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More Than a Vacation: Short-Term Study Abroad as a Critically Reflective, Transformative Learning Experience

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade there have been increasing calls to develop the capacity of United States students to think and act globally (Stearns, 2009). One method of encouraging the civic of global citizenship is through study abroad (Tarrant, 2010). However, the educational value and legitimacy of study abroad, in particular short-term programs, has been questioned (Tarrant & Lyons, 2012). This review and commentary will endeavor to support short-term study abroad as a creative, engaging, and effective educative practice. Building on a proposed theoretical framework grounding investigations focused on study abroad and global citizenship (Tarrant, 2010), a review of literature will examine Dewey's (1933, 1938) conceptualization of educative experiences as necessary and valuable components for a learner, and Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory (TLT) in connection with the fundamental role that critical reflection serves in both established perspectives of learning. Of particular concern is establishing the alignment between studies abroad, the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of TLT, and the perspective development of learners in connection with global citizenship. By intentionally connecting Dewey and Mezirow's conceptualizations of learning with Tarrant's conceptual framework for studies abroad, a call for further research focusing on the experiences and perspectives of students within short-term study abroad environments can be made.

KEYWORDS

Educative Experiences; Transformative Learning; Critical Reflection; Higher Education

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