

Impact of Immersion Experience in an Immigrant Community on Pre-service Teachers' Cross-Cultural and Global Awareness

Yali Zhao, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, yzhao@gsu.edu

Abstract

This study examined a group of pre-service teachers' cross-cultural immersion experience at a large immigrant community and the impact of this immersion on their understanding and belief about teaching immigrant students. Findings suggest that pre-service teachers experienced culture shock and language barrier, yet they learned profoundly from this experience. The immersion helped promote pre-service teachers' cross-cultural and global awareness and empowered them in teaching immigrant students.

Introduction

The past decade has seen an explosive growth of immigrants from all over the world in the United States. Mirroring this trend, American schools are increasingly looking "international" both ethnically and linguistically (Azzam, 2005). According to the statistics (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2005), students from non-English speaking countries represent the fastest-growing K-12 American student population. Within 10 school years (school year 1992-1993 through school year 2002-2003), the number of immigrant students classified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in American public schools increased 84% (reached over 5 million), whereas total pre-K-12 enrollment increased only 11% (NCELA, 2005). Inevitably, teachers in today's classrooms have to deal with students with cultural and language backgrounds significantly different from their own and to address the diverse needs of these students. Yet, most pre-service and in-service teachers are inadequately prepared to teach these students (Gay, 2002; Howard, 1999). Recent statistics indicate that fewer than 13 percent of teachers in the United States have received any form of training to help them effectively teach this growing population of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

To make sure that pre-service teachers will work more comfortably and successfully with immigrant students, teacher education programs need to help pre-service teachers develop and maintain a positive attitude toward their immigrant students and to develop a cross-cultural knowledge base as well as global awareness. Without this positive attitude, the cross-cultural knowledge and global awareness, teachers are unlikely to help immigrant students become successful both academically and socially. Researchers have argued that, to achieve this goal, teachers need experiential learning to develop empathy toward these students, to understand students' cultures, and to teach through students' cultural and experiential filters (Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000).

Cross-cultural Immersion

Quite a few universities and colleges have designed and implemented cross-cultural immersion programs to help raise pre-service teachers' cross-cultural awareness. Examining the impacts of these programs, researchers have consented that cross-cultural immersion programs have allowed pre-service teachers to experience their students' culture on a personal level and to develop a cross-cultural understanding (Aguilar & Pohan, 1998; Bryan & Marsha, 1997; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Nieto, 2006; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998; Wiest, 2004). Despite the benefits, many immersion programs conducted within the states or overseas, often take much time, cost, energy, and organization, and not all pre-service teachers can afford to participate in such programs. Therefore, in reviewing studies on cross-cultural immersion experiences and confirming the powerful impact of immersion experiences, Sleeter (2001) urged that more research is needed to explore how long an immersion project needs to be, what kinds of settings work best, and what impact an immersion experience has on a teacher when he or she enters the profession.

Many large cities in the U.S. have become increasingly international with influxes of immigrants from many countries in the past decade, especially immigrants from Central and South America as well as Asia, where English is not the dominant language. Atlanta is one of such cities. According to a recent report released by the Center for Immigration Studies (Camarota, 2005), Atlanta has experienced one of the largest influxes of immigrants in the nation from 2000 to 2005. The immigrant community formed along Buford Highway in metropolitan Atlanta has revived the declining economy of Atlanta and is considered the most unique cultural and business phenomena in the U.S. (Holt, 2004). This large community that accommodates thousands of immigrants from many different countries serves as an ideal window for native Americans, especially pre-service teachers, to learn more about immigrants as well as their diverse culture without having to visit these countries. Experiential learning in such a community is very likely to increase pre-service teachers' cultural and global awareness and to help them work more successfully with immigrant students.

Review of literature on the immersion programs indicates that most of the programs that intend to prepare pre-service teachers to work more successfully with immigrant students occurred overseas whereas few studies have been conducted to explore how an immersion experience in an immigrant-dominated community might affect pre-service teachers. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the impact of one-day cross-cultural immigrant community-based immersion experience on pre-service teachers who were just entering the education profession. More specifically, this study attempted to answer four questions: (a) how did pre-service teachers perceive this immersion experience? (b) what did pre-service teachers learn about and from immigrants and the immigrant students they are going to teach as a result of this immersion experience? (c) to what extent did this immersion experience at the immigrant community help promote pre-service teachers' cross-cultural and global awareness? and (d) in which aspects did pre-service teachers feel they were most empowered as a future teacher as a result of this experience?

