On-site Directors:
Thoughtfully and Effectively Coping with Culture

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On-site Directors: Thoughtfully and Effectively Coping with Culture

Overview

• The intersections of multiple cultures that program directors/coordinators navigate on a daily basis
• Presentation of survey results: Input from directors & coordinators around the world
• Effectively negotiating the gap between sending institution expectations & on-site realities
• Strategies for supporting on-site directors/staff & training opportunities
• Implications for institutions hiring on-site directors
Layers of Culture

- One’s own complex culture
- Host country/community culture
- U.S. culture
- Students’ varied & complex cultures
- Multiple institutional cultures (sending & host)
- Program office/center colleagues’ & staff’s cultures
- Study abroad organization’s culture
- Parents’ cultures
195 directors replied to the statement, “Personally I associate more with…”

Home culture – 14.9%
Host culture – 11.3%
Mixed – 63.1%
They are the same – 10.8%

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# Collaborating Institutions & Associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACUPI (Italy)</td>
<td>CASA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>CIEE</td>
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<tr>
<td>APUAF (France)</td>
<td>IES</td>
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<td>APUNE (Spain)</td>
<td>IFSA – Butler</td>
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<td>Arcadia University</td>
<td>ISEP</td>
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<td>Boston University</td>
<td>Middlebury College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown University</td>
<td>SIT</td>
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</table>
The On-site directors/coordinators who participated (n=257) are from:

- 57.2% from the host country
- 31.5% from the United States
- 11.3% from a third country
Years of experience in an on-site director/coordinator position

- 0 - 5 years: 30.5%
- 6 - 10 years: 28.5%
- 11 - 15 years: 21.1%
- 16 - 20 years: 9.8%
- +20 years: 10.2%
29.6% of the participating directors/coordinators work with Direct Enrollment Programs.

Direct Enrollment Programs: Students are directly enrolled in the host university with local students.

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28.8% of the participating directors/coordinators work with Island Programs.

Island Programs: Students take classes offered by their study abroad program in the Program Center.

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49.4% of participating directors/coordinators work with Hybrid Programs.

Hybrid Programs: Students are enrolled in a combination of classes offered by both the study abroad program and the host institution(s).
Based on my own experience, there are advantages to being a director from...

![Bar Chart]

- Strongly Disagree: 0.9%
- Disagree: 4.5%
- Uncertain: 3.5%
- Agree: 52.2%
- Strongly Agree: 51.3%

Options:

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

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Being a director/coordinator from

- **the host country**
- **the USA**
- **3rd country**

Is an advantage when working with the **STUDENTS**

- *First-hand local knowledge*
- *Credibility*
- *Cultural reference*
- *Freedom to criticize culture*

- *Shared experience*
- *First-hand US knowledge*
- *Approachability*
- *Common language*

- *Neutrality*
- *Outsider perspective*

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Is an advantage when working with colleagues at the HOST INSTITUTION(S)

- Same cultural codes
- Same language
- Shared communication styles
- First-hand knowledge of educational system

*Neutrality
*Mediation
*Translate cultural norms
*Represent U.S. institutions
*Knowledge of U.S. higher ed system

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

- Labor & tax law knowledge
- Understanding of work ethic, incentives
- Shared norms
- Knowledge of business customs
- Facilitate understanding of the U.S. perspective
- Offer alternative solutions
- Shared vision, goals with other American staff
- Broader perspective

Is an advantage when working with the PROGRAM CENTER STAFF

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

Is an advantage when working with the SENDING INSTITUTIONS/US HEADQUARTERS

*Effective bridge
*Provide local perspective
*Compliance with local norms

52.4%

*Ease of communication
*Same language
*Familiarity with US campus, curriculum, norms, standards
*Understanding of cultural context

71.6%

*Broader view

31.0%

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

Is an advantage when working with PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT / ACTIVITIES

- Deep knowledge of local context
- Ease at building working relationships
- Cultural authenticity of activities
- Understanding of US student expectations, needs, interests
- Different ideas & approaches

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Based on my own experience there are challenges to being a director from...

