Combining specialized professional skills with personal global citizenship development: The case of an itinerant graduate study abroad program

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Today’s socio-political and economic climate beseeches the world’s citizens to move toward an era of informed, culturally-sensitive coexistence. Accordingly, internationalization is increasingly indicated in mission statements and strategic plans across universities and professional learning organizations. As such, educators are reshaping learning experiences to prepare students for cross-cultural collaboration and socially responsible careers in a time of global interdependence. The need to educate for responsible intercultural competencies can be integrated into the concept of “global citizenship.”

Framed through cosmopolitanism and experiential learning theory, this study aimed to investigate participants’ sense and development of global citizenship through engagement in an innovative itinerant master’s degree program at the intersection of architecture, archaeology and museum design. The private graduate professional degree program is organized around a unique educational formula that includes students of diverse nationalities, local professionals, professors, and tutors interacting in collaborative design workshops across multiple international locations.

The following research questions guided the research: What aspects of an itinerant graduate professional degree program do participants find as strengths and weaknesses, and why do they feel this way? And, what aspects of the program informed participants’ skills, understandings, attitudes, and dispositions vis-à-vis their global perspectives and citizenship?

Literature Review

Internationalization and Global Citizenship

Global citizenship as a concept is being used to operationalize internationalization priorities and underpin student learning outcomes (Ogden, 2010). Unfortunately, scholars do not agree as to how to define global citizenship, or how to measure it. Ogden identifies three dimensions of global citizenship: 1) social responsibility, 2)
global competence, and 3) global civic engagement. Social responsibility is the perceived level of interdependence with and social concern for others, society, and the environment (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Global competence is actively seeking to understand others’ cultural norms and expectations, and leveraging this knowledge to interact, communicate, and work effectively outside one’s environment (American Council on Education, 2008). And, global civic engagement is understood as the demonstration of action and/or predisposition toward recognizing and engaging in local, state, national, and global community issues (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Ogden (2010) suggests, “these interrelated dimensions align well with the prominent theoretical and philosophical perspectives described in the literature, reflect how governmental entities, associations, and educators have framed global citizenship” and articulate ideas that resonate with the general goals of education abroad (p. 32).

Nussbaum (2010) suggests being a citizen of the world does not require that we give up our ethnic, gendered, or religious identifications; indeed, she believes these affections and identities need special attention in education. She asserts an enhanced approach to education, however, that extends learning by helping individuals recognize humanity wherever it is encountered, undaunted by traits that are strange, and to be keen to understand humanity in its difference. She further argues that people must “learn about the different [?] to recognize common aims, aspirations, and values, and enough about these common ends to see how variously they are instantiated in the many cultures and many histories” around the world (p. 158).

**Study Abroad Pedagogy and Adult Higher Professional Education**

Research indicates that studying in international locations can develop the tenets of global citizenship by cultivating participants’ global perspectives, self-perceptions, and cross-cultural effectiveness (Herbers & Mullins Nelson, 2009). We know that engaging in authentic intercultural interactions often requires real-world problem solving and develops global sensitivities in different ways from formal, didactic instruction (Coryell, 2011). However, international study experiences do not always facilitate the development and transformation they intend (Green, 2002). Study abroad pedagogy is still in a phase of defining and validation. The paucity of research on the types of learning activities, intercultural development, and personal
transformation that actually occurs in these experiences suggests further investigation is warranted into how educators can facilitate meaningful cross-cultural learning (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). With unprecedented growth in graduate education study abroad participation of over 39% in the past 10 years (IIE, 2011), additional research is needed to provide a scholarly foundation about the characteristics of these experiences in the development of global citizenship in adulthood (de Wit, 2009). Indeed, very little research has been conducted to identify global citizenship as an outcome of international study or of cross-cultural professional engagement (Ogden, 2010). We also know little about adult learning and graduate study abroad (Dirkx, Spohr, Tepper, & Tons, 2010), how different countries approach adult international study programs, and what learners find meaningful in their development of global perspectives and global citizenship.

