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# International Education or Colonial Tourism? Measuring Tools and Standards for Evaluating International Education

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## Abstract

This article applies a recently published indicator to various types of international education projects to measure their compliance with educational professionalism and international development law and also compares this indicator with the standards checklist currently in use by The Forum on Education Abroad. The tests and comparisons suggest that no existing standards hold international education to any real scrutiny, allowing many programs: 1) to degenerate into the equivalent of for-profit travel programs with little real educational content or intellectual challenge to students and 2) to promote colonialism rather than equity and development meeting international legal standards. The author shows how indicators can be extended to improve education abroad programs assessment on dimensions of professionalism and appropriate impact on developing countries under international law and also points to some of the many niches or gaps in education abroad that remain to be filled.

## Abstract in Spanish

Este artículo aplica un indicador recientemente publicado a varios tipos de proyectos de educación internacional para medir su cumplimiento de la

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profesionalidad educativa y la ley de desarrollo internacional, y también compara este indicador con la lista de comprobación de normas que utiliza actualmente The Forum on Education Abroad (el Foro sobre la Educación en el Extranjero). Las pruebas y comparaciones sugieren que ninguna de las normas existentes somete a la educación internacional a un escrutinio real, lo que permite que muchos programas 1) degeneren en el equivalente a programas de viajes con fines de lucro con poco contenido educativo real o desafío intelectual para los estudiantes y 2) promuevan el colonialismo en lugar de la equidad y el desarrollo cumpliendo las normas legales internacionales. El autor muestra cómo pueden ampliarse los indicadores para mejorar la evaluación de los programas de educación en el extranjero en cuanto a las dimensiones de profesionalidad e impacto adecuado en los países en desarrollo según el derecho internacional y también señala algunos de los muchos nichos o lagunas de la educación en el extranjero que quedan por cubrir.

### **Abstract in German**

In diesem Artikel wird ein kürzlich veröffentlichter Indikator auf verschiedene Arten von internationalen Bildungsprojekten angewandt, um deren Übereinstimmung mit der pädagogischen Professionalität und dem internationalen Entwicklungsrecht zu messen, und dieser Indikator wird mit der derzeit vom Forum on Education Abroad verwendeten Checkliste für Standards verglichen. Die Tests und Vergleiche deuten darauf hin, dass keine der bestehenden Standards die internationale Bildung einer wirklichen Prüfung unterziehen, so dass viele Programme: 1) zu einem Äquivalent für gewinnorientierte Reiseprogramme mit wenig echten Bildungsinhalten oder intellektuellen Herausforderungen für die Studierenden zu verkommen und 2) Kolonialismus fördern, aber nicht Gerechtigkeit und Entwicklung sowie die internationalen Rechtsstandards entsprechen. Der Autor zeigt, wie Indikatoren erweitert werden können, um die Bewertung von Bildungsprogrammen im Ausland in Bezug auf Professionalität und angemessene Auswirkungen auf Entwicklungsländer nach internationalem Recht zu verbessern, und weist auf einige der vielen Nischen oder Lücken im Bereich der Bildung im Ausland hin, die noch zu füllen sind.

### **Keywords:**

International education, educational standards, non-governmental organizations, development, aid, colonialism

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## Introduction

The number of U.S. students studying abroad continues to increase and is now roughly 350,000 per year pre-COVID 19 (347,000 in 2018-19 according to the U.S. State Department's Institute of International Education (2021a), more than four times the 76,000 in 1994-1995, only 25 years ago and nearly five times the 70,000 in 1989-90, thirty years ago (IIE, 2021a). Although this represents only about 2% of all enrolled U.S. students (and some 10% of graduates (NAFSA, 2020), there were at least 2,250 study abroad programs in the 1990s (DeWinter, 1997) and possibly a multiple of that today if one were also to include the growing number clinical projects for professional students that offer for-credit and non-credit supervised research<sup>1</sup>. Parallel with this increase is the emergence of "international studies" majors that promote participation in programs abroad.

While many of these programs still appear to be in European and other "First World" ("Developed") countries like the U.S., Australia, Taiwan, and Japan, they are increasingly expanding to the "Third World" ("Developing World"). According to recent U.S. State Department tabulations, 14 of the top 25 destinations for international education in 2018-19, pre-COVID were outside of Western Europe (Institute of International Education, 2021b). Nearly half of students now study outside of Europe, including about 14% in Latin America and 12% in Asia pre-COVID in 2018-19 (Institute for International Education, 2021c). Though no data is available on the number of programs that universities in the Third World have established for their students to study in other countries, the economic and political realities (such as visas) suggests that the programs are in one direction; for students in wealthier countries to study in countries of similar or lesser wealth<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, what the data continues to show in the U.S. is that in the pre-COVID year of 2018-19, 67.3% were women and 68.7% were "white" according to U.S. census categories, which means that the dominant category is "white" women (Institute for International Education, 2021d).

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<sup>1</sup> At least 5% of study abroad is in the category of non-credit work and volunteering (IIE, 2014, p. 38) with about 11% of U.S. students abroad participating in such work in 2017-18 (IIE, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Of The Forum on Education Abroad's membership, for example, 62% are U.S. universities and colleges and another 7% "community colleges" (presumably in the U.S.) with only 7% (9% of the total of academic institutions) described as "institutions outside of the U.S." and presumably mostly European or Australian universities (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020a, p. 15)

There are also increasing numbers of programs in Europe and elsewhere that award degrees through programs geared to foreign students from lesser developed countries (though not exclusively), often funded by scholarships, as well as U.S. degree programs based abroad, sometimes offering short study in the U.S.

Most of these programs can be described as good “business opportunities” for educators to attract students and funds by expanding their offerings in what some say characterizes trends in universities today towards the “corporatization of higher education” and pandering to short-term pleasures for students (Clay, 2008). While many of these overseas education programs are administered or certified by students’ home institutions, even accreditation by home institutions in the students’ countries offers no guarantee that students are receiving educational value, that universities and programs have real incentives to provide high quality education at a fair price (Marksjarvis, 2017), or that the relationships between countries promote sovereignty and pride. No current oversight or assessment measures exist to prevent these programs from furthering relationships of dependency and exploitation between wealthy and poorer dependent countries, for wealthy students in poorer countries to perpetuate inequalities in their home countries and regions, or to assure that they are driven by social interests consistent with international laws and goals, rather than profit and self-interest (Wallerstein, 1979).

Language skills and the comparative cost of attaining them in different programs is relatively easy to measure. Students concerned about value for their money and time can certainly weigh the comparative costs of language study through a high-cost university tuition program in their home countries or abroad, including comparisons with language immersion and overseas study on their own, even though few organizations now exist to protect students by offering information on the comparative costs.

Purported skills acquisition in other areas, however, and the costs and value of such skills are harder to measure. It seems that neither universities, nor governments, nor consumer organizations have much interest in conducting such assessment measurements or in providing results to students or the public, for a variety of reasons. Indeed, experts have seemed to throw up their hands when it comes to such “learning assessment” measures for anything other than

the STEM courses (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) (Coates, 2014; William T. Grant Foundation et al., 2014) though such measures are certainly possible (Melguizo et al., 2015), often just substituting “market” measures like rankings and satisfaction (Abubakar et al., 2018). One recent study suggested that the skills touted for Education Abroad programs such as language and international skills were actually those ranked last among employers hiring new college graduates, falling behind even general skills like problem solving, communications, teamwork, and leadership (National Association of Colleges and Employers survey, cited in Marksjarvis, 2017).

Nor does there appear to be much interest among public bodies in holding universities accountable to the publics in the countries of education abroad, or to international law. There is little to assure that these interventions meet the standards that one would apply to other international businesses or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or to governmental programs serving a public function as the education sector does.

Certainly, Education Abroad programs could be offering superior education to domestic programs with high skills content and learning and multiple benefits. In order to document that however, there is a need for testing using some form of accepted standards and measures. There have been increasing calls to do so. Academic programs and disciplines have often come under scrutiny as having business or political motivations (Lenoir, 1993) and there has been a call for better measures to assure that programs are not just pandering or fads (Abrahamson, 2009; Arum & Roska, 2011; Belcher et al., 2016; Starbuck, 2009).

As an international educator and an Anthropologist, I have also been able to introduce new methods, to test their impacts in the form of social experimentation and comparative study, and to also reflect on the experiences as a participant observer (Geertz, 1973; Malinowski, 1944; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972). Some 30 years ago, as an anthropology graduate student frustrated with education abroad programs that seemed to give little back to the countries where they were situated and that also offered little in the way of skills or challenge to students, I designed and ran an international project in which students spent a summer producing an alternative sustainable development plan for a country to test what would be possible if attention were focused on high skills content and quality benefits to the country where the program was

situated, meeting standards of international development law. At the end of a summer, my students presented the sustainable national development country plan that they had written in Spanish, directly to the President of the country and to the country's national press (Ecuador) in meetings that we arranged and then published it as possibly the first textbook on sustainable, culturally protective development (Lempert et al., 1995, 1998; Lempert with Briggs et al., 1995).

