

Guest editorial

This special issue is devoted to a study of an action research-based reform of a US university study abroad programme to make it a genuine intercultural immersion experience. The four-year collaborative reform process combined participatory organisational redesign, the development of a comprehensive active learning approach and the teaching of intercultural competence through ethnographic immersion and community engagement in Seville, Spain. The case is an example of the development of intercultural competencies through guided behavioural change, of action research to reform higher education programmes and of active learning combined with formative and summative evaluation. The reader will learn about the experiences of the staff, faculty and mentors in the Consortium for Advanced Studies Abroad (CASA)-Sevilla study abroad programme and those of the sponsoring US universities as they together achieved a fundamental reform of a decades-old study abroad immersion programme. This special issue has many authors because this was a collaborative action-research project with continuous group work and brainstorming. The authors' names are placed in the sections where the authorship is clear, but, as befits a collaboration, many of the ideas are the result of the combined thinking of all the authors. Authorship of the various sections has been allocated mainly to clarify for readers the most relevant author to contact to learn more about particular dimensions of the process. The guest editors took on the editorial duties on behalf of this larger group.

The special issue is organised as follows. We introduce the CASA-Sevilla programme. Part 1 explains the problems that led to the programme reform process and reviews the relevant literature. It also deals with action research as an approach to pedagogical reform and lays out the itinerary of change in the programme. Part 2 describes changes in language learning linked to intercultural pedagogies using a modified version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the development of our own Common Framework for Intercultural Learning. It reviews some of the complexities of their deployment and the innovation of an interactive blog on which students document their experiences and interact with their mentors. Part 3 presents the changed teaching strategies in the programme modules on anthropology, history and art/art history and discusses the changed



role of the faculty member in residence. Part 4 examines the use of active pedagogy in linking students to their homestay families, local organisations and the larger surrounding environment. Part 5 analyses the organisational challenges all these changes created for the CASA-Sevilla programme itself. We examine how the changed role and requirements of the programme gave rise to changes at Cornell University. Finally, Part 6 details the formative and summative evaluation strategies used for the development and improvement of the programme.

This special issue is aimed to be of interest to readers concerned with study abroad programmes, language pedagogy and intercultural learning – all themes that *LATISS* has addressed in previous issues. The pedagogical approach described here would work as well at the home university as they do in study abroad. The special issue also provides a comprehensive account of this complex action research project and long-term process of organisational change. It has been written by the teachers, mentors and organisers of the study abroad programme, as well as specialists who provide support services for students and educational development and IT in the home university and, not least, the university leaders without whose support the reform would not have been institutionalised. Throughout the special issue, there will be links that take the reader to the CASA-Sevilla blog (<https://casasevillablog.wordpress.com/>), where additional materials and examples can be found. The author of each part of this ambitious and successful process of reform is identified in the text so that readers can contact them for further information and inspiration about how to adapt relevant aspects of the pedagogy or the action research process to other institutions.

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