

Transformative learning of pre-Service teachers during study abroad in Reggio Emilia, Italy: A case study

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Abstract: The present paper explores the transformative learning of five pre-service teachers participating in a two-week study abroad program to Reggio Emilia, Italy. The study was conducted in order to understand how a study abroad program could contribute to pre-service teachers' content knowledge, teaching practices, and global competence. Through a phenomenological research design, participants' lived experiences and the meanings they made of those experiences during study abroad were collected, analyzed, and coded. Conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for further research are also included.

Keywords: study abroad, pre-service teachers, global competence, teacher education

I. Introduction

Only a small percentage of pre-service teachers are exposed to meaningful, comprehensive curricula that enhance global competence (Lucas & Villegas, 2002; Tucker, 1982; Wells, 2008). In response to pre-service teachers' limited exposure to diverse curricula, many universities offer international study abroad programs that provide students with experiences designed to increase multicultural and global awareness that they may not receive in their regular coursework. This paper shares how a Study Abroad Program to Reggio Emilia, Italy transformed pre-service teachers' learning experiences.

The guiding research question for the study was: How do the lived experiences of pre-service teachers who travel to Reggio Emilia, Italy for study abroad transform students' perceptions and global competence? Student perceptions and global competence were measured by a demographic questionnaire, interview-style directed reflective journals, and a profile of a globally competent student. Findings indicate that students' perceptions and global competence were transformed in three areas: a) an increase in content knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach; b) views of cultural differences; and c) a heightened self-awareness after returning to the United States.

A. Global Competence

According to the National Education Association (NEA, 2010), global competence is a vital skill for all 21st Century Learners and higher educational institutions must find ways for pre-professionals—those who are in education programs prior to entering the workforce—to increase their global competence skills. The Council of Chief State School Officers and the Asia Society (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011) define global competence as "...the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance" (p. xiii). Within this definition, global

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competence is enhanced when students participate in and analyze experiences beyond the environment in which they interact with the most, identify diverse perspectives, present ideas to diverse people, and advocate for others. More specifically, NEA operationally defines global competence as "...the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues, an appreciation of and ability to learn and work with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, proficiency in a foreign language, and skills to function productively in an interdependent world community" (2010, p. 1). NEA further breaks this definition of global competence down into four components: (1) international awareness; (2) appreciation of cultural diversity; (3) proficiency in foreign languages; and (4) competitive skills. NEA believes these skills are necessary components of public education programs because the United States has become more diverse, relies more on other countries to boost the economy, and must address global health and environmental issues. Therefore, higher educational institutions must determine how the global competence skills of pre-service teachers can be fostered. For the purposes of this paper, both definitions of global competence and their characteristics will be adopted and will be discussed in relation to pre-service teachers.

B. Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad programs can be outstanding educational opportunities to increase global competence. They can provide pre-service teachers with additional real-world experiences working with others in varying socio-economic conditions and with those who speak different languages. Study abroad programs can also offer exposure to educational systems and teaching philosophies outside of the United States. Study abroad—or "global learning"—programs are defined as "a vehicle for integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives and weaving together existing commitments to explore diversity, build capacity for civic engagement, and prepare students to take responsibility for common global problems" (Hovland, 2009, p. 2). This definition aligns with the definitions of global competence as described earlier, especially in the areas of international awareness, appreciation of cultural diversity, and advocating for others.

Scholars have also indicated that study abroad programs have resulted in participants being able to identify more specific components of global competence such as the political, religious, economic, historical, and cultural diversity of children and families in the school community who come from different countries (Trilokekar & Rasmi, 2011). Study abroad experiences can be applied throughout an education program to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate existing course texts and activities within the context of what is experienced abroad (Hovland, 2009). Finally, global learning programs can be either short-term (up to a few weeks) or long-term (semester or year-long) and can range in experiences from learning about the food in a specific country to service-learning within schools.

