize or support; differentiation, which highlights program differences according to the learning goals and comparative levels of adaptational challenge; intervention, which is skilled and geared toward experiential learning; and assessment, which is systematic, reliable and appropriate to each program's goals," Engle said.

"Between a first taste of international travel on one side, and the perspective-shifting on the other, there is a whole spectrum of intercultural learning outcomes worthy of our attention," said Engle, who emphasized that a study abroad experience of any duration can be meaningful as long as the outcomes are intentionally and realistically designed. *"What I'm finding though is that many times, we don't know why we're doing the things that we're doing, and it undermines the targeted objectives that we can then formulate and aim towards,"* she said.

"So a lot of it is just an effort to articulate what is possible for us at all levels of study abroad, so we can say that it is all good if it's done with intentionality and focus. Without that intentionality, it's the student's consumerism that fills that void. So we have to fill it; we have to fill it before they can fill it with what will come naturally to them." (Redden, 2013).

11. Findings

The study project identified many findings that shed light on the nature of the existing co-curricular partnerships that exist at Queen's and open out the possibilities that present themselves for future developments in this area. Many of their findings are embedded in the previous description of the project research and activities, while others are extracted from my interview notes.

Programs and Program Structure

1) All host partners interviewed and surveyed found volunteer programs beneficial for their needs as well as for the students. On the part of the Canadian partners the benefits were balanced with various operational and ethical concerns; while the host partners abroad were unambiguous in their support for them including some recommendations on how they might be improved.
2) The link between the volunteers and Queen's as an institution with a strong reputation and recognized academic authority is a significant benefit for the host organizations as they can list Queen's as a supporter for their programs when applying for on-going funding.
3) Queen's international reputation benefits from the existence of co-curricular volunteer programs and the quality of the ambassadorship that the volunteers perform in their placements.

4) If a co-curricular volunteer program is to be successful, it will require an intentional effort to integrate guided learning into the process and the significant resources to carry out the program both at Queen's where the training of students and mentors is critical, and in the field where resource imbalance is evident.

5) Ethical questions regarding volunteer programs in the global South must be addressed in the design and implementation of the programs.

Learning Outcomes

6) Generally the "it is all about me" posture on the part of students was not as operative as one might have assumed on the part of the volunteers. In fact it was clear that the volunteers adapted to the goals of the organization, contributed where they were needed, and accepted the conditions that they were working in.

7) A key learning outcome for students involved in volunteer programs is to recognize that a host community has values and customs that are not their own and that their integration within the community will be recognized and valued by the hosts. It will garner tremendous respect for the volunteers.

8) The predominant mood of most interviews was that the vast amount of time and resources for all host partners was directed toward the settling in of the volunteers and development of their work plan. Intercultural issues were seen to be secondary and any discussion about them was incidental.

Intercultural Competence

9) The volunteers generally adapted well to the life of the workplace and the larger community.

10) The implementation of intercultural training is secondary and incidental to the transfer of skills and the integration into the community.

11) Intercultural skills pertain most effectively to co-curricular programs through the appropriate transfer of skills and the awareness of the key cultural factors that enhance integration into the community.

12) In some cases the work that the host partner is involved with utilizes processes that are similar to the guided learning process proposed for intercultural competence. One of the partners observed that the dialogue around the work that they were doing in conflict management reflected the same process and outcomes that I was talking about achieving through a guided learning process for gaining intercultural competence. They felt that the process for raising the awareness of the volunteer to the issues involved in managing a conflict situation in many ways paralleled the work a mentor would do in the guided learning program.

Challenges and Partner Recommendations

13) For the most part the challenges identified through the literature can be classified as design and ethical. These challenges – especially the ethical issues – require intentional action and an ethical protocol to establish equity and a power balance within the partnerships.
14) None of the interviews betrayed the hosts' feelings that the volunteer programs created an ethical or power shift in their lives; however, this does not mean that one does not exist.
15) Host partners identified challenges that were largely operational or focused on program outcomes. Most of these could be dealt with during the initial stages of design and implementation such as the length of the volunteer sojourn and any resource transfer to the host partner.
16) Host partners indicated that the field visits that were made during this study project were greatly appreciated.
17) The observations and issues that I raised personally were reflected at least in part in the work by Vande Berg and other recent researchers looking at the question of guided learning in volunteer or service learning programs, and in the discussions with host partners in southern Africa.
18) A critical element in volunteer placement is the matching of volunteer skills to the skills required by the partners to complete the designated tasks in the time available.

