

Short-term international internship experiences for future teachers and other child development professionals

Kari Knutson Miller and Amber M. Gonzalez

California State University, USA

This paper examines outcomes associated with participation in short-term, international internship experiences. Results suggest short-term international internship experiences contribute to rich personal and professional development outcomes. Findings highlight participant challenges associated with initial internship experiences, professional growth in teaching skills and strategies, and personal growth in confidence, flexibility, and coping skills. Multicultural competencies and program-level learning goals were also supported through the international internship experience.

Introduction

Constructivist theories advocate for meaningful, active learning experiences in authentic contexts. International internships, one form of experiential learning, offer unique opportunities for enhancing personal and professional development (Annette, 2003; Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Grusky, 2000; Knutson Miller & Gonzalez, 2011, 2010, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Plater, 2011; Roberts, 2003; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). Direct service experiences with children, families, and communities in international settings provide opportunities for participants to develop foundational multicultural competencies and enhanced global perspectives (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Brown, 2011; Plater, 2011). Development of these competencies and perspectives is of increased interest within professional preparation programs (Plater, 2011) as they are seen as essential to effective professional functioning in diverse cultural contexts in the United States and abroad. Empirical studies report outcomes including increased flexibility, expanded notions of community, greater appreciation of cultural diversity, increased awareness of global issues, and development of general cultural competencies in association with international learning experiences (Alfaro, 2008; Annette, 2003; Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Cushner, 2007; Hartman & Rola, 2000; Kiely, 2004; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Roberts, 2007, 2003; Thompson, 2002; Van Hoff & Verbeeten, 2005). Further, these experiences are potentially transformative in nature (Grusky, 2000; Kiely, 2005, 2004; Roberts, 2003).

In 2012-2013, 60% of the study abroad experiences of U.S. college students were characterised as relatively short-term in nature (Open Doors, 2015). A growing number of students participate in short-term international experiences (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010; Hulstrand, 2006; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005) that typically occur in summer sessions and/or are eight weeks or less in duration. Donnelly-Smith (2009) and Hulstrand (2006) suggested these short-term experiences provide international study opportunities for students who might not otherwise consider or participate in them. Authors across reports referenced here have recommended that short-term study abroad-type experiences be clearly aligned with course learning goals, provide opportunities for significant participant

interaction with local communities, and encourage ongoing participant reflection (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Hulstrand, 2006; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Sachau, Brasher & Fee; 2010). The present investigation examines the impact of a short-term international internship experience with these features on the personal and professional development of undergraduate-level students planning to work with children, adolescents, and families in various professional contexts including educational and social service settings.

Kiely (2005) and Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) examined participant outcomes in short-term study abroad programs that included direct interaction with local community members in settings connected to designated course learning goals. Kiely (2005) noted perspective transformation, or ways of thinking about and acting within the world, in association with undergraduate student participation in a January/winter session international service-learning program that included coordination with local communities to organise and implement health clinics. Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) reported short-term study abroad experiences changed student perceptions of globalisation and increased interest in subsequent study abroad experiences, in a study of outcomes associated with a two-week, community-based service experience in Costa Rica.

These findings are further supported by those reported by Willard-Holt (2000), Pence and Macgillivray (2008), and Brindley, Quinn, and Morton (2009) in qualitative studies of preservice teacher outcomes in short-term study abroad contexts. Willard-Holt (2000) described significant personal and professional development outcomes for preservice teachers participating in a week-long international teaching experience in Mexico. Gains across pre-post measures revealed enhanced understanding of global connectedness and cultural diversity. Pence and Macgillivray (2008) reported increased preservice teacher confidence, cultural appreciation, and cultural respect in examination of outcomes associated with a four-week international practicum in Rome, Italy. Brindley, Quinn, and Morton found greater preservice teacher understanding of cultural context in children's educational experiences in association with a four-week study-abroad internship in England. Enhanced understanding and awareness of cultural context was reported across these studies of short-term study abroad outcomes where participants had opportunities to interact with children and teaching professionals in local classrooms and communities, and engage in ongoing reflection related to their experiences.

The present investigation builds on findings previously reported by Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2009, 2010). In these studies, the value-added nature of internships, specifically those including service-learning components, in domestic and international settings was examined. In both an initial program evaluation study and a subsequent study of program outcomes, participants across internship contexts reported their experience positively impacted academic achievement, provided opportunities for career goal clarification, and contributed toward their understandings of challenges and resources within their respective placement sites/communities. The short-term international internship facilitated enhanced outcomes in relation to development of professional skills and strategies as well as personal development. For example, international participants reported higher skill development gains and greater relevancy of the experience to their professional goals, higher gains in awareness of global needs, and greater enjoyment in

working with linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse individuals than domestic internship participants.

