



BUILDING A FACULTY-LED STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM WITH BACKWARD DESIGN

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Abstract

Research has shown that high impact practices improve the quality of student learning, experience, retention, and academic success, particularly for underserved students. The teaching and learning practices that have been extensively tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students include study abroad and field-based service-learning projects. In Summer 2019, a group of four undergraduate pre-service teachers at a Hispanic-serving university from the United States participated in a 10-day faculty-led Taiwan Study Abroad Program. One of the components of the program was a service-learning project – a 2-1/2-day English Language Camp in a Taiwanese elementary school. Using this study abroad program as a model, this article discusses how to develop and implement a program with the end in mind, including the respective academic preparation including the pre-travel, on-site, and post-travel assignments. The backward design framework provides instructors a planning structure and process to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Keywords

Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program, Service Learning Project, Pre-Service Elementary Teachers

Introduction

Kuh (2008) stressed that research has shown evidence that high impact practices improve the quality of student learning, experience, retention, and academic success, particularly for underserved students. The teaching and learning practices that have been extensively tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students include study abroad and field-based service-learning projects.

In Summer 2019, a group of four undergraduate pre-service teachers of a Hispanic-serving university from the United States of America participated in a 10-day faculty-led Taiwan Study Abroad Program. One of the components of the program was the 2-1/2-day English Camp in an elementary school, which was a service-learning project. This article discusses how to develop and implement a program with the end in mind (Bowen, 2017; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), including the respective academic preparation such as the pre-travel, on-site, and post-travel assignments.

Perspective and Theoretical Framework

The perspective framework that undergirds this article is holistic student development and student engagement. Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) described that one of the objectives of higher education is to develop the whole student. This comprehensive, holistic approach involves addressing the varied aspects of students' lives inside and outside of the classroom (Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013). From this perspective, student affairs professionals and faculty members play significant roles in helping to develop purposeful curricula and activities, which focus on different aspects of college student development. These curricula and activities include global learning and intercultural awareness. Within this conceptual framework, programs and activities that are intentionally developed to foster deeper student learning and engagement will lead to the development of outcomes that have a long-term impact on students (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney (2013) maintained that a central strategy for fostering holistic student development is to promote active student engagement in the collegiate experience. Kuh (2009) asserted that student engagement represents both the effort students devote to activities that are linked to desired outcomes of college and the amount of support that institutions provide to foster student participation. Hence, for programs and

activities to have the most lasting impact on student development and institutional outcomes, academic institutions need to intentionally develop activities and provide students the support so they can be fully engaged in these activities. These programs and activities include global learning opportunities.

Moreover, service learning (SL) is a form of experiential learning that engages students in experiences outside of the classroom that relate to course learning objectives (Myers, 2020). The learning usually takes place in non-profit communities and organizations for mutual benefits. Myers (2020) asserted that self-authorship theory serves as a useful guiding theoretical framework for examining student development in SL. "Self-authorship is the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and relationship" (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 631) and is viewed as the gateway to adulthood (Myers, 2020). This theory is rooted in a sociological and psychological perspective of student development and maturation. It utilizes the constructive developmental epistemology that frames knowledge as constructed and reconstructed by individuals as they interact with external factors such as work environments.

Developing a Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program with the End in Mind

Covey (2020) stated that to begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of one's destination. It is important to know "where you're going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction" (Covey, 2020, p. 46). In curriculum planning, instructors typically adopt a forward design. They start with the learning activities or how to teach the content, develop assessments, and then draw connections to the learning goals of the course (Bowen, 2017). In contrast, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) advocate to start with the end in mind, which is referred as a backward design. In such a design, one starts with the desired results in mind, which are student learning outcomes or goals. These learning outcomes or goals incorporate the knowledge and skills instructors want their students to master at the end of the course. Once the learning outcomes are established, the second stage is to think about assessments. That is, what evidence of student understanding and proficiency will be accepted. The backward design framework suggests that instructors should consider the learning goals and assessment prior to planning the learning activities and instruction (Bowen, 2017).

