The effects of study abroad programs on teachers' professional development

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The Effects of Study Abroad Programs on Teachers’ Professional Development

Bahar Mikael

A Thesis Project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY
In
Partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science in Education

Adult Education and Human Resource Development

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband ‘Farhad Koyee’, my sister ‘Paiyz Mikael’, my children ‘Aurvan Koyee, Akarr Koyee, Ariyan Koyee, Baby Koyee’ and my niece ‘Rojan Guli Javaheri’. Without their love and support it would not have been possible to complete this study.
Acknowledgement

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Abstract

Globalization and the state of the world today increase the demands and pressures on nations. The preparation of teachers requires the elevation of international knowledge and experiences to address the diverse needs of societies. This study investigated the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ personal and professional development. A mixed method of data collection methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized in this study. Thirty-two teachers who experienced a study abroad program were surveyed and 3 educators who accompanied teachers abroad were interviewed. The findings of this study suggested that international experiences have significant effects on teachers’ professional and personal development. In addition, the international experience increased teachers’ cultural awareness, global perspectives, and self-efficacy. Variables such as adaptability and flexibility, communication skills, and language learning were also common themes found within response patterns.

Keywords: Globalization, International Experiences, Study Abroad, Professional Development, Cultural Awareness, Global Perspective, Self-Efficacy
INTRODUCTION

Globalization has increased the demands and pressures on nations around the world. Today, the United States is confronted with the problem of competing within a global society, and it is vital for this country to prepare a future generation capable of keeping up with other areas of the rapidly changing global world (Gallicchio, 2007). As a result of globalization, each individual society of the world is now considered to be a universally joined entity, known as the global society. Gallicchio (2007) asserts that the process of transformation into one society requires adequate efforts and flexibility in order to be connected politically, socially, and economically with the world around us.

Increasingly, U.S. businesses are requiring employees to be able and willing to leave their home culture and work in foreign surroundings. Employees cannot expect that their experiences in their home culture will generalize to the culture in which they will be working. Instead, they must be equipped with an understanding of a variety of cultures, and possess the cognitive and emotional flexibility needed to quickly integrate information from the new culture. Flexibility within a new culture is most likely to occur when individuals possess an ethno-relative worldview that understands the impact of a foreign and familiar culture on oneself and others. Along these lines, developing the ethno-relative worldview that facilitates sensitivity to all cultures is the goal of many programs that value cultural competences (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2008).

Caillier and Riordan (2009) assert that our world is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, which requires a great need for employees to collaborate at work in order to address today’s problems and anticipate future dilemmas.
Caillier and Riordan (2009) argue that our nation is growing in terms of racial and ethnic diversity. It is therefore critical to prepare a generation that can envision our global economy and create a learning environment where students can work together to achieve a common goal. However, the considerable demographic change in the United States is more apparent in schools than anywhere else. Therefore, educators need to prepare teachers who are able to face and deal with these new changes (Brown, 2007).

President Lincoln, a pioneer in higher education, stated, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew”, (Lincoln Commission, 2005 p. 15). President Lincoln understood the need for forward thinking and change. As a result of this ideology, he democratized higher education by signing into law the legislation for the Land-grant University system. Certainly Abraham Lincoln had a political purpose in the timing of his support of the land-grant college act. However, as a self-educated man, he also understood the importance of education both for individuals and for the Union that so many Americans were fighting and dying for (Lincoln Commission, 2005). According to the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005), study abroad programs began to obtain valuable new models after World War II. Global education was encouraged through Fulbright exchange programs between the United States and the rest of the world. In 1958, the National Defense Education Act was initiated to train Americans in foreign languages and different cultures (Lincoln Commission, 2005).

The importance of international education has evolved over the last 50 years (O’Meara, Melinger, & Newman, 2001). The emphasis on international education began
after World War II with many U.S. universities initiating faculty and student exchange with other countries for the first time. This focus has increased exponentially since that time. For example, in today’s U.S. colleges and universities, international education and foreign studies are the norm, receiving support from the federal government, students, and the institutions that provide the support (Siaya & Hayward, 2003).

Studying abroad is one way to ensure that students develop global skills, as well as an appreciation for other cultures. Education, business, and government leaders argue that study abroad programs must increase to ensure future security, economic prosperity, and global leadership (Paulsen, Pascarella, Salsbury, & Umbach 2009). Teachers play a vital role in transforming the new generation into one that has broad worldview perspectives, and an awareness of cultural sensitivity. Lin, Lake and Rice (2008) state that, according to the National Survey Data, 54% of teachers taught students who were culturally diverse or had limited English proficiency, even though only 20% of these teachers were prepared to deal with these differences.

According to the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Virginia is not only growing older, but it is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. While the relatively rapid growth of the larger minority groups mirrors what is happening in other parts of the country, Virginia’s mix of minorities is somewhat different from national averages. In 2007, for people reporting one race alone, 70.4 percent were White, 19.6 percent were African American, and 4.8 percent were Asian. The proportion of African Americans was significantly higher than the national average of 12.4 percent (See Figure 1).
In addition, Virginia’s population is becoming increasingly diverse. International immigrants comprise one quarter of the Commonwealth’s recent population growth. Until 1970, one in every one hundred Virginians was born outside the United States. In 2006, one in every ten Virginians was foreign born (See Figure 2). In 1900, more than 90 percent of Virginia’s foreign-born citizens were from Europe. Few, if any, were from Latin America, and virtually Asian foreign-born individuals were from China (UVA Welden Cooper Center, 2008).

As reported by Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Report of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in Harrisonburg as of September 30, 2009 are as follows:
In order for teachers to obtain the required knowledge and skills needed to adapt to these cultural trends, we must prepare them professionally and provide them with international experiences that can enrich their worldview perspectives. Connectedness to the world and experiences in various life settings are very important in building and strengthening the skills and abilities of teachers (Institute for International Education, 2007). Study abroad programs can be useful tools when developing and enhancing teachers’ skills, and they have a significant impact on their career development (Sahin, 2008; Cushner & Mahon, 2002). The number of American students crossing the borders
to different parts of the world for higher education has increased over the last several decades, and this change has attracted scholarly attention (Cantwell, Lee & Luca, 2009). Battalio and Johnson (2008) state that according to the Institute for International Education (2007), the number of students studying abroad in school year 2005-2006 was 223,534. As stated by the Lincoln Commission (2005), support for study abroad programs will continue to grow.

Study abroad programs provide crucial opportunities for student teachers to acquire the competencies necessary for a successful career. Many research studies have been conducted in this field, and noticeable attention has been given to promote the importance of study abroad programs (Brindley, Morton, & Quinn, 2009). In order to become educators with a global perspective, it is critical for teachers or potential teacher candidates to experience and study in an international setting in order to become educators with a global perspective (Alfaro, 2003 and Blair, 2002)

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the effects of study abroad programs on teachers, and comprehend how the experience will make sense to teachers based on their observations of the different systems and practices currently in place in foreign schools. The study will emphasize the advantage of study abroad programs, which consist of more than just cross-cultural experiences, and are directly related to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. Such competences cannot be acquired without a real world experience gained from visiting and exploring another country (O’Meara et al., 2001). Consequently, this study will contribute to the understanding of how study abroad programs affect the professional development of teachers.
Research Questions

The proposed study involves hypotheses regarding the positive effects of study abroad programs on new teachers’ professional development, and will examine the following questions:

1. What are the effects of study abroad programs on teacher’s professional development?
2. Do study abroad programs have a role in enhancing new teacher’s cultural awareness?
3. What effects do study abroad programs have on new teachers’ global perspectives?
4. How will study abroad programs influence teachers’ self-efficacy?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Study abroad programs have significant effects on teachers’ emerging professional development.

Hypothesis 2: Study abroad programs have a critical impact on new teachers’ cultural awareness.

Hypothesis 3: Study abroad programs will broaden new teacher’s global perspectives.

Hypothesis 4: Study abroad programs will increase new teachers’ self-efficacy.

Key Definitions

Teachers’ Professional Development: “An activist teacher professional identity is not something that will come naturally to all teachers. It has to be negotiated, lived and practiced. The development of such an identity will be a challenge for many, and will be challenged by others, but once its elements are learned and
communicated to others it will make a significant contribution to teachers’ work and how the experience that work in the eyes of themselves and others” (Sachs, 2001, P. 160).

**Pre-Service Teachers:** Future teachers who do not have a sufficient teaching experience or are still in the academic field (Townsend, 2002).

**Land-Grant Institutions:** Land-grant College or University is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The Morrill Act, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, offered states thirty thousand acres of land for each sitting federal representative and senator as an endowment for the proposed schools. Some states elected to give the land to existing institutions; others used it to establish new agricultural and technical colleges (Gates, 2003).

**Cultural Awareness:** Cushner and Brislin (1986) define cultural awareness as understanding and valuing the differences in a diverse world.

**Global Perspective:** How students understand their own views, values, and beliefs of their country and they relate to the views and beliefs of the diverse world around them (Cushner & Mahon, 2002).

**Self–Efficacy:** “The belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required managing prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2)

**Bi-Literacy:** Students who complete half of their academic requirements in the United States and half in the host country their university is partnered with (Quezada, 2005).

The needs and demands for improved teacher preparation are increasing, and the
challenges that teachers and students in the United States have been facing since the beginning of this new century are unlike that of any other nation (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). The number of students entering the United States school systems from different backgrounds is significantly increasing (The Lincoln Commission, 2005). The following chapter will introduce an extensive review of the literature regarding this area of interest, beginning with a discussion of Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Learning Theory and Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, which will enhance the reader’s understanding of how learning occurs within a diverse environment. Subsequently, an introduction to the review of the literature will cover and describe the international education and study abroad programs which have been touted as a preferred means of developing students’ expertise through global, personal, and professional means.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Socio-Cultural Learning Theory by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura (1977) were utilized in this study to examine and understand how learning occurs when a learner is exposed to a cultural environment different from his or her own. These theories were favored above others because of their relevancy to the explanation of how teachers learn from an international experience through social interactions within unique cultures. The following figure portrays how the two theories collaborate in demonstrating how teachers who experience a study abroad program develop professionally in terms of cultural awareness, global perspective and self-efficacy.