The current investigation also extends inquiry into short-term international internship outcomes reported by Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2011). In this study, Knutson Miller and Gonzalez examined participant outcomes associated with a two-week, service-oriented internship in a Chinese summer camp setting. They reported initially challenging participant experiences associated with adaptation to a new cultural context. Features of Chinese classrooms including student response style, class size, classroom resources, and diversity in English proficiency were discussed in participant reflections. Participant ability to adjust to the challenges present in the international, less than familiar, environment appeared significant in achievement of program outcomes. Primary outcomes of the short-term international internship experience included career clarification and skill development. Participants reported professional growth in career goal confidence, instructional planning, and implementation of teaching strategies. Participants also noted greater knowledge of community and community resources, appreciation of cultural diversity, and concern about global issues as a result of their experiences. Furthermore, growth in general cultural competencies including the use of multimodal communication and assessment strategies was also demonstrated in reflections on participant experiences. At the conclusion of their international experiences, participants reported positive impact on their understandings of and abilities to apply course content, development of professional skills and strategies, cultural competencies, confidence, and coping skills.

The purpose of the present investigation is to further examine outcomes associated with short-term, service-oriented international internships through two subsequent studies. Multiple data sources were considered in study one in order to triangulate reflection-based participant perception data with focus group transcripts and field notes based on systematic observations conducted by site-based personnel. In study two, reflection prompts were modified in response to a larger, department-level program assessment effort. Modification of reflection prompts made it possible to more clearly consider participant performance and program outcomes in the context of relevant department learning and professional development goals.

Internship context

The mission of the Department of Child and Adolescent Studies (CAS) is to prepare undergraduate students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective professionals working with diverse populations in school, service, and community settings. Required internship seminar themes include developmentally appropriate practice, ethical and legal principles, theory and research to practice, and professionalism in internship settings. Undergraduate majors are generally planning on professional roles with children, adolescents, and/or families in schools or community-based settings following graduation (and in many cases after additional post-baccalaureate or graduate training). The term “internship” is that most commonly used to describe department practicum requirements at the time of the study and at present.

The CAS Department initiated opportunities for undergraduate-level students to complete major internship requirements through short-term international experiences in 2005. Institutional relationships led to locating these experiences in China. Specific service-oriented, site-based activities were negotiated between site and department-based personnel through articulation of site and community needs and alignment of those needs with course learning objectives and participant professional development levels. Site-based professionals and parents within the local Chinese community were particularly interested in opportunities for Chinese children to interact with English-speaking university students through songs, games, and other enrichment activities designed to enhance children's conversational English skills and knowledge of American culture. Facilitation of such activities was generally appropriate to course learning goals and participant professional development levels.

Study one

Method

Participants included 20 undergraduate-level students (1 male, 19 females; 4 Asian American/Pacific Islander, 8 Caucasian, 8 Latina/o/Hispanic) enrolled in a 3-unit upper division course at a California State University campus. The participants ranged from 21-29 with most being 21-24 years of age. Completion of this 3-unit course was required for graduation. Participants self-selected the international option for completion of major internship requirements. Preparation for the short-term international internship included participation in a five-week summer seminar course. Participants prepared a series of theme-based activities to co-facilitate (each instructional "team" included two participants) in a summer English camp environment before departure. The international internship was situated over a two-week period with approximately eight hours of scheduled activity per day. A bilingual Mandarin/English teaching assistant (senior-level, Chinese high school student or beginning-level, Chinese university student) was present in each summer camp classroom. Interns planned activities for groups of children ranging in age from 3-13; English fluency of children participating in the summer camp ranged within and across age/grade levels.

Qualitative measures were used to assess participant outcomes. All participants submitted individual short papers before departure for the international internship. In these papers, participants discussed aspects and potential implications of the Chinese cultural context for their interactions with children at the internship site. Participants also submitted a series of structured reflections linking course content and internship experiences. Reflection prompts were distributed to participants via email just prior to departure. Participants submitted reflections every other day during their internship experiences and a final reflection at the conclusion of their internship.

Comparative content analysis was used to identify primary themes integrated in participant reflections. All data were examined by two coders, one of whom had no connection to the course or participants. Analysis included examination of data sources, identification of themes and categories, identification of codes to describe primary

themes, application of codes, and evaluation of coder agreement in code application. Codes were also reviewed by three undergraduate students who had participated in the short-term international internship experience and were reported as representative of their experiences. Emergent themes that reached at least 90% agreement in coder ratings are reported here. Quotes from participants' narrative responses are included as illustrative of identified themes.

