

# A Teacher's Perception of an International Leadership Training

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## ABSTRACT

International education makes international students and scholars globally competitive and culturally responsive. This study aims to explore the experiences of a public secondary school teacher who participated in an international leadership training program of the United States (US) Government. The researcher used the qualitative approach employing narrative as the design. The interview was the primary tool in gathering the data. The participant is a female teacher who has been in the service for almost 15 years. Analysis of data was conducted through categorization and thematization with the use of cool and warm analysis method. Findings revealed seven (7) themes that created significant impact on the subject teacher. These are motivation, the attitude of the host school and community, the significance of the host parent, homesickness, culture-sharing through field experience, culture clash, and gaining a wider perspective in life. Joining international leadership training program helps participants to attain substantial personal and professional development. Support from the government to willing and qualified participants in joining similar activities is needed.

**Keywords:** internalization, resilience in teaching, leadership training, professional development

## INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

International education is becoming a trend today because of the perceived benefits of international students learning. These learnings are seen to contribute to national progress. International students see this chance as an opportunity to achieve professional growth. Students who have completed their graduate studies abroad, especially in well-developed countries are viewed to have an advantage over their colleagues because of the notion that they possess more quality education or have experienced advanced education.

The Philippine government in seeing the potential of internationalization tasks the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) with the implementation of internalization programs. One of the programs of internalization is the mobilization of faculty and students. These include exchanging students between local and foreign schools or providing scholarship grants to students. One of the goals of the internalization program is to make the educational system become globally competitive and culturally responsive. Students who have undergone these programs are expected to apply and share their learning once they come back to their home schools or countries.

Internalization programs do not only cater to students in higher education but professionals who are interested in leveling up their education and skills. There are programs of some governments promoting internalization. This is seen to be a “win-win situation” for individuals who can be accommodated by the program. These individuals can be provided with free training and education in their country and return schools accommodating international students will develop an awareness of the different cultures of the students or professionals coming from various countries in the world.

The United States of America (USA) developed a program that provides free educational training to teachers and other professionals from different countries in the world. This is conducted annually. Grantees are selected from the pool of applicants through interviews and assessment of their papers. USA takes care of all the necessary fees so the beneficiaries have nothing to worry about financial concerns. There is a significant difference between the experiences of international students undertaking post-graduate studies in a different country to a professional availing of five (5)-month-long leadership training.

This is the context of the study at hand. A teacher of Baguio City National High School was accepted in the free leadership training program offered by the US government through the facilitation of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The researcher explores the perception of an individual participant in international leadership training conducted in a foreign country. The result is significant because more and more students and professionals are taking advantage of this free training. It is only fitting to give them a view of the experience of participants through the lens of a single individual who has been there. Policies regarding participation in these programs can also be enhanced or revised better help these professionals.

Filipino students study abroad to finish their postgraduate studies. We believe that education in Western countries is of quality and it gives a significant boost to the career once they come back home. Their learnings can be applied in their areas making the country more competitive with other nations. The endeavor, however, is not a walk in the park because of the number of challenges an international student has to face and overcome. Financial challenge is another huge concern. For a Filipino student to succeed in studying abroad, he/she has to do significant preparation including the expectation of these problems and the measures to overcome them. If not prepared, Filipinos will have a hard time coping and adjusting which will be detrimental to their study.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

There have numerous studies about internalization programs including the lived experiences of international students (Wa-Mbaleka, 2013; Harvey, et.al, 2017; Xue, 2018; Bird, 2017) but few if none have explored the experiences of a Filipino student undertaking a free educational training for 5 months through a narrative approach. Most research on internalization focused on postgraduate students completing a Master's or doctorate and not on professionals availing of free educational training.

Most of the literature included in this study is qualitative research that deals with the experiences of international students. Studying abroad is considered a family sacrifice (Harvey, Robinson, & Welch, 2017). The findings of this study revealed that international students are living with emotional turmoil. There is a feeling of isolation. Students feel torn between staying to study and going home to oversee their families. It is also living in a world of negativity, living a world of negativity, and enduring to study because of personal ambition. Another set of concerns experienced is on the aspect of language and communication. International students are having problems communicating with confidence among the locals which is sometimes the reason for isolating themselves. In the area of community connectedness and identity, employers often favor locals over foreigners in hiring them due to communication and cultural concerns. Discrimination is also a topic of concern among international students (Scott, Sadfar, Trilokekar & El Masr, 2015).