While that experiment demonstrated what was possible in education abroad with appropriate initiative and interest in both students and peoples of host countries, it also exposed the lack of such initiative in then existing university programs. Indeed, after almost 30 years and with the approach widely published and promoted, apparently not a single university program has sought to emulate it or incorporate its elements, though there has certainly been an expansion in the types of international programs with specialized curricula and projects that include different forms of service and field work.

In looking back at the changes in international education since that time, it is hard to find many programs that have incorporated the goals of combining high-level educational skills with benefits to foreign communities that meet international standards for "development" interventions; moreover, it is hard to note many that seek effective measurement of either such skills or such benefits (Lempert, 2014b). While the number of programs has increased and there are a number of good programs that allow students to develop particular skills, there does not appear to be any screening of programs to assure that there are any real safeguards in their missions, oversight, or administration and that they are doing more than offering top-down approaches.

Since my experience testing the potential of education abroad programs more than 30 years ago, I have worked directly with several international abroad programs and have become familiar with the large spectrum of approaches that do exist, while watching how they have evolved in several regions globally, including not only Latin America but Asia, Africa and Europe. I have worked with universities, government Ministries of Education, and educators in a number of disciplines as well as in a diversity of regions, including as a Fellow (the Center for Khmer Studies in Cambodia), guest lecturer (Council of International Education in Vietnam), graduate student researcher (University of California Education Abroad, in the, then, Soviet Union) and as an

evaluator in foreign programs for developing country students (Network of EU Schools of Political Studies in Eastern Europe) or lecturer (Harvard Fulbright Program in Economics), a curriculum designer with universities in Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia, as well as a consultant reviewing and recommending exchange programs in Europe for the past several years including diaspora programs (Lempert, 2008). I have come into contact with faculty and students and have become familiar with dozens of other programs in a number of countries, with work in some 30 countries.

While those working in the field largely praise their own programs, I admit to a sense of dismay, if not alarm, as both an educator and an international development professional at the actual educational quality, the value to students, and the actual values and impacts to students and the cultures and countries. My view, and one that I have heard expressed from a number of colleagues in private conversations, as well as from students and from members of host countries, is that many of these programs are little more than high priced tourism (perhaps exemplified by one colleague's description of "Semester at Sea" as "Mattress at Sea"), used by universities to profit off of students because of the need for little real investment in establishing and running the programs. Too often, the approaches appear to me and to others to perpetuate colonialism and open the door to "market exploitation" or cultural imperialism in the form of "projects" that do not meet international legal standards for interventions.

Of course, this could be my own idiosyncratic view and I could very well be wrong. What I have recognized is that what was missing and is sorely needed is a method of testing what is happening in education abroad programs that can offer some more objective conclusions and standards that can be used for accountability and improvement. I began by examining with my own concerns and then sought an objective set of measurements that colleagues and I could use for examining, troubleshooting, and improving education abroad programs on some of their most important dimensions and for their important constituencies of students, educators, and the public in their own countries and the countries in which the programs are offered. Some of the typical problems that guided my search for an appropriate indicator can be summarized briefly as follows.

In the area of social sciences, many international studies programs and overseas programs now have a high content of courses from my field of

anthropology, but these seem to define “field research” as little more than cross cultural journalism, thus replacing any real disciplinary learning or applications of models of culture. While the discipline of anthropology (and related social science disciplines) opens up opportunities both for remarkable experiences in cultural processes through study of environment, the archaeological and historical record, and contemporary cultures and their differentiation, as well as for applied anthropological work to stabilize or reconstruct cultures and their sustainability as well as to build tolerance, few if any programs actually do this. Among existing programs that do more than promote journalism or volunteer work in organizations instead of structured learning are those that seem limited to excavation work exploiting student labor, museum preservation (again exploiting student labor), and some environmental study. The programs in which anthropologists play a role seem to reflect the transformation of anthropology, itself, as a discipline into little more than journalism, blog, and advocacy in place of serious study of skills, modelling, and real-world applications with communities on high level problems (Duncan, 2013).

While professional schools such as business and law do not typically have long overseas programs, there are short overseas research trips and clinical projects now run by law and business schools. Those programs with which I am personally familiar seem to offer little appropriate to foreign environments but rather seem to exist to promote business contacts and understanding of how to best exploit foreign resources and markets (Lempert, 2012). Similarly, university run overseas legal projects with students appear to simply export U.S. approaches to law and legal education in what some authors have described as top-down legal hegemony (or plunder) (Gardner, 1980; Nader & Mattei, 2008).

Despite the claims that each program is unique and that overseeing institutions are legitimately able to exercise appropriate oversight and quality assessment through their own “peer review” in place of other scrutiny, I have not seen them used anywhere. In fact, objective public measures for the protection of foreign countries and students and the potential to use such measures do exist. They simply are not used.

Recently, I designed a series of indicators for international “development” interventions to hold them to standards of international law and



professionalism (Lempert, 2018a). Among them is one for testing whether international NGOs (INGOs), that could include international educational programs, both of public and private not-for-profit universities meet professional standards for public organizations and whether they meet international development standards. Such an indicator can easily identify whether university programs have been corrupted by profit and cost-saving incentives of universities and essentially operate on the model of a for-profit business, with little attention to educational or public benefit standards (Lempert, 2017). In fact, it can be adapted to serve precisely as the kind of measurement and accountability tool that is now missing for international education programs.

This article applies that recently published indicator to international education programs. While I designed the general version of that indicator for INGOs, it is also applicable to public organizations to measure compliance of publicly chartered organizations with public purpose to assure their compliance with professionalism and international development law. The indicator can further be applied to a variety of types of international education projects that are given accreditation by public and private universities. It is also relatively easy to compare that indicator with the standards checklist currently in use by The Forum on Education Abroad in order to troubleshoot this standard that The Forum currently recommends. The tests and comparisons suggest that no existing standards hold international education to any real scrutiny, allowing many programs: 1) to degenerate into the equivalent of for-profit travel programs with little real educational content or intellectual challenge to students and 2) to promote colonialism rather than equity and development. I show how my indicator and other indicators can be extended to improve education abroad programs assessment on both dimensions of professionalism and appropriate impact on developing countries under international law and also point to some of the many niches or gaps in education abroad that remain to be filled.

This article begins with a discussion of the professional principles of public organization legitimacy, accountability, and management that served as the basis for my created accountability indicator. The piece adds a set of principles from educational evaluation that supplements the indicator in order to apply it effectively to international educational programs. The article

summarizes the lack of effective accountability indicators for international education programs and the consequences that result from the lack of such oversight. I then update my previously published indicator so that it can be used for oversight of international education programs, and I test it on several international education programs, showing how it can be improved by adding measures of educational quality assessment. I then offer some ideas for missing international education programs that would effectively meet these standards.

## **Principles of Professionalism**

Since educational organizations fulfill a public purpose, the way to hold them accountable is to apply the kinds of standards that one applies to public organizations (governmental organizations and nonprofit NGOs) and specifically to standards for educational institutions. In previous work developing tools for holding public organizations accountable to professional standards and to law, I identified seven essential elements for professionalism of NGOs, in general, and an additional seven elements that such organizations must meet for compliance with international development laws and principles (measures of legitimacy), following recognized theories for oversight of governmental organizations and nonprofit INGOs (Atack, 1998; Brown & Moore, 2001; Edwards & Hulme, 2002; Szporluk, 2009). These fourteen elements all apply to international education programs in developing countries since such programs serve a public purpose and need to meet public standards. International education programs are largely managed by nonprofit NGOs that are chartered to serve a public purpose compliant with law or public universities with administrative oversight similar to those of private organizations. At the same time, the key elements that are guiding principles for meeting educational and disciplinary standards can be added to or incorporated within these lists.

### **Principles of Administrative Professionalism of NGOs and INGOs**

The principles of administrative professionalism of organizations serving public functions, including governmental and non-profit NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs) fall into two categories and are well recognized in the literature: overall managerial professionalism and efficiency, reflecting the principles of management for any organization, and fulfilment of a “vision” through a “mission”. What makes public mission organizations different from for-profit organizations is that they seek to address the root causes of a problem

such that its end goal is to end its work (or to provide a service continually dedicated to educating people to fulfil this mission on a continual and sustainable basis, “promoting” and “protecting” human and other public resources) and see their mission institutionalized in other sustainable organizations. That is its “vision”.

