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Student Name: Matthew Zittritsch

Email Address: matthew.zittritsch@mail.sit.edu ; matthew.zittritsch@gmail.com

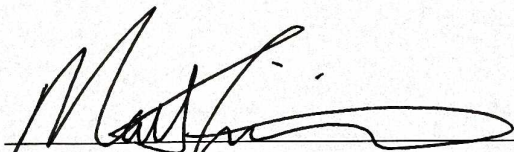
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COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON (COFC) EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM
IN GHANA, SPRING 2024

Matthew Zittritsch

IELR-82

International Education

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a Master of International Education
at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 1, 2024

Advisor: Dr. Melissa Whatley

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Abstract

This study evaluates the impact and outcomes of an experiential learning program in Ghana for students with a declared business major or minor at the College of Charleston. The research focuses on the personal, academic, and professional growth experienced by program participants, as well as their immersion in Ghanaian culture and entrepreneurial experiences. The study utilizes the ADDIE model, encompassing the stages of Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate, to assess the program's effectiveness. The qualitative data collected provides a holistic overview of the participants' experiences and perceptions, allowing for the identification of areas of success and improvement. The findings have led to actionable recommendations for future program planning and enhancements. The study also addresses potential biases in the participants' reflections and experiences, emphasizing transparency and seeking feedback from multiple perspectives. The research highlights the importance of expanding study abroad opportunities to encompass a broader range of global regions and provides valuable insights for program planning and development.

Keywords: Experiential learning, Study abroad program, Ghana, College of Charleston, ADDIE model, Qualitative data, Program evaluation, Entrepreneurial experiences, Cultural immersion, Future program planning.

Introduction

Studying abroad offers a unique and unparalleled opportunity for both the students who participate and the individuals who host them to broaden their horizons, explore new cultures, and gain perspectives from diverse communities. It allows students to immerse themselves in a different cultural setting, interact with locals, and develop a deeper understanding of global issues and perspectives (Molenda, 2003). By exposing themselves to different cultural norms and traditions, students can develop intercultural competence and adaptability, essential skills in today's globalized world (Smith, 2018).

Ghana is a developing nation in sub-Saharan Africa with a rich cultural heritage, historical significance, and an evolving economic sector. The country has a vibrant community of scholars, researchers, and leaders; therefore, international study abroad opportunities to Ghana can have a profound impact on the individuals who are participating in these types of programs. This capstone offers insights into the experiences of program participants who studied abroad in Ghana, covering their personal, academic, and professional growth, as well as their cultural immersion and entrepreneurial experiences.

The College of Charleston offers three study abroad options which include affiliate, exchange, and faculty-led programs. Faculty-led study abroad programs, such as the experiential learning program that was evaluated in this capstone, are short-term study abroad opportunities that take place, typically, during either the College's spring break or summer term. These programs are the most cost affordable study abroad program options available to students at the College of Charleston. However, as of the 2022-23 academic year, the College's School of Business only offered faculty led study abroad program opportunities to parts of Europe,

including some Nordic countries, South America, and Asia. A geographical area that has been omitted is sub-Saharan Africa.

While all study abroad programs may vary in location, duration, and cost, the one consistency amongst these programs is that they all are associated with an academic department that helps to determine the program's design and affixed course credits. This means that students who are interested in these cost-affordable, short-term study abroad programs are limited to the options that are available within their field of study (major/s) or relevant field of study (minor/s and concentration/s) due to the academic credits that are affixed to these programs.

Ghana offers students with a declared business major or minor at the College of Charleston a unique opportunity to study abroad. This Course Link Capstone (CLC) highlights how a College of Charleston experiential learning program to Ghana exposed its program participants to each of the aforementioned aspects of Ghanaian culture and their contextual role within business development in the country. Additionally, this capstone outlines how post-program evaluations are critical in ensuring that faculty-led study abroad programs with an affixed course meet their stated outcomes and helps to identify areas for program improvement.

More specifically, this capstone outlines an evaluation study that delves into the impact and outcomes of an experiential learning program to Ghana for students with a declared business major or minor at the College of Charleston. The study highlights the personal, academic, and professional growth experienced by program participants, along with their immersion in Ghanaian culture and entrepreneurial experiences. By focusing on the unique offering of studying abroad in Ghana, this evaluation study sheds light on the importance of expanding study abroad opportunities to encompass a broader range of global regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa. Evaluating such programs through post-program assessments is crucial in ensuring their

effectiveness, aligning with learning objectives, and identifying areas for enhancement to provide enriching experiences for future participants.

Program Design Process

This section describes how the Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate (ADDIE) model was used to design this experiential learning program to Ghana. Each step of the ADDIE model will be discussed in detail, highlighting how it guided the creation and execution of the program, as well as how it helped shape the post-program reflection. From identifying the target audience and designing the curriculum to implementing the program and evaluating its effectiveness, this comprehensive recap will provide insight into the successful planning and execution of this experiential learning opportunity.

The ADDIE Model

The Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate (ADDIE) model was used throughout the entirety of the program design period. In general terms, the ADDIE model consists of five steps that can be used in designing a study abroad program (Molenda, 2003):

1. *Analyze*: In this step, the program designers need to gather information about the target audience, their needs, and the desired outcomes of the experiential learning program. This may involve conducting surveys, interviews, and researching the cultural, educational, and logistical aspects of the host country.
2. *Design*: Based on the needs assessment conducted in step one, the program designers determine the overall structure of the program. They need to define the learning objectives and outcomes, select the appropriate curriculum, and identify the necessary resources and activities to achieve the desired outcomes. This step also involves designing the methods that will be used to evaluate the participants' learning.

3. *Develop:* In the development phase, the program designers create the materials and resources required for the program. This could include selecting textbooks, videos, or online resources that align with the learning objectives. Additionally, the logistics of the program, such as accommodation, transportation, and local guides, need to be organized and finalized.
4. *Implement:* During this phase, the program designers and facilitators execute the program according to the plan established in the previous phases. This includes arranging flights, accommodation, and transportation for participants. The program facilitators lead discussions, lectures, and guided tours, ensuring that the participants engage in interactive learning experiences that align with the program's goals.
5. *Evaluate:* The final step in the ADDIE model is to evaluate the program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives. Program evaluators can employ various methods, such as tests, surveys, participant observation, or interviews, to gather feedback from participants. The results of this evaluation will help identify areas of improvement and inform future iterations of the experiential learning program.

Below is comprehensive recap of how each step of the ADDIE model was used to design this experiential learning program to Ghana and how it guided the implementation of the post-program evaluation, which is the focus of this capstone.

Analyze

The program designer(s) assessed the current faculty led study abroad program options that were available to students with a declared business major or minor at the College of Charleston. Upon their review, it was determined that there was a gap in program options that

were offered in sub-Saharan Africa. When examining the countries that could address this gap, it was determined that Ghana was the best option available due to numerous factors, including:

1. Ease of travel for students traveling from the Eastern United States.
2. The mitigation of potential language barriers since English is widely spoken throughout the sub-Sahara African nation.
3. The existing political relations, which are strong and cordial, between the United States and Ghana.
4. The fact that one of the program directors was born, raised, and attended university in Ghana before becoming a citizen of the United States. This was especially critical given the program's design, which included collaboration between the program participants and the social entrepreneurs from the host country.

Design

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory was used throughout the program's designing period. According to Kolb (1984), learning is more effective and meaningful when individuals engage in concrete experiences and subsequent reflection, followed by abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Therefore, by prioritizing the inclusion of hands-on activities, simulations, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks, the program participants learned how to actively engage with the affixed courses' subject matter.

