

**Global Perspectives of American Elementary School Teachers: A Research Study**

**Cyndi Mottola Poole; William B. Russell III**

University of Central Florida

---

**Abstract:** The importance of global education cannot be overstated in modern society. In order to be successful and live happily in the world, today's young people must develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to interact with people and countries around the globe. The first step to promoting global perspectives in the classroom is to ensure that the teachers we entrust those classrooms to have developed their own global perspectives. This study sought to determine the extent to which American elementary school teachers in a diverse, urban school district had developed global perspectives as well as the demographic, educational, and lifestyle factors that influenced those perspectives. The results indicated that while most of the teachers who participated in the study did have global perspectives, schools of education are not doing enough to promote globalization and global citizenship in pre-service teachers.

*Key words:* social studies, global perspectives, teacher education, elementary education, elementary teachers

---

A multitude of international education organizations have emphasized that comprehensive global education must be made a priority in the schools of all nations. The United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) underscored the need for all countries to incorporate such global education concepts as sustainability education, education for human rights, and intercultural and interfaith education into their school curricula (UNESCO, 2006). Similarly, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) asserted that high levels of educational attainment and the ability to work effectively in a global context will be the key indicators of success in the new world economic order. The worldwide popularity of specific globally-focused alternative education programs such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which is currently offered in more than 3,300 schools in more than 140 countries, is also evidence of the strength of the movement towards a more international approach (Hill, 2012).

The education systems of many specific countries throughout the world have also called for the inclusion of global education goals within their curricula. The Department for Education and Employment (DFEE, 2005), for example, has laid out eight key concepts of a global dimension that all schools at all levels in the United Kingdom should integrate into their curriculum, namely diversity, human rights, global citizenship, interdependence, conflict resolution, values and perceptions, sustainable development, and social justice. Beginning in the fall of 2013, a new Global Learning Programme has also been instituted in the United Kingdom as a network of schools devoted to educating globally-minded young people. Australia's *Global Perspectives: A Framework for Global Education in Australian Schools* (Education Services Australia, 2011) also insists on the importance of integrating global perspectives into all schools, which is conceptualized as five learning emphases: interdependence and globalization, identity and cultural diversity, social justice and human rights, peace building and conflict resolution, and sustainable futures. Within the United States, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills' *Framework for 21st Century Learning* (2009) states as one of its

---

Corresponding author email: [Russell@ucf.edu](mailto:Russell@ucf.edu)

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

main goals that students must be 'prepared to thrive in today's global economy' (p. 1), and includes global awareness, civic literacy, and environmental literacy – all key elements of global education – in its '21st century themes' (p. 2). The mission statement of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012) sets as one of its objectives that students should be prepared to successfully compete in the global economy. Additionally, the National Council for the Social Studies' *National Curriculum Standards* (2010) specifies that American social studies programs should emphasize cultural diversity and global interdependence.

However, despite this ostensible agreement on the imperative of global education, educational researchers in many countries have expressed concern about the slow pace at which these needed reforms are taking place. Mundy and Manion (2008) discovered that attempts by Canadian education professionals to integrate global perspectives into their elementary schools were plagued by insufficient teacher training, little coordination between different education authorities, and lack of support for curriculum development. The United Kingdom's DFEE reports that although four out of five teachers in the U.K. believe that teaching about emerging nations and their relationships to Great Britain, 60% lack confidence in their ability to do so (DFEE, 2005). Hayden (2013) argued that one cause for the popularity of IB and other similar alternative education programs in the United Kingdom may be the lack of a true international focus in these countries' public education systems. Likewise, the desire for a more global dimension in education has led many upper-class South Korean parents to desert the public education system and enrol their children in English-language international schools originally intended for international residents of the country (Song, 2013).

Similar concerns abound in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 27% of eighth grade students and 20% of twelfth grade students scored at or above the 'proficient' level on the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress Geography examination (NCES, 2010). The 2006 National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs Geographic Literacy Survey found that common errors made by young adults in the United States included greatly overestimating the size of the United States compared to other countries, incorrectly identifying English as the most prevalent native language in the world, and the inability to locate many countries on a world map. Just as worrisome, only 32% of students indicated they could speak a foreign language, and 38% of respondents stated that speaking a foreign language was 'not too important'. Additionally, 50% thought it was not important to be able to locate news-worthy countries on a globe (National Geographic, 2006). These results show a need for more expansive global education programs in K-12 American education.

