

Study abroad as social and emotional learning

Framing international teaching with critical cosmopolitan theory

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper investigates and reports on the study abroad experiences of 22 teacher candidates from the Southeast region of the USA ($n = 22$). The purpose of this paper is to examine the teacher candidates' development of social and emotional learning through their international teaching experiences.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is framed by Critical Cosmopolitan Theory, which is a theoretical lens for a critical understanding of the development of global competencies for critical consciousness. The paper uses a case study research design (Yin, 2008), which included data collected via artifact analysis, participant interviews and participant observation through field notes.

Findings – The study found how the study abroad and international teaching experiences were instrumental in aiding in the teacher candidates' social and emotional learning. This included the adoption of culturally responsive teaching practices, development of reading the world and enactment of taking action to rewrite the world.

Research limitations/implications – One of the limitations is the relatively small sample size. This is due, in part, to the high cost associated with study abroad. The high cost of study abroad can be a barrier for students to access the cross-cultural experiences afforded by study abroad. The hefty price tag of study abroad often limits the number of teacher candidates at public institutions who can go on study abroad (Malewski and Phillion, 2009). A future research agenda is needed about ways to help off-set the costs in order to make study abroad more affordable and equitable.

Practical implications – The practical implications of this paper are that it provides an instructive lens for how to integrate social and emotional learning within a study abroad experience. At the same time, the paper connects socio-emotional learning (SEL) with the development of global competencies and global citizenship.

Social implications – The social implications relate to the practical implications in that the paper illustrates how SEL is connected to the development of global citizenship development. The study weaves the critical cosmopolitan framework with SEL to show how learners develop empathy through reading and rewriting the world.

Originality/value – The case study presented in this paper highlights the possibilities of study abroad in tandem with international teaching experiences to help prepare teachers with SEL features like fostering empathy, developing culturally responsive practices, and becoming critically conscious and cosmopolitan. The study fills a gap in the literature regarding the development of SEL among elementary education teacher candidates through study abroad and international teaching experiences.

Keywords Critical cosmopolitan theory, Global citizenship, Global competencies, International teaching experiences, Social and emotional learning (SEL), Study abroad

Paper type Research paper

The purpose of this Special Issue of the *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning* is to examine the intersectionality and interdisciplinary contours of socio-emotional learning (SEL). This paper argues that educating globally competent educators can be aided with an SEL lens. Teacher education programs have a responsibility to prepare teachers today to meet



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the demands of tomorrow's future. A SEL lens helps to situate those demands in the awareness and management of emotions and relationships. Indeed, such relational awareness is a key to acquiring life skills to navigate an increasingly interdependent global village. As the Kiswahili proverb states, "It takes a whole village to raise a child"; the SEL framework helps the village to nurture and guide the child. In this paper, I assert that SEL provides a particularly empowering frame for the support and development of global citizenship. Furthermore, I seek to wed SEL with a global citizenship theory called critical cosmopolitan theory (CCT). I illustrate this union by examining a case study of a study abroad program for 22 teacher candidates ($n = 22$) from a large research university in the southeast region of the USA. The case study focuses on the impact of international clinical teaching experiences through a study abroad program to South Africa. I use a SEL lens to report on how the teacher candidates construct meanings and purposes for global and intercultural competencies as part of this study abroad experience.

SEL is the recognition of emotions and the development of empathy in order to make informed and responsible decisions (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). SEL includes three components: emotional processes, which is when a person is able to recognize and regulate emotions; social and interpersonal skills, which is when a person can recognize social cues and act with pro-social behaviors; and cognitive regulation, which is when a person is able to adapt to new situations and regulate impulses (Jones *et al.*, 2013). All of these features of SEL are critical for teacher candidates who are learning to teach as well as develop professional competencies that will guide their pedagogical practices. This development does not happen in a vacuum. Rather, diversity and pluralism comprise the training ground for teacher candidates – especially in urban areas. Teacher candidates are being prepared to be culturally responsive, globally conscious and interculturally competent (Hansen, 2015). This is especially tantamount in the USA, where over a quarter of children (25 percent) under 18 years old have a parent who was not born in the USA (Kandel, 2013). More and more, the USA' classrooms reflect the mosaic of global diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity and religious beliefs (Goodwin, 2010). Globally competent teacher candidates are a must. Such teacher candidates need to be girded with an understanding SEL as they are nurtured with culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) as well as global awareness and intercultural competence (Longview Foundation, 2008).