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Poses a challenge when working with the STUDENTS

- *Different cultural codes & communication barriers*
- *Generational difference*
- *Students’ preference for an American*
- *Not knowing US university system 100%*
- *Lack of credibility*

- *Misunderstandings*
- *Lesser familiarity with US culture*

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

35.8%: *Communication problems*

35.8%: *Misunderstanding social/cultural cues*

27.6%: *Outside host institution culture*

15.0%: *Caught in the middle*

*Information flow - being kept informed*

Poses a challenge when working with colleagues at the HOST INSTITUTION

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

Poses a challenge when working with the PROGRAM CENTER STAFF

*Cultural differences
*Different work ethic

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>Communication challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>Confronting lack of understanding on US side of local realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poses a challenge when working with the SENDING INSTITUTION(S) / US HEADQUARTERS

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Being a director/coordinator from

- the host country
- the USA
- 3rd country

Poses a challenge when working with PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT / ACTIVITIES

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On-site directors/coordinators associate more with

Home culture Host culture Mixed They are the same

- directors from the host country
- directors from the USA
- directors from a 3rd country

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The ideal situation in a study abroad program is to have both local and U.S. staff on-site.
Directors recognize ways in which their own culture impacts their interactions with students & with on-site/US colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors from:</th>
<th>the host country</th>
<th>the United States</th>
<th>a third country</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Strongly disagree 5 = Strongly agree

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Cultural differences have been the source of conflicts or misunderstandings in the work environment (n=186)
Directors generally have an easy time resolving culture-related conflicts

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Directors/Coordinators use personal examples of culture-related conflict resolution as teaching moments for their students (n=187)
The employing institution has mechanisms in place to support on-site directors & staff (n=179)

1 = Strongly disagree  5 = Strongly agree

Directors from:  the host country  the United States  a third country  Total

- Host country: 4.03
- United States: 3.43
- Third country: 3.95
- Total: 3.82

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The support from the institution is helpful to directors/coordinators in managing multiple cultures effectively.

Here are the scores:

- The host country: 3.82
- The United States: 3.13
- A third country: 3.95
- Total: 3.6

1 = Strongly disagree  5 = Strongly agree

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Directors/Coordinators feel connected to other program directors
This support is helpful specifically re: managing multiple cultural differences

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Suggestions/Requests for training/support

• Support in engaging with the field outside of the host country.
• More colleague-to-colleague sharing of issues and best practices at annual RD meetings.
• Increase awareness at sending institutions/US HQs re: on-site perspectives and realities.
• More management training. EIDP training was too U.S.-centric.
• Hire former study abroad students at sending institution OIPs / US HQs to increase awareness of realities abroad.
• Risk management training.
• Improve communication.
• Support that demonstrates a belonging to the home campus community.
• Encourage more communication and stronger ties with fellow RDs.
• Include us in higher level conversations to facilitate smooth communication with in-country officials, attorneys, etc.
• Use veteran directors to help train local/newer staff/directors.
• Training on cultural differences among US students from different ethnic backgrounds.
Special thanks to

Juan Sánchez Fernández, PhD
Director, Department of Commercialization and Marketing Research
Managing Director, Modern Language Center
University of Granada

And to all of the directors and coordinators around the world who took the time to participate in this survey and who are most certainly “thoughtfully and effectively coping with culture.”
SIT Study Abroad Reporting Matrix

- ADs/PDs speak with parents and sending schools only in exceptional circumstances
- Cultural issues mitigated by limiting AD/PD communication to University Relations/Students Affairs
- Academic Dean mediates conversations
- Annual AD/PD training further equips all parties
- Differences in interpretation of process/behavior/academic expectations may occur between the AD/PD and student. SIT manages/mitigates these with:
  - Standard procedures manual
  - Student handbook
  - Program specific rules
  - Program syllabi
Leadership

decision
ethic
vision
integrity
contribution
communication
motivation
influence
responsibility
PERSONAL LEADERSHIP
International Negotiations
Executive/Leadership Management

- Harvard University, Graduate School of Education, Certificate in Advanced Education Leadership
- Women’s Executive Leadership
- Leadership Development

Management Development

- Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Kolbes Learning Style
- 360º Leadership Development
- Individual Directions Inventory, Management Resource Group (MRG)
- Firo-B: Inter-relational needs
- Adaptive Leadership Capability
- Organizational Culture Assessment

Intercultural Development

- IDI
- Cultural Detective
- Management of Self
- Personal Leadership
- Happiness Studies (Beth Cabrera)
- Presence/Mindfulness (Byron Katie)
- Emotional Intelligence (Daniel Goleman)
Thank you!

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