Throughout this ten-day experiential learning program, the program participants had the opportunity to witness firsthand the transformative power of social enterprise and economic development. While visiting various locations such as the capital city of Accra, Old Akraide, Cape Coast, and the renowned Lake Volta (see Appendix A for an overview of the cultural sites that the program participants visited while in Ghana), participants were able to gain a

comprehensive understanding of Ghana's cultural heritage and the challenges and opportunities faced by social entrepreneurs and microfinancing initiatives in the country. Below is a comprehensive list of the program's objectives:

- To develop cross cultural understanding of living and working conditions in other parts of the world.
- To increase students' understanding of economic and social problems in other cultures and communities.
- To introduce students to the concept of social enterprise and development in an international context.
- To improve students' understanding of the goals and objectives of specific NGOs (or other agencies) and the strategies and tactics they use when assisting communities.
- To provide students an opportunity to connect academic study with practical experience working in overseas communities.

In summary, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory was used in aiding the program's design by incorporating active learning experiences and integrating reflective practices. These strategies promoted effective and meaningful learning experiences, which enhanced the overall program design.

Develop

The program's curriculum (see Appendix B to view the program's affixed finance course syllabus) included a combination of classroom lectures, interactive workshops, and field visits to local communities and businesses. Through these activities, the program participants acquired practical knowledge and skills that could then be applied in real-world scenarios. The program's design also encouraged students to engage with local entrepreneurs and community leaders to

foster cross-cultural exchange and collaboration. Additionally, the program emphasized the importance of sustainable development and the use of innovative business models to drive social change. The program participants also learned about how microfinancing can have a positive impact on marginalized communities, enabling individuals to start their own businesses.

Implement

At the beginning of the spring 2024 semester, the program directors handed out hard copies of the program's affixed finance course syllabus to each of the program participants, as well as copies of the finalized itinerary. The cost of the three finance credits, in addition to flights, in-country transportation, hotel accommodations, food, and guided tours were all included in the participants' program fees.

The semester-long *Finance: Special Topics* course commenced on January 10, 2024, and concluded on March 29, 2024, with the experiential learning component taking place from March 1-10, 2024. The program participants met with the program directors once a week on Tuesdays from 4:00 to 6:45 p.m. During these organized meeting times, the students were assigned readings, had group discussions, and attended lectures, all of which prepared them to have a successful and positive experience while studying abroad in Ghana.

Evaluate

Post-program evaluations play a crucial role in the development of study abroad programs by assessing the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended goals and outcomes. Evaluations help gauge the impact of the program on the students' academic and personal development, intercultural competency, and global perspectives. Moreover, reflections are a crucial aspect of Kolb's learning cycle (1984), as it allows participants to analyze and extract meaning from their experiences. By integrating a post-program evaluation (see Appendix C), the

program participants had the opportunity to think critically about their experiences, analyze their learning, and make connections to previous knowledge.

Furthermore, post-program evaluations allow program directors to understand the participants' overall satisfaction with the study abroad experience, their perceptions of the host country and culture, and their perception of the program's design and structure. This feedback ultimately helps to refine these types of experiential learning programs by enhancing their overall quality and design and ensures a better experience for the program's future participants.

Summary

By following the ADDIE model, the program ensured that this experiential learning program was 1) thoughtfully and intently designed, 2) aligned with the affixed finance course's learning objectives, and 3) offered a valuable educational experience for both the program participants and the individuals who hosted them.

Literature Review

A study conducted by the American Councils for International Education (2018) found that study abroad programs to sub-Saharan Africa offer numerous benefits to both the student participants and the individuals from the host country. These benefits encompass cultural understanding, economic growth, personal growth, and educational enhancement. This literature review will outline specific advantages that study abroad programs in Ghana offer to both the student participants, as well as the individuals from the host country.

Benefits of Program Participation to Students

A report by the Institute of International Education (IIE): Open Doors (2023) revealed that 188,753 U.S. students studied abroad during the 2021/22 academic year. However, only 2.4 percent, or 4,614, of these students studied abroad in sub-Saharan Africa. This highlights a need

for greater investment in international study abroad opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa to promote a more diverse and inclusive experiential learning experience for study abroad participants.

Regarding benefits of participation from the student perspective, a study by the University of California, Merced found that studying abroad leads to greater academic success, including increased GPAs, higher graduation rates, and improved language skills (Vo & Morris, 2020). However, studying abroad in Ghana extends far beyond achieving academic excellence. In addition to acquiring new knowledge, international study abroad opportunities in Ghana offer numerous benefits to students including but not limited to:

1. *Cultural Immersion and Experiential Learning*: Ghana offers an immersive cultural experience for students, enabling them to engage with vibrant communities and experience a diverse range of cultural practices. Through interactions with locals, students gain intercultural skills, adaptability, and global competencies. A study by Conner and Kennedy (2017) found that cultural immersion positively influences intercultural development, enhancing students' ability to navigate diverse environments.
2. *Academic Opportunities*: Ghana's robust higher education system provides a variety of academic opportunities, including courses in African studies, politics, development, history, and more. Study abroad programs offer students the chance to engage with Ghanaian scholars, participate in local research, and gain unique insights into regional challenges and development strategies. Knapp (2019) discusses how engaging with Ghanaian academics helps students develop a more nuanced understanding of global issues and contributes to their intellectual and personal growth.

3. *Potential for Personal Growth:* Studying abroad in Ghana offers students the chance to develop important skills such as cultural competence, adaptability, and resilience. As mentioned by Conner and Kennedy (2017), immersing oneself in a new culture exposes students to diverse perspectives, challenges ethnocentric viewpoints, and enhances intercultural development. Additionally, living in a different cultural context encourages self-reflection, independent thinking, and personal growth (Nketia & Oppong, 2017).

Benefits of the Program to the Host Country

One significant benefit of study abroad programs in Ghana is the promotion of cultural understanding and global citizenship. Interacting with students from diverse cultural backgrounds fosters tolerance, empathy, and appreciation of diversity (Hegarty & Dzokoto, 2017). By interacting with students from a new and different culture, individuals from the host country can gain a deeper understanding of their own culture and traditions, ultimately bridging cultural gaps both locally and internationally. This experience propels the development of a global mindset that promotes cross-cultural collaboration (Lualdi, 2016).

Additionally, study abroad programs in Ghana contribute to the economic growth of individuals in the host country. These programs expose individuals to potential economic opportunities by developing entrepreneurial and networking skills (Obanya, 2017). This expansion of economic prospects positively impacts individuals by broadening their career horizons, fostering innovation, and generating employment opportunities within their communities.

What Ghana Offers Program Participants

Study abroad programs, in general, offer program participants a unique opportunity to engage in international education, cultural immersion, and personal growth. Ghana presents a

compelling case due to its rich history, cultural diversity, welcoming environment towards visitors, and educational institutions. The following are key reasons why Ghana stands out as an attractive location to establish an experiential learning program:

1. *Rich Cultural Heritage*: Ghana boasts a diverse cultural heritage with over 100 ethnic groups, each contributing unique practices and traditions. This cultural richness provides a compelling and immersive environment for students to study and experience firsthand. As Acheson et al. (2021) state, Ghana's cultural diversity offers students an “immersion experience” (p. 6) to explore different customs, beliefs, and diverse economic sectors.
2. *Historical Significance*: Ghana has important historical significance, particularly as the former epicenter of the transatlantic slave trade and the birthplace of pan-Africanism¹. The country's historical sites, such as the Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, offer profound insights into the history of slavery and African diaspora. As Ablo and Akoto (2019) argue, visiting these sites allows students to confront the past, develop critical thinking skills, and deepen their understanding of global historical perspectives.
3. *Welcoming and Safe Environment*: Ghana is renowned for its warm hospitality and friendly atmosphere towards visitors. The Ghanaian people are known for their welcoming nature, making study abroad students feel at home. This sense of acceptance and inclusivity fosters positive interactions and cultural exchange (Owusu & Batuafo, 2020), creating a conducive environment for personal growth and learning.
4. *Educational Institutions*: Ghana is home to a range of reputable universities and educational institutions, providing ample academic opportunities for study abroad students. Institutions such as the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of

¹ As defined by Oxford Dictionary, pan-Africanism is “the principle or advocacy of the political union of all the indigenous inhabitants of Africa.”

