

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT: Understanding the Perceptions of US Students Participating in an International Student Teaching Experience

STUDENT: Opal Leeman Bartzis

DEGREE: Doctor of Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July 2016

PAGES: 127

While the American K-12 teaching force remains a largely homogenous group of White, middle class, females, the American K-12 classroom becomes more culturally diverse daily. It is necessary for American colleges of teacher education and the students they educate to understand the value of culturally sensitive teaching and the ways in which the experience of student teaching abroad can foster its development. In this study, which was guided by interpretivism and the methodology of transcendental phenomenology, the phenomenon of student teaching abroad was qualitatively examined. Participants who completed student teaching abroad programs were interviewed to discover how they described their experiences and how they were impacted by them. Attention was specifically paid to any effects the participants perceived on the development of culturally sensitive teaching practices that may have been fostered through student teaching abroad. The overarching themes from the participants' characterizations of their experiences were the realization of study abroad dreams, confidence despite limited preparation, cultural awareness and the development of cultural empathy, and teaching challenges and opportunities; collectively, these themes constitute the essence of student teaching abroad as experienced by the participants. These conclusions, as well as implications for practice, are suggested. More student teaching abroad programs are needed, and

the perceived barrier to students' participation in them must be removed. Further study into best practices in program development and comparative study focused on cross-cultural American student teaching programs and international student teaching programs is recommended.