The managerial professionalism of a public service/public function organization, such as an educational institution (as different from a public membership) organization, can generally be defined in four areas:

1. the targeting of root causes of a public problem (generally using a “problem tree” analysis),
2. the use of professional research and development methods for ensuring proficiency of its problem-solving tools and approaches,
3. merit-based hiring; and
4. implementation tools that demonstrate impact on specific behaviors and systems that are root causes of the given public problem.

These principles that apply to feasibility and effectiveness of interventions can be found in several texts, including those on basic business analysis and organizational strategy for effective management control (Garrison et al., 2005; Emmanuel et al., 1999), strategic management and planning in NGOs (Barry, 1984; Bryson, 1988; Unterman & Davis, 1984), and overall incentives and psychology of organizational behavior (Nelson & Quick, 2005; Robbins, 2002). Note that for public organizations (such as public universities or “private” universities that are chartered as non-profits) as opposed to private business organizations operating for profit, such as tourism businesses, the standards that are used for accountability are essentially the same (Bryson, 1988).

Three additional measures of institutionalization of changes (that certainly apply to the mission of educational institutions for solving disciplinary questions/problems and then applying techniques invented through university research and taught to students for solutions to public/community problems) are really subsets of the above. The test is whether mission-based organizations have three clear components:

1. an organizational mission defined as solving root causes of a public problem, with specialized interventions designed to solve it,

2. a vision of the world once that problem is solved, with behavioral, cultural, and/or institutional changes that are sustained; and
3. an approach that protects local sovereignty of the beneficiaries in a way that promotes the sustainability of local cultures and local empowerment without the need for outside reliance.

### Elements of Public Mission Organization Legitimacy in Weaker Countries

International development interventions—actions by governments and other organizations of more powerful countries in weaker countries—must satisfy three requirements in order to comply with international law and the goals of the international system: protection and promotion of sustainability (ability of the peoples of those countries to live perpetually in balance with their resources); development or poverty reduction consistent with sustainability; and protection of sovereignty. At the same time, there are two internationally recognized legal standards in professional and technical areas that such interventions must fulfil. For easy reference, these five requirements for public actions by government or by publicly chartered nonprofit NGOs can be written as follows:

- 1) *Promotion of sustainability/sustainable development*, consistent with the balance of consumption and production over generations for the area of the intervention, with or without growth (ability of the peoples to live perpetually in balance with their resources);
- 2) *Development and/or poverty reduction*, consistent with sustainability. Development and poverty reduction are two distinct objectives though they are often confused with each other. The international community in its basic treaty documents defines “development” as full expression of multiple capacities of both cultures and individuals in their diversity and within their values and choices (Lempert, 2014a); it defines long-term poverty reduction as an approach that assures equity and addresses the real root causes of both absolute and relative poverty (see Lempert, 2015);
- 3) *Sovereignty/cultural integrity and prevention of dependency*, to ensure that cultural identity and autonomy of cultures are safeguarded, such that the driving force of actions comes from the cultural groups

themselves and protects their integrity, rather than serves foreign interests;

- 4) *Legal and professional compliance*, to ensure conformity with basic international treaties and professionalism. Where there are technical activities conducted abroad, they should meet international legal and professional standards within their technical sphere (e.g., democratization, gender equity) with fully professional use of those tools and methods that are suggested; and
- 5) *Safeguarding of appropriate mission/functions* of the organization that is the overseas actor conducting an “intervention”. Such functions include objective and transparent evaluation and reporting without conflicts of interest, such that there are no possibilities of distortion of missions and functions that could erode the roles of different parts of accountable, responsive government, functioning economic systems, and culturally appropriate civil society.

In addition to having a specific public mission, a nonprofit governmental or non-governmental organization must not usurp the role of other organizations. This can be described in terms of two additional elements.

- 1) Its role must be distinct from that of a business meaning that it does not sell a product or service or
- 2) Its role must be distinct from that of providing a routine service or contractor (in which case it is really acting as a business) but must have some intent in research and problem-solving.

This definition of public mission is well defined in the literature of government and public not-for-profit organization management dating back at least 30 years (see, for example, Barry, 1984; Bryson, 1988; Unterman & Davis, 1984).

### Professional Requirements of Educational Institutions

The standards for measuring educational quality are long established at the elementary level for basic skills, knowledge, and concepts as well as through the university level for the natural sciences. Educational inputs are broken down on the basis of teaching of specific skills that build on each other, in problem solving (problems defined by each discipline within its specific

disciplinary mission) and in technical competence in applications, acquisition of knowledge, and concepts. Though this approach seems to be missing at the university level and increasingly in secondary education for social sciences and humanities, where problem solving and technical skills seem to be disappearing and replaced with knowledge of disparate facts, definitions, authors and ideologies, the methods for analyzing and assessing pedagogy are the same and are well established (Lempert, 2018b).

At the university level, human knowledge has long been organized into clear disciplines that define an educational and research mission in terms of problem solving (an agenda of problems that are defined and at the core of each discipline) with applications to human benefit. Nevertheless, many current educators appear to simply see these as subject headings for some general categories of perceived good or ability to market education to funders and students. Within this public mission for disciplines, there are essentially four elements that serve as measures of education in furtherance of this mission, noting the general overall goal of education and the three cognitive changes that education brings (in skills, knowledge, and perspectives) (Lempert with Briggs et. al., 1995).

1. *General Goal and Measure*: The determination of student learning and achievement is based on measures of student achievement and/or later professional impact, not on unstandardized “peer review” or other political process.
2. *Skills*: Skills development can be measured in multiple categories at levels of inputs of time, money, and resources, calculated for maximum benefit.
3. *Knowledge*: Knowledge transfer can be measured in multiple categories at levels of inputs calculated for maximum benefit.
4. *Perspectives*: Sensitivity and other cognitive changes can be measured in multiple categories at levels of inputs calculated for maximum benefit.

Note that educational measures must be objective and concrete, not simply “peer review” determinations on what is politically acceptable and rated highly by a group of like-minded colleagues (Abubakar et al., 2018; Melguizo et al., 2015). Nor is “representativeness” or “representation” of faculty an appropriate criterion in measuring specific cognitive benefits to students and

the impact of these benefits on specific disciplinary problems that have a benefit for society.

## Existing Indicators and Potential Problems

University programs are accredited by accreditation bodies, subject to peer review, and there is a standards body that offers guidelines for academic quality of international programs, the Council for Standards in Higher Education (CAS, n.d.). However, the Council's category of "international student programs and services" does not appear to be any sets of indicators for holding international education programs accountable to standards of accountability and impact like other organizations serving public functions, those that work specifically in areas of development intervention, or those that have an educational/disciplinary merit. One "standard of good practice" that does exist is one designed by The Forum on Education Abroad, an organization, currently with 800 institutional members, that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization for the field of education abroad and that claims its member institutions account for 90% of students who study abroad (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2015). The Forum's standard introduces some elements of review but in only a perfunctory and advisory way that seems designed more to protect institutions from outside criticism than to assure adherence to public standards or benefits (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2015, 2020b).

Table (1) offers a test of The Forum on Education Abroad's "Standards of Good Practice" to see if it incorporates the kinds of elements that one would expect to find that would hold an international educational program accountable to professionalism in an area of a public function, to legal standards for an organization operating in developing countries, and to those standards for an educational institution. If it is an effective indicator, it would identify failures of organizations in these three areas and show exactly where they need to change and why. Moreover, if international education programs today really have deteriorated and become driven only by profit motives, no different from tour companies, this indicator would also point to exactly those elements on which there are failures.

Table (1) takes the one indicator of The Forum on Education Abroad that currently exists (now in its sixth edition (2020b) but still similar to previous

iterations) and examines its key components. In constructing the table, I have worked with both the current indicator as well as the previous indicator so that readers can also see how the indicator is evolving (and whether or not it is improving) and use two columns to show this evolution. In the table, I take the nine numbered elements that were listed in the fifth edition in 2015 and note where they are found now in the sixth edition. This information forms the table's left-hand column (for 2015) and then the center column (for 2020). In the left-hand column, I list the elements as they existed in 2015 with updates. In the middle column, I use the 2020 referencing numbers of these elements and present them in the three recommendation categories given for each element by The Forum: as a "possibility", "recommendation" or, in a few cases, at best a "minimum requirement" (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2015, 2020b). Note that these nine elements are really just a checklist of concerns; they are not a measurement test of compliance with any objective measure. They simply ask international programs to think about each category. I present my analysis of these elements in the third column, on the right.

In addition to the nine elements that are presented in Table (1), I have sought to make the Table more valuable by adding in elements that I was surprised were missing in The Forum's "Standards of Good Practice". I have added, in italics, in the left hand column, two categories of additions: first, several elements of requirements for international development missions (after the first numbered element on "Mission" and described as "Missing Mission" tests) and, second, for objective educational measurement standards (in italics after the second numbered element, on "Student Learning and Development and described as "Missing Learning Standards") that one would expect to find in international educational projects holding themselves accountable to disciplinary and educational standards. In my view, the missions that I have added are glaringly absent from The Forum's "Standards".