FIGURE 4 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

![Conceptual Framework Diagram](image-url)
Social Learning Theory
Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)

Socio-cultural learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It proposes that people learn from one another through interactions, observation, imitation, and modeling (Vygotsky, 1978). Using a social constructivist approach to teach adult learners’ grounds study abroad programs. Vygotsky (1978) assumed that emotions are vital to human learning and development. Humans, unlike animals, have the capability to alter the environment for their own purposes. According to socio-cultural learning theory, higher mentality originates in the social environment. Today we consider teaching to be an interactive process between teachers and students (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). This approach was strongly promoted by Vygotsky (1978), who emphasized that human interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition.

Vygotsky (1978) attempted to combine two psychological approaches, namely natural sciences and humanities, which were already prevalent in his time (Postholm, 2007). This is clear from Vygotsky’s (1978) general genetic law of cultural development. This law states that functions in a child’s development appear twice. First, they appear in the interpersonal realm. This is manifest when children share thoughts and ideas with each other in groups. Next, they appear in the intrapersonal realm. The ideas and concepts shared in groups then make their way into the individual’s own consciousness. Vygotsky used this law to explain the relationship between the external and the internal worlds of an individual. Internal development begins in a social, cultural, and historical context. Vygotsky (1978) believed that development commences on an external social level before it is transformed into part of an individual’s intra-mental processes.
According to Vygotsky (1993), being familiar with the external world appears strange and filled with fantastic phenomena. Therefore, the need to use individual, external objects as tools arises for the purpose of achieving goals. It is vital to replace instinctive, immediate activity with intercultural activity, which is led by complex intentions and translated into the organized action.

The ability to use tools is indicative of the level of psychological development one has achieved, or can potentially achieve in the future. Vygotsky stated “We can confidently state that it is these processes of tool acquisition together with the specific development on internal psychological methods and the skills of functionally organizing one’s behavior that characterize the cultural development of a child’s mind” (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 175). Vygotsky argued that physical tools mediate the affiliation between humans and the world of objects around them, and as a result, provide us with the authority to systematize, manage, and change the world. Human beings can only be understood within the context of the time period and within the part of the world in which they live. Human nature cannot be understood as “never changing” and universal, but as always depending on its specific social and historical formation. This principle does not leave out biological factors. To be human, however, means that you have surpassed a level of functioning that your biological traits would otherwise dictate. Although some animals have the ability to create and use material tools, humans have the ability to utilize psychological tools. In other words, human beings are differentiated by their ability to develop psychological tools that are used to gain mastery over one's own behavior and cognition that other forms of life are not capable of developing. Some psychological tools include language, different forms of numeration and counting, techniques, algebraic
symbolism, works of art, writing, schemes, diagrams, maps, blueprints, etc.

Vygotsky assumed that psychological tools, or symbolic tools, as Vygotsky (1978) called them, allow humans to systematize and manage such mental practices as voluntary attention, problem solving, planning and evaluation, voluntary memory, and intentional learning. Integrated amongst symbolic tools are mnemonic devices, algebraic symbols, diagrams and graphs, and, most importantly, language (Lantolf, 1994). Vygotsky (1978) differentiated such psychological tools as gestures, language and sign systems, mnemonic techniques, and decision-making systems. Vygotsky (1978) argued that psychological tools are oriented within one framework, converting natural human abilities and skills into advanced mental functions. Therefore, by using the signs mentioned above, one can construct his or her own content understanding. Studies by Vygotsky (1978) revealed that understanding the relationship between signs meaning, and the transition to function with signs, never results from a direct discovery by the child. The child needs the guidance of an adult or a teacher in a school setting. The social environment influences cognition through tools-cultural objects, language, symbols, and social institutions. Cognitive change results from using these cultural tools in social interactions, and from internalizing and transforming these interactions (Schunk, 2008).

Vygotsky (1978) alleged that, with language acquisition, children acquire access to the most dominant of “mental tools,” and that children use language to convert the cognitive functions allocated within them by converting interpersonal experience into intrapersonal functions (Lantolf, 1994). When a system of signs, linguistic or other, is missing, only the most archaic and restricted type of communication is feasible (Vygotsky, 1978). It was assumed that the methods of communication were the sign or
the word, and that through simultaneous manifestations; a sound may possibly become linked with the content of any experience, which can help to communicate the same content to other human beings (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky often referred to internalization as cultural mediation (Kim & Baylor, 2006). The specific knowledge gained through social interactions also represents the shared knowledge of a culture, which is defined as internalization (Driscoll, 2005). Internalization can be understood in one respect as ‘knowing how’, and the mastery of these skills occur through the activity of the child within society. A further aspect of internalization is appropriation, in which the child takes a tool and makes it his own, perhaps using it in a way unique to himself (Driscoll, 2005). Internalizing the use of a pencil allows the child to use it very much for his own ends rather than draw exactly what others in society have drawn previously.

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that the use of signs as a supplementary means of solving a psychological problem is similar to the invention and use of tools in a psychological manner. Despite the similar and common features shared by the two kinds of activity tools and signs, essential differences do exist. The logical relationship between the use of signs and of tools is illustrated in Figure 5, which demonstrates how each concept is subsumed under a general concept of indirect mediated activity. The social environment influences cognition through its cultural objects (tools), language, and social institutions (Schunk, 2008). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that social interactions assist in coordinating these three vital influences on development. Cognitive change results from using these three influences. Mediation is the key mechanism used in development and learning practices.
Vygotsky (1978) investigated cognitive development and how it was guided by the role of culture and interpersonal communication. He observed how higher mental functions developed historically within particular cultural groups, as well as individually, through social interactions with significant people in an individual’s life. Cultural habits are learned through these interactions, including speech patterns, written language, and other symbolic knowledge through which the learner derives meaning and constructs his or her knowledge. Vygotsky (1993) argued that adapting to a new culture requires the process of integration into the cultural context. This process entails deep transformations in behavior and is accompanied by the development of major specific mechanisms of behavior. Once integration into an appropriate environment is completed, changes begin to occur quickly. Vygotsky (1993) further explained that this process is surprisingly rapid, because the pre-existence of the social cultural environment stimulates the necessary forms of adaptation, which were created previously from the surrounding environment. The behavior becomes reconstructed, and the habit of refraining from the immediate satisfaction of needs and retarding immediate reactions to external stimuli are developed. It is this inhibition of primitive functions and the development of difficult forms of adaptation that justify the transition from primitive forms of child behavior to refined and advanced adult processes.
"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do".

(Albert Bandura, 1977, p 22)

Albert Bandura

Albert Bandura’s social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1973). Due to the fact that it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation, social learning theory spans both cognitive and behavioral frameworks. Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1973), behavior is influenced by multiple determinants. The concept of reciprocal determinism proposes that these factors have an interactive effect on each other and that they exist in the environment, as well as within the individual, in the form of affect, cognition, and constitutional disposition (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6 - A Model of Reciprocal Determinism, Bandura (1986)**
One of the most important concepts developed by Bandura (1986) is that of reciprocal determinism. From this perspective, a person's behavior is influenced both by personal factors and the environment. Bandura (1986) accepts the possibility of an individual's behavior being conditioned through the use of consequences. However, at the same time he recognizes that a person's behavior can impact the environment (Schunk, 2008). The same is true of the relationship between personal factors such as cognitive skills, attitudes, and behavior with the environment. Each can impact and be impacted by the other. The component processes that culminate the facets of observational learning are:

1) Attention includes modeled events such as distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, functional value, and observer characteristics such as sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, and past reinforcement. Observers cannot learn unless they pay attention to what’s happening around them. This process is influenced by characteristics of the model, such as how much one likes or identifies with the model, and by characteristics of the observer, such as the observer’s expectations or level of emotional arousal.

2) Retention includes symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal (Bandura & Walter, 1963). The authors further suggest that observers not only recognize the observed behavior, but also remember it at some later time. This process depends on the observer’s ability to code or structure the information in an easily remembered form as well as their ability to mentally or physically rehearse the model’s actions.
3) Motor Reproduction includes physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, and accuracy of feedback. Observers must be physically and intellectually capable of producing the act. In many cases, the observer possesses the necessary responses. Sometimes, however, reproducing the model’s actions may involve skills the observer has not yet acquired. It is one thing to carefully watch a circus juggler, but it is quite another to go home and repeat those acts.

4) Motivation includes external, vicarious self-reinforcement. In general, observers will perform the act only if they have some motivation or reason to do so. The presence of reinforcement or punishment, either to the model or directly to the observer, becomes most important in this process.

Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory has many implications for classrooms. Students often learn a great deal simply by observing other people. Describing the consequences of a behavior can effectively increase the positive behavior and decrease the negative one (Driscol, 2005). Students must be exposed to a variety of learning models that enable the breakdown of traditional stereotypes (Herron, Mills & Pajares, 2007). Bandura and Walter (1963) argue that observational learning occurs when an observer’s behavior changes after viewing the behavior of a model. Observers’ behavioral consequences are known as vicarious reinforcement or vicarious punishment of a model’s behavior. The observer imitates the model’s behavior if the model possesses characteristics such as talent, intelligence, power, good looks, or popularity that the observer finds attractive or desirable. Bandura and Walter (1963) further argue that the observer reacts to the way the model is treated and mimics the model’s behavior. When the model’s behavior is rewarded, the observer is more likely to reproduce the rewarded
behavior. When the model is punished, an example of vicarious punishment, the observer is less likely to reproduce the same behavior.

