Chapter 5

Consortium Models: Enhancing Faculty Led Study Abroad Programs for Pre- and In-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the chapter is to explore the type of study abroad programming available to pre- and in-service teachers through the lens of a participant. The authors’ experiences with the various programming options provide a unique perspective on the options available to both participants and their educational and professional institutions. The data indicates that international education experiences are of particular value to those in the teaching profession, and the authors’ experiences point to the consortium model of international education as a uniquely promising model for providing transformational educational experiences to pre- and in-service teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the documented benefits of study abroad experiences, many pre- and in-service teachers do not engage in these learning and professional development opportunities that could be beneficial to them as educators. The consortium model of international education described in this chapter is one way that institutions of higher education can begin to encourage pre- and in-service teachers to participate in study abroad programming. In this chapter, the consortium model will be introduced and explained, as well as compared to other popular models of international education.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1057-4.ch005
BACKGROUND

The benefits of study abroad have been well documented. Whether looking at a survey conducted by the Institute of International Education of Students (IES), or reading an *Open Doors* report, both the personal and professional benefits of study abroad experiences are apparent. Study abroad participants such as Carolyn Valtos often say things such as “Overall, I learned more about myself in that one semester than I did in the three and half years in my home school because of the unique space in which I learned, experiences, and spent exploring another culture,” (IES Adelaide, 1992). Students in the United States often have a limited view of the world in which they live; specifically, 10-20% of the authors’ population who study abroad report that their study abroad experience will be their first time on an airplane or the first time they will be leaving the 150-mile radius of their hometown. The experiences that these students gain by studying abroad will help them expand their worldviews, learn about different cultures, and begin to learn how their home countries fit into the global picture. As Schattle notes in *The practices of global citizenship* (2008), awareness, responsibility, participation, cross cultural empathy, personal achievement, and international mobility are important components of global citizenship. Study abroad opportunities should be designed to facilitate most, if not all, of those components.

In addition to all of the personal transformative processes, study abroad can also provide a marketable set of skills to a future graduate. As the barriers to entry in the global marketplace continue to be minimized due to advancements in technology, more and more employers are becoming aware of the value of an employee who has challenged him or herself to gain knowledge and experience in an international learning environment. Often times, experiences abroad can provide such transformational learning opportunities, making graduates more successful in the recruitment and interview stages of seeking employment. According to the 2012 IES Abroad Recent Graduate Study, 97% of the 1,008 respondents who had studied abroad reported that they had secured a job within one year after graduation and reported on average that they had earned approximately $7,000 more in starting salaries when compared to recent graduates in the general population. For comparison, only 49% of graduates of a May 2012 Rutgers University survey of the general college graduate population reported finding work within one year of graduation. Furthermore, 90% of students in the IES survey reported getting into their first or second choice of graduate or professional school, and 84% of the study abroad alumni felt that studying abroad helped them build valuable job skills.

Additionally, study abroad has always been designed as a method to help future leaders be more effective in understanding other cultures, develop cross-cultural skills, be more aware of global economic systems, and seek creative solutions to problems that may be different from what is the norm in their home country. The resulting multicultural competency is particularly valuable in the field of education.

Unfortunately, the demographics of teaching professionals in the United States have not diversified in appropriate correlation to match the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of students in most schools (Come back Mr. Chips, 2007; Gay, 1993; Hodgkinson, 2002; Zimpher, 1989). Demographics of public schools, in which minority students now make up the majority of the student body (Maxwell, 2014; Sleeter, Neal, & Kumashiro, 2014) while the teaching force continues to be mostly white (Subedi, 2006), indicate that many pre-service teachers will need significant training if they are to be prepared for the challenging task of interrogating dominant assumptions and creating space for voices of difference (Butin, 2007a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Marshall, 2006). Before teachers can lead their classes in transformational learning, described as that which occurs when a new awareness changes the way we perceive ourselves, others, and the world around us (Cole, 2011), teachers must first experience it themselves.