C. Study Abroad as a Vehicle to Enhance Global Competence in Teacher Education Programs

Several patterns have emerged from the examination of the impact of study abroad programs on pre-service teachers' global competence. For example, Brindley, Quinn, and Morton (2009) investigated 17 elementary and early childhood pre-service teachers who spent 26 days teaching in England. Data using a qualitative approach were collected from the participants' reflective journals. The common emerging themes centered on the similarities and differences between the American and English education systems. The themes included "understanding of

community, responsibility and management in the classroom, the meaning of a broader curriculum, the role of technology and the universal characteristics of children” (Brindley et al., 2009, p. 250). The researchers concluded that a characteristic of the globally competent pre-professional is the ability to consider diverse methods of teaching and reflect upon how those methods apply to their career.

Another characteristic of the globally competent pre-service teachers that has emerged is the ability to adapt and become sensitive to other cultures. Williams (2005) investigated 55 college students of varying majors who studied abroad in different countries for at least four months. A control group of 48 students who did not study abroad was used for comparison. Pre- and post-study abroad survey data included “emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy...[as well as] intercultural communication awareness” (p. 362). Williams concluded that “...exposure to various cultures is the best predictor of intercultural communication skills” (p. 369). Therefore, global competence increases the more a person participates in activities outside of their own culture. Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) reached a similar conclusion about students who studied abroad. Using a qualitative approach, Trilokekar and Kukar identified themes of racism, being an outsider, risk-taking, and realizing differences in social status between countries. Each of these themes requires a certain degree of cultural adaptability and sensitivity as defined by Williams (2005). Through recognizing and analyzing these disorienting experiences, globally competent pre-service teachers can begin to perceive diverse children as individuals and consider the difficulties these children may face when interacting within an unfamiliar culture.

D. Study Abroad as a Transformative Learning Process

Study abroad programs are considered to be a transformative process (Taylor, 2008; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Wells, 2008). *Transformative learning theory* involves “constructing and appropriating new and revised interpretations of the meaning of an experience in the world” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5). A primary process of transformative learning theory is the understanding of experiences through reflection and conversations with others (Mezirow, 1996). Through deep reflection, the learner can begin to question, evaluate, and compare encounters in order to make sense of diverse experiences. Ultimately, the learner begins to apply experiences to prior knowledge and form new notions, or frames of reference, about the world and others in the world. Therefore, the transformative learning theory involves reflecting on and analyzing experiences in order to construct knowledge.

According to Mezirow (1997), a frame of reference acts as a preconception that guides a person’s actions in a new experience. A frame of reference includes two components: habits of mind and point of view. Habits of mind comprise a set of abstract codes and values a person gains from their immediate environment. A habit of mind drives a person’s point of view and, thus, their feelings and judgments towards others. Habits of mind tend to remain static, while points of view transform as a person has an experience that does not fit into their previously conceived points of view and is able to reflect critically on their previous assumptions (Mezirow, 1997). When working with adult learners, Mezirow (1978, 1997) believes that transformative learning is supported when the learner is aware and can critically analyze theirs and others’ frames of reference, can examine beliefs and experiences from different perspectives, and can engage in discussion to support or reject current frames of reference. Consequently, learning is transformed through making meaning of social experiences (Mezirow, 1997).

From the perspective of studying abroad, upon experiencing a diversity of ideas, language, and culture and then reflecting on that experience, the pre-service teachers can begin to transform preconceptions about others into an inclusive, globally competent context (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Thus, the pre-service teacher who reflects on the study abroad experience forms new global perspectives that can inform teaching practice and strengthen global competence. Based on the above, the purpose of the present study is to explore such transformative learning processes of pre-service teachers during a Study Abroad Program in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

E. The Study Abroad Program to Reggio Emilia, Italy

The Reggio Emilia Approach (afterwards referred to as “the Approach”) offers a unique perspective to the developmentally appropriate practices defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009), including the role of the teacher as a facilitator who guides children as they take charge of their learning within an emergent curriculum. Although the Approach is not the only teaching philosophy used in the town of Reggio Emilia, it has been closely studied by Early Childhood educators around the world. While the Approach is often described in Early Childhood textbooks as an “influence [that] has challenged our thinking about art for young children. . .” (Essa, 2007, p. 267), the information included in texts is very limited in scope -leaving the reader to conclude that the main component of the Approach is student engagement and learning through art-based activities.