These days, American educational decisions seem to be driven primarily by state-mandated curriculum standards and their corresponding standardized tests. Unfortunately, global education and global citizenship do not seem to be a priority in the standards of any U.S. state. Rapoport (2009) discovered that the social studies curriculum standards of only 15 states contained the term *globalization*, and only two included the term *global citizen(ship)*. At the elementary level, the situation is even worse. The 'expanding environments' curriculum popular in most elementary social studies standards basically guarantees that elementary social studies has no global focus. Additionally, the emphasis on standardized test performance in many districts nationwide serves to marginalize social studies as an unimportant subject on which little instructional time can afford to be spent (VanFossen & McGrew, 2008).

Despite the pressure to conform to the established curriculum standards, there is evidence that most American teachers still have control over the learning opportunities within their own

classroom (Barton, 2012). It is logical to believe that teachers who have developed their own global perspectives and who have a personal commitment to global education will be more likely to integrate these themes into their classrooms. Thus, this study sought to determine the extent to which elementary school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States had developed global perspectives.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which elementary school teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States possessed attitudes and perspectives consistent with the aims of global education and global citizenship. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are the perspectives of American elementary school teachers consistent with the aims of global education and global citizenship?
2. What demographic factors influence the extent to which American elementary school teachers have developed global perspectives?
3. What educational factors influence the extent to which American elementary school teachers have developed global perspectives?
4. To what extent have American colleges improved in promoting global perspectives in teacher graduates in the past 15 years?

### **Framework**

#### *Global Education*

Global education is a field of study developed in the Cold War era which, has as its main goal to 'develop in youth the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live effectively in a world possessing limited natural resources and characterized by ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism, and increasing interdependence' (quoted in Merryfield, 2012, p. 58). While there exists no single unifying vision of global education, most global educators would agree upon a focus on helping their students to 'perceive the world as an interconnected system. . . [which] leads to the need to understand diverse cultures, cultural interactions, and human conflicts' (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005, p. 59). Students throughout the world need to understand that they are not only citizens of their own country but also citizens of the world and that their actions may affect people internationally.

Two main themes of global education are perspective consciousness and global interconnectedness. Perspective consciousness is 'the recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he/she has a view of the world that is not universally shared and that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different' (Hanvey, 2004, p. 5). Global interconnectedness is the understanding that we are all linked to people around the world, through economics, politics, culture, the environment, and technology; and that our actions may have international effects (Merryfield, 2012).

Most social studies educators in the United States accept the necessity of integrating global education into our country's educational system (Anderson & Anderson, 1977; Hong & Halvorsen, 2010; Merryfield, 2012; Rapoport, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2010). 'Global education is not only essential today but should be an integral part of school curriculum on every grade level' (Ukpokodu, 2010, p.

---

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

139). Rapoport (2009) pointed out that the United States lags behind many other countries in this implementation. Merryfield (2012) emphasized the need for American students to develop intercultural competence and 'Students need to have global knowledge and multicultural awareness to be socially and economically successful in a rapidly changing world' (Hong & Halvorsen, 2010, p. 371).

Numerous specific recommendations on how to promote global perspectives in American K-12 and college students exist in the literature. One primary method suggested by the research literature is to require students to take more diversity-oriented, foreign language, or multicultural courses (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). Other researchers suggest that increasing the international, global, and multiple perspective contents of already-existing courses, such as social studies, literature, and even music, is a key factor (Case, 1996; Eslami, 2005; Frederickson, 2010; Heimonen, 2012; McNulty, Davies, & Maddoux, 2010; Martin, Smolen, Oswald, & Milam, 2012). Some research suggests that providing study abroad experiences may positively affect the development of global perspectives (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Talbert-Johnson, 2009). Encouraging student involvement in co-curricular activities has also been shown to have a positive effect (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). Increasing service-learning opportunities may also help promote global perspectives in American students (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). Additionally, many have stressed the importance of emphasizing globalization and civic responsibility in teacher education in the hopes that future educators will be better-prepared to integrate global perspectives into their future classes (Erickson, 2011; Eslami, 2005; Ochoa, 2010).