The researcher hopes that the findings of this research will help address the questions proposed by Sleeter (2001) as to the appropriate length and settings of immersion programs in preparing pre-service teachers to teach for diversity. It is also hoped that this study will contribute to the existing literature on strategies of preparing pre-service teachers to teach immigrant students.

The Study

This study was located within the theoretical framework of cross-cultural experiential learning (Cushner & Brislin, 1996; Wilson, 1982), and interpretive paradigm. Cross-cultural experiential learning proposes that teachers from one culture be immersed in another culture, and that they reflect upon this experience for educational purposes. The second culture can be within the United States or in another country. Wilson (1982) has justified that cross-cultural experiential learning aids self-development, develops characteristics desirable for effective teachers, and leads to global perspectives necessary for global education to happen in schools.

This study was also informed by interpretive paradigm because it sought to understand the immersion experiences from the participants' perspectives, as Hitchcock and Hughes put it, "social life can be adequately understood only from the point of view of the actors themselves" (1993, p. 28).

Participants and Research Context

The participants in this study were 21 pre-service elementary teachers who just entered the teacher education program and took a summer cultural diversity course at an urban university in Georgia. A majority of the participants were to be placed as interns at the metropolitan Atlanta schools that accommodate a large number of immigrant students. Among the 21 participants, there were 12 white Americans, 6 African Americans, 1 Cuban American, and 2 Asian Americans, all female but one. The cultural diversity course focused on a variety of strategies for affirming the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of young children and intended to prepare pre-service teachers to teach for diversity. The cross-cultural immersion experience described in this study was one of the two immersion experiences that participants were engaged in while taking the course, the other one being related to understanding students' socioeconomic status.

The immersion took place in the community along Buford Highway, Northeast of Atlanta, where thousands of businesses are run by the immigrants. It is the largest and most important community where immigrants from many countries (Latino and Asian countries in particular), live, work, and shop side by side while still retaining their own cultures and languages. For example, at Asian Square shopping plaza, there are about 30 stores of

various kinds run by immigrants from over 15 Asian countries. This shopping plaza was formed by Asian immigrants about ten years ago to accommodate the diverse needs of increasing Asian population in Georgia and to provide a window for American people to learn about Asian culture. Almost all the stores or buildings along Buford Highway have signs and posters with English and a foreign language, many with more than three languages, including Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. Newspapers in different languages are displayed in front of various stores.

Each participant who was involved in this one-day immersion was required to: (a) thoroughly explore this immigrant community by him/herself, especially the three shopping centers (Farmer's Market, Asian Square, and Chinatown); (b) take fieldnotes, observe the community, take pictures, and collect information relevant to the community; (c) explore foods, goods, and books at the different stores; (d) taste food at a restaurant and participate in a certain kind of cultural activity in the community; and (e) informally interview at least three immigrants, especially parents with children, to gain an understanding of the children, the children's school life as well as parents' own concerns about and expectations of their children. The three shopping centers (Farmer's Market, Asian Square, and Chinatown) were selected because these are the places where most immigrants in Georgia come for shopping and social life. In addition, these are the places where different cultures, especially Latino and Asian cultures, are nicely merged together.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Research data were collected in multiple ways, including interviews with the participants before and after the immersion experience, observation of participants in the immigrant community, participants' reflective papers and fieldnotes, and participants' classroom discussions about this experience. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. The interviews and classroom discussions were audiotaped for data analysis. The observation was made by the researcher and two graduate students. This multitude of data sets allowed the researcher to better understand the experiences and perceptions of these participants.

The participants' responses and relevant data were first coded and analyzed based on the four research questions, and then patterns and themes that reflected participants' general understanding and stated or implied meaning attributed to the experience were noted and analyzed. Themes generated from the two interviews (before and after the immersion experience) were compared and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Data analysis revealed that this one-day cross-cultural immersion experience helped pre-service teachers in this study gain much knowledge about cultures other than their own and new insight into how it feels to be a foreigner and how they want to work with students with different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The following section describes and discusses the four themes generated from the data analysis: new perspectives of Atlanta; improved global mindedness; improved cross-cultural awareness; and more positive attitudes and competence in teaching immigrant students.

New Perspectives of Atlanta

Interviews conducted with participants before the immersion experience indicated that most of the participants in this study had never been out of the state. Four out of 21 had gone to the Buford immigrant community before the immersion trip. These four participants included one Cuban American, two Asian Americans, and one white American female who had a Mexican boyfriend. Prior to the immersion day, the instructor presented in class a series of Atlanta population maps and discussed the population changes in Atlanta in the past decade. Almost all the participants responded that they knew the city well. However, most of them had no idea about the immigrant community along Buford highway. After the experiential learning in the community, a majority of the participants noted that they experienced a culture shock and started to have a new look at Atlanta:

Today's experience was very informative and definitely memorable. I had no idea that there was such a large group of immigrants right in my backyard. I feel lucky and privileged that our city has such a unique part of town... Until today I didn't realize how much Atlanta has changed.

I have always considered myself a native Atlantan that knew this city well. I have traveled through just about every part of this city and take great pride in showing it off to friends whenever they come to town. Today I got to explore a large part of the city I have never seen before, which is the international district of Buford Highway... I have a better understanding of different people and their cultures, and of course, the city.

As the comments indicate, this immersion experience turned out to be a worthwhile and eye-opening experience for many participants. It opened a new window for the participants to get to know more about their city and see the changes the immigrants have brought to Atlanta.

Most people tend to live and socialize with members of their own ethnic group. This is no exception for the participants in this study. The cross-cultural immersion forced them to move beyond their comfort zone and observe their environment with a new perspective. This unusual experience no doubt expanded their horizons and enabled them to “see things in a more concrete and larger picture” (participant’s words).

Improved Global Mindedness

This experience expanded participants’ knowledge about immigration and globalization. It helped them develop a new understanding of these issues and how they should address these issues in their own classrooms. During the interviews and classroom discussions about immigration and globalization before the immersion experience, many participants acknowledged that they had no or little interactions with immigrants and they felt timid to live or stay with immigrants. Most participants commented that they welcome immigrants while a few expressed discomfort because of the belief that immigrants take many jobs away from native Americans and they have caused many societal problems. At the same time, to half of them, globalization or global society remained more of a concept than a reality. However, after the exploration of the community and interactions with the immigrants, almost all the participants believed that they had a full new understanding of the immigrants and they became more appreciative of the contributions immigrants have made to the U.S. Meanwhile, observation of people from so many countries living and working peacefully together enabled them to view globalization in a more positive and concrete way. Almost all of the participants agreed that global education should be a major component of everyday instruction to help students understand what is happening in the United States as well as other parts of the world, as expressed by one participant:

On my journey to Buford Highway, when I saw all the different languages on the shops, stores, and businesses along the road, I was overwhelmed with feelings. Not only did I feel a cultural shock, but also I felt like I was in another country... It was at this time that the word ‘globalization’ came into my mind and I started to know what it really means to us. It is fascinating to see that people of so many countries and cultures share a ‘home’ in Atlanta. It’s exactly a global village. Never before have I felt so strongly that our schools should talk about global issues and we teachers should teach our students from a more global perspective as we now have so many international students.

As this comment indicates, this immigrant community-based immersion offered participants the opportunity to observe a miniature global world. This first-hand immersion experience forced them to reflect upon their experience and move beyond their normal way of thinking about their classrooms and the world. It helped them realize that the world has become increasingly globalized and it is important to include global education to benefit both the American students and immigrant students. National studies have continuously revealed that American college students, including pre-service teachers, lack basic knowledge of other countries and global issues (Clarke, 2004; Holm and Farber, 2002; Osunde, 1996; RoperASW for National Geographic Education Foundation, 2002). As we live in critical times when the world faces various global issues of terrorism, ethnic conflict, social inequality, and environment destruction, it is important that teachers themselves develop world-mindedness and then integrate global education into their daily instruction. Global education will certainly promote the knowledge, attitudes and skills relevant to living responsibly in a multicultural and interdependent world.