A distinction exists between an observer’s “acquiring” a behavior and “performing” a behavior. Through observation, the observer can acquire the behavior without performing it. The observer may then later, in situations where there is an incentive to do so, display the behavior. Attention and retention account for the acquisition or learning of a model’s behavior. Production and motivation control the performance. Human development reflects the complex interaction of the person, the person’s behavior, and the environment. The relationship between these elements is called reciprocal determinism. A person’s cognitive abilities, physical characteristics, personality, beliefs, and attitudes influence their behavior within their environment. However, these influences are reciprocal (Bandura, 1986). A person’s behavior can affect his or her feelings of self, attitudes, and beliefs about others. Likewise, much of what a person knows comes from environmental resources such as television, parents, and books. Environment also affects behavior. What a person observes can powerfully influence what he or she does. However, a person’s behavior also contributes to their environment. Participants of study abroad programs are exposed to different cultures, teaching settings, and environments. Consequently and through observations, students change their behavior, apply what they learned to the professional field, become sensitive to other cultures, and grow their global perspective.
Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory describes learning in terms of the interrelationship between behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors (Figure 2). It also provides the theoretical framework for interactive learning used to develop both Constructivism and Cooperative Learning (Schunk, 2008). According to Social Cognitive Theory, interactive learning allows students to gain confidence through practice (Bandura, 1994). Educators can practice teaching in a different environment using simulators to overcome their fears before their first teaching experience. According to Bandura’s (1994) social cognitive theory, the learner acquires knowledge as his or her environment converges with personal characteristics and personal experience. Prior experiences help to subsequently guide and inform the learner as to how the present should be investigated. Due to the fact that social cognitive theory is based on understanding an individual’s reality construct, it is especially useful when applied to interventions aimed at personality development.

Bandura (1986) proposes that self-regulatory systems mediate external influences and provide a basis for purposeful action, allowing people to have personal control over their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and actions. Self-regulation is an internal control mechanism that governs what behavior is performed, and the self-imposed consequences for that behavior. Self-regulation is extremely important because it allows the gradual substitution of internal controls for external controls of behavior. Self-regulation occurs through the interplay of self-produced and external sources of influence, including motivational, social, and moral standards.
People continually go through the process of setting goals for themselves and then comparing that goal to their personal accomplishments. In doing so, standards can motivate a person to work harder or modify their behavior in order to meet a goal or standard. Motivation can occur externally, such as when a promised monetary reward for receiving an 'A' in a class is proposed, or internally, such as when a person feels self-pride when a standard or goal is reached. Three factors seem to determine the degree of self-motivation that occurs during this process (Bandura, 1986). First, a person's self-efficacy for a given behavior dramatically affects their self-motivation for performing that behavior. If a person feels he or she is capable of achieving a goal, then he or she is likely to work harder and give up less easily compared to a person who has low self-efficacy. A second essential factor for self-motivation is feedback. Through feedback, a person is able to control or adjust his or her efforts and goals to make them more feasible and realistic. In addition, receiving feedback on performance accomplishments will improve a person's self-efficacy for a specified behavior. The third factor that influences self-motivation is the anticipated time it takes to achieve goal attainment. Proximal goals are more effective than distal goals in enlisting self-motivation. According to Driscoll (2005) proximal goals are met in the near future, while distal goals are met in the distant future. Therefore, proximal goals improve self-motivation to a greater extent than distal goals because proximal goals reduce the time required achieving goals.

**Self-Efficacy**

Self-reflection enables people to analyze their experiences, think about their own thought processes, and alter their thinking accordingly. One of the most important types of self-reflection is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has become a central focus of Bandura's
research, as he contends that self-efficacy is a major determinant of self-regulation. Self-efficacy is a type of self-reflective thought that affects one's behavior (Bandura, 1977). According to the social cognitive theory, people develop perceptions about their own abilities and characteristics that subsequently guide their behavior by determining what a person tries to achieve and how much effort they will put into their performance (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura (1994) described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel. As Bandura (1994) demonstrated, self-efficacy can have an impact on everything from psychological states to behavior and motivation. He also suggested that an individual’s self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered, develop deeper interest in the activities in which they participate, form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, and recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. According to Bandura (1992), there are four essential sources of self-efficacy. First, the mastery experience, which is the most effective way to develop a strong sense of efficacy and perform a task successfully, enhances our self-efficacy. Second, social modeling is another important source of self-efficacy that refers to witnessing other people successfully completing a task. Thirdly, social persuasions, according to Bandura (1992) people who are persuaded to believe in their capabilities are more able to succeed in achieving goals. Receiving verbal encouragement from others helps learners overcome self-doubt and instead focus on giving their best effort to complete the task at hand. Fourth, our own psychological responses and emotional
reactions to situations play an important role in self-efficacy.

Moods, emotional states, physical reactions, and stress levels can all impact how a person feels about their personal abilities in a particular situation. Bandura (1994) also notes that it is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important, but rather, how they are perceived and interpreted. By learning how to minimize stress and elevate mood when facing difficult or challenging tasks, people can improve their sense of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1994), seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities and succeed at them.

The goal of education has always been preparing educators who can meet new changes and demands effectively (Cushner & Brislin, 1986). Thompson (2008) asserts that self-efficacy is constructed from both social and individual feedback. A learner’s evaluation of personal self-efficacy appears to be derived, in part, from past performance, vicarious learning, social feedback, and one’s physiological state. Bandura (1994) defines self-efficacy as a person’s beliefs regarding whether one has the power to create change with personal actions. He suggests that self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to take actions that will produce desired effects. Self-efficacy is considered an important concept within the American educational system (Driscoll, 2005). High levels of self-efficacy can increase the likelihood that a student will achieve desired goals, and can help educators overcome difficult situations in the classroom. Teachers and educators with high self-efficacy tend to motivate and praise students more (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Thompson, 2008). Thompson (2008) also argued that enhanced self-efficacy provides educators with the resilience needed to deal with difficult students or complex
classroom situations.

According to Vygotsky’s (1978) general genetic law, teachers work and interact in small collaborative groups. The concepts acquired through group interactions are then attained and transformed to contribute to their cognitive development. Study abroad programs provide students with the opportunities needed to enhance their cognitive development through group interactions. Consequently, the concepts learned through the international experience increases students’ self-efficacy by transferring the attained knowledge to their teaching practice in the field, resulting in greater professional and personal development. For example, when placed in a foreign culture, the study abroad student faces personal anxieties and tests his or her own limitations, which fosters the development of self-efficacy. It is this self-efficacy that changes the nature of the teaching when the teacher is challenged with diverse students and cultures. When teaching the teacher compares his or her prior study abroad experiences with his or her current classroom experiences. This comparison assists teachers with the formation of teaching strategies and interactions with students, which contributes to the teachers’ professional development.
Literature Review

Today, people from different nations and backgrounds interact and communicate with increased frequency and regularity. People bring certain values, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and expectations to these relationships (Cushner & Brislin, 1986). Gallicchio (2007) emphasized that globalization is the force behind establishing social, political, and economical agreements between countries, especially with the European Union. He argued that education elevates government involvement by increasing educational opportunities and decreasing the number of obstacles that can potentially cause a reduction in the flow of students, educators, professionals, and projects across borders.

Most teachers in the United States have relatively little, if any intercultural experiences (Cushner, & Mahon, 2002). Gallicchio (2007), Cushner & Mahon (2002), Lin, Lake and Rice (2008), Townsend (2002), Battalio and Johnson (2008), Alfaro (2003) and Quezada & Alfaro (2007) strongly agree on the importance of international education and how students can compete with daily life changes in this new era of globalization. As society move toward a more global economy and mindset, college students have demonstrated an increased interest in expanding their educational experience further away from their traditional classrooms (Lincoln Commission, 2005).

Cultural Awareness

According to researchers, important factors affecting teachers’ professional development include exposure to different cultures (Cushner & Mahon 2002), community participation (Sahin, 2008), classroom management (Battalio & Johnson, 2008), broader curriculum (Quezada, 2005), the role of technology (Gallicchio, 2007),
and children’s personalities (Sahin, 2008). Furthermore, teachers and potential teacher candidates become more culturally sensitive when they have a clear understanding of the experiences of individuals from other cultures (Blair, 2002; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; and Quezada, 2005). Cushner and Mahon (2002) asserted that international teaching experiences provide great opportunities to prepare new teachers and develop new skills needed to work effectively. As a researcher Cushner contributes significantly to the field of international education and overseas experiences. Cushner and Mahon (2002) presented two studies, each suggesting that an international experience has immense benefits on teachers’ professional development in terms of global perspectives and improved self–efficacy.

*Cultural Competence*

Individuals often have difficulties comprehending major concepts in cross-cultural psychology, especially if they have had little experience with members of other cultures (Cushner, 1987). The author further argues that teachers struggle with delivering concepts from cross-cultural psychology to students who have not been exposed to different cultures. Quezada (2005) hypothesized that those students who teach in multiple socio-cultural contexts and in different environments are more likely to be professionally successful. Quezada (2005) presented two programs, namely “faculty-initiated and university sponsored”, whereby the faculty created the bilingual teaching system themselves. The second program was an “affiliated program”, and it included educational institutions in the United States that partnered with host country institutions. Participants of the affiliated program completed their student teaching in four different kinds of schools located overseas.
Quezada and Alfaro (2007) continued their previous study at San Diego State University System (SDSU), which is an affiliated institution partnered with Mexico at San Diego State University in Mexico City. Four themes emerged from this study. The first theme created an observation of perceived iniquities, which refers to participants' abilities to reflect on inequities that affect children on both sides of the borders due to language, national origin, skin color or socioeconomic status. Second, the theme of teachers acting as change agents refers to the challenges encountered and the possibility of having the power to become change agents in their own classrooms. Thirdly, the theme of student intimacy and significance emerged, referring to the relationship between the children and their teachers, and how it has a great impact on the professional development of new teachers. Finally, internal versus external pressures refers to a theme that occurred when the bi-literacy teachers felt the inequality of the standard curriculum and the children’s socio economic, cultural, and language conditions. As a result of this study, the bi-literacy teachers grew personally and professionally from their experience, learned pedagogical strategies, and adapted their instructional plans. In addition, teachers became more sensitive to multiculturalism issues, and had an increase in self-efficacy from learning about themselves and others.

Quezada and Alfaro (2007) asserted that international experiences strongly affect a students’ cultural understanding, enhance their professional competence, and increase their self-efficacy. Many theorists conducting current research in the field support this claim (Gallicchio, 2007; Brindley, Quinn & Morton 2009; Quezada, 2005; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Sahin, 2008, and Battalio & Johnson, 2008) support this claim. Quezada and Alfaro (2007) argued that if we want future teachers to be equipped with sufficient
knowledge and experience, study abroad programs will have a great effect on their professional growth. The international study field is significant because the experience of the learning outcomes can be viewed as a positive consequence of adapting to a new culture in a foreign country (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008).