In addition, field notes based on supervisor observations of participating interns were completed at the international internship site and submitted to the course instructor at the conclusion of the international internship experience. These field notes provided supervisor perspective of intern behaviours and outcomes in areas also addressed by participants in reflection prompts. Finally, on-site focus group interviews were completed to further consider participant perspectives. Participants met with their course instructor in groups of four during the second week of their internship experiences to discuss and clarify comments and reactions to their experiences in China. Comparative content analysis was also used in this context to identify primary themes. Again, coding was completed by two individuals. Reported findings include general patterns present in individual data sources and aspects of convergence across data sources.

Results

Short papers

International internship participants engaged in cross-cultural comparison of American and Chinese behaviours and values before departure to China. For example, participants noted cultural differences in the structure of schooling and examinations, etiquette and behavioural expectations, status of teachers, and strategies used by teachers and parents to facilitate academic achievement and success. They also discussed the potential implications of noted factors for their interactions with children at internship site. For example, one participant noted, "The children may be hesitant to speak out aloud to avoid embarrassment or maintain 'face'." Another suggested, "I will need to be thoughtful about eye contact and other non-verbal cues and behaviors."

Internship week 1

Participant reflections were submitted every other day during the first week of the internship experience. Several participants (50%) indicated nervousness as they approached their practicum experiences. One participant stated, "Walking to work on the first day I felt a little sick to my stomach. I didn't know what to expect." Another noted, "Before I arrived at the practicum site on the first day of school, I was very anxious, nervous, and scared." Many participants described their initial site-based experiences as both positive and challenging (60%). One intern indicated,

On the first day some of the kids were crying and didn't want to participate because they felt overwhelmed and nervous about the situation, but as soon as the activities and games started they joined right in. The second day the kids came in more excited and eager to see what the day's activities were going to include.

A second stated, "Day 1 was exactly what I expected, hectic and a complete culture shock. Yet, meeting all the students was encouraging because they were willing to work with us." Forty percent described their initial experiences as primarily positive. For example, participants wrote, "I love the experience I am having. I am enjoying every moment and constantly reminding myself that this experience is going to make me a better teacher" and "I can't believe that we are in China and have been teaching for two days already. It has been so much fun and all the kids like our lessons."

The significance of supervision and support was discussed by all participants in reflections on their internship experiences (100%). Many participants specifically discussed supervisor support of instructional activities (70%). For example, one participant stated, "She (internship supervisor) had extra lessons ready to go and provided the instructions and materials needed for us to succeed in the classroom." A significant number of participants emphasised perceived approachability/ availability/ caring of their primary internship supervisor (85%). One participant indicated, "I know that I can turn to her for anything and she is always willing to help. She works very hard and inspires me. She is always willing to teach me and listen to any ideas I have." A second expressed, "I most appreciate her caring personality. She is constantly asking how each group is doing and how she can help."

In reflections summarising their initial on-site experiences, participants said that if they were to do anything differently they would plan, pre-departure, in a more systematic way to prevent activity overlap between instructional teams and "over-plan" identified lessons. Issues related to lesson overlap between instructional teams were mentioned by some participants (35%). For example, one participant stated, "I would like to know what other groups were doing in advance, that way we would not have to change our lesson plans because other groups had done or planned to do similar activities." Others noted challenges related to discrepancy between anticipated and available supplies at the internship site (30%). One participant explained, "At first, it was hard to get materials because we only had a limited supply and it seemed like everyone needed the same materials."

At the conclusion of their first week engaged in international internship activities, participants wrote that they greatly enjoyed teaching and interacting with Chinese children in the internship setting (95%). For example, participants commented, "The thing I enjoy most about this experience is asking the students questions and learning about their lives and families"; "I just love seeing how the kids take the instructions and create something totally different and even better than what I expected", and "being able to share in their excitement makes teaching enjoyable and makes all of our hard work worthwhile." Participants also noted that, in general, positive interactions with colleagues including their supervisor, instructor, intern peers, and teaching partners were important components of their site-based experiences (40%). One participant stated, "I really like how accommodating all the supervisors and peers are in trying to get us the things that we need and helping us when necessary." Another commented, "The people I work with, they are so supportive and fun. We give each other help and advice."

Participant reflections on Week 1 internship experiences were complemented by the internship supervisor's on-site observations. Supervisor field notes indicated that participants approached their first days with excitement, energy, nerves, and apprehension. She commented that planned intern activities required modification based on wide variation in age ranges of Chinese participants and initial overlap between instructional intern teams. The internship supervisor noted challenges with intern identification of alternative activities, classroom management, and team-specific co-teaching strategies in the early days of the experience. She also noted, however, that interns were quite willing to request assistance from both supervisors and peers to address these challenges.