The global awareness raised from this experience forced participants to seriously think about the necessity of mastering a foreign language, not only to communicate with immigrant students and their parents better, but

also to learn more about the world. For the first time, many participants felt that the lack of the ability to speak a foreign language would disadvantage them and that teachers need to be equipped with another language to better serve their students. Several participants expressed such a concern:

From this experience, I take with me a curiosity about others. Knowing that there are so many people in the world who do not speak my language bothers me. It makes me want to learn how to speak their language. I have never really felt the need for it before because I thought that English is spoken in so many other countries too, that I would not have too hard of a time with a language barrier if I ever travel. This is not true even in my own country.

I wish I could understand another language so [that] I could talk with them, read their newspapers and books and know what they do, what they think, and how they look at us. I really feel that people in different countries need to understand each other in this global society.

It can be honestly said that participants would not have felt so strongly about the need to command a foreign language without the language barrier they encountered in this experience. The idea that foreign language teaching can contribute to people's mutual understanding and a better world is not new. Unfortunately, foreign language teaching has been largely ignored in American schools. The growing number of immigrants in the U.S. and more globally connected market economy and environmental issues all call for the need to prepare both teachers and students to obtain a foreign language, especially Spanish and Chinese, the two languages spoken by over one fifth of the world population.

Improved Cross-Cultural Awareness

All the participants considered this immersion experience very valuable and believed it was effective in helping them gain greater cross-cultural sensitivity and a strong sense of empathy in the immigrant students. This view was expressed by not only participants who have never been to the Buford Highway immigrant community but also those who have been there many times. The latter all acknowledged that they never thought about how this community would relate to their future teaching until they made this meaningful trip.

An interesting finding about this study is that although the instructor emphasized that each participant was to explore the community by him/herself, it was discovered that nearly half of the participants partnered with one or two of their fellow students. Interview responses from the participants and their reflective journals suggested that they did so mainly because they felt very uncomfortable and frustrated when they were on their own in an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment. Even with their partners, they felt isolated. Participants noted that the feeling of a foreigner in their own country helped them deeply understand the feelings of the new immigrant students and the challenges they are facing everyday. This experience not only helped participants become more aware and appreciative of the cultures that are different from their own, but also gave them a way to relate to their immigrant students.

My experiences today will have a lasting effect on my life. I can honestly say that if the trips to Buford Highway international communities were not a part of the course requirements, I would probably have never gone to any of these places. After I visited these places and talked with people there, I have a better understanding of how the diverse ethnic groups in our society today use these markets and stores to keep their ethnic customs and cultures alive for themselves and for their children in our American society. Visiting the 'unknown' world of 'those' markets should be an experience every teacher should explore.

This cross-cultural immersion experience was an eye opener for me. I felt like I was the dumbest person on the face of this planet. I felt out of place and isolated, and I realized that I was an inconvenience to the people around me. The many empty stares that I received cut into my heart... this experience gave me the chance to walk in the shoes of the immigrant students that I will teach soon. I realize that it is up to me to make the difference and set the right tone for my classroom.

Being immersed in so much culture gave me a better understanding and respect for all the differences as well as similarities that we have. Now I feel like I will have at least a new and better

understanding of friends, colleagues, and even students I came across that come from these cultures. Actually visiting these places makes me feel like I have a way to relate to immigrant students in my classroom.

More than half of the participants commented that from their interactions with the immigrants, they not only became more sensitive to immigrant cultures but also better understand why some immigrant students behave in a certain way in the classroom. This understanding helped them become more receptive of the “abnormal behavior” and more willing to adjust their teaching to the diverse needs of these students.

I really like being submerged in this cultural immersion trip. I got to see how different cultures act in public on a normal, day-to-day basis. This is good for me, as an upcoming teacher, because often, teachers might infringe on the cultural behavior of his or her student’s family. From my experience today, I see how cultures are different... Just because something is “normal” in America does not mean that it is “normal” in other countries or cultures. Seeing how these different groups of people act around others really helped me see how my students interact with each other.

It’s easy now to understand how the language barriers could keep foreign individuals from feeling obligated to learn the American language. The entire situation helped me understand the reluctance of foreign students to make new friends and participate in classroom activities... I know now that many of them may have been raised in an environment where they have had absolutely no contact with cultures other than their own, or where they have been educated to be quiet. I feel that for this reason, I should automatically incorporate as many group activities into lesson plans early in the year. This would hopefully encourage inclusion amongst the students and give them opportunity to get to know one another and learn to appreciate each other’s differences. I would also begin the year with “getting to know you” activities that would give each student a chance to explain why their culture is wonderful and unique. Today was a life altering experience, and I have gained knowledge that a book could have never given me.

The above quotes suggest that many participants have developed an empathic disposition toward immigrant students as a result of this cross-cultural immersion. This empathic disposition has been deemed extremely important and identified as a key characteristic in working effectively with urban diverse students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gordon, 1999; McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Empathic teachers are more willing to establish a caring relationship with diverse students, form a friendly classroom environment, take on the perspectives of another culture, and to respond to individual needs. It is vital that teachers develop this empathy to foster openness, attentiveness, and supportive relationships with the immigrant students, who have often suffered tremendous trauma because of their life change and language barrier.

More Positive Attitudes and Competence in Teaching Immigrant Students

This cross-cultural immersion activity offered participants an unusual opportunity to observe and interact with immigrants, to obtain first-hand stories from immigrants about their life in U.S., their children, their concerns about schools, and their expectations for their children. This knowledge helped participants develop positive attitudes toward immigrants and their cultures and in many ways empowered them in teaching immigrant students.

One thing that impressed participants the most is the strong sense of community among the immigrants of diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants saw this as a model for their future classrooms and believed that the existence of such a community gave them the confidence to create a friendly and harmonious community within their own classrooms.

It truly is a melting pot of cultures. It is unusual to me to think of Latino and different Asian cultures blending together so well, since these cultures are on opposite sides of the world. But the cultures have really merged together and seem truly accepting of each other... I kept asking myself how I could make this possible in my own classroom.

When I walked in the community, I felt a strong sense of community between these people. They spoke different languages and had different cultures, yet they all had something in common and something to offer each other. Inside a school, a sense of community is offered as well. I know it is hard to bring an outside culture into something that is already formed, but the people of Mexico, China, Korea, India, Vietnam, Nigeria, and Bosnia have done so to Atlanta. So it is possible. I, as an upcoming teacher, need to recognize and appreciate these different cultures, and create a sense of community in my own class.

This feeling of community, along with interviews with parents, enabled participants to realize that immigrant parents care much about their children's education and success, that parents are eager to help their children, that it is vital to include immigrant families, their communities and other aspects of their lives in the classroom. A majority of the participants felt that they have become a better person and a better teacher because of this immersion experience.

Through interviews and the experience as a whole I feel I have become a better teacher. Although my experience was short lived, I got a chance to feel what many of my students may feel. Because of this, I will try to include them and their culture into my lessons and daily activities. I will include their families also because at a time when they feel ousted, that may be the only 'safe' thing they have. I will take account of all the changes that they are experiencing and make modifications as much as I can while teaching them. I will remember to highlight their good skills because they will most likely be reminded daily of all the things they are not yet good at. I will carry this assignment with me as I teach and just remember to put myself in their shoes.

Such comments were made even by those who seemed to have unpleasant experiences possibly caused by language barrier or lack of appropriate communication. However, this unpleasant experience in turn helped them realize that they need to avoid such things happening to their immigrant students, as participants remarked,

This may truly affect my teaching of immigrants, due to the fact that some of these immigrants were highly rude [to me]. I may have parents that can't speak English or may be rude to me. I am up for the challenge and ready to deal with this problem. I will try not to let the rudeness of the people I encountered have an effect with any immigrant student I may have in the future. I will do my best to ensure that they will be treated the same as everyone else in the classroom.

This unhappy experience helped me see how someone may feel when first arriving in a new country. It is very frustrating to not be able to read, to speak, or be understood. I will take this experience with me into my future, and every time I have a student in my class from another country, I will look back on it and remember how I felt. I will remember that I felt frustrated, misunderstood, out of place, and lost. Armed with that memory I will use all of my resources to ensure that my students will never feel that way in my classroom.