In the right-hand column of the table, I offer my test of the "Standards" by asking whether a typical tourism for-profit business that has tour guides knowledgeable on heritage would really answer any differently from a university abroad program of an "island" type (students not studying at a foreign university but in a separate program).

The results of this test are, in my view, alarming. In fact, The Forum's measures may themselves be a key to understanding what I believe has gone



wrong in international education and why. Of The Forum's nine indicator categories, eight are exactly those that would be applied to a tourism business to assure it maximizes its profits rather than provides public benefits! In fact, the only difference in how a tourism business does on these measures is that its paying clients are not graded and certified, but that says nothing about any quality or benefit to students or to a country where international education programs operate.

In my view, as someone who has worked on both sides – in university education abroad and in private businesses, as well as in government accountability approaches – The Forum's "Standards" is a checklist that looks as if it is designed by and for administrators of international education programs themselves, to assure their profitability and freedom from legal challenge, exactly like any for-profit tourism business and association seeking to protect itself against real accountability!

Although The Forum members can and do claim that they encourage programs to offer high educational quality projects and provides another checklist ("The Quality Improvement Program for Education Abroad") to do that, this appears to be a case of the industry creating its own "peer review" standards (with all inherent conflicts of interest) and protecting itself, in place of holding itself directly accountable to students or foreign countries<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, The Forum, itself, describes the standards as "self-study and peer reviews" not for outside accountability or monitoring (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2015, p.1).

To put these standards in context to see what biases may have entered in them, one can examine the history of The Forum and how it developed since its founding in 1999. News reports suggest that the real impetus for the establishment of The Forum and its attempt to root out those who were viewed by the majority as acting unprofessionally was to protect university administrators from charges like those arising later that in establishing programs they were receiving kickbacks, rather than to establish direct

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<sup>3</sup> The Forum on Education Abroad, licensed as a non-profit, is a membership organization of which some 76% are educational institutions and another 16% are "providers", potentially commercial services and agencies. (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020a, p. 15)

accountability of the programs, themselves to students or the public in the countries of programs or in the U.S. (Redden, 2007).

While the “Standards of Good Practice” have been certified as self-regulatory standards of professionals by the U.S. Government, as of 2005, (now claimed to be “recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission” (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020b, copyright page)) there is no assertion that the standards are any more than self-protection for the industry. Nor is there any claim that programs are anything more than educational profit centers like those of private business firms, bringing in money to universities with low costs and minimized risks (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2015, p. 12).

TABLE (1): DISTINGUISHING EDUCATION ABROAD FROM FOR-PROFIT TOURISM

“Standard of Good Practice for Education Abroad” of The Forum on Education Abroad (2015)	Where it is found in the 6 <sup>th</sup> Edition (2020)	Whether For-Profit Cultural Tourist Companies Meet the Standard any Differently from University International Education Programs, including those with “Tours”
<p>1. <u>Mission and Goals</u>: The organization has a mission statement and articulates clear goals for its education abroad programming.</p> <p>- Specific learning goals are articulated for each of the organization’s individual programs. (The current section now adds a call for “objectives and outcomes”)</p>	Section 4.1	No. For-Profit our programs offer itinerary, hire “experts” and claim to serve a knowledge market, in the same way that international education programs do, but they are of course profit motivated. The two missions seem currently to be the same.
<p>- <i>[Missing Mission Standard] The mission is to solve the root causes of a social problem that is consistent with international legal objectives and to achieve a concrete vision through targeting the root causes (changing behaviors).</i></p>	<i>Still missing</i>	<i>Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Most international education programs also lack any disciplinary goal (e.g., a research mission designed to solve specific disciplinary problems by applying skills to them, both theoretical and applied) and are often not based in any disciplinary objective for human betterment other than the platitudes offered by tour companies, of promoting “understanding” and “knowledge of another culture”.</i>

- [Missing Mission Standard] The educational and research mission is defined in terms of disciplinary problem solving with applications to human benefit, not just activity under a subject heading or for some general category of perceived good.	Still missing	Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. There is little real research or joint research in overseas education programs today that develops new knowledge or solves problems, meaning that the same skills could be taught in domestic programs in local communities.
- [Missing Mission Standard] There is a benefit to the host country that promotes the sustainability and sovereignty of its cultures	Still missing	Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. The only claimed benefits to the foreign countries now in most international education programs are financial earnings of locals or receipt of some other kind of financial benefit, just like for-profit tourism.
- [Missing Mission Standard] There is a measurable benefit to the sustainability of the cultures and country of the students rather than just future economic gain to individuals and country.	Still missing	Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Maybe students learn how to live with less consumption in overseas programs, but the benefits to the host country seem mostly to be to exploit local knowledge and generosity rather than to work together on local and global benefits, as with for-profit tourism.
- [Missing Mission Standard] There is a beneficial impact on existing relations between the countries that promotes the sustainability and sovereignty of countries and cultures beyond just "mutual understanding". [There is a current addition calling for "Collaboration and Transparency" based on "mutual respect" and "mutually beneficial", but it does not use any key international development terms like "sustainability".]	Still missing despite addition of 4.2	Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Although some international educational programs offer "volunteer work" to "help the poor", it is also little more than a top-down economic transfer and for-profit tour companies are now doing this as well. Local benefit is rarely a concern of either educational programs or for-profit tourism. The current addition is without any content and the "collaborators" may just be businesses.
2. <u>Student Learning and Development</u> : The organization's mission, goals, and operations prioritize student learning and development.	6.	No, for those for-profit tour businesses that include an educational or learning component and are not just recreational, there is nothing to differentiate them from international education programs since their market niche includes knowledgeable tour guides to promote "learning".
- [Missing Learning Standard] The determination of student learning and achievement is based on measures of student achievement and/or later professional impact, not	Still missing	Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Many international education programs today do not teach any real skills that would be different from the language, history and culture learning of a

<i>on unstandardized "peer review" or other political process.</i>		<i>for-profit tour program.</i>
<i>- [Missing Learning Standard] Skills Development in Multiple Categories at Levels Calculated for Maximum Benefit</i>	<i>Still missing</i>	<i>Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Few international education programs today provide a list of the skills that each course and component develops, making it hard to differentiate them from for-profit tour programs.</i>
<i>- [Missing Learning Standard] Knowledge Transfer in Multiple Categories at Levels Calculated for Maximum Benefit</i>	<i>Still missing</i>	<i>Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Few international education programs today provide detail of the knowledge learned and its relevance, beyond just the information one would acquire on a for-profit tour, such as a list of authors, books and definitions from readings that are recommended or cited by the for-profit tour guide.</i>
<i>- [Missing Learning Standard] Sensitivity in Multiple Categories at Levels Calculated for Maximum Benefit</i>	<i>Still missing</i>	<i>Not today, but this missing standard would differentiate the two. Few international education programs today provide a detail of the concepts they hope to impart other than ideologies and "understanding" of others, which is little different from how for-profit tour companies now often advertise their tours.</i>
3. <u>Academic Framework</u> : The organization delivers academic content appropriate to its stated mission and goals, ensures adequate academic supervision and evaluation, and maintains clear and transparent academic policies.	5.1.3; 5.1.6	Yes, but here, and only in part, is the <i>only</i> difference between a for-profit tour and an international educational program: the participants in an international education program receive "grades" and "credit". The delivery of academic content that is self-regulated and determined to be "appropriate" and is "supervised" and "clear" also characterizes for-profit tour businesses, so little really distinguishes them on this dimension.
4. <u>Student Selection, Preparation and Advising</u> : The organization maintains fair and ethical recruitment and selection processes, adequate student preparation and advising, and ongoing student support. [There is now a call for "equity, diversity and inclusion."]	4.4	No. For-profit tour companies are also subject to contract laws. University international education programs do not offer any additional legal safeguards or transparency that does not already exist under law and would be appropriate for a sustainable for-profit tour business.
5. <u>Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Measures</u> : The organization articulates clear and	6.2	No. All for-profit tour businesses establish regulations for guests that meet their needs and differ from local

accessible guidelines for student behavior and consequences resulting from violations.		laws, and for-profit tour businesses also declare requirements and penalties.
6. <u>Policies and Procedures</u> : The organization has well-defined and clearly-articulated policies and procedures that govern its programs and practices, ensures that they are fairly and consistently implemented, and conducts regular reviews to assess their effectiveness.	5.1	No. Establishing clear policies and procedures is simply the prerequisite of any successful business, including for-profit tourism, so there is nothing here that would distinguish an international education program.
7. <u>Organizational and Program Resources</u> : The organization ensures that its programs are adequately funded and staffed.	5.2	No. Any successful for-profit tour business will also assure that it chooses competent staff and maintains appropriate insurance and back-up, so nothing in this funding and staffing good practice standard is unique to an international education program.
8. <u>Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management</u> : The organization prioritizes the health, safety, and security of its students through policies, procedures, advising, orientation, and training.	5.1.5; 5.1.7; 5.1.8; 6.1.10; 6.1.11	No. "Insurance" and risk management is essential to any sustainable business, and particularly to a for-profit tourism business, so nothing here is unique to an international education program.
9. <u>Ethics</u> : The organization operates its programs in accordance with ethical principles, and trains its staff and students in ethical decision-making and practices. [The ethical principles referenced are those of the Code of Ethics for Education Abroad: <a href="https://forumea.org/resources/standards-of-good-practice/code-of-ethics/">https://forumea.org/resources/standards-of-good-practice/code-of-ethics/</a> ] There is now an addition of "respect for the cultures and values of all involved" and a recommendation to "consider the social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of its education abroad programming" but without requirements or measures.	4.3	No. Most for-profit tour companies now also have such professional and ethical codes, so nothing here is unique to an international education program.

