Chapter 10
Integrating Study Abroad Curriculum in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the design of an innovative study abroad curriculum to be integrated into teacher education departments. The curriculum is based upon the results of in-depth interviews administered to teacher candidates and/or practicing teachers of English following their return from a study abroad program. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of prospective study abroad student teachers of English and to address possible challenges that might result from their participation in such programs. The most innovative aspect of the curriculum is that it incorporates problem scenarios and provides experiential hands-on practice. The curriculum comprises ten modules, each focusing on a different topic. It is expected that the curriculum will enhance teacher educators' awareness of the contribution(s) study abroad makes to create global citizens and increase teacher educators' knowledge about the learning needs of prospective study abroad student teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have begun to recognize the need to equip students with the skills necessary to cope with the complexities of an increasingly globalized world by implementing study abroad programs, a powerful educational tool for internationalizing the higher education (HE) curriculum. Over the last few decades, the world has seen an increasing number of students traveling abroad for study. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that international student mobility worldwide reached 3.7 million in 2011, representing a 75% increase since 2000 (OECD, 2011). As a result, an increasing number of preservice student teachers, as well as practicing teachers of English, have become interested in studying abroad. Study abroad programs, defined as education that occurs outside the participant's home country, take various forms. Forms of study abroad include:

exchange programs, internship and service learning programs, direct enrollment programs, sponsored study abroad programs, special international student programs, and summer study abroad programs. These programs are influenced to a significant degree by learning goals. As noted by Hopkins (1999):

Study abroad programs take many forms, but all share the characteristic that, by their very nature, they provide students with a healthy dose of experiential learning. Immersing oneself in another culture provides new opportunities for learning-by-doing, virtually twenty-four hours a day (p. 36).

Substantial research has been produced purporting the advantages of studying abroad (e.g., Asaoka, 2009; Button et al. 2005; Dwyer, 2004a, Dwyer, 2004b; Goodwin & Nacht, 1988; Lassegard, 2013). Studies, generally, tend to focus on the generalized benefits, which include increased competitiveness in the global job market, foreign language proficiency, and intercultural knowledge and skills (Anderson et al. 2006; Dywer, 2004). Sutton and Rubin (2001) found that study abroad students acquire more academic-based knowledge in the areas of world geography, cultural knowledge, and global interdependence compared to those without these experiences. Douglas and Jones-Rikkers (2001) report that the study abroad experience results in an increased level of "worldmindedness," namely, the sense of belonging to humankind. Study abroad experiences expose students to different cultures, helping them to gain comprehensive understandings of global contexts and global citizenship (Linder & McGaha, 2013), facilitating "the individuals' retaining intercultural understanding over a lifetime" (Dywer, 2004, p. 151). Study abroad is widely considered an important opportunity to learn "intercultural competences" through the first-hand experience of another culture (Davies & Pike, 2009; Skelly, 2009) and an appreciation for cultural differences.

The literature also suggests that students demonstrate significantly more language fluency upon returning from an overseas sojourn (Freed, 1995; Stansfield, 1975), as well as higher proficiency in intercultural communication (Williams, 2005). Students who go abroad even for short periods consistently report returning with higher levels of confidence and self-efficacy in the foreign language, increased motivation for further study (Ingram, 2005), greater independence, and more maturity over the course of an international experience.

Despite the well-documented academic and personal benefits offered by the study abroad programs on the participants' personal development, cultural acquisition, and intercultural competence, the international education literature recognizes that merely sending students abroad remains quite insufficient in achieving the required learning outcomes. As a result, it becomes essential for HE institutions in many countries, including Turkey, to design a study abroad curriculum, particularly for undergraduate students prior to their overseas sojourns, which would establish academically relevant and meaningful study abroad experiences.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT

Within the system of HEI in Turkey, study abroad programs play an integral part in realizing the globalization and internationalization goals of Turkish HEI. The growth in Turkish undergraduate students participating in study abroad programs has been steadily increasing with more students opting for a

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