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"I Don't Think I'm Prepared": Perceptions of U.S. Higher Education Doctoral Students on International Research Preparation

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Abstract

Although internationalization is often touted as a priority in higher education, little attention is given to infusing international perspectives into the formalities of doctoral education. Further, limited attention is given towards doctoral student training for conducting international research. This qualitative study provides insight on how 21 U.S. doctoral students in higher education programs perceive their preparation as emerging international researchers. Implications for practice include fostering cross-departmental collaborations and supporting co-curricular international opportunities.

Keywords: Doctoral preparation, international higher education, researcher development, international research, graduate education

Introduction

Internationalization has been a priority in higher education for a number of years and it has influenced many aspects of the academic institution (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2015). The process of internationalization in the United States (U.S.) involves many stakeholders committed to changing the internal structure of the higher education institution in order to "respond and adapt appropriately to an increasingly diverse, globally focused, ever-changing external environment" (Ellingboe, 1998, p. 199). As we have become a more globally connected society, institutions of higher education in the U.S. have responded by emphasizing internationalization in their studies and programs. The process of becoming more international has taken on a number of forms and includes various activities. For example, more students are studying abroad than ever before, and, at the same time, an increased number of international students attend universities in

the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2015; Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). In addition to student mobility, internationalization in higher education has included the academic mobility of teachers, projects, and partnerships that link U.S. institutions to countries around the globe (Knight, 2004). To better understand these complexities of internationalization, we conducted an exploratory study to examine how students in

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U.S. higher education doctoral programs perceived their preparation for conducting research in international contexts. We specifically sought to understand how students with an expressed interest in international higher education were experiencing their graduate preparation programs. Given the breadth of internationalization as a topic, this study serves as one avenue for unpacking the concept of internationalization in relation to graduate student researcher development.

Learning to conduct research is a key component of doctoral student preparation in many academic disciplines. Research is a “transformative activity where a state of knowledge is advanced” (Williams & Ormond, 2009, p. 1), and the outcome of research has implications for university stakeholders, research participants, and studied communities. In order to be successful, students should be socialized to doctoral level work, effectively trained to conduct research, and prepared to incorporate techniques that are reflective of the formalities of academia and research activities beyond the classroom. In contemporary academia, the milieu of higher education is more international; therefore, doctoral students should be prepared to undergo research projects while engaging with a level of critical inquiry reflective of the increasingly international knowledge community. Thus, researchers must be formally trained to conduct responsible research, and universities are ideal locations for fostering critical inquiry in graduate students (Williams & Ormond, 2009). How, then, are novice researchers trained to approach the complexities associated with conducting research in international contexts?

The research question guiding our study is the following: what are higher education doctoral students’ perceptions of their preparation for conducting research in international contexts? In this paper, we examine doctoral students’ perception of internationalization from a very broad lens, all centered on researcher preparation for international contexts. International researcher preparation could include interviewing different populations of people, traveling outside of one’s home country, collaborating with international scholars, and engaging in perspectives from a global worldview. We recognize that our definition of international researcher development encompasses multiple topics, yet we believe that broadly defining this topic allows us to engage with our participants who operationalize internationalization in different ways.

In an attempt to answer our research question, we begin with an overview of how U.S. higher education has incorporated internationalized priorities in their institutions and follow with a review of researcher development as a central priority in doctoral education. Next, we provide an overview of our conceptual framework. We used Evans’ (2010) emerging conceptual model on researcher development to frame our study, which encompasses three components: behavioral development, attitudinal development, and intellectual development. Our framework is followed by a section outlining our methods including our methodological approach, data collection, coding scheme, and data analysis. We then include the voices of our participants who offer critiques on their international research training and reflections on opportunities for international research development in their higher education doctoral programs. Because of the focus of our paper, we sought participants who were specifically interested in international higher education as they could provide a perspective on how well they believed their program was preparing them for such work. Finally, we conclude with our discussion and implications for future research about graduate student development and practice.

Internationalization of U.S. Higher Education

When considering the question of “how” to internationalize higher education, Knight (1993) offered that the process for internationalization includes incorporating the international concepts into the “teaching, research and service functions of the institutions” (p. 21). Explaining the strategies that universities use to internationalize their institutions, Antelo (2012) noted that the internationalization of research represented a “new reality” (p. 1) for just a few institutions and that academic staff and students represented “tremendous resources” (p. 2) available to collaborate in

research. Due to advances in technology, students and researchers have greater access to each other, despite international borders (Rostan, Ceravolo & Metcalfe, 2014). When discussing internationalization and its influence on senior and new generation of academics, Jung, Kookhi, and Teichler (2014) found that international collaboration provided opportunities for individuals to broaden their experiences and that it increased the international dimensions of their research. Given these positive outcomes, institutions may need to consider how their students are prepared to conduct research in the global knowledge community.