A Unique Pedagogical Context
The current research is an investigation of a unique graduate professional program that includes multiple international learning experiences in the pedagogical methodology. The program under study is an itinerant master’s program developed at the intersection of architecture, archaeology, and museography. The program’s description suggests learners will develop operative, analytical, design, and management relationships between architects and archeologists with improved awareness and utilization of cultural heritage. Learning objectives include the ability to engage in cross-cultural professional dialogue to permit the creation of a common language between architects and archeologists in a variety of cultural contexts. The graduate professional degree program is composed on the basis of an itinerant set of month-long workshops that require between seven to ten days on-site. These research and design workshops are held at various locations in Italy, Athens, Sagunto, Seville, and New York City. In each workshop, students work with local experts to learn about issues that are of the specific site but pertain to the key issues concerning architecture and archeology. Students choose to participate in a minimum number of five workshops of the nine offered over the course of one year. In each workshop and in a culminating thesis project, international dignitaries in the fields of architecture and archeology, research and technical professionals, and institutional managers in related fields attend and critique group design presentations. The program creates a “bridge between culture and project and
between culture and conversation – a place for disciplinary contamination… to promote an interdisciplinary professional development activity concentrated on museum design” (program description).

Theoretical Framework
The research is approached through cosmopolitanism. Appiah (2006) suggests in this age of global interdependence, people need to engage in meaningful discourse employing a cosmopolitan stance. Rooted in philosophy, ethics, and education, cosmopolitanism maintains that there are universal values across cultures and peoples, yet it demands a respect for legitimate differences. Appiah contends that the world’s peoples currently engage in a kaleidoscope of cultural interactions that continue to shift and interact. He calls this cultural intermingling “contamination,” which ultimately requires people to be equipped with ideas and institutions for living together in multicultural spaces as citizens of a “global tribe.” As such he argues that individuals need to assume obligations to all others regardless of nationality, kinship, or affection, while at the same time valuing specific people’s lives, not just human life in the abstract (Appiah, 2006, p. xv). He and others (Nussbaum, 2010) endorse cosmopolitan education practices that engage people in meaningful dialogue as a means for engaging across cultures through interactions and storytelling about one’s own and other peoples’ experiences and understandings.

Correspondingly, a second theoretical lens, which underpins study abroad pedagogy and research, is experiential learning. Dewey (1916) maintained that learning requires the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience. Learning through hands-on experiences aids students in encoding information for long-term retrieval, catalyzing personal development, and contributing civically to their communities thereby becoming more responsible citizens. As such, experiential learning provides the intellectual undergirding for global citizenship learning components like, 1) working together rather than in isolation on learning tasks; 2) the organic relation between what is learned and personal experience; 3) the importance of social and not just intellectual development; and, 4) the value of actions directed toward the welfare of others.

Method
The study was a qualitative design anchored in the “case” of the itinerant master’s program. Case studies may be undertaken when a researcher wants to understand a particular case because of its uniqueness. For this study, the program was chosen because its model could offer inimitable insight into an educational approach in graduate professional study abroad. Case studies provide a utility of opening the way for discoveries, and of highlighting insights that may be pursued in subsequent studies.

**Data Collection**

The program’s final workshop was based in New York City. The focus of that workshop was to engage in culturally-sensitive design surrounding a historically-significant hospital from the early 1900s. This workshop hosted 41 students and four teaching assistants (tutors), many of whom were former program students. Learners hailed primarily from Italy, but there were also participants from Romania, Spain, Greece, and Poland. The teaching assistants and professors were Italian.