Ausubel (1963) proposes that prior knowledge plays a significant role in acquiring new information. The cognitive structure is represented as a person’s knowledge of a specific subject matter and how well it is organized. Acquiring new information relies heavily on how strongly an individual’s cognitive structure is. Studies show that eighty percent of prior knowledge was attributed to the acquisition of new knowledge. A foundation of knowledge and experience is required for further cognitive development (Cushner, 1987; Cushner & Mahon, 2002). The demand for attention to cross-cultural factors is increasing in order to transmit skills that enable practitioners to socialize more effectively across cultural boundaries (Gallicchio, 2007). Preparing individuals to work, live, compete, and respond cross-culturally is becoming a growing necessity in this global era (Cushner, 1987; Gallicchio, 2007, and Sahin, 2008).

Sahin (2008) investigated the effects of international student teaching experiences on the professional and personal development of teachers. Eleven student teachers and seven mentors participated in the study through answering open-ended survey questions; in addition, three of the participant student teachers were interviewed. Participant student teachers were selected from a private university in Turkey, which as part of their curriculum requirement, provided students with the opportunity to student teach in the United States. In the third semester of their two years of graduate study, students had a two month internship in the United States where they work in the classroom with
experienced mentors. The data collected from student teachers, mentor teachers and student teacher interviews was analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study added significantly to the literature on teacher’s professional development through study abroad programs. The results supported the premise that international experiences of student teachers significantly contribute to their professional development. The researcher also asserted that study abroad programs are used as important tools toward gaining self-confidence, observing and applying new technologies in learning, and comparing different education systems (Alfaro & Quezada, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Battalio & Johnson, 2008; Cushner & Brislin, 1986).

Cultural Sensitivity

The field of cross-cultural psychology and international experiences continuously emphasizes the significant role experience plays in cultural learning (Cushner & Brislin, 1986). International experiences provide ideal ways to address critical factors, such as developing skills that enable individuals to work effectively among people from different cultures, as well as directing personal interactions with persons and contexts different from those in which one is familiar with (Cushner & Mahon, 2002).

Cushner and Mahon (2002) conducted a study on fifty teachers who participated in international student teaching program. Participants responded to several open ended questions to investigate how the experience affected them as they returned to live and participate in classrooms in the United States. The majority of participants completed a student teaching placement in their home community prior to the international experience in order to gain the needed competencies to succeed in both environments. The data collected from this study suggested that the greatest benefits resulted from students’
beliefs concerning themselves and others through increased cultural awareness, improved self-efficacy, and professional development in terms of global perspective (Gallicchio, 2007; Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Quezada, 2005; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Sahin, 2008 and Battalio & Johnson 2008).

The study also provided evidence of increased cultural sensitivity accompanied by improved cognitive development, and increased students’ abilities to understand individual differences. The study compared and analyzed participants’ answers prior to and after the international experience. One student during week two stated the following:

“I have also learned how it feels to be away from one’s familiar surroundings and be the odd person out. It is very scary and lonely at times, but you do get over it. This will definitely help me if I ever get a student who is from another country or even state in my classroom” (p. 51).

After six weeks, the same student stated the following:

“I can use my experiences to help introduce my students to the differences and cultural experiences our world is made up of. I can teach understanding of these differences since I have become aware of them on a firsthand basis. I will also be more aware myself of the differences that each student may have from one another and help these students adapt to a new and possibly difficult situation. I have learned to be sensitive to the needs of children at a much higher level. Being in a new and different situation has given me the opportunity to relate to a student who may be new to my future classroom. This is one way I have gained more sensitivity. I was able to find myself, and I truly know that teaching is a passion of mine that I cannot wait to pursue” (p. 51).
Another feature of cultural sensitivity includes learning about other cultures and one’s own. Cushner and Mahon (2002) further argue that when students are out of the United States, they are able to view the country they left from a different perspective. Overseas experiences provide the opportunity for students to work and live in a completely different environment, and to stretch beyond their traditional zone of comfort (Cushner & Mahon 2002).

Global Perspective

Study abroad programs allow students to broaden their horizons and think beyond their individual area of influence (Quesada, 2005; Gillicchio, 2007; Brandley, Quinn, Morton & Lou, 2009 and Johnson & Battalio, 2008). Battalio and Johnson (2008) propose that the benefits of study abroad programs include having a positive effect on an individual’s personal awareness and self-confidence, as well as a deeper understanding of other cultures. Individuals who are culturally effective become system change agents, and are capable of knowing how people from different backgrounds think and behave (Hess, Lanig, & Vaughan, 2007). The aforementioned studies highlighted the significance of international experiences and study abroad programs on teachers. In addition, the factors and elements that affect the students’ experiences overseas were presented.

Sustainable Development

Globalization has integrated economic, ecological, social, and political changes across nation states that have systematically combined with rapid technological changes (Lim, 2008). In their study, Green and Little (2008) discussed the issue of successful globalization and sustainable development and education. The role of education in
development has greatly changed due to the globalization process. Green and Little (2008) further argue that knowledge and skills become more critical as countries compete internationally in this era of globalization, which often culminates in a variety of rapid changes. Our world is changing tremendously in terms of connectedness, which requires educators to inspect their position as global citizens (Battalio & Johnson, 2008). Battalio and Johnson (2008) stated, “A global perspective recognizes that worldwide economic, cultural, and political issues affect the practices in education by influencing how we instruct students in citizenship and academic areas” (P. 90).

A global perspective expands beyond diversity in the classroom. It encourages and engages learners to acknowledge how their decisions increasingly relate to issues and events in their community and world (Cushner & Brislin, 1986). A vast majority of ministries of education in the West, non-governmental organizations, and private corporations undertook global citizenship as an educational initiative in schools (Lim, 2008). Lim (2008) suggests that in our new global world, it is vital to prepare our children and young people to be agents of change rather than passive observers living in a very diverse and complex society.

When teachers lack the necessary competence needed to communicate and collaborate with their students, it is less likely that a productive and ethical relationship will be formed (Battalio & Johnson, 2008). The responsibility of teacher preparation programs is to prepare globally–minded and culturally sensitive teachers (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Although gaining experience with diverse populations within one’s own community is crucial, international experiences can provide a more challenging task of inspecting cultures and their educational practices. Due to the urgency and growing trend
toward globalization, universities and colleges are recommending that students study abroad as part of their professional education program (Goccione, White & Ye, 2009).

**Teachers’ Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs in an individual’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action necessary to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1977). Teaching efficacy is recognized as the degree to which the teacher believes he or she has the ability to impact student performance (Gurvitch & Metzler, 2008). International experiences increased student teachers’ cultural awareness, and improved self-efficacy, as well as professional development, in terms of global mindedness (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Sahin, (2008); Cushner & Mahon (2002); Battalio & Johnson (2008) and Cushner & Brislin (1986) conducted studies that emphasize the impact of international experiences on teachers’ personal and professional development in terms of improving their self-confidence.

**Self-Confidence**

A study conducted by Willard-Holt (2001) investigating the effects of a short study abroad experience on pre-service teachers showed significant results in terms of improving self-confidence. Willard-Holt (2001) suggested that the international experience provided pre-service teachers with the opportunity to improve their personal development in areas of empathy, tolerance, patience, and self-confidence. In addition, participants of the same study expressed an increase in their self-confidence due to being appreciated by students from other cultures despite the minimal amount of experience they acquired. Paulsen, Pascarella, Salisbury and Umbach (2009) argued that study abroad experiences developed a stronger understanding and respect for global issues,
stronger communication skills, and improved personal and professional self image.

Paulsen, et al. (2009) expand on this idea by emphasizing the significant role of study abroad programs in improving teachers’ self-efficacy and their ability to handle ambiguity.

Study abroad programs develop the skills that enable teachers to live and work effectively with individuals from different cultures. Therefore, international experiences increase students’ cultural knowledge and sensitivity and provide the opportunity to stretch beyond their traditional comfort zone. Confronting different situations, settings, and pedagogical philosophies enhances student teachers self-assurance and elevates their self-efficacy. In addition, participants of study abroad programs challenge their beliefs about the world around them and exhibit a shift in their global perspective.
METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to investigate the positive effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, cultural sensitivity, global perspective, and self-efficacy. The researcher faced many difficulties collecting data and locating participants. Initially, a mixed method study consisting of two focus groups and survey research was chosen to meet the goals of this research. The survey research comprised both quantitative (Likert scale) and qualitative (open ended) questions. The researcher chose survey research because it is the most inexpensive and effective way to answer the study’s questions on new teachers’ professional development. Interview questions were aligned with the survey questions in order to obtain constructive data. Creswell and Clark (2007) assert that using a mixed methodology provides better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone, provides strengths that balance the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, and is practical in terms of the freedom of using both numbers and words. By incorporating quantitative and qualitative questions, the researcher’s goal was to collect valuable data that supported the proposed hypotheses.

The study was reviewed and approved by James Madison University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September of 2009 prior to the survey’s distribution. Following the submission to the IRB, the researcher asked six professors, who accompanied students during their international experiences, to assist in locating new teachers. These professors were in contact with the new teachers who have been in the work field from 0-3 years. A list of students who participated in study abroad programs from the College of Education was received, however, no contact data was provided.
In October of 2009 the Office of Alumni Relations was contacted in order to collect the contact information of new teachers who had participated in a study abroad program, but the attempt was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the researcher made several efforts to organize focus groups, but was unable to do so because of the timing and location issues of the new teachers. The list from the Office of Alumni Relations contained a limited number of new teachers who had experienced a study abroad program and had been in the field from 0-3 years. The list was quite small which made the attempt unsuccessful. The researcher contacted the Curry Participant Pool at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia but approval was not granted for the study.

