

Chapter 7

Development of an Enhanced Study Abroad Curriculum in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the design of an enhanced innovative study abroad curriculum to be integrated into teacher education programs. 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. It is designed to meet the needs of prospective study abroad student teachers of English and to address possible challenges that may result from their participation in such programs. The enhanced curriculum is comprised of 10 modules, each focusing on a different topic. Integrated into the enhanced curriculum are tasks and problem scenarios reflecting on the real experiences of the returned study abroad sojourners. It is expected that the curriculum will increase teacher educators' knowledge about the learning needs of prospective study abroad participants and enhance their awareness of the contribution(s) study abroad makes to create global citizens.

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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 maintained by Taguchi and Collentine (2018), ‘as internationalization efforts in educational contexts intensify around the world, the number of students who study outside their home country continues to rise’ (p. 564).

As a result, an increasing number of preservice student teachers, as well as practicing teachers of foreign languages, 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 direct enrollment programs, exchange programs, internships, service-learning programs, special international student programs, sponsored study abroad programs, and summer study abroad programs. These programs are influenced to a significant degree by learning goals.

Correspondingly, numerous researchers are investigating the advantages of studying abroad (e.g., Asaoka, 2009; Button et al., 2005; Dwyer, 2004a, Dwyer, 2004b; Skelly, 2009; 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; Dwyer, 2004). Sutton and Rubin (2001) reported 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-Rikkens (2001) suggested that the study abroad experience results in an increased level of ‘world mindedness,’ 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’ (Dwyer, 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) and an appreciation for cultural differences.

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