


SHORT REPORT

Special International Experiential Report: A Fulbright case study

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper sets out to describe the experiences of a pharmacy faculty member leveraging the United States (U.S.) Fulbright Specialist (FS) programme as one mechanism to build global alliances in pharmacy workforce development. It also describe the findings of the Fulbright visit in creating an Assessment Centre for a faculty group at a university of a middle-income country.

Methods: The University of Pristina in Kosovo tendered a successful application for the visit of a pharmacy education scholar in assessment with the FS programme. The FS and host endeavoured an engaging process with various university administrators and academic staff using semi-structured interviews, presentations, and informal discussions during academic and social exchanges.

Results: The FS produced a 27-page report on recommendations to develop an Assessment Centre that also outlined steps needed to scale the centre up to the University level and replicate it in other faculties, all keeping in mind entrustable activities of assessment and desired global outcomes for workforce development. The FS and host engaged in additional, unplanned activities including a possible pipeline for Ph.D. students from Kosovo to the U.S., a formal exchange with another U.S. institution, and continued collaboration on various scholarly endeavours.

Conclusions: Pharmacy educators must continue identifying opportunities for global collaboration that seeks to promote workforce development and assessment for readiness to practice. The Fulbright Program is one mechanism that fosters collaboration, along with culturally stimulating and mutually beneficial intellectual exchange.

Keywords: *Assessment, Assessment Centre, Fulbright, Fulbright Specialist Programme, Workforce Development*

Introduction

Global challenges in assessment and pharmacy workforce development

As the world becomes more globalised, so does pharmacy education and practice. There are undoubtedly various levels of development in each nation's pharmacy workforce due to different funding, health systems, and myriad other factors. However, there is a common and widely recognised need for pharmacy's involvement in direct patient care activities and to take a more prominent stage in public health, or population-based care and interventions (Strand *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, national and international professional pharmacy organisations are forging alliances to promote quality assurance in student pharmacist education and proffer a global vision for training and practice of all pharmacy personnel (Bader, Kusynova, & Duggan, 2019). The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) recently proposed its

Nanjing Statements linked to their Global Vision for Education and Workforce (Law *et al.*, 2019). The Nanjing Statements (FIP, 2019) assist to monitor workforce education and development goals using various indicators and drivers, including: delivery of appropriate education and training to address academic and institutional infrastructure; establishment of standards-based global guidance for quality assurance of pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences; implementation of effective and transparent procedures for quality assurance of education; and definition of critical stakeholder input for implementation of these procedures. These are organised into clusters including: educational institutions instructing students on workforce development goals and public health advocacy; pharmacists meeting competencies in ethical and communication competencies in attaining the appropriate skills mix; foundational training, leadership development, and assessment of those foundations; imbuing a culture

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of risk assessment and medication safety in educational training; promoting adequate resources to ensure success; promoting continuous professional development; and quality assurance with appropriate formative and summative assessment (FIP, 2019).

At the heart of the Nanjing Statements and widely recognised as paramount in appropriate workforce development is the need for assessment of student competence to enter the workforce and pharmacist revalidation to maintain its integrity (Bushell *et al.*, 2016). Ried (2011) described assessment within the context of various aspects of continuous quality improvement (CQI) to describe a competent practitioner; development of core curricular competencies; implementation of the curriculum; data collection about the students' actual performance on the curriculum; and reassessment of the model and curricular outcomes.

The Fulbright programme as a means to build global bridges

Given the importance of assessment and increased efforts toward globalisation in pharmacy education, pharmacy educators must identify opportunities for greater collaboration in assessment and CQI initiatives. Global placements are gaining popularity, with students having experiential educational rotations in other countries where they gain a greater appreciation for varied health systems, pharmacists' roles, and the emerging importance of pharmacy workforce personnel, while exchanging ideas with faculties and students regarding best practices and mutual challenges faced (Lucas, 2018). It would be beneficial likewise if there were more endeavours for pharmacy faculty scholars, particularly with expertise in assessment to engage in more systematic means of sharing experiences and skill sets.

One such mechanism which is perhaps underused is available through the United States (U.S.) Fulbright Scholars Program. Established in 1946, the Fulbright Scholarship Program sponsors U.S. and foreign participants for exchanges in all areas of endeavour, including the sciences, business, academe, public service, government, and the arts to increase mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of other countries (Fulbright Scholar Program, 2019). It is administered by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), the scholar division of the Institute of International Education (IIE). The Fulbright Program annually offers over 450 teaching and/or research awards in over 125 countries in conjunction with the U.S. The programmes under Fulbright have become more varied to include the Specialist Scholars programme designed for visiting exchanges several weeks in length. The programme sends U.S. faculty and professionals to serve as expert consultants on curriculum, faculty development, institutional planning, assessment and related areas of subject (Fulbright Specialist Program, 2019).