Internship week 2

Participant reflections submitted during the second week of the internship highlighted the impact of the experience on specific personal and professional development outcomes. For example, participants discussed strategies used to facilitate communication and assess student understanding in the internship setting. All participants reported use of general verbal strategies to facilitate communication (100%). For example, one stated, "I communicate with the students at camp by speaking slowly, repeating words/sentences, asking them to repeat what I said, and asking them to describe what they thought I meant." Two participants (10%) specifically discussed the use of the students' native language. One commented, "I use Mandarin to clarify what a word or phrase means if the students are having trouble understanding." In addition, many participants discussed requests for assistance with verbal translation as needed (80%). For example, one participated stated, "Sometimes when I think that my students do not understand, I ask the teaching assistant to translate for me."

Many participants noted use of multi-modal strategies to facilitate communication with Chinese children (70%). That is, participants described the use of verbal, visual, and nonverbal/physical strategies. For example, one participant stated, "I brought lots of pictures to show during my lessons for the kids to see and get a better idea of what I am trying to say." Participants commented on the value of "showing examples", "using body language and gestures", and "acting things out" in their interactions with children in the summer camp environment. Participants also discussed the use of both verbal and non-verbal cues, including observation of facial expression, to assess student understanding. Use of verbal strategies was discussed by 75% of the participants. Representative comments included reference to "asking students if they understand." Most participants also considered the potential significance of non-verbal cues (60%). For example, one noted, "I continually read the children's facial expressions." Other participants commented that "off-task behavior" and observations of "frustration" were potential signs that children did not comprehend or were not engaged in planned activities. Finally, participants indicated they would ask children to complete tasks or activities and observe performance to assess student understanding of related lesson themes.

Subsequent reflections submitted during the second week of the international internship highlighted impact on career-related outcomes. For example, participants discussed their internship experiences in relationship to anticipated career goals and developing knowledge of instructional strategies (65%). One participant stated, "The most important

thing I've learned is that this is what I want to do professionally. I came into this experience wary and unsure of myself, but I am leaving with confidence." Another commented, "This experience has really opened my eyes to what teaching will be like. Also, this experience confirmed my love for teaching." Additionally, participants emphasised flexibility and coping skills in the internship setting (65%). For example, one participant stated, "I learned to be flexible and to have additional back-up lessons or materials in case the students are not interested in a particular activity." Another participant noted,

I learned that I have an ability to easily adapt to different teaching situations, I can be flexible when things do not go as planned in the classroom, and I have the ability to be culturally responsive towards children of different backgrounds.

On-site focus groups were facilitated during the second week to further consider participant perspectives as they reflected on their initial and ongoing internship experiences. Participants noted contrasts in children's behaviours, needs for lesson plan modification, and developing confidence over the course of the internship experience. More specifically, participants shared that in some cases, children were more settled as the experience progressed, while in others they grew more assertive in communication of their interest (or lack of interest) in planned activities. Participants indicated their growing understanding of the baseline knowledge, English language fluency, and interests of the Chinese children, leading to more proactive, less reactive, lesson plan modifications in the second week of their internship experience. They also expressed increased confidence in their abilities to effectively prepare for and facilitate activities in the internship setting as well as pride in their abilities to do so.

Participants discussed the impact of their experiences on career clarification, knowledge and skill development, in focus group interviews. They noted the internship provided opportunities to apply what they had learned in academic coursework. Participants anticipated that skill and knowledge development gained through the international internship would transfer to domestic settings. They also discussed the impact of their experiences on career choice (to teach or not to teach), based on their experiences in Chinese classrooms. The impact of the internship experience on the development of coping skills was also emphasised in focus group contexts. Participants noted the importance of preparation for and flexibility in the international internship context and indicated the experience greatly enhanced their cultural awareness. They noted a feeling of success in classroom and out-of-classroom environments in the international setting, and a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to participate in an international internship experience.

Finally, internship outcomes were explored through observations of the internship supervisor. Field notes indicated participants used verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate learning goals and assess student understanding. The internship supervisor specifically noted that participant use of non-verbal cues to facilitate communication and attention to student non-verbal cues in assessment of understanding increased, as classroom management skills increased. Primary intern outcomes identified by the

internship supervisor included growing comfort in classroom environments, increased lesson variety, and enhanced classroom management skills over the course of the experience. The supervisor indicated participants earned the trust and respect of Chinese children and staff through their commitment to facilitating quality experiences for Chinese children in the internship setting. The supervisor also indicated the energy and excitement of the interns was “contagious” and that their personal and professional adaptability was significant.

