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About CSIE

Case Studies in International Education (CSIE) is an open access, online, peer-reviewed publication that utilizes case studies for the development and advancement of the field. CSIE seeks to promote further professional development through engaging case study discussion. We offer publication opportunities for scholar-practitioners, including working professionals, faculty, and graduate students at CSIEpub.org. Each case study provides an opportunity to integrate theory and practice through interdisciplinary analysis/insight for the benefit of the field's future growth.

International education is defined by Punteney (2019) as "the profession of designing, managing, and facilitating programs and activities that help participants to appropriately, effectively, and ethically engage in interactions with culturally diverse people and ideas, often across national borders."

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“I Have the Worst Life Abroad”: Mental Health Crisis

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Education Abroad; Management and Operations; Student Services

Setting

Keiran is a 19-year-old premedical major from a large southern university in the U.S. He is selected by his honors college to study abroad during the spring semester of his sophomore year. He and a small cohort of fourteen other honors students apply and are selected to study abroad in Australia, living in the same site and studying in the same classes, including a writing class that the entire cohort takes together.

Keiran is a very sporty student, with excellent grades. He has a romantic partner and lots of friends. He has always excelled in science classes and has been successful in all areas of his life. Keiran expects things to be the same during his time abroad. Keiran has never had any mental health issues or counseling and there are no flags to the home campus that Keiran might struggle while abroad.

Prior to departure, Keiran attends an orientation session on his home campus. After arrival in England, Keiran attends a three-day on-site orientation where physical health, mental health, and culture shock are all discussed. During the first week, Keiran does not get involved in activities or do more than is required of him, missing out on the time that most students make friends and start to plan for the term. While Keiran is not isolated, he is not integrating with the group and seems to be an outsider.

Case

During the first weekend excursion with the group, Keiran tells his friends that he is having thoughts of self-harm, reporting that he has “the worst life as anyone in the world”. His friends report this immediately to the student life

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office. Keiran admits to these thoughts and wants to withdraw from the program. The following day, Keiran decides he would rather stay in the program and the team arranges a psychiatric evaluation. The physician reports that Keiran has been cleared to stay on the program as Keiran stated that there were no issues at all and he is healthy and happy. The team cannot intervene as Keiran has asked the physician specifically not to talk with them.

Each week during the first seven weeks of term, this event repeats itself. Keiran appears in a state of crisis, crying and texting friends about thoughts of self-harm. The team meets with Keiran, sends him for evaluation, and Keiran is cleared medically to stay on the program. Each week the team becomes more disheartened as they worry that Keiran will self-harm. The team reported the incident to the home institution during the first incident, and each week after, but the home institution says the study abroad program has the duty of care and cannot intervene to withdraw the student. They offer no additional resources or help.

The team is pleased when Keiran's father comes to visit unexpectedly, but Keiran states he does not give permission for the student life team to speak to his father about any medical or mental health issues. Keiran's father is aware of the issues as a family friend has tipped him off in the U.S. Keiran's father simply replies that Keiran must "toughen up." He recounts how difficult military school was for him, but it made him a better person.

Keiran's friends are upset, his classes are disrupted, the community is on edge, and the staff are demoralized and sleep deprived. All resources available have been mobilized with self-harm contracts in place, check-ins with the nursing staff, weekly counseling, weekly clergy support, and all members of staff reporting when Keiran has been seen to ensure his safety. The provider team, the faculty, and the students are very unstable, and many blame the study abroad provider for not involuntarily withdrawing Keiran. The provider is not able to involuntarily withdraw a student unless they have a physician recommending the withdrawal or a home campus recommending a withdrawal, and neither has happened.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What laws in the U.S. are guiding the home institution to decide if they can intervene in the case? What policies of the home institution or study abroad provider should be considered in this case?
- Who has the duty of care for the student? What does duty of care entail?
- What resources might be helpful to the student?
- How might beliefs around mental health and counseling apply to this case?
- What steps might be taken to help the other students on the program cope with the situation?
- How could the pre-departure and on-site orientation be improved to cover more mental health information?
- How might the program take steps in the future to ensure this situation would be better dealt with?
- How can the program provider prepare and train onsite staff for similar situations?
- What support could be provided for the onsite staff and faculty?

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Breaking Mental Health Silence: Men from Different Cultures and Generations Inspire and Support Each Other

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Internationalization and Global Learning; Professional Training; Student Learning and Development; University/Higher Education

Setting

In a vibrant neighborhood located in Nairobi, Kenya, men from different generations and diverse backgrounds gather weekly at a popular community gym to engage in group physical fitness activities for good health and

well-being. While enjoying their boot camp drills, this group of men from various countries with unique cultures inadvertently confront their embedded denial to openly discuss mental health challenges that are largely influenced by their societal and cultural norms.

