

Chapter 36

Cultural Self–Study as a Tool for Critical Reflection and Learning: Integral Analysis and Implications for Pre–Service Teacher Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce a research study based on the Cultural Self-Study method and to describe the application of this method with teachers. A specific example from the empirical study of Canadian expatriate teachers is used to illustrate how the tool and its application look in real life, and what data are generated by the use of this tool. The Integral Model is described as a useful framework for analysis of these types of data, and the analysis is illustrated using examples from this empirical study. Based on this experience with the use of Cultural Self-Study, the authors provide recommendations for the use of self-study in pre-service teacher training.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the outcome of a discussion the authors, Natalie Pitre and Veronika Bohac Clarke, had after Pitre completed her doctoral dissertation research. There is a danger, for new researchers who are embedded in professional practice, that while they bring the results of their research into their daily work informally on many levels, they may not vigorously pursue the opportunities to disseminate their work farther afield through publications. Because Pitre is passionate about preparing culturally competent new teachers, the authors discussed how to bring the tools and knowledge about cultural competence into the hands of new and practicing teachers.

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Many pre-service teachers graduate from teacher education programs without the intercultural competence to teach and lead students from a global perspective. Second language education courses, where concepts of language education and cross-cultural learning are taught, still remain non-compulsory for teacher-candidates in many of these programs. Teacher-candidates, who opt out of second/additional language perspectives in their education courses, might not know how to adopt a socio-cultural lens to understand teacher education pedagogy in their core courses. Without any inter-cultural preparation, the critical reflection on the professional practice assignments, given to pre-service teachers in their curricular disciplines and field practica, fail to provide them with insight on the ways they enact their own culture. Pre-service teachers need to be provided with assignments that tap into the cognitive and experiential orientations of cultural learning, in order to lead students to understand the fabric of their own cultural identity. We propose Weigl's (2009) cultural self-study method combined with a framework of questions to guide reflection on professional practice (Pitre, 2015) to be included in teacher education course curricula. These tools will guide teacher-candidates to reflect on the self and recognize their beliefs about cultural others. Wilber's (2006) integral theory model can be used as a guidepost for pre-service teachers to identify their own developmental levels and intercultural competence based on their cultural self-study and reflection on their responses to the professional practice questions. Based on Pitre's (2015) dissertation findings, we believe that by providing teacher candidates with a framework and tools to clearly articulate their own developmental levels and intercultural competencies, they will be better equipped to identify the developmental levels and intercultural knowledge and skills of their own students. With these skills, teachers could intentionally plan opportunities for cultural self-learning, bi-directional, and cross-cultural learning in their future classrooms with student developmental levels in mind, and with consideration for the nature of the unique context where they work.

BACKGROUND: CULTURAL SELF-STUDY AND ITS APPLICATION

Origins of Cultural Self-Study

The University of Virginia sponsors the Institute for Shipboard Education's Semester at Sea program. The self-study process was designed for the Semester at Sea program. The program was originally supported by the University of Pittsburgh (visit www.semesteratsea.org for additional information). Semester at Sea is an option for undergraduate students across a variety of disciplines and post-baccalaureate students on a special basis to acquire firsthand experience with traveling the world while completing courses towards a program of study. Students are expected to complete a number of Global Comparative Education Courses to develop a better understanding of the different cultures, peoples, and countries that they will experience during the completion of the program. With a sharpened lens, students will be able to make comparisons between their own societies and the societies that they visit. Clinical and cross-cultural psychologist, Robert Weigl (2009) discovered that students in the Semester at Sea program possessed increased cultural sensitivity and interest in partaking in different types of research onshore following this learning experience. The use of the cultural self-study method during land based semesters has also shown to lead to students' investment in both cross-cultural and intercultural involvements (Weigl, 2009). The insights Weigl (2009) has gained from using the cultural self-study method for over twelve years in his cross-cultural psychology classes for undergraduate students is what has led to him present this approach to scholars and educators in the field as well as intercultural trainers to use this method as

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