Summary

Participants provided advice for future international interns in final reflections. They emphasised the need for over-preparation of activities to be facilitated in the internship context (75%), and provided program improvement suggestions related to lesson plan overlap, preparation, scheduling, and provision of supplies (80%). Participants recommended that future interns “bring supplies essential to the lesson”, prepare “activity fillers”, and “spend significant time on planning prior to the experience”. They also advised program personnel to “make it clear what supplies can and will be provided” and coordinate advanced theme identification to reduce/eliminate “lesson plan overlap”. The internship supervisor also provided suggestions for preparation of future international cohort participants. In particular, she recommended that program personnel address classroom management strategies to a greater degree in future seminar and orientation sessions. She also noted the importance of thoughtful consideration of co-teaching strategies and encouraging co-teaching commitment among intern pairs.

Finally, in implications for future interns, participants noted the importance of attitude in preparation for and enjoyment of the international experience (45%). One participant commented, “Those who want to take a trip similar to this one should be open to change and new ways of thinking.” A second participated stated,

Anyone who has the possibility to travel abroad should do it. I think that it is extremely important to get out of your comfort zone once in a while and have new experiences. As a student, there is no greater benefit than traveling and getting to know new places and people.

Final participant reflections noted direct interactions with children in a teaching context (75%) and interactions with their supervisor, site-based staff and peers (50%) were highlights of the short-term international internship experience. They reported great enjoyment in the opportunity to “work directly with the students” and “experience teaching children from a different cultural background”. They also enjoyed “networking and sharing ideas with fellow classmates”, and “getting to know the others on the trip and the students they had the opportunity to teach”. The majority of participants indicated the international internship experience either exceeded their expectations (75%) or met their (high) expectations (20%). One participant commented, “The program exceeded my expectations; the entire program seemed well-organized and structured.” Another stated, “This experience has been so memorable. Completely unforgettable. I am so grateful for the program and the amazing people I was able to meet”. A third indicated, “My

expectations were met. I expected to come out of this program having a better understanding of teaching and a priceless and amazing experience”.

Many participants described the course and its associated international internship experience as unlike any they had previously experienced (45%). Participants commented that “this course really does not compare to any others I have taken”, and that the “experience was completely unique, one-of-a-kind”. The international internship was described as more challenging and hands-on than those previously experienced in domestic settings (45%). For example, one participant stated,

Out of all the courses or similar programs that I’ve taken part in, this one has been the most challenging and rewarding. It was challenging because of the culture difference and the language barrier. It was also a challenge to my comfort zone.

Another indicated “a lot more was expected of me” in the international internship, “I actively taught and engaged the children”.

Study two

Method

Participants included 21 undergraduate-level students (1 male, 20 females; 5 Asian American/Pacific Islander, 9 Caucasian, 7 Latina/o/Hispanic) enrolled in a 3-unit upper division course at a California State University campus the academic year following Study 1. The participants ranged from 20-29 with most being 21-24 years of age. Completion of this 3-unit course was required for graduation. Participants self-selected the international option for completion of major internship requirements.

Pre-departure course content and total meeting minutes were consistent across Study 1 and Study 2 internship seminars. International internship activities were also consistent across studies as participants in each group prepared a series of theme-based activities to co-facilitate in a summer camp environment. The international internship was situated over a two week period with approximately eight hours of scheduled activity per day in both studies. A bilingual Mandarin/English teaching assistant (senior-level, Chinese high school student or beginning-level, Chinese university student) was present in each classroom. Interns planned activities for groups of children ranging in age from 3-13; English fluency of children participating in summer camp activities ranged within and across age/grade level groups.

Qualitative measures were used to assess program outcomes in Study 2. Participants submitted a series of structured reflections linking course content and internship experiences during and immediately following their internship experiences. Reflection prompts were modified in Study 2 in order to more systematically align with course and program-level learning and professional development expectations. Specifically, revised prompts included performance-type items to more effectively examine participant accuracy in applying course content to their international internship experiences.

Language aligned with relevant department-level learning goals was also incorporated. Reflection prompts were distributed to participants via email just prior to departure. Participants submitted reflections every other day during their internship experiences and a final reflection at the conclusion of their internship.

Comparative content analysis was used to identify primary themes integrated in participant reflections. All data were examined by two coders, one of whom had no connection to the course or participants. Analysis included examination of data sources, identification of themes and categories, identification of codes to describe primary themes, application of codes, and evaluation coder agreement in code application. Codes were also reviewed by two undergraduates who had participated in the short-term international internship experience and were reported as representative of their experiences. Emergent themes that reached at least 90% agreement in coder ratings are reported here. Quotes from participants' narrative responses are included as illustrative of identified themes.

