

The Impact of International Experiential Learning on Career Trajectories: A Scoping Literature Review

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USRI Context I joined this project in April of 2022, after the initiation of the study in 2019, which explores how international experiential learning (EL) facilitates students' career trajectories post-graduation through a longitudinal study with students from the course, *Aging Globally: Lessons from Scandinavia*. I have contributed to this study by completing a scoping literature review, updating the contact information database, supporting ethics amendments, and revising the survey in Qualtrics. With gratitude, I acknowledge the Western USRI program for the chance to partake in this research opportunity. To my supervisor, I appreciate your mentorship and guidance throughout this fellowship. It has been my privilege to work with you, and I look forward to continuing this project with your support.

Introduction

Preparing graduates for the future beyond the classroom is of paramount importance in today's society, where the landscape of global employment is ever-changing.¹ Traditional career development has relied on degree attainments as the most important factor supporting a career post-graduation. However, research suggests that knowledge acquisition integrated with transferable skills predicts successful employment.² To construct a meaningful future, graduating students in the twenty-first century must become strong experiential learners through engagement in cycles of continuous experience and reflection.³ International EL has shown promise in the development of vocational identity and career development.^{4,5} Opportunities for international EL are commonly offered in undergraduate programs, but their impact on career trajectories is unknown.

Purpose

The purpose of this scoping literature review is to identify the current state of knowledge about the impact of international EL courses on career trajectories.

Key Words

experiential learning, transferable skills, international courses, career trajectories, employer perspectives, global competence

Method

A five-stage framework for scoping literature reviews, proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), was as follows: 1. Determined the research question, 2. Identified relevant studies using key words, 3. Selected studies using inclusion criteria: no publication year limits, peer-reviewed published papers, available surveys or questionnaires, 4. Charted data via Excel, 5. Collated, summarized and identified thematic patterns to report findings.⁶



Findings

Students' perspective: graduates with international learning experiences reported increased awareness of the importance of global citizenship that influenced their core values, professional identity, and overall lifestyle. They have identified skills and competencies they believe employers sought after. The most highlighted skills were:

1. Cross-cultural competency - ability to collaborate and appreciate opinions of others
2. Interpersonal and cross-cultural communication
3. High-level of decision making and problem-solving
4. Increased level of confidence and ability to adapt to new atmospheres
5. Openness to new perspectives and ideas
6. Acceptance of diverse individuals through cultural awareness
7. Broad technical knowledge
8. Critical reflection and engagement in professional development
9. Ability to self-direct
10. Tolerance to ambiguity

Employers' perspective: job applicants with international educational experience stood out due to their understanding of global marketplace demands, cross-cultural sensitivity, political awareness, intellectual flexibility, awareness of globalization, and the interworking of international business trades. Despite the reputed skill-based benefits, studies identified a common limitation: employers do not understand the depth and impact of international EL, and some perceive it as "academic tourism." This impression begs the question: How should the gains of EL be communicated to employers?

Literature Included

Sixty-two sources published between 2003 to 2022 were included, predominantly theoretical and experimental studies. Seven provided the surveys they used, alongside commentary for survey development. This review covered EL initiatives from Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Discussion

The scope of published work is limited to the skills students bring to their future careers post-EL. Further inquiry is needed into how students' careers evolve and what students choose to partake in post-international EL. For example: Do students choose to accept positions that involve international partnerships? Do students choose to pursue post-graduate programs abroad? This scoping literature review provides direction for future research to fill the identified gap on students' career trajectories after engaging in an international course(s). **Next Steps:** The following steps in this study are to obtain ethics approval, conduct an online survey with students who participated in the international EL course, *Aging Globally: Lessons in Scandinavia*, complete quantitative and qualitative analysis, identify themes on how transferable skills impacted early career trajectories, and prepare a manuscript for publication.

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