If a true global perspective is to be promoted in American schools, then proper teacher preparation is the key. However, there is great concern in the literature that American schools of education are not doing enough to prepare future educators for the demands of global education. According to a 1994 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education study, 'only about 4% of the nation's K-12 teachers have had any academic preparation in global or international studies' (Merryfield, 1994, p. 4). Other researchers agree. 'Many future teachers get little systematic grounding in global education as a regular and required aspect of their teacher preparation... [and when global education is included], it is all too easy to slip into colonizing and stereotyped ways of doing global education' (Crocco, 2010, p. 20-21). Ukpokodu (2010) also found that teacher education programs were doing very little to prepare teachers to teach from a global perspective.

#### *Elementary Social Studies in the United States*

Since the 1930s, elementary education has been dominated by the expanding environments curriculum, first introduced by Paul Hanna. His textbook series 'combined social studies disciplines, such as history, economics, and geography, and established for the first time an integrated social studies curriculum for the elementary grades that has continued into the present time' (Bisland, 2009, p. 156-7). Hanna's curriculum focused on what he believed to be the natural progression of a child's awareness, starting from the child's understanding of him or herself, and gradually expanding to include his or her community, state, region, nation, and eventually, the world (Turner, Russell & Waters, 2012). While the elementary social studies curriculum of most states seems to be organized this way to the present day, this schema has been criticized because some researchers feel it does not give students a realistic understanding of the integration of local, national, and world systems or that it is based on antiquated notions of child development (Akenson, 1987, 1989; LeRiche, 1987, 1992; Palmer, 1989). It also basically precludes the integration of global education perspectives, since it does not call for any substantial instruction about the world until sixth grade.

---

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

Social studies instruction is seen by many researchers to hold a tenuous position in the elementary curricula of many modern American schools. Since the subject is not tested on the high-stakes standardized examinations in most states, many schools and teachers feel that social studies instruction is tantamount to wasted time that could be spent on other, seemingly more important, subjects (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; VanFossen & McGrew, 2008). Thus, it is crucial that elementary teachers not only value social studies as a discipline, but also that they value the promotion of global perspectives in their students, otherwise both of these important areas can easily be eclipsed by other subjects and pedagogical prerogatives.

## Methods

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were all elementary school teachers currently employed by a large southeastern urban school district. According to the information published on the district website, as of summer, 2013, the school district had approximately 82,000 elementary students enrolled in 123 elementary schools. Sixty-one percent of the elementary school students were White, 30% were Black, 1% were Native American, 3% were Asian, and 3% were of multiple ethnicities. Additionally, 37 percent of elementary students were Hispanic. Nine randomly selected elementary schools participated in the survey. In all, 313 teachers were sent an invitation email which included a link to an online survey. Due to time restrictions imposed by the school district administration, teachers had two weeks to respond to the survey, during which time they were sent one additional reminder email. Ultimately, 60 teachers completed the survey [19% response rate].

The survey respondents were a diverse group in every respect except for gender. Ninety-two percent of respondents were female, while only 8% were male. This is most likely due to the inherent gender discrepancy within the field of elementary education. Seventy-three percent of respondents were White/Caucasian, 12% were Hispanic/Latino, 7% were African-American/Black, 2% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 2% were of multiple ethnicities, and 5% declined to respond. Eighty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they were native-born American citizens, 10% were naturalized citizens, and 2% were legal residents of the United States. Of those who were not native-born citizens, all but one had lived in the United States more than 20 years. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they were under 25 years of age, 29% were between 25 and 34, 22% were between 35 and 44, 29% were between 45 and 54, and 10% were aged 55 or older. Fifty-eight percent indicated that they had earned a Bachelor's Degree, 39% had earned a Master's Degree, and 2% had earned a Specialist degree. Seventy-three percent of participants graduated from a traditional bachelors-level teacher preparation program.

### *Materials*

The questionnaire utilized in this study was the Global Perspectives Inventory. It was created by Larry Braskamp, David Braskamp, Kelly Carter Merrill, and Mark Engberg (2010). The survey was used with permission. The bulk of the survey is a 40 question Likert-type questionnaire regarding the global perspectives of the participants. This questionnaire is broken down for analysis purposes into six subscales: Cognitive-Knowing, Cognitive-Knowledge, Intrapersonal-Identity, Intrapersonal-Affect, Interpersonal-Social Responsibility, and Interpersonal-Social Interaction. The Cognitive-Knowing subscale focuses on the way participants approach thinking and knowing, while the Cognitive-Knowledge subscale focuses more on the actual knowledge that participants have acquired about the world. The Intrapersonal-Identity subscale measures the participants' knowledge about

---

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

themselves and their unique identity and purpose in life, while the Intrapersonal-Affect subscale measures participants' level of respect for and acceptance of cultural differences. The Interpersonal-Social Responsibility subscale measures participants' feelings of concern for members of other cultural groups, while Interpersonal-Social Interaction measures participants' degree of interaction with members of other cultural groups (Merrill, Braskamp, & Braskamp, 2012).