Case

The weekly gym group is made up of six men from different cultures and generations:

Men's Workout Group	Country	Generation	Status
Liam	Kenya	Generation Z	College Student
Carlos	Nigeria	Generation Z	Corporate Professional
Ethan	Uganda	Millennial	Father
Ahmed	Kenya	Millennial	Former Student Athlete
Frank	Kenya	Baby Boomer	Retired Police Officer
George	Kenya	Baby Boomer	Vietnam War Veteran

Liam is a Kenyan college student, who is vocal about mental health and is never shy about sharing his perspective on this topic. For him, the gym nourishes his mental wellness as physical fitness. Carlos is a young Nigerian professional who recently moved to Kenya and joined the workforce in Nairobi. He sees the gym as an escape from his stressful corporate life. Like Liam, Carlos has a progressive viewpoint about freely discussing mental health but struggles with anxiety, which he often hides behind jokes and bravado.

Ethan, a dedicated father who recently relocated from Uganda to Kenya, outwardly exhibits strength but has bouts of stress and high anxiety. He manages his stress through regular workouts but has become aware that physical exertion is not enough. Ahmed takes pride in his discipline and physical endurance. He is skeptical about openly discussing mental health despite his occasional insomnia and mood swings. He believes personal issues are solved through willpower and hard work.

Frank, a retired police officer, espouses the belief that men should be self-reliant, stoic, and never share their emotions. To him, the gym is a place to maintain his physical strength, a symbol of his resilience. George, like Frank, upholds a conservative Kenyan traditional viewpoint on masculinity that men should never expose their weaknesses. He views the gym as a sanctuary to escape family obligations. Frank and George serve as the de facto leaders of the group.

After their rigorous workouts, the men gather at the Sweat and Tears Coffee Shop and often engage in lively conversations about manhood and routinely deflect discussions about mental health challenges.

For two months, Ethan struggled to commit to their bootcamp regiment and frequently failed to show up for weekly workout sessions. One day, the men gathered at the coffee shop after a workout and Ethan awkwardly apologized to them for missing their weekly boot camp. As the sole provider for his family, Ethan was overwhelmed with fulfilling greater financial obligations in Kenya. Ethan's stress was visibly noticeable to the men who accepted his apology. They expressed genuine concern and offered their support to Ethan. Ahmed and Liam shared how they had educated themselves on managing mental health issues and asked Ethan, "Is everything okay?" Ethan was reluctant to respond and deflected by saying "Man, I am just trying to keep up with

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the drills.” Carlos expressed to Ethan that “workouts are not only about the body, but it helps to keep one’s mind in shape. We are here to support you and each other through life’s peaks and valleys and there is no shame in asking for our help.”

George and Frank kindly criticized Carlos for suggesting that rigorous workouts do not solve all problems. To them, Ethan just needed to “toughen up, workout more and he will be fine.” The varying perspectives confused Ethan and escalated his stress and anxiety.

Later, as he thought it over, Ethan was encouraged by the progressive viewpoints of Ahmed, Liam, and Carlos. He made the difficult decision to pivot from denial to seeking mental health therapy from a professional counselor. Soon after his therapy sessions, Ethan had an epiphany that talking about his mental health struggles did not make him weaker but stronger. He shared a few techniques he learned from his counselor with his brethren on how to manage his mild depression. His willingness to share his positive experiences with mental health counseling inspired Ahmed to seek help for his insomnia and mood swings.

Ethan joined Liam and Carlos in their advocacy to champion mental health awareness with males from different countries, diverse cultures, and backgrounds who work out at the gym. Purposeful discussions emerged among the men on the importance of embracing mental health challenges and confronting them as opportunities to become physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy.

After a couple of months, Frank and George began to openly contribute their viewpoints to the discussion of how to enhance mental health awareness. During a bootcamp milestone celebration, Frank and George expressed their admiration for Ethan and sheepishly confessed that it is beneficial to openly discuss mental health and seek help from a trained professional. Within a year, the men from the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations transformed their conservative fixed mindset on mental health to a growth mindset and joined the progressive Gen Zs to raise awareness and promote healthy living for men. This diverse group of men all came to agree that taking care of one’s physical *and* mental fitness is an excellent recipe for health and well-being.