However, while art is used to enhance learning and expression in Reggio classrooms, the foundations of the Approach are based on strong child, teacher, family, and community relationships, with long-term community-based critical and creative thinking projects evolving from those interactions (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012). A major tenant of the Reggio Emilia Approach is that education is based on relationships within “...a school that is active, inventive, livable, documentable, and communicative... a place of research, learning, revisiting, reconsideration, and reflection” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 9). In this sense, teachers and parents learn from and along with the children. This is achieved through constant communication between the three systems (children, teachers, and parents).

Structuring the majority of learning experiences for children to work in small groups is also an important aspect of the Reggio Emilia Approach. In the context of The Approach, allowing children to interact with each other and their environment in ways that are not highly structured will facilitate the growth of all domains of development. Thus, it is the teacher’s job to observe children as they interact with each other and with the materials they are given so that teachers can determine what materials or responses are needed to help foster communication among the children (Malaguzzi, 1993). As the teacher observes the children, continuous documentation in the form of written behaviors and children quotes, photographs, and videos is conducted and used to inform teachers’ guidance of children’s learning. Documentation panels are printed and placed on walls around the whole school for children, parents, and visitors to understand the processes of the children’s learning.

The Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) program at a large southeastern public university collaborated with the campus’s Office of International Studies to create a study abroad program to Reggio Emilia, Italy during Summer 2012 entitled *Historical, Cultural, and Theoretical Foundations of the Reggio Approach to Early Childhood in Italy*. The study abroad program was designed to provide a deeper exploration into the Approach in order to offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to gain hands-on, real-world educational and

cultural experiences within the context of developmentally appropriate practices that cannot be obtained from reading a textbook or enrolling in non-study abroad courses. Participants had the opportunity to visit early childhood and cultural centers in Italy and compare them with centers in the United States. This was the first time current ECDE faculty at this university planned and carried out a study abroad program to schools that use the Approach. The program was open to all majors at this university.

II. Research Design and Guiding Question

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was chosen for the study. The goal of phenomenological research is to depict the meanings participants give to lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). In a phenomenological study, the researcher often conducts interviews and observations to gain in depth insight into participants' experiences. Data analysis is conducted as participants are experiencing the phenomena. In the present study, participants' responses were repeatedly reviewed throughout the study. Through the phenomenological process of horizontalization (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) significant statements relevant to the participants' experiences and global competence were highlighted. Then, the statements were clustered into common themes that all participants experienced. Data was then presented as a list of themes with detailed descriptions and quotes from participants' responses to further represent the themes (Hays & Wood, 2011).

Because participants' responses and experiences drive a phenomenological study, an overall research question is formed to help guide the study (Creswell, 2007). The guiding question for the current study was: How do the lived experiences of pre-service teachers who travel to Reggio Emilia, Italy for study abroad transform students' perceptions and global competence?

III. Procedures

A protocol was submitted to the campus Institutional Review Board and the study was approved as Exempt from Human Research. Participation in the study was voluntary and no incentives were offered. Five participants provided the most comprehensive data that allowed for in depth analysis. The sample size of five falls within the range of the recommended sample size for a phenomenological study (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Participants submitted their data using a self-created four-digit code in order to maintain confidentiality. They represented a diverse range of background experiences. Four of the participants were female and one was male. One participant was an Early Childhood Development and Education undergraduate, one was an Elementary Education undergraduate, one was a Psychology undergraduate who was receiving a minor in Early Childhood, one was in the Interdisciplinary Studies Master's program, and one was in the Early Childhood Track of the Education PhD program. Three of the five participants had previous international travel experience and two of those students had been to Italy on previous trips. One student was fluent in English and Spanish, but none of the students spoke Italian. All five participants had completed at least one prior diversity course or training. The male Interdisciplinary Studies major stood out from the group as having extensive experience of international travel, while the most another participant had was two years of travel experience. He was also the bilingual student.