## What Goes Wrong without an Appropriate Indicator

It is easy to see how the lack of an actual system of accountability with objective measures can lead to a degradation and corruption of program ends, with benefits for administrators and organizations taking priority over measurable, cost-effective educational benefits to students, to academic missions of disciplines and to the publics of the countries sponsoring and hosting international programs. The lack of effective measures creates incentives for failures in each of these three categories and they are easily visible in many overseas programs today.

Note that these failures are not unique to education abroad programs because failures in oversight and incentives can also undermine any university program. When universities (and international development projects) turn into the equivalent of for-profit centers without direct public oversight of their role and missions, students, the societies where they operate, and civilization are not only vulnerable to loss of benefits but also to exploitation (Arum & Roska, 2011; Barrow, 1990; Clay, 2008; Zinn, 2008). Indeed, without accountability, one would expect to see that as the revenues that universities generate from students (and university donors) rise, the actual benefit they bring to their disciplines, to communities and to students are likely to fall. This is not to say that all educational work can be measured in ways that are agreed upon (industries with political power can and do exert pressure for measures that fit their short-term benefit measured in profits, while government objectives can also focus on short-term military or “security” concerns of bureaucracies and elites, rather than on long-term public benefits in terms of sustainability, cultural survival, social and scientific “progress”, equity and health). The problem is the absence of effective measures today that hold universities accountable to educational, disciplinary, and public goals promotes a focus on political power, expedience, bureaucratic goals and short-term benefits to the detriment of society.

The following is a discussion of how the lack of measures creates incentives for failures in these three areas.

### Potential for Exploitation of Students

Although overseas learning is often sold to students at the same tuition costs (or higher) than courses in their own universities (Marksjarvis, 2017), the

costs to the university of hiring overseas staff and renting overseas facilities can be much less expensive to run and offers universities a way to subsidize other programs. The most expensive university programs are the sciences given the cost of laboratory research facilities. To cut costs, universities have a tendency to push students into humanities courses in lecture halls or on-line, that require little investment compared to science laboratories or field social science that are more labor intensive and teach skills. The promotion of “service learning” and for-credit “internships” in overseas programs (and domestically) that provides free student labor to organizations, also cuts university costs of supervised laboratory learning or actual empowering “field work” in social sciences and humanities in a way that short-changes educational quality and public benefits. Often, professors often view going overseas as a chance for a vacation “perquisite” rather than a challenge to offer an educational experience at a more demanding level than within the parent university. The motive to profit off of students going overseas is high.

### Degradation of the Intellectual and Social Mission of the University and of International Studies

Although universities generally market overseas programs to students as a chance to “experience other cultures” and broadening perspectives (Bolen, 2006; Braskamp, 2007), the fact that most universities do little to promote the very same kind of skills and sensitivity learning in their own backyards (communities near their own campuses) leads one to question the sincerity and basis of this appeal. In my own attempts to design and promote such courses pioneering field social science laboratory courses at U.S. and European universities (starting with “The Unseen America”, at Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley) (Lempert with Briggs et. al., 1995) over the past 30 years, my experience has been that U.S. and European universities consciously avoid promoting cross-cultural student work with the many minority cultures just outside of the university doors. While there are calls for “diversifying” the campus itself to promote cross-cultural interactions, and work off-campus, it rarely promotes more than superficial interactions through controlled internships or volunteer charity work, euphemistically called “service learning”. Indeed, much of the learning that is claimed for overseas programs might be more effectively achieved, or achieved sequentially, through the kind of field science, social science and humanities that would occur if universities would add clinical laboratory work to disciplines in the very “unseen”

communities around the universities. With no standards promoting accountability and benefits, however, the incentive for universities is to promote a cost-saving classroom book-learning model that focuses only on basic skills like reading, writing and discussion of doctrinal texts, and offers students little or no opportunity to directly test and apply theories directly in university courses where they would have significant cross-cultural interactions in their own communities while developing large skill sets to understand, work with and provide benefits to those communities. In the place of actual linkages between universities and their own communities, universities have also focused on job connections or disempowering work experiences for students that reduce university costs while marketing the promotion of employment “connections” to their students in place of actual skills development, advancement of their disciplines, and social change and benefits to their communities..

Although overseas programs may appeal to the “market” in giving many students what they want (i.e., what many university faculty and students whom I have spoken with describe as the freedom to live like colonial adventurers, far from home, and to be coddled and cocooned in exotic tour programs), the focus on student happiness and security has also replaced the focus on the actual educational and research missions of universities (Arum & Roska, 2011; Starbuck, 2009). There seems to be a “peer” mindset among international educators that sets these programs at the lowest common denominator, so as to assure limited “liability” of the universities, and greater social control of student behaviors. Faculty members and administrators with whom I have spoken say that students today lack the maturity to handle personal freedom in foreign environments, perhaps as the result of lack of basic skills training and interactions in their basic education and parenting, and as a result of young people spending more time on the Internet rather than in actual personal interactions that would develop social and civic skills (Florida Tech, 2020). While the American Association of University Professors has called attention to what it views today as the “infantilization” of students on domestic campuses, they appear to be on the defensive (AAUP, 2014). Faculty and administrators from the U.S. and Europe, with whom I have spoken in work in the U.S. and overseas, on this issue, including queries as to why they shy away from field courses and projects like those I have tested, say they have no choice but to “protect” students against the harms they may do themselves and to others today, due to this lack of maturity. They say that this is why they make little attempt to challenge



students or to offer high-level programs, i.e., of high-level skills development and intellectual disciplinary value on major research questions. This is, in fact, a failure in disciplines and educational institutions to establish real standards to promote and measure progress on disciplinary questions and educational benefits in terms of transfer of objective skills, knowledge and perspectives.

In my field of social anthropology and social sciences, even when overseas education does claim to offer skills training and examination of problems of foreign cultures and societies as objects for study, such study, in my view, seems to corrupt the very assumptions and heart of the discipline. In anthropology, the key to study of foreign cultures is ethnographic holism and understanding of relations between particular cultural attributes and environmental factors, in an integrated system. In general, however, international programs teach social science as interviewing discrete, disconnected aspects of the local culture and considering how student charity projects can promote individual groups, without looking at the larger impacts on sustainability or survival of the cultures. I take issue with such projects that violate the teaching in the discipline about the embedded and integrated nature of particular practices (such as Duke University's DukeEngage in Africa).

### Exploitation of Developing Countries

Even where education abroad programs add "service" or "anti-poverty" projects to their curricula, or internships with foreign NGOs, none of these projects are rigorously screened today to assess whether they actually promote local cultural sovereignty, sustainable development, or appropriate poverty reduction following standards under international law (Lempert, 2009; Lempert & Nguyen, 2008; Lempert, 2015). That means that they are likely to reinforce colonial relations and attitudes (Gunder Frank et. al, 1972; Wallerstein, 1979). Indeed, many programs today appear to this author to be little more than exotic tourism in which students use overseas countries as a source of entertainment (cooking, music, dance, tourism) while offering little in return that helps to reverse the legacies of colonialism or that respects and promotes local cultural integrity and survival. The missions of such programs are phrased mostly as that of "understanding" rather than promoting specific common intellectual or social objectives. Often, they open doors for students to develop some marketable foreign "expertise" in language or diplomacy or reporting that they will sell for employment in multi-national businesses or in the foreign service

without any real knowledge of how that work will impact the sustainability and or survival of foreign cultures.

The problem also seems to exist in reverse. Programs that are designed for the education of foreign students in developing countries have long been used to brain drain the best talent from overseas or to create “networks” of dependent intermediaries to serve the interests of developed countries when they return, exploiting or transforming their cultures. (Gunder Frank, et. al., 1972; Wallerstein, 1979). My experience has been that international students coming to developed countries are rarely allowed or encouraged to strongly critique or seek to change or improve developed countries; those who would seek to do so are screened out or given incentives to work for their own interests and for those of the developed countries rather than the sustainability and integrity of their own cultures. No accountability measures exist to protect against this.