Science and Technology, and University of Cape Coast offer a wide variety of courses across disciplines. These institutions often collaborate with international partners to provide a supportive learning environment for students (Knapp, 2019).

5. *Global Partnerships and Networking*: Study abroad programs to Ghana facilitate the establishment of meaningful partnerships between international institutions and Ghanaian universities. These collaborations promote knowledge exchange, research partnerships, and faculty and student mobility. By creating these connections, study abroad programs can foster long-lasting relationships that contribute to academic advancement, cultural exchange, and mutual enrichment (Rawlings et al., 2018).
6. *Socioeconomic Impact and Development*: Study abroad programs can play a significant role in supporting Ghana's socioeconomic development through various means. Students engage with local communities, contributing to small-scale project implementations, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Ghana benefits from the cultural exchange, economic injection, and increased tourism revenue associated with study abroad programs, which can positively impact job creation and economic growth (Owusu & Batuafo, 2020).

Summary

In summary, experiential learning programs to Ghana provide numerous advantages for both the students who participate and the individuals who host them. The promotion of cultural understanding, the contribution to economic growth, and the facilitation of educational enhancement all contribute to the personal and professional development of individuals. These benefits have a positive impact on society as a whole by fostering global citizenship, economic prosperity, and improved educational opportunities.

Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research methodology was used to gather and analyze data. More specifically, the data used for this evaluation consisted of personal reflections, experiences, and anecdotes from the participants. The findings include detailed accounts of personal challenges, cultural activities, interactions with locals, and academic and professional skills development. The responses are subjective and provide insights into the participants' evolving mindsets, perspectives, and values. Additionally, the findings include reflections on misconceptions and stereotypes, as well as the influence of the Ghana experience on the participants' ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt to new environments, and deal with ambiguity. The evaluation also involves the participants' self-assessment of their academic, cultural, and professional growth, as well as their leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

Participants and Sampling

For the purpose of this study, eight (8) program participants,² all current College of Charleston undergraduates enrolled in the semester-long *Finance: Special Topics* course, completed a personal details questionnaire (see Appendix D). The questionnaire, which was collected one week after the program concluded, was divided into six sections, each containing specific questions related to personal information.

In the first section, the participants were asked to indicate their preferred sex, with the options being female or male. The second and third sections pertained to the participants' major(s), with a list of options provided, including fields such as Business Administration, Economics, Finance, and others provided. Participants who indicated their major as "Other" specified additional majors, such as Biology, Psychology, and Political Science. Moving on to

² Only eight students were eligible to participate in this study since this was the total number of participants in the program.

the fourth and fifth sections, participants were asked to indicate their minor(s), with options such as Business Administration, Economics, Finance, and others provided. Similar to the major(s) section, there was an "Other" category for specifying additional minor(s), to which participants specified FinTech, International Studies, Spanish, African American Studies, and Russian Studies. Lastly, in the sixth section, participants were asked to indicate their current graduation class standing, with options ranging from freshman to senior. The results of the personal details questionnaire can be found below in Table 1.

Table 1³

Participant Demographics

Preferred Sex	<i>Number of Participants</i>	Academic Minors	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Male	2	Business Administration	1
Female	6	Marketing	1
		Other	6
Academic Majors		Academic Minors if ‘Other’	
Finance	1	African American Studies	1
International Business	4	FinTech	1
Marketing	2	International Studies	2
Other	3	Russian Studies	1
		Spanish	1
Academic Majors if ‘Other’		Academic Class Standing	
Biology	1	Sophomore	2
Political Science	1	Junior	1
Psychology	1	Senior	5

³ Some of the figures in Table 1 do not match the total number of program participants (8) due to some participants having reported a double major and, in some cases, a minor or two.

Overall, the questionnaire served as a comprehensive tool for gathering personal details related to academic pursuits, including major(s), minor(s), and graduation class standing. It was structured to accommodate a diverse range of academic backgrounds and preferences, allowing respondents to specify their choices within the given categories and to provide additional details if their specific choices were not listed. This ensured that a broad spectrum of academic specializations and graduation standings were captured.

Data Collection

Evaluation data collection for the experiential learning program in Ghana involved the dissemination of a post-program reflection survey (see Appendix D), which was given to the aforementioned program participants. The survey was sent out the day after the participants returned from the program, on March 11, 2024, through the online survey platform Qualtrics. Along with the survey, participants were also provided with the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E) outlining the purpose of the study and their rights as participants.

Program participants were given a one-week window to respond to the Qualtrics survey, with the deadline being set for Monday, March 18, 2024. This allowed participants ample time to reflect on their experiences in Ghana and provide detailed feedback on the program.

By utilizing an online survey platform like Qualtrics, data collection for the experiential learning program was streamlined and efficient. Participants could easily access and complete the survey at their convenience, ensuring a high response rate. The data collected from the post-program reflection survey has since provided valuable insight and feedback for the program directors to assess the success of the program and make improvements for future iterations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for the experiential learning program in Ghana first involved aggregating and organizing the responses from the post-program reflection survey in Qualtrics. The data was collated into a Qualtrics data report for easier manipulation and interpretation. Once the data was collected, the next steps in the analysis process included:

1. *Qualitative Analysis:* Open-ended responses from the survey were qualitatively analyzed to identify common themes, sentiments, and feedback from the participants. This involved categorizing the responses to draw out key insights (see Appendix F for the code book).
2. *Interpretation:* The qualitative data helped to provide a holistic overview of the participants' experiences and perceptions of the program. This allowed the program directors, myself included, to identify areas of success and areas for improvement.
3. *Reporting and Action:* The findings from the data analysis have since been synthesized and can be found below in the *Findings* section of this course link capstone. Actionable recommendations for future program planning and enhancements have also been developed and can be found in the *Future Considerations* section of the course link capstone.

Overall, the data analysis process was crucial in evaluating the outcomes of the experiential learning program in Ghana, understanding the impact on participants, and guiding decision-making for future program iterations.

Researcher Positionality

As the Global Studies Education Coordinator within the College of Charleston's School of Business, my role plays a crucial part in shaping my researcher positionality for the

experiential learning program in Ghana. My position provides me with a unique perspective and expertise in designing and implementing international educational programs, which directly influences my approach to conducting research within this context.

My role as the Global Studies Education Coordinator allows me to understand the specific needs and goals of business-related experiential learning programs, including the importance of cultural immersion, ethical considerations, and student learning outcomes. This understanding helps shape my researcher positionality by informing the design of the research study, the selection of data collection methods, and the interpretation of results in a way that aligns with the goals and values of the College of Charleston's faculty-led programs.

While my researcher positionality as the Global Studies Education Coordinator provides me with valuable insight and resources for conducting this study in Ghana, it is important to acknowledge that there may have been some level of bias inherent in the research process. As someone who is closely involved in designing and implementing international educational programs, it is possible that my personal beliefs and perspectives influenced the research design, data collection methods, and interpretation of results in ways that align with my own professional goals and values.

Additionally, as the coordinator of an experiential learning program, I may have had preconceived notions about the benefits of such programs and their impact on student learning outcomes, which could have influenced my approach to the study and the way in which I analyzed the data. To address these potential biases, efforts were made to maintain transparency throughout the research process, including clearly outlining the research objectives, methodologies, and limitations in the study design. Additionally, I sought feedback from

colleagues and stakeholders to ensure that multiple perspectives were considered in the analysis of the data.