Discussion Questions

- Envision the diverse backgrounds of these six men before this case ensued, what societal and cultural norms may have influenced their beliefs about mental health?
- How did these men from the different generations influence each other’s perspective on mental health counseling? What does this suggest about the role of peer support in addressing mental health?
- How does this case study challenge traditional views of masculinity? What can individuals or groups do to challenge traditional views of masculinity?
- Carol Dweck’s Growth and Fixed Mindset Theory suggests that some people view innate ability and personalities as constant through life (fixed) and others emphasize that with effort, people can change (growth). How does this theory help to interpret this case?
- Two of these men had moved to a new country. What added stressors does that bring to their lives? What additional challenges and/or opportunities exist when seeking mental health support in a new country?
- What lessons can international educators learn from this case?

Standing Ovation:

Latina Exchange Student Overcomes Cross-Cultural Stereotype

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; International Student and Scholar Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

Birch College is a small liberal arts institution in Vermont known for its elite theater and performing arts program that prepares students who aspire to perform in dramatic and musical theater. Within this vibrant academic atmosphere, the college welcomes domestic and international students from diverse cultural backgrounds who bring unique perspectives to the campus community. Birch College has a long-standing student exchange initiative for its theater arts program with a university located in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Faculty at both institutions make a mutual decision to select Sofia, a Latina, first-generation, bilingual talented student, for the Birch College theater arts exchange program. Sofia comes from a university in San Juan, Puerto Rico where renowned faculty teach acting classes primarily in Spanish. She is excited to have the opportunity to

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spend her junior year at Birch College so that she can engage with students from different cultures and hone her acting skills. Sofia is proficient in English and has been the lead actress in several plays at her university. Most of her performances were delivered in her native language, Spanish, and on a few occasions in English.

Case

From the onset at Birch College, Sofia actively fosters relationships with her peers and is an active contributor to amplify everyone's acting ability through rehearsals. Sofia frequently solicits feedback from her instructors and diligently practices her lines to refine her acting skills. Sofia is eager to audition for the lead role in a play.

However, a week before auditions, some students vocally express their bias against Sofia about her English accent and believe that she should be disqualified from auditioning for the play. It becomes apparent to Sofia that they are biased against non-native English speakers and their insensitivity creates an unwelcoming environment.

Despite the hostile environment, Sofia is motivated to overcome this false perception through resilience in her acting ability. This resolve leads her to confidently audition for the lead role in the Birch College Annual Theater Production.

The director of the play selects Sofia for the lead role and consequently, the peers who spoke against her reluctantly acknowledge her exceptional talent as a dramatic actress. Through this adversity, Sofia delivers one of her best performances that culminates in a resounding standing ovation. The skeptical students who exhibited bias about her English accent being an impediment to the audience are enlightened about the value of diversity and inclusion through her performance. This experience elevates Sofia's confidence and passion to advocate to the broad community about the importance of embracing cross-cultural differences and fostering inclusivity among exchange students.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- Which specific stereotypes and biases did Sofia encounter and how did these manifest themselves among her peers? How did those stereotypes and biases affect the overall educational environment?
- In this case, what could a student, staff member, or faculty member have done to be an ally to Sofia?
- Before and after selecting Sofia as the lead, how could the director have intervened to resolve the conflict between Sofia and her peers?
- What responsibilities do faculty members in the theater and performing arts program have to ensure that students like Sofia are evaluated based on their abilities rather than on their linguistic or cultural backgrounds?
- What steps can individual faculty members take to create a more inclusive environment that addresses bias and fosters diversity within its theater and performing arts program?
- What strategies can an institution adopt to enhance cultural sensitivity and reduce biases to ensure all students have equal opportunities to succeed?

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A Lesson in Cross-Cultural Healthcare: Navigating Medical Emergencies Abroad

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Experiential Education; Student Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

This case occurs during a 2-week faculty-led study abroad program in Comparative Healthcare from a United States university to Western Europe. The experiential program travels to Europe every year. In May, a group of 20 undergraduate and graduate students traveled to Paris, France; Geneva and Interlaken, Switzerland; and Milan, Italy to experience healthcare systems outside of the United States. Students visited healthcare facilities, participated in museum tours, and attended lectures by healthcare professionals to compare healthcare systems in Western Europe and the US. Students were given an immersive experience of healthcare systems and the culture in each community to experience how local customs affect healthcare. This case study centers on a student's encounter with the hospital system following a medical emergency in Italy.