Guided Learning Process

19) Overall guided learning is not a well-known concept and is not generally employed in the field. However the partners who are engaged in volunteer programs on the Canadian side either are aware of or are providing mentoring and support for reflective learning.
20) Significant intercultural learning can take place if the conditions are correct and the learning support is in place in the form of a guided learning approach.
21) The training of mentors is a very real challenge and it is hard to achieve the targeted learning outcomes without significant resources being applied for the training of mentors, whether they reside in the home culture or host culture.
22) Whatever approach a host partner takes to working with the volunteers, it was important to impart the importance and value of the role that the volunteer is playing in the life and work of the partner organization. In this way the volunteer becomes more aware and more involved in the learning process.

12. Recommendations

Several recommendations either have been suggested by the partners during their interviews or on the survey, or arise from the literature.

Co-curricular Program Aims and Program Structure

1) Given that a co-curricular volunteer program abroad presents significant opportunities for Queen's students to develop intercultural and international competence, it is recommended that in conjunction with the Global Citizenship Program, Queen's should establish co-curricular volunteer program(s) abroad with a guided learning dimension under the auspice of QUIC and Student Affairs.
2) Some program design considerations are:
   a) the structure of the program should be simple to apply and monitor;
   b) the overall structure of the program should take advantage to what is already in place at Queen's in terms of administrative, experience, and resource options of Student Affairs and QUIC;
   c) the link to the university and its academic objectives should remain strong and be articulated as such;
   d) program placements should be at least 12 -16 weeks long with the option for staying in the placement for an additional term; and,
   e) the program should be kept small with 20-24 students per year so that adequate resources and quality support services can be provided to the participants by Queen's, and suitable partners can be found for all students who are selected to participate.

3) Some design considerations for preparing volunteers for a guided learning approach to a volunteer experience are:

   At home preparation
   a) participate in a general pre-departure orientation including logistics, culture specific information, risk management plan;
   b) review culture general background from research done by recognized authorities such as Hall, Hofstede, Berry, Bennett;
   c) discuss "how we know what we know" using the work of Kolb regarding the learning cycle and Mestenhauser regarding reframing the cultural context;
   d) complete a personal skills inventory for optimum placement;
   e) complete the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) for benchmarking purposes and group and personal discussion;
   f) become conversant with the reflective learning questions;
   g) participate in a discussion of the ethics of working as a volunteer in the global South and review the ethical protocol developed by Queen's to develop partnerships that are equitable in resources and power;
   h) participate in culture specific sessions hosted by resource people from Queen's, embassies and NGOs; and,

i) participate in sessions on being a Canadian and Queen's ambassador e.g. how to relate to the community, host family and host partner leader.

In field mentoring
a) make the introduction of a mentor;
b) assign the reflection questions 2-3 times for personal and group sessions; and,
c) complete a reflective journal.

Re-entry
a) discuss the experience using the reflective questions;
b) debrief personally and in groups with reflective learning gleaned through the journal entries; and,
c) complete the IDI for a 2nd time for assessment of the intercultural growth.

Currently students departing for volunteer placements abroad normally complete the pre-departure orientation that is linked to the Off Campus Activity Safety Policy (OCASP) program and have a group risk management session. In addition students may complete the IDI and have a group session to discuss the results. The additional elements that are listed above have specific intended outcomes that such a program aims to achieve.

3) In order to ameliorate the systemic imbalance in the flow of resources, Queen's should develop a set of ethical guidelines to ensure that both the institution and their partners in the South are in agreement as to the aims and process of the program and to forge a program structure that commits an institution such as Queen's to the transfer of appropriate resources in order to ensure that the host partner is recognized for its contribution.

