**Reframing the Lens:**

**Fostering Global Competence through Study Abroad Programs**

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Teachers convey more than a lesson plan. Their framing of questions, cultural assumptions, biases, approach to different genders, personal background, life experiences and a host of other factors form a lens, or framework, through which they teach. Like all of us, however, teachers generally are not aware of those frameworks. Further, teachers often lack understanding of their students’ frameworks, who come from different countries, cultures, traditions and ways of knowing information. A short-hand way of describing these frameworks that require such global, cross-cultural fluency and self-awareness is “global competency.”

As we ask our students to be globally competent citizens (Davies & Pike, 2009; Schattle, 2009; Braskamp, 2009), we first must look to the teacher and assess his/her own global competency. As Sutton notes in her historical overview of global education in the United States, ‘the strength of global studies rests on the strengths of individual teachers’ (1998). Some researchers suggest schools and colleges of education are often the least internationalized divisions in U.S. post-secondary institutions (Schneider, 2003) and that consequently, ‘most teachers begin their careers with little more than superficial knowledge of the world’ (Longview Foundation, 2008). The question is how to most efficiently and effectively build global competency and understanding among teachers? This research paper proposes definitions of terms and then examines one tool to build global citizenship among teachers, namely through study abroad programs. The purpose of this study is to examine **how study abroad programs affect the perceived level of global competency among future teachers, and if particular design components of the program make a difference in that perceived level of competency.**

**Theoretical Framework**

*Parameters:* To answer this research question, this study will begin with a literature review followed by a proposed quantitative study. During the literature review, I will include studies only if they focus on: (1) defining global citizenship/international mindedness; (2) include future or current teachers participating in international experiences; (3) and/or examine how to build intercultural competency. I will not include articles if they: (1) only focus on international immersion programs for K-12 students; and (2) do not include international programs, i.e. are local programs only. When referring to teachers in the literature review, this study includes students preparing to be teachers (pre-service teachers, teacher candidates), teachers returning to the profession after an absence, and currently active teachers. The quantitative analysis proposed focuses only on students intending to be teachers.

*Assumptions*: This research is based on the assumption that we want our teachers to be globally competent. Reimers (2009) refers to the necessity of global competence given the frequency and type of interactions among different cultures and worldviews. Schools serve the purpose of preparing students to effectively develop tolerance, a deep knowledge of global affairs, a commitment to peace, and how to live their lives in a highly globalized socio-economic and political construct (Reimers, 2009). To achieve these goals, future teachers must be globally competent; teachers cannot teach what they do not know (Sadruddin, 2013).

*Defining of Terms.* The framework used in this research proposes a definition of at least two terms. First, different terminology is used to signify “global competency,” such as “intercultural competence,” “critical global citizenship,” and “global cosmopolitan” (Ramos, 2020). Other examples are noted by Reimers, who uses “global citizenship” (2009 and 2009a); Gallavum (2008) uses “world citizenship”; and Banks (2001) uses “multicultural citizenship.” In this study, these terms will be used interchangeably with a preference for “global citizenship.”

In addition, the notion of “global citizenship” does not have a uniform or consistent definition (Pashby et al, 2020), although there are common themes in definitions. Reimers (2009) defines global competency as the obtainment of attitudinal and ethical dispositions, and the collection of knowledge and skills to help people integrate across disciplinary domains to understand global issues and how to address them. Andreotti (2012) suggests the process of becoming globally competent is a transformative experience for those individuals needing international understanding, knowledge and cross-cultural skills. However, naming the process of becoming a global citizen as a *transformation* ignores those who already possess those skills due to their multicultural background, immigration status, “third culture kid” background, or other characteristic. A risk of generalizing what global competency development means must be included in broader definitions.