Results

Internship week 1

Participants described their initial experiences as "very interesting and somewhat chaotic", "hectic", "fun and very exhausting", "exciting and worthwhile", and "FANTASIC!" Many participants discussed need for lesson modification in significant detail (90%). Participants commented that "not knowing what to expect", class size variations, age/grade level diversity, and specific child characteristics necessitated adjustments to planned activities. Modification needs were most commonly referred to in response to age/grade level differences in attention span, interest, content knowledge, and cognitive levels (76%). For example, several participants discussed challenges in working with three and four year-old children. One stated, "We began the first day of camp with the group of three and four year olds with four students crying and calling out to their parents". Another commented, "The most difficult period was when we had the three and four year olds".

Participants reported increased personal satisfaction, confidence and student engagement based on lesson modifications made (100%). One participant wrote,

We modified the lesson for the three and four-year olds. We made our own Bingo cards using colors. We taught the children the names of each color and played the Bingo game. It was great to see how quickly children learned to express color names in English by playing a game. They were very into the game.

Another commented,

Our day one lesson was based on 'Where the Wild Things Are'. We read the book and then created paper bag monsters with the children. The amount of assistance [we provided] varied by grade level. We had to modify the activity for the 11, 12, and 13-year olds. For these age groups we decided to have the students write a short story about the monster they created. The students enjoyed creating monsters although the monster making was a little chaotic.

A third described modifications to a lesson focused on New York City themes,

With the three and four year olds, we used blocks to create tall structures, reflecting the tall buildings in New York City. With the older kids we played a board game we created. This was a big hit for the nine to 10 year-old class.

Additional modifications were discussed in context of an "All about me" lesson,

We painted the three and four year-olds hands and had them make hand prints. They liked how the paint brush tickled their hands. The six year-olds made an 'All about Me Cube', filling each box with fun facts such as Chinese name, favorite color, and favorite animal. They all participated in and enjoyed the activities.

A specific course theme systematically integrated into reflection prompts focused on methods for coping with stressful experiences. Sources of stress noted by participating interns included need for lesson modification, classroom management, and increased student engagement. Virtually all participants (95%) identified and described problem-focused strategies for handling these stressors. One participant noted,

We [she and her teaching partner] discuss our issues and try to think of ways to make our lessons more appropriate. For instance, today our lesson plan included a game called 'Museum' that requires the children to stand up and pose as a statue for about a minute at a time. We realized that the five year olds would have trouble with the task, so we brainstormed to see how we could change the activity up a little bit in order to make it work.

Another participant commented,

I use problem-focused coping. For example, we were teaching the nine and ten year olds about Vincent Van Gogh. As I started to tell the students about his life, they seemed to know most of what I was going to say. I solved a potential problem by asking them more in depth questions and allowing them to lead more of the discussions during class.

A third participant noted,

We are prepared. We use our prep period to the fullest. We talk about what is working and what is not working. We talk about how we fix those things. We stay focused on our task and on what needs to be done. We try to do our best for the students, they deserve it. We want this experience to be fun not just for the students but for us as well.

A fourth participant also discussed need for lesson modification, "One student loses focus rather quickly and has trouble concentrating. I noticed he enjoys coloring, so for today's lesson instead of writing a recipe and explaining each step, we had him draw the steps instead". Finally, one participant wrote, "I am doing my best to learn a new strategy every day in order to improve student engagement the following day. Problem solving has been my best friend throughout the past four days".

At the conclusion of the first week of their short-term international internship activities, participants indicated they greatly enjoyed interacting with Chinese children (90%), modifying lessons for diverse children (29%), and the general act of teaching (33%). One participant commented, "I have learned how important lesson modification is not only for different age groups, but for children of the same age as well". A second wrote about diversity within and between groups of children,

I am able to work with such a wide range of children. For instance, there are older children, younger children, children who know a lot of English, and children who are not familiar with English at all. I also love the whole experience of just teaching because I am able to see what I need to work on and what I am good at.

A fourth participant noted pride in the accomplishments of her students and her ability to modify lessons for diverse age ranges,

I've loved interacting with the students and witnessing them accomplish the objective of our lesson. It is extremely gratifying. For example, one of my favorite experiences was when we modified our Mexican Bingo lesson for the toddlers to 'Colors Bingo'. Now, we were a bit nervous because it was our second day, and we were not sure if the game would fully engage the whole class. However, the results were so exciting to see. As we introduced the game and practiced our colors, students appeared extremely engaged. Towards the end of the game, 90% of the children were able to identify the colors on their own in English. I was so proud of my students, and I was happy to see our modification succeed.

Internship week 2

Participant reflections submitted during the second week of the internship highlighted another internship and program theme, application of theory to practice. All participants reported application of constructivist theories of learning to their internship experiences (100%). More specifically, participants discussed application of general constructivist principles as well as constructs associated with cognitive and contextual theories. Frequently discussed constructs and strategies included scaffolding, social interaction, active learning, hands-on learning, use of manipulatives, and use of learning strategies. One participant explained, "Our lessons have been really hands on, for example, for our lesson on tide pools we brought in sand and sea shells for students to touch and explore." A second participant commented,

We have applied constructivism in our teaching here at the site. We applied this theory by creating lessons that have students actively participating-orally and physically. We also had the students working hands on with items and tools to gain certain knowledge and skills.

