



## Chapter 2

# Enhancing Pre–Service Teachers’ Global Competencies Through Interdisciplinary Study Abroad

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### ABSTRACT

*A continuing challenge in teacher education is how to develop future teachers’ global competencies to prepare them for the diversity of learners in school classrooms. This chapter investigates an undergraduate teacher education degree program which aims to enhance future teachers’ intercultural engagement and global competence within an interdisciplinary curriculum incorporating an international experience. The researchers explored the level of pre-service teachers’ engagement with their host society during a study abroad year through analysis of students’ written assessment tasks. Findings indicate that the program encouraged the pre-service teachers’ engagement with the local society through opportunities for students to explore complex social issues beyond the university context, potentially contributing to their global competence development. The chapter will be of interest for researchers and educators interested in exploring the value of alternative and interdisciplinary approaches to pre-service teacher education to prepare teachers for diversity of modern schools.*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the recent growth rates in transnational migration rates is the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity found among learners in elementary and secondary schools. These changing demographics present a challenge for teacher educators to ensure that students who are training to become teachers (pre-service teachers) have opportunities during their university studies to develop their own intercultural and linguistic skills or more broadly their 'global competencies' (Byker & Xu, 2019; Moloney & Oguro, 2016). These competencies can enable teachers to cater to their young learners' diverse backgrounds and needs in school classrooms. This is an increasingly important issue for teacher educators as it has been argued that few pre-service teachers experience comprehensive curricula to enhance their global competence development (Vatalaro et al., 2015). The research reported in this chapter investigates one aspect of an undergraduate degree program at an Australian university designed to enhance pre-service teacher education by incorporating a unique study abroad model. The chapter explores how the international, interdisciplinary program contributes to global competence learning outcomes for the pre-service teachers.

The inclusion of international study programs into pre-service teacher education curricula is one-way pre-service teachers can be supported to develop their global competencies. This type of study program may be for academic credit within a degree program, or may remain an extra-curricular experience, and typically falls into one of two models: the first involves pre-service teachers traveling abroad to visit local schools and may include a combination of classroom observations and teaching practice (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2017; French & Harbon, 2010; Patterson, 2015). Such programs vary in length but are an average of four weeks duration (Driscoll et al., 2014; He et al., 2017; Patterson, 2015), or if they include an internship, they are between three to six months (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011).

A second common model for incorporating international experiences in pre-service education courses is a study abroad program. These programs typically occur under exchange agreements between a pre-service teacher's home university and an international partner university to enable pre-service teachers to undertake semester(s) of study abroad at the host institution and receive academic credit. Subject to the requirements of the home university, a study abroad semester for pre-service teachers might include subjects at the host university from the field of education (e.g., teaching methods, educational systems, child and adolescent development) or courses from a pre-service teacher's particular area of specialization (e.g., the social or natural sciences, languages, and literature). Depending on the language in which the host university's curriculum is delivered, and a pre-service teacher's level of proficiency in that language, these courses may be undertaken in the local language or a *lingua franca* (commonly English).

The desired learning outcomes of most international programs for university students include notions such as 'global-readiness', 'intercultural competence', 'global competence' and 'global citizenship' (Hunter et al., 2006; Jackson & Oguro, 2018a; Paige & Goode, 2009; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012). In this investigation of a study abroad model for pre-service teachers reported in this chapter, the notion of 'global competencies' (Byker & Xu, 2019; Moloney & Oguro, 2016) has been used to encompass the possible learning outcomes which contribute to the development of a set of skills highly suitable for teaching learners of diverse backgrounds. Such skills include awareness of ethnocentrism and development of intercultural awareness (Buchanan et al., 2017; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Larson & Searle, 2017) as well as gains in language and culture knowledge and empathy for second language learners (Bradley et al., 2019; Driscoll et al., 2014; French & Harbon, 2010).

International experiences and students' development of global competencies have often been assumed to be automatically achieved through living abroad for undergraduate study (Stebbleton et al., 2013;

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