4) It follows as noted above that an ethical framework for the establishment of such programs will help to ensure that the individual volunteer understands that the role that they are playing in the achievement of the stated programs outcomes will certainly include recognition that they will experience personal growth; however, primary among the goals is the support and engagement with the partner goals and activities. Therefore, a thorough selection process and orientation programs both pre-departure and in-country should take place in order to assist in making this happen.

Program Partners

5) Host partners indicated that the field visits that were made during this study project were greatly appreciated; therefore, if co-curricular volunteer programs are established it is recommended that periodic field visits take place to the host partner institutions.

6) A protocol for identifying, selecting and relating to host partner organizations should be developed and vetted with our exisiting program partners. The information offered by host partner organizations in the selection of volunteers should include:
a) An inventory of the key tasks that will be available for volunteers to complete;
b) An inventory of the desired skills that the organization requires.

Training Mentors

7) Considerations for the development of a mentor training program are:
   a) Develop selection criteria for identifiying mentors best suited to the the program learning outcomes and the dynamic of the guide learning approach;
   b) offer a general pre-departure orientation including logistics, culture specific information, risk management plan;
   c) review culture general background from research done by recognized authorities such as Hall, Hofstede, Berry, Bennett;
   d) discuss "how we know what we know" using the work of Kolb regarding the learning cycle and Mestenhauser regarding reframing the cultural context;
   e) complete of the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) for benchmarking purposes and group and personal discussion; and,
   f) introduce the reflective learning questions and how to work with students when using them.

Guided Learning Approach, Reflective Questions and Reflective Journals

8) Queen's should consider the work of M. Vande Berg and D. Kolb as a base of research for informing a guided learning approach to any co-curricular volunteer programs that are established.

9) Given the many options for adopting reflective approaches offered in the literature, and in line with the desire to keep the guided learning process as simple as possible, the following list of questions that is influenced by both Gibbs (1988) and Vande Berg et al (2012, p. 403) is proposed as the basis of the reflective process.

   - Describe what happened?
   - What did you do?
   - How did you do this?
   - What were your feelings about the results?
   - What were the consequences?
   - Might others have done it differently or felt differently about the situation?
   - What might you do differently in this type of situation next time?

10) Given that reflective journals are being used by a number of volunteer programs and they have proven to be very useful tools for a guided learning approach, Queen's should consider the use of reflective journals in a guided learning approach that is established. Various models exist for this purpose. One example is included as an example in Appendix VI.

Assessment

11) Employ the IDI and Kolb Learning styles as a means to assess the impact of the guided learning experience.

Resources

12) Adequate resources should be allocated to the establishment and implementation of co-curricular volunteer programs so that they are able to: administer the programs, train students and mentors, assist in funding individual students with limited resources, enable field visits to take place, and transfer resources to host partners to support their efforts in the field.

13) Student Affairs should identify the Global Citizenship Program and its related co-curricular volunteer programs as a funding priority and present the program to external funders for support.

13. Appendices

Appendix I - Definitions
Appendix II – Survey Participant List and Questionnaire for Key Informants
Appendix III – List of Interviewees and Interview Template
Appendix IV – Timeline and Activities
Appendix V – References
Appendix VI – Guided Learning Research References

In any study the definition of terms is required in order to clarify the meanings that are implied in this specific circumstance. The following terms are used on several occasions in the reference materials and the text of this report. Several definitions may be identified since the various authors may differ in their approach to the discussion of the topics. I have chosen definitions that come closest to the meaning that I wish to convey in outlining the results of this study project.

Co-curricular Activities

> *Co-Curricular activities: being outside of but usually complementing the regular curriculum.*
> Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cocurricular

Global Citizenship

> *Global citizenship is an umbrella term for the social, political, environmental, or economic actions of globally-minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. The term can refer to the belief that, rather than actors affecting isolated societies, individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks. Global citizenship is an interdisciplinary lens through which to analyze the history and development of our changing world. Although there is no standard definition of global citizenship, there are common topics that guide conversations in the field.*
> Retrieved from http://unai-globalcitizenship.org/global-citizenship

> *Oxfam supports active Global Citizenship. This means enabling young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place. This is about a way of thinking and behaving. It is an outlook on life, a belief that we can make a difference.*
> Retrieved from http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship

> *Global citizenship [is] a way of understanding the world in which an individual's attitudes and behaviours reflect a compassion and concern for the marginalized and/or poor and for the relationship between poverty and wealth – within and between communities, countries and regions.*
> Retrieved from http://cdnglobalcitizenship.wordpress.com/2011/05/14/educating-global-citizenscanadian-foreign-policy-and-youth-studyvolunteer-abroad-programs/

Guided Learning

> *Guided learning implies that a mentor or instructor interacts at regular intervals with the student volunteers to facilitate guided inquiry into their experience through reflective questions and reference to their knowledge and critical resources* (Footnote 1, p. 7).

> *Guided learning is a middle ground between* <u>didactic teaching</u> *and untrammeled* <u>discovery learning</u>.
> Retrieved from http://dairynutrient.wisc.edu/875/page.php?id=444

Intercultural competence

Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one's goals to some degree.
Deardorff, D. (2006). The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization at institutions of higher education in the united states". *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 10(3), 254.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes (LOs) describe what a student is expected to know, understand or be able to demonstrate at the end of a course in order to obtain a passing grade. They express a desired state and are often described in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Learning outcomes can be set for both individual courses and entire degree programmes.

The contents in a course description lists the issues dealt with and discussed during the course. It presents the teacher's viewpoint of what the course is about. Also the aims in a course description present the instructor's point of view. They list points that students should learn during the course or what the course offers (the student acquires an understanding of something, the course provides basic information on something, the course introduces an issue…).

Learning outcomes provide a student-oriented perspective on the course aims. They explicitly define what the student is expected to learn and at what level.
Retrieved from
http://www.lut.fi/fi/lut/studies/learningcentre/report/Documents/lo_en.html

Partner

*A **partnership** is an arrangement where parties agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests.*
Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partnership

Reflective practice

Reflective learning is the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective. We suggest that this process is central to understanding the experiential learning process.
Boyd, E., & Fales, A. (1983). Reflective Learning: Key to Learning from Experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology,* 23(2), 99-117.

What is reflective learning?
Reflective learning … is … likely to involve a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome specified in terms of learning, action or clarification … The process and outcome of reflective work is most likely to be in a represented (e.g. written) form, to be seen by others and to be assessed (Moon, 2007).

Key findings
There are different stages and levels of reflection.
Reflective skills need to be built up gradually.
Tutors find it difficult to mark reflective answers fairly.
Tutors and course teams have found the model useful for the development and assessment of reflective questions.
Retrieved from http://www.open.ac.uk/opencetl/files/opencetl/file/ecms/web-content/Sclater-and-Minocha-(2009)-Leaflet-Reflection-on-action.pdf

Service Learning

Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
Retrieved from http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning.

Service learning is:
a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community; is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and helps foster civic responsibility; and that is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.
Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service-learning.

Service-learning is an educational methodology which combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation for community work, and deliberate reflection. Students participating in service-learning provide direct and indirect community service as part of their academic coursework, learn about and reflect upon the community context in which service is provided, and develop an understanding of the connection between service and their academic work. These learning experiences are designed through a collaboration of the community and the institution or academic unit/program, relying upon partnerships meant to be of mutual benefit. Improvement and sustainability of the experiences and the partnerships are enhanced through formal assessment activities that involve community, faculty, student and institutional perspectives.
Retrieved from http://www.purdue.edu/servicelearning/documents/workbook.pdf

Volunteer/Volunteer Program

Volunteer, verb *- To choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's basic obligations.*

Volunteer, noun – *from the perspective of the doer: Someone who gives time, effort and talent to a need or cause without profiting monetarily.*
Retrieved from http://www.energizeinc.com/art/adef.html.

Appendix II
Survey Participant List and Questionnaire for Key Informants

Survey Participant List

CARE International
Development Studies (Development Studies)
Guelph University – International Programs
IAESTE - Career Services
Queen's Health Outreach (QHO)
Queen's Program for International Development (QPID)

Questionnaire for Key Informants: Distributed to Seven Participants January 17, 2013

Hello:

As you know I will be on study leave for March and April of this year. During my study leave I usually work on a project. Last year I developed a framework for a co-curricular Global Citizenship Program which is currently being planned for a pilot run.