For the purposes of this paper, the definition proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Center for Global Education at Asia Society will be used:

Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues; to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others; to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. (OECD/Asia Society, 2018)

When applied to education, Gilliom (1997) describes “global competency education” as that which cultivates a global perspective, including the skills, attitudes, knowledge and ethical reasoning in a diverse, culturally pluralistic and interconnected world, among students. Another interpretation of the goals of global education suggests it is a process of assisting students develop a cognitive understanding of the interdependence of nations and peoples while finding ways to identify oneself with that global community (Banks, 2001). The OECD and the Center for Global Education name four key components of global competence (OECD/Asia Society, 2018). Globally competent youth:

(1) investigate the world beyond their immediate environment by examining issues of local, global, and cultural significance;

(2) recognize, understand, and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others;

(3) communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences by engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures; and

(4) take action for collective well-being and sustainable development both locally and globally.

In addition, the term “study abroad program” is not uniformly defined. For the purposes of this study, a study abroad program is an international immersion program that could be faculty led; organized by an independent organization; organized by another academic institution; or organized by the participant and approved by the academic institution. A study abroad program occurs when a participant leaves his/her home country and immerses in a different country for at least three weeks and no longer than one academic school year, or nine months. In addition, a study abroad program involves engagement with local people in the host country either by living with a host family and/or attending school or work with the local community.

**Literature Review**

A literature review serves as preliminary justification for an eventual quantitative research study to assess the effectiveness of study abroad programs on developing future teachers’ global competency. In addition to literature focused on defining global citizenship and terminology as discussed above, this literature review also assesses the state of global competency among teachers and study abroad programs, including their purpose and limitations. In reviewing the literature, this study can build upon the work of other researchers while deepening our understanding on how immersion programs can catalyze meaningful and effective global competency among future teachers.

**Study Abroad Programs**

As the demand for global competency increases (Sadruddin, 2013), the American Council on Education reiterates that Americans lack global competence (American Council, 2002). Consequently, globalization effectively becomes a threat as our citizens do not know how to succeed in a globalized world (American Council, 2002). In response, the council states that study-abroad programs “produce the core knowledge experts need for national security, economic competitiveness, and U.S. foreign policy leadership” (American Council, 2002). Educating people to become global citizens is a driving force behind justifying and validating international education and specifically study abroad programs (Davies & Pike, 2009; Schattle, 2009); there is broad acceptance that study abroad programs do develop global citizenship (Braskamp, 2009). Indeed, the U.S. Senate (2005) named 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad, in order to intentionally build global competency among American youth.

Andreotti (2012) expands on the difference between study abroad programs and other types of engagement with a foreign place. He discusses the differences between “visitor,” “tourism,” and “empathy,” which are nonlinear “dispositions” that refer to our interaction with a new culture or place. As a tourist, our encounter maintains distance from ourselves to the other; in empathy, we attempt to fuse ourselves with the other; and as a visitor, we both encounter the other and ourselves. When considering the multiple dimensions faced during an immersion program, a visitor, according to this theory, allows for cognitive reflection, awareness, and authentic engagement with both the self and the other while holding present the differences.

Looking broadly at the impact of study abroad experiences on global citizenship occurred in a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009). This study was a 50-year, longitudinal study (1960 to 2010) examining the long-term impact on students who studied abroad, including their local and international engagement, career choices and ambitions, and educational achievement (Paige, et al 2009). A clear correlation was found among students who maintained a more “global” view after participating in a study abroad program than those who did not. In another study, Kishino and Takahashi (2019) concluded university students improved their self-perceptions of global competency after mandatory study abroad programs.

**State of Global Competency among Teachers**

International study abroad programs, defined as service learning, practicums, or educational tourism, is effective in building global competency, particularly cultural awareness, among teachers (Baecher, 2019). When these programs to account for power dynamics between developed and developing country participants, teachers can move from compassion to critical assessments and intercultural competency (Major & Santoro, 2016; Baecher, 2019). Gilliom (1993) reiterates that immersion programs must be developed specifically for reservice teachers. In addition to faculty support and engagement, building global competency among teachers is most effective through immersion programs specifically designed for students preparing to teach, and that these future teachers must be committed to global education (Gilliom, 1993).