While limited to exchanges between the U.S. and other countries, the Fulbright programme promotes bi-lateral

support for global solutions, in this case workforce development. Rather than having well-known and highly capitalised institutions from the U.S. and other developed nations establishing campuses in lower- and middle-income countries, Fulbright offers the opportunity for its scholars to travel overseas and assist existing ones and identify mechanisms to collaborate. In the case of pharmacy, this avenue probably has been under-utilised, and thus the programme provided a means for pharmacy scholars with knowledge of 'best practices' in curriculum, assessment, and global workforce initiatives to endeavour in a mutually beneficial exchange.

The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) recognised the potential for the Fulbright programme as a means of promoting global education initiatives, as they sought and continue to seek strategic alliances that promote competence in clinical pharmacy and the delivery of pharmacy services worldwide, opining that shared experiences such as the one through Fulbright would allow the most productive students and scholars to exchange best practices, learn from one another, and thus promote competence in pharmacy and develop the workforce (AACP, 2010; 2011). Purdue University's College of Pharmacy (West Lafayette, IN, USA) implemented their Global Health Residency Program with a focus on international public health alliances and list among its achievements a Fulbright scholar who created a drug informatics database in Kenya (Miller *et al.*, 2016). This Fulbright scholarship was part of a larger endeavour that included National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for a disease care model scaled up throughout Kenya and a grant supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support development of a national pharmacovigilance programme.

The above-mentioned are but just a couple examples and represent the potential for the Fulbright programme to promote global partnerships, yet it would appear as though the programme is still not widely known about or used by pharmacy academics, and much focus has been on Fulbright student awards rather than faculty. This paper describes the experiences of a Fulbright Specialist (FS) Scholar selected to inform the creation of an Assessment Centre for the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) at the University of Pristina (UP) in Kosovo.

Fulbright Specialist Scholar

In seeking to elevate its quality of educational delivery to meet workforce development goals and aim for ranking among well-renowned institutions of higher learning, the UP in Kosovo, particularly FoM, recognised the need to strengthen its efforts in assessment. At the same time, they also recognised the need to shore up quality improvement initiatives, prepare their students for public health challenges, all while promoting the scholarly productivity of its academic staff. To that end, they applied for the services of Dr. Shane Desselle, listed on the FS roster for his experience in developing mentorship programmes, creating centres for assessment, and as an international journal editor assisting scholars with

productivity and in helping educators meet workforce development goals in communication, public health service, cultural competency, and medication safety. The application from UP FoM was approved in early 2018.

Faculty of Medicine at the University of Pristina

The UP is the largest university in Kosovo. It is a public university almost entirely funded by the Kosovo government. The university's chief academic officer is the Rector. There are five Vice Rectors in the areas of quality assurance as well as academic, research, financial, and international affairs. UP has 13 faculties for the following programmes: Medicine, Philosophy, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Philology, Law, Economics, Construction and Architecture, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Arts, Agriculture and Veterinary, Physical Education, and Sports and Education. FoM consists of academic divisions of General Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing and Physiotherapy with a Dean in charge of entire programmes with Vice-Deans in Finance, Academic, and Health Affairs. The Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Kreshnik Hoti with Ph.D. training in Social Pharmacy, served as the primary host for Shane Desselle.

The academic Fulbright experience: Informing the development of the Assessment Centre

The approved application included the following specific goals:

- 1) Inform the establishment of a pilot office for the Assessment Centre (AC) at the FoM, UP, which can then be applied in other UP units;
- 2) Review and provide guidance of advancing and reforming current assessment procedures and policies;
- 3) Conduct academic staff training in relation to assessment policies and practices with focus on results analysis and reporting, marking and assessment moderation, continuous assessment process, and academic integrity of student assessments;
- 4) Conduct workshops for FoM and other UP units on key strategies for successful publication in high-impact international journals.

To accomplish these goals, a process was developed to provide maximal exposure of the FS to key UP and FoM personnel in the hope to facilitate mutual exchange and appreciation of diverse perspectives. This is important particularly in light of the FS's brief visit, the FS anticipated the need to promote a culture of assessment at UP, yet gain an appreciation of their own organisational culture, particularly given their limited funding coming almost exclusively from the federal government of a middle-income developing country.