## **Lempert’s Accountability Indicator as an Accountability Tool**

My previously published indicator for use in holding public not-for-profit organizations (governments and not-for-profit NGOs) accountable to their professional roles and missions and to laws for international interventions, works relatively well for determining whether international education organizations meet professional obligations and legal obligations to host countries in their roles as publicly chartered organizations. The indicator uses the fourteen elements from these two categories that I presented earlier in this article. However, this indicator is designed for organizations in general and does not address the specific missions of universities in international education. Since the missions of international education programs require accountability to specific disciplinary missions as well as to educational needs of students, it is important to supplement this indicator by revising it specifically for international education. With this in mind, that indicator can then be used as a way to troubleshoot actual problems in international education programs. In presenting the indicator here, I demonstrate its value by considering how it would score a standard “island” type (transplanted university campus in a foreign country for the university students at the main campus) education abroad program today. I start here with my original indicator’s fourteen elements in the two basic categories (seven in each category, that I will call

categories “A” and “B”) before moving to supplement it for the specifics of international education (with a category “C” of five additional elements).

Table (2) presents my recent indicator in summary form, with the key questions and scoring categories in the left-hand column, following the standards described in the first section of this article for public (not-for profit) organizational professionalism and international compliance and shows how it can be used for International Education. The indicator has two categories, each with seven questions that are scored as either one point or zero points. Category A is for the overall legitimacy and public accountability of the organization to international law for international (“development”) interventions and Category B is for the overall professionalism of the organization).

The second column of the Table examines standard “island” type education abroad programs to see how many points they score when held to the standards required for public organizations in general. To clarify my definition of the “island” type” that I am using here to show how scoring works, what I have in mind here is a basic type of international education program where foreign students have a mini-campus, a mix of local and foreign professors, and generally study in a mixed classroom-field setting in traditional courses that usually include a mix of language, history, culture (arts and literature), and politics in an area studies of the foreign setting. In such programs, students usually write papers and may engage in internships or charitable projects.

In order to work through Table (2) to fully understand the purposes of each component, or to apply it to a program that you as the reader know or have in mind, you have to go back to the introduction in the earlier part of this article and/or directly use my indicator (Lempert, 2017). Since it is easily available on-line and you can use it directly, I have not repeated it directly and fully in Table (2). In my explanations in the right-hand column of Table (2), where I report on the scoring of the “island” type program, I try to reference the specific reasons for the scoring, but you may wish to go to material outside of this Table if you want a more detailed understanding.

In using my previous indicator for scoring education abroad programs on these two dimensions, there is one potential ambiguity that jumps out and requires some small correction in applying it here. In examining the “professionalism” of organizations (in category B., the second set of seven

questions), the indicator does not require that the mission of organizations be one appropriate to those of international development interventions, since that is the test of category A., the first seven questions. There is, however, a way to “correct” my indicator to account for this. Broadly speaking, there are two general kinds of educational missions for international education programs: one is to serve the goals of international relations in its appropriate dimensions, and the other is to purely serve the advancement of academic disciplines and the needs of foreign communities in the application of those disciplines. International education programs can serve both of these missions, but they do not have to identify both of them as their key missions, as long as they act professionally in both areas (being responsible in international relations and in their disciplinary activities). This makes my indicator question on mission potentially difficult to apply. Most education abroad programs do not clearly state which of these educational missions they seek to serve. The questions in my indicator do point out, however, if the programs fail to state a clear mission and whether education abroad programs are “professional” in fulfilling their mission if one can be identified or inferred.

You can see from the scoring that I report in Table (2) on each of the fourteen elements and that I summarize for each category, A., and B., and then as a whole, that the standard “island” type education abroad program essentially fails to meet the test of either conforming with international laws and goals for international “development” interventions (that include educational interventions like educational abroad) or the professionalism for achieving a mission that one would expect from an organization serving a public function, like international education. The total potential scoring is 7 points for A. (in this case, 6 points, since question A.6. is not relevant), and 7 points for B., for a total of 13 points. Out of this 13, the “island” type program scores at best 3.0 points; 0.5 points for A. and potentially 2.5 points for B. According to the scoring guide for the indicator, this puts the “island” type international education program in the category of “Weak to None” in organizational legitimacy and Weak in professionalism. Combining the two categories, the “island” type program is in the category of “Profit-Driven Organizations Undermining Domestic and/or International Principles” and doing little more than “Serving a Public Relations Function” rather than fulfilling its public purpose. The “island” type program is essentially a failure on

these two dimensions, and this seems to be the first indicator that is seeking to hold them to these standards and revealing these failures.

Besides the specific results for one type of international education program, the “island” type, what is important to note here is that categories A. and B. of my previously published indicator seem to work very well on international education programs. The indicator is effective in measuring and troubleshooting whether an international education program is in conformity with international “development” goals of international interventions under international law and whether it meets the professional standards of a public organization for serving a stated mission.

At the same time, the indicator only offers two categories of measures and does not offer input on educational quality. It does not force educational programs to measure their educational and disciplinary quality. To do that, I have devised five additional questions in a category “C.” that I present below in the next section.

Note that the category “C.”, in Table (2) on the next page, is not the only indicator that I suggest for measuring quality of international education programs. Where education abroad programs focus on specific disciplinary or “sectoral” areas in developing countries, such as international education programs in the area of “rule of law” in a foreign country, or business programs to promote the “market” in a foreign country, or other disciplinary activities in international education to promote “poverty alleviation” or “human rights” or “gender equality”, I have devised and published specific tests for projects in those intervention areas that readers can use to test whether international education programs really fulfill the requirements for international interventions in these areas. I have designed and published indicators that can be used to hold these programs accountable in these areas, along with a number of others in areas of international development interventions (Lempert, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014b, 2016) and welcome readers to apply them.

**TABLE (2):** HOW THE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATOR FOR PUBLIC, NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSES SOME CONCERNS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPMENT COUNTRIES

<b>Analysis</b>		
<b>Q</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Scoring of a Typical “Island Type” Education Abroad Program using the Recent Indicator for Not-for-Profit Public Organization Accountability to International Law and Professionalism</b>
A.	<i>Organizational Legitimacy and Accountability</i>	<i>(Summary) Weak to Non-existent.</i> On the six of seven questions that are applicable to education abroad programs, this indicator reveals that these programs offer little or nothing in the way of appropriate development to host country communities or to promote academic disciplines or to communicate fully to the public in the countries sponsoring the programs. Rather than promote a public mission, the programs seem to be indistinguishable in their impacts from for-profit businesses training students/participants in low level skills that companies could provide at lower cost. 0.5 points out of a potential 7 points (potential 6 points if question A.6. is discarded as not applicable)
A.1.	<i>Compliance with Legal and Policy Frameworks for Public Interventions (in this case, International interventions)?</i>	No. In no sense are traditional education abroad programs currently furthering “development” missions in the sense of promoting sustainable development.. This is not to say that no international education programs do this. Today, there are some alternative programs that do focus on concerns like biodiversity, heritage protection and appropriate skills transfers to the host countries, but these are not the norm. 0 points.
A.2.	<i>Enforcement of Compliance with Legal and Policy Frameworks for Public Interventions?</i>	No. There is no internal oversight function to assure that international education program frameworks fit each rights category under international law and begin with international law and conformity with international law objectives. 0 points.
A.3.	<i>Organizational Communications and Accountability to Beneficiaries and the Public?</i>	No. There are no systems for independent evaluations of the educational and research activities of the international education program, and no research and no detailed reporting to the public in host countries or the country of the university/organization running the project to the public. 0 points.
A.4.	<i>Free of Distorting Ideologies?</i>	Debatable. Education abroad programs may address some academic concerns of protecting privacy of local peoples and not violating local norms on an individual basis, but the overall goals of the programs are not based on protecting and promoting local cultures and environments. Instead, they are designed for foreign students developing skills and bringing in outside frameworks that may be to exploit foreign countries and peoples. Much of the research that students do on these projects seems to be extractive and many projects have top-down or hidden agendas of trade, globalization, and foreign hegemony rather than local sustainability, cultural survival and rights