The questionnaire was originally developed for use with college students, but the authors do specifically state that 'the survey items do not focus on growth and development only appropriate or limited to college students as a result of a specific collegiate experience (e.g., education/study abroad). Rather, the items in the GPI are meant to portray markers in a life-long journey in which people of all ages are constantly asking questions about how they think, feel, and relate to others' (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, & Engberg, 2012, p. 3). Thus, it seems reasonable to use the questionnaire with elementary school teachers, as well. In order to insure that reliability was not negatively affected by this change in population, Cronbach's alpha was calculated by the researcher for this specific population. Cronbach's alpha for the 40 question Likert-style questionnaire was found to be .79, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability. Additionally, questions were asked regarding coursework taken in college, activities the participants choose to participate in in their daily lives, and demographic questions. Cronbach's alpha was also calculated for the college coursework section and the daily activity sections of the questionnaire. The college coursework section's alpha score was .446, and the daily activity section's alpha score was found to be .771.

#### *Limitations*

One limitation of this study was the short window that teachers had to respond to the invitation to participate email. Ideally, participants would have had a month to respond, and more than one email reminder would have been sent during that time. This would probably have resulted in a larger response rate which may have provided more accurate results. Since only American elementary school teachers were surveyed, the results cannot be generalized to teachers of other grade levels or in other countries. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data only, which may be skewed by the perceptions of the participants.

#### **Results**

##### *Global Perspectives Questionnaire*

The first analysis completed was of the Likert-style questionnaire. The mean total questionnaire score was 149.3 out of a possible 200 points, which indicates a moderate global perspective amongst teachers. A few questions stood out as generating notable results. On a positive note, 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a definite purpose in life. All respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they could explain their personal values to others. Eighty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that they see their life in terms of giving back to society. Ninety-three percent responded that they take into account different perspectives before drawing conclusions about the world. Ninety percent responded that they were accepting of people with different religious or spiritual traditions. Additionally, 97% of participants indicated that they enjoyed learning about cultural differences.

A few of the results were slightly troubling, however. For example, 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that when cultural differences occur, their culture has the better approach. Forty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed that most of their friends were from the same racial or ethnic

---

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

group as themselves. Only 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they were informed about current issues that impact international relations. Additionally, only 55% agreed or strongly agreed that they intentionally involve people from different cultural backgrounds in their lives.

Subsequently, the questionnaire was divided into subscales and each subscale was analyzed separately. When all respondents were considered together, a significant difference in subscale scores was found ( $F = 31.4$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p > .01$ ). As shown in Table 1, respondents scored significantly higher on the Intrapersonal-Identity ( $M = 4.2$ ,  $sd = .37$ ) subscale than on any other scale. The lowest score was obtained on the Interpersonal-Social Interaction subscale ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $sd = .39$ ). These subscales were also analyzed based on demographic factors. Again, no significant differences were found based on years of teaching experience, age of respondent, prior study abroad experience, or teacher certification route.

Table 1. Mean Scores by Subscale

Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intrapersonal-Identity [self-knowledge]	4.2	.37
Interpersonal-Social Responsibility [concern for others]	3.88	.47
Intrapersonal-Affect [intercultural respect & acceptance]	3.86	.46
Cognitive-Knowing [approach to thinking & knowing]	3.57	.42
Cognitive-Knowledge [accumulated world knowledge]	3.54	.5
Interpersonal-Social Interaction [degree of intercultural interaction]	3.49	.39

#### Effect of Global Education Courses

An analysis of college courses taken by the participants during their teacher preparation program revealed an overall lack of global education-related courses. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 2. Fifty-one percent of participants reported that they had taken only one or no foreign language courses. Forty-nine percent of respondents recalled taking fewer than two multicultural courses. Forty-two percent recalled taking only one or no world history courses. Fifty-two percent of respondents reported that they had taken no courses that required a service learning component. Additionally, 76% indicated that they had taken one or fewer college classes that focused on significant global issues or problems, while 61% indicated that they had taken one or no classes that provided time for intensive cross-cultural dialogue.