The study of Wa-Mbaleka, (2013) on married African males studying in the Philippines claimed some challenges encountered by married African students enrolled in the country who have left their families at home. It was found that these international students suffer some sort of discrimination. They also experience loneliness and homesickness. A feeling of guilt is sometimes associated with this loneliness because they feel like they left their wives to take care of their families. They were also having a difficult time adjusting to the culture in the Philippines. They experience financial difficulty and communication problems. Communication has become a concern for the majority of international students. Also, the lack of support

from the universities for international students in the institutions they are enrolled in. This came out because, from his findings, most of his participants face multiple challenges that require support for them to cope. Several of the participants felt painful separation from their families, loneliness for being far from them, and a lack of balanced nutrition (Wa-Mbaleka, (2013).

One huge challenge for students studying abroad is communication deficiency or the lack of English language proficiency (Harvey, et.al, 2017). This problem prevents students to build networks with local or native students. The lack of language fluency in the host country intimidates international students thus affecting their confidence negatively. Others, prefer to limit their interaction in class discussions because they fear that their choice of words might be wrong. Though many participants would attest that native speakers do not mind it, many are still conscious of their knowledge of the language when speaking with native speakers. The implication is, many international students prefer to stay with other international students or with students from their own countries to become more comfortable instead of building a network with the locals.

Cultural adjustment is another challenge for international students (Xue, 2018). An international student taking a postgraduate study says she had to adjust to the host country's food. Rice is available but it was not common. The seeming lack of respect attitude of fellow students when speaking with adults bother also international students who have different orientations in their home country.

Another struggle is the feeling of isolation and homesickness (Bird, 2017). These are also common to the previous studies cited. Homesickness and feeling of isolation oftentimes become a distraction in their study. Since they are having a hard time connecting with other natives due to the language barrier, they experience a lack of social support when they feel homesick. They usually communicate with their loved ones at home through text messaging and phone calling or video calling. Many wonders, especially those who have married if their decision is worth their sacrifices. A study conducted in the Philippines with African male students serving as participants admitted that they feel guilt for leaving their families at home. They also feel a sense of irresponsibility because their wives are forced to become the leaders of their families.

International students find themselves adjusting to academic expectations (Bird, 2017). Foreign countries usually have different educational systems. Western countries promote independence and innovation among their students and in doing so they have a different practice in the classroom. International students sometimes experience shock at the teaching style of their professors giving them confusion, anxiety, and discomfort.

The experiences of international students in a work placement in Australia are positive but felt uncertain in their transition to work. Skill in reflection and self-evaluation is not high (International Students' Perceptions of Workplace Experiences in Australian Study Programs: A Large-Scale Survey).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The researcher aimed to explore the perception of a professional individual of international leadership training conducted in a different country. USA was the setting of the leadership training and it would be interesting to capture this individual perspective on this training to serve as a guide for future attendees. The primary problem in this study is how the participant view or perceived her experiences in the leadership training program conducted in a foreign country. The participant was asked to narrate her experiences in this training.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This qualitative study was based on a theory of the hierarchy of needs by Maslow (1987). The fourth level of

needs is esteem needs - which Maslow classified into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). The participant's primary motivation is to seek a sense of achievement. There was a feeling of passivity because, the participant, she has not been promoted for a long time. Her skin condition affects her self-esteem. With her participation in this training, she wanted to regain confidence. The completion of the training which only a few are qualified to join is expected to give her a sense of dignity and achievement.

## **SCOPE AND LIMITATION**

There is only one participant in this study but the cover of the research is international-wide. The findings of this study are solely based on her experiences and her views during the conduct of the leadership training. Her views and experiences certainly differ from the others but the scope of this study is the truthfulness of her accounts. The leadership training was conducted in the year 2017 and the researcher only trusts the memory of the participant as she narrates her experiences. The scope is not limited to the challenges met by the participants but includes aspects of the training and its conduct that became significant to her.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative approach was used in this study using the narrative design. Under the narrative design, a single individual is sufficient to be a participant in the research. As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals. The procedures for implementing this research consist of focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2007). The story in this study is the experience of a teacher participating in international leadership training. The researcher tried to gather sufficient data from the time she decided to apply until the conclusion of the training.