As such, the first few days of the FS's visit involved meetings with the Rector (Chancellor or President), Vice-Rectors, UP Head of Quality Assurance, and various Dean and Vice-Deans around campus, in addition to various department heads within FoM. The FS purposively left space for each dialogue for the free flow of information, but approached many of the opportunities in a similar way one might approach a semi-structured interview for a focus group or personal interview. There were several questions slated for inquiry and discussion in some form or another such as:

"What does assessment of student learning mean to you?"

"To what extent are faculty development initiatives and resources devoted to assessment?"

"What do you call success, or preparation of your graduates to enter their career; and how have you benchmarked progress in this area?"

"What would you do with additional resources afforded you in the area of assessment?"

"What personnel do you currently have with expertise in assessment, and how would these and other persons interact with UP-level personnel in assessment?"

"How could experts in assessment at UP or even in other programs (e.g., at FoM) help you in assessment and in establishing a culture of assessment?"

"What does a culture of assessment mean to you"?

"What do you see as the links between assessment of student learning with assessment of mission effectiveness"?

In between these interviews, the FS was given tours of various facilities such as the hospital adjoining the FoM where much of the experiential education takes place and while initial presentations were made to FoM faculty on publishing strategies in international journals, with an emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Following the interviews, an initial presentation developed prior to arrival of the FS in Kosovo was adapted based upon the results of the interviews and personal discussions with UP and specific FoM personnel on development of an Assessment Centre at FoM. The presentation centred on plans to leverage the FoM Centre into one that served other Faculties, including what sort of personnel might be in charge and the resources needed to accomplish this. This was presented to various audiences during the second week of the FS visit, which also included attendance at some students' Master thesis defences. One of those students exemplifying extraordinary talent was counselled and has since been mentored and accepted into a Ph.D. programme in Social Pharmacy in the U.S. To the authors' best knowledge this is the first student from UP FoM to take up Ph.D. studies in the U.S. where she will continue her initial work on patient activation in health and pharmacy care. Attending other Master's thesis defences also provided the FS a good sense of the current use of these defences as a form of assessment and in the types of health care, medication safety and distribution, and public health concerns currently being faced by Kosovars, well beyond an

examination of the the FoM School of Pharmacy current curriculum could.

Execution of activities and initial findings

It was observed that while training and expertise in assessment was relatively diffuse, FoM cumulatively had amassed considerable talent. Due to past issues and sensitivities, FoM had been devoting an extraordinary amount of resources toward maintaining exam integrity, such as sequestering large groups of academic staff for item-writing overnight for examinations related to student admissions. The FoM had recently also introduced a number of improved assessment practices such as marking rubrics for written and presented work during thesis defences, along with various marking moderation procedures. The report of the FS, though, would recommend how adding Assessment Centre personnel and resources would be money well spent so as to further educate academic staff and relieve administrative task burden to free up time for research, scholarship, and more innovative teaching.

Fulbright Specialist summary report of recommendations

The FS produced a 27-page report of recommendations to inform creation of an AC and ongoing improvement of standardisation in assessment and related curricular affairs. These were organised around clusters on AC Personnel, Responsibilities of the AC, Culture of Assessment, and Expansion throughout UP.

Assessment Centre Personnel

- Recommend 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE). The ideal director would be devoted exclusively to AC activities, being someone versed in, or at least some level of training and background in assessment. They would also have 'boots on the ground' and be engaged in some amount of teaching and/or clinical practice.
- Head of AC given a formal administrative title. Commensurate with this responsibility, the Head should sit with other administrators for the FoM, thereby acknowledging the importance of assessment; helping imbue a culture of assessment, and recognition that the AC holds capacity to collect voluminous amounts of data that are key to future decision-making. It was recommended that the Head be provided with the salary and responsibilities of a Vice-Dean, either as an entirely new position or one carved out in a restructuring of existing Vice-Dean positions.
- Heads of Department prioritising outcomes. Heads of Department must assume greater responsibility for enforcing proper teaching and accountability for student outcomes by the respective faculty in his/her department, including quality of teaching, quality of assessment, and use of contemporary resources/teaching materials and educational design.