Table 2. Number of Global Education Courses Taken

Class	0-1	2	3-4	5+
Multicultural courses	49%	31%	15%	5%
Foreign language courses	51%	33%	11%	5%
World history courses	41%	43%	7%	10%
Service learning courses	68%	13%	15%	3%
Global/international issue courses	76%	18%	7%	0%
Intercultural dialogue courses	61%	18%	10%	11%

When these results were broken down by years of experience, significant differences could only be found with regards to service learning courses ( $F = 20.252$ ,  $df = 1.57$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Teachers with fewer than 10 years of teaching experience ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $sd = 1.36$ ) were significantly more likely to report having taken courses with a service-learning component than those with 10 years of experience or more ( $M = 1.32$ ,  $sd = .612$ ). When the results were broken down by age group, the same question again provided significant results ( $F = 9.6$ ,  $df = 1.58$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Teachers who were younger than 35 years of age ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $sd = 1.376$ ) recalled taking significantly more service learning courses than those who were 35 years of age or older ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $sd = .982$ ). Another factor that significantly influenced global coursework was certification route ( $F = 5.441$ ,  $df = 2.48$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Teachers who obtained their certification after graduating from a traditional bachelor's level teacher education program ( $M = 12.71$ ,  $sd = 3.26$ ) took significantly fewer global education classes than those who became teachers through an alternative certification route after obtaining a bachelor's degree in another field ( $M = 16.4$ ,  $sd = 2.67$ ).

Despite the overall low number of education courses taken by the respondents, the number of global education college courses taken (as measured in the college coursework section of the survey) did have a significant impact on mean total questionnaire score ( $F = 14.088$ ,  $df = 2.48$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Elementary school teachers who took many global education courses ( $M = 157.9$ ,  $sd = 9.45$ ) scored significantly higher on global perspectives than those who took a moderate number of global courses ( $M = 147.9$ ,  $sd = 7.89$ ) or those who took few global courses ( $M = 140.4$ ,  $sd = 7.64$ ). This suggests that more global education courses should be required for teacher candidates, as they seem to have a positive effect on their global perspectives. In fact, the number of global education courses taken was the only demographic factor that had a significant impact on mean total questionnaire score. No significant differences on mean score were found based on years of teaching experience, age of respondent, prior study abroad experience, or teacher certification route.

#### *Participation in Global Activities*

Global education-related activities had mixed results. Ninety-one percent of respondents reported that they often or very often interact with students from a different race or ethnic group than their own. Seventy-five percent stated that they watch news programs on television often or very often, while 66% often or very often read newspapers or news magazines. Seventy-two percent indicated that they often or very often followed international events or crises through media sources. Fifty-six percent reported that they often or very often participate in leadership programs that stress collaboration and team work. Seventy-five percent of respondents participate in community service activities at least sometimes.

However, 31% of participants indicated that they never or rarely attend cultural events reflecting their own cultural heritage, while 35% indicated that they never or rarely attend cultural events reflecting a different cultural heritage than their own. Forty percent never or rarely attend spiritual or religious events. Also, 75% of respondents indicated that they never or rarely attend lectures, workshops, or discussions on global or international issues.

Table 3. Frequency of Participation in Global Activities

Activity	never	rarely	sometimes	Often	Very often
Events from own culture	10%	21%	38%	21%	10%
Events from other cultures	8%	52%	51%	10%	5%
Religious/spiritual events	8%	31%	15%	23%	23%
Leadership activities	5%	11%	55%	36%	20%
Community Service	5%	18%	41%	23%	13%
Global/International Lecture	49%	25%	21%	3%	2%
Read a newspaper	0%	10%	23%	23%	44%
Watched TV news	2%	3%	20%	25%	51%
Followed international event	2%	2%	25%	30%	43%
Discussed current events in class	3%	18%	38%	23%	18%
Interacted with students/coworkers from other countries	3%	3%	11%	34%	48%
Interacted with students/coworkers from other ethnic groups	0%	0%	8%	34%	58%

When these results were broken down by years of experience, significant differences were found on 4 out of 12 questions. Participation in religious or spiritual activities ( $F = 5.332$ ,  $df = 1,57$ ,  $p > .01$ ), participation in community service activities ( $F = 10.046$ ,  $df = 1.57$ ,  $p > .01$ ), following an international event or crisis ( $F = 5.494$ ,  $df = 1.57$ ,  $p > .05$ ), and participation in leadership programs that stress collaboration and teamwork ( $F = 7.226$ ,  $df = 1.57$ ,  $p > .01$ ) were all significantly different by years of teaching experience. Teachers with 10 or more years of teaching experience were more likely to participate in religious or spiritual activities ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $sd = 1.315$ ), community service activities ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $sd = .956$ ) and leadership programs ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $sd = .858$ ) than those with fewer than 10 years of experience ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $sd = 1.241$ ;  $M = 2.81$ ,  $sd = .980$ ; &  $M = 3.19$ ,  $sd = 1.195$ , respectively). Teachers with 10 or more years of experience ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $sd = .786$ ) were also significantly more likely to follow international events and crises than were those with fewer than 10 years of teaching experience ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $sd = 1.003$ ).

