

Semiotic analysis of agriscience educators and agricultural teacher candidates' perceptions of global competency gains during an immersion experience

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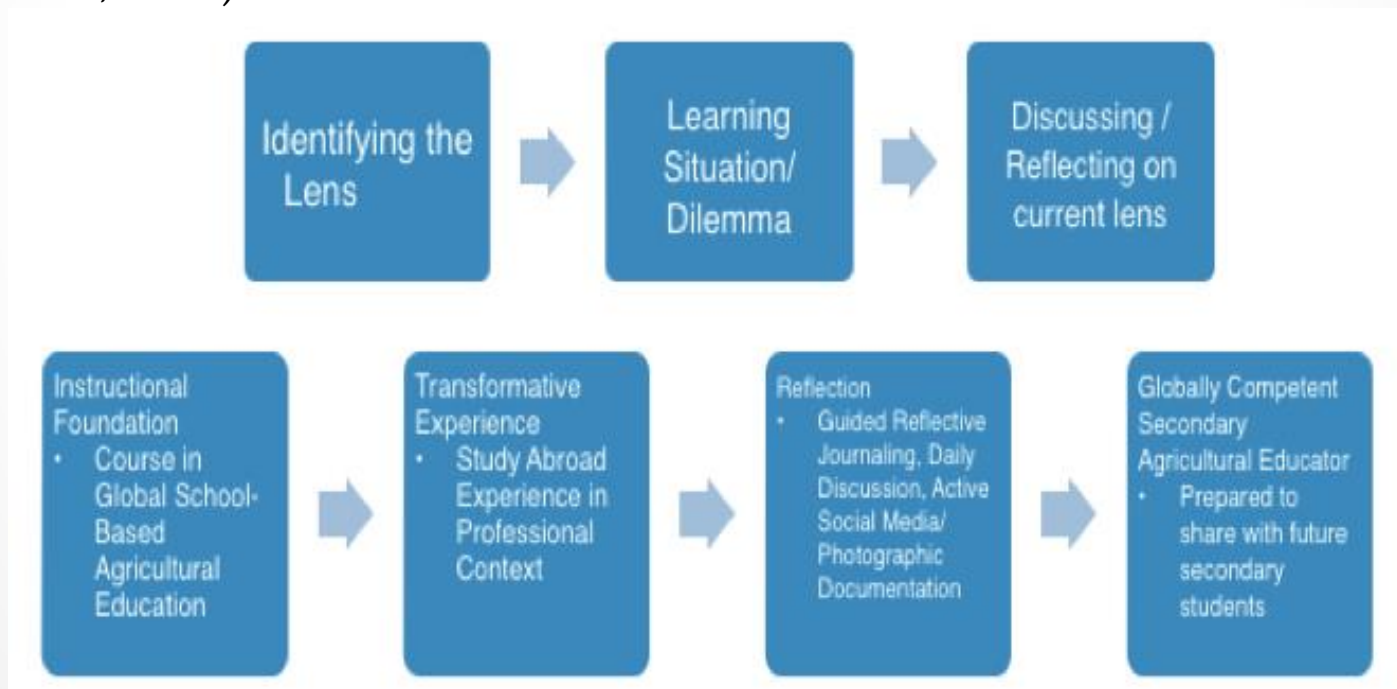
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Purpose and Objective

- The purpose of this descriptive study was to explore the effect of an immersion experience on perceptions of knowledge, skills and dispositions gained by participants through semiotic analysis of photographs submitted by participants. The following research objective guided the study:
 - Identify participant perceptions of knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to global competency that were acquired through an immersion experience.

Theoretical Foundation & Conceptual Framework

- Mezirow's transformational learning theory which is the "process of exploring, assessing, and working to change limiting frames of reference and habits of mind" served as the theoretical foundation for the study (Mezirow, 2000).



Methods

- 15 participants – Seven University students, Eight Agricultural educators
- Participants were enrolled in a 10-week preparation course through The Pennsylvania State University
- Immersed in Korean culture June 14 – July 12, 2014
- 3 photographs and 3-5 word descriptors for each photograph per participant were submitted
- A focus group was conducted for participants to analyze and share the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they obtained in their immersion experience using their photographs

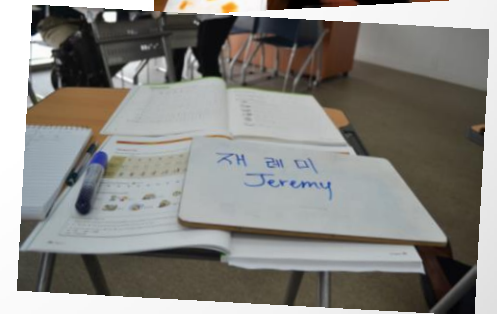
Findings - Knowledge

- Findings related to knowledge included agricultural production, the Korean education system, and the difficulty of language barriers.



Findings - Skills

- Skills acquired by participants included learning the Korean language, communication, collaboration, agricultural production, skills involving use of chopsticks, and coaching students.



Findings - Dispositions

- Participants shared change or development of their dispositions with themes of recognizing similarities and differences within cultures, importance of understanding differences, agriculture program success, agricultural production, importance of gaining dispositions in other cultures, and development of global competency.



Conclusions

- Participants in this study showed evidence of developing global competency through self-identified knowledge, skills, and dispositions as evidenced by selected photographs.
- All of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions participants developed from their experiences assisted them in becoming more globally competent professionals in the agricultural education field.
- Some knowledge can be obtained from globalizing or internationalizing curriculum delivered on home campuses, but there is a certain level of knowledge that can only be obtained from full immersion.

Recommendations

- Utilizing technology for photograph sharing
- Include faculty perspective
- Cost benefit analysis of global competency gains between immersion experience and on-campus internalization of course work
- The semiotic analysis method potentially be utilized to explore other issues

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