### **Sampling**

The participant (named Ma'am Elsa in the discussion real name) is a teacher in a secondary public school in Baguio City. Sampling is purposive since there were only a limited number of teachers in the country who participated in the leadership training. Some of those who have availed of the program are out of reach. She is teaching English subject and one of the reasons why she was selected was because of her major. At that time of application, only selected majors are preferred like Science, Mathematics, and English. Today, according to the participant, the application is now open to all subject areas. The program was recommended to her by a friend who was also a former grantee. It was not difficult to ask her permission to become the subject of this study because she is a colleague.

### **Data Collection**

Permission was initially asked from the participant to interview for research purposes. It was explained why she was chosen as the participant in this study. The researcher also talks to her personally explaining the aim of the study. When the participant agreed, a date was set for the interview. Before the interview process, the researcher asked permission to tape-record the interview properly to ensure that all data were captured. The researcher first engaged in small talk with the participant to develop rapport. The researcher then asks the participant to narrate her experiences during her participation in the leadership training. Her thoughts, views, insights, and realizations were also asked.

### **Data Analysis**

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed to the Microsoft Word Application of my computer. Cool and

warm analysis was employed. Through the use of constant comparative analysis, emerging themes were categorized from the coded responses. Interview transcripts were then coded according to the final version of code categories (Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014).

### **Ethical Issues**

The researcher ensured the confidentiality of all gathered data in this research. The real name of the respondent was not disclosed to maintain anonymity. Data were gathered only after consent from the participant was obtained. The participant was informed of her right to withdraw from the conduct of research should she feel uncomfortable or threatened. Upon the completion of this research, the researcher will disseminate the findings to the appropriate forum to ensure that the intent of the study is achieved.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The experience of a teacher availing of a scholarship grant in the United States was the backdrop of this study. The scholarship grant was given through the annual provision of a free educational leadership program to professionals all over the world. The findings of this study were taken from the perception of this teacher by narrating her personal experiences while undergoing the program. Among the themes deduced from this narrative are motivation, the attitude of the host school and community, the significance of the host parent, homesickness, culture-sharing through field experience, culture clash, and gaining a wider perspective in life.

### **Motivation**

The program was introduced to Ma'am Elsa (not the real name of the participant) by her friend who was a former grantee of the scholarship program. Her friend wanted her to try it. According to the participant, she was challenged. Being part of it will give her a sense of accomplishment and will boost her morale.

“My friend recommended the program to me in 2016. There was apprehension on my part but I took it as a challenge. It's been a long since my last promotion and I felt like nothing is happening in my life so I applied. My friend told me I could do it because I have been doing a lot of things here. Honestly, the reason is more personal though, of course, it is for my professional development. Also, to boost my morale. I have this skin condition called psoriasis. I told myself there are still a lot of things I can do.”

Although the participant's main motivation is career development, she later admitted that she was not able to use her certificate given to her by the program in the ranking for promotion. There were many applicants and the program could only accommodate six (6) participants from the Philippines. Career development has been one of the primary reasons why local students study abroad. The finding of one study says that international students are driven by personal ambition. International students endure the difficulties they experience in foreign countries because they think of its greater benefit (Harvey, Robinson, & Welch, 2017). The scholarship grant here is not similar to postgraduate studies but this experience is a venue for professional development that can boost the career of the participant. The study abroad will certainly provide international students brighter future through their career advancement (Wa-Mbaela, 2013). The length of the service of Ma'am Elsa in the service may have prompted her to apply. Promotion is hard to come by especially in the field of teaching because they have to compete among fellow teachers when there is an item available. For the promotion, a teacher must obtain certificates to meet the criteria of the ranking qualification. Attendance to training and seminars is part of the papers needed in assessing the papers for ranking.

Ma'am Elsa's skin condition also affected her decision to apply for the scholarship program. It was a sort of challenging because the skin condition was negatively affecting her self-esteem. A survey on the effect of

psoriasis on confidence conducted in the United States revealed that people having this skin problem experience crisis in confidence affecting all aspects of their life including their job performance (Uk, 2004). Elsa was having this feeling and her acceptance in the program is expected to counter these negative feelings.

Fortunately, while she was processing her application, she was informed of her promotion. The promotion however did not affect her decision to join the training abroad. She was nervous that the office might take back the promotion if they found out about her decision to go abroad for the training.