While bias is inherent in all forms of research, it is important to acknowledge and address potential sources of bias to ensure the credibility and validity of the study findings. By being transparent about my researcher positionality and taking steps to mitigate bias, I aimed to conduct the research in a rigorous and ethical manner that aligns with the principles of academic inquiry.

Ethics and Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility indeed refers to the extent to which the findings are honest, accurate, and trustworthy. As the late Egon Guba, a former American author and educator at Indiana University, stated, “any attempt to justify the credibility of a study involves showing the research was conducted in such a way as to ensure the findings are trustworthy and believable” (Guba, 1981, as cited by Lincoln & Guba et al., 1985). This involves ensuring that the research is conducted in a rigorous and transparent manner, and that potential sources of bias are acknowledged and addressed. To ensure that the data collected from this post-program reflection was both ethical and credible, the post-program reflection was first reviewed and approved by the School for International Training’s (SIT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee, as well as the College of Charleston’s IRB committee. By undergoing IRB review, researchers demonstrate their commitment to conducting the study in an ethical and credible manner.

The IRB committee reviewal process is an essential step in ensuring that research involving human participants is conducted ethically and credibly. It involves a thorough examination of the study design, methodology, and procedures to ensure that participants are

treated ethically and that their confidentiality and privacy are maintained. In the context of this experiential learning program in Ghana, obtaining IRB approval for collecting post-program reflection data from program participants is crucial to protecting their rights and well-being. By obtaining IRB approval, one may conclude that the researcher is committed to upholding the ethical standards and ensuring the credibility of their research findings.

Additionally, deep reflection on my own positionality was indeed a crucial aspect of ensuring the credibility of the research findings. As the Global Studies Education Coordinator, I recognized the importance of being aware of my own perspectives, biases, and motivations that could potentially impact the study. To minimize the extent to which my positionality would bias the results, I engaged in reflexive practices that involved critically reflecting on my own beliefs and experiences related to experiential learning programs and intercultural education.

Moreover, the review and creation of program materials as part of my professional work played a significant role in data triangulation. Being intimately involved in the development of the experiential learning program provided me with a deep understanding of the program's goals, curriculum design, and learning outcomes. This insider perspective allowed me to use my own experiences and knowledge of the program to triangulate the data collected from program participants, adding another layer of credibility to the research findings.

In essence, by actively engaging in reflection on my positionality, obtaining IRB approval, and leveraging my insider knowledge of the program as a source of data triangulation, I took important steps to enhance the credibility and ethical rigor of the research study on the experiential learning program in Ghana. These efforts were aimed at ensuring that the research was conducted in a transparent, ethical, and credible manner, ultimately contributing to the validity and trustworthiness of the study findings.

Findings

Overview

The post-program reflection that was carried out provided the experiential learning program's directors a comprehensive, qualitative insight into the experiences of program participants studying abroad in Ghana, as reported in their responses to the post-program reflection survey. The findings are separated into two distinct sections. The first section, *Participants' Perceived Growth*, focuses on assessing the program participants' reflections and discerning common themes and insights from their responses. This analysis aims to understand the impact of the study abroad experience, as well as the participants' overall satisfaction with the program. The second section, *Program Outcomes*, delves deeper into evaluating the program participants' responses in relation to the experiential learning program's objectives. By comparing the participants' feedback and responses to the program's outcomes, this section aims to determine the effectiveness and success of the program in meeting its original objectives.

Participants' Perceived Growth

This section focuses on the personal, academic, cultural, and professional growth that the program participants reported having experienced as a result of their participation in the experiential learning program in Ghana. The *Personal Growth* sub-section delves into the challenges the participants faced during the program, highlighting emotional, communicative, and adaptability hurdles. The reflections on how studying abroad in Ghana enhanced self-confidence, independence, and adaptability shed light on the profound impact of the experience on the participants' personal growth.

Moreover, the *Academic Growth* sub-section emphasizes the practical learning experiences gained during the trip, such as hands-on work, immersive site visits, and insights

into global finance and economic disparities. The reflections on how the experiential learning program will influence academic and career aspirations demonstrate the students' enhanced understanding of global issues and a renewed commitment to leveraging their education for positive change.

The *Cultural Growth* sub-section outlines the diverse cultural activities, immersion experiences, and interactions with locals that broadened the students' cultural knowledge and understanding. Additionally, the post-program reflection highlights the development of communication skills, sensitivity towards different cultures, and the debunking of misconceptions or stereotypes about Ghanaian culture.

Furthermore, the *Personal Skills Development* sub-section showcases how the experience contributed to the participants' leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and communication skills. The entrepreneurial and innovation-related experiences gained during the program underscore the students' exposure to grassroots entrepreneurship and their ability to identify community needs. Lastly, the post-program reflection explores how the overall experience influenced the participants' ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt to new environments, and deal with ambiguity, revealing their resilience, adaptability, and openness to new experiences.

Personal Growth

The experiential learning program in Ghana helped participants experience and embrace personal growth. Firstly, the immersive experience allowed them to adapt to various cultural norms and perspectives, challenging any preconceived notions and fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity. Participant A⁴ wrote: “This experience allowed me to observe and adapt to

⁴ All personal identifiers were removed from the data, and pseudonyms were assigned to participants to conceal their identities.

various cultural norms, and perspectives. Overall, it challenged any preconceived notions and fostered my appreciation for cultural diversity.” Participant B added: “I went in thinking ‘Ghana is Ghana, and America is America.’ By this I mean that I went in with no specific expectations and wanted to just soak in whatever Ghana had to offer me. Doing so allowed me to thoroughly enjoy the country and learn about the customs without passing judgement, as much as humanly possible.” These quotes highlight that the program participants had a transformative experience during their time in Ghana. Both participants showcase a positive attitude towards cultural immersion and a willingness to learn and grow from their experiences in Ghana.

Moreover, the participants developed the ability to communicate effectively under pressure and with a language barrier, as well as to simplify their vocabulary to ensure understanding. Participant C wrote: “I had to make my vocabulary simpler that way everyone understood some of the more challenging English words.” This exposure to diverse perspectives and communicating under pressure enhanced intercultural communication skills, which are valuable in both academic and personal life. By recognizing the need to simplify their vocabulary to facilitate understanding, Participant C demonstrated adaptability and a willingness to adjust their communication style to effectively connect with others from diverse backgrounds. This experience of communicating under pressure and exposure to diverse perspectives not only enhanced their intercultural communication skills but also fostered personal growth.

Academic Growth

The experiential learning program in Ghana significantly contributed to the academic growth of the participants in several ways. Firstly, the hands-on work and real-world experiences in Ghana fostered a deeper understanding of in-class concepts, providing the participants with practical insights that enhanced their academic knowledge acquisition. Participant A wrote: “In

Ghana, I was able to do a lot of hands-on work which fostered a deeper understanding of in-class concepts in a real-world scenario.” Participant D added: “I believe experiencing how people live on less than \$2 a day was extremely valuable to my academic growth and knowledge acquisition in the sense that I can be more engaged when topics relating to issues in developing countries arise in the classroom.”

Moreover, the exposure to diverse perspectives and the firsthand experience of witnessing the financial aspects and economic conditions in Ghana expanded their knowledge of global finance and issues in developing countries. Participant E wrote: “Along the whole trip, I was able to speak with people of different economic levels and get an understanding of how each person lives which helped me to understand that Ghana has a lower, middle, and upper class just like America.” The experience of speaking to people of different economic levels in Ghana enabled program participants to engage with related topics in the classroom.

Additionally, the participants were able to translate their academic knowledge into real-world applications, such as understanding the economic side of households in different areas and gaining insights into independence movements and the long-term effects of colonialism. Participant B wrote: “I have a minor in African American Studies, so this trip allowed me to translate some things that I have learned in the classroom into the real world (independence movements, long-term effects of colonialism). Studying abroad in Ghana also allowed me to finally see the good parts of Ghana in addition to the not-so-good parts (which are typically the focus of academia).” This exposure to a different academic and cultural context provided valuable insights and perspectives that enriched the participants’ academic growth.

Cultural Growth

The experiential learning program in Ghana challenged and changed several misconceptions or stereotypes about Ghanaian culture. Several of the participants entered the experience without preconceived notions, having spent their college careers breaking down incorrect stereotypes about African countries. However, the participants were still surprised by the warmth and generosity of the people, and the absence of resentment towards Americans in relation to slavery. Participant D wrote: “Before leaving for the trip, I was unsure if [there] would be resentment towards Americans [regarding] slavery. I didn’t notice any resentment and the people were kind and generous.” Additionally, the participants were impressed by the sense of community and the cultural pride displayed by Ghanaians. Participant A wrote: “Seeing the community's sense of unity and seeing everyone come together (paid and unpaid) and work on finishing the project just shed light on how importance teamwork is.” Participant F added: “Their enthusiasm was truly heartwarming.”

Furthermore, the experience in Ghana influenced the participants' ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt to new environments, and deal with ambiguity. Participant E wrote: “This experience helped me better work in teams under pressure and in less favorable conditions such as the heat. [It] also allowed me to step up as a leader in some circumstances.” Participant F added: “I made sure to ask any question that came to mind. Between that and being observant I learned so much about Ghana and feel entirely more educated on not only Ghana, but other developing countries.”

As a result of all these culminating factors, the participants broadened their understanding of global finance and the economic disparities in developing countries, leading to a deeper appreciation for the value of life and connection to nature. Participant G wrote: “Seeing firsthand

a third world country expanded my knowledge of global finance and how the "other half" manages money and survives on a daily basis." Participant B added: "A major takeaway for me is that connection to nature and appreciation for life is infinitely more valuable than material goods. Too many people look upon African countries as material-poor without realizing the power in just simply living off the land and showing love for self and others." Participant B emphasized the importance of connecting with nature and valuing relationships over material possessions, suggesting a shift in mindset towards a more holistic and sustainable way of life. Both participants reflected on the transformative power of cultural experiences in fostering empathy, appreciation, and personal growth.

Professional Skills Development

Studying abroad in Ghana also contributed to the development of leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Firstly, students were able to lead effectively in a foreign environment, such as teaching a class and leading peers in building a kindergarten classroom. Participant D wrote: "There was a lot of teamwork incorporated working on the kindergarten classroom. It was almost like a supply chain bringing the dirt to the destination. It required teamwork with one person shoveling, one person carrying the dirt, and another dumping the dirt in the best spot." Participant H added: "[I] worked cooperatively to pack and hand out donations in an orderly manner."

These quotes highlight the importance of teamwork and collaboration in professional growth. Participant D's description of the teamwork involved in the construction of a kindergarten classroom illustrates the necessity of coordinating efforts and utilizing individual strengths to achieve a common goal efficiently. Participant H's statement about working cooperatively to organize donations emphasizes the value of organization and teamwork in a

professional setting. Both participants demonstrate the significance of effective communication, division of labor, and mutual support in achieving success and personal development in a professional context.

Program Outcomes

This section delves deeper into evaluating the program participants' responses in relation to the experiential learning program's objectives. By examining the responses and reflections of the program participants in relation to the program's objectives, the program directors can determine the effectiveness and success of the program and whether it met its original objectives.

The program aimed:

- To develop cross cultural understanding of living and working conditions in other parts of the world.
- To increase students' understanding of economic and social problems in other cultures and communities.
- To introduce students to the concept of social enterprise and development in an international context.
- To improve students' understanding of the goals and objectives of specific NGOs (or other agencies) and the strategies and tactics they use when assisting communities.
- To provide students an opportunity to connect academic study with practical experience working in overseas communities.

Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that the experiential learning program in Ghana met its original objectives by providing students with a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural dynamics, economic and social issues, social enterprise, and practical experience

working in overseas communities. The participants' responses provide compelling evidence of the achievement of these objectives.

Firstly, the course aimed to develop cross-cultural understanding of living and working conditions in other parts of the world. The participants' experiences in Ghana allowed them to immerse themselves in the local culture, interact with the community, and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in a different cultural context. Participant A wrote: "Walking around the village during some downtime allowed me to further understand how these individuals live." This demonstrates the firsthand experience and observation of different living conditions, contributing to the development of cross-cultural understanding.

Furthermore, the participants' interactions with locals and immersion experiences broadened their cultural knowledge and understanding of economic and social problems in other cultures and communities. Participant F wrote: "Teaching the Junior High School students was beneficial to broadening my cultural understanding. Despite the lack of resources provided in the village, these children were so intelligent and eager to learn." This illustrates how the participants gained insight into the challenges and resilience of the local community, fulfilling the objective of increasing understanding of economic and social problems.

In addition, the program effectively introduced participants to the concept of social enterprise and development in an international context. Participant C wrote: "Studying abroad in Ghana contributed to my academic growth by allowing me to visualize the textbook, *Portfolios of the Poor*, and how they are more than just stories but they are people." This indicates a deeper understanding of the real-world application of academic concepts related to social enterprise and development.

Moreover, the participants' experiences provided them with a practical understanding of the goals and objectives of specific NGOs and the strategies and tactics they use when assisting communities. Participant G wrote: “[Surveying] someone who is 'doing okay' is still dealing with basic struggles such as communicating with her son. Her son goes to boarding school but does not have a phone.” This demonstrates the participants' engagement with the challenges faced by individuals in the community, aligning with the objective of understanding the goals and strategies of NGOs.

Lastly, the participants' practical experiences working in overseas communities were evident in their reflections on leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Participant C wrote: "Studying abroad in Ghana contributed to the development of my leadership and teamwork skills by showing me how much can get done if a community, the whole community, truly gets involved and makes vital and visual changes." This highlights the practical application of teamwork skills in a real-world context, community engagement, cooperation, and collective action in achieving tangible outcomes.

In conclusion, the participants' responses provide compelling evidence that the original course objectives were successfully met, as they gained valuable insights into cross-cultural understanding, economic and social problems, social enterprise and development, NGO goals and strategies, and practical experience working in overseas communities during their study abroad experience in Ghana.

Challenges

While much of the above content reflects positive experiences, there are instances of negative experiences and challenges faced by the students. One significant negative aspect worth highlighting is the participants' encounter with prejudice and perceived inappropriate behavior

from a member of the group. Moreover, one participant specifically expressed how this significantly impacted their experience during the program. Participant B wrote: “A specific personal challenge that I encountered during the program was figuring out how to cope with and respond to the ridiculous amount of prejudice that was displayed by members of our group from the CofC. I did not know how to respond in the moment because I felt that speaking up would result in even more tension than was already present... Thankfully, I was able to still enjoy the country itself, but I would never go on a trip with [group members] again.”

Additionally, some participants faced emotional challenges, such as struggling with attachment to the local community and children, as well as witnessing the disparity between their living conditions and those of the locals. Participant A wrote: “[The] biggest personal challenge I faced on the trip was not being fully prepared for the emotional toll some of the experiences would have on me. I knew I would have a fun time hanging out with the kids and teachers, but I did not think I would get as attached as I did. Learning personal details about the children’s lives allowed me to quickly form a close connection, so having to turn around and say goodbye a few days later was a lot harder than expected.” Participant C added: “Leaving the village and returning to the resort was something that struck me deeply and caused me to reflect every time I arrived back.” In summary, while the post-program reflection’s qualitative data primarily focuses on positive experiences and personal growth, it also highlights emotional challenges the program participants faced.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is that the participants' reflections and experiences may be subject to potential biases. This is because the data collected for the study is primarily based on subjective accounts provided by the participants. This means that there is a risk that the

participants may have unintentionally or intentionally misrepresented their thoughts, feelings, or actions. Additionally, subjective accounts are influenced by a variety of factors such as memory recall, personal beliefs, social desirability, and cognitive biases. For example, participants may have selective memory, where they only recall events that support their beliefs or perspectives.

Furthermore, the participants may also provide responses that they think align with societal norms or what they perceive the researcher wants to hear. This may be due to social desirability bias. In the context of this experiential learning program in Ghana, participants may have felt inclined to share experiences that reflect positively on their cultural immersion, personal growth, and academic development, as these aspects are often valued in such programs. Additionally, the participants may have withheld negative experiences or challenges if they believed the focus of the study was on positive outcomes.

Moreover, individual differences among participants could have also affected the reliability and validity of the data. For instance, participants may have different levels of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, or communication skills, which can impact the depth and accuracy of their reflections and experiences. Overall, the reliance on subjective accounts as the primary source of data in the study could introduce biases and limitations that may have affected the credibility and relevance of the findings. Researchers should be cautious of these limitations and consider employing additional measures, such as triangulation methods or independent verification, to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the study.

Future Considerations

These considerations are based on the above findings and aim to enhance the overall experience of the experiential learning program in Ghana by providing students with a more comprehensive and impactful learning experience.

Program Considerations

Based on the participant feedback and responses, several program considerations could be made to enhance this experiential learning program in Ghana. These considerations include:

1. *Preparing Students for Emotional Challenges:* Both the "Personal Growth" sub-section and the "Challenges" section highlight the challenges participants faced during the program and the impact on their personal growth. It is evident that emotional challenges are a significant aspect of the experience and should be addressed in future iterations of the program. The program could provide more comprehensive pre-departure orientation to prepare participants for potential emotional challenges, such as forming close connections with locals and dealing with the emotional toll of saying goodbye. This could involve organizing immersive cultural activities, facilitating interactions with locals, and creating opportunities for students to gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and lifestyle. By incorporating these elements, the program can enrich the cultural immersion experience and provide students with more support when dealing with emotional challenges. This approach aligns with the goal of promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience for the participants.
2. *Addressing Prejudice and Inappropriate Behavior:* The negative experiences and challenges faced by the students, such as encountering prejudice and inappropriate behavior, as highlighted in the "Challenges" section, demonstrate the need for proactive measures to address and mitigate such issues. The program should address instances of prejudice or inappropriate behavior, ensuring that all participants demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect towards the local community. To address this consideration, the program should prioritize creating a respectful and inclusive environment for all participants, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and respect towards the local community.

This can be achieved through comprehensive training and orientation for both program directors and participants, focusing on cultural awareness, respectful communication, and understanding the impact of words and actions on the local community. Additionally, clear guidelines and expectations should be established to address inappropriate behavior and ensure that all interactions with the local community are conducted with sensitivity and respect.

3. *Post-Program Reflection and Debriefing:* The "Data Collection" and "Data Analysis" sections emphasize the importance of post-program evaluations in understanding participants' satisfaction, perceptions of the host country and culture, and the program's design and structure. To address this, the program could incorporate more comprehensive post-program reflection and debriefing sessions. Post-program reflection and debriefing sessions should be designed to provide students with a structured opportunity to articulate their thoughts, emotions, and insights gained from the experiential learning experience. These sessions can serve as a platform for students to share their challenges, successes, and personal growth, fostering a deeper understanding of the impact of the program on their academic, personal, and professional development. Additionally, the debriefing sessions can facilitate discussions on the ethical, cultural, and social implications of the students' experiences in Ghana. This can include addressing instances of prejudice, inappropriate behavior, or challenges encountered during the program, allowing students to reflect on how these experiences have shaped their perspectives and values. Furthermore, the post-program reflection and debriefing sessions can provide a forum for students to discuss potential areas for program improvement, share constructive feedback, and offer suggestions for enhancing future study abroad experiences. This collaborative

approach can help the program directors gain valuable insights and make informed decisions to enhance the overall quality of the program, thus ensuring a better experience for future participants.

Researcher Considerations

In future studies, researchers could consider incorporating additional data collection methods, such as observational data, interviews with multiple stakeholders, or document analysis, to complement and cross-validate the subjective accounts provided by participants. By incorporating diverse data collection methods, researchers may uncover hidden perspectives and nuances that may not be captured through subjective accounts alone. This holistic approach can offer a more complete understanding of the complexities and dynamics of study abroad experiences, enriching the overall analysis and interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, by employing triangulation methods and diversifying the sources of data, researchers can enhance the credibility, reliability, and validity of the study findings, mitigating the impact of potential biases inherent in subjective accounts. These strategies can help strengthen the research design and provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the study abroad experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the post-program reflection provided the program directors a detailed account of the experiences and reflections of individuals studying abroad in Ghana, focusing on personal growth, academic development, cultural understanding, and professional skills enhancement. Participants encountered personal challenges related to emotional attachment to the local community, adapting to a different lifestyle, and confronting prejudice within their group. They overcame these challenges by communicating their feelings, embracing adaptability, and reflecting on their privilege. The experiential learning experience broadened their cultural

knowledge and understanding through activities such as teaching at a local school, interacting with villagers, and learning about the struggles of women in the community. The experience also influenced their ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt to new environments, and deal with ambiguity, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills. These findings have led to actionable recommendations for future program planning and enhancements.

By incorporating the future programmatic considerations outlined in the “Program Considerations” sub-section, the experiential learning program in Ghana can further enrich the educational experience for participants, providing them with more comprehensive support, fostering cultural sensitivity, and promoting personal growth and reflection. The proactive measures to address emotional challenges, prejudice, and inappropriate behavior, as well as the implementation of post-program reflection and debriefing sessions, will enhance the overall impact of the program and ensure a more meaningful and transformative experience for future participants.

Overall, the future of the program looks promising, with participants equipped with valuable skills, a broader cultural understanding, and a renewed sense of purpose to make a positive impact in their communities and careers. By continuing to refine and enhance the program based on participant feedback and research insights, the experiential learning program in Ghana can continue to make a profound impact on students' academic, personal, and professional development, preparing them to navigate a complex and interconnected world with compassion, empathy, and resilience.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ghana Study Abroad Program Itinerary

Date	Day	Itinerary
1-Mar-24	1	Depart US for Ghana
2-Mar-24	2	Arrive in Accra, Ghana Transfer via private coach to Hotel Have Breakfast Visit Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Roots Hotel Apartment
3-Mar-24	3	Breakfast at Hotel Transfer via private coach to Old Akrade to work on service-learning project. Enjoy the beautiful scenes of the Volta River Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Mekandi Riverside Resort
4-Mar-24	4	Breakfast at Hotel Work on service-learning project. Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Mekandi Riverside Resort
5-Mar-24	5	Breakfast at Hotel Work on service-learning project. Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Mekandi Riverside Resort
6-Mar-24	6	Breakfast at Hotel Work on service-learning project. Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Mekandi Riverside Resort
7-Mar-24	7	Breakfast at Hotel Transfer via private coach to Cape Coast. Visit Cape Coast Castle and Museum Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Nyansapo Eco Resort
8-Mar-24	8	Breakfast at Hotel Transfer via private coach to Aburi. Have lunch & dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Royal Lee's Hotel
9-Mar-24	9	Breakfast at Hotel Souvenirs shopping Transfer via private coach to Airport. Have lunch & farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Depart Ghana for the US
10-Mar-24	10	Arrive in the US