A. Data Collection

As the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) requires in-depth reflection, data in the form of reflective questionnaires designed to track participants' learning and experiences over the course of the program were collected three times: prior to the start of the study abroad program while participants were still in the United States, at the mid-point of the study abroad program while participants were in Italy, and after the study abroad program ended and participants returned to the United States. Data were analyzed from participants who completed questionnaires at all three data points.

B. Instrument #1

An eight-item **directed reflective journal** was given to participants at pre-departure, mid-program, and post-arrival. The journal was designed for participants to evaluate how their expectations, feelings, and understanding transformed during the study abroad program. The eight questions were the same at each data collection point, with only a change in verbs to indicate at which point in the program the reflection took place. Data at all three collection points were compared to determine the themes that emerged about the Approach as well as global competence skills that were gained throughout the program.

C. Instrument #2

A ***Profile of the University of Central Florida Globally Competent Student*** (see Appendix A) provided by the campus Office of International Studies (2010) was given at pre-departure and post-arrival. This questionnaire required participants to evaluate their knowledge about the Reggio Emilia region as well as evaluate culture, values, and language from a personal and a diverse perspective. Participants were asked to answer several questions within three main categories: (a) Demonstrate basic knowledge of the places you are to visit/visited; (b) Demonstrate self-awareness and self-reliance; and (c) General outcomes for language programs. An example of a response item under the basic knowledge category was "Describe examples of the local cultures of the countries to be visited/that were visited." An example of a response item under the self-awareness and self-reliance category was "Describe your ability to relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds." Finally, an example of a response item under the outcomes for language programs category was "Describe non-verbal cues for the countries to be visited/that were visited." The campus Office of International Studies designed these specific questions as learning outcomes for a study abroad program and were based on characteristics that were identified to contribute to the global competitiveness of graduates from this institution. Pre-departure and post-arrival questionnaires were compared to determine ways in which global competence skills transformed during the study abroad experience.

D. Instrument #3

A **demographic questionnaire** was given at pre-departure to collect biographic and background information about the study abroad participants, including age, gender, ethnicity, major, number of diversity training and international experiences, and fluency in a second

language. This information was evaluated to determine if patterns emerged in similarities and differences in participants' biographic information that may have impacted the study abroad experience.

IV. Data Analysis

Responses from the pre-, mid-, and post-directed reflective journals and the pre- and post-*Profile of the University of Central Florida Globally Competent Student* (Office of International Studies, 2010) after the conclusion of the project were used to determine the global competence themes that emerged from pre-service teachers in the current study in relation to previous studies. Data in the study presented here were analyzed using a qualitative, phenomenological approach to determine if the emergent themes within participants' lived experiences and the meanings they make of those experiences are consistent with the two overall themes in the previously reviewed research: (a) consideration of diverse teaching practices and (b) cultural adaptability and sensitivity. Additionally, other themes about global competence and pre-professional education that emerged during the study abroad program are examined.

Using the phenomenological method of data analysis (Creswell, 2007), participants' responses were first read several times, significant phrases from responses were then highlighted, which resulted in the formulation of clustered themes present across the responses. Thus, data from the three reflective journals, the two questionnaires, and the demographic information were triangulated, to form common themes that emerged from the pre-departure to post-arrival. Below, quotes from responses on the reflective journals and the questionnaires were used to provide more insight to the lived experiences and meanings the participants' made of the experiences during the study abroad program.