Preparation for incorporating international components in higher education includes expanding international themes in the curriculum and research priorities (Stromquist, 2007). In doing so, doctoral programs can foster the critical link between students and their research conducted in international contexts. University graduates are required to have the skills to work in environments that are reflective of the global society and international markets (Gopal, 2011), and, as a result, higher education programs must prepare students for the academic and professional knowledge necessary to be successful after leaving the classroom (Qiang, 2003). For current students, adequate preparation for functioning in cross-cultural environments in international research contexts is vital given the increased globalization of higher education. Researchers encounter many issues while engaging in international research, with challenges including language barriers, different cultural contexts, and relationship building with translators and boundary spanners (Harzing, Reiche, & Pudenko, 2013).

Failure to consider international and cross-cultural perspectives while conducting research could potentially lead to harm to the international participants/community. For example, international research could present dangers to the studied population because any interaction could produce lingering effects on a culture or population as a result of neocolonialism. According to Herzog (2013), neocolonialism is the “continued exercise of political or economic influence over a society in the absence of formal political control” (para. 2). In academic contexts, neocolonialism could occur through a domination of intellectual production, such as with the adoption or imposition of U.S. educational theories and practices into non-U.S. educational systems (Murphy & Zhu, 2012). In addition, differing views on ways of knowing and standards of research may cause challenges for both the researcher and the host culture or people, with the potential of the research process and outcomes benefiting the researcher (Fortujin, 1985). Thus, international research could cause unintended or unanticipated consequences to those cultures and peoples being researched, which requires consideration since global exchange is evident in multiple aspects of higher education.

Despite the increased internationalization of higher education, there is a dearth of literature and promising practice related to researcher preparation in international research. Although higher education is moving toward internationalizing academic activity, limited attention is given to students’ training for conducting research in the international arena. Pallas (2001) questioned if doctoral preparation programs train students for the world of educational research *as it is* or for the world *as it might become*. Because the world is increasingly global and international, Kent and Ziller (2013) contend that doctoral programs should prepare researchers to participate in the global academy. International research training is particularly important for emerging scholars because globalization has impacted many aspects of daily practices in academia, such as student recruitment, curriculum development, and cross-border collaborations (Institute of International Education, 2012). For example, many academics seek external funding through grantors such as USAID, World Bank, and the MacArthur Foundation, all of which emphasize international initiatives. The financial investment in multiple regions and countries indicate that global and international priorities are of interest to many funding agencies and academic researchers. Despite the heavy financial costs related to investing in researchers and their international research endeav-

ors, little scholarship exists on understanding how these researchers are trained to effectively work with and among international contexts.

Researcher Development in Doctoral Programs

Doctoral programs are opportunities for socialization into an academic discipline, particularly as a way to prepare graduates for successful academic careers (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Tierney, 1997). Socialization in graduate education is “the processes through which individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for successful entry into a professional career requiring an advanced level of specialized knowledge and skills” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 5). Graduate school serves as a place where students gain knowledge and skills necessary for pursuing work in academia. Therein, graduate education is often a complex process as doctoral students conceptualize and define their roles as members of the academy. Traditionally, the development of doctoral student socialization includes emphasis on teaching and research; however, when compared to students’ teaching development, the critical component of research training has been understudied in higher education (Åkerlind, 2008; Evans, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). The development of doctoral students’ research efficacy is important because the knowledge gained during doctoral work will carry into future careers in the academy.

Researcher development is defined as “the process whereby people’s capacity and willingness to carry out the research components of their work or studies may be considered to be enhanced, with a degree of permanence that exceeds transitoriness” (Evans, 2011, p. 20). Simply stated, researcher development includes training in both the process and outcome of conducting research. Åkerlind (2008) further defined researcher development through four different components: “1. becoming confident as a researcher; 2. becoming recognised as a researcher; 3. becoming more productive as a researcher; and 4. becoming more sophisticated as a researcher” (p. 245). These four stages offered by Åkerlind (2008) not only emphasize students knowing how to research, but they also confirm the importance of continuously developing knowledge, awareness, and expertise in conducting research, all of which relate to Evans’ (2011) emphasis on both the process and outcome of researcher development.

In most disciplines, “researcher development” is synonymous with “professional development,” which is often provided through research associations (e.g., American Educational Research Association professional development and training courses [AERA], 2014; American Society of Human Genetics continuing education sessions [ASHG], 2015). Professional associations and conference attendance are beneficial; however, most workshops and annual meetings last for approximately one week, which is a limited amount of time to gain new research knowledge and to understand the complexities of applying new knowledge. Consequently, doctoral programs are at the heart of nurturing and sustaining effective researcher development. Thus, doctoral programs have the primary role of doctoral student development through programmatic and curricular priorities that extend beyond the scope of professional associations.

In addition to assisting students with the general complexities of researcher development, doctoral programs may consider the additional layer of conducting research in international contexts. International engagement has affected many aspects of academia, as indicated by the pervasive presence of external funding agencies (e.g., USAID, the World Bank) in international research endeavors. As a result, considerations of international research training are a necessary part of doctoral education. This is important because tension could occur between the studied community and university-based research, particularly with competing theoretical and cultural perspectives (Eketone, 2008). However, the complexities of international research are often excluded from formal programmatic coursework and training in doctoral programs. Doctoral programs seldom include researcher development in international contexts as part of their curricular requirements. Because conducting research is a key component of doctoral education, evaluating doctoral cur-

riculum could ensure that students are taught to incorporate techniques that are reflective of the formal structures in academia yet at the same time are inclusive of cultural standards that exist beyond the classroom.