Case

One student on the trip faced a major health emergency during the program. The student experienced back pain after falling down two flights of stairs in Paris, France. The pain from this incident continued to progress as the trip continued. Later, while staying at a hostel in Italy, the student twisted over in bed to pass another student a cord and was suddenly frozen by stabbing back pain that left them almost unable to move. It became clear that trying to endure the agony was fruitless and seeking immediate healthcare was necessary. The student notified the program director and was immediately taken to an emergency room (ER) close by in Milan. Once the student reached the hospital, X-rays were taken and it was discovered that the student had an irregular spinal column—an unexpected finding that warranted further investigation. The medical team believed that she had a crooked back causing pinched nerves under her shoulder blade. The hospital staff managed to communicate the severity

of the issue despite the language barrier. The medical team at the emergency room recommended that the student see a physician and have an MRI done upon returning to the United States.

The visit to the Milan hospital offered direct insight into the Italian medical system. Even though there were language barriers, the effectiveness and professionalism of the medical providers spoke volumes. To ensure the student understood the gravity of their condition, medical personnel went to great lengths to explain details using gestures and basic English. This illustrated the adaptability and dedication of the healthcare staff towards delivering necessary treatment even in the face of communication barriers.

The student observed a few cultural differences with how medical processes are handled in Italy versus in the U.S. The Italian healthcare system particularly values the physical environment and complete wellness of an individual. The student felt that Italian hospitals focus on patients' emotional and physical needs whereas the U.S. healthcare system tends to focus on efficiency and medical procedures, at the expense of emotional support and comfort. When comparing Italian and American hospitals, it was noted that the Milanese hospital had a warmer atmosphere, and they take holistic care of patients including considering their comfort and emotional state. They place a high value on ensuring that the patient feels comfortable at all costs, which contrasted the student's experience of U.S. healthcare, where it is sometimes impersonal and rushed, and patient comfort can be overlooked in favor of efficiency.

The recent situation highlighted the importance of having a support network while studying in a country. Going abroad without friends or family can feel daunting, especially if faced with a crisis. The student felt fortunate to have faculty and fellow program participants who offered encouragement and assistance during this period. Not only did the professor ensure that the student received medical attention and assist with communication between hospital staff and the student, but she also remained a constant source of support, offering emotional reassurance throughout the process. Whether it was finding the hospital or communicating with healthcare professionals, this network proved invaluable in navigating the healthcare system.

After returning to the U.S., the student scheduled an MRI as recommended by the doctors in Italy. Arranging the MRI appointment at home shed light on the differences between healthcare systems in both countries. The U.S. experience included calling multiple specialists for a referral, dealing with insurance, and waiting for an appointment that was weeks away. The student noticed how complex the American healthcare system was compared to the patient-focused approach in Italy.

This experience provided lessons for the student and the faculty leader. It emphasized the need for planning before a study abroad program. In case of an emergency, having a grasp of healthcare services, such as knowing where hospitals and clinics are located, can be extremely helpful. Furthermore, being familiar with medical terms in the local language can make seeking medical help much easier. The Italian team demonstrated the expertise and adaptability of healthcare providers in delivering care despite language and cultural challenges. The student appreciated that they were aware and attentive to the needs of their patients.

While no one ever wishes for this experience, the student was able to gain additional insight into the very subject that they were studying - comparative healthcare. The experience of moving from an emergency room in Milan to scheduling an MRI appointment in the US shed light on the complexities and obstacles associated with accessing healthcare. Facing a health issue while studying in Italy gave them insights into the healthcare system, variations in medical practices across cultures, and the significance of having a support system. It emphasized the necessity for students, faculty, and international education programs to be well-informed and ready to navigate healthcare systems abroad.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How can faculty prepare for dealing with these types of emergencies?
- How can academic institutions help students manage health problems while enrolled in classes abroad?
- How can we prepare students for dealing with language barriers abroad?
- What policies should be put in place to ensure the safety and welfare of students involved in study abroad programs?
- In what ways do cultural differences influence how health and well-being problems are perceived and addressed?
- What contrasts might exist between different countries' health care systems?

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Cultivating Global Citizens: Navigating an International School-University Partnership

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; International Student Services; Internationalization and Global Learning; Partnerships; Primary and Secondary Education; Program Design; Technology; University/Higher Education

Setting

The case is set at a private international high school in Taiwan that follows the American education model, where the administration is actively pursuing international partnerships to enhance educational outcomes and foster global citizenship among students. The Deputy Director of the school, a United Nations Global Schools Advocate who has been in the role for five years, oversees all international collaborations, working closely with instructors to integrate internationalization into the curriculum and facilitate robust student mobility opportunities. The school has implemented training programs for students and faculty to enhance intercultural awareness and understanding while incorporating diverse teaching materials that reflect varied viewpoints. Additionally, the school encourages positive interactions through collaborative online projects with students abroad, fostering an inclusive environment that values diversity and supports cross-cultural understanding.