The remaining part of the paper is organized into four sections. First, the paper grounds the study in CCT, which is a theoretical framework for the development of global competencies that lead to a deeper, critical consciousness. Second, the paper will describe the study's case study research design. Third, the paper will report on the findings of the study. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of the findings in connection with SEL and the development of global educators.

Theoretical framework

The paper is framed by CCT (Byker, 2013, 2016). CCT provides a theoretical framework for the development of global competencies, which lead to a critical consciousness of the world. As stated earlier, I discuss CCT in connection with SEL. The three features of SEL align with the need for global competent teachers. Such teachers display emotions that reflect empathy for what it means to live in a global society. They demonstrate culturally connected and responsive interpersonal skills for the students in their classrooms. These teachers are also open-minded and willing to adapt to new situations like when new students – who may or may not be fluent in the language of instruction – join their classrooms mid-year. When it comes to preparing high- quality teacher candidates, it is tempting to rank order the SEL dispositions and skills required for success in teaching. Teacher education programs have vision and mission statements that provide direction for what dispositions and skills their program emphasizes. Yet, the failure to address any

of the three SEL components is a failure to support teacher candidates in their development as social and emotional nurturers. Similarly, teacher candidates need to also be prepared for the global dimensions that define today's classroom learning context. Such preparation connects to the realities about living in an international and global world. Global competencies are a mix of skills and dispositions to help citizens navigate international issues (Byker and Banerjee, 2016; Byker and Putman, 2019).

CCT utilizes the Asia Society's global competency matrix as part of its framework. The Asia Society is a non-governmental organization that is dedicated to fostering global competencies. In 2011, the Asia Society published a free, electronic book called *Educating for Global Competency* (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011). In that book, the Asia Society defines global competency as "the capacity to understand and act on issues of global significance" (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011, p. 2). The Asia Society's Global Competency Matrix includes the following four components: investigating the world, recognizing perspectives, communicating ideas and taking action.

CCT maps the Asia Society's four global competencies (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011) to Paulo Freire's (1970) notions regarding the development of conscientization or critical consciousness. CCT provides a conceptual frame for developing global citizens who are both critically conscious and humane. Global competencies should guide students and teachers toward a "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1970, p. 35) about the world. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian Educationist, focused his writing on education for critical consciousness. Education – from a Freirean perspective – involves much more than acts of learning how to read and write and compute numbers; education is about empowerment and emancipation. Freire coined the term *conscientizao* or critical consciousness to identify the possibilities of education to help to liberate people from societal injustices. Freire (1970) explains that the development of critical consciousness is part of being able to "read the world" and "rewrite the world". In his seminal book, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire (1998) describes that being able to read the world is a creative activity that leads to deeper comprehension of one's presence in the world. Reading the world includes having eyes opened to the world's diversity and to global issues – like the opportunity gap and income inequality – that cause deep rifts in societies.

When eyes are opened, then Freire says that students and educators are prepared to start rewriting the world through communication and action. By rewriting the world, Freire (1994) means the engagement in social activities that can transform the world. Rewriting the world includes what Freire (1994) identifies as denunciations and annunciations. By denunciations, Freire means a critical consciousness about the globe that is aware of and denounces the world's injustices. Annunciations encompass an awareness and announcement of all peoples' humanity, dignity and future possibilities. Denunciations and annunciations are necessary features of rewriting the world and fostering a critical consciousness about the globe.

The main presupposition of CCT is being a global citizen requires a social and emotional learning maturation toward critical consciousness. Such maturation includes the integration of global competencies with Freirean skills like reading and rewriting the world. Cosmopolitanism is the final feature of CCT.

Cosmopolitan by its Greek root word *kosmopolitês* literally means citizen of the world. Becoming cosmopolitanism is more than just becoming urbane or hip, rather cosmopolitan is a virtuous word that combines empathy, hospitality and openness. Appiah (2010) asserts that cosmopolitan captures how people "take value in human lives and humanity" (p. xv). CCT seeks to develop global citizens who are humane *vis-à-vis* conscientization of the wider world. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of CCT. The figure illustrates the merging of the Asia Society's Global Competency Matrix with Paulo Freire's perspectives on education and conscientization.

Utilizing CCT as a theoretical framework, the paper examines the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of how they investigated the world during their study abroad experience?
- RQ2. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of how they recognized perspectives during their study abroad experience?
- RQ3. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of how they communicated ideas during their study abroad experience?
- RQ4. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of their willingness to take action because of their study abroad experience?

Method

To investigate these research questions, the paper uses a case study research design (Yin, 2008). The case study centers on a study abroad trip in South Africa. The trip was 24 days long. Participants included 22 teaching candidates majoring in elementary education ($n=20$) or world languages ($n=2$) at Southmont University, which is a large state university in the southeastern region of the USA. The South Africa study abroad experience primarily took place in the Cape Town area. The participants stayed at a host university. The participants' study abroad experience included over 40 hours of observation and teaching at four Cape Town area elementary schools. These public, elementary schools were all different in terms of their Quintile standing within in the South African education system (see Spaull, 2013). The schools were Quintiles 2 and 3 public schools – which are under-resourced schools – and a Quintile 5 school, which is a high-fee, high resourced public school. The study abroad program included daily debriefs and lectures by South African professors about the South African education system and the legacy of apartheid in South African school. The study abroad program had several cultural excursions including visits to Robben Island and the District Six Museum.

Data collection

Data collection included artifact analysis, participant interviews and participant observation through field notes. These data allow for a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) about the case study. For the artifact analysis, the participants kept a reflective journal of their trip. The journal included the following reflection prompts aligned with CCT:

- Global citizens are aware and curious about the world and how it works. What are ways that you investigated the world during this study abroad trip?
- Global citizens recognize that people may have different perspectives from their own. What new perspectives have you gained from this study abroad trip?

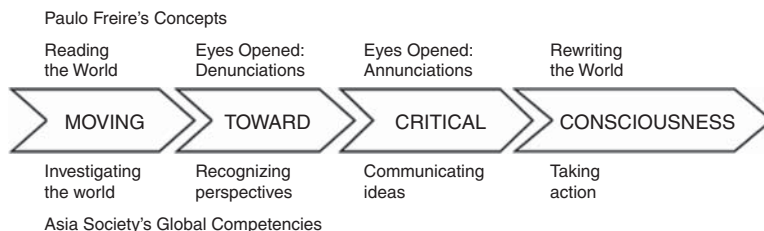


Figure 1.
A graphic representation of critical cosmopolitan theory

- Global citizenship requires language and communication. What experiences have you had with cross-cultural communication during your study abroad trip?
- Global citizens are action-oriented and ready to “rewrite the world.” Describe a time on this trip where you observed someone making a difference and/or a time where you were moved to start taking action to make a difference.

Participant interviews followed up on the themes that the participants shared in their journals. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview approach (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The interview question protocol included questions about the overall perception of study abroad and followed up on participants’ responses in their journals.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively using Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) constant-comparative method and took place after the study abroad experience was completed. The analysis included a three-step interpretive process (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of, first, reading through all the data from the reflective journals and interview transcripts. Next, the data were coded and organized into categories. Third, categories were analyzed to identify similarities and differences which emerged from the data to address the study’s research questions. From this analysis of similarities and differences, I developed larger themes related to the development of global competencies among the participants. I analyzed these themes into findings that help answer the research questions, which guided the study.

Findings

Four themes emerged from the data analysis. The paper introduces and discusses each theme in relationship to the study’s research questions. The themes are organized by the Asia Society’s four global competencies: investigate the world, recognize perspectives, communicate ideas and take action.

Investigate the world

Participants reported how their South Africa study abroad experience afforded opportunities to investigate the world by examining culture and the South African educational system in a clinical teaching format. In response to the question about investigating South Africa, the Southmont University teacher candidates focused on South Africa’s system of education. In particular, their emphasis was on the inequities of school resources. The teacher candidates were surprised by the scarcity of teaching materials in the South African elementary schools – mostly in Quintiles 2 and 3 – where they taught. One Southmont University teacher candidate wrote:

I have noticed a lack of resources in some of the South African elementary schools. Books that students can read their leisure, technology that students can use for learning, individual desks, and white boards or chalkboards are a few of the very limited resources available in the schools. Before this trip, I didn’t really think about not having access to resources like books and even a chalkboard in order to teach.

The Southmont University teacher candidates reflected on the respect they had for the South African elementary school teachers who make do with the few resources they can scrounge up in order to teach. One participant discussed the South African teachers’ ingenuity and provided the example of a teacher using bottle caps for counters in a math class. Another participant wrote about how a teacher snapped crayons in half so that her students all had crayons to use for coloring.

Investigating the world of the South African education system was also eye-opening for the Southmont University teacher candidates in terms of environmental education

and conservation. The teacher candidates noticed that many of the elementary schools did not have air-conditioning and the heating system was rarely turned on. They remarked on the open windows in the classroom, which allowed in fresh air. The school children would arrive to school “layered-up” in clothes and then peel off jackets and sweaters as the day progressed. Water conservation was also an issue that the Southmont University teacher candidates noticed. Teacher candidates reflected on how they became more aware of their water usage and waste throughout their time in South Africa. They remarked on the many signs and posters that provided reminders about turning off the tap when brushing teeth, taking 90 s showers, as well as limiting the amount of toilet flushes. These reminders helped the teacher candidates “to be more mindful and vigilant about their water usage.” The Southmont University teacher candidates believed the USA had much to learn and put into practice related to environmental protection and water conservation.

Recognize perspectives

The issue of water conservation reflects the emphasis on environmental education, which is a different perspective than the teacher candidates may have had growing up in the USA (Byker *et al.*, 2019). The study abroad and clinical teaching experience helped the teacher candidates to develop a deeper recognition of perspectives. One of those perspectives is the difference in how religion is recognized in South Africa schools compared to the USA. Southmont University teacher candidates focused on the prevalence of religious education (RE) in the South African public schools. The Southmont University teacher candidates completed their clinical experiences at public elementary schools. The legacies of the British rule in South Africa are still reflected in the public school curricula, including RE. Many of the Southmont University teacher candidates shared how the inclusion of RE and a time for prayer in the school was new to them and made them uneasy.

For example, one teacher candidate explained, “I found that I wasn’t comfortable with the prayers during school. It seems like only one religion is catered to. I would like to find out more about why this is allowed in South African public schools.” Another teacher candidate stated, “The students have a prayer time in schools that they have to participate in. I don’t agree with this because not all religions are being catered to during this time.” The teacher candidates perceived that Christianity was only the religion being observed during this prayer time, which they believed unfair to the children who may have religious beliefs other than the Christian faith.

Another perspective that the Southmont University teacher candidates encountered was South African university students having a larger view of the world and greater knowledge about global events. One Southmont University teacher candidate shared how talking to South African university students made her realize how myopic her view of the world. She explained how her view of the world was quite limited to the USA. In fact, the first time she heard or read about apartheid was when she was preparing for the trip to South Africa. The Southmont University teacher candidates expressed the need for a larger perspective about the world and global events. One teacher candidate put it this way, “Participating in this study abroad trip has made me realize that I need to be more aware of what’s happening not only in the United States, but in countries all over the world.” At the same time, the Southmont University teacher candidates’ perspectives were broadened related to everyday realities in a context like South Africa.

