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Study Abroad for Prospective Teachers

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Abstract

Teacher education students often lack the cultural education and international exposure to effectively teach when they graduate and have classrooms of their own. Although cultural awareness and adaptability to diversity is an important skill, research shows that prospective teachers do not have and do not receive the international education that is necessary for them to teach effectively. Study abroad is an excellent way for prospective teachers to gain international experience and knowledge for their profession as educators. Study abroad can have a significant impact on prospective educators as well as prospective citizens. As the United States becomes more diverse, it is important that educators are able to relate and identify with their diverse students. Unfortunately, teacher education students do not have ample opportunity to study abroad. Teacher education students that do study abroad, however, benefit tremendously in that they are impacted both personally and professionally. Although many teacher education students do not get the chance to study abroad, it is an extremely effective means to gain cultural awareness and thus become better educators to their diverse students.

Cultural Competence

- It is important for teachers to be internationally knowledgeable to cater to needs of diverse students.
- In the United States, a large gap exists between teachers and students.
- College students in U.S. lack international knowledge on most basic level.



Key Points

- “While most teachers may be competent in the subject matter that they have studied, they often lack the necessary prior knowledge, attitude, and skills essential to teach toward a global and intercultural perspective” (Cushner, 2009).
- “A study of nearly 50 colleges...found that the average teacher education student took fewer than 1.5 internationally focused courses compared with 2.4 courses taken by all majors” (Cushner, 2009).
- Coryell (2011) says that recent research reveals that as well as improving students’ global perceptions and outlooks, it also increases personal development in areas such as self-reliance and self-confidence.
- Cushner states that “this ability to place oneself in another’s shoes and to shift perspectives is critical to developing effective cross-cultural understanding and maintaining good communication” (2009).

Restrictions on Teachers to SA

- Institutional requirements
- Obligation for student teaching to be done locally
- Overcrowded teacher education curriculum
- Financial challenges
- Multicultural indifference/apathy