Similar results were found when the results were broken down by respondent age. Significant differences were found in participation in religious or spiritual activities ( $F = 6.065$ ,  $df = 1.58$ ,  $p > .05$ ), participation in community service activities ( $F = 7.801$ ,  $df = 1.58$ ,  $p > .01$ ), and following international events or crises ( $F = 7.884$ ,  $df = 1.58$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Respondents who were 35 years of age or older were more likely to participate in religious or spiritual activities ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $sd = 1.237$ ), participate in community service activities ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $sd = 1.015$ ), and follow international events or crises ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $sd = .823$ ) than those who were younger than 35 years old ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $sd = 1.295$ ;  $M = 2.74$ ,  $sd = .915$ ; &  $M = 3.70$ ,  $sd = .974$ , respectively).

## Discussion

Overall, a moderate global perspective was found amongst the elementary school teachers who participated in this study. Due to the increasing emphasis on globalization of college curriculum and teacher education programs cited in the research literature, it was expected that younger teachers or teachers with fewer years of experience, who presumably would have graduated college more recently, would have scored higher on the global perspective inventory than older or more

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

experienced teachers. However, no significant differences could be found on the total mean score or on the individual subscale scores based on age or years of experience. This suggests that more recent graduates of American teacher education programs are not any more likely to have a global perspective than those who graduated fifteen or more years ago. This result substantiates other researcher's claims that American schools of education are currently not meeting global education goals (Merryfield, 1994; Ukpokodu, 2010). Additionally, there was no significant difference in mean total questionnaire score based on certification route. This finding provides evidence that graduates of traditional teacher education programs have not developed global perspectives at a higher rate than teachers who earned an alternative certification.

The questionnaire subscale analysis revealed that the teachers in this study scored well on the Intrapersonal-Identity, Intrapersonal-Affect, and Interpersonal-Social Responsibility subscales. The lowest scores were obtained on the Cognitive-Knowing and Cognitive-Knowledge subscales. These results indicate that teachers the teachers in this sample know themselves well and feel an obligation to help others, but that they are generally not as well-informed about different cultures and international issues or their importance. Thus despite Merryfield's (1997) emphasis on the incorporation of global content knowledge into successful teacher education programs, it appears that this is still an area of need. Additionally, the lackluster scores on the Interpersonal-Social Interaction subscale suggest that a second component of Merryfield's (1997) framework, the integration of meaningful cross-cultural experiences, is also deficient. These are definitely areas that teacher education programs could focus on in order to increase the global perspectives of their graduates.

Another interesting finding of this study relates to study abroad programs. Study abroad programs are typically seen as a powerful means to increase college students' global perspectives. Despite the suggestion by multiple researchers that study abroad experiences are of the utmost importance in creating globally-minded individuals (Braskamp et al., 2009; Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Talbert-Johnson, 2009), only 23% of teachers in this study participated in a study abroad program, and of those nearly 30% indicated that their program lasted for shorter than 2 weeks. Furthermore, no significant difference in any global perspective outcome was found based on the existence or lack of study abroad experience among participants. This may be an indication that study abroad programs are not as meaningful in promoting global citizenship as is commonly believed.

The results of the college coursework section of the questionnaire were also surprising. While there is much talk these days of colleges providing their students with coursework that is aimed at helping them to develop a global perspective, the results of this study suggest that this population has not taken many of these types of courses. Nearly half of the elementary school teachers in this study have taken only one or no multicultural courses, world history courses, or foreign language courses. More than half have taken no service learning courses, while about half have taken no courses that provided intercultural dialogue or focused on global or international problems. Even more troubling, the only coursework area in which we have seen improvement in the last 15 years is in service learning. None of the other types of courses investigated in this study showed any significant increase in teachers who are younger or who had less teaching experience. This seems to suggest that for all of the talk about globalizing college education, very little actual change has occurred. Since the findings of this study showed that participants who took more global education classes in college scored higher on the inventory, these classes do seem to be effective at promoting global perspectives. Also alarming was the finding that teachers who became certified after graduating from a traditional bachelor's level teacher education program took fewer global education courses

than those who became certified through an alternate route after initially receiving their bachelor's degree in another field. This seems to imply that traditional teacher education programs offer require fewer global education classes than other bachelor's degree programs, when in fact, they should be required to take more global education classes.