Backward design is beneficial to instructors as it is a much more intentional approach to course design than traditional design (Bowen, 2017). It encourages the instructor to establish the purpose of learning before implementing it into the curriculum. Hence, backward design provides guidance for instruction and designing courses. Once the learning goals have been identified, instructors will find it easier to develop assessments and instruction around the learning outcomes. Moreover, backward design provides instructors a better idea of what they want their students to achieve from the learning activities. It eliminates the possibility of doing certain activities for the sake of doing them. Each activity and instruction have a purpose that fits in with the goals of the course. Furthermore, teaching is not just about engaging students in content. It is also to ensure students have the resources to help them learn and understand. Backward design helps gauge student learning and understanding more accurately because it leverages what students will need to understand during the design process in order to progress (Bowen, 2017).

The Understanding by Design Framework offers instructors a planning structure and process to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). The logic of backward design suggests a three-stage planning sequence (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The key concept is to align not only to the goals, but also to one another. The Stage 1 content and understanding should be what is assessed in Stage 2 and taught in Stage 3. In this section, these three stages are discussed and illustrated with an example of a course design (EDED 4328 Topics and Issues in Elementary and Secondary) based on the Taiwan Study Abroad Program.

Stage 1. Identifying Desired Results

In the first stage, the instructor should consider the learning goals of the lesson, unit, or course (Bowen, 2017; McTighe & Wiggins, 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Instructors need to ask themselves three questions: (a) What should the course participants hear, read, view, or explore? (b) What knowledge and skills should be mastered in the course? (c) What are the important knowledge and skills the participants should retain? By answering these three questions, instructors will be able to determine the best content for the course.

Examples for Stage 1

Course Goals. When designing the course for the Taiwan Study Abroad Program, the goals of EDED 4328 are:

1. To enhance participants' understanding of how to use hands-on activities to help young Taiwan students to learn materials in English.
2. To enable participants to present concepts and principles related to instruction in elementary educational settings in Taiwan.

3. To provide strategies and procedures that will guide the participants in selecting, applying, and evaluating effective materials and approaches fostering elementary English learning.

Student Learning Outcome. After the completion of the Taiwan Study Abroad Program, the participants will be able to grow personally, academically, and professionally by:

1. Providing a report on the service-learning project delivered in Ming Tan Elementary School (1st-6th grades);
2. Providing reflective insight in teaching strategies in bilingual (English and Chinese) classrooms; and
3. Creating a PowerPoint presentation and sharing their experiences.

Stage 2: Determine Acceptable Evidence

In the traditional design instructors think about assessment once teaching is finished. Whereas in the second stage of backward design, instructors first think about assessment before designing specific lessons. In this stage, instructors consider assessments and performance tasks that will be completed by the course participants in order to demonstrate their understanding and learning (Bowen, 2017; McTighe & Wiggins, 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Instructors assign performance tasks to participants for them to apply their learning to a new and authentic context so as to assess their understanding and ability to transfer their learning. In addition to performance tasks, Stage 2 includes other evidence, such as quizzes, tests, observations, and work samples to determine what participants know and can do (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

The key questions for Stage 2 are: (a) How will I know if the participants have achieved the desired results? and (b) What will I accept as evidence of understanding and proficiency?

At this stage, it is important for instructors to consider different types of assessments. The assessment methods for the learning goals may include: (a) short quizzes; (b) open-ended questions; (c) homework; (d) essay papers; and (e) group projects.

Examples for Stage 2

Pre-Travel Assignments. In study abroad courses, it is necessary to be knowledgeable about many concepts prior to the experience in order for the participants to get the most out of the study abroad program. For EDED 4328-250, there are several pre-travel assignments.

1. Pre-Travel Journal – Goal Setting: A Self-Reflection Assignment (See Appendix A)
2. Teaching & Learning English in Taiwan (See Appendix B)
3. PowerPoint Slides – Vocabulary of Longfeng Temple and Xiangshan Visitor Center & Tourism English (prompts). The slides will be compiled into booklets for the elementary students to learn the vocabulary. (See Appendix C)
4. Draft(s) for English Camps I & II (Grades 1-6) and Camp III (Kindergarten) Activity Plans (See Appendix D)

On-Site Assignments. Once the participants start their journey, they are asked to complete several assignments.