When defining the purpose of teachers obtaining and building their global competency, Banks (2001) focuses on teachers developing a reflective self-identification that includes a self-assessment of culture and background. In this way, he argues, teachers can effectively respond to a diverse study body, and help these students construct their own narratives. Another purpose of building teacher’s global competency is to equip students to be global citizens with the appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills, as well as a deep sense of identity and perceived role in a global society (Diaz et al, 1999). To teach students this information, argues Howard (1999), teachers cannot teach what they do not know; cultural responsiveness in the classroom is dependent on a teacher’s self-understanding of identity and role in a global community as well as his or her global competency.

Looking at whether teachers are interested in global competency and what “global citizenship” means for teachers, Gallavan (2008) conducted a comprehensive study of teacher candidates finishing their internship as part of a teacher certification program in the southern United States. In her research, she asked, “should teacher education programs include preparation to teach students to be world citizens?” (Gallavan, 2008). The response was an overwhelming 97 percent affirmative, but a follow-up question revealed only 72 percent of teacher candidates felt prepared to teach P-12 students to be global citizens. Gallavan’s study in part responded to Robbins (1997) earlier research, which had identified a gap in literature related to teacher candidates’ attitude toward global citizenship education, whether it was important, and how it related to the teacher’s major field of study. Despite their research occurring more than a decade apart, both Robbins (1997) and Gallavan (2008) found that teachers do not feel prepared to teach global citizenship.

Flinders (2009) suggests that global citizenship demands teaching that neither excludes nor skims the surface, which requires a depth of knowledge often unfamiliar to most teachers. When seeking to build global citizenship through teacher training programs that integrate cross-cultural skills, global knowledge, and personal self-reflection into the curriculum, the results are not as effective given the multi-dimensional aspect of study abroad programs (Sadruddin, 2013).

Cunningham (2019) conducted an ethnographic study on teacher candidates participating in an international student teaching program in Mexico, where she identified an increase in cultural noticing and cultural responsiveness during and following the conclusion of the program. One reason is the nature of a study abroad program in that it engages learning through multiple domains including conition, affect, and behavior (Cunningham, 2019). Ramirez (2013) emphasizes the need for authentic engagement and improved knowledge of globalization when participating in an international immersion program in her autoethnographic study examining American students in Mexico and international students participating in a study abroad program in the United States.

**Initial Assessment of Literature Review**

Based on this initial research review, “global citizenship” is a well-researched topic, but consensus on the purpose and definition of global citizenship varies across researchers, in part based on country of origin and/or epistemologies. However, there is a gap in the literature is how to build global competency among teachers most effectively (Seeberg &Minick, 2012). Studies have indicated global competency is critical, that teachers want to be globally competent, that approaches to becoming a global citizen are limited by classroom only engagement, and that study abroad programs are a highly effective tool to build global citizenship: but we don’t know what aspects of an immersion program are most effective. What makes an effective immersion program in terms of building global competency among pre-service teachers? The purpose of this study is to describe to what extent study abroad programs increase self-perceptions of global citizenship among future teachers and to investigate the differences in study abroad program structure that may affect differing levels of this self-perception.

**Proposed Method**

**Research Design**

This proposed research study would explore two related questions:

1. Do international immersion experiences affect the perceived level of global competency among future teachers?
2. Do particular structural components within the study abroad programs affect the levels of self-perception global competency?

To answer these questions, I would suggest a pretest-posttest research design. A control group is not used in this study given the focus of the study is on examining a self-selected group of participants who choose to participate in a study abroad program, and investigating whether certain structural components of an experience are correlated with the level of global competency perceived.

This research design seeks to respond to my hypothesis and null hypothesis:

Hypothesis: future teachers (college students intending to enroll or currently enrolled in a teacher certification program) who participate in international immersion programs improve their global competency, and certain types of programs are more effective than others.

Null hypothesis: international immersion programs do not improve global competency among future teachers (as defined), and the structure of a program has no impact.