Because of this immersion experience, almost all the participants felt the need to make extra efforts to make sure every student feels welcome and comfortable in their classrooms. This experience motivated participants to think about more ways of teaching not only to accommodate the needs of immigrant students but also engage native Americans in meaningful learning. This was summarized in one student's paper and reflected the general view of almost all the participants in this study:

Overall these experiences caused me to have a great appreciation for someone who has a different culture than me as well as how difficult it must be for those that come here from other countries. I have found that it is going to be very important that when I begin teaching, I work with the other teachers to make sure that we have a very strong understanding of other cultures and their histories. It will be very important that we look after all students to make sure that all of them are integrating together so that no one feels left out just because of their culture and where they were born. It is very important that we work extra hard to see that these students have every chance possible to improve their ability to speak English so that they do not fall behind their classmates. In order for this to happen, it is crucial that I stay in contact with foreign students' parents to keep them aware of how their child's English is developing and what they can do at

home to make sure their English continues to develop...My experience today will influence my form of teaching profoundly in the future because I will take more care to learn the ethnic backgrounds of all my students and to consult many different places including their families, local agencies, communities, and the Internet to discover more about their way of life. I will include my students' experience into our learning. Finally I will look for ways to include studying their different ethnic backgrounds as part of our year's lessons. Every new teacher should be given such a chance to see personally how different cultures can be and why it is sometimes so difficult for foreign students to fuse their culture with that of their peers.

Conclusion

This study investigated a group of 21 pre-service teachers who experienced a one-day cross-cultural immersion at an immigrant community in Atlanta, Georgia, and reported that they learned profoundly from this experience. Data analysis revealed that this one-day immersion experience at an immigrant community can possibly affect pre-service teachers positively in their beliefs about teaching for diversity. Such an immersion experience can raise pre-service teachers' cross-cultural and global awareness, expand their knowledge of their own country and other countries, and better prepare them to work with immigrant students. The knowledge they gained about and from the immigrant community helped them become more positive and confident in creating a supporting class environment to attend to the diverse needs of all students.

The value of this immersion experience is profound. Firstly, the pre-service teachers learn first hand how it feels as an immigrant in a significantly different cultural and linguistic environment and what a positive impact they can make to the immigrant students in a new setting; secondly, participants learn first hand how immigrants have helped revive the declining economy and brought life and energy to American cities, and thus they develop a new appreciation of immigrants' contributions and their unique cultures; thirdly, participants learn first hand that a strong sense of community is possible among people of diverse backgrounds and in their own classrooms; and finally, participants learn to view their teaching from a more multicultural and global perspective and they are determined to make extra efforts to teach for diversity.

Mahon and Cushner (2002) have argued that overseas immersion experience provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to increase cultural knowledge, broaden global perspectives, enhance belief in multicultural education, motivate them to attend to individual differences, and include their students' personal experiences in the learning process. It is obvious that the immersion experience at the Buford immigrant community produced the same effect. This experience forced pre-service teachers to move beyond their comfort zone, to feel isolated and frustrated because of language barrier and cultural difference. It helped them develop empathy, which is a crucial part of being a caring, supportive, and responsive teacher with their culturally diverse students. Overall, it gave students a unique opportunity to develop cross-cultural and global awareness that they may not be able to obtain from a lecture, textbooks, or discussion (Nieto, 2006).

By 2030, more than half of the students in American schools will be minorities, immigrant students in particular. It is vital that pre-service teachers take up the challenge and equip themselves with knowledge, skills, and competence to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. It is vital that teacher education programs provide teachers with every opportunity to develop cross-cultural awareness and world-mindedness to make sure both immigrant students and American students succeed in this increasingly diverse and interdependent society.

This one-day cross-cultural immersion experience at an immigrants-dominated community proved to be effective and worthwhile in expanding pre-service teachers' cultural and global knowledge and improving their confidence and competence in working with immigrant students. Although it was short-lived, this immersion resembled overseas immersion experience in many ways as it gave pre-service teachers the unique opportunity to personally observe and experience different cultures, to interact with immigrants and their children, and to feel as immigrants may feel when entering a culturally and linguistically different environment. One obvious advantage is that this immersion can be easily implemented as there are and will be many cities like Atlanta within the United States. Of course, this cross-cultural immersion alone does not ensure that all pre-service teachers will certainly apply their learning to the classroom. This learning needs to be reinforced and enhanced via readings, lectures, videos, and more interactions with immigrant students and their families.

Such an activity can and ought to be a part of teacher education programs and preferably conducted at the early stages of their teacher education program in order to better prepare these teachers to work more successfully with immigrant students.

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