Chapter 13
Developing a Multicultural Cross-Curricular Study Abroad Experience

Mary-Kate Sableski
University of Dayton, USA

Jackie M. Arnold
University of Dayton, USA

John White
University of Dayton, USA

ABSTRACT

Study abroad experiences can and should be inherently two-fold. Before, during, and after the study abroad commitment, students experience and live both their curricular content as well as their culturally diverse experiences. In the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton, our mission is to engage students in experiences that will support their ability to be reflective practitioners in a diverse society. This chapter will describe the development of a study abroad program designed to assist preservice teachers in developing and utilizing these skills and dispositions in a global setting. The study abroad experience required courses from both teacher education and general education content. An overarching goal of our program was to facilitate students’ ability to utilize a multicultural lens both in their study abroad experience and throughout their lives. This chapter will describe how three professors integrated cross-curricular projects grounded in children’s and young adult literature, historical literacy, and understanding diverse populations.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1057-4.ch013
INTRODUCTION

Study abroad experiences are inherently two-fold: Before, during, and after their involvement, students immerse themselves in both the curricular content and in a diverse culture. The mission of the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton is to engage students in experiences that will support their ability to be reflective practitioners in a diverse society. This chapter describes a study abroad program for pre-service teachers, designed to foster the skills and dispositions necessary to utilize a multicultural lens both in the program and throughout the students’ lives. The study abroad experience detailed in this chapter required courses in both teacher education and general education content. Three professors integrated cross-curricular projects grounded in children’s and young adult literature, historical literacy, and understanding diverse populations to develop this multicultural lens in young teachers.

While this particular program took place in the United States and Ireland, this chapter will articulate ways in which such a model can be applied to any study abroad experience throughout the world. This particular program included six weeks of study in Ireland, with additional learning experiences before, during, and after the trip. Faculty supported student understanding and appreciation of a diverse, complex society, with a goal of building and broadening students’ views of the world.

The University of Dayton is a four year private college located in southwest Ohio. The University enrolls an average of 8,500 students per year with approximately 12% of those students being in the School of Education and Health Sciences. The University of Dayton strives to be a diverse campus, but currently hosts a 9% racial/minority student population. The Department of Teacher Education enrolls approximately 500 students; 90% of this group are female and 5% identifying as diverse.

The Department of Teacher Education offers licensure degrees in Early-Childhood Education (PK-3), Middle Childhood Education (grades 4–9), Adolescent and Young Adult (grades 7–12) and Intervention Specialist (K-12). The program also includes options to specialize in STEM, TESOL, Dyslexia, and the Urban Teaching Academy. Though only 5% of students identify as diverse, over 30% of teacher candidates student teach in urban settings, and approximately 80% are employed in an urban district. These statistics are indicative of a disparity between the number of students who engage and work in urban, diverse contexts, though they come from a very traditional non-diverse context. In the Department of Teacher Education, faculty continually try to build experiences that help students become “mindful of the cultural gap” (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 35).

One of the ways in which faculty try to address such cultural gaps is to engage students in a study abroad experience. Currently, an average of seventy-five students in the School of Education and Health Sciences participate each year in a study abroad experience. Across the University of Dayton, an average of 4% of students engage in a study-abroad experience at some point in their undergraduate program. In response to a growing demand and a clear need to expand beyond the “home” experience, the University of Dayton now provides a study abroad scholarship for each student to utilize during their college experience. Through this innovative initiative, the University of Dayton seeks to support students in moving outside of their cultural context and step into an environment and culture in which they are not familiar to grow beyond their traditional experiences.

This chapter details a six-week study abroad experience that took place across Ireland. The three authors of this chapter traveled through Ireland with fourteen students, all female teacher-education students of sophomore or junior status. No students identified as culturally diverse. Two students identified as in need of learning accommodations. The fourteen teacher education students represented four licensure...