“I applied on March 28, 2016. The examination was on May 2016. I found out about the result on September 5 through a phone call congratulating me and telling me that I was qualified. I was advised to furnish a copy of this and that...” they called and congratulate me for being one of the 6 Filipinos to go to the US. While I was processing my papers, I was informed of the promotion. I worried that they might take it back because of my application. But I already decided. I would go no matter what happens because it’s the US. Even if it is a leave without pay, I’ll take it. Luckily there was a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between Fulbright (scholarship grantor) and the Department of Education (DepEd). In the MOA it says that I should be given pay and that the office will provide a substitute for my absence.”

Elsa sees the scholarship grant as an opportunity not to be missed especially since it will be held in the US. It was an opportunity of a lifetime. She was willing to go on leave without pay and even willing to risk her promotion for that golden opportunity. This corroborates to the finding that international education despite its woes and challenges is seen as a “necessary sacrifice” for personal ambition, the security of family, and the enrichment of the country (Harvey, Robinson, & Welch, 2017). Ambition is a huge factor that drives a teacher to avail of international scholarship grants.

### **Attitude of the host school and community**

Elsa had multiple thoughts on American behavior but her experiences on the first days of the leadership training amazed her. The implementation of the program even including the processing of her papers back in the Philippines was highly organized.

“From the examination until the processing of visa, they arrange them all for us. We did not pay anything. They took charge of our hotel accommodation, the fees spent during the examination, interviews, and meals, and they even reimbursed our transportation fare. The only time I had to spend was when I sent my documents through the courier.”

“We arrived in Washington on January 4, 2017. There was a committee that was in charge of our arrival so they made sure that we were comfortable there. On the second day, there was a formal dinner and program held to introduce us to the host school and other concerned personalities of the US Department of Education. During the program, I was astounded because the VIPs were not provided a special seat. They were assigned to each of our tables. The person on my left was the head of the department of education and the head of the International Research and Exchange Board (IIREX). They were asking me questions. They looked formal but their approaches were very humble. So it lessened my worries and nervousness. The second activity was we had to make a booth inspired by the culture of our own country and introduce it to the host and fellow grantees. It’s getting to know time. That was the time when I had to put on my “Igorota attire.” I brought it from here (Baguio) because we were informed during our orientation in Manila. We also provided them with tokens. On the third day, we had a seminar and an overview of the program. After that, we were grouped again by four (4) and then toured in Washington DC. On the fourth day, it was our departure to our host universities. There were three (3) Universities that hosted us. I was part of the group to go to Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) with another Filipina. We had a four-hour bus trip going to IUP. On the bus, were very excited. We were singing because there was music. The university host staff were standing in

front, telling us stories, asking how we are. We stopped in a gasoline station and had some bites courtesy of the university then we went straight to IUP. There, we were assisted to our rooms/pads. Food was already prepared”

Elsa described the first days of the program as amusing. The attitude of the people was welcoming. She said they were treated as VIPs but at the back of her mind, she was thinking if the hospitality had something to do with the success of the program. However, her impression of the host and community did not change in the course of her stay because the atmosphere when being with the locals is always positive.

“The following week, the host university staff toured gave a tour again. We roamed around. We were brought to famous spots in the localities and assisted wherewith re to buy our needs. The tour was part of the program. The University applies to the US government and its application includes the presentation of its programs for training. We were also given a technology allowance. The technology professor assisted us with what to buy. Our tour guides were very kind.”

In her interaction with the community, Elsa had the same appreciative attitude toward the locals. She even thinks that Filipinos are more discriminating.

“We (Filipinos) are very sensitive to cleanliness. We put a high value on hygiene. Many of us cannot take others who have a bodily smell and often we cannot hide our dislike towards them. During our free lunch every Monday, we can smell a bad odor from our fellow grantees yet nobody was complaining. The host also knew what to do.”

“In the grocery store, Americans would ask us, “Is everything okay, you need help? How are you, good morning! I wonder if they know the people they greet. They are not particular with someone’s attire, they don’t mind if what you’re wearing is out of style. I felt more comfortable speaking in English there than here. I never had any experience with discrimination. I just don’t know if it is because of the program”

Elsa was also introduced to the culture of the host country. Her interaction with the community gave her direct experience in dealing with them. The finding on the welcoming attitude host country does not corroborate the experiences of international students taking postgraduate studies who find their new experiences ‘shocking’ in a negative sense. (Harvey, Robinson & Welch, 2017). The context of the two is far too different. While the participant in this study is under a program that a university is expected to facilitate, international students taking graduate studies for a longer period are left to their resources. The evaluation of the participants in these programs is crucial and the host country and staff must ensure that participants have positive experiences. In another study (Belford, 2017), international students find the adjustment shocking to them. The culture of expressing respect comes as a shock to international students (IS) while the participant in this study somehow expected these kinds of behavior from students in the given setting. For the participant, the experience was generally positive, especially in the aspect of accommodating them to the university host and the community. She became even more appreciative of the host culture in terms of not giving special treatment to big personalities.