Due to the fact that the College of Education at James Madison University was unable to provide the researcher with teachers’ email addresses, Harrisonburg Public Schools (HCPS) and Rockingham County Public Schools (RCPS) were added to the new study proposal. On November 10th, 2009 the researcher contacted both HCPS and RCPS assistant superintendents, and received their approval for distributing the survey via emails after reviewing the consent form and the survey questions. In addition, three interviews replaced the focus groups: two interviews were with college professors who accompanied students abroad, and one was with a middle school teacher who experienced a study abroad program. In addition, the researcher contacted Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) requesting a distribution of the survey. Due to teachers’ work overload both FCPS and ACPS did not approve the distribution of the survey and the request was rejected. A new proposal with changes was submitted to the IRB and on November 17th, 2009 the second approval was received (See Appendix G). The new participants of the study included all teachers
regardless of the duration of their teaching experience.

**Procedure**

The researcher contacted HCPS and RCPS assistant superintendents and requested that they send out the online survey. The researcher sent the email containing the consent form and the survey link to the assistant superintendents. The consent form stated that the study was voluntary and that the teachers could exit at any time. The teachers indicated their willingness to participate by clicking the link to the survey that was embedded in the consent form. Once the participants agreed to the consent form, they resumed the survey by clicking the following link at the end of the consent form.

http://jmu.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_6yzo5j1uuJOH&VID=Prod

For three weeks, the researcher sent e-mails to the assistant superintendents reminding them of the need to distribute the survey. Anonymity of participants was ensured because the survey did not collect participant names and contact information, and was contributed by HCPS and PCPS assistant superintendents (See Appendix A). Quantitative data collected using the online survey was secured electronically in a password protected Qualtrics database, and an MS Word document.

In addition, the researcher sent both the consent form and the survey to two professors from the College of Education at James Madison University. As professors who had led study abroad trips, they used Facebook to network with former students. They utilized their Facebook accounts to distribute the survey to their former students who were now practicing teachers and who had been their students. The researcher decided to interview two college professors who accompanied students abroad and a middle school teacher who experienced study abroad programs. The interview questions
used by the researcher were the same as online survey questions (See Appendices B and C). The purpose of interviewing is to understand the experiences of other people, the participants’ careful word choice, the preservation of the participants’ words, and the availability of those words to use for reference and a check for accuracy (Seidman, 2006). The standardized open-ended interview questions that were used in the online survey were also used during the interviews. Standardized questions consist of a set of questions carefully worded and organized with the intention of asking each interviewer the same questions (Patton, 2002).

A consent form was read and signed by each interviewee prior to the interview. The duration of each interview was approximately one hour (See Appendix D). Professors were interviewed at the College of Education at James Madison University, and the teacher was interviewed at Thomas Harrison Middle School. Data collected from each interview was kept in absolute confidence. A numerical coding system was applied to conceal the identity of each participant (i.e., Bahar Mikael = A1). Other techniques used will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. Data collected from each interview, including the researcher’s notes, tapes of recorded sessions, signed consent forms, and transcriptions of the interviews were immediately stored in a locked and secure cabinet in Memorial Hall.

Participants

The goal of this study was to investigate the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development. Participants of the quantitative study consisted of teachers who had studied abroad and were affiliated with James Madison University, HCPS, or RCPS. The survey sample consisted of 87 participants. The researcher was able
to utilize only 32 responses because only 32 of the 87 participants experienced a study abroad program. Twenty-seven participants were female and 5 were male teachers, while there were 29 Caucasian teachers, two Hispanic, and only one Asian teacher. The qualitative study consisted of three interviews; participants were two college professors and a middle school teacher. The study abroad experience of the professors varied. Professor Teresa has lengthy experience accompanying students abroad, Professor Deborah traveled abroad with students once, and Ms. Jessica experienced a semester abroad as a student and has experience as a teacher taking high school students abroad.

**Survey Design**

The survey consisted of various questions that were related to the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development (See Appendix A). Question one specifically asked if participants experienced a study abroad program. Questions two through seven were demographic questions, aimed at investigating gender, ethnicity, host countries, and whether or not participants were still interested in more study abroad programs. Paulsen, Pascarella, Salisbury and Umbach (2009) introduced similar data concerning gender, race, and students’ interests in international experiences. Questions eight through eleven were Likert-scale questions that focused on the following: the duration of the study abroad program, the teachers’ interest in the programs, their benefits from the programs, and if they would recommend study abroad programs to other students. These questions were based on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree through Strongly Disagree). Questions twelve through fifteen were open-ended questions, which asked respondents to elaborate on what they learned from study abroad. These open-ended questions were the basis for the interview questions used with the professors and
teacher. Sahin (2008) and Cushner and Mahon (2002) conducted similar research where they investigated what teachers learned from their international experience. This study’s questions were meant to gather information regarding what the participants learned about themselves and others, what aspects of the experience helped them in their first teaching experience, why the study abroad program was personally important to them, how effective the experience was on their self-confidence as new teachers, how the experience influenced their teaching strategies, and whether or not they considered themselves different from teachers who did not experience a study abroad program.

**Threats to Internal Validity**

Two college professors experienced in research methodology were asked to review and approve the instrument used for this study to ensure both validity and reliability. The professors approved both the survey and interview instruments used in this study and confirmed that the survey had face validity. The survey was piloted and tested in the researcher’s cohort. All pilot test data was reviewed and analyzed for the purpose of strengthening the survey instrument and then destroyed. The major threat to validity in this research was lack of response. The researcher requested that a reminder be sent to the population along with a link to the survey three times. Despite the reminders and only 32 out of 87 participants completed the survey. Another potential threat was duplicate answers. The survey was distributed three times, and the researcher had no way to determine whether a respondent answered the survey more than once. In addition, the timing of the survey could have influenced the response rate. The survey was launched on November 17th and was closed on December 7th, which was a busy time for teachers. In conclusion, many factors may have contributed to the overall low response rate.
RESULTS

This study presented four hypotheses concerning the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development:

- Hypothesis 1: Study abroad programs have significant effects on teachers’ emerging professional development.
- Hypothesis 2: Study abroad programs have a critical impact on teachers’ cultural awareness
- Hypothesis 3: Study abroad programs will broaden teachers’ global perspective
- Hypothesis 4: Study abroad programs will increase new teachers’ self-efficacy

Data Analysis

At the beginning of this study, the researcher chose to follow four objectives. The first objective was to investigate the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development. The second objective was to examine how those programs increase teachers’ cultural awareness. The third objective was to determine how these programs broaden teachers’ global perspectives. The fourth objective was to appraise the way study abroad programs enhance teachers’ self-efficacy and self-confidence when addressing professional challenges. The responses from the quantitative portion were considered numerical data that measured abilities, beliefs and reactions; therefore descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Graphs and charts from the Qualtrics Survey Software were used to describe the data collected from the survey. The survey was designed to give participants the option of exiting the survey if they did not experience a study abroad program. From a total of 87 participants only 32 teachers completed the survey. The researcher examined the data for
outliers, which may have skewed the results. No outliers were identified; therefore, the researcher proceeded to analyze the 32 responses.

Responses from the survey’s open-ended questions were coded, sorted, and then conceptualized. This step helped keep the data organized and coded properly. In order to reduce researcher bias and to ensure trustworthiness of the data, the research was triangulated. Data were re-coded and reviewed by a second person not associated with the research to ensure the accuracy of the responses. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed and were read multiple times to ensure accurate analysis. In addition, the transcripts were sent to the respective participants to prevent any misunderstanding that might have occurred in the interview process. All interviewees were satisfied with the transcriptions and no modification was needed. Sahin (2008) and Cushner and Mahon (2002) utilized similar strategies when investigating the impacts of study abroad programs on new teachers’ professional development.

The researcher used a “comparison through a discussion” approach to analyze the mixed methods data. This approach examines the similarities of the quantitative and qualitative data results. It is a frequently used approach that reports the statistical results followed by important quotes from the themes that emerged in the qualitative data (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The researcher introduced the descriptive data followed by specific quotes from the open-ended questions from both the survey and interviews. The raw data were analyzed and presented in a summarized format. The themes and categories that emerged from the raw data were used in answering the questions posed by the research study. The themes that emerged from this study were: “cultural awareness and appreciation”, “global perspective”, ”self-efficacy and self-confidence”, “language
learning”, “communication skills”, and “flexibility and adaptability”.

Examining and understanding the demographic structure of the sample is critical before an in depth investigation of the hypotheses. Table 2 and Table 3 present detailed data about the demographic results for gender and race of the sample. Paulsen, Pascarella, Salisbury and Umbach (2009) argued that female students abroad outnumbered their male counterparts by a ratio of almost 2:1. Professor Deborah (personal communication, December 17, 2009) stated that ninety percent of the study abroad programs’ participants are middle-class white females. The results of this study supported these arguments because out of 32 participants, 16% (n=5) were male teachers who participated in a study abroad program, and 84% (n=27) of the sample were female teachers See Table 2 and Figure 7.

**Table 2 - Gender Distribution Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7 - Gender Distribution**

According to the Lincoln Commission (2005), minorities have been under
represented among study abroad participants. The results of this study obtained similar outcomes in terms of race distribution. From the total of 32 participants, 91% (n=29) were White, 6% (n=2) were Hispanic, and only 3% (n=1) were Asian (See Table 3 and Figure 8). The survey also included other important questions covering significant factors for the study such as the year and length of the experience, and the country the participant traveled to. Appendix F lists the results of those questions.

**Table 3 – Race Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian American/Native Alaskan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8 - Race Distribution Graph**

The researcher desired to detect participants’ interest in broadening access scope and number of study abroad programs. Seventy-two percent (n=23) of teachers were
interested in more study abroad programs and 28% (n=9) were not. All participants strongly agreed that they would recommend study abroad to other teachers (See Figure 9). However, economic factors affect whether teachers choose to study abroad. Due to the recent economic downturn, financial burdens may impact the decision to participate in more study abroad programs (Paulsen et al. 2008). In fact, out of 32 teachers, only 5 (15.63%) strongly agreed that study abroad programs should become pre-requisite courses.

**Figure 9 - Participants Recommending Study Abroad Programs**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of teachers recommending study abroad programs.]