1. Taiwan Study Abroad Program Daily Journal (9 days) (See Appendix E)
2. English Camps I, II, III Preparation (4 meetings) - Those who do not plan, plan to fail! The instructor will meet with each group of the course participants to review their project and answer any questions.
3. Activity Plans – (a) English Camp Day I (Grades 1-6) Activity Plan; (b) English Camp Day II (Gr 1-6); and (c) English Camp Day III (Kindergarten) Activity Plans. The participants will revise the activity plans one day before implementing the activities.

Post-Travel Assignments. After the participants return to the United States, they will complete the following assignments:

1. Summarized Journal of Taiwan Study Abroad Program (400-500 words)
2. Summary Report on Service-Learning Project – Teaching Through Hands-On Activities (300 words)
3. PowerPoint Presentation of Teaching & Learning Experiences in Taiwan Study Abroad Program – Submit through Blackboard and delivered on Zoom

Assessments. In addition to the assignments, the participants are evaluated for other essential elements. First and foremost, attendance and participation are critical for success in the course. Course participants will be graded on program participation which includes attendance, participation in service-learning project and activities and the demonstration of professionalism. The critical elements of professionalism are: attitude, behavior, and communication/attire. To demonstrate professionalism refers to being punctual, adopting a positive and responsible attitude, exhibiting professionally responsible behavior in the trip, and maintaining professionally appropriate

demeanor when communicating with the professor, peers, and other individuals in Taiwan (verbal and written communication). See Appendix F for assessments.

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

The final stage of the backward design is that instructors begin to consider how they will teach. In this stage, instructional strategies and learning activities will be created. With the course goals, student learning outcomes, and assessment methods established, instructors will have a clearer vision of which strategies will work best to provide participants with the materials, resources, and information essential to help them attain the course goals (Bowen, 2017).

The key questions are: (a) How will I support participants as they come to understand important knowledge and skills? (b) What enabling knowledge and skills will participants need to perform effectively and achieve desired results? and (c) What activities, materials, and resources are best suited to accomplish the learning goals and outcomes? (Bowen, 2017; McTighe & Wiggins, 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

McTighe and Wiggins (2012) stress that in Stage 3 instructors plan the most appropriate lessons and learning activities to different types of goals in Stage 1, which are transfer, meaning making, and acquisition. They note that, too often, teaching focuses mostly on presenting information or modeling basic skills for acquisition without extending the lessons to assist participants to make meaning or transfer their learning. Teaching for transfer means giving participants opportunities to apply their learning to new contexts and provide timely feedback to help them improve. Therefore, instructors are facilitators of meaning making and a coach giving feedback and advice about how to use the learning effectively.

Examples for Stage 3

The learning experiences and instructional strategies for the participants of EDED 4328 are:

1. Community-Based Service Learning;
2. Student engagement;
3. Facilitate discussion in the planned meetings and informal gatherings (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner, traveling on the road); and
4. Reflective practice.

Conclusions

This article discusses how to develop a faculty-led study abroad program with the end in mind. It includes the respective academic preparation including the pre-travel, on-site, and post-travel assignments as well as assessment. The backward design framework helps instructors to establish the purpose of student learning before implementing it into the curriculum. Hence, it provides guidance for instruction and designing courses. In addition, such design gives instructors a better idea of what they want students to achieve from the learning activities. Each activity and instruction have a purpose that fits in with the goals of the course. It also ensures that students will have the resources to help them learn. Lastly, backward design helps gauge student learning and understanding more accurately because it leverages what students will need to understand during the design process in order to progress (Bowen, 2017).

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Appendix A

Pre-Travel Assignment 1: Goal Setting

What are your goals for your Study Abroad experience in Taiwan?

Directions:

1. Read the stated goals of TAMUK Faculty-Led Programs and the 2019 Taiwan Study Abroad Program. You will notice that there are three major areas of goals: academic, personal growth, and cultural awareness.
2. Type your responses to the questions on p. 2 & p. 3
3. Save the document with your Last Name, First Name – Setting Goals
4. Click on the Link of Pre-Travel Journal
5. Attach the document
6. Click Submit

TAMUK Faculty-Led Programs

Faculty-led programs are study abroad programs developed and led by TAMUK faculty members that typically focus on a specific subject area or foreign language. One or more faculty leader travel with a group of students from TAMUK and teach one or more courses in the location abroad. Students receive predetermined TAMUK credit for the course(s) taken abroad. By design, faculty-led programs integrate many group activities into their curriculum and provide a very structured, enriching international experience.

