

Expanding Boundaries: The Impact of the Special Education in Scotland Program

Laura E. Johnson and Dr. Rosemary Battalio

Department of Special Education

University of Wisconsin -Eau Claire

Research Questions Does SPED in Scotland:

- ◆ Improve pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity?
- ◆ Affect pre-service teachers' perceptions of their efficacy in working in culturally unfamiliar environments?
- ◆ Affect preservice teachers' awareness of global interconnectedness, specifically in regard to serving students with disabilities?



2007 SPED in Scotland Participants at Dalkeith House

The Special Education (SPED) in Scotland Program includes:

- ◆ Three weeks of coursework in Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities at the Dalkeith House, Dalkeith, Scotland
- ◆ Two weeks living with and observing a professional in schools for students with disabilities, or schools with inclusion programs throughout Scotland
- ◆ One week of travel through the Scottish Highlands with the UWEC group and individuals from around the world



Loch Garry, Western Highlands

Participants

Nine undergraduate and one graduate student at various stages in teacher preparation in the Department of Special Education at UWEC.

Methodology: Mixed

- ◆ Pretest and posttest with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).
- ◆ Six weekly guided journal entries, analyzed for themes using Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).



Participant with students from school for students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities

Results

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Scores (Actual)

Participant	Developmental Sensitivity Pre test		Developmental Sensitivity Post test	
	Score	Scale	Score	Scale
A	94.7	Minimization	93.24	Minimization
B	80.33	Denial/Defense	91.38	Minimization
C	109.42	Minimization	115.95	Acceptance/Adaptation
D	86.99	Minimization	83.3	Denial/Defense
E	98.76	Minimization	87.44	Minimization
F	79.32	Denial/Defense	77.05	Denial/Defense
G	87.05	Minimization	89.9	Minimization
H	102.2	Minimization	87.8	Minimization
I	89.83	Minimization	89.21	Minimization
J	74.3	Denial/Defense	84.52	Denial/Defense/Minimization

Denial/Defense: A stage characterized by avoiding cultural difference and viewing other cultures as either superior or inferior to one's own culture.

Minimization: A stage characterized by recognizing similarities at the expense of recognizing and accepting cultural differences.

Acceptance/Adaptation: A stage characterized by viewing cultures as equal to one's own, and equally representative of reality. Includes the ability to adopt a multicultural identity (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

Results

Guided Journal Entries

- ◆ Entries reflected movement through three stages: Observation, Reflective Awareness, and Change.
- ◆ Within each stage, entries related to three themes: Culture, Education, Homestays, and Travel.
- ◆ Comments that reflected emotion, transition, and personal growth were also present through all stages and themes.

Observation: The act of noticing surroundings, environmental factors, etc. Observation can also include the recognition of a difference.

Reflective awareness: Filtered observations. These observations are influenced by participants' own personal growth and knowledge. Conclusions and judgements are made as an outcome of this process.

Change: Expressing a desire to use the generated reflective awareness to make future changes in one's life.

Examples:

Observation in the theme of Culture

"The Scots seem to know more about their own country and the general UK than we know about the US." (Participant D)



Participant at Wallace Monument

Reflective awareness in the theme of Culture

"There are so many things that don't make sense to me. Maybe that's just the way the culture works and that is acceptable. Maybe as the trip continues, things will all come into place and start to make some more sense." (Participant A)

Reflective Awareness in the theme of Homestays

"I'm realizing how similar family dynamics are here, and how similar university students are to our college students. In these ways our cultures are more similar than different." (Participant G)

Change in the theme of Education

"I would like to continue to hold high expectations for my students...Though it is my job to teach the students, I also want to teach them to complete things individually." (Participant I)

Change in the Theme of Travel

"Now that I'm here and thinking about leaving soon, I've come to the conclusion that I will just have to find some way to get back! Not necessarily to Scotland, though I would love to, but just to go out and discover other countries and cultures. I don't know where the money will come from, but somehow I will save up." (Participant G)



Participant with host family

Conclusions

- ◆ Through both the journal entries and the IDI scores, it became evident that only a minority of participants progressed in their intercultural sensitivity or aspired to make changes.
- ◆ Participants' journal entries seemed to be affected by their previous travel experiences, level of education in the teacher preparation program at UWEC, and personal characteristics.
- ◆ For many participants, the experience in Scottish schools led to a global awareness of issues in special education as demonstrated in guided journal entries.
- ◆ A follow-up focus group session with participants four months after return from Scotland revealed that all participants continued to experience some effect on their perceptions of culture, personal growth, and their value systems.
- ◆ Finally, it became evident that the SPED in Scotland program is primarily a vehicle for a group of students who have a common educational interest to study abroad while having an international special education experience.

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References

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