This year I will be returning to southern Africa after many years as I used to live in Zambia in the early 1980s. My study project involves meeting with some organizations in Botswana and Zambia to discuss programs that are in place currently for student volunteers. I will also visit some universities in South Africa. I am interested in hearing from partner organizations about the success of their programs especially with regard to the potential for students to grow in intercultural competence during their sojourn. I am also interested in discovering how we might add a guided learning dimension to our volunteer programs in order to enhance student development, if one is not already in place.

Given that the move towards a guided learning approach to the development of intercultural competence is relatively recent, it is not clear if existing partnerships are able to accommodate this change. With this in mind, I will seek to learn partner perspectives - both Canadian and Southern African – on:

- the key objectives in setting up volunteer opportunities;
- the benefits and constraints that are faced in preparing and hosting students;
- implementing a guided learning component to volunteer programs; and,
- recommendations for improving the programs and the ways we might deepen the intercultural experience of the volunteers.

Given your involvement in relating to volunteer programs abroad would you please take a few minutes and address as many of the following questions as pertain to your programs and/or as your time permits. Your responses will assist me in preparing for my meetings with our partners and colleagues in southern Africa.

Many thanks

Wayne

Wayne Myles
Director
QUIC

Questions

1. Does your organization/institution send and/or receive students on volunteer programs abroad?
2. What main responsibilities (2 or 3) do program partners share in placing students in volunteer programs?
3. What are the key learning outcomes for students who participate in your program(s)?
4. If gaining intercultural competence through volunteering abroad is one of your program's student learning outcomes, how do you achieve this?
5. What are the key challenges in implementing volunteer programs?
6. Are you familiar with a guided learning approach to supporting student development i.e. a mentor or instructor interacts at regular intervals with the student volunteers to facilitate guided inquiry into their experience through reflective questions and reference to their knowledge and critical resources?
7. What are your thoughts on having guided learning as part of volunteer programs?
8. Do both partners have to be involved in the guided learning aspect of a program for it to be successful? Why?

List of Interviewees

South Africa

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A Brief Outline of the Co-curricular Volunteer/Internship Program Study Project

This study originates in the plans for Queen's to increase co-curricular volunteer opportunities abroad for students, and because of the challenge of providing support for these students in learning about themselves and the cultures and communities that they visit.

Of significance in preparing co-curricular placements for Queen's students is the identification and engagement of community partnerships both in Canada and abroad within which students will volunteer or intern. It is critical to any of these partnerships that there is a mutual understanding of the aims and objectives of the programs that will accommodate the students. Among the objectives that Queen's would bring to the table is the desire to engage our students more effectively in the intercultural dimension of their experience. In order to accomplish this objective one aspect of the program might be the implementation of a guided learning component.

Given that the move toward a guided learning approach to monitoring the development of intercultural competence in students who accept volunteer placements is relatively recent, it is not clear if existing partnerships already have a guided learning approach in place and, if not, whether they are able to accommodate this change. With this in mind, this project will seek to identify answers to the following questions:

1. What are the key learning outcomes for students who participate in partner program(s)?
2. If gaining intercultural competence through volunteering abroad is one of the partner program's student learning outcomes, how do we achieve this?
3. What are the key challenges in implementing volunteer/internship programs?
4. Do our partners have recommendations for improving our programs?
5. Are the partners familiar with a guided learning approach to supporting student development i.e. a mentor or instructor interacts at regular intervals with the student volunteers to facilitate guided inquiry into their experience through reflective questions and reference to their knowledge and critical resources?
6. What are our partners' thoughts on having guided learning as part of volunteer programs?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Wayne Myles