		protections.. <i>0.5 points.</i>
A.5.	<i>Accountability to Public Mission and Not to Constituencies with conflicts of interest?</i>	No. Accountability of the "island" type international education program is to university departments and administrators and to local government officials and partners,. Though there may be mention of disciplinary missions or specific benefits to local communities, there are no clear systems assuring accountability to those missions and for overriding potential conflicts of interest with other goals. <i>0 points.</i>
A.6.	<i>Proper Role of an Institution with Respect to Government Functions?</i>	Not applicable given the mix of public and private universities that run these "island" type international education programs and the general similarities in descriptions and approaches. Where universities are private/publicly chartered, their role should be to promote approaches that are models of change and that offer something different from that of public universities, to justify their private status. It is ambiguous whether private universities are aware of this additional obligation in the area of international education and, if they are, how they implement it.
A.7.	<i>Proper Role of a non-governmental institution with Respect to Private Sector of Government Invested Functions? (Is the organization's mission one that freely provides services that are not more efficiently provided in competitive markets and that would not otherwise be seen as productive investments that government could finance...?)</i>	No. The traditional "island" type education abroad programs are essentially little different from foreign commercial educational programs and from for-profit tour programs that can offer almost exactly the same educational products: language learning, historical and cultural education, and tours. Universities could easily measure student achievement in learning foreign languages along with historical and cultural knowledge and the efficiency and cost of their programs could easily be compared against those offered by for-profit organizations, including those in host countries. Universities that offer these "island" type programs generally do not allow their students to receive credit for these other forms of learning in the host countries. This forces students who want to go overseas to pay more for their university's more expensive "island" type education abroad, even though it fails to offer much that is different (e.g., high-level disciplinary skills, research, and development benefits that universities have the capacity to provide but rarely do in these programs as they are currently offered). <i>0 points.</i>
B.	<i>Compliance with Organizational Professionalism Standards:</i>	<i>Summary: Weak to non-existent. This part of the indicator can seem ambiguous when applied to the "island" type education abroad programs, since this measure of "professionalism" does not address whether or not the missions comply with the law or advance public purposes, since that is the purpose of the seven questions of part A.</i> <i>- Where education abroad programs serve objectives of a government's foreign service and/or the for-profit interests of</i>

		<p>corporations to further the financial and political interests of the country running the programs, measures will show that many existing education abroad programs do partly fulfill these needs, though not rigorously. Current programs might earn 2.5 points on this agenda if these or some other missions can be inferred to them. Here, from this scoring table, it does not seem clear at all what the missions are of the "island" type international education programs, and one might say they do not earn any points on these seven questions, but if missions are inferred and they are given the benefit of the doubt, they might earn 2.5 points.</p>
B.1.	<p><i>Administrative Efficiency: Targeting of Root Causes of Problems with Problem Tree Analysis?</i></p>	<p>Debatable. University educators rarely define and measure the goals of their "island" model of education (or, in many cases, for social science and humanities education, in general). They appear today to simply act as providers of approaches they define (and exclude), setting methods and curricula, with few if any measures of the impacts of what they teach on students, the discipline, or the society and with no accountability set by government or consumers. If anything, the "island" model of education abroad may be geared to meet the needs of corporate overseas hiring and foreign service reporting, for exploitation of foreign countries and peoples.</p> <p>0.5 points.</p>
B.2.	<p><i>Organizational Research and Development?</i></p>	<p>Debatable. There is little or no research into international educational effectiveness and value of methods at the university level for "island" type programs of for most university education, in general, though there are plenty of measures (with their uses hotly debated) at the primary, elementary and secondary school level. At best, overseas programs offer basic measures of language learning and "sensitivity". The accountability of the research function of universities and overseas studies to specific disciplinary standards beyond the self-interest of "peer review" is questionable, with no direct accountability to the public and only at best to those who fund the research (specific corporate and government agencies).</p> <p>0.5 points.</p>
B.3.	<p><i>Merit and Solution Based Hiring Systems?</i></p>	<p>Debatable. While there are certainly selections of faculty based on language and country expertise, there is a general impression among students and faculty in these programs, particularly those of the "island" type, that overseas positions are often filled as perquisites to faculty to go overseas, or to save on costs, hiring low cost foreign or local facilitators and technical instructors rather than measuring their ability to promote academic disciplines or address local issues. University hiring in general today is hierarchical and by peers, often to meet the interests of faculty members or political (e.g., "representational" goals) and often not any objective standard on quality of education or impact. In the sciences and medicine, there is merit-based feedback since more of the funding is tied to specific competitive</p>



		research grants, but this does not appear to apply to education abroad programs that are humanities and social sciences. <i>0.5 points.</i>
B.4.	<i>Results-Based Implementation?</i>	Debatable. "Island" type international abroad programs do not appear to be held to any measures of advancing the disciplines that they teach, solving local problems or meeting long-term local needs, or meeting specific educational needs other than perhaps providing skills for future diplomats, journalists, and international businesses. The only real measures of education abroad appear to be the reputation of programs and ability to continue to attract students, which is a business marketing measure applied to for-profit institutions and tour programs. <i>0.5 points.</i>
B.5.	<i>Organizational Mission?</i>	Debatable. "Island" type education abroad programs do not appear to state any "problems" or "needs" on their websites that they target. Though disciplines have missions of solving specific questions, and educational programs should have missions of meeting specific needs in disciplinary training to further disciplines and careers to benefit society, with overseas projects expected to have missions of meeting local development needs by solving specific root causes of problems, the only part of this that is mentioned in the "island" type of education abroad programs is providing specific area studies information for students, without explaining why overseas programs are the most effective ways to get this and what problems are being addressed. The only mission potentially being served by the "island" type education abroad programs seems to be that of helping governments and corporations train future employees who have local overseas knowledge. <i>0.5 points</i>
B.6.	<i>Organizational Vision?</i>	No. The vision of the "island" type education abroad programs that they generally state on their websites, is that of "sensitivity to foreign cultures", but without measures, standards or explanations of what this means and how it addresses specific problems. The absence of real content potentially hides agendas of globalization and corporate benefit that results in exploitation of foreign countries and cultures. There are few if any programs that detail a vision of benefit to the host country or specific advancement of disciplines or student careers. <i>0 points.</i>
B.7.	<i>Promotes Local Sovereignty and Institutionalized Change?</i>	No. Some overseas partner organizations of the "island" type international education programs are local but there is no attempt to transfer specific benefits to them or to local communities overseas, nor to generate overall improvements in disciplines taught overseas since the "island" type programs are under control of foreign institutions. <i>0 points.</i>
Total:		This indicator effectively exposes standard education abroad programs as serving no appropriate international development

		purpose in host countries (scoring only 0.5 points in category A.) and also lacking in basic professionalism as academic and educational institutions, though some may be partly serving in roles to promote the interests of government foreign service training and international business (allowing them to score, at best, 2.5 points in category B.).
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## Solutions

### A Targeted Indicator for Standards Setting for International Education

It is relatively easy to supplement and fortify the above accountability indicator with a specific set of questions that apply to international education programs, using the principles identified as the Professional Requirements of Educational Institutions, in the first section of this article, Principles of Professionalism.

Such an additional indicator would have five key elements, with a scoring of a possible six points. These five elements, in the form of questions in category C., that can also be scored, are presented below. Note how these questions supplement categories A. and B., above, which require only that international education programs have some kind of mission that is consistent with international laws and standards but not necessarily that they are specific educational missions meeting educational quality standards.

**(C.) Educational Professionalism Assessment:** Is the program in fulfillment of the professional requirements for an academic and educational institution? (5 questions with a potential score of 6 points)

**Question C.1.** *Scholarly/Disciplinary and Educational Mission.* Does the program define its mission clearly in terms of both, (1) academic disciplinary problems that it seeks to solve in particular fields, with applications to human benefit and not just an activity under a subject heading or for some general category of perceived good, and (2) specific educational and applied benefits for the long-term sustainability of the overseas country and its cultures and communities?

Scoring: Yes on both – 2 points  
Yes on one or debatable on both – 1 point  
No – (0)

**Question C.2.** *Measurement: General Assessment.* Does the program use a rigorous process for measuring student achievement, learning and later professional impact that is based on theories of learning and cognition that can be verified by those outside the discipline, rather than on “peer review” or other subjective and political process in which insiders have conflicts of interest for justifying the value of their work?

Scoring: Yes – 1  
Debatable or not relevant – 0.5  
No – (0)

**Question C.3.** *Measurement of Learning Outcomes: Skills Assessment.* Does the program measure specific skills and skill levels (and not just lists of subjects or topics) that students can expect to achieve at the end of the course, in a way that students can measure the costs and benefits of their investments in money and time and applicability to future use and employment, and can compare with other courses both international, campus-based, or non-course based learning?

Scoring: Yes – 1  
Debatable or not relevant – 0.5  
No – (0)

**Question C.4.** *Measurement of Learning Outcomes: Knowledge Assessment.* Does the program measure specific knowledge acquisition of a recognized body of material that students can expect to achieve at the end of the course, in a way that students can measure the costs and benefits of their investments in money and time and applicability to future use and employment, and can compare with other courses both international, campus-based, or non-course based learning?