### **Significance of the host parent**

The host parent is a new concept in international studies. Although the practice of having a host parent is not new, insufficient studies regarding the contribution of the host parent to an international student are apparent. In this study, one huge contribution of the positive outlook of the participant to the program and the culture of the people is due to the behavior of the host parent. It was even narrated here that through the efforts of the host parent, the participant successfully copes with homesickness.

“Host parents apply to the university to house scholars. In the first week, the university informed our host

parent not to contact us. The following week, my host parent called me and introduced herself “I wonder when can we meet.” I wanted to have a host parent who has family, has kids, so that I will not miss my children but I found out that my host parent was single and a retired teacher already. There was apprehension but it turned out that I became the luckiest among us scholars. When my host parent was applying to the university to be a host parent, she requested to give her scholars/grantees who are catholic like her so that she can bring them to the church so they do not feel homesick. She asked us because there were two of us assigned to her, me and one from Brazil if we have medicine or first aid kits. We didn’t have one because the university host told us to just visit the clinic within the school vicinity. Melanie, our host parent, bought us the kit. Sunday is our host parent day. Every Sunday she would visit us, bring us around places, and would constantly contact us in case we needed anything. During the orientation at the university, we were advised not to expect that our host parents to treat us unlike the practice in many cultures. However, Melanie would always treat us. She would take care of the bill when we eat out. One time, when the program is nearing its end, we planned to treat her. I think she felt what we were planning to do, so while we were eating, she excused herself, went to the counter, and paid. We told her that we were supposed to pay for it as a treat. She said, “I know that’s why I went ahead, keep your money, you need that for your family. I’m okay, don’t worry about me.”

“She is also jolly like us. Perhaps, it’s one reason why we were getting along. She has this funny ‘silly’ side of her. There was a time when she brought us to a pizza house. My two companions had a scheduled class. She told them, “Don’t worry I’ll write an excuse letter for you (laughed). You won’t be able to come with us anymore, this is the first and last time that we go here. Luckily, it happened that their classes were canceled. So she told them, “I told you, I dismiss your teacher.” Melanie joked around and she would also cook for us. We also asked her to sleep at her house and she would agree without hesitation. She would bring us to the cinema. There were times when we were only the people inside the cinema.

“Some host parents do not contact the assigned grantees to them. Like my friend, the Filipina, I call her Bisaya. So, I used to invite her when we visit our host parents. Melanie also brought us to her hometown and introduced us to her friends. She brought us to her hometown for us to learn about where she grew up. She brought us to her friends with children for us to interact and play with them. It would help us to cope with homesickness she said. We played baseball and watch a professional baseball game as a way of introducing their culture to us. She brought us other famous destinations in Washington like the crashing place of the 9/11 attack. I learned a lot there. They made the area a museum where all records and news are present there.”

In participating with international leadership grants or scholarships, it is helpful to inquire about the host parent program or practices of the host country. One factor that connects the host parent to the participants is sharing the same religious values. The host parent asked for catholic scholars to be assigned to her and this similarity in religious orientation lessens the gap between host parents and scholars. In the study of Xue, (2018) of the experiences of Chinese international students, Chinese students find it hard to adjust to the host countries because of cultural differences and clash of values. The host country in this study was also exerting effort to help the scholars adjust and introduce their own culture. She even introduced them to her friends and families. She brought them to churches which ignites their connection. This is the importance of friendship in adjusting to the host country as reiterated by Belford, 2017. In the review of the literature of his research, he cited that friendship plays a significant role in the cross-cultural transition of international students (Belfor, 2017). The host parent was not only acting on a professional level but she added a personal touch in taking care of the scholars.

### **Homesickness**

Homesickness is perhaps the most common challenge among individuals who are separated from their loved ones. Elsa said that she communicated with her family daily. She started to feel homesick in the middle of



the second month but the presence of a Filipina mother and a generous host parent lessen its negativity.