Director

Appendix IV
Timeline and Activities

Date	Location	Activity	Contacts
Mar 9	Toronto to Cape Town	• En route	
Mar 10	Cape Town	• En route	
Mar 11 -13	Cape Town	• University of Cape Town • Reading and drafting notes	• Charles Hellaby
Mar 14	Cape Town to Joburg	• University of Witwatersrand Interviews • Reading and Drafting notes	• Dr. Jaichand • Sami Chasi
Mar 15	Joburg	• Action Support Interview • Reading and Drafting notes	• Kate Gardner • Allison Malkin
Mar 16	Joburg	• Apartheid Museum	
Mar 17	Joburg to Francistown		
Mar 18 - 19	Francistown	• True Men Trust Interview • Reading and Drafting notes Reading and Drafting notes	• Kabo Moskei
Mar 20	Francistown to Kasane		
Mar 21 - 22	Kasane	• Ditswunelo Interview • Reading and Drafting notes	• Richard Kashweeka
Mar 23	Kasane		
Mar 24	Kasane to Livingstone		
Mar 25	Livingstone	• Reading and Drafting notes • Writing Report	
Mar 26	Livingstone to Lusaka		
Mar 27 - 29	Lusaka	• Forest Fruits Interview • Reading and Drafting notes • Writing Report	• Dan Ball
Mar 30 - 31	Lusaka		
April 1 - 8	Lusaka	• Field Trip to North West Province to see Honey production in villages • Reading and Drafting notes • Writing Report	• Field Staff
April 9 - 12		• Notes review, analysis and report writing	
Apr 13	Lusaka to Amsterdam		
Apr 14-15	Amsterdam	• Report writing	
Apr 16	Amsterdam		
Apr 17 -19	Amsterdam to Kingston		
Apr 18-19	Kingston	• Report writing	
Apr 20/21	Kingston		

Appendix V
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Australian Curriculum of New South Wales

Stages of reflective learning	Bloom's Taxonomy	The student's task
Noticing	Knowledge	What did you already know? What caught your attention? What do you now know?
Making sense and meaning	Comprehension	Can you give examples or illustrate what you have learnt?
	Application	How can you use what you have learnt?
Working with meaning	Analysis	Can you demonstrate or apply your new learning in some way? How? What are your preferred learning styles and what teaching strategies were used for these? What worked? What was easy? What energised you? What was difficult? What were the low points? What frustrated you?
Transformative learning	Synthesis	Construct a mind map or other form of study guide of geometry. Select one aspect and give full details of what you have learnt. Why do you consider the learning of geometry as significant in your daily life?
	Evaluation	From which activity did you learn the most? Explain why, including a reflection on whether this activity was presented in your learning preference or otherwise.

Manly, HS. *Year 7 Reflective Learning Task: Version 1*. The Government of Australia: New South Wales. Retrieved from
http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=year%207%20reflective%20learning%20task%3A%20version&source=web&cd=1&sqi=2&ved=0CDAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au%2Fsecondary%2Fmathematics%2Fyears7_10%2Fprogramming%2Fnbscmanly%2Fmhsy7reftask.doc&ei=2cNxUemPBJOlqwGZ_oGwCA&usg=AFQjCNFwJ3UI0tekeBBio1-r88ulOU8jiA&bvm=bv.45512109,d.aWM

An Experiment in Developmental Teaching and Learning
Michael Vande Berg, Meghan Quinn, and Catherine Menyhart

This sequence is grounded in a basic experiential/constructivist assumption: that the meaning of an event is not in the event itself but is created – and within the context of the person's own cultural groups is cocreated – by the person who experiences it:

1. What happened?
2. What did you do?
3. How did you do this?
4. What were the consequences?
5. What might you have done differently?

We find that this sequence, and especially the final question, helps individuals realize that in order to address successfully the cultural issue that they are facing, they must take into account the perspective of "the other," and work to shift their own frames of reference.

Vande Berg, M., Paige, R., & Lou, K. (2012). *Student Learning Abroad.* Stirling, Virginia: Stylus. (p. 403)

The University of Essex

The University of Essex, in its guidelines for internships in Latin America, for example, informs the students in advance about the criteria for assessment of journals: "critical reflection on the social and cultural setting of the internship … [and] relating the experiences to broader international events and processes … [as well as] the overall quality of the reflections." The Essex grading criteria stress the quality of the observations.

The Essex approach also suggests five topics that ought to be included in all journals: "cultural knowledge, race and ethnicity, gender, power, and work." This is helpful to the students because it provides a focus for them to recognize and articulate cultural differences.