V. Findings

In examining participants' responses, three major transformative themes emerged: (a) an increase in content knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach; (b) views of cultural differences; and (c) a heightened self-awareness after reflecting upon experiences and returning to the United States.

A. Transformative Theme 1: Increase in Content Knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach

After reflecting on study abroad experiences, the participants felt their content knowledge of the Approach increased and, more specifically, discovered how creative and critical thinking activities can enhance teaching practices. The participants were especially impacted by the Approach's use of creative and critical thinking and its relationship to teaching and learning. The following quotes represent thoughts on this concept:

“The natural touches and creativity brought me to tears.” (Code 0124)

“I believe this experience will allow me to explore different ways I can instruct young minds and embrace their creativity and development.” (Code 6394)

“[The most rewarding aspect] was witnessing with my own eyes children ages 4-6 creating clay sculptures that could rival—or beat—anything that I could do...If we let kids construct their own knowledge, they will.” (Code MOOS)

“I feel as if these [hands-on activities] have not only changed the way I think about teaching children, but they have also stimulated my own brain and have challenged me to become a more creative and critical thinker.” (Code 0831)

Similar to the earlier study completed by Brindley et al. (2009), pre-service teachers in the Reggio Emilia study abroad program reflected on teaching practices employed with the Approach and how the practices in relation to “the curriculum, the teacher, the learner, the building, and the community” (p. 528) were similar and different to those in the United States. In general, all participants believed they learned more than they could in a classroom at home, that content knowledge of the Approach increased, and they gained more knowledge of the benefits of the Approach, especially in relation to working with young children. All of the participants also indicated that the experience caused them to view children with more respect and as stakeholders of their own learning, a key aspect of the Approach (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012) as well as NAEYC’s position on developmentally appropriate practices. One participant (Code 0392) was so inspired by the experiences that she changed her major from Elementary Education to Early Childhood Development and Education while she was in Reggio Emilia.

B. Transformative Theme 2: Views of Cultural Differences

Both Williams (2005) and Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) examined participants’ interactions with diverse cultures during study abroad. Similarly, participants in the Reggio Emilia study abroad program had difficulties adapting to everyday cultural practices such as shopping for food, navigating the public transportation systems, and communicating with Italians in professional and informal settings. They experienced a sense of being an outsider and felt disliked by some native Italians. In their reflections, the participants indicated how they learned to adapt to the culture by becoming proficient in nonverbal communication and connecting with others in formal settings through the common lens of educating young children. Also similarly to the previous studies, all of the participants gained a more thorough understanding of different cultural norms as well as historical and current events stemming from the Reggio Emilia region of Italy. Participants used specific cultural examples such as: each city has a unique culture, the ways in which men scrutinize women in public, the current economic crisis, drinking coffee, and an increased use in bicycles over cars. One participant summarized Italian culture as seen in Reggio Emilia by stating, “They cherish their victories and losses through statues and educate their students through a community perspective.” (Code 0392)

Additionally, reflections indicated that the participants discovered a need for their own future students to become culturally aware as well:

“...After experiencing a new culture, I developed a larger sense of importance and need for more language and cultural programs within the public school system.” (Code 0124)

“I learned more about how to be able to relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds after this trip. We can’t assume people in other cultures do things the same way we do. Even the simplest things can be done differently.” (Code 6394)

The participants in this study also reflected on how this experience was only the start of becoming more culturally aware. One participant in particular reflected in-depth on this idea:

“...I feel as though I was missing out before I had traveled and almost like I was not living to my full potential by engaging with other cultures and always striving to learn new things...This trip touched me in so many ways. I am incredibly fascinated with the fact that there are so many differing cultures out there that I don’t know anything about. I am so much more eager to explore and learn from others after this trip. It’s such a wonderful feeling! I had never placed such an importance on opening myself up to different cultural experiences and truly pushing myself out of my comfort zone. Now I want to continue to travel and learn about different cultures, religions, and ways of living.” (Code 0124)

Therefore, the study abroad program not only transformed participants’ knowledge of a different, specific culture, but also increased their desire to travel, learn more about other cultures, and infuse cultural education into their future classrooms, which are consistent themes found by other researchers (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Williams 2005).

