

Study Abroad in Teacher Education

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Teachers who understand how culture shapes beliefs can apply this knowledge to foster learning about the world and appreciation for the richness of the diversity in their classrooms (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). One of the most powerful ways in which teachers and teacher educators can develop this cultural awareness is to engage in an international study abroad experience. Study abroad for teachers provides the distance often needed to better see their home contexts with more objectivity (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Kissock & Richardson, 2010) and can also fuel a desire to serve students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Pilonieta, Medina & Hathaway, 2017). However, there have been relatively few scholarly explorations on study abroad for teachers, as the bulk of study abroad literature focuses on undergraduate student experiences rather than study abroad in professional programs. This special issue of the *Global Education Review* is an important contribution to both the field of teacher education and of study abroad, as the articles selected provide a grounding in key ethical, conceptual, and design considerations. The four studies chosen for this special issue provide breadth and currency for readers interested in designing, implementing, or researching study abroad for teachers.

This issue also aims to critically explore the tensions of international placements in terms of program type—positioned as service learning, educational tourism, or practicum—and whether host communities benefit. Major and Santoro

(2016) assert that the power differentials and the complexities of post-colonialism must be thoughtfully and carefully addressed when teachers from “developed” nations are placed in “developing” nations. If these complexities are addressed and reflected upon, teacher candidates stand to move from compassion to a critical stance, greatly increasing pre-service teachers’ intercultural awareness, knowledge, sensitivity, and competence, as well as their ability to understand, respect, engage with, and ultimately teach diverse cultural groups.

One of the reasons that study abroad in the realm of teacher education is often overlooked—and also why it is challenging to survey—is that ongoing initiatives engaging pre- and in-service teachers are largely developed by individual faculty with personal passion for the work and building on their unique professional networks. Gray and co-researchers (2019) aptly point out that study abroad programming for teachers usually does not arise from careful institutional planning. Instead, they attribute its development to faculty who utilize personal capital and relationships to design and implement them, alongside other staff, administrators, and host educators, who they call architects, champions, and linchpins. “Architects [are] those who developed and launched the initial idea; champions, those who came alongside or joined forces to strengthen and build on first steps; and linchpins, those who do important and detailed work, often behind the scenes, to make programs work. These categories are not

mutually exclusive, and some individuals fill more than one of these roles” (p. 461).

In the pursuit of celebrating these players and sharing the work for others interested in venturing into international experiences, this special issue on study abroad in teacher education presents impact studies of study abroad on pre- and in-service teachers’ beliefs, skills, knowledge, and practices before, during, and immediately after their participation, as well as an examination of conceptual frames for the design and implementation of teacher study abroad.

To begin, Morley, Braun, Rohrer, and Lamb provide a comprehensive and critical systematic review of the literature on study abroad in pre-service teacher education. Through the lens of post-colonial theory, this opening piece uses geovisualization tools and techniques to examine the sending and receiving countries of teacher study abroad participants in the reviewed literature. It lays the groundwork for understanding and assessing teacher study abroad in terms of trends that bring teachers from the Global North to other sites in the Global North and South, with little travel flowing in the opposite direction. The implications of these patterns are explored, with abundant evidence to suggest that teacher study abroad must make efforts to include the impact on host communities and incorporate the voices and experiences of host participants. It also cautions consumers of this literature to be aware that it is almost always the teacher educator participant who is doing the design, analysis, and writing up of these programs.

Against the backdrop of this wide survey of teacher study abroad literature, Canadian scholars Ingersoll, Sears, Hirschhorn, Chami, and Landine provide a multiple, country-wide examination of Canadian study abroad in teacher education. Reminding readers of the many affective benefits—from self-confidence to

empathy—and using the frames of neoliberal versus affective outcomes, the authors further advance our understanding of why teacher study abroad is promoted and point to ways in which institutions of teacher education could better collaborate and communicate to set a national agenda for teacher learning through study abroad that includes more support for students and faculty. The authors also reveal the multiple goals, benefits, and approaches various teacher educators have employed to conceptualize their programs and suggest that rather than preparing teachers for careers abroad, teacher study abroad experiences are ultimately best conceived as supporting teachers who work in schools becoming increasingly international. Their distinction between cultural awareness and critical awareness are important lenses to evaluate the impact of teacher study abroad.

From the broad Canadian picture, we then zoom into a consortium program described within one large U.S. university system that has been working in teacher study abroad for more than 40 years. Brennan and Holliday share the historical beginnings of their teacher study abroad programs and how these have been bolstered by intensive pre-trip course experiences discussing cultural identity and culturally responsive pedagogy as well as post-trip reflective coursework. They align their work with national teacher preparation standards that make designing such initiatives clearly associated with broader objectives in educator preparation programs. They also offer ways to infuse global awareness throughout a teacher education program even without study abroad.

Rounding out our special issue, Heimer and colleagues provide a compelling example of teacher study abroad, which actually takes place in participants’ home country. This unique study abroad program places early childhood pre-service teachers in the Anishinaabe indigenous nation for classroom observation,

language learning, and coursework. This article makes a neat circle back to this issue's opening study, as it illuminates the possibilities inherent in teacher study abroad that challenges notions of Global North, what it means to "travel" across cultural boundaries, and how researchers, teachers, and local host educators can engage in programmatic experiences and research that are mutually beneficial.

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About the Author

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