



# The longitudinal impact of teaching abroad: An analysis of intercultural development

Laura Boynton Hauerwas<sup>\*</sup>, Susan F. Skawinski, Lynne B. Ryan

Providence College, Department of Elementary Special Education, 1 Cunningham Square, Providence, RI 02918, USA

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Preservice teachers experienced being the 'other' teaching in Florence schools.
- Teaching language learners produced professional growth during and post experience.
- A limited understanding of how culture impacts teaching and curriculum was evident.
- Contexts of experience were significant factors in intercultural development.
- Personal identity was not central to professional intercultural competency growth.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 14 June 2016

Received in revised form

2 June 2017

Accepted 11 June 2017

Available online 26 June 2017

### Keywords:

Teacher education

International teaching

Study abroad

Cultural awareness

English as a foreign language

English language learners

Longitudinal

## ABSTRACT

This case study investigated the development of intercultural competencies in a cohort of preservice elementary special education teachers that participated in a teaching English as a foreign language field experience in Italy. Data sources collected both during and three semesters after the experience included reflections, focus groups and profile responses. Directed content and time series analyses resulted in findings regarding preservice teachers' growth in communication, culturally-relevant teaching practices and personal identity. The discussion addresses longitudinal patterns of change and the effect of the local and international context on preservice teachers' intercultural development process.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Teachers in the 21st century must be prepared to teach diverse students and develop their global competence (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Longview Foundation, 2008; Merryfield, 2008). However, teacher education students tend to be cross-culturally inexperienced and globally unaware, making it difficult for them to effectively address the differentiated needs in today's classrooms (McGaha & Linder, 2014). More US classrooms have emergent bilinguals with varying language proficiencies and different cultural backgrounds who require instruction to be relevant to their

background. Teaching abroad is one approach to developing preservice teachers<sup>1</sup> (PSTs') ability to use culturally-relevant pedagogy in diverse classrooms (Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), and to internationalize their teacher education curriculum (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Immersing teacher candidates in another culture to live and teach – particularly a non-English speaking culture – can foster an understanding of the “outsider” and encourage critical cultural and linguistic sensitivity, but does this translate to a greater awareness of students' diverse needs and the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy when preservice teachers return home?

### 1.1. Study abroad in teacher education

Teaching overseas as part of study abroad programs affords PSTs

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [lhauerwa@providence.edu](mailto:lhauerwa@providence.edu) (L.B. Hauerwas).

<sup>1</sup> PSTs Pre-service teachers.

the opportunity to discover unfamiliar cultures, develop new languages and dialects, gain multiple perspectives about the roles of schooling, and experience opportunities for professional and personal development (Brindley, Quinn, & Morton, 2009; Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). Such opportunities for education majors are generally short-term experiences or a semester of student teaching. Research on both short-term and semester-long student teaching experiences suggests that studying abroad alone does not guarantee PSTs will gain global knowledge or an appreciation for different cultural perspectives (Phillion & Malewski, 2011).

Marx and Moss's (2011a) study is an example of research that has examined the impact of a post-BA study abroad student teaching semester. Using case study methodology, they explored the intercultural development of an American student teacher in London. Data analysis suggested that both the structured teaching immersion experience in which she was the cultural outsider and support for cultural reflection provided by a cultural guide were essential for her intercultural development. Similarly, Sharma, Phillion and Malewski's (2011) analysis of the impact of a summer education experience in Honduras explores a short-term program that contributed to participants' cultural competence. These researchers explicitly examined the practice of critical reflection in PSTs' development of multicultural competencies. They found that structured reflection allowed participants to examine their personal experience and beliefs and connect broader social and political context and their experiences in Honduras' classrooms. Both studies are examples from the research that emphasize the importance of not only a structured immersion experience, but also guided reflection that addresses self development and understanding of cultural differences.