Each year, the school organizes several in-person study trips to its international partner universities. During these visits, students participate in customized learning programs while administrative staff explore opportunities for joint research, shared curriculum development, and progressively higher-intensity partnership arrangements with their university counterparts (often engendering greater levels of commitment, resource sharing, and engagement between the institutions). The school also maintains a program in which their students are at liberty to pursue credit-bearing early college courses alongside their high school classes. By forging stronger school-university partnerships, it is posited that students will be better equipped with the skills necessary to excel in their higher education pursuits and in an increasingly competitive global labor market.

Case

In July, a delegation from the school, including approximately 30 Taiwanese students and 2 staff, embarked upon an initial visit to a new American partner, a large public university in the western United States. Despite the best efforts of the school's Deputy Director and colleagues from the university, unforeseen challenges arose among students due to language and cultural differences that hindered effective communication during this summer program. Many East-Asian students traditionally exhibit a more passive approach to classroom participation than their American counterparts. These differences are often attributed to cultural norms that emphasize respect for authority and deference to educators. This cultural backdrop limited open dialogue and active engagement in collaborative settings. Compounding these issues were varying levels of English proficiency among Taiwanese students, leading to misunderstandings and reluctance to participate fully in open unstructured discussions with their international peers.

In response to these challenges, colleagues from the university quickly implemented strategies to encourage communication. Faculty members facilitated informal one-on-one sessions with students in casual settings outside of regular scheduled program hours. These flexible sessions encouraged open dialogue and provided practical tools for students to navigate cultural differences and express themselves more confidently. The informal approach fostered a low-stress learning environment without the pressure of formal assessments. Additionally, peer mentoring was implemented, pairing American students with Taiwanese students. This contributed to an engaging and supportive environment for cultural immersion, allowing both groups to learn from one another while enhancing their communication skills. These swift adjustments helped create an atmosphere where students felt more comfortable engaging in discussions and sharing their perspectives. As a result, the Taiwanese students demonstrated increased participation and collaboration during the learning experiences that followed.

The outcomes of the study trip, on the whole, were deemed mutually beneficial for the school and university concerned. It was thus decided in August to pursue a dual enrollment model, allowing for high school students in Taiwan to asynchronously participate in an online university program taught by faculty from the United States. While the program offered the opportunity to earn college credits and complete advanced coursework, it also introduced new complications related to online learning. After returning to Taiwan, students were initially excited about this avenue for continued engagement with professors they had interacted with in the United States. However, by October, many students had expressed personal struggles with time management in the asynchronous format of the program. The transition to an online mode of instruction had created feelings of isolation, as students reminisced about the face-to-face interactions that had previously facilitated their learning experiences during the summer program in the US.

In order to address the challenges faced by students, a solution was developed that would allow university courses to be taught locally in Taiwan from January. By delivering the university program in-person, students would benefit from face-to-face instruction, enhancing engagement and facilitating more effective communication. This localized approach is seen as particularly appropriate given the challenges associated with distance learning in the East Asian context, where there has historically been less support for online education. Cultural attitudes often favor the traditional face-to-face education model whilst concerns regarding government accreditation result in skepticism towards asynchronous instruction among students and their parents. Additionally, many students in this demographic face barriers such as inadequate digital infrastructure and varying levels of technological proficiency, hindering effective engagement in online courses. By offering in-person classes taught by qualified international faculty, the program not only addresses these concerns but also provides a familiar and supportive learning environment that aligns with cultural expectations.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- In providing learning opportunities for the students and exploring partnership expansion, what did the school and university staff in this case do well? Is there anything that you would recommend they do differently in the future?
- What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing a dual enrollment model for high school students, and how can schools ensure that this model meets both academic and cultural needs?
- What strategies can be implemented to better prepare students for the cultural differences they may encounter when participating in international programs, and how can these strategies be tailored to fit the East Asian context?
- What types of support systems (e.g., mentoring, tutoring) could be established to assist students who may struggle with the demands of advanced coursework in a dual enrollment program?
- In what ways could an international high school and a university in another country benefit from a partnership? Other than dual enrollment, what activities might they partner on?
- How should success be measured in the context of international partnerships, particularly regarding student engagement, academic performance, and intercultural competence?

Education at a Crossroads:

Costa Rica's New Approach to Technical Education and Workforce Readiness

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Tags

Education Policy; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Primary and Secondary Education; Program Assessment; Technology

Setting

Historically, Costa Rica has been considered an anomaly in Latin America, due to its stable democracy, commitment to environmental sustainability, and investment in human capital through education. Costa Rica is a country in which primary education has been both compulsory and tuition-free since 1869. Long recognized internationally for its commitment to universal education and its high rate of literacy (98 percent), today Costa Rica faces declining educational outcomes, growing inequality, and a stalling economy, factors that have brought it to an inflection point. Recent data paints a stark picture of an educational system in crisis, challenging the country's ability to continue to develop and remain a leader in the international education landscape.

The gravity of Costa Rica's educational crisis is confirmed by international assessments. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report ranked Costa Rica 102 out of 141 countries regarding skill levels of its secondary school graduates. Moreover, the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results further highlight the country's educational deficiencies, with Costa Rica's average scores among the lowest ever measured by PISA across all three subjects—mathematics, science, and reading. These results

have sparked national debate and influenced policy decisions, pushing education reform to the forefront of the political agenda.

The statistics are alarming: today, only 10 percent of first graders in the country will go on to earn a high school diploma, and just 40 percent of the nation's current labor force has completed secondary school. Moreover, only a quarter of adults between the ages of 24 and 35 hold high school diplomas. These figures stand in sharp contrast to Costa Rica's past achievements in education and its aspirations to compete in the global knowledge economy.

Case

In response to these challenges and influenced by global education trends, the Ministry of Public Education approved a new initiative in 2023 that introduces a new nationwide form of vocational educational training. The National Technological Training Program (PNFT) ("Programa Nacional de Formación Tecnológica") was designed to better prepare learners in the areas of digital literacy and twenty-first century skills. This initiative is moving forward despite significant annual budget cuts to public education every year since 2017.

Unlike traditional vocational programs that often operate parallel to academic tracks, the PNFT seeks to embed technological and vocational training within the core curriculum throughout all educational levels of the public system, making it accessible to students, regardless of their academic trajectory, location, or grade level. This novel approach is particularly significant given that a large share of Costa Rica's working-age population has low educational attainment (below secondary education) and could benefit from vocational skills training.

The PNFT is based on three pillars: developing computational thinking for problem-solving; creating ethical digital citizens; and encouraging entrepreneurial and innovative thinkers. Through these pillars, the initiative aims not only to address the immediate need to increase technological skills but also to cultivate future generations of principled, innovative, and technologically-skilled citizens.

This initiative aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). By focusing on technological skills and digital citizenship, the PNFT aims to address SDG targets related to relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship, as well as the promotion of sustainable development.

One tenet of the PNFT is its inclusivity and accessibility to all students in the public education system, regardless of background or prior exposure to technology, which aligns with SDG 10. Moreover, the PNFT is designed to be implemented across all levels of education, throughout primary, elementary, and secondary school, ensuring continuous and progressive development of technological competencies.

Now, with initial implementation ahead, the PNFT is facing challenges. There are concerns about equitable access to technological resources, particularly for students in rural areas or from low-income backgrounds. The digital divide, both in terms of infrastructure and skills, remains a significant obstacle throughout the country, especially outside of San Jose, the capital. Additionally, changing long-held perceptions about the value of technical education compared to traditional academic pathways, especially for girls, presents a cultural challenge. Many of the country's technical high schools emphasize STEM-related fields, domains where girls and women tend to have lower representation than their male counterparts. Finally, the program was slated to

launch in 2024, but as of November 2024, it has yet to begin implementation. The funding cuts to public education may have delayed its launch.

If implemented and successful, the PNFT could have far-reaching implications for Costa Rica's alignment with international standards and achievement of the SDGs. By equipping students with critical technological skills, fostering innovation, and promoting ethical, digital citizenship, the program has the potential to improve educational outcomes, drive economic growth, and position Costa Rica as a leader in technological education in Latin America.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- On the precipice of implementation, what factors are still unknown about how the implementation of this new policy in Costa Rica will play out? How can educators move forward amidst ambiguity?
- What strategies could be employed to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to the resources needed for this new type of technical training?
- How might educators balance the focus on technological skills with the need for a well-rounded education that includes humanities and social sciences?
- How could international partnerships help to further national policy goals in implementing programs such as the PNFT?
- What could other national education systems learn from Costa Rica's new approach to technical education, and what could Costa Rica learn from other countries' technical education systems?
- How can the Costa Rican government measure the impact of this new program on both educational outcomes and broader economic development, particularly in relation to SDG targets?
- How might the emphasis on education surrounding digital citizenship and ethics contribute to addressing broader societal challenges?