**Professional Development**

To examine the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, the researcher analyzed the raw data from the survey and the interviews. Figure 10 depicts the participant teachers’ strong assertion that study abroad programs offered intellectual challenges, broadened their academic field, enabled them to explore new topics, and help them understand their field from a different perspective.
TABLE 4 - PARTICIPANTS’ LEVEL OF AGREEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offered intellectual challenges</td>
<td>84.38%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadened academic scope</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explored new topics</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the field from a different perspective</td>
<td>56.25%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 10 - PARTICIPANTS’ LEVEL OF AGREEMENT

Positive response patterns supported the hypothesis that study abroad programs have significant effects on teachers’ professional development. Responses included:

- “Irreplaceable experiences for personal, cultural, and academic growth”
- “Simply said, a lifetime experience”
- “Enrich your mind intellectually and your life in a way that wouldn’t be possible unless you stepped outside your comfort level”
- “Lead the teacher to be able to help ELL students in his/her classroom”
- “Nothing else that I did in college better prepared me for difficulties in life”
- “Provided a variety of teaching and education styles”
• “Gave me insights to where and what my students experience”
• “Shaped the way I teach as a foreign language teacher”
• “A broader appreciation of the different styles of learning”
• “I am a compassionate, open-minded teacher “I treat my students equally and fairly”

Professor Deborah (personal communication, December 17, 2009) emphasized the significance of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development. She asserted that personally, studying abroad was important for her professional development, and later as an educator working with pre-service teachers. In addition, study abroad programs generate a set of skills that assist students in learning how to interact with students, teach a lesson, assess it, see if any learning has occurred, and start to enter the profession at that level in a professional life. Ms. Jessica (personal communication, November 13, 2009) stated that studying abroad as a college student and/or as a teacher go hand in hand and enable teachers to effectively interact with students and understand their feelings as new students in a new culture.

**Cultural Awareness and Appreciation**

Cultural awareness is a significant variable that best characterized teachers’ interest in study abroad programs. About 97% (n=31) of the teachers strongly agreed that cultural awareness best characterized their interests in study abroad, while 93.75% (n=30) stated that study abroad programs contributed to their knowledge of other cultures See Table 5 and Figure 11. Cushner and Mahon (2002); and Sahin (2008) asserted that international experiences increase teachers’ cultural awareness and knowledge of other cultures to a great extent.
TABLE 5 - PARTICIPANTS’ INTERESTS

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<td>32</td>
</tr>
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<td>Personal Enrichment</td>
<td>90.63%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Academic Subject</td>
<td>34.38%</td>
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<td>Resume/Employment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Study</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 11 - DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS’ INTERESTS

Cultural awareness and appreciation comprised the most significant patterns and responses. Responses included:

“To help understand other cultures and your own better”

“Truly experiencing another culture”

“Cultural awareness begins with self awareness”

“All of our likes and dislikes are culturally based”

“Helps participants become more understanding of human differences”
“Cultural enrichment”

“Compassion for diversity”

“Appreciation of similarities”

“Appreciate others as I have been appreciated”

“Bi-culturally opens you up to greater opportunities”

“Became more aware of cultural issues and now can see how they effect the students I teach”

“Cultural indoctrination is difficult to recognize unless one-steps outside of their comfort zone”

**Global Perspective**

Green and Little (2008) explored the topic of successful globalization and sustainable development and education. The role of education in development has greatly changed due to globalization processes. The authors further discussed that knowledge and skills become more critical as countries compete internationally in this era of globalization and rapid changes. Positive response patterns for participants’ comments concerning global perspective included:

- “Seeing the world from different angle”
- “Makes people more open to things, ideas, and people who are different from them”
- “When you study abroad, it changes your world-view”
- “Great opportunity to see how things are done in other countries”
- “Offers global awareness and helps remove ego centric feelings”
- “A wonderful opportunity to challenge our perspective”
• “It forces one out of any narrow scope of the world”
• “Experiences of worldly beauty”
• “I am part of a global family that I need to be a global citizen”
• “Exposes you to the world in a challenging way”
• “The world is made of diverse people with many different and individual viewpoints”
• “View your field of study and have a very different perspective”

Professor Teresa considers the experience of traveling abroad as a whole new way of looking at the world. It transforms who you are and your obvious worldview of things, and allows you to become immersed in a culture different than yours (personal communication, November 19, 2009).

Self-efficacy and self-confidence

Out of 32 teachers 29 (90.63%) strongly agreed that personal enrichment characterized their interest in study abroad programs. See (Table 4) and (Graph 4). Cushner and Mahon (2002) asserted that it is through personal anxiety and testing limitations, that students create an area for opportunity. In that area, they reveal the growth in self-esteem and self-confidence, which are critical as countries compete internationally in this era of globalization and rapid changes. Positive response patterns for participants’ responses included:

• “Personally I became a stronger person”
• “It is an opportunity that enriches life experience”
• “It is once in a life experience”
“Become more tolerant of other people”

“Expanding our horizons and entering into ideas and experiences that we are currently unfamiliar with

“I am adaptable & can learn a lot”

Ability to choose the best of 2 different systems

Became a stronger person

Much prouder of my country

I can make mistakes and still make valuable contributions

Adapt to difficult situations better than I thought

Found confidence in myself that I did not have before

Handle living in a foreign country on my own

Tolerance and understanding

Independently achieve my goals and navigate through challenging situations

According to Professor Teresa teachers who participated in study abroad programs felt more confident and competent and from an educator’s observation, as teachers their task performance was incredible (personal communication, November 19, 2009). Professor Deborah also stated that:

“They’re willing to take the initiative, work with kids for whom English is not their first language and they feel comfortable doing it because they have a variety of experiences in which they were already successful, they connect very close with the students. If there was something that they did very well, they know they could do very well, and I think that was the power of having that experience, the fact that it happened to be abroad”
Language Learning

Out of 32 teachers 16 (50%) stated that language learning best characterized their interest in study abroad programs see (Table 4) and (Graph4). “We are language teachers and we really want to learn more about other countries” (personal communication, November 13, 2009). Positive response patterns for participants’ response concerning Language study included:

- “Helps with language learning”
- “Even if second language proficiency is not achieved, the traveler increases understanding of the demands placed on ESL students”
- “Learning another language is very helpful/important in life”

Language and differences in culture

- I am more confident with the language because of my studies there
- Shaped the way I teach as a foreign language teacher
- Native language skills should be valued and encouraged in all possible ways
- Understand how hard it is to learn in a different language

Communication Skills

Several participants emphasized how study abroad programs enhanced their communication skills and strengthen their socialization talents. Study abroad programs helped participants to interact with children, cooperating teachers, and other school staff abroad; and make sense of their culture, which provoked them into thinking deeply. Positive responses patterns for participants’ response concerning Communication Skills included:

- “Better communicate in a foreign language”
• “Make social bridges”
• “Relate to people who are minorities”
• “You can always connect on a personal level regardless of cultural differences”
• “Socially, people are very similar. Culturally, they may value different”
• “Understanding of English Language Learners”

Adaptable and Flexibility

Results of this study showed that many study abroad programs’ participants reflected that the experience made them more flexible and adaptable to changes. Ms. Jessica (personal communication, November 13, 2009) stated that “you’re in college and you’re very narrow-minded”, but “studying abroad, having the chance to live there, live with families, really interact with the people outside not just the families, professors at the time or other students, or even homeless people and just talking to them while we were there it really started to open my mind and I realized that there is more to life than what we have”. Positive response patterns for participants’ responses concerning Adaptability and Flexibility included:

• “Adaptable and can learn a lot”
• “I am very flexible, curious, and mostly patient”
• “Much more flexible”
• “I accept all children”
• “Much more understanding of immigrant students”
• “More accustomed to accents so I could understand easily”
• “Provided a lot of personal examples”
• “More options of how to approach a subject”
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, cultural awareness, global perspective, and self-efficacy. All four hypotheses were supported by the overall results of the study. Teachers who participated in a study abroad program as students and teacher educators who accompanied students abroad asserted that international experiences had significant effects on teachers’ professional and personal development. Pence and Macgillivray (2008) and Brindley, Morton and Quinn (2008) indicated that study abroad programs have critical benefits in terms of professional and personal growth, greater understanding of cultural differences, increased self-confidence, and a new global perspective. The findings of the present study are organized according to seven themes that emerged in the process of data analyses. These themes are: professional development, cultural awareness and appreciation, global perspective, self-efficacy and self-confidence, language learning, communication skills, and flexibility and adaptability.

Paulsen, Pascarella, Salisbury and Umbach (2009) asserted that female participants of study abroad programs have outnumbered their male counterparts. The results of this study supported their results. Eighty-four percent of this study’s participants were female and 16% were male. In addition, Paulsen et al. (2009) also claimed that minority participants comprised the lowest number of participants. This study achieved the same conclusion: 91% of participants were White and 9% were ethnic minorities.

Sahin (2008) and Cushner and Mahon (2002) concluded in their studies that international experiences or study abroad programs increased participants’ cultural
sensitivity and appreciation of different cultures. The results of this study demonstrated that 96.88% of participants indicated that their study abroad experience increased their cultural awareness and sensitivity to other cultures. Of the themes that emerged in this study, this percentage was the highest rate recorded. Therefore, the results showed that cultural awareness is one of the most important benefits of study abroad programs.

Green and Little (2008) argued that successful globalization and sustainable development are important to coping with the rapid changes in the world. Study abroad programs permit students to broaden their horizons and think beyond their individual areas of influence (Quesada, 2005; Gillicchio, 2007; Brandley, Quinn, Morton & Lou, 2009; Battalio and Johnson, 2008). The results obtained from the open ended questions in this study strongly supported these claims. For example, one participant described that study abroad are “a wonderful opportunity to challenge our perspective”

Self-efficacy is another variable that was investigated in this study. Thompson (2008) and Mahon and Crushner (2002) argued that international experiences increase self-efficacy and provide educators with the necessary flexibility to deal with difficult students or complex classroom situations. In this study 90.63% of the participants reinforced the significance of study abroad programs in terms of increasing self-confidence.

The results of this study introduced three additional variables: communication skills, resiliency and flexibility, and language learning. This study found that study abroad programs improved students’ communication skills and increased their socialization capabilities. Teachers who participated in the programs were able to interact with students from different cultural backgrounds more effectively and were more
understanding of those students’ situations. Fifty percent of the participants indicated that language learning was their major interest in a study abroad program. Living the experience and being in an actual learning situation of a second language enhances teachers’ understanding of students who are second language learners. The results also showed that study abroad participants were more adaptable and flexible when dealing with difficult and ambiguous situations. In addition, the international experience opened their minds and provided them with the resilience needed to cope with any new changes they faced in their professional field.

Most of the participants of this study demonstrated their great interest in study abroad programs and the critical benefits the programs provide professionally and personally. In addition to participating in the survey, a teacher chose to share thoughts about her international experience and stated:

“I was a Peace Corps Volunteer many years ago. As a Peace corps Volunteer, I lived and worked in another country for 2 years. The experience of living and working in another culture, learning another language, has had a significant and positive impact on me as a teacher. I am able to share insights into other places, peoples, cultures, views of issues facing the world and my students. I am able to engage more critical thinking with y students about our foreign policies with other countries and its effect on us as well as those peoples. I am able to better encourage a more objective view of the world and my students' place in it to counter my students' ethnocentrism. I would not have traded my experience abroad for anything” (personal communication, November 23, 2009).
Pascarella, et el. (2009) advised that financial burdens have great impacts on the decision to study abroad. The recent economic situation and downturn plays a vital role in the decision making process, making participation in study abroad less likely for those of modest means. Although 100% of the participants recommended study abroad programs to other teachers, only 72% of the participants showed their interest in more international experiences. This decrease in interest emphasizes the pivotal effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional and personal development, while also showing that economics matter, too.

**Conclusion**

Globalization and the rapid changes in the world have increased the need for teachers to be culturally competent in order to address the requirements demanded by society. As a consequence of globalization, each individual society of the world is now considered to be a universally joined entity, known as the global society. Gallicchio (2007) asserts that the process of transformation into one society requires adequate efforts and flexibility in order to be connected politically, socially, and economically with the world around us. International experiences or study abroad programs have immense benefits for the teachers in terms of personal and professional development. It is evident from the inferences made by respondents, that the four hypotheses of this study were supported. Study abroad programs have positive effects on teachers' professional development, cultural awareness, global mindedness, and self-efficacy. Variables such as communication skills, language learning, and adaptability and flexibility were common themes found within response patterns. Social Learning Theory and Socio-Cultural Theory was the conceptual framework underlying the findings of this study.
Limitations and Strengths

The small size and the nature of the sample were major limitations of the study. The small sample size indicated that the results of the study could not be generalized. In addition, the sample was drawn from James Madison University, Harrisonburg City Public School, and Rockingham County Public School teachers. The fact that Harrisonburg is considered a small city and the most diverse in the state of Virginia makes the sample very unique in its nature. As mentioned in the methodology section, participants of the study were teachers who graduated from the College of Education at James Madison University and experienced a study abroad program. International opportunities are not limited to study abroad programs; therefore, the sample cannot represent all teachers who experienced an international opportunity other than a study abroad program.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The outcomes of this study indicated that some of the results, such as gender and race, need further research and investigation. In terms of gender, this study was largely comprised of females. It is critical to explore the factors that impact the high rate of female teachers participating in study abroad programs. Several factors might contribute to this situation. It could be that the teaching profession is largely composed of females, and that the students in the College of Education are mostly females. In addition, male and female teachers may have different needs in terms of career development. For example, male teachers may have little or no desire to experience a different culture. Therefore, further study should be conducted on this important topic and the question here is what can be done to bridge the gap between male and female teachers’ interest in
study abroad programs.

In terms of race, this study was largely comprised of White teachers who may desire to study abroad to experience being a minority. In addition, financial reasons could play a vital role in determining whether ethnic minorities decide to study abroad. Finally, many minority cultures may resist sending their children abroad for study overseas. In sum, the researcher is uncertain as to exactly why this sample is predominantly White female.

This study and previous studies examined the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development after living an international experience; however there are no studies that examine the change in teacher’s behavior as a result of a study abroad program. A longitudinal study designed to investigate teachers’ professional development before and after a study abroad program, would show specifically the effect study abroad has on professional development. This comparison study would introduce significant results that could demonstrate the need for teachers’ participation in study abroad programs.
APPENDICES

Appendix A - Survey Questions

The Effects of Study Abroad Programs on Teachers’ Professional Development

I am interested in investigating the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and it includes a couple of demographic questions, multiple choices, and open-ended questions. Your responses will be strictly confidential, and your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, please contact Bahar Mikael at (540) 383-3891 or by email at mikaelbe@jmu.edu

Have you ever experienced a study abroad program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Race?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ American Indian/Native Alaskan
- ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ☐ other

How long have you been teaching since graduation?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ One to three years
- ☐ Three to five years
- ☐ More than five years
During which year did you travel to study abroad?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Other [ ]

What was the length of your study abroad experience?

- ☐ 4 weeks
- ☐ 6 weeks
- ☐ one semester
- ☐ one year
- ☐ other [ ]

Are you interested in more study abroad programs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Which country did you travel to for your study abroad experience?

- ☐ please list [ ]

Which of these options best characterizes your interest(s) in Study Abroad programs? Please check as many as apply.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>Cultural Experience</td>
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<td>Personal Enrichment</td>
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<td>Resume / Employment</td>
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Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Study abroad offered intellectual challenges
Study abroad broadened my academic scope
I was able to explore new topics
Study abroad fulfilled a course requirement
Study abroad enabled me to understand my field from a different prospective
Study abroad contributed to my knowledge of other cultures
Study abroad programs should become prerequisite courses

Would you recommend a study abroad program to others?

- ☐ Yes
- ☑ No

Why would you recommend study abroad programs to others?

What have you learned about yourself as a result of the study abroad experience?
What have you learned about others as a result of the study abroad experience?
How did your study abroad experience affect your teaching?

You have successfully completed the survey. Thank you very much for your participation in this survey, your feedback and comments are extremely appreciated. Please click the next button to submit the survey.
Appendix B - Professors’ Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your position and responsibilities?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. When did you start participating in studying abroad programs?
5. What are the countries you travel to for studying abroad programs?
6. What is the length of studying abroad programs?
7. How would you characterize your interest(s) in Study Abroad programs?
8. Would you recommend studying abroad programs to future teachers?
9. Would you mandate studying abroad programs? Why?
10. What are the critical learning aspects in studying abroad programs?
11. What roles do studying abroad programs have on teachers’ professional development?
12. What is the affect of studying abroad programs on teachers’ self-efficacy?
13. Can you share some comments and thoughts about the significance of studying abroad programs?
Appendix C - Teacher’s interview questions

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. During which year did you travel abroad?

3. What was the length of your study abroad experience?

4. Are you interested in more study abroad programs? Why?

5. Which country did you travel to for your study abroad experience?

6. How would you characterize your interest(s) in Study Abroad?

7. What have you learned about yourself as a result of the study abroad experience?

8. What have you learned about others as a result of the study abroad experience?

9. How did your study abroad experience affect your teaching?

10. Would you recommend a study abroad program to student teachers?

11. Would you recommend mandating study abroad programs? Why?

12. What is the affect of studying abroad programs on your self-efficacy?
Appendix D - Interviewees’ Consent Form

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bahar Mikael from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the positive effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, cultural sensitivity, global perspective, and their self-efficacy. This study will contribute to the researcher’s completion of a master's thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a survey and interviews; you are participating by providing answers to a series of questions related to the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development.

Time Required

Participation in the interview will require one hour of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study, but your participation will contribute to the research literature on how study abroad affects teachers’ professional development. The benefits for the researchers are a better understanding of the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, and to fulfill the requirements of a Master Thesis Project.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University during a thesis defense with three James Madison University professors present and will be published as Master’s thesis. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent’s identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual information is confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data and audiotapes will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information and videotapes that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:
Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject
Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent
I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be (video/audio) taped during my interview. ________ (initials)

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Participant (Signed)                                   Date

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Researcher (Signed)                                   Date
Appendix E - Survey Participation Consent Form

Hello,

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bahar Mikael from James Madison University. **Your participation is entirely voluntary.** The purpose of this study is to investigate the positive effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, cultural sensitivity, global perspective, and their self-efficacy. This study will contribute to the researcher’s completion of a master's thesis.

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through Qualtrics online tool. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development. Should you decide to participate in this research you may access the anonymous survey by following the web link located under the “Giving of Consent” section. Participation in this study will require 20-30 minutes of your time. The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study. There are no direct benefits to participants in this study, but your participation will contribute to the research literature on how study abroad affects teachers’ professional development. The benefits for the researchers are a better understanding of the effects of study abroad programs on teachers’ professional development, and to fulfill the requirements of a Master Thesis Project.

The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University during a thesis defense with three James Madison University professors present and will be published as Master’s thesis. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent’s identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent’s identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. Aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However once your response have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw.

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher’s Name: Bahar Mikael  
Department: LTLE  
James Madison University  
Email Address: mikaelbe@jmu.edu  
Email Address: wilcoxdm@jmu.edu

**Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject**  
Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
(540) 568-2834  
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form through email. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous online survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

http://jmu.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_6yzo5j1uuJOnOHG&SVID=Prod

__________________________   __________________________
Bahar Mikael                      Date
Name of Researcher (Printed)
Appendix F – Additional Survey Questions

During which year did you travel to study abroad?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of study abroad years.]

What was the length of your study abroad experience?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of study abroad lengths.]

### Appendix G - IRB Form

**Investigators:** This form is required for Full Board or Expedited review for all JMU research involving human subjects. If you are eligible for an exemption request, please use the alternate form at: [http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbExemptRequest.doc](http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbExemptRequest.doc)

**FOR IRB USE ONLY:**
- Protocol Number: IRB
- Received: Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.
- Approved Date: Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.
- Disapproved Date: Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.
- Exempt Date: Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.


- **External Funding:** Yes □ No ☒ If YES, Sponsor(s):

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<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Responsible Researcher(s):**
- Bahar Mikael
- mikaelbe@jmu.edu
- (540) 383-3891

**Department:** Learning Technology and Leadership Education
**Address:** 2572-A Mosby Court
**Harrisonburg, VA 22801**

**Telephone:**
- Visiting Adjunct Research Administrator Undergrad Graduate
- Faculty □ Faculty Associate □ Staff □ Student □ Student

**Please select:** Faculty □ Faculty Associate □ Staff □ Student □ Student
Investigator: Please respond to the questions below. The IRB will utilize your responses to evaluate your protocol submission.

1. ☑ YES ☐ NO Does the James Madison University Institutional Review Board define the project as research?

The James Madison University IRB defines "research" as a "systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."

All research involving human participants conducted by James Madison University faculty, staff, and students is subject to IRB review.

Some, but not all, studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to full or expedited IRB review, including those:

☐ intended to satisfy the academic requirements for Independent Study, Bachelor’s Essay, Honors/Senior Thesis, or the Master’s Thesis;

☐ intended or expected to result in publication, presentation outside the classroom, or public dissemination in some other form;

☐ conducted outside the classroom and/or departmental research participant pool if they involve

-- external funding

-- minors (i.e., persons under the age of 18),

-- a targeted population of adults whose ability to freely give informed consent may be compromised (i.e., persons who are socio-economically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged, cognitively impaired, elderly, terminally ill, or incarcerated),

-- pregnant women and/or fetuses who may be put at risk of physical harm,

-- a topic of a sensitive or personal nature, the examination or reporting of which may place the research participant at more than minimal risk, or

-- any type of activity that places research participants at more than minimal risk.

Other studies are eligible to request exemption from IRB review, including those

☐ conducted solely within the confines of the classroom or within a departmental research participant pool if they

-- are a general requirement of a course,

-- have the sole purpose of developing the student's research skills, and

-- will be overseen by a faculty member;

☐ conducted outside the classroom and outside departmental research participant pools, provided they do not involve minors, do not target special adult populations, do not pose a risk of physical harm to pregnant women and fetuses, do not deal with a topic of sensitive or personal nature, or do not
involve any type of activity that places the participants at more than minimal risk (see details above); and provided the investigator does not intend to publish the results or share them with others in a public forum (i.e. conference presentations, senior theses).

☐ that are part of a larger research project that has current James Madison University IRB approval; or

☐ that are part of a larger research project that has current approval of a registered IRB at another institution, provided that, if research participants are to be recruited at James Madison University, the University’s IRB has given permission for such on-campus recruitment.

2. ☒ YES  ☐ NO Are the human participants in your study living individuals?

3. ☒ YES  ☐ NO Will you obtain data through intervention or interaction with these individuals?

“Intervention” includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (e.g., measurement of heart rate or venipuncture) and manipulations of the participant or the participant's environment that are performed for research purposes. “Interaction” includes communication or interpersonal contact between the investigator and participant (e.g., surveying or interviewing).

4. ☐ YES  ☒ NO Will you obtain identifiable private information about these individuals?

"Private information" includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, or information provided for specific purposes which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (e.g., a medical record or student record). "Identifiable" means that the identity of the participant may be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information (e.g., by name, code number, pattern of answers, etc.).

5. ☐ YES  ☒ NO Does the study present more than minimal risk to the participants?

"Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Note that the concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk as well as risks to employability, economic well being, social standing, and risks of civil and criminal liability.

CERTIFICATIONS:
For James Madison University to obtain a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, all research staff working with human participants must sign this form and receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors. The Office of Sponsored Programs maintains a roster of all researchers who have completed training within the past three years.

By signing below, the Responsible Researcher(s), and the Faculty Advisor (if applicable), certifies that he/she is familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human research participants from research risks. In addition, he/she agrees
to abide by all sponsor and university policies and procedures in conducting the research. He/she further certifies that he/she has completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years.

Test module at OSP website [http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbtraining.html](http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbtraining.html)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Signature of Researcher(s) and Faculty Advisor (if applicable)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Training Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahar Mikael</td>
<td></td>
<td>06/30/09</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diane Wilcox</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/20/08</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Faculty Advisor also required (if Student)</td>
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For additional training interests visit the National Institutes of Health Web Tutorial at: [http://cme.nci.nih.gov/](http://cme.nci.nih.gov/)

To Submit a Complete protocol, this document should include the following:
- Human Research Review Request form (i.e. the questions above)
- IRB Checklist (included on this form)
- Research Narrative (use the categories indicated below. 10 pages maximum, do not include your literature review) Additional relevant research materials (i.e. letter of consent, questionnaire, survey, where used) Research Proposal Checklist

for Submission to the Institutional Review Board on the Use of Human Subjects in Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Study:</th>
<th>The Effects of Study Abroad Programs on New Teachers' Professional Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Investigator(s):</td>
<td>Bahar Mikael                                                             Phone: (540) 383-3891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Address:</td>
<td>N/A                                                                        MSC: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mikaelbe@jmu.edu">mikaelbe@jmu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Advisor (if applicable):</td>
<td>Diane Wilcox                                                               Phone: (540) 568-6707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wilcoxdm@jmu.edu">wilcoxdm@jmu.edu</a>                                                          MSC: 6913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Please Organize Material on the following page using the Topics Below)

PURPOSE OR OBJECTIVE(S)
- Limited to one page
PROCEDURES (Included are:)
- Research design and sampling
- Method of collecting data (emphasize possible risks, and protection of subjects)
- Time frame of study

DATA ANALYSIS
- Discussed how confidentiality of subjects and their responses will be maintained
- Discussed how data will be stored to ensure confidentiality of subjects

REPORTING PROCEDURES
- Identified audience to be reached in the report of the study
- Identified the presentation method(s) to be used
- Discussed how feedback will be provided to subjects

EXPERIENCE OF THE RESEARCHER
- Prior relevant experience of the researcher, supervisor, and/or consultants

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS (if applicable:)
- Consent forms
- Letters of permission
- Cover letter(s)
- Questionnaire
- Tests
- Additional attachments relevant to the study

NOTIFY OSP OF INTENT TO SUBMIT FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING
- Project will be submitted for External Funding
  - If yes, submit proposal to Sponsored Programs: MSC 5728

*SUBMIT PROPOSAL AND CHECKLIST ELECTRONICALLY TO: JMU_grants@jmu.edu

Purpose and Objectives:
The purpose of this study is to understand the effects of study abroad programs on new teachers; and how the experience will make sense to the new teachers based on their observations of the different systems and practices in foreign schools. The study will emphasize the importance of studying abroad and how it enables new teachers to identify the key aspects of teacher preparation, and as a result the study will contribute to the understanding of how study abroad programs affect the professional development of new teachers.

**Procedures/Research Design/Methodology/Timeframe:**

This study will take place during the Fall 2009 semester. According to my program, it must be completed by the end of December 2009. Research will begin pending IRB approval and end December 20, 2009. The purpose of this study is to investigate the positive effects of study abroad programs on new teachers’ professional development, cultural sensitivity, global perspective, and their self-efficacy. A mixed method study consisting of two focus groups and a survey research will be utilized to support the goal of this research. Two focus groups will be conducted. One will consist of 10-15 new teachers that have been in the practice field for duration of 1-3 years, and the other will consist of 10-15 students who have recently completed study abroad. The survey research will be comprised of both quantitative (Likert scale) and qualitative questions (open ended questions). The survey will be distributed to former JMU students (new teachers) who have experienced at least one study abroad program. After contacting study abroad professors in order to collect former students’ current addresses, the researcher will distribute the survey via e-mails to former students. Qualtrics Survey Software will be used to create the survey and will be administered via the Qualtrics account. The survey
link, the cover letter, and the invitation for a focus group session will be attached to the e-mail. The survey will consist of 13 questions. I will put the Cover Letter at the beginning of the survey so that participants cannot move on to take the survey unless they agree to the Cover Letter. By clicking that they agree to go on to the next page they are agreeing to the Cover Letter. I do not foresee any more than minimal risks to the participants for their involvement in the survey as the information will not be linked to their identities. Since the survey will be anonymous, I will not ask for any information that could give away their identity, thus protecting their identity and allowing them to feel they can answer honestly the survey questions. A mass email will be sent out to new teachers who participated in James Madison University's Study Abroad Programs with a link to the survey. The results will be within the Qualtrics Survey and will not be sent back via email. Participation is voluntary. Participants can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once their responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded they will not be able to withdraw from the study. All participants will be at least 18 years of age.

For the focus groups, I will be interviewing and videotaping participants with their permission, but no indentifying information will be reported in my written thesis and all data will be destroyed after the study is concluded. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form before beginning participation in the focus group or being video recorded. There are not any direct benefits to the participants in this study. The first focus group will be with students who experienced a study abroad program but have not been in the working field yet. The members of the first group will not be participating in the online survey. The second group will consist of new teachers who experienced a study
abroad program, have been in the working field from 1-3 years, and completed the survey online.

**Data Analysis:**

The responses from the quantitative portion will be considered numerical data, and will be analyzed by using the graphs and tools of the Qualtrics Survey Software. Responses from the qualitative portion will be coded, sorted, and then conceptualized. This step helps keep the data organized and coded properly. The result from the focus group meeting will be coded, analyzed and will be read multiple times to ensure accurate analysis.

**Reporting Procedures:**

The data will be presented to my thesis committee after completion during a two-hour presentation in which I will discuss my purpose, the methods used, the results, limitations, and while also allowing for a question and answer portion or the presentation. No identifiable information will be collected from the participants and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. A final copy of this study will be submitted to the Graduate School for publication and kept in the AHRD program file. Students within my program will also be able to check out the results of the project after I have left the program. I will place my email address within the cover letter so that if new teachers would like to see the final results after the completion of the study they might contact me for that information. No feedback will be reported to the subjects unless requested. The data and video tapes will be kept in a safe locked file cabinet at the Learning Technology and Leadership Education Department at James Madison University.

**Experience of the researcher (and advisor, if student):**
As a graduate student in the College of Education, Learning Technology and Leadership Education, Adult Education/ Human Resources Development Program; I have completed coursework in Research Methods (Quantitative & Qualitative), Performance Analysis (created and executed a meta data analysis using descriptive methods). Adult Learning, Educational Technology, Foundations of Human Resources Development.

Diane Wilcox has been conducting research at JMU since 2004 in the areas of online learning, surveys of middle school students’ career goals, and the effect of chronic Lyme Disease on patients’ workplace performance. Her Master’s and Dissertation research involved examining the effect of three dimensional computer generated graphics on second grade students’ understanding of fraction concepts.
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