One of those realities is poverty. Teacher candidates expressed a sense of shock about the extreme poverty that they encountered in South Africa, especially in the townships. One Southmont University teacher candidate explained:

At home, I only see a couple of homeless people, but in South Africa, I walk by homeless on a daily basis. The visit to the township was eye-opening, walking through the township made me aware of what poverty looks like and how families live together in a small space with very few resources.

All the Southmont University teacher candidates agreed that the visit to the township was one of the most eye-opening experiences of their study abroad trip. The township visit was led by a local guide who grew up in the township and runs a non-profit organization teaching the children in the township computer skills and how to ride bicycles. The candidates reported that having a local guide lead them through his community helped them to move beyond “poverty tourism” to see the communal aspects, entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity within the township.

Another reality the teacher candidates encountered was racism. The legacies of apartheid are still present within South Africa. Apartheid can be seen in the spatial organization of the Cape Town geography and in much of the divisions of labor. For example, it is more common to see a black South African as a streetcleaner than a white South African. The legacies of apartheid are present in the views of some people, including some South African university students the Southmont University students encountered. For example, one Southmont University teacher candidate recalled a conversation with a white South African student who expressed strong anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and racist points of view. In response, the Southmont University teacher candidate was dismayed and stated, “It makes me sad that there is more ignorance across the world. Even in South Africa, which only recently worked to overcome apartheid and discriminatory systems, racist people can still live.” The recognition of perspectives is about reading the world to recognize the prevalence of ignorance and injustice.

Communicate ideas

The study abroad experiences afforded opportunities for cross-cultural communication and the recognition of the privileges that come with being speakers of English. The Southmont University teacher candidates reported being impressed that many of the elementary students were tri-lingual and knew how to speak: Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. The teacher candidates also reported how their study abroad experience made them more aware of their own privileges especially as speakers of English. A Southmont University teacher candidate put it this way, “I think I take too much for granted. I can only speak English, but I expect to just say ‘hello’ and people will understand me. This experience has opened my eyes to all the privileges that I have in terms of language.” Another Southmont University teacher candidate shared, “I have seen how English is used as a common way to communicate in South Africa and gives me access to the things I want to buy at the store. But, it doesn’t give me full access to cultural understandings.” This quote is a reflection of how many of the Southmont University teacher candidates recognized that language is a form of communication and access. Knowing English provided an almost universal way to communicate in South Africa, but English does not always provide access to another person’s culture.

Taking action

The teacher candidates were ready to take action because of their study abroad experience and clinical teaching opportunities. For the Southmont University teacher candidates, the most popular form of taking action was adopting culturally responsive pedagogies in their future teaching practice. They also reported on how they planned to promote study abroad and international experiences. Related to culturally responsive pedagogies, Gay (2002) defines cultural responsiveness as “using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 107). To enact culturally responsive instruction, teacher candidates need to engage in experiences to understand young peoples and families’ cultural background.

Experiences like study abroad coupled with international teaching opportunities are often quite powerful. The Southmont University teacher candidates reported as much. One Southmont University teacher candidate shared about how the life of Nelson Mandela

inspired her to take action as a future school teacher. She explained, “As a future teacher, I will be an advocate for my students and will also be purposeful about getting different cultures to interact in the classroom. Like Nelson Mandela, I want to be a teacher who brings people together.” Another teacher candidate shared:

During my time in South Africa, I taught many lessons on cultural awareness. I taught about the importance of knowing and respecting the culture of others. I will take these lessons back and teach them again in the US, where cultural awareness is just as important.