Gilbert (2004) argued that doctoral curriculum related to researcher development needs to be studied rather than the continued focus on pedagogy and administration, as emphasized in current doctoral education research. Evans (2011) agreed, stating that researcher development is a component of academic practice and the developmental process is multi-dimensional. As such, researcher development in doctoral curriculum should center around two specific areas: to what extent the research training achieves the goals of the academic program and to what extent does the training meet the “needs of students, interested parties and the community as a whole in a context of social, cultural, economic and technological change” (Gilbert, 2004, p. 303). The second area is particularly relevant for graduate students who are conducting research in an increasingly internationalized educational system.

Conceptual Framework

We used Evans’ (2010) emerging conceptual model on researcher development to frame our study. Evans identified three components that are necessary for researcher development and they are behavioral development, attitudinal development, and intellectual development. Each component includes individual sub-components such as procedural change and evaluative change; however, holistic development of researchers should include aspects of all three areas related to behavioral, attitudinal, and intellectual development.

Behavioral development “refers to the full range of physical activity that forms part of what may be categorised as research activity or performance” (Evans, 2010, p. 22). Simply stated, behavioral development includes the processes and procedures of actually doing research. The sub-components of behavioral development include procedural change, processual change, productive change, and compentential change.

Attitudinal development involves more of the mental and perceptual development in researchers, particularly in relation to people’s perceptions, beliefs, and mindsets. Attitudinal development includes the degree of change in motivation towards research activity as well as evaluating what matters to them about research. Sub-components include perceptual, evaluative, and motivational changes.

The third component is intellectual development and includes the following four sub-components: epistemological change, rationalistic change, analytical change, and comprehensive change. Epistemological change means a change in “what people know or understand about research,” (Evans, 2010, p. 23), which includes a shift in one’s research-related knowledge structure. Rationalistic change is related to the “extent and the nature of the reasoning” (Evans, 2010, p. 23) applied to research practice. Analytical change involves the application of analyticism to research, and finally, comprehensive change refers to the enhancement of research knowledge and understanding.

For the purpose of this study, we utilize the intellectual development component as a framework and unit of analysis. Although all three components work in tandem to foster holistic researcher development, we feel that intellectual development, and more specifically, the sub-components of epistemological change and comprehensive change, more accurately fit the research question in this study because this study goes beyond simply looking at the curricula or program components of higher education programs. Specifically, this study addresses the lived experiences of doctoral students and understanding the perceptions of doctoral students is important for examining researcher international preparation.

Methods

We used qualitative inquiry in this project to answer the study's research question: what are higher education doctoral students' perceptions of their preparation for conducting research in international contexts? We recruited participants by sending an email to a listserv from a national association for the field of higher education and through snowball sampling (Patton, 2001) by doctoral students who participated in our study. We conducted 90-minute, semi-structured interviews by either telephone or Skype to collect our data. Interviewing participants was the most appropriate mode of inquiry because it helped us learn about their experiences and allowed for their lived experiences to emerge (Charmaz, 1996).

Using semi-structured interviews also provided us the opportunity to ask follow-up or clarifying questions related to participants' specific and unique experiences at their respective institutions (Glesne, 2011). By studying the experiences of higher education doctoral students in their graduate preparation programs, we were able to examine their perceptions on how prepared they believed they were for conducting international research. Participants were able to share their thoughts on their specific graduate programs, including feedback on their faculty. We recognize that we purposefully recruited participants who have a predisposed affiliation towards international higher education. In doing so, we were able to gain understanding of international researcher preparation from a sample that had an active interest in internationalization, thus providing us with findings from a population that is cognizant of what international training means.

Data Sources

We interviewed 21 participants (see Table 1) representing 11 different higher education doctoral programs in the United States. Seventeen of the participants self-identified as women and/or female. Nine of the participants identified as international students, meaning they were born and/or raised in a country outside of the United States. Of the nine international students, two became naturalized U.S. citizens. We recognize that the international student participants in our study have different prior experiences as well as different perceptions on the meaning of "international research." For example, when we asked the question, "What kinds of global-related in-class and out-of-class experiences did you have in your graduate program?" we specified that we were interested in experiences that were facilitated by their graduate program. By clarifying our questions, we feel that we were able to get rich and informative data that was appropriate for the purpose of this study.

All of the domestic study participants had at least one experience outside of the United States, either related to their prior and/or current academic experiences such as study abroad or for personal travel. Each participant chose his or her own pseudonym to use in this study. As a result of our participants' broad range of backgrounds and experiences, we have been able to collect rich data, which has increased the trustworthiness of the data collected (Glesne, 2011).

Selection of participants began with purposeful sampling, which is used when "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Recruitment emails were sent in spring of 2015 and 2016 to eligible participants who were current members in a higher education association. We also employed snowball sampling by asking participants to assist us in forwarding our recruitment emails to eligible participants (Patton, 2001). We intentionally solicited participants who participated in an international higher education pre-conference because they could offer critiques based on their experiences as higher education doctoral students interