

Impact of a Study Abroad Course on Cultural Sensitivity

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ABSTRACT

Our study investigates the cultural sensitivity of master's students enrolled in a short-term faculty-led study abroad. Participants ($n = 7$) include graduate students enrolled in library sciences and reading education master's programs. Pre- and post-course measures of cultural sensitivity, students' reflection on their own cultural heritage, and experiences interacting with another culture while abroad will be assessed. The central theory of this study is that as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases (Bennett, 1986, 1993). This competence is vital in school-based professionals given the multiculturalism present in today's schools. We will examine students' intercultural sensitivity using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which posits that individuals move through six orientations around cultural difference (Bennett, 1986). The first three (denial, defense reversal, and minimization) can be considered ethnocentric whereas the final three (acceptance, adaptation, integration) can be considered ethno-relativistic. As teachers interact with people from other cultures, they will be better prepared to interact with children, families, and colleagues from other cultures. Mixed methods will be used to analyze data. Participants' personal cultural narrative and international journals will be analyzed using thematic coding, while t-tests and descriptive analysis will be performed on quantitative measures. Anticipated outcomes include greater intercultural sensitivity. Results will be disaggregated across educational experience.

REFERENCES

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