Appendix B: Ghana Study Abroad Program

College of Charleston (COFC) in Ghana, Spring 2024

Program Directors: Dr. Rene Mueller & Dr. James Malm

Approximate Departure Date: March 1, 2024

Approximate Return Date: March 10, 2024

Application Deadline: October 15, 2023

THE PROGRAM

The proposed course would be offered in Spring 2024. The course which includes a Spring Break travel component would explore Ghana's rich history and provide information on how social entrepreneurship and microfinancing can empower and change communities and ultimately help alleviate poverty. The course will translate international business and finance concepts into real world application in the West African nation of Ghana. This ten-day trip will provide students the opportunity to experience how social enterprise and economic development can help in poverty eradication. In addition, students will experience how outreach programs are working tirelessly to help communities become sustainable. We will learn how social enterprise and microfinance are widening the opportunities to invest in developing countries, and how the work of local and international Nonprofit agencies (NGOs) on the ground are improving the lives of individuals. The course will also highlight some of the challenges and opportunities of social entrepreneurship and micro-financing. The journey will take participants to Ghana's capital, Accra, the Old Akra, Cape Coast, and the Volta Lake, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. Participants will gain an in-depth understanding of this beautiful country by studying its history, immersing themselves with the people, and interacting with local communities and businesses. At the end of this course, students will have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of so many people.

GHANA

Ghana is a nation in West Africa. The country is bounded on the north by Burkina Faso, on the east by Togo, on the west by Côte d'Ivoire, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Ghana was formerly known as the Gold Coast. The country was colonized by the British until March 6, 1957, when Ghana became the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence from colonial rule. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah led the struggle for independence and become the first President of the nation. The country is named after the ancient empire of Ghana, from which the ancestors of the inhabitants of the present country are thought to have migrated. Ghana has a notable status as one of Africa's most stable democracies. The country has experienced peaceful transitions of power each time there has been a change in government since the country ended military rule in 1992. The climate in Ghana is tropical; warm, hot and humid in the Southwest

and hot and dry in the North. The population of Ghana is about 33 million people. English is the official language but there are over 25 languages and dialects spoken.

COURSE INFORMATION AND CREDITS

This program could satisfy the requirement of Business Travel Course for international business majors. Because we are working with an NGO, the course could also satisfy the Independent Study/Directed Reading and Internship for the international business, marketing, and finance programs. Students will be enrolled in one of the following two courses:

INTB 390: International Social Enterprise (3 credits)

MKTG 309: Marketing Study Abroad (3 credits)

FINC 360: Doing Business in Ghana (3 credits)

INTB 344: International Business Internship (3 credits)

MKTG 344: Marketing Internship (3 credits)

MKTG 360: Special Topics in Marketing (3 credits)

INTB 360: Special Topics International Business Internship (3 credits)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Students will work on social enterprise projects in Ghana, The project will be in Akrade, Ghana and supervised by a local NGO. Old Akrade is a village on the banks of the Volta in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa. The people of the village are predominantly farmers (yam, plantain, pepper, cassava, cocoa, and corn) and fishermen. Though the people of the village are hardworking they have many challenges to survival including no clean water, lack of proper sanitation, limited healthcare, and limited educational opportunities. Economic security and poverty are key obstacles.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The International Social Enterprise and Development course will introduce students to the development, planning and managing of social enterprises. The course objectives include:

- To develop cross cultural understanding of living and working conditions in other parts of the world
- To increase students' understanding of economic and social problems in other cultures and communities
- To introduce students to the concept of social enterprise and development in an international context

- To improve student's understanding of the goals and objectives of specific NGOs (or other agencies) and the strategies and tactics they use when assisting communities
- To provide students an opportunity to connect academic study with practical experience working in overseas communities

SBE LEARNING GOALS RELEVANT TO THIS COURSE

Effective Communications: Students will write professional documents that are technically correct and concise and make effective presentations utilizing technological tools and ability utilizing relevant discipline specific knowledge.

Ethical Awareness: Students will recognize and be able to appraise ethical dilemmas involved in business decisions and competently engage in discourse aimed at resolution of these dilemmas utilizing relevant discipline specific knowledge.

Global Awareness: Students will recognize and examine the global implications of business decisions while evaluating and integrating innovative applications of these implications utilizing relevant discipline specific knowledge.

Problem Solving Ability: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills in identifying and evaluating problems and opportunities in the business environment and apply analytical techniques to formulate creative solutions utilizing relevant discipline specific knowledge.

PREREQUISITES

Junior standing or permission of instructor

READINGS

Recommended Text (approximately \$18 on Amazon; used \$10)

Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Lives on Two Dollars A Day (Princeton University Press, 2009)

ACCOMMODATIONS

The accommodations for this trip allow us to bond as a group and live among the locals. During the trip to Old Akra, the group will be housed at a hotel. Living conditions are safe. While touring outside of Accra, students will spend nights in tourist class hotels, While in Accra, students will be housed in three (3) star (or higher) hotels.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations during their study abroad experience should discuss these needs with the Program Directors and the Office of Disability Services at the time of application.

ELIGIBILITY

The program is open to undergraduate and graduate students from the College of Charleston and other universities and colleges. Program size is limited to 20 students and it is on a first come first serve basis. Participation is contingent upon acceptance by the Program Directors. Students must be in good academic standing at their university.

PRE-DEPARTURE READINGS QUIZZES

These quizzes will be based on course readings. Students are required to complete the quiz prior to traveling overseas for the course. The goal of these quizzes is to ensure each student is prepared academically and intellectually for all facets of the work in Ghana.

Daily Diary

Students will keep a daily diary throughout the trip. The diary will describe daily events and relate the activities to learning objectives. The daily diary should relate to the required readings, experience on the trip, interviews and economic analysis. Students are encouraged to take photos.

Paper

Students are expected to write a one-page single spaced paper on Ghana. The paper should incorporate the history and culture of Ghana. A minimum of five (5) sources should be used.

Final Reflection Video/Photo Book

At the end of the course, students will submit either a 3-to-5-minute video or 20 page photo book summarizing the project {grading rubric will be provided). The video should include all the elements of the course and a (1) description of the NGO, the organization's goals and mission, (2) brief summary of the economic, social and culture of Ghana, (3) description of NGOs and agencies operating in Ghana, (4) student/students' contribution to the project, (5) reports on business visits, and (6) reflection on what the participants learned through the project. The video or photobook should be completed and submitted no later than 1 week after project completion.

Students can elect to do this portion as a group or as an individual. If the video/book is a group effort, students will be required to grade each group member's effort/contribution by using a constant sum scale i.e. each individual will divide 100 points among all group members based on each individual's efforts. These evaluations will be confidential.

GRADING

Evaluation Method for Student Participants: pre-departure readings quizzes, Ghana Profile Paper, daily journal and economic analysis, video summary, direct observation, direct and written feedback, two to four pages' report on observations and written reflection of the course.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

- Pre-departure Readings Quizzes 30%
- Ghana Profile Paper 5%
- Daily Journal and Economic Analysis: 15%
- Video Summary (3-5 min video/photo book) 30%
- Behavior, written reflection & participation in Ghana 20%

Grades will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Average	Letter Grade	Average
A	90-100%	C	72-75.99%
A-	88-89.9%	C-	70-71.99%
B+	86-87.99%	D+	66-69.99%
B	83-85.99%	D	62-65.99%
B-	80-82.99%	D-	60-61.99%
C+	76-79.99%	F	0-59.99%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE COLLEGE HONOR CODE

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be

placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance. Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor. Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook.

PROGRAM PAYMENT

Any inquiries regarding application processing, billing, or scholarship opportunities can be directed to the Center for International Education (contact information listed below).

