Ipsos Public Affairs
The Social Research and Corporate Reputation Specialists

Understanding the value of the Humanities in meeting global development challenges

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Objectives

- Understand the value of the Humanities
- Discern difference between practical values and less tangible values
- How Humanities contribute to achieving global development goals

What are the Humanities?

- **Pure Humanities (Liberal Arts):** archaeology, ancient languages, classics, cultural studies, film, history, linguistics, literature, music, philosophy, religious studies, theology, visual arts.

- **Applied Humanities (Social Sciences):** architecture, design, economics, geography, international relations, law, modern languages, politics, psychology, sociology.

Phase 1: Literature Review

- Literature review to develop a thorough understanding of:
  - The debate about the value of a Humanities education
  - The importance of context in the delivery of development programs, and linkages with Humanities education

Phase 2: In-Depth Interviews

- 20 interviews with high-level representatives of organizations in the development sector

- Australian Aid
- Coffey International Development
- Development Alternatives Inc.
- Democracy International
- International Finance Corporation
- Inter-American Development Bank
- International Republican Institute
- IREX
- Management Systems International
- Marie Stopes International
- Mendez England and Associates
- National Democratic Institute
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Oxfam
- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- RTI International
- The Coca Cola Foundation
- United Nations Development Programme
- University of York
- World Bank

Phase 3: Online Discussion Boards

Phase 1 → Phase 2 → **Phase 3**

- Week-long discussions online with HR Managers and Project/Delivery Managers in development organizations

Findings

Overview

1. Programs need humanizing
2. Four broad categories of skills and attributes
3. Humanities education develops relevant skills and knowledge
4. Challenges finding the right people
Findings

Finding 1: Even the most technical programs need "humanizing"

- Challenges of program delivery go beyond technical
- Requires a skill-set beyond technical or scientific expertise

"If you want to get the development outcomes, you've got to get the relationship stuff right."

--Senior Leader

Finding 2: Four key skills and attributes for successful program delivery

- Critical/ analytical thinking
- Flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity
- Communication and negotiation
- Local knowledge

Critical/analytical thinking

- Assess the situation at hand
- Ensure that the program is successfully responding to local contexts
- Apply logic and reasoning to solve complex problems

"Ultimately it comes down to someone who has been trained to think critically about issues and develop programs and design solutions to the complex problems we face."

--HR Manager

Flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity

- Adapt approach to meet local needs
- Solve problems in complex environment
- Implement program even where there is a lack of clarity

"You have to visualize, articulate, and solve problems in complex environment. But it is only half of the battle. You need to use soft skills to apply this learning and move the team with you."

--Program Manager

Communication and negotiation

- Negotiate with a range of stakeholders
- Accommodate competing objectives
- Communicate in a culturally sensitive manner

"Good communication skills are essential both to explain ideas clearly and concisely to other staff and to beneficiaries at a level they can understand."

--Program Manager

Local knowledge

- Essential to good situation analysis and needs assessment
- Ensures relevance of program
- Effectively manage relationships with local partners

"I have seen good technical professionals fail because of the lack of sensitivity or awareness of local languages, cultures, history, philosophy, or religion."

--HR Manager

Finding 3: Humanities education develops needed knowledge and skills…

Skills

Critical
Analytical
Communication
Negotiation

Knowledge

Politics
Geography
History
Language
Culture
Arts

…yet interaction between education and experience is important

- Work experience – skills applied on the job
- International experience – skills learned and perceptions altered from having interacted with different cultures

"You don't want someone in D.C. coming up with ideas for programs off the top of their head and hoping that they will work, you want someone who really understands what this looks like day-to-day."

--Senior Leader

Finding 4: Organizations face significant challenges finding the right people

- International development organizations struggle to compete with the private sector
- Requirements for program staffing are often highly specific

"We often have fairly strict requirements for personnel. Recruiting and retaining a person with experience and who is willing to live in difficult posts is a significant challenge."

--Senior Leader

Conclusions

Conclusions

Challenges in the delivery of programs include: complexity, negotiation, cultural difference

Specific skills and knowledge related to the Humanities are crucial attributes for successful implementation

A combination of relevant education and local experience is key

Thank you

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