While a number of studies describe positive outcomes of teaching abroad, recent research raises some methodological questions. Much research in this area relies on student self reports, and as such, lacks generalizability and external evaluation criteria (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). Bishop (2013) also questioned whether PSTs' perceptions of change are based on what they were told to expect rather than what they actually experienced. Additionally, researchers have found that some approaches to interviewing can lead participants to stereotypical perspectives (Tusting, Crawshaw & Calle, 2002). Study abroad research that has utilized quantitative evaluative tools generally demonstrated little change in intercultural competence (see Paige & Vande Berg, 2012 for a review). Experts in research on intercultural competence recommend the use of multiple qualitative assessment methods employed over time to capture the complex construct in specific situations (Deardorff, 2006).

Finally, less is known about the long-term impact of teaching abroad on cultural competence when students return to American classrooms (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008). Rexeisen et al. (2008) reported positive short-term outcomes on the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), but note an absence of continued gains in intercultural competence one-year post-experiences, suggesting that study abroad might not have produced a long-term impact on intercultural skills. DeVillar and Jiang (2012) found that inservice teachers who had student taught abroad developed important instructional practices and enhanced their professional flexibility. However, they also concluded that concepts learned both in a preparation program and in teaching abroad did not always transfer well in a different cultural context.

In sum, previous research on teacher education and study abroad provides important information about program features that impact candidates' intercultural development. However, questions remain about the persistence of outcomes on teaching

given differences in methodology. The present study was designed to add to what is known about the impact of a mid-program teaching abroad experience by longitudinally examining PSTs' intercultural development while abroad and for three following semesters. The teaching abroad program included regular cross-cultural immersion in the teaching practicum, cultural mediation with both Italian and American educators, and on-going guided reflection (Engle & Engle, 2003; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). The longitudinal collection and analysis of different qualitative data allowed us to consider both the immediate impact of the abroad context and the impact of American classroom contexts when participants returned to the United States for their senior student teaching year.

## 1.2. Theoretical framework

Our study employs developmental models of intercultural competence (Bennett, 2004; Byram, 2009; Deardorff, 2012; Hammer, 2012) as frameworks to interpret outcomes. In this paper we use Deardorff's (2006) definition of intercultural competence: "the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions" (p. 248–249), but specifically consider the development in the context of teaching.

Deardorff (2012) describes the development of intercultural competence as a continual learning process in which individuals must choose to "try on other cultures" and "situate their identity in a broader context" (p. 8). This requires not only knowledge of other cultures but also a reflective awareness of one's personal cultural identity. With this cultural knowledge, along with communication skills and attitudes of respect, openness and curiosity, individuals can advance toward internal and external intercultural outcomes. Internal outcomes include flexibility, adaptability, ethno-relative perspective and empathy, while external outcomes reflect appropriate and effective behavior and communication in an intercultural setting (p. 24). In the context of teaching, internal outcomes include the ability to adapt to cultural variations in learning and teaching, empathy for all learners, and an understanding of diverse perspectives, while external outcomes address the use of culturally-relevant teaching practices and communication approaches to meet the needs of diverse students and their families.

Similarly to Deardorff, Byram's (1997, 2009) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence reflects the development of open-mindedness, cultural knowledge, and critical thinking skills as contributions to intercultural competence. However, Byram (1997) also identifies linguistic competence as a key factor in the on-going learning process. He describes intercultural development as building relationships with others who hold a differing worldview; in communicating with others, individuals develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for intercultural competence (1997). Culture is mediated through language and that "without a linguistic experience of difference, a cultural experience of difference can not reach the same depths" (Crozet, Liddicoat, & Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 4).

While Deardorff (2012) and Byram (1997, 2009) focus on attitudes, knowledge and skills, stage models of intercultural development by Bennett (2004) and Hammer (2012) describe intercultural competence as a shift from an ethnocentric to an ethno-relative worldview, with a state of minimization in the middle. Individuals with ethnocentric views respond definitively from their own cultural perspective; they ascribe negativity to others or take a polarized position of "us" versus "them" (Hammer, 2012). In the transition stage of minimization, individuals highlight similarities or universal values and fail to acknowledge differences. Those

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4941577>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4941577>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)