

SHERIE WILLIAMS

Grand Valley State University, United States

BLENDING STATESIDE AND OVERSEAS PRESERVICE TEACHING EXPERIENCES: CREATING A SEAMLESS TRANSITION**Abstract:**

According to the Buddhist philosopher Daisaku Ikeda (2005), "The key to the formation of global citizens is the educator, bearing out the concept that the teacher is the most important element in the educational environment" (p. xi). With this in mind, it is of paramount importance that the educators in today's world be trained to be culturally competent. As noted by numerous researchers, immersing preservice teachers in an international teaching experience is key to developing their personal cultural awareness and competence (Blair, 2002; Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Doppen, Jing, & Diki, 2016; Malewski, Sharma, & Phillion, 2012; Quezada, 2005). Culturally competent teachers will, in turn, educate the students in their charge to recognize the importance of being culturally aware.

In addition, the demographic makeup of students is changing in the world of education. Students who are culturally diverse respond more positively to teachers who are able to connect to their background and prior experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006; MacPherson, 2010). Culturally diverse students and parents also have been found to have more trust in teachers who are culturally sensitive and competent (Irizarry & Williams, 2013).

One program that offers the opportunity for students to teach abroad during their preservice experience is a 15-university consortium in the United States called COST (Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching). This organization offers a distance and blended approach to the preparation of teachers by providing field experiences in both a stateside and an overseas placement. The intent is to provide a seamless transition between the two experiences, prompting the teachers-to-be to find a comfort zone in both placements. This, in turn, produces culturally aware and competent teachers to inform the next generation of learners.

In order to systematically reflect on the newly acquired Directorship of the COST program, a self-study will be undertaken to examine performance and create a plan for the future of the organization and the duties of the director. Korthagen's (2001) ALACT Model of self-reflection will be utilized. This study will also assist those considering creating a consortium for pre-service teaching experiences.

Keywords:

Keywords: cultural awareness, cultural competence, diversity, student teaching, teaching abroad

JEL Classification: I21, I29