Yin (1994) noted that no single data source has a complete advantage over the others; “…the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” (p. 80). Data included program documents (workshop syllabi and other informational documents) and semi-structured individual and group interviews from a sample of convenience. Students, professors, and tutors were provided an information sheet regarding the study and invitation to participate. Twelve students (seven Italians, one Polish, two Romanians, and two Greeks), three tutors, and one of the professors (with dual citizenship in Italy and the US) volunteered to participate. Volunteers (n=16) received a gift card for their participation. Participation did not influence any part of the grading for the program.

Since all students and teaching assistants are required to be proficient in English to enter the program, I conducted four semi-structured focus groups - three groups with four students, each (SFGs), and one with the three tutors (TFG) in English. The professor was interviewed individually. The questions concentrated on demographic information first, then the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, the participants’ descriptions of their meaningful learning experiences, and their insight into the development of global citizenship within the program. The interviews took
between an hour and an hour and a half, each. They were recorded through audio and audio-video capture. I also took notes throughout the data gathering process.

Analysis
The analysis began as I listened to the audio recordings of the focus groups and interviews to get an overall sense of the data. Then, each session was transcribed. I used constant-comparative and thematic methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) to further analyze the data. Using cross-case analysis of the student, tutor, and professor interviews (Yin, 1994), I grouped responses to specific questions in order to examine various perspectives on specific topics. I first examined the participants’ responses individually and then collectively, from within each interview and then across the data set. The responses were broken into a list of data bits, or codes, which led to a compilation of categories and eventually larger, overarching themes. Finding these patterns was essential in discovering what was prominent and meaningful across the data set. Through devising rules that described each category, I consistently compared the codes and subsequently refined the categories and themes.

Findings
From these inquiries, new knowledge emerged from this study to provide insight into adult learning and well-being through a cosmopolitan approach to the development of global citizenship couched in professional experiential learning. Cosmopolitan education in the program was located in relational and physical experiences—professional cross-cultural learning occurred through dialogue in relationships with co-participants and in the physical/cultural experience of the foreign setting. Learners and instructors, alike, were subsequently able to identify aspects of global citizenship development as a result of their experiences in the program.

The Relational Nature of Cosmopolitan Graduate Professional Education
Professional cross-cultural, interdisciplinary relationships were steeped in dialogue at the intersection of architecture, archaeology, and museography. Each of the students were trained as professional architects, but this program provided a new space for dialogue about the need for architectural design that encompasses “the relationships with the landscape, the relationship with the history, and [with] the culture” (TFG). Learning began with pre-workshop readings and through lectures by
program professors and local experts on-site. The relationships formed in the program between the learner and professors and tutors, local experts, and other learners were considered strengths by participants. Indeed, the unique collaborative nature of the learning was “not a usual way to study” (SFG). First, there were opportunities for participants to engage in mentorships not commonly offered in traditional university experiences. A tutor explained, “the relationship between mentor and pupils is close and friendly enough that the pupils are not ashamed of asking something.” He further clarified the difference that the program’s collaborative relationships could offer learners,

It is very difficult to find a ‘master.’ Someone to follow. You go to university, you’ve got your professor, you can [admire] them, you can believe that they are good professor, they still remain professor. And, after your course, it’s finished. This kind of school, this kind of approach, gives you the possibility of choosing your own master. Someone to follow. A reference point.

Likewise, a student explained, “I liked the cooperation. I found it something different.” Another offered the professors and tutors

Transmit [to] you the passion about our job. So basically it was an education, and opportunity, to live the education in a different way. In our own way with someone able to show us, as another way, a more free way, a more passionate way to do our job.

The relationships built via student design team collaborations also incorporated a mutual sharing of knowledge and respectful appreciation of cultural difference. These projects fostered a unique cross-cultural dialogic space.