Another participant stated, "We incorporate Piaget's theory of active learning. We include hands on activities in every lesson that we teach. We incorporate manipulatives into every lesson and make sure that students are involved not only mentally, but also physically". She added,

My teaching partner and I also use Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding and social interaction. We provide instruction to each class at the beginning of the period, model for students, then come around and provide individual attention and instruction until each student is able to independently do the activity.

Most participants also discussed application of behavioural theories to their internship experiences (81%). Interns generally referenced the use of reinforcement to encourage on-task behavior. For example,

We incorporated behavioral approaches by rewarding or reinforcing positive behavior with small material rewards, such as stickers or stamps. We also provided non-material rewards such as a high fives or simply said 'good job'.

Participant applications of theory to practice were generally accurate (90% of examples provided). In this case, accuracy was indicated by correct alignment of theoretical constructs and internship actions with sufficient explanation, detail, or rationale to evaluate participant understanding.

Summary

Participants revisited program outcomes in final reflections. All participants described the short-term international internship as an incredible personal and professional development experience (100%). They emphasised the value of opportunities to interact with diverse children (57%) and the development of relationships with supervisors and peers (33%). Participants also indicated program participation had a significant impact on their development of professional skills and multi-cultural competences (95%). One participant explained, "The most important thing I've learned is how to develop plans that are appropriate based on age, culture, and individual differences. I also found out how much time and preparation it takes to do so". A second commented, "Working with children with different levels of English fluency made us consider other forms of communication. We used facial expressions and gestures to support our lessons and enhance student understanding". A final student noted, "This is a great way to grow and learn about yourself and the world around you".

Discussion

Findings reported here suggest short-term, service-oriented, international internships enhance the personal and professional development of participating undergraduate students. Pre-departure activities promoted active consideration of potential implications of the Chinese cultural context for internship activities. Many participants approached their initial internship experiences with nerves and anxiety and experienced challenges in coordination of teaching activities, classroom management, and need for lesson plan modification. Participants reported significant growth in their development of professional skills and strategies during and at the conclusion of their internship experiences. The experience contributed to the development of cultural competencies including dispositions essential to effective interaction with linguistically and culturally

diverse children and use of multimodal strategies to facilitate communication and assess understanding. Program impact on enhanced confidence and coping skills was also noted.

These findings complement those reported by Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2009, 2010, 2011). Participants reported consistent personal and professional development outcomes across study, cohort, internship setting, and year. Participants across studies reported initially challenging experiences as they adjusted to the cultural and professional contexts and discussed professional growth in instructional planning and implementation of effective teaching strategies. They noted appreciation of cultural diversity as a result of their experiences. They also reported the use of multimodal communication and assessment strategies across reports.

In the present investigation, Study One extends findings reported by Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2011) through consideration of multiple data sources to triangulate reflection-based participant perception data with other sources. Focus group and supervisor field notes based on systematic, on-site observations provide further detail of initially positive and challenging internship experiences. All data sources reference first days filled with excitement, anxiety, and need for lesson modification based on based on age and individual-level variation among Chinese students and initial overlap between instructional teams. Multiple data sources indicate growth in participant confidence, proactive lesson modification decisions, and demonstration of increased professional skills over the course of the two-week internship.

Participant reflections, focus group interviews, and supervisor field notes also provide support for program impact on foundational multicultural competencies. These include dispositions essential to working effectively with diverse children, use of multimodal strategies for communication and assessment of student understanding, and most significantly, commitment to lesson modification based on age, individual differences, and cultural context as detailed in Study Two. Many participants indicated that if they were to do anything different, they would engage in more systematic planning before their international departure to achieve these outcomes. Participant enjoyment in interacting with Chinese children in the internship setting was also noted across data sources and reports.

Need for lesson modification discussed in previous reports (Knutson Miller and Gonzalez 2009, 2010, and 2011) was again referenced in the present investigation. This awareness was highly desired and appropriate given course and program-level goals including demonstrated understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, application of theory to practice, and professionalism, including problem-based coping, in internship settings. Lesson modifications referred to in Study One and discussed in even greater detail in Study Two suggest participants applied the concept of developmentally appropriate practice, or consideration of age, individual, and cultural appropriateness, in interactions with children in their internship experiences. Participants identified, accurately described, and implemented problem-focused strategies for handling internship-related stressors, including need for lesson plan modifications, and reported increased confidence and student engagement based on modifications made.