Responsibilities of the AC, and Vice-Dean of the AC

- Assuring assessment integrity. The Vice-Dean should evaluate mechanisms to reducing resources dedicated towards while still ensuring integrity of examinations and all other assessments. They should also provide data on integrity and content validity of assessments to Department and Division Heads. Here, the term integrity is used in a broader sense, understanding that without integrity or validity, all other aspects of assessment and monitoring of assessment is relatively moot.
- Provide assistance to academic staff in creating content-valid assessments/examinations. The AC should provide academic staff with training on how to write examination questions that accurately reflect what students are learning and are expected to learn from the course. Provide assistance to academic staff in determining content validity and reliability of assessments. The Vice Dean alone cannot undertake determinations of integrity, validity, and reliability of every assessment activity. Through workshops, links to literature and other information, academic staff are provided resources on how they can conduct relatively simple calculations and determinations to ascertain integrity and content validity, such as internal consistency coefficients and other relatively simple statistical and psychometric evaluations.
- Assist with the curriculum mapping processes. While not yet required for most accreditation processes in Kosovo, curriculum mapping or something akin to this might be on the horizon, as accreditation agencies in Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing, and other disciplines in European countries, the U.S., Australia, and Canada are increasingly looking for such processes to ascertain validity of the entire curriculum and in consideration of workforce development goals proffered by the aforementioned Nanjing Statements, and elsewhere. Identify and assess opportunities in the Co-Curriculum Process (CCP) to further facilitate student engagement and satisfaction. The Co-Curriculum includes such experiences that engage students and help them apply what is being learned in class, but outside the classroom and not that which is assigned a grade and not mandatory for degree requirements, but nonetheless extraordinarily helpful in student development.
- Measure various student outcomes at a more programmatic level and report recommendations to proper personnel. The Vice-Dean can work with other appropriate personnel to identify those characteristics of students and graduates deemed important and implement a system of measuring those outcomes.
- Assist with other aspects of assessment to inform Admissions and other processes. Current Admissions procedures do not reflect much in the way of desired student competencies, currently emphasising content knowledge, only. Identify and assist in measuring appropriate benchmarks to evaluate the quality of the academic programme that transcend even student curricular and co-curricular outcomes. A more

holistic view of assessment evaluates mission effectiveness. Evaluate the cost feasibility of various assessment and curriculum management tools.

- Evaluating various software programmes. Consideration given to suitable software programmes that facilitate assessment and educational design interventions that could in the long-run prove cost-effective and useful for collecting, benchmarking, and dissemination of data, as well as managing curriculum delivery and course management processes.
- Apply for and assist others in applying for grants, gifts, and other monies to support education. The Vice-Dean should not only be able to be competitive in applying for such grants and seek donations from vendors, but also help other academic staff to do so, as well.

Creating a culture of assessment

- Create a culture of assessment that permeates the entire FoM. A culture of assessment implies wide-scale recognition and acceptance of assessment as being paramount to advancing the FoM in its academic reputation, prestige, integrity, and destination for top students. It implies that academic staff and administrators take responsibility and accept accountability to take assessment seriously and understand its importance. This requires buy-in from academic staff, the Dean, and other Vice-Deans.
- The Vice-Dean role in promoting a culture of assessment. The Vice-Dean must not only promote a culture of assessment but also build trust between various stakeholders in the assessment process. Department and Division Heads must demand accountability from academic staff in assessments and facilitate development of academic staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). Academic staff are encouraged to experiment and publish on best practices to disseminate to other UP personnel as well as enhance the teaching and research reputation of FoM and all of UP.
- Educate and train academic staff on varied assessments, particularly formative assessments. Assessments, themselves, should serve as additional learning tools and learning environments for students. This would include assessments that go beyond summative examinations, which currently serve as the basis for the overwhelming majority of assessments. Formative assessments provide students with feedback and allow them to learn as the course progresses, thus helping to ensure a deeper learning beyond rote memorisation of facts while also facilitating their engagement in the course.
- Educate and train academic staff on contemporary teaching/pedagogical strategies. Assessments adhering to the above principles of engagement and feedback go hand-in-hand with contemporary teaching/pedagogical strategies. In other words,

while the quality of assessments is paramount, it is also important to employ teaching strategies that are commensurate with those assessments

Expansion of AC from FoM to other Faculties and University levels

- Liaise between FoM staff and administrators with UP-level administrators to identify appropriate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).
- The Vice-Dean must maintain appropriate contact and provide information to other academic units and to UP personnel. Vice-Rectors and the Director of Academic Development should provide support to the extent possible at the UP level to the Vice Dean to help ensure success. While initial piloting at FoM is important, key decision-makers at the UP level should be actively planning rather than waiting for considerable lengths of time subsequent to the FoM implementation

Progress on the development of the Assessment Centre

The report of recommendations made by the FS was completed in August 2018. It has been bound, made into a booklet, and widely circulated throughout FoM and UP as hard copy and made available throughout the institution. The Dean for FoM has secured an additional 0.5 FTE for a Vice-Dean of Assessment to have the other 0.5 devoted to clinical practice and teaching. The UP Head of Quality Assurance has provided consultation and served as a liaison between the Dean and the Office of the University Rector. Additionally, the FS host and champion of the entire process, Dr. Hoti, has been on an extended Fulbright Scholarship himself for the entire year in the U.S. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It is hoped that initial request for funding and infrastructure, along with the return of Dr. Hoti to UP FoM will expedite the process, and there are plans to bring Dr. Desselle back to UP even in the absence of FS funding.

