

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.015.088](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.015.088)

COLLEEN KAWALILAK

University of Calgary, Canada

LISA FEDORUK

University of Calgary, Canada

SUPPORTING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND GLOBAL-MINDEDNESS IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

Abstract:

By stepping beyond the “comfortable and familiar,” pre-service teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program at a university in Western Canada travel to an international host country destination to engage with diverse cultures, traditions, and practices and to volunteer teach. This “Teaching Across Borders” program option provides interested students the opportunity to deeply engage with and experience a culture vastly different from their own, in support of a deepened cross-cultural understanding and an enhanced global-mindedness, while earning a professional teacher designation credential. In support of providing a pedagogically informed and robust cross-cultural experience, a literature review and synthesis of current, scholarly debates was taken up, focusing on the impact and influence of travel abroad initiatives when international travel study constitutes a component of coursework for adult learners enrolled in university education programs. Asserting that international travel and study abroad programs have the potential to advance cross-cultural competencies and cultural sensitivities of learners, Hammer and Bennett (2002) referred to the beneficial effects on knowledge, skills, and attitudes when participating students engage with cultures of difference in support of exploring and critically reflecting on tightly held notions, beliefs, and assumptions that inform their philosophy and future practice as developing professionals. Adding to the discourse, Button, Green, Tengnah, Johansson, and Baker (2005) contended that “differences in placement programmes, such as duration, preparation and debriefing were found to have affected the reported overall international placement experience” (p. 315) of participants. Kehl and Morris (2007-2008) further elaborated and argued that the level of global-mindedness achieved and experienced may be directly related to and impacted by the duration of study abroad initiatives. From another perspective, cross-cultural border crossing initiatives, however well intentioned, run the risk of becoming a “cultural invasion” and, therefore, educators, program administrators, and participating students must consider ethical questions around the reciprocity of the relationship (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). Reciprocity refers to a give and take, an inhale and exhale of sorts, to being open and present, to offering up, and to receiving what is being given to and to what is being offered by others. Questions that informed this critical exploration of the literature included: What constitutes a meaningful cross-cultural experience for learners enrolled in university programs? What factors, program elements, and experiences deepen and expand learners’ cultural sensitivity and global-mindedness?

Keywords:

Study abroad, intercultural sensitivity, cultural competence, global-mindedness, pre-service teacher education, internationalization of curricula.

JEL Classification: I29