**Participant Selection**

This study will use convenience sampling. Participants will be drawn from three targeted universities, each of which have a robust study abroad program and teacher certification program. The proposed universities are University of Washington (Seattle), University of Texas (Austin), and University of Maryland (College Park), each of which is a public institution, of similar size, and with a similar level of diversity among the student body (College Factual, 2020). These three universities are intentionally chosen from three distinct parts of the United States to help provide geographic diversity in the universities represented by the participants included in this research study. Each of these universities has robust and recognized study abroad programs that are widely integrated into the culture and curriculum options of the university. Below is a summary chart briefly outlining the schools, average number and percentage of students participating in a study abroad program, average number of IM programs offered at the university, and the reported percent of students self-identifying as minorities.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Brief overview of target schools and international immersion (IM) reported data\* |  |  |
| **School** | **Location** | **Total no. of students** | **Avg tuition (after aid)\*\*** | **% of student minorities\*\*** | **No. and % of students participating in IM programs** | **No of IM programs** |  |
| University of Washington | Seattle, WA | 54,000 | $12,899  | 43.70% | 2600 students or 5% of total | est. 350 |  |
| University of Texas | Austin, TX | 51,832 | $16,960  | 52.60% | 4400 students or 8.5% of total | 400 |  |
| University of Maryland | College Park, MD | 41,000 | $18,517  | 43.10% | 1835 students or 4.5% of total | 447 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*Information from school websites: https://global.utexas.edu/; http://www.washington.edu/; https://globalmaryland.umd.edu/ |
| \*\*data from https://www.collegefactual.com |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Volunteers must fall within the following parameters:

1. Identify as a student intending to teach in the future
2. Not participated in a study abroad program previously
3. Had not traveled to the intended study abroad program country previously
4. Fall within the age range of 20 to 30 years.
5. Will be participating in a semester/quarter or academic year length program

To reach a 95 % confidence level of the total N sample of study abroad participants (8,835 across all three universities), this study would seek a total of 368 participants. As each university has a different number of participants in programs, a proportional number of students would be taken from each university, that is: 50 percent from University of Texas, or 184 participants; 21 percent from University of Maryland, or 77 students; and 29 percent from University of Washington, or 107 students.

Further, approximately 65 percent of study abroad participants are women (Paige, et al, 2009); this proportional gender stratification will be applied to this study so that a total of 120 students from the University of Texas are female; 50 students from the University of Maryland are female; and 70 students from the University of Washington are female. In order to reach the target n sample, the study will accept 20 percent additional students (proportionally divided) above n to address attrition.

To recruit students, volunteers would be requested in coordination with the university administration and/or faculty. All volunteers will be offered $150 in renumeration for their participation.

**Measures**

The construct used to measure perceived levels of global competency followed by an assessment of what elements of the study abroad program are most influential will consist of a (1) demographic survey of participants, (2) the implementation of the Global Engagement Scale pre-test and post-test, and (3) completion of a Content Survey assessing the design of the study abroad program, which will be provided post-test.

*Demographics.* All volunteers will be asked to complete an online application that will serve as a baseline of demographic information. This application will ask for general biographical data (age; school; year in school; major in school; minor in school, as applicable; race; gender; sexual orientation; marital status; intended grades to teach; previous international travel experience (purpose and location); and destination of study abroad program). All demographic information will be disaggregated and statistically analyzed with the results of the GCS to assess if there is a relationship between a particular demographic value, such as gender, on the level of global competency perceived. To ensure reliability of the information provided, some information, specifically age, school, year in school, major and minor, race, gender, and destination) will be cross-checked with official school records. To check for internal validity, information provided will be checked against the parameters of the study.

 *Global Citizenship.* The Global Citizenship Scale is a survey of 56 questions developed and introduced by researchers in 2011 to provide a conceptual framework for assessing outcomes following study abroad or other international immersion experiences (Morais & Ogden, 2011). The Global Citizenship Scale (GCS) is a three-dimensional scale that includes social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement that provides a measurement of global citizenship.