2019 Taiwan Study Abroad Program

This study abroad program provides the participants with an opportunity to meet the following types of goals:

1. Academic Goals

- 1.1. Demonstrate increased knowledge of specific course-related content (e.g. teaching strategies of English to EFL students, designing and implementing learning activities for EFL students, etc.)
- 1.2. Enhance linguistic awareness and ability
- 1.3. Increase knowledge of the history, politics, geography, and the arts of Taiwan
- 1.4. Experience and develop writing, speaking, reading, critical thinking and reflection skills.

2. Personal Growth Goals

- 2.1. Develop personal responsibility

- 2.2. Develop self-confidence
- 2.3. Increase self-awareness through reflection
- 2.4. Display a sense of intellectual curiosity and a desire to learn and know
- 2.5. Develop a sense of healthy risk-taking and decision making in unfamiliar settings
- 2.6. Develop interpersonal skills through interaction with the group abroad
- 2.7. Develop tolerance for discomfort
- 2.8. Become more open-minded and tolerant of differences

3. Cultural Awareness Goals

- 3.1. Interact with diverse peoples
- 3.2. Understand the significance of culture (e.g., items as beliefs, values, customs traditions, rituals, behavior) and develop an awareness of cultural context
- 3.3. Develop an ability to adjust successfully to living conditions (transportation, food, entertainment, currency, shopping, communication system, etc.) in Taiwan
- 3.4. Gain an insight into your own culture through comparison and contrast

For this writing assignment, you are asked to think through how you will translate these general goals into ones that are specific for you. For each one of the three areas, consider your goals for our upcoming Study Abroad. Strive to be thorough and specific.

After identifying your goals, respond to the following prompts:

- A. It is important to reflect upon how our study abroad setting and our campus and surroundings are different.
 - a. How will these differences influence your experience?
 - b. What opportunities for academic growth, exploration, and personal growth might you seek out?
 - c. What potential risks or problems (e.g., personal safety, stress) might you confront in that different environment?
 - d. What might you do to address these opportunities and challenges, both before we depart and while you are there?
- B. What behaviors and attitudes on your part do you expect will contribute to your achieving your goals?
- C. What behaviors and attitudes on your part might interfere or stand in the way of achieving your goals?
- D. What behaviors and attitudes on the part of other student participants might contribute to your achieving your goals?
- E. What behaviors and attitudes on the part of other student participants might interfere with or stand in the way of achieving your goals?

Appendix B

Pre-Travel Assignment 2: Teaching & Learning in Taiwan

Directions:

1. Save this document with your Last Name, First Name – Teaching & Learning
2. Respond to the questions below.
3. Go to Blackboard Assignment.
4. Click on the link: Teaching & Learning English in Taiwan.
5. Attach the document and click Submit.

1. Visit this webpage <https://english.moe.gov.tw/cp-31-17722-3fb83-1.html> and <https://borgenproject.org/education-in-taiwan/>. Briefly discuss the education system in Taiwan (200 words). (5 points)

2. Read over this article:

Chou, C. H. (2008). Exploring elementary English teachers' practical knowledge: A case study of EFL Teachers in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 9(4), 529-541.

Summarize the article in 300 words. Focus on the elementary English teachers' practical principles and rules of practice. (15 points)

3. Read over this article:

Lu, H.L., and Soares, L. (2014). US elementary preservice teachers' experiences while teaching to students in Taiwan. *Journal of the scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 14(1), 59-74. doi: 10.14434/josotl.v14i1.4170

Summarize the article in 300 words. Focus on (a) Professional Growth, (b) Personal Growth, and (c) Challenges and Difficulties (10 points).

Appendix C

Pre-Travel Assignment 4: PowerPoint Slides

Background Information:

The English Camp will start with two field trips to two local famous tourist attractions. The lower elementary students will visit the Longfeng Temple in the morning and the upper elementary students will visit a newly built visitor center, Xiangshan Visitor Center, in the afternoon.

To assist the elementary students learn Tourism English, you and your partner will work on a booklet by using PowerPoint. The slides will be reviewed by Principal Chang. She will help print the slides and compile them into booklets. On the day of the field trips, the young students will receive the booklet so they will learn the vocabulary as they visit the sites.

