Cross-culture outcomes of a brazilian professor 
*Fulbright in the USA*

Resultados interculturais de um professor brasileiro *Fulbright* nos EUA

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**ABSTRACT**
Over the past decade due the expansion of globalization, there has been an increasing emphasis on internationalization among faculty, administration and accrediting agencies in the Higher Education. Although to promote internationalization in the Higher Education, costs are a big challenge, one way to have the international actions with low cost, it is seeking for grants from different governmental agencies and foundations.

The Fulbright Scholar program provides a long-standing and externally funded means for internationalizing college and university curriculum. This article is going to share the perspective of a Brazilian Fulbright Scholar at an American college and the institution perspective of the Fulbright scholar participation at the College.

**Keywords:** scholar; higher education; Fulbright; internationalization

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RESUMO
Ao longo da última década, devido à expansão da globalização, tem havido uma crescente ênfase na internacionalização no ensino superior entre corpo docente, administração e agências de reconhecimento. Embora para promover a internacionalização no ensino superior, os custos são um grande desafio, uma forma de ter as ações internacionais com baixo custo, é buscar por bolsas de estudo de diferentes agências governamentais de fomento e fundações. O programa Fulbright Scholar oferece condições financeiras excelente para internacionalizar os currículos de faculdades e universidades. Este artigo vai partilhar a perspectiva de um bolsista Fulbright brasileiro em uma faculdade americana e a perspectiva da instituição da participação do bolsista Fulbright na instituição.

Palavras chave: bolsista; educação superior; Fulbright; internacionalização

Introduction

In the last decades the institutions of higher education have expanded their process of internationalization due to the new opportunities and challenges that globalization has brought. There are different ways that internationalization can be promoted in the institutions of higher education; one of the actions is to receive visiting scholars.

The fact that more universities are active in global alliances and more faculties are traveling abroad to enrich their career portfolios makes the specific case of the management educator as expatriate timely and appropriate. This is especially true in the context of growing interest in international business programs and courses. (SCHERMERHORN, 1999, p. 246)

A visiting scholar bring to the students of the host institution the opportunities of different academic perspectives and cross-cultural relationship, a foreign professor could also diversify the departments with
their expertise while also exchanging ideas with the faculty members at the host institution.

In summary, previous research suggests that international education provides significant benefits to both faculty and student participants. In addition, the Fulbright Scholar Program provides a unique and enriching experience for faculty members across a wide range of metrics and settings. (BORGIA; HOBBS; WEEKS, 2007, p.18)

One of the challenges to bring an international visiting scholar to the institution are the costs. To facilitate this action there are different grants that can be asked. In the United States of America Fulbright is a foundation, which provides grants for American institution of higher education to bring international visiting scholars.

Background on the Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Council for International Exchange of Scholars assists in the administration of the Fulbright Scholar Program for faculties and professionals. As the website states:

“The Fulbright Program, the U.S. government’s flagship program in international educational exchange, was proposed to the U.S. Congress in 1945 by then freshman Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas. In the aftermath of World War II, Senator Fulbright viewed the proposed program as a much-needed vehicle for promoting “mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries of the world.” His vision was approved by Congress and the program was signed into law by President Truman in 1946. Fulbright grants are made to U.S. citizens and nationals of other countries for a variety of educational activities, primarily university lecturing, advanced research, graduate study and teaching in elementary and secondary schools. (CIES, 2017)

My Fulbright Experience

As for my experience, Fulbright informed me in February 2016 that my candidacy was accepted to go through a selection process to live and work in the USA. During the months of March and May, I took the language test and provided all the documents requested, in June I was informed that I had been awarded the grant. I also spent the time getting prepared for the departure, which included planning for my classes, and working out the logistics of leaving our home and Brazil life behind for 6 months. We decided to leave our family taking care of our house.
In August my wife and I departed to the US, we arrived in Emory on August 2nd, during the first 3 weeks I spent the time preparing for the beginning of the classes on August 24th and also getting the things organized regarding our living in Emory. The college provided a house for us to live and also a car to move around.

The College allowed me to teach three courses, one was about Multicultural Competences. It was part of the core curriculum in the Connections classes: This is a seminar course involving an in-depth study of a broad public problem, with an emphasis on regional, national, and international institutions, policies, cultural practices, and ethical aspects that must be negotiated to address the problem.