C. Transformative Theme 3: Heightened Self-Awareness

Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) found that the participants in their study experienced a sense of culture shock, which can be defined as discomfort when a person encounters experiences that are culturally unfamiliar to them. In the Trilokekar and Kukar study, participants’ responses indicated they were uncomfortable when they realized they live in a nation that was more powerful and privileged than the nation in which they were studying. In the current study, a similar pattern emerged in regards to participants’ having a more heightened self-awareness. The participants realized that Americans were different and had more privileges, which resulted in negative feelings about Americans and the American school system, which they wrote about when reflecting on their experiences:

“America seems more fast-paced. There are less ‘family-owned’ restaurants. In the cities I have lived in, we depend less on public transportation or bicycling. We are more stand-offish with each other. In America, I would never see two men greet each other by hugging or kissing on cheeks.” (Code 0831)

[Reflecting on American culture before and after study abroad]: “Before I had no idea, but now I realize that we’re all about consuming as much as possible (without giving back to the earth) and being lazy, impatient, and selfish.” (Code 0392)

“Americans need to be more open minded and cultured.” (Code 0124)

“[I have a] fear of not being able to accomplish the Reggio experience in a mainstream US school. [I am convinced that] if I teach in the US I will not be happy. I feel like I need to teach in Reggio if I want to have the professional teaching experience I’ve always dreamed of having.” (Code 0392)

As participants gained appreciation for Italian culture and education, their self-awareness of American culture and education became increasingly more negative.

VI. Conclusions and Discussions

Using transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978), participants were required to complete in-depth reflections that indicated how they constructed knowledge and how their world view changed after completing a two week study abroad program to Reggio Emilia, Italy. As indicated above, pre-service teachers' responses suggested three transformative learning themes as a result of their participation in the Study Abroad Program to Reggio Emilia, Italy. These transformative learning themes included: a) an increase in content knowledge of the Reggio Emilia Approach; b) views of cultural differences; and c) a heightened self-awareness after returning to the United States.

Upon reviewing participants' demographic information and comparing them to pre-departure and post-arrival questionnaire responses and pre-departure, mid-program, and post-arrival journal reflections, the male Interdisciplinary Studies major's responses did not indicate much growth in global competence, as defined by NEA (2010) above. He had also indicated more travel experience than the other participants in his demographic questionnaire, which could result in a pre-existing high degree of global competence. The remaining participants, who had comparable backgrounds and limited experiences with travel, had similar responses and growth in global competence. However, all students, irrespective of demographic background, indicated some degree of increased global competence in areas identified in previous research (Brindley et al., 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Williams, 2005), in which transformative themes of consideration of diverse teaching practice, cultural adaptability and sensitivity, and heightened self-awareness emerged. Additionally, participants' responses indicated increased knowledge in two components of NEA's (2010) definition of global competence: international awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity.

The group of students who went to Reggio Emilia struggled most with reactions to differences in culture and the language barrier. They also indicated that the creative and critical thinking activities where children are able to construct their own knowledge were the most eye-opening and beneficial. While it may not be feasible for all pre-service teachers to enroll in a study abroad program, participant responses in this study can offer some indication of activities that can be incorporated into existing education programs to increase global competence. This study and previous research indicated that experiences where pre-service teachers are placed in situations outside the cultural norm, while initially disorienting, can increase cultural adaptability and sensitivity.