Directions:

1. This assignment is completed by you and your team partner.
2. Research on the Internet and find some photos of Longfeng Temple (Grades 1 & 2) and Xiangshan Visitor Center (Grades 3 to 6).
3. Create a PowerPoint presentation and save the document with your Last Name, First Name & Last Name, First Name – PPT
 - 3.1. Longfeng Temple: 5-8 vocabulary slides and prompts for Tourism English
 - 3.2. Xiangshan Visitor Center: 10-13 vocabulary slides and prompts for Tourism English
4. Send the draft(s) through My Course Messages.

Appendix D

Pre-Travel Assignment 3 – Activity Planning

Activity Plan for English Camp # _____

English Camp Leaders: TAMUK Course Name & #: EDED4328-250 Topic & Issues in Elem. & Secondary Education Grade Level: Subject: <u>English</u> Special Classroom Preparations/Technology:

1. **Identification of Concept/Skill:**
2. **Objective(s):** At the end of the learning activity, TLW:
3. **Rationale:** The activity is important because:
4. **Materials:** List all the materials which will be needed for this activity:
5. **Ice-Breaking Activity:**
6. **Introduction/Focus/Hook:** TTW introduce the activity by:
7. **Procedures:**
8. **Modeling:** Explain how teacher will model the learning activity (show, tell, demonstrate)

TTW:

Guided Practice: Give specific examples of the types of instructional support you will provide as you lead students in guided practice for enabling successful movement into independent practice. Check for understanding needs to occur. (Students should have 80-85% mastery during guided practice)

TTW:

TLW:

Independent Practice: What learning activity will the students do by themselves to demonstrate that their knowledge and skill learned?

9. **Closure/Review:** What will you do to close out of summarize the lesson at the end? Who will you review the topic(s) covered during the lesson?

TTW review and summarize the activity by:

Appendix E

On-Site Assignment 1: Taiwan Study Abroad Program Daily Journal (9 days)

One of the most valuable and relatively painless activities you can do to enhance your international and intercultural experience is to keep a journal. No matter how amazing and unforgettable your experience may seem, it doesn't take long before your memories begin to fade. Keeping a journal gives you a record of events, activities, and thoughts. More importantly, it actively engages you in your personal overseas journey through thinking, interpreting and analyzing intercultural experiences. It may also help you remember the academic content of the class and will help you articulate how this course is transforming you into a global citizen. Your journal will be read and graded.

Course participants are encouraged to carry a notebook to jot down some interesting and important events. All on-site journal will be submitted through Blackboard.

Appendix F

Assessments of EDED 4328

Allocations of Scores for Attendance & Participation:

Attendance (Study Abroad Program) – 5 points x 25 occasions = 125 points

Participation – 5 points x 25 occasions = 125 points

Attendance (Zoom Meetings) – 5 points x 3 = 15 points

Participation (Zoom Meetings) – 5 points x 3 = 15 points

Student Data Sheets & Schedule – 10 points

Punctuality (earn 10 pts for being punctual all the time; deduct 2 points for each tardiness or early departure without official excuse)

Communication/Courtesy/Email Etiquette/Attire - 20 points

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments & Evaluation	Points
1. Attendance & Participation Punctuality Student Data Sheet & Schedule Communication/Courtesy/Attire	280 10 10 20
2. Pre-Travel Assignments (a) Pre-Travel Journal - Goal Setting: A Self-Reflection Assignment – 60 points (b) Teaching & Learning English in Taiwan – 30 points (c) PowerPoint Slides – 20 points (d) Drafts for English Camp – 10 points	120
3. On-Site Assignments (a) Taiwan Program Daily Journal (20 points x 9 journals) – 180 points (b) English Camp (Days 1-3) Preparation – 4 meetings x 10 points– 40 points (c) English Camp (Days 1-3) Activity Plans – 3 days x 10 points – 20 points	240
4. Post-Travel Assignments (a) Summarized Journal of Taiwan Program – 40 points (b) Summary Report on Service-Learning Project – 30 points (c) PowerPoint Presentation of Teaching & Learning Experiences in Taiwan Program – 50 points	120
Total	800

Grading: 800-720 A 719-640 B 639-560 C 559-480 D Below 479 F