Scoring: Yes – 1  
Debatable or not relevant – 0.5  
No – (0)

**Question C.5.** *Measurement of Learning Outcomes: Perspectives Assessment.* Does the program measure specific cognitive benefits and sensitivities that students can expect to achieve at the end of the course, in a way that students can measure the costs and benefits of their investments in money and time and applicability to future application and employment, and can compare with other courses both international, campus-based, or non-course based learning?

Scoring: Yes – 1  
Debatable or not relevant – 0.5  
No – (0)

### “Island” Type International Education Programs vis-à-vis Educational Professionalism

Rather than present a new table here, the reader can quickly go down the list of the five questions in category C., using the same information presented in Table (2) and discussed above. It is debatable how well the “island” type international education programs apply the measures in C. Arguably, students can measure their language outcome skills and some of their local knowledge in international language tests and international citizenship tests and that their “grades” and syllabi could be used as part of those measures. If 0.5 points are awarded in this way for questions C.3 and C.4, a program would score 1 point on educational professionalism. This is not to say that the program outcomes

fail, but simply that there are no effective professional measurement systems that offer evidence or that work to clearly improve outcomes. This makes them little different from for-profit tourism programs that would likely also score 1 point.

### Special Applications of the Indicator by Teachers and Students

Note that a specific indicator is not the only accountability tool for improving education programs at the level of administration and implementation. Students and faculty members can also hold their own teaching and research assignments to standards of disciplinary advancement, educational quality, and public benefit.

Table 3 offers a generalized version of a tool I used in an overseas project in one of the U.S. State Department funded overseas research centers in the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) network to assure the academic merit and social value of student research projects on overseas assignments. Rather than simply offer a single “grade” to students for their work, with few factors, this research protocol informs students of the multiple criteria on which their work can be judged, in three categories – academic merit, benefit of the research to and respect for host country peoples and cultures, and policy implications for application of the research. The total of 14 questions is relatively easy to use as a grading tool for student work and can certainly be used in reverse, by students, holding teachers and their curricula directly accountable to the same standards.

**TABLE (3): MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT RESEARCH AS A WAY OF ASSURING DISCIPLINARY VALIDITY AND BENEFITS TO/RESPECT FOR LOCAL PEOPLES**

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING OVERSEAS STUDENT RESEARCH
<p><i>Key Questions for Basic Research:</i> Is this social science research and policy research, or is it doctrine/ ideological work (promoting an untested assumption about what is good for the overseas country), or journalism?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there a scientific hypothesis tested that has universal applicability, apart from the population in which it is being tested?</li> <li>- Is there a model is being developed, that will link variables so as to create a picture of the working of a system or sub-system?</li> <li>- Is there a general human phenomenon described in the report that the research results will allow for people to better predict or influence?</li> <li>- Is there scholarship here that is new, intellectually creative and challenging?</li> <li>- Is there any use/testing of new techniques or methods that are a contribution to scholarship?</li> </ul>

Given all of the above, is the work important?

- What is the benefit of this work to humankind's future as a whole (beyond that of a particular interest group), on and off of the planet? By what scientific theory of human sustainability can it be justified?

*Does the research have a clear link to Local peoples (or other minority identity) and help to promote that identity?*

- Does the research describe a specific trait/ strategy (and not just a practice) and show its historic development through different periods in the overseas country's history?
- Does the paper start by trying to describe how this trait was either positive (contributing to sustainability) or negative in different periods in the history of local peoples, in setting a foundation for the research?
- Does the research demonstrate how a particular trait/ strategy fits into a model of sustainability in the overseas country? If the goal is to help eliminate a non-sustainable trait, is the analysis clear?

*How will the overseas country (including target Subjects/ Beneficiaries) actually benefit from this work?*

- What are the implications of this work for policy? What are the author's new practical, constructive ideas and solutions that will be of benefit to humanity and to the local peoples, and why have they not been tried or developed before?
- What new ideas and approaches are likely to come out of the work in addition to those in the report?
- How do contributors benefit from the results? How are they assured access to the findings?
- How will results be disseminated to assure that all interested parties/ beneficiary groups can benefit from the information/ findings? What strategy of change in the overseas country and outside the overseas country is built into the work?

*Overall Assessment:*

Did the student make good use of placement overseas and go beyond any previous thinking elsewhere and beyond work that was or could have been done elsewhere (e.g., in libraries, on previous research)?

## Missing Areas as Opportunities for International Education

While an indicator opens the door to setting higher standards for international education programs on the dimensions of advancing academic disciplines, providing appropriate benefits to the host country communities, and offering creative high level educational opportunities that take specific advantage of overseas environments, it cannot in and of itself generate a list of the types of possibilities that are hardly realized in programs today. A quick look

at what is missing in some contemporary disciplines, however, points to just a few possibilities, particularly in areas of theoretical and applied social science and in technology, described in each of these two categories, below. Such approaches would promote healthy respect between cultures as well as joint academic work and advancement rather than the type of top-down exploitation, cultural imperialism, and “tourism” that seems, in my view and in results of use of the above indicator, to characterize many current programs.

### Social Sciences

There seems to have been a slow growth in disciplinary areas of international programs and in benefits, particularly related to the environment, but there are many areas in which there are other opportunities. In addition to the project that I designed and tested in national development planning for sustainable development (Lempert et al., 1995), some existing programs in ecosystem management and restoration that are emerging for ecologists and biologists, and occasional heritage preservation projects, there is potential for programs in a number of areas that draw from social sciences, including those in my doctoral discipline of anthropology, in applications that are largely ignored today (Lempert, under review). Table (4) presents some nine areas for high level educational and research learning overseas that can offer benefits to local communities in social science fields.

**TABLE (4):** SOCIAL SCIENCE APPROACHES COMBINING RESEARCH WITH LONG-TERM LOCAL BENEFITS CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAWS ON RIGHTS, SOVEREIGNTY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

<b>Key Discipline for High Level Training</b>	<b>Subject Area and Benefit to Foreign Country</b>
Anthropology, Political Science	Peace and Conflict Prevention, Cross Borders
	Structured Ethnic Relations within Complex Multi-Culture Systems
Anthropology, Sustainable Development	Sustainability and Appropriate Technology, Measures and Mechanisms of Change and “Progress in Various Environments (Traditional Cultures, Urban Settings)
	Cultural Protection and Restoration (Indigenous Cultures)
	Cultural Protection and Restoration, Post Genocide
	Post Disaster Community and Cultural Rehabilitation/ Restoration
	Collapse and Survivalist Anthropology
Archaeology	Cultural Resource Management/Heritage Preservation Mapping, Popularization and Tolerance Discussions (Lempert, 2013, 2020)
	Museum Studies/ Museum design

## Technologies

In a sense, education abroad programs do currently teach some foreign technologies, though generally at a low level and incidentally rather than in concentrated courses (in studies of cooking, literature, and some basic artistic forms) and in some higher-level courses (in traditional medicines and techniques for health and medical training). Many developing countries have long histories of very developed appropriate technologies as well as historic technologies that could be offer the basis of specialized programs.

While most of this is more specialized education than most undergraduates would seek, it is, in my view, a failing of education in industrial societies today that the focus is increasingly on symbol manipulation and on communications with little or no grounding in basic productive technologies. Even just short segments on these technologies with student assignments in producing some basic technologies would enrich overseas education. Table (5) offers examples.

**TABLE (5): TYPES OF TECHNOLOGICAL STUDY THAT WOULD ENRICH AND CREATE MORE EQUITY IN OVERSEAS STUDIES PROGRAMS**

<b>Types of Specialized Technologies that Could be Part of Research and Study in Intensive Overseas Programs</b>	<b>Example of Countries</b>
<i>Productive Technologies (Food, Clothing, Shelter, Transport, Health, Safety)</i>	
Agriculture (Food)	Several in different environments
Water hydraulics and fisheries (Food, Transportation and Energy)	Khmer reservoirs and Southeast Asian canal and dike systems, water and fisheries management, Afghani underground water systems, European mills
Appropriate technology - tools, traps, archaeological development of technologies (Food and Other)	Several in different environments
Fabric, weaving and clothing design and technologies (Clothing)	Several in different environments
Urban planning and home construction (Shelter)	Several, in different environments
Maritime construction (boats) and navigation (Transport)	Several
<i>Artistic Technologies</i>	
Film	Bollywood (India)
Music	African, Chinese and Southeast Asian musicology

## Conclusion

When market mechanisms, professional ethics, and government oversight are failing in education abroad programs, there are no magic incantations or solutions to set things right. Denial, rationalization, and more academic “debate” will also not lead to improvements. However, there are principles and tools that can be used by the public to rate, differentiate, reward, and punish organizations as well as to inspire new innovations. This article offers the basic infrastructure of how to do that in the form of a simple indicator and some related tools as a first step in a long process of educational accountability and reform in international education projects.

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