Steinberg, M. (2002). 'Involve me and I will understand': Academic quality in experiential programs abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad,* 8, 207-229. Retrieved from http://www.frontiersjournal.com/issues/vol8/vol8-10_steinberg.pdf

Adaptation of the Gibbs Reflective Model (1988)

Graham Gibbs discussed the use of **structured debriefing** to facilitate the reflection involved in Kolb's "experiential learning cycle". He presents the stages of a full structured debriefing as follows:

(Initial experience)
- Description:
"What happened? Don't make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions; simply describe."

- Feelings:
"What were your reactions and feelings? Again don't move on to analysing these yet."

- Evaluation:
"What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements."

- Analysis:
"What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you."
"What was really going on?"
"Were different people's experiences similar or different in important ways?"

- Conclusions (general):
"What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?"

- Conclusions (specific):
"What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or way of working?"
Personal action plans:
"What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time?"
"What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?"[13][14]

Gibbs' suggestions are often cited as Gibbs' reflective cycle or Gibbs' model of reflection (1988), and simplified into the following six distinct stages:
- Description
- Feelings
- Evaluation
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Action plan.
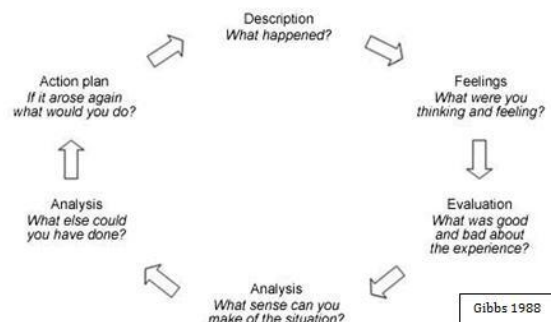
Gibbs, G. (2012) Gibbs 1988 Adaptation of Gibbs Reflective Model. *Wikipedia*.
    Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflective_practice#Gibbs_1988

Reflective Journals - The Centre for Community Service Learning

A well- written journal is a tool, which helps you practice the quick movements back and forth from the environment in which you are working to the abstract generalizations you have read or heard in class.

What is reflection? A process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences. Reflection can happen through writing, speaking, listening, and reading about the service experiences. Why is reflection important? Learning happens through a mix of theory and practice, thought and action, observation and interaction. It allows students to learn from themselves.

The Three Levels of Reflection

The Mirror (A clear reflection of the Self)

- Who am I?
- What are my values?
- What have I learned about myself through this experience?
- Do I have more/less understanding or empathy than I did before volunteering?
- In what ways, if any, has your sense of self, your values, your sense of "community," your willingness to serve others, and your self-confidence/self-esteem been impacted or altered through this experience?
- Have your motivations for volunteering changed? In what ways?
- How has this experience challenged stereotypes or prejudices you have/had? Any realizations, insights, or especially strong lessons learned or half-glimpsed?
- Will these experiences change the way you act or think in the future? Have you given enough, opened up enough, cared enough?
- How have you challenged yourself, your ideals, your philosophies, your concept of life or of the way you live?

The Microscope (Makes the small experience large)

- What happened?
- Describe your experience.
- What would you change about this situation if you were in charge? What have you learned about this agency, these people, or the community?
- Was there a moment of failure, success, indecision, doubt, humor, frustration, happiness, sadness?
- Do you feel your actions had any impact?
- What more needs to be done? Does this experience compliment or contrast with what you're learning in class? How?
- Has learning through experience taught you more, less, or the same as the class? In what ways?

The Binoculars (Makes what appears distant, appear closer)

- From your service experience, are you able to identify any underlying or overarching issues that influence the problem?
- What could be done to change the situation?
- How will this alter your future behaviors/attitudes/and career?
- How is the issue/agency you're serving impacted by what is going on in the larger political/social sphere?
- What does the future hold?
- What can be done?

Center for Community Service Learning. (2012). *Reflection Journals*. Arlington, Texas: University of Texas at Arlington. Retrieved from http://www.uta.edu/ccsl/for-students/reflection-journals.php