Teacher candidates also connected responsiveness to the idea of inclusion. The purpose of inclusion is not to single out students with disabilities but rather give them supports that can make them successful within the general education population. One teacher candidate noticed during her time in South African school a lack of resources and attention to students with special needs. She wrote, “I plan on taking action on behalf of students with special needs. I felt that many of these students were just ignored. I will promote inclusive practices to make sure that students with special needs are part of the classroom.” Whether it was the adoption of culturally responsive practices or inclusion, the Southmont University teacher candidates eyes were opened to the world and were moved to take action.

Finally, the Southmont University teacher candidates planned on taking action to promote the benefits of study abroad. The Southmont University teacher candidates explained how the study abroad opened their eyes to making a difference as future teachers. They wanted to share their experiences with the children in their future classrooms. Likewise, they planned on promoting study abroad to their peers in order to encourage them to attend a future study abroad trip. A number of the Southmont University teacher candidates explained that they utilize the South African cultural artifacts that they purchased during the study abroad trip in their future classrooms. As a group, the teacher candidates gained a deeper commitment to teaching back home. One Southmont University teacher candidate explained it this way:

I keep thinking about this quote that goes something like this: “People travel to faraway places to watch the kind of people they ignore at home.” Study abroad has taught me that I can no longer ignore the kids back home. I am excited to start my journey as a classroom teacher so I can share about the powerful experience I had during my study abroad trip to South Africa.

The Southmont University teacher candidates had a greater resolve for the global competency of taking action because of their study abroad and international clinical teaching opportunities in South Africa.

Discussion

Study abroad is recognized by American Association of the Colleges for Teacher Education as one activity for university students to gain international experience in teaching (Alfaro and Quezada, 2010). The authentic experience of study abroad is considered important for intercultural development and for providing first-hand of experience in learning about people and culture of the host country (Alfaro and Quezada, 2010; Pence and Macgillivray, 2008). Evidence demonstrates that those who have study abroad experience demonstrated increased knowledge in culture and politics, and a greater understanding about life, the traditions of the host country, and to support personal growth and independence (Alfaro and Quezada, 2010; Byker, 2014, 2016; Byker and Marquadt, 2016). Study abroad participants are also more confident to speak with strangers and figure out ways for communication in new environment (Medina *et al.*, 2015; Pilonieta *et al.*, 2017). The paper’s case study reflects how SEL can be supported through the development of global competencies.

According to Jones *et al.* (2013), SEL competencies and skills need to be embedded in the daily life of teaching and learning. They provide concrete strategies in the support of SEL, which include: building emotional awareness, the incorporation of daily reflection and the culture of continuous learning. The case study in this paper demonstrates the effectiveness of these strategies in a study abroad context. The study's teacher candidates developed a deeper emotional – and intercultural – awareness as they encountered new experiences *vis-à-vis* the South African context. This deeper emotional learning was fostered by the daily reflective activities, which allowed the teacher candidates to communicate how they were making sense of their study abroad experiences. The study abroad trip also reflected a culture of continuous learning – whether through confronting ignorance or the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogies. The case study further illustrates how international teaching and clinical experiences at schools expand teacher candidates' sense of agency – or the ability to take action – as future educators and citizens. Agency is an important feature of SEL as it reflects what the maturation of social and emotional learning.