“Integrating with the different people…from different cultures” and the “team experience” were strengths indicated across the data. One student suggested the team-based projects required “24 hours [of] sleeping together, eating together, working together…trying to cooperate with people you don’t know.” Although there were language and communication barriers, students learned to develop new skills that helped “communicate the idea or the solution in a new verbal way.” Participants identified the value of these interactions in enhancing their cooperative professional skills. One student acknowledged this through the value of making comparisons, “it is important to see another architect of another country, work on the same case, same problem.” The cross-cultural cooperative skills development that
occurred through the various relationships across the workshops was summarized in this student’s statement,

The interactions…are very important. I learn from them, it’s like we have those stereotypes and sometimes they are completely wrong. But sometimes they are completely true. The thing is that you see when you confront other people is their limitations and your own limitations. And the thing is, you have to decide: can you live with this person’s limitations? Or can this person live with my limits? And if you say “yes” then you have to accept and move on. It makes me a little bit more flexible, I think.

The Physical Nature of Cosmopolitan Professional Graduate Education

The professor offered that studying on-site helps architects to learn that buildings can represent many cultural underpinnings. He explained, “Meaningful architecture…has a representative component, which allows it to mean something to the culture that built it…but also it represents that culture to cultures that are external to it.” Through their learning about histories, landscapes, and architectural design problems in different locations, participants indicated the significance of interacting with people in the physical setting. A student offered, “moving in a year, to nine cites, to stay there, work there, to get to know people there, it is a really strong experience.” Another clarified, “living with Greek people for one week in Greece, you feel the house you live [in], and so maybe you can think and understand some of the culture.” The physical experiences, the feeling of the cultural space, was found to “develop a real sensibility towards an archaeological place and the things that were built there, how they were built, what they serve.” The physicality of the cross-cultural experiences was essential to meaningful participant learning and professional development.

Identifying Aspects of Global Citizenship

When asked about what it means to develop global citizenship, the respondents reflected upon their experiences and indicated they had developed skills and value systems necessary to engage sensitively with peoples and practices from other cultures. Through these reflections, the analysis identified a developed sense of self-efficacy in cross-cultural professional work, the ability to engage and work in another culture, and overcoming a fear of difference. A tutor suggested, “Comparing yourself
with someone that obviously sees the world from another point of view” was an essential point of the program. A student offered, “I think you can’t establish global citizenship if you don’t go. I mean you can read all the literature from all the world…but you will never be a citizen of the world if you just don’t go abroad.” Participants said they had become “more flexible in [their] ways of life,” and “the concept of something new doesn’t exist anymore…it’s not so present.” One student provided this explanation regarding her own development as a citizen of the world, “in this Master, we have to learn how to not think about our personal needs, but how to settle in the environment and adopt yourself, and respect the other needs.” In addition, the respondents revealed an extended “trust” in others who are different (“[I am] not scared about what is different”), acquired knowledge of how to interact sensitively in foreign communities, and committed to continual learning about foreign peoples and culture. A learner illustrated her new approach to interaction with new cultural communities as, “You just have to try to read their sign…you learn how to live in the world, read the world, how to look for the world and other people.” Ultimately, a student believed, “[Now], home is not just your home with your mother and your father. Home is the world.”

Discussion and Implications
The new dispositions regarding sensitive engagement and coexistence with the many peoples/cultures across the world were developed in the dialectical and physical experiences of the program. Participants learned through dialogue with other students, with professors and local professionals, with the terrain and materials, with the history/archaeology, and through personal reflection. Certainly, the program had many challenges including the limited time and intensity of the work during the on-site projects, the expense of travel, and the desire to work more closely with other students native to the workshop sites. In addition, the program is not yet self-sustaining; the professors and tutors are not paid salaries for their work (their travel, room, and board expenses were covered by the program). However, the innovative model offers important characteristics for those interested in fostering cosmopolitan educative experiences in foreign locales. Program directors and instructors must design instruction that integrates opportunities for participants to build dialogic, cross-cultural relationships in real-world, problem-solving practice.
Finally, attending to the value of the physical cultural experiences of learning on-location in these programs cannot be underestimated. The inclusion of international cultural histories, practices, and peoples into the development of cooperative professional skills and production was found to be vital in the participants' development of global citizenship and self-efficacy.

References