The other two courses I taught were Migration Movement in the Contemporary World and Issues in International Management. The migration course objective was to understand that international migration has become the concern of all in some form or another, with the questions of how to understand international migration in a globalized world, how to take advantage of it, how to live with it and how to manage it. With these questions in mind, it is important to keep pace with the growth of the phenomenon and understand the complexity of its linkages with other global issues.

The business course objective was to discuss topical and regional international management issues, addressing contemporary concerns in such areas as the European Union, the Middle East, China and the Pacific Rim, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Cross-cultural analyses from the perspective of the American business organization.

On August 24th the classes started, the first days were very challenging for me to teach the classes that were not in my first language so I was very anxious with the new experience.

Byrne and Falk (1996, p. 134) underscored the difficulties of a visiting professorship in another country. “Limitations depend not only on language skills but on previous cross-cultural experiences as well as personal charisma”. For visiting faculty, Byrne and Falk (1996, p. 134) recommended “personal courage to participate in exchanges, curiosity and openness to new perspectives, and conscious seeking of mutual trust and cooperation”.

I was afraid of having difficulties to communicate with the students in English; I also was worried if I was going to be able to accomplish my goals regarding the classes.

Little by little all the anxiety and fear disappeared, the students understood my English very well and gave positive feedback about the classes and the content taught, different times they helped me with the words I had difficulty in pronouncing.

Sometimes to create a relaxing environment in the classroom I would start speaking in Portuguese while teaching and the students enjoyed a lot when I did it.
Another thing I noticed at the beginning of the course was that the students were very quiet. It was like that from the start to the end of the class. This situation is very different from the Brazilian students who talk all the time. At first, I thought that the silence was because I was a new professor and they did not know me very well, but the silence continued throughout the semester, than I understood that the silence was a cultural aspect of those students.

At the beginning I did not know very well how to make the students to be more participative in the classes, but talking to other professors they gave me some tips in how to involve the students in the discussions and by applying those tips in my classes I could have more participation from the students.

Thomas et al. (1994, p. 85) say that “spending time living in another culture not only increases one’s understanding of the other people but also enables one to look more closely and reassess the values of one’s own culture”.

The way the students welcomed me made a great difference in the result of the teaching learning process, their positive attitude gave me confidence to overcome the challenges of teaching in another language and in a different culture.

Thomas et al. (1994, p. 84) “loss of one’s familiar environment and challenge of a new environment cause anxiety, and [that] it takes time to adjust to living and working in a different culture”.

The professors also gave me good support regarding to the classes and some bureaucratic procedures. What also facilitated the adaptation was that since the beginning of our staying at the college the faculties and the administrative staff were friendly and also welcoming, they made my wife and I feel like we were part of the community and not only temporary residents.

Another action, which was part of the program was outreach activities, I had the chance to speak to different groups during the period I was in the USA.

I spoke at different times to a group of school principals and at several schools from elementary level to highschool level, I spoke to a group of people from the Abingdon Chamber of Commerce and a Rotary Club meeting and at a Kiwanis Club Meeting. With the group of principals I shared about the Brazilian educational system, with the students in the schools I talked general facts about Brazil like geography, language, food, culture and at the other meetings I talked about Brazilian politics.

Barber (1992) “service to the neighborhood and to the nation are not the gift of altruists but rather the duty of free men and women whose

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1 Kiwanis is an international club of service present in more than eighty countries.
freedom is itself wholly dependent on the assumptions of political responsibilities.”

“As highly-educated individuals, they see themselves as having a responsibility to apply their knowledge toward the betterment of society. These faculties engage in both voluntary and professional service and often were found to be campus leaders in discussions about the role of outreach in the academy. They engage in service because it is the right thing to do and because it allows them to link their personal and professional lives.” (HOLLAND, 1999, p.64)

The semester went fast and December arrived, at the end of the staying we had a great experience and made great friends.

In the next topic, Professor Celeste Gaia, international director of the Emory & Henry College describes how it was the participation of Professor Marcelo Leite as a Fulbright Scholar at the institution.

**Hosting a Fulbright Scholar**

Hosting a Fulbright Scholar on campus, it was one of the most rewarding experiences that I have encountered as an international educator. The Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence (SIR) Program provided our campus with a well-qualified teacher-scholar who exposed our students to a global perspective both in and out of the classroom. Prof. Leite also worked closely with the Office of International Education and the faculties on a variety of activities, most of these involving efforts for “internationalization at home” – developing cost-effective ways to internationalize the campus (NILSSON, 2003). This internationalization extended to the wider community, where Prof. Leite shared his knowledge at local schools and civic organizations. The results of these efforts can be seen in the short-term; however, Prof. Leite also left our campus and community with creative ideas and collaborative projects that will contribute to the education of global citizens for many years to come.