The expansive sense of agency as global educators is an example of the many affordances of study abroad. In this current study, it was also found that study abroad was a catalyst for cosmopolitanism or making connections to humanity (Appiah, 2010). How did this happen? To address this question, we return to the study's framework: CCT. This theory is premised on supporting the development of critically conscious global competencies, which compels citizens to act in humane ways. Within the case study, the teacher candidates move toward critical consciousness in four main ways. First, the teacher candidates investigated the socio-cultural context and educational context of South Africa. They began reading the world (Byker, 2013, 2014, 2015; Freire, 1970) of South Africa even before the study abroad trip commenced. This act of reading the world helped them to better the South African context which they be situated. Second, the teacher candidates had their eyes opened to new perspectives about cultural norms, educational pedagogies, language instruction, socio-economic status and even the legacies of racist systems like apartheid. For many teacher candidates, the recognition of difference in perspectives included broadening their thinking about classroom sizes, instructional resources and the language of instruction. Third, the teacher candidates developed a great of sense of awareness for the communication of ideas in multiple languages. They also gained greater appreciation for how multilingualism is a learning strength rather than a deficit. The teacher candidates developed a greater commitment to communicating with students and families in culturally responsive and culturally sustaining ways (Paris, 2012). Fourth, the teacher candidates developed a deeper commitment to taking action to make a difference as future educators. For some teacher candidates taking action meant promoting the value of study abroad and international teaching opportunities with their peers. For others, taking action meant sharing about their study abroad experiences in their future teaching classrooms back in the USA. As Byker (2016) explains, taking action is not about where the action is situated, but rather why a teacher candidate decides to take action. The teacher candidates in this case study were inspired to take action because their study abroad and international teaching and clinical experiences connected – and challenged – their notions of what it means to be an educator. Being an educator means that one is nurturing and helping to develop future citizens – of the world – who have a deep sense of humanity and what it means to be connected with the local community and the global community. The study abroad experience helped the teacher candidates develop SEL through exercising a deeper critical consciousness as a cosmopolitan or citizen of the world.

Limitations and future research

There are limitations related to this study. One of the limitations is the relatively small sample size. This is due, in part, to the high cost associated with study abroad. The high cost

of study abroad can be a barrier for students to access the cross-cultural and the SEL experiences afforded by study abroad. The hefty price tag of study abroad often limits the number of teacher candidates at public institutions who can go on study abroad (Malewski and Phillion, 2009). A future research agenda is needed about ways to help off-set the costs in order to make study abroad more affordable and equitable. Additionally, more research is needed in regards to the connection between SEL development and international teaching experience that may be situated in the university where the teacher education program is located. For example, teacher candidates may be able to have field experiences with teaching English classes or citizenship classes to a group of refugees. A future research agenda would expand the sample size to include study abroad participants from all teacher preparation levels – including the middle level and secondary level. The case study in this paper focused on elementary level teacher candidates.

Yet, there may be similar or divergent perspectives about SEL, study abroad and international teaching experiences among the teacher candidates preparing to teach middle school or high school. Finally, a future research agenda would include longitudinal studies of the impact of study abroad experiences on educators' professional teaching practice. Such a study could include a long-term examination of the social and emotional learning of teacher candidates or practicing teachers who attend study abroad or participate in international teaching experiences. Is this population of educators more likely to assume leadership positions in the future? How, if in any way, is there SEL different from teachers who do not participate in study abroad? Such questions could guide a future research agenda. Likewise, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the impact of study abroad on participants' change of perceptions – over time – of their SEL development and what it means to be a critically conscious global citizen.

Conclusion

International teaching and clinical experiences provided by study abroad are wrapped up in the possibilities of fostering social and emotional learning through the development of emotional awareness, empathy and cognitive regulation. All of these SEL features are especially critical for teacher candidates to develop. Indeed, SEL can support teacher candidates in effectively applying the knowledge, dispositions and skills necessary for teaching in diverse classrooms and for the development of global citizenship. This study demonstrates how study abroad experiences further nurture SEL skills – like empathy – and to develop global competencies through authentic learning opportunities in a context different than the USA. Whether in South Africa or another country, the case study presented in this paper highlights the possibilities of study abroad in tandem with international teaching experiences to help prepare teachers with SEL features like fostering empathy, developing culturally responsive practices, and becoming critically conscious and cosmopolitan. The study fills a gap in the literature regarding the development of SEL among elementary education teacher candidates through study abroad and international teaching experiences. In turn, the teacher candidates have committed to take action in order share their international opportunities with their future students and guide those future students in reading and rewriting the world as global citizens.

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