Finally, since the end of the study abroad program, participants have been invited to present at the university's early learning center as part of its professional development day. Study abroad participants have also chosen the Approach when completing theory-based assignments in their courses and, subsequently, continue to share their knowledge with their pre-professional colleagues. The transformative learning that occurred during this two week study abroad to Reggio Emilia has not only shaped the ways in which the participants view developmentally appropriate practices and global learning, but their continuous enthusiasm in sharing experiences is starting to benefit others in the local teaching profession, thus enhancing the skills and knowledge of many pre-professionals and professionals who did not have the study abroad experience.

VII. Recommendations for Future Research

Although these qualitative results are not generalizable to large populations, it is hoped that this study will inspire other researchers to carry out similar studies in order to impact their teacher education programs. The relatively small sample of 5 is a recommended size for a phenomenological study, it would be beneficial to increase the number of students who provide comprehensive data about their experiences. In addition to the recommended methods of data collection regarding transformative learning -such as through questionnaires and journals (Mezirow, 1978), semi-structured face-to-face interviews at each data collection point could offer a more thorough insight into participants' experiences. Further, participants in this study experienced a two-week study abroad with four school visits and additional cultural experiences designed to increase their understanding of the Reggio Emilia Approach and this region of Italy. This brief program could not provide as full of an immersion into the culture and the school system as a more extended stay could have. Thus, a longer study abroad program could offer further insights into pre-service teachers' transformative learning and increased global competence during study abroad. Additionally, future programs could benefit from an examination into the similarities and differences between the Approach and Italian Montessori philosophies in order to strengthen pre-service teachers' knowledge of historical theories and practices in Early Childhood Education.

In future studies, it may also be beneficial to compare a group of American students who study in an English-speaking country to a group who study in a non-English-speaking country to determine how much of a factor language is in pre-service teachers' transformative learning and increase in global competence during study abroad. Additionally, a longitudinal study that tracks pre-service teachers who participate in study abroad programs and pre-service teachers who do not participate after they begin teaching could be beneficial to determine how global competence skills are retained or used once they enter the profession. Lastly, pre-service teachers need to conceptualize that, not only are they global citizens, but they must also teach their future students to be globally competent. A study of globally competent characteristics and how they can be meaningfully integrated into the curriculum could benefit future professionals, students, and families as well.

Appendix A. Profile of the University of Central Florida Globally Competent Student

- I. **After students participate in a study abroad experience, students should be able to do the following:**
 - A. **Compare/contrast your prior knowledge of each the following with that gained during your experience:**
 - (1) The main cultural, geographic, physical, politico-economic and social characteristics of the places visited
 - (2) Sources of information for the countries visited
 - (3) Currencies and currency trends for the places visited
 - (4) Examples of the local cultures of the countries visited
 - (5) Describe how you applied orientation information within a cultural context
 - B. **Compare/contrast your prior self awareness and self-reliance with that after your experience.**
 - (1) Description of your own culture before and after

- (2) Your personal values before and after
 - (3) Your ability to deal with the components of international travel (immigration, currency, transportation, housing...) before and after
 - (4) Your adaptability to be functional in new and unfamiliar circumstances before and after
 - (5) Your ability to deal with challenging situations before and after
 - (6) Your ability to relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds before and after
 - (7) Your ability to identify signs of intercultural conflict before and after
 - (8) Your ability to integrate experiences into your learning (personal growth) before and after
 - (9) Your ability to identify signs of trouble and react accordingly before and after
 - (10) Your ability to develop a personal budget before and after
 - (11) Your tolerance for complex and ambiguous situations before and after
 - (12) Your ability to work independently before and after
 - (13) Your ability to work in culturally diverse teams before and after
 - (14) Define your level of curiosity about cultural exploration before and after
 - (15) Your ability to analyze and empathize with the personal situations of others before and after
- C. Compare/contrast your general outcomes for language programs (in addition to the language specific ones) prior to the experience abroad with those after the experience.**
- (1) Recognize appropriate use of language in different cultural contexts (formal, etc.) before and after
 - (2) Describe non-verbal cues for the countries to be visited before and after
 - (3) Recognize and describe cultural norms for the country before and after

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