“In the middle of the second month, I was feeling homesick. What we do, is go to places with my Filipino friend who is also a mother. We get support from one another. We do window shopping because we are saving. Then, Melanie was a huge help for us to cope with our homesickness. Her way of bringing us around and entertaining us helped us to forget thinking of home. If we are homesick, she would roam us around. We constantly call our families back in the Philippines. At night, I cannot avoid crying thinking about what’s happening there already. Even if I always talk to them through video calls or phone calls, things are going on that I didn’t know. It’s hard. That’s the time I realized how hard the lives of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) are. I was not even stressed out looking for money. I was just there for a couple of months attending leadership training. It’s difficult because I don’t know what’s happening to my family. Do my children go to school? Were they okay? Did they tell me what was going on? It’s difficult on the part of a mother.

Wa-Mbaela (2013) found out in his study that one of the main problems of African international students enrolled in the Philippines is homesickness and isolation. Belford, (2017) corroborates this finding. Homesickness cannot be prevented as a concern of students or professionals studying abroad. The department of education can only help by strengthening the program on supporting international students. The same study by Wa-Mbaela (2013) showed the lack of social support of the institutions to the Africans who were having trouble in their adjustment in the country. He suggested that counseling or a similar program should be initiated to help IS undergoing the same problem.

### **Culture-sharing through field experience**

The field experience is part of the program where scholars are brought to schools to observe the educational practices and culture in general. In return, the scholars also share their best practices and share something about their culture with the teachers and students there. Elsa treasured this part of the program because it provided her with a lot of insights into leadership and education.

“In February and March, we visited Indiana Area High School, a rural high school. Here, the students are tamed – they are disciplined. The system is organized. The school is well-provided by the community. The taxes of the people of the community run the school, so it’s orderly. It goes with the education of the parents. Most of the residents are professionals. They usually work in the university- it’s like they are raised well.

“Their value on time stood out during my observation. They stand when the bell rings because they give value on time not because they do not want to listen. It does not appear insulting. The teacher should know that if the time is expiring, he/she should stop. They are given a 4-minute allowance to travel from one room to another so the class time was only about 36 minutes.”

“From April to May, we visit another school located in the city, Pittsburgh High School. It is a bigger school because it’s in the city, there were more enrollees. That’s where you see the typical American we see in the movies. Many female students wear tight and spaghetti-strapped dresses, one can almost see the women behind because of too-short skirts, young couples kissing along the corridor, and students using cellular phones in the classroom. You cannot lecture them because in Washington teachers are prevented from meddling with the personal lives of the students. Teachers are being warned of child abuse, so one on one talk with a student is discouraged. Sometimes parents make it a way to get your money. Abuse is relative to the interpretation of the child.”

The experience of culture sharing was dubbed as beautiful by the participant because the context of the exposure was to learn and be informed. Even the negative behaviors shown by students in the field are still considered an enlightening exposure since the participant was there to understand the culture in a typical

urban American high school. There was a sense of ‘shock’ factor but this was viewed lie a sort of information dissemination to the scholars. Unlike the experiences of international students who were there to study, these differences in culture and school setting leave a shocking feeling to them. Factors that contributed to culture shock by international students include the setting of schools in the area, the barking of a dog, humid weather, and others (Wa-Mbaleka & Ryszewski, 2012).

“That’s where I realize that we are so tough and strict with our students here, in the country but in return, it is more advantageous on their part. In the same school, Filipinos there are excelling in their studies. One is head of the student body.”

“The students there were not exposed to other cultures so they were grateful when other nationalities visit their school because they learn. They realize there’s more to their world. Even the teachers are thankful and happy because of interacting with other cultures and educational systems.”

Berry’s (2005) definition of acculturation highlights that acculturation is a two-way process between international students and their host society (Smith & Nigar,2011). This definition is evident in the interaction of culture between the host country and international scholars. According to the participants, it’s a win-win situation. Both parties are gaining from each other. Each share their best practices and informed the other of their differences.

The language barrier was not observed until the participant’s exposed to the urban high school area. Immigrants from warring countries are present in the area. The participant was presented with the reality that there are students who have ‘zero’ knowledge of the English Language.

“During our exposure to Pittsburg High School, I observed the big problem of the language barrier. There are many immigrants there. Political refugees are coming from Nepal, Mexico, and other places, and these students cannot speak or understand the English language. What the school does is provide an interpreter for each of them and translate what is being discussed in the classroom. The translators are there in the classroom.

There are many aspects of the program. They do not only develop participants as leaders in the classroom but also leaders of school and community. The field experience’s primary aim was to expose scholars to the US culture. International students are having problems with communication (Gua, Schweisfurthb & Daya, 2009). It would be more difficult for high school level students to adopt the second language even if they are already there. These experiences of culture-sharing deepen the awareness and knowledge of the participants in terms of leadership in the school and community.

### **Culture –clash**

Participants were oriented that there could be tension that will happen during the duration of the leadership training. Elsa said this happens during the formulation of their output- the Professional Development Module.

“In the middle of the program course, it’s the time to make our output – the Professional Development Module (PDM). That’s when we had tensions with other scholars/participants. In IUP, there were sixteen participants of mixed nationalities (2 Filipinos, 2 Brazilians, 2 Malaysians, 1 from Cashmere, 2 Indians, 2 Kenyans, 3 Senegalists, and 2 Moroccans). – We were oriented before that there may be challenges in relating to one another since we are from different countries. This tension only became apparent when we were making our outputs. For instance, I observed that the Moroccans have dominating attitude. They insist on what they like. So it’s up to you how to deal with them.”

“For Filipinos, we are grammatically conscious. We also see the quality of the work. The other participants did not want to extend extra time. They only work at the duration time given to them.”

“We were grouped in four, and I’m lucky because I was with three participants who were not that proud of themselves. When we’re stressed out, we eat together in one of our rooms.”

“The struggle was adjusting to the personality of the others. Some have to dominant personalities, although we learned to adjust. The crucial art there was to learn the personality of others. I think this adjustment is part of the leadership training.”

Culture clash is expected especially when several nationalities are grouped in one setting. The differences among others will appear. Work ethic and management are part of the culture of countries and the difference in work approach will certainly surprise others. Elsa said it is a part of their leadership training to adjust to different cultures. This statement is seconded by a statement from a study saying that constructs shaped by culture can be changed, but that the nature of each individual's motivations and experiences can be major factors (Gua, Schweisfurthb & Daya, 2009).

### **Gaining a wider perspective on life**

The leadership training provided Elsa insights not only about classroom management, and school administration, but leadership in the community. She said that the learnings she obtained from the training will surely be used and applied in her personal life.

“For me, there’s a lot of learning. In the situation where I’m far from my family, and my students, and in a different setting, there are a lot of realizations. It boosts my morale to know that I have gained lots of things that I can apply in the classroom, not only in my professional life but also personally.”

“I’m looking at things from a bigger perspective. We have lots of resources in the country but we are still lagging. I pity our students. We can do better for them.”

A study on the resiliency of international students revealed that their experiences made them perceive themselves as being adaptable, capable, responsible, and stable; while these qualities help in acclimatizing to the new environment, they also reflect the participants’ resilience (Mukthyal, 2013). The leadership training provided a significant impact on the participant. For her, there was a development that took place. DepEd is encouraged to support teachers who are willing to join training abroad to obtain substantial growth and development.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

International education is a movement to further the development of students and professionals. This current study presented seven (7) themes based on her experience in attending leadership training held in America. They are:

- A. Motivation. The motivation of the participant was initially a career advancement but was later seen as an opportunity of a lifetime. It should not be missed. The completion can provide a sense of achievement.
- B. Attitude of host school and community. The attitude of the host school and community based on the participant’s experiences is very accommodating and welcoming. This sort of war welcome made her appreciate the culture of the host country.

- C. Impact of host parent. The impact of the host parent was huge for the participant. The host parent helped her cope with homesickness. The host parent was so kind and generous that the participant felt she was the luckiest among the scholars.
- D. Homesickness. Participant admitted to this challenge but she tried to cope by visiting different places. She gains support from another Filipino mother and the help of their host parent.
- E. Culture-sharing through field experience. It was enlightening as claimed by the participant. She learned a lot from it and developed insights into education.
- F. Culture clash. It is expected as claimed by participants but she considered dealing with different cultures a part of the leadership training.
- G. Gaining a wider perspective in life. Participants said she attained significant personal and professional growth.

## Recommendations

1. The researcher recommends the creation of a policy of the Department of Education (DepEd) supporting the participation of local teachers in international studies and scholarship grants either in post-graduate studies or training.
2. The DepEd to adopt the program of internalization for basic education teachers to be given the opportunity for the additional venue of personal and professional growth.

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