Additional academic/scholarly activities - Furthering the Alliance

As previously mentioned, Dr. Desselle attended several Master's thesis presentations and assisted with the successful application of a student into a U.S. Ph.D. programme, hopefully encouraging and opening a pipeline of future UP FoM students into U.S. (and other) Ph.D. programmes in pharmacy. The FS's visit also incorporated an interview with the President of Kosovo's Chamber of Pharmacists, where they have made changes to their licensing examination to promote its content validity, reliability, and rigour of assessment.

Additional strides have been made to further an alliance between UP, the FS, and various institutions in the U.S. The employer of the FS in the U.S. has successfully shepherded through an application for one of its medical

students to integrate Western medicine therapies into existing therapeutic paradigms in households in Nigeria. Through contacts of the FS, UP has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to initiate an exchange programme comprising both students and research faculty on an annual basis with another U.S. institution, specifically Northeastern University in Boston. Two colleagues of the FS have since joined the Fulbright Specialist roster, and one of them has already completed a visit to Indonesia to promote research in the social and clinical pharmaceutical sciences (West Virginia University School of Pharmacy, 2019; American Indonesian Exchange Foundation, 2019). The initial partnership between the FS and UP continues to pay dividends. Drs. Desselle and Hoti are part of a multi-institutional project examining the use of social media to encourage patient activation and discern its effect on patient medication adherence. They have just completed a study of pharmacists in Pristina to evaluate the extent to which those pharmacists are following recommended precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic utilising the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska, Johnson, & Lee, 1998).

Fulbright programme to advance pharmacy alliances

The Fulbright programme has helped forge alliances between individual students, faculty scholars, and entire institutions for a number of years. This has been less so in pharmacy, and it is hoped that this paper provides an example of how one scholar's visit to the UP helped them in creating a centre of assessment in line with recommendations in the Nanjing Statements and in accordance with the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), among which are to imbue a sense of assessment, and determine the effectiveness of educational programming to ensure competence in promoting patient safety (ACPE, 2016). Given the still relative nascency of advances in assessment in pharmacy education, particularly in developing nations, this is an area ripe for experts in assessment to apply for and engage in the Fulbright programme. Like has been done elsewhere, it could be part of a larger strategy that includes exchange programmes and funded initiatives to foster collaboration. The continued relationship and scholarly endeavours of UP and the FS are testament to that, but it is hoped and anticipated that there are many other areas of fertile ground beyond assessment that could make for successful endeavours.

The Fulbright experience: Cultural or 'non-academic' component

While the Fulbright programme was established for cultural, academic, and scientific exchange, it is really up to the scholar and their host institution to leverage this, even while there at some point will likely be some contact with the local U.S. Embassy. The FS was provided a furnished apartment and transportation and was afforded some free time to explore and gain a sense of local culture on his own. In addition, they were also

provided more formal programming that included a visit to Kosovo's National Museum to learn of the extremely close ties between Kosovo and the U.S., given the aid rendered by the U.S. as well as the European Union and United Nations during Kosovo's struggle for independence in the 1990s. In addition, there were efforts by various organisations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) to strengthen the higher education infrastructure throughout the region.

Conclusion

As professional pharmacy organisations aim to work together with pharmacy education to ensure the preparedness of a global pharmacy workforce to transform practice, there are various programmes such as U.S. Fulbright Scholars that might help facilitate these endeavours. The Fulbright programme helps its scholars to realise the unique challenges faced by practitioners in countries with highly varied health systems and socioeconomic status. At the same time, however, it also helps us understand that the goals of pharmacy practice are similar throughout the world in advancing the profession and improving the lives of the patients that are served. It is hoped that visits through programmes such as Fulbright and others will be of great assistance to scholars around the world in both developed and in low- and middle-income countries in further globalising pharmacy education and pharmacy workforce preparedness. Pharmacy scholars and leaders should seize these opportunities for international exchange.

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