A similar concern arose from the global education activity section of the questionnaire. While some positive indications of global perspectives were found, such as the high rate of news consumption, when age or years of experience were analyzed, the results were actually the opposite of what we hoped to find. Participation in religious or spiritual activities, likeliness of following international events or crises, participation in leadership activities, and community service all decreased in younger and less experienced teachers. If the modern American teacher preparation system was truly producing students with more global perspectives, we would have anticipated that younger teachers would have higher scores on these measures.

### Conclusion

This study investigated the global perspectives of American elementary school teachers and the demographic, lifestyle, and educational factors that increase these perspectives. Results indicated that the participants in this study did have many global perspectives. It was hoped that evidence would be found that would support the notion that teacher education programs were increasing their global focus, and that this important change would produce a greater global awareness in younger or less experienced teachers. However, the findings suggested that few substantial changes to globalize teacher education have been made, and that therefore, younger teachers are not actually more globally aware than older or more experienced teachers.

These findings are troubling for two reasons. First of all, since 82% of respondents reported that they often or very often interact with students or coworkers from other countries, it is clear that intercultural acceptance and communication skills are a required part of their daily lives. Secondly, elementary school teachers are charged with providing the first exposure most students have to internationalization or global perspectives. If the goals of globalizing teacher education programs were realized, teachers would graduate more prepared to integrate these important concepts into their daily instruction. The results of this study suggest that much more needs to be done to improve the global education in American teacher preparation programs if we desire that new teachers will come to the classroom ready to accept the challenge to teach from a truly global perspective. Further research is needed to compare these results of American elementary school teachers with others around the world.

### References

- Akenson, J. E. (1987). Historical factors in the development of elementary social studies: Focus on the expanding environments. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 15*(3), 155–171.
- Akenson, J. E. (1989). The expanding environments & elementary education: A critical perspective. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 17*(1), 33–52.
- Anderson, C., & Anderson, L. (1977). Global education in elementary schools: An overview. *Social Education, 41*(1), 34–37.
- Barton, K. (2012). Wars and rumors of war. In T. Taylor & R. Guyver (Eds.), *History wars and the classroom: Global perspectives* (pp. 187–202). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

---

Corresponding author email: Russell@ucf.edu

©2012/2013 International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies

Website: <http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

---

- Bisland, B. M. (2009). Two traditions in the social studies curriculum for the elementary grades: The textbooks of Paul R. Hanna and Harold O. Rugg. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 33(2), 155–196.
- Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., & Merrill, K. C. (2009). Assessing progress in global learning and development of students with education abroad experiences. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 18, 101–118.
- Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Merrill, K. C., & Engberg, M. E. (2010). Global Perspective Inventory (GPI). Retrieved from <http://gpi.central.edu>
- Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Merrill, K. C., & Engberg, M. E. (2012). *The Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI): Its purpose, construction, potential uses, and psychometric characteristics*. Chicago, IL: Global Perspectives Institute.
- Braskamp, L. A., & Engberg, M. E. (2011). How colleges can influence the development of a global perspective. *Liberal Education*, 97(3–4), 34–39.
- Case, R. (1996). Promoting “global” attitudes. *Canadian Social Studies*, 30(4), 174–177. Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012). *Mission Statement*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/>
- Crocco, M. (2010). [How] do we teach about women of the world in teacher education? In B. Subedi (Ed.), *Critical global perspectives: Rethinking knowledge about global societies* (pp. 19–38). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Department for Education and Employment. (2005). *Developing the global dimension in the school curriculum*. London: Author.
- Education Services Australia. (2011). *Global perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools*. Carlton South, Victoria, Australia: Author.
- Erickson, L. B. (2011). Civic engagement in teacher education: Activities or obligation? *Teacher Education and Practice*, 24(3), 330–332.
- Eslami, Z. R. (2005). Global education: Instructional strategies used and challenges faced by in-service teachers. *Teacher Education and Practice*, 18(4), 400–415.
- Frederickson, M. E. (2010). Going global: New trajectories in U.S. women’s history. *History Teacher*, 43(2), 169–189.
- Hanvey, R. G. (2004). *An attainable global perspective*. Denver, CO: University of Denver, Center for Teaching International Relations.
- Hayden, M. (2013). A review of curriculum in the UK: Internationalising in a changing context. *The Curriculum Journal*, 24(1), 8–26.
- Heafner, T. L., & Fitchett, P. G. (2012). Tipping the scales: National trends of declining social studies instructional time in elementary schools. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 36(2), 190–215.