Navigating Identity and Safety: Supporting LGBTQI International Students

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Cross-Cultural Issues; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; International Student and Scholar Services; Leadership and Strategy; Partnerships; Student Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

This case study takes place at a mid-sized U.S. university known for diversity and inclusion, as well as extensive support structures for international students. The institution strives to create a safe, affirming environment for all students, particularly those from marginalized groups, yet faces typical resource limitations that challenge comprehensive, continuous support for international students outside campus grounds. Institutional policies generally promote inclusivity, and broader policy changes are under consideration to specifically address the unique needs of LGBTQI international students.

Case

Alex, an international student from a country where LGBTQI identities face severe legal restrictions and social stigmatization, arrives in the U.S. to study computer science. Over the course of their first semester, Alex begins exploring their gender identity, participating in campus LGBTQI events and connecting with supportive peers and counselors. Alex finds acceptance in this new environment, a stark contrast to the societal expectations in their home country. As winter break nears, however, Alex's anxiety about returning home grows, aware that being openly LGBTQI may place them at serious risk.

Jamie, a campus social worker specializing in LGBTQI student affairs, becomes aware of Alex's concerns. With Alex's permission, Jamie consults with you, a seasoned international educator, to develop a comprehensive plan that prioritizes Alex's safety and autonomy. Together, you coordinate resources such as mental health counseling, safe travel planning, and pre-departure cultural re-adjustment support. This includes preparing Alex for the psychological and emotional challenges they may face if they need to conceal their identity upon return. You also explore with Alex potential alternatives to going home, like on-campus or local housing options during the break. However, there are housing limitations and reduced staff availability on campus which present challenges for international students over academic breaks.

The collaboration between international education and social work underscores the complex, intersecting identities of students like Alex, who must navigate conflicting cultural expectations. Recognizing the challenges faced by LGBTQI international students, Jamie and the international office begin advocating for more formalized institutional policies to support such students, including measures like:

- **Designated Safe Spaces and Programs:** Initiating programs specifically tailored for LGBTQI international students to discuss cultural, social, and personal challenges with confidentiality.
- **Flexible Housing Policies:** Advocating for expanded housing availability during academic breaks, allowing international students facing unsafe home environments to remain on campus.

While the social worker and international educator work on policy advocacy and continue to offer individual support, Alex contemplates their upcoming choices.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What strategies can be implemented to ensure that Alex feels supported both emotionally and practically during their transition back home?
- What are the long-term implications for Alex's mental health and academic performance if they choose to suppress their identity upon returning home, and how can the university prepare to support them upon their return?
- What are the ethical considerations involved in potentially advising a student to conceal aspects of their identity for their safety? How should these be navigated?
- How can educators balance respect for a student's cultural background with the imperative to support their individual identity exploration and expression?
- How can institutions foster a supportive environment that can extend beyond the campus to international students returning to potentially hostile environments?
- In what ways can collaboration between different support services on campus be improved to address the unique needs of international LGBTQI students?

Athletes Abroad:

Launching a Study Abroad Initiative for Division 1 College Athletes

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Tags

Education Abroad; Internationalization and Global Learning; Program Design; Student Learning and Development; Technology; University/Higher Education

Setting

The National Collegiate Athletics Administration (NCAA) governs collegiate athletics in the U.S. and has strict policies regarding what they refer to as “foreign tours.” The NCAA allows all teams from member institutions to participate in one foreign tour once every four years. These foreign tours must be conducted during the summer vacation break between an institution’s spring and fall terms or during an academic year vacation period (NCAA, 2023). Foreign tours are an opportunity for college athletes to participate in global learning as the time demands of their training often limit college athletes from participating in traditional study abroad programs. Scholars build on this approach and recommend that coaches, athletic administrators, faculty, and international offices work together to develop credit-bearing short-term programs that will fit within college athletes’ packed schedules, which include practices, contests, and academic commitments (Navarro et al., 2019).

The University of the Midwest (UM) has positioned itself as a leader in collegiate athletics on the field and in its college athlete development program, Athlete Career Transition Initiative (ACTive), which helps college athletes participate in job shadowing, career networking events, and internships. In addition to supporting students as they explore different career options, the ACTive program aims to help students develop leadership and other transferable skills that will help them on and off the field.

The Assistant Athletic Director (AAD) of Student-Athlete Development wanted to create a new initiative that would build cross-cultural skills and provide students with a global education. Considering that some coaches at UM had led foreign tours in the past, the AAD saw an opportunity to expand the program. Their goal was to increase the number of student-athletes traveling overseas and add an academic component to the athletic foreign tour by incorporating a UM credit-bearing class. This Athletes Abroad program could become a framework for future short-term international athletic programs for UM.

Case

The AAD began work to launch the Athletes Abroad (AA) program and develop two summer programs for the current year, one for the women's volleyball team in Brazil and another for the men's basketball team in Greece. They contacted the study abroad office and the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) to begin work.

The AA program was designed to benefit student-athletes both on and off the field and enhance the foreign tour program to maximize cultural immersion and academic value while also providing a meaningful athletic experience. They identified three principal learning outcomes for the new programs.

- **Intercultural Learning:** The student-athlete development staff worked with the study abroad office and the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) to create a course for the AA program entitled Intercultural Competencies: Culture, Leadership, and Diversity, which could be adapted to many locations around the world where UM teams pursue foreign tours. The FAR, a professor of education, worked with the study abroad office as well as faculty members in the fields of communication, international relations, history, sociology, and sport management to create assignments and activities appropriate for a short-term study abroad program.
- **Athletic Opportunity:** Working with coaches, the AA created foreign tours that maximized athletic opportunities, including competition with professional sports organizations, sports clubs, and in international college tournaments. For example, they scheduled students in the first iteration to play three contests against quality competition.
- **Career Development:** The AA program expanded the career and personal development focus on the ACTive program into the growth of cultural competencies by helping athletes broaden their global perspectives, navigate diverse environments, and consider international employment.

Taking NCAA rules into consideration, UM decided to offer the AA program to teams on a rotating basis, with two to four of the sixteen teams participating each year. This would increase the number of college athletes studying abroad for credit. Each program was structured to include four pre-departure class sessions, 10 days abroad (in addition to travel days), and two class sessions upon return.

The program development stage was not without obstacles. Although coaches had seen the benefit of foreign tours because they serve as great bonding experiences for teams, provide extra practice and competition days, and give the students exposure to new cultures and opportunities, not every coach at UM was excited about the prospect. Coaches questioned the quality of the competition faced during foreign tours as well as limitations related to facility access for strength and conditioning activities. In addition, they worried about the athletes' full calendar and the foreign tour potentially taking up what little "free" time the athletes had to spend with their families.

Despite these challenges, the first two AA programs ran and were impactful, with 28 college athletes traveling abroad and earning three credits while competing against strong competition. Students all reflected that the experience in a different culture provided them with new cross-cultural insights, offered career exploration, and highlighted the value of the foreign tour as a bonding experience for the entire team.

Reflecting on the first year, the AAD, the FAR, and the study abroad office recognized that there were additional challenges that needed to be overcome to create credit-bearing foreign tours for all UM student-athletes. In addition to addressing the coaches' concerns, there was a substantial increase in cost for incorporating a credit-bearing course into a foreign tour. Students paid more because of the tuition and faculty salary and travel costs. Furthermore, the first iteration of the program was completed using teams with smaller roster sizes; men's basketball had 13 players participate, and women's volleyball had 15 athletes travel abroad. Expanding to larger teams like track and field or football could create a challenge with travel logistics and the program cost may become out of reach. As the average faculty-led study abroad course at UM has 17 students enrolled, any larger course may also be unmanageable from an academic standpoint.

Another challenge was recruiting faculty. Although the FAR was willing to teach the course during the volleyball team's trip to Brazil, and they were also able to recruit a Classics professor to teach the course in Greece, recruiting faculty to lead trips and teach the courses each year could be challenging.

To deal with these challenges, the student-athlete development office employed several strategic approaches.

- To encourage coaches to participate in AA programs, the student-athlete development office worked with the study abroad office to create a workshop that explained the benefits for teams and athletes.
- Securing secure alternative funding sources was also a priority and required collaboration with the athletics department's fundraising office to muster donor support and corporate sponsors.
- The FAR helped to identify a potential pool of faculty who could lead AA trips in the future and helped to design professional development workshops that could train more faculty members to teach the course on international competencies.

Overall, the initiative was successful in creating a framework for future years. A syllabus and course model was created that could be used for future trips, and the AA program contributed to making international education more accessible for college athletes at UM. The student-athlete development office was proud of their achievement and looked forward to continuing to expand the program in future years.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What components contributed to the success of the first year of AA? What could UM do to improve?
- What opportunities are there for career development on a short-term program of this nature?
- How can UM overcome coach and faculty resistance to participating in the AA program?
- What strategies can UM employ to meet roster-size challenges for AA programs?
- What strategies can athletic departments explore to expand financial accessibility of foreign tours and credit-bearing programs for student-athletes?
- How could online courses, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), or virtual exchange (VE) be leveraged for college athletes?
- What should UM prioritize for the second year of the program?

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