

## **The influences of cross-cultural field experiences during international student teaching on the personal and professional development of future teachers**

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The development of cross cultural competencies are becoming more important issues in teacher education programs as future teachers enter classrooms with students from multicultural and international backgrounds. (Griffith, Frase, & Ralph, 1989) In the last ten years a growing concern about how to meet the educational challenge of learner diversity has dominated discussion in teacher education programs.

Researchers (i.e., Banks & Banks, 1989, Bennett, 1990, and Sleeter and Grant, 1988) have recommended five approaches to teacher education curriculum. (ERIC, 1992) One of these approaches is “field experiences and student teaching opportunities with students from varying backgrounds.” There is a growing need for more field experiences and student teaching opportunities to work with diverse students. Prospective teachers can benefit from cross-cultural exchanges during student teaching as they are still able to dialogue with teacher educators, and teachers in the field.

This study focused on an international student teaching program at the University of Northern Iowa, which allows prospective teachers to complete their student teaching in out-of-state and international schools. These fourth and fifth year teacher education candidates select from a variety of American and International schools in over 20 countries. They develop cross cultural competencies during the semester long experience in Department of Defense (DoDDS) schools, American and International Schools and host country schools. Over 150 students a year participate in these exchanges.

Results indicate the personal outcomes of international student teaching on teacher development include: a heightened sense of personal achievement, a willingness to explore teaching careers in cross-cultural settings, a sense of self as a minority person, and a renewal of self and identity factors as an American citizen. The professional outcomes of international student teaching on teacher development include: a better understanding of the influences of cultural background and experiences on teaching and learning; strategies for welcoming students into their classrooms; understanding of second language learners in their classrooms, and strategies for creative inclusive learning environments for all learners

International student teaching programs can be a great catalyst in influencing and preparing teacher educators. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors in international settings can maximize the experience for teacher education candidates as they mentor and coach student teachers in these positive classroom environments.

