Chapter 6
Study Abroad Australia:
Practice and Research

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ABSTRACT
Research findings suggest that teaching experiences abroad have a significant impact on participant outcomes and perceptions; however, findings have also indicated that short-term experiences in particular, may not have the same impact as long-term study abroad experiences. This chapter highlights the facilitators and challenges of planning and developing a short-term, faculty-led experience abroad to Australia for preservice teachers. This three-week study abroad experience included immersive experiences and a commitment to critically examining issues surrounding diversity. The authors also describe a research study that was embedded in the study abroad program, known as Photovoice. Photovoice was employed as a means to document the preservice teachers’ experiences and perceptions related to diversity. Participant photos and descriptions represent student perceptions of how diversity is represented in Australian schools and society.

INTRODUCTION
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign maintains a rich engagement in international endeavors. Illinois has more than 500 active institutional partnerships representing more than 50 countries. In 2014 alone, more than 10,000 international students attended Illinois, from more than 110 countries. This international engagement includes strong numbers in study abroad for students across disciplines. Illinois students have the opportunity to study abroad in 200 programs ranging from one week to one academic year in duration, occurring in over 60 countries. In fact, Illinois is ranked ninth among all

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U.S. institutions for number of students studying abroad in 2013-14 by Open Doors. In 2013-2014, 2,422 University of Illinois students studied abroad. In addition to the wide selection of programs that are offered, Illinois awards a number of scholarships to encourage study abroad. In fact, 26 different scholarship opportunities were offered at the campus level in 2014, with more than 74 students awarded scholarships to study abroad. In total, $850,000 in financial support was awarded at the campus level for students studying abroad in 2014.

Despite the notable achievements in study abroad for the campus as a whole, the College of Education at the University of Illinois has lagged far behind in student participation in study abroad. Following national trends, the College of Education only averaged a 3-4% participation rate for study abroad, despite strong support for study abroad at both the campus and College level. This predicament is mirrored in teacher preparation programs nationwide. Due to a number of barriers, education students are among the least likely to study abroad of any major. This is particularly troubling given the positive impacts that researchers have attributed to study abroad for preservice teachers as well as the multiplier effect of the impact of study abroad in their future classrooms.

Within the College of Education at Illinois, increasing the opportunities for travel and study abroad is a core mission for students in teacher preparation programs. This chapter describes two areas of emphasis within the College regarding study abroad. First, the authors outline the Practice of providing study abroad opportunities for College of Education students at Illinois by describing the planning and development from pre-departure to post-study abroad. Second, they describe the Research that was conducted with preservice teachers during a study abroad program in Australia. Finally, they highlight implications for future research and for the potential for research to impact practice for study abroad programs in a college of education.

**STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS**

In this age of globalization, teachers must strive to instill global citizenship and global mindedness into classrooms comprised of an ever more diverse student body. To do so, teachers need both global and multicultural competencies, which are sometimes overlapping, yet distinct skill sets (Gay, 2010). Teacher education programs have attempted to prepare their preservice teachers for the modern globalized classroom by incorporating an increased focus on the impact of globalization, international education systems, and other global educational topics. In addition, teacher preparation programs are increasingly developing study abroad and student teaching abroad programs that aim to provide both global competencies and improve practicing teachers’ ability to teach diverse students (Dunn, et al., 2014; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Sleeter, 2001).

Though research findings indicate that teaching experiences abroad have a significant impact on participant outcomes (Hansen & Smith, 2002; Merryfield, 2000; Devillar & Jiang, 2012), another body of research suggests that short-term experiences may not have the same impact of programs that require a semester or a year abroad. That is, in some cases, programs that are less than eight weeks show little or no effect on participants’ global competency or other measures of impact (Page, et al, 2009; Kehl & Morris, 2008).

The aforementioned studies illuminate a number of challenges for teacher educators. Amidst the calls for global and multicultural competency are similarly urgent demands for increased accountability, higher skill levels, and multiple evaluation measures, all culminating in tightly scheduled teacher preparation