In the classroom, Prof. Leite taught courses in the Core Curriculum program, in Business Management and Politics, Law & International Relations programs. In these courses, he was able to reach a broad range of students. Many of our students have limited experience with individuals from countries other than the U.S., and with a visiting scholar on campus, they had the opportunity to spend an entire semester learning about the importance of cultural competency. Though at first some students were intimidated by having a Brazilian professor with a different accent, they soon embraced Prof. Leite and welcomed him into our campus family. As they became more familiar with Prof. Leite as a person, they learned the invaluable lesson that can be taught only
through real human interaction - that difference in nationality and culture is not a barrier but a meaningful addition to the rich diversity that an individual brings to any experience.

Outside the classroom, Prof. Leite was able to reach the campus community through presentations on Brazilian culture, business, and politics. His spouse, Sandra Leite, also presented a program about the history and culture of Brazil. Through classroom visits, participating in social events, and becoming integrated into the E&H community in every way, Prof. Leite’s presence highlighted the importance of internationalizing the campus and providing students with a comprehensive global citizenship education.

In the larger community, Prof. Leite was able to share his knowledge in multiple presentations with local civic and professional groups, three groups of public school administrators, and five groups of students at elementary and middle schools. This allowed him to explain the Brazilian educational system and the importance of understanding culture in the 21st century.

One long-term result of Prof. Leite’s time at E&H was the development of a project using technology to enhance global citizenship, teacher preparation, and cultural exchange. The use of technology for internationalization at home has increased at colleges and universities; however, only 20% of institutions surveyed by the American Council on Education (2012) used technology for internationalizing the curriculum. This new collaboration between E&H and the Colégio Piracicabano² uses real-time video conferencing to integrate global citizenship into the curriculum. U.S. students will develop educational modules for Brazilian high school and university students. Likewise, students in Brazil will present their own projects and engage in dialogue with their U.S. counterparts. This effort facilitates the mission of global citizenship and enhances the cultural competency of future teachers and professionals. This model can be applied to any curriculum in institutions of learning around the world.

Another long-term project that resulted from Prof. Leite’s expertise was the preliminary planning of an English as a Second Language (ESL) program at E&H, as he has more than 20 years experience teaching ESL. He also assisted the Office of International Education, which is responsible for the international students who study at the E&H College in identifying and responding to the needs of these students, as well as discussing the development of a semester exchange with the Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (UNIMEP). Prof. Leite will also work with us to develop a summer program to host Brazilian high school students on our campus.

² Colégio Piracicabano is a Methodist institution located in the city of Piracicaba in the state of São Paulo, which offers education from kindergarten to High School.
Hosting Prof. Leite also enhanced the long-standing partnership between E&H and Methodist institutions in Brazil. This history extends over 20 years, as former E&H Dean of Faculty; Dr. James Dawsey created a summer program for Brazilian teachers and students to study culture and English language. Today, Methodist K-12 schools in Brazil host at least one E&H student who teaches ESL during the summer. As the International Coordinator for UNIMEP, Prof. Leite has arranged much of the student and faculty exchange between E&H and the Methodist institutions in Brazil.

Emory & Henry College believes that hosting Prof. Leite as a Fulbright SIR was an exceptional opportunity to educate the campus and surrounding community about global issues, culture, and international relations, while providing a UNIMEP professor with valuable teaching and professional development experiences. We truly believe that such exchange promotes awareness of the global human experience and fosters good will. We agree with J. William Fulbright when he stated:

“The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy—the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately. The simple purpose of the exchange program is to erode the culturally rooted mistrust that sets nations against one another. The exchange program is not a panacea but an avenue of hope....” (FULBRIGHT, 1989, p.20)

Final Considerations

Agencies like Fulbright collaborate very much to the higher education institutions to achieve their internationalization goals. The process to get the grants is very bureaucratic, but it is worth of trying, because if the grant is approved the institution finds a way to bring a visiting scholar on campus. As we have seen, the presence of an international scholar at the institution adds a lot of benefits for the completely academic community.

Bibliography


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