Study Two provided an opportunity to extend previous investigations conducted by Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2009, 2010, and 2011) through modification of structured reflection prompts to incorporate more performance-oriented task requirements. For example, ability to accurately apply theory to practice in the context of internship experiences was explored in Study Two. All participants discussed application of constructivist theories of learning in reflections on their internship experiences. More specifically, participants discussed application of general constructivist principles and constructs associated with the cognitive and contextual theories to practice. Many discussed applications of behavioural theories to practice as well. Participant examples and rationale for connections were generally accurate and provided evidence of achievement of course and department-level goals.

Service-oriented international internship experiences offer unique opportunities for enhancing academic achievement and professional development as proposed by Annette (2003), Brindley, Quinn and Morton (2009), Grusky (2000), Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005), Roberts (2003), and Stachowski and Tyler (2007). Participants across previous studies (Knutson Miller and Gonzalez, 2009, 2010, 2011) as well as those involved in the current investigation noted their international internships experiences were qualitatively different than those previously experienced in domestic settings. Short-term international internship participants in the current investigation reported enhanced understanding of cultural context and ability to plan and facilitate activities that take age, individual differences, language, and culture into consideration. They also demonstrated understanding of relevant course and program-level themes in the context of structured reflections. Further, international internship participants reported personal growth in confidence and coping strategies and discussed the significance of relationships developed with supervisors and peers.

Previous studies, including those conducted by Brindley, Quinn, and Morton (2009), Knutson Miller and Gonzalez (2009, 2010 and 2011), Pence and Macgillivray (2008), and Willard-Holt (2000) reported positive participant outcomes in short-term study abroad programs that included opportunity for direct interaction with local children in school and community contexts connected to course learning and participant professional development goals. The current investigation provides further support for these findings. It is important, however, to consider additional program features that may differentially impact participant outcomes and limit ability to generalise findings to other settings.

Participants in the short-term international internship cohorts described here were upper-division undergraduate-level students majoring in Child and Adolescent Development. Their professional interests included working with children and families in schools and community-based settings. Participants self-selected the international option for completion of internship requirements and generally sacrificed or engaged in personal fundraising to support travel expenses. Pre-departure experiences included participation in a seminar course that incorporated content related to course learning goals, reference to the cultural context of the international setting, and an orientation to study abroad required by the University. A tenured faculty member served as course instructor and

introduced participants to the primary site supervisor, an elementary school teacher with 25 years of experience in U.S. classrooms and seven plus years of experience in Chinese summer English camp settings, in a pre-departure seminar session.

The referenced faculty member and site supervisor developed relationships with school and community-based partners in China that resulted in an internship context aligned with partner, participant, and course goals. Site-based personnel and local Chinese parents were specifically interested in opportunities for children to interact with native English speakers in an engaging summer camp environment. Participating interns were motivated to support these goals and had a high degree of autonomy in proposing summer camp themes. Participants self-selected teaching partners based on common co-teaching and theme preferences and collaboratively worked to prepare activities before departure to China. The degree to which interns were involved in decision-making in respect to summer camp themes and related activities may be somewhat unique. The particular international partnership described here was aligned with the needs and interests of all involved, provided opportunity for intern participants to make decisions based on their content knowledge and personal interests, and was appropriately challenging and supported based on intern professional development levels.

Conclusions

In summary, the findings reported here suggest short-term international internship experiences provide significant professional development opportunities for those who indicate interest and select to complete course requirements in such settings. The extent to which pre-departure positive attitudes and commitment and specific features of international internship programs are essential elements to achievement of reported findings may be further studied in subsequent investigations. Short-term international internship experiences have the potential to provide additive, unique, and potentially powerful contexts for the development of professionals with enhanced awareness of global issues and a strong foundation upon which to build further multicultural competencies. Such professionals are likely to positively impact the learning experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse children in educational and service settings in the United States and abroad.

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Dr Kari Knutson Miller initiated opportunities for undergraduate-level students to complete Department of Child and Adolescent Studies (CAS) practicum requirements through international fieldwork experiences in 2005. Over a ten-year period, approximately 200 CAS students provided over 12,000 hours of service to children, adolescents, and families in international contexts. Program evaluation studies indicate that participation significantly contributes to both professional and personal development outcomes.

Email: kkmiller@exchange.fullerton.edu

Web: http://hhd.fullerton.edu/cas/Faculty/knutson_miller.htm

Dr Amber M. Gonzalez is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Child Development at California State University Sacramento. Her research examines student perceptions of institutional characteristics and how those perceptions influence academic, professional, and personal outcomes through the P20 educational pipeline.

Email: amber.gonzalez.phd@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.csus.edu/coe/faculty/profiles/gonzalez-amber.html>

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