

Mapping the role of the meso-level context during study abroad in Hungary

The aim of our study was to explore international students' dispositions in one particular university in Hungary. The importance of the investigation lies in the fact that study abroad investigations often fail to take into account meso-level contextual information, but our study mapped one particular context, a Hungarian university and its academic programs. When investigating international students' characteristics, we focused on important individual difference variables, such as motivation and autonomy, but also on various academic skills and community-related variables. Our empirical study was guided by the following research questions: (1) How can the academic and social experiences of international students at a major Hungarian university be described? (2) What differences are there in their academic and social experiences according to background variables? (3) What correlations exist regarding their academic and social experiences? (4) What impacts their motivated learning behavior? To answer these questions, we employed quantitative research methods. The participants (N=106) were recruited via convenience sampling targeting the full population of students. Data were collected with the help of a newly designed questionnaire, online, between May and June, 2022, and analyzed using various statistical procedures (e.g., descriptive and difference tests). Our results showed that the observed students had rather favorable academic and social experiences on the whole; however, we also found significant differences in those experiences in terms of the level of program they were studying in, their level of English, and the length of their study abroad. Furthermore, motivated learning behavior proved to be positively predicted by students' confidence concerning testing and opinion on the community at the faculty. Our study does not only shed light on the importance of academic and social experiences during study abroad, but has implications for university faculty members and policymakers alike.