FUNDING AND SCHOLARSHIPS

College of Charleston students are eligible to apply for the CIE Study Abroad Scholarship. Visit CIE Scholarship Page or call the Center for International Education office at (843) 953-7661 or email studyabroad@cofc.edu for more information. School of Business (SB) students are also eligible for SB scholarships.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Students interested in applying should create a profile and application through the Center for International Education Travel Abroad portal. For more information on the course contact the program directors using their contact information below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Director 1: Dr. Rene Mueller

5 Liberty Street

Telephone: 843-953-5394

E-mail: muellerr@cofe.edu

Program Director 2: Dr. James Malm

5 Liberty Street, Suite 330

Telephone: 843-952-5192

E-mail: malmj@cofc.edu

Dr. Rene Mueller is a professor of Marketing. She joined the College in 1996. She has led student groups to China, Honduras, and Austria. She has taught in many countries and works with colleagues from many countries. She has been involved with Project Okurase on several initiatives and was the instructor of record for the Maymester 2018 trip to Okurase, Ghana. In May 2015, four (4) of her students completed a Spring semester internship with Project Okurase in Ghana).

Dr. James Malm is an Associate Professor of Finance. He joined the College in Fall 2014. He teaches courses in financial management, financial modeling, and microfinance. More recently, he and Dr. Mueller led students to Ghana. Dr. Malm has also team-led MBA students to the Czech Republic, United Kingdom, and India. He sheds lights on numerous international issues in his courses.

Appendix C: Post-Program Survey



This post-program survey aims to evaluate the impact of studying abroad in Ghana on a student's personal, academic, and cultural growth. By gathering detailed feedback regarding the unique experiences, learnings, and growth outcomes, this survey will help determine the effectiveness and value of the study abroad program.

On reflection questions that require a longer answer, it may be best to type your responses out in a separate Microsoft Word document and copy and paste it into the text field.



1. Describe how studying abroad in Ghana contributed to your academic growth and knowledge acquisition.

2. Reflect on any specific conversation, site visit, or project you undertook while in Ghana that enhanced your academic skills or cultural understanding. Explain.

3. Explain how the study abroad experience will influence your academic and career aspirations, and how will it impact your future educational endeavors.



1. Rate the extent to which studying abroad in Ghana enhanced your understanding and appreciation of Ghanaian culture on a scale of 1-5.

1

2

3

4

5

1=No enhancement, 5=Significant enhancement



2. Reflect on any cultural activities, immersion experiences, or interactions with locals that broadened your cultural knowledge and understanding.

3. Explain how studying abroad in Ghana developed your communication skills and sensitivity towards cultures that differ from your own.

4. Describe any misconceptions or stereotypes you had about Ghanaian culture that were challenged or changed as a result of your study abroad experience.



1. Assess how the experience of studying abroad in Ghana contributed to the development of your leadership, teamwork, or problem-solving skills.

2. Reflect on any communication skills you acquired or developed while in Ghana.

3. Describe any entrepreneurial or innovation-related experiences you gained during your program in Ghana.

4. Explain how the overall experience studying abroad in Ghana has influenced your ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt to new environments, and deal with ambiguity.



Thank you for participating in this post-program survey!



Appendix D: Personal Details Questionnaire



1. Please indicate your preferred sex.

Male

Female

Other

2. Please indicate your major(s).

Business Administration

Commercial Real Estate Finance

Economics

Finance

Hospitality and Tourism Management

International Business

Management

Marketing

Supply Chain Management

Other

3. If 'Other', then please indicate any additional major(s).

4. Please indicate your minor(s).

Business Administration

Economics

Entrepreneurship

Finance

Healthcare and Medical Services Management

Hospitality and Tourism Management

Information Management

Leadership and Sustainability

Management

Marketing

Project Management

Real Estate

Other

5. If 'Other', then please indicate any additional major(s).

6. Please indicate your current graduation class standing.

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior



Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title Of the Study: College of Charleston Study Abroad Program in Ghana, Spring 2024

Researcher Name:

My name is Matthew Zittritsch, and I am a graduate student with the Master of Arts in International Education (part-time hybrid) program at the School for International Training (SIT) Graduate Institute.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I am conducting (for partial fulfillment of my Master of Arts in International Education (part-time hybrid) program. Your participation is voluntary.

Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, then please sign this form. You will be given an electronic copy of this form. Printed copies are available upon request.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess various aspects of the study abroad program to Ghana and its impact on participants. The study aims to gather data regarding cultural immersion, academic progress, personal development, and overall satisfaction. The findings will help to identify areas of improve for future reiterations of the short-term study abroad program in Ghana and will contribute to the knowledge base on the benefits of such experiences.

Study Procedures

Your participation will consist of voluntarily completing a post-program survey. The survey will be administered upon your return from Ghana, no more than a week after the study abroad program has concluded. The survey will require no more than 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Participants may feel uncomfortable sharing personal information, especially if the survey requires sensitive or identifiable details. Additionally, some of the post program survey questions may evoke unpleasant memories or experiences for you that you would rather not revisit. To safeguard these potential risks of stress or harm, you will retain the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any given time.

Potential Benefits to Participants And/or To Society

Benefits of opting to take part in the post-program evaluation include allowing you the opportunity to think critically about your experiences, analyze your learning, and make connections to previous knowledge.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, you will not be asked to provide your name as part of the post-program survey. You will be asked, however, to voluntarily provide your major(s)/minor(s), graduation class standing, and preferred sex. These identifiable records will only be accessible by me, the researcher. When the results

of the survey are published or discussed in conferences, only the aforementioned information will be used.

Future Use of Data

The findings will help to identify areas of improve for future reiterations of the short-term study abroad program in Ghana and will contribute to the knowledge base on the benefits of such experiences.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Researcher's Contact Information

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at matthew.zittritsch@mail.sit.edu or zittritschm@cofc.edu, or my advisor at melissa.whatley@sit.edu.

Rights Of Research Participant – IRB Contact Information

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by the SARB or SIT IRB. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at: irb@sit.edu

School for International Training, Institutional Review Board, 1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676, Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676, USA irb@sit.edu, +001-802-258-3132

"I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older."

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix F: Code Book

CATEGORY	KEY WORDS
ACADEMIC GROWTH	Diverse perspectives, hands-on work, intercultural communication, teaching, learning from students, academic skills, cultural understanding, learning about women's needs, learning about community sense of unity
CHALLENGES	Emotional toll, adaptability, communication barriers, personal opinions, patience, frustration, anger, distribution of resources
COMMUNITY CHALLENGES	Challenges in communication, challenges in distribution of resources, challenges in adapting to new environment, challenges in dealing with ambiguity, challenges in understanding cultural differences
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Development of leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, communication skills, intercultural communication, adaptability, mindset evolution, values and beliefs, economic insights, language skills, innovative ideas, resilience, community contributions, community reflections, community impact
COMMUNITY IMPACT	Building a school, packing and handing out donations, helping the community, making vital and visual changes, working with the beads, working on the kindergarten classroom
ENTREPRENEURSHIP	Innovative experiences, thinking about community needs, building something for the community, making connections with people to understand their needs
INTERACTIONS	Teaching, surveying, communication with locals, conversation with teacher, conversation with Dr. Malm, conversation with kids, conversation with people of different economic levels
PERSONAL SKILLS	Communication under pressure, adaptability, patience
PERSONAL GROWTH	Leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, unity, understanding of gratitude, adaptability, patience, communication skills, emotional growth, disconnecting from technology, personal challenges, personal connections with locals

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS	Entrepreneurial experiences, innovation, leadership, teamwork
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	Leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, communication skills, intercultural communication, teaching, learning native words, communication under pressure, simplifying vocabulary, sign language, delegation, working with people, working in teams under pressure, sensitivity towards different cultures