 

Each of these factors is broken down into subareas, which are captured in a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The target audience for this tool is undergraduate students (Morais & Ogden, 2011). The tool uses a 5-point Likert scale asking for agreement or disagreement related to self-perceptions of global citizenship. To test for internal reliability, this survey will be given to participants twice: first, before participating in the study abroad program, and second, after participating in the study abroad program, therefore providing test-retest reliability. To mitigate internal validity issues, the content of the survey will be examined to ensure it accurately represents the construct presented in this study, namely, illuminating levels of global citizenship. In addition, this survey measures three key dimensions of global citizenship; factor analysis could be used to analyze the relationships among those elements measured to determine if the construct measured is uni- or multi-dimensional. If a factor analysis shows that the three components of global citizenship are present, then we have evidence of internal structure.

 *Study Abroad Elements*. At the conclusion of the study abroad program, participants will complete a survey about the program design of the study abroad experience (see appendix B). The objective of this survey is to provide information if certain components of a study abroad program have more influence on global competency than other components. The following components make up the survey: orientation and post-debrief; duration of program; housing; level of foreign language competency; required language use, if applicable (in class); use of local faculty and host institution faculty; cross-cultural communication course; experiential learning activities; internship and volunteer opportunities; reflection; travel; and time with other Americans (Engle & Engle, 2004; Whatley, M., Landon, A. C., Tarrant, M. A., & Rubin, D., 2020). This survey will be provided to host institution faculty to check reliability of information provided. To check internal validity issues, the survey’s content will be examined against this study’s intent to examine key components of study abroad programs.

**Procedures**

Once volunteers are selected, each volunteer would be asked to sign a written consent that would explain the purpose of the study, the potential risks of participation, the freedom to withdraw, and the confidentiality and privacy of all results. All participants would also be invited to review the final research report, which would not contain names or other identifying information of participants.

Participant demographic data will be analyzed and disaggregated by each of the reported data. Where redundancies become prominent, such as participants’ major, groups will be maintained at least by gender, race, destination, and previous experience abroad.

Data collection begins with a pre-test assessment using the Global Citizenship Scale (GCS). Each participant will receive the GCS online, and must complete the scale within ten days prior to departure. Upon return from the study abroad program, participants will be asked to complete the GCS again within ten days upon returning. In addition, students will be asked to complete the Content Survey regarding the structural components of the Study Abroad Program.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research study, while it does not include minors, does include human subjects and therefore would require International Review Board approval. As noted above, written informed consent will be obtained from each participant. Also, all participants will be informed that they can withdraw from the research study at anytime without any consequence. All 1:1 conversations will be kept confidential, but any group conversations will be at risk given the uncertainty of each member honoring confidentiality. To help ensure privacy, all email correspondence would be encrypted and subsequently deleted at the conclusion of the study. Information gathered from the GCS will be anonymized.

**Limitations**

This study will seek to mitigate several potential internal validity threats such as selection bias, testing, history or attrition as well as to address the pretest-posttest research method limitations. In this research method, a risk of extraneous variables occurring during the intermediary period between testing is possible, and therefore changes in scores on the GCS cannot automatically infer causation or relationship to the study abroad program. A pretest-posttest can suggest there is an association between participation in a study abroad program and increased global competency, but this method is insufficient to determine causation.

*Selection Bias:* Several potential biases in selection are possible. For example, a possible selection bias relates to cost of participation in a study abroad program. Universities were chosen based on their average tuition and availability of scholarships for study abroad programs. By holding steady the financial implications of study abroad programs and the average tuition, this study seeks to mitigate “cost” as a significant extraneous variable. In addition, an effort to mitigate a lack of exposure to student populations of different cultures was made by choosing universities having similar diversity levels as noted in the self-identification of students upon enrollment. By mitigating this factor, the objective is to approximate some equal level of exposure to students of different races and ethnicities, even if such exposure was limited to the classroom. Finally, the parameters of accepting volunteers who had not participated in a study abroad program previously as well as had not traveled to the program’s destination helps mitigate exposure to the environment, which may impact the results given on the GCS.

A separate but additional selection bias limitation is whether there are sufficient future teacher students willing to volunteer for this study in order to meet the n sample. Should there be an insufficient number of volunteers, this study will not meet the n sample number rather than take volunteers who do not meet the criteria in order to maintain the integrity of the parameters of the study.

 *Instrumentation.* Because this study utilizes the Global Citizenship Scale twice (pre- and post -test), the risk of recollection of questions by the participants will be introduced, which may lead to responses orientated toward what researchers would expect to see, or participants may not take the second test seriously. In addition, the survey about the study abroad program may be influenced by how the participants felt about the program, and therefore mark accordingly. To address these risks, scores will be correlated between and among participants to check for reliability. While not a formal instrument used in this study, participants will be asked to maintain a travel journal to record their observations, reflect on their experiences, and self-monitor their insights and progression of thought development, which may assist in mitigating this risk.

*History.* Another challenge is that an event may occur in one of the locations or regions that uniquely impacts a particular study abroad program. For example, a tsunami may hit Thailand (should that be a destination) but have no effect on Honduras. A conflict may rise in Ethiopia but not in Zambia. In addition, an unexpected event in the personal life of a participant may inadvertently alter the experience of the study abroad program; or, a key faculty member may depart, which disrupts the program’s experience. This challenge may be mitigated by the travel journal noted above, by attrition, or by integrating this information as data in an analysis.

**Proposed Preliminary Data Analyses**

The planned analysis will use participation in a Study Abroad program as the Independent Variable (IV); and two Dependent Variables (DV), the perceived level of global competency recorded by participants, and the structural content of the programs.

This research study will use a dependent t-test that will compare pre and post text scores. In addition, results from the Content Survey will be analyzed to check for similarities and differences among the programs. Further, the Content Survey data will be added to the particular student’s GCS and demographic data, so that a more complete data set on each student is available for deeper analysis. One objective of this combined data analysis is to evaluate whether there is a relationship between the factors in the Content Survey and the GCS analysis of increasing or decreasing levels of perceived global competency.

**Expected Findings**

This study will likely result in the assessment that study abroad programs lead to greater perceptions of global citizenship among participants. Further, this study may show a tendency for increased levels of global competency when:

1. The destination of the study abroad program is not Europe or Australia
2. Another language was spoken in the dominant country, requiring some language ability on behalf of the participant
3. Multiple weeks living with a host family
4. Participation in a cross-cultural communication class

As our perceptions, learning and attitudes are most profoundly formed during our school years, the school domain is arguably an optimal place to begin to build a global citizenship mindset among students. As the demand for global competency increases (Sadruddin, 2013), the vision is that improving global competency among a greater percentage of future teachers will lead to more globally competent students and future adults, and hopefully change the trajectory of the continuing, and now escalating, divisiveness facing our nation and broader global community.

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### Appendix A: Initial Item Pool of Global Citizenship Scale (portion of scale shown)

### A close up of a newspaper  Description automatically generated

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### Appendix B:

### Content Survey

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Study Abroad Program Characteristics Survey (Topics Only)\*** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Question** | **How Question is Surveyed** |   |
| Orientation pre-departure | (No of days) |   |
| Duration | (No of months/weeks) |   |
| No of Students from host school | (Number) |   |
| Dorm/hotel | (No of weeks/days) |   |
| Host family | (No of weeks/days) |   |
| Classes in English | (No of classes: 0 to 5) |   |
| English-speaking country | (Yes/No) | (If no, list language) |
| Foreign language history (if applicable) | (No of college semesters) |   |
| Use of home institution faculty | (No of classes: 0 to 5) |   |
| Use of host institution faculty | (No of classes: 0 to 5) |   |
| Use of host institution campus | (Yes/No) |   |
| Cross-Cultural Communications Class | (Yes/No) |   |
| Experiential learning activities | (Yes/No) | (List of activities) |
| Private reflection | (None, Daily, Weekly, Monthly) |   |
| Group reflection | (None, Daily, Weekly, Monthly) |   |
| Internship | (No of days) |   |
| Volunteer work | (No of days) |   |
| Time with other Americans | (Frequent/Sometimes/Rarely) |   |
| Travel in-country | (No of days) |   |
| Post-experience debrief | (No of days) |   |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| \*Adapted from Whatley, M., Landon, A. C., Tarrant, M. A., & Rubin, D. (2020) and Engle & Engle (2004). |

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