- Heimonen, M. (2012). Music education and global ethics: Educating citizens for the world. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 11(1), 62–80.
- Hill, I. (2012). An international model of world-class education: The International Baccalaureate. *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 43(3), 341–359.
- Hong, W. P., & Halvorsen, A. (2010). Teaching Asia in United States secondary school classrooms: A curriculum of othering. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 42(3), 371–393.
- LeRiche, L. W. (1987). The expanding environments sequence in elementary social studies: The origins. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 15(3), 137–154.
- LeRiche, L. W. (1992). The political socialization of children in the expanding environments sequence. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 20(2), 126–140.
- McNulty, C. P., Davies, M., & Maddoux, M. (2010). Living in the global village: Strategies for teaching mental flexibility. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 23(2), 21–24.
- Martin, L. A., Smolen, L. A., Oswald, R. A., & Milam, J. L. (2012). Preparing students for global citizenship in the twenty-first century: Integrating social justice through global literature. *The Social Studies*, 103(4), 158–164.
- Merrill, K. C., Braskamp, D. C., & Braskamp, L. A. (2012). Assessing individuals' global perspective. *Journal of College Student Development*, 53(2), 356–360.
- Merryfield, M.M. (1994). *Teacher education in global and international education*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education.
- Merryfield, M.M. (1997). A framework for teacher education in global perspectives. In M.M. Merryfield, E. Jarchow, & S. Pickert (Eds.), *Preparing teachers to teach global perspectives: A handbook for teacher educators* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Merryfield, M.M. (2012). Global education: Responding to a changing world. In W. B. Russell (Ed.), *Contemporary social studies: An essential reader* (pp. 57–76). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Merryfield, M.M., & Wilson, A. (2005). *Social studies and the world: Teaching global perspectives*. Silver Spring, MD: The National Council for the Social Studies.
- Mundy, K., & Manion, C. (2008). Global education in Canadian elementary schools: An exploratory study. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(4), 941–974.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *The nation's report card: Geography 2010*. Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2010/2011467.pdf>
- National Council for the Social Studies. (2010). *National curriculum standards for social studies: Chapter 2—The themes of social studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

- National Geographic Education Foundation. (2006). *National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs 2006 global literacy survey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/roper2006/pdf/FINALReport2006GeogLitsurvey.pdf>
- Ochoa, A. M. (2010). International education in higher education: A developing process of engagement in teacher preparation programs. *Teaching Education*, 21(1), 103–112.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2010). *Education at a glance: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD.
- Palmer, J. (1989). Challenging the expanding environment model of teaching elementary social studies. *Southern Social Studies Quarterly*, 15(1), 17–28.
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2009). *Framework for 21st century learning*. Retrieved from: [http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21\\_Framework\\_Definitions.pdf](http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_Framework_Definitions.pdf)
- Rapoport, A. (2009). A forgotten concept: Global citizenship education and state social studies standards. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 33(1), 91–112.
- Song, J. J. (2013). For whom the bell tolls: Globalisation, social class, and South Korea's international schools. *Globalisation, Societies, and Education*, 11(1), 136–159.
- Talbert-Johnson, C. (2009). Establishing internationally competent leaders for the future: Promoting an agenda for social justice, equity, and intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 18(3), 174–184.
- Turner, T.N., Russell, W.B, & Waters, S. (2012). *Essentials of elementary social studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ukpokodu, O. (2010). Teacher preparation for global perspectives pedagogy. In B. Subedi (Ed.), *Critical global perspectives: Rethinking knowledge about global societies* (pp. 121–142). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization. (2006). *UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education*. Retrieved from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147878e.pdf>
- VanFossen, P. J., & McGrew, C. (2008). Is the sky really falling?: An update on the status of social studies in the K-5 classroom in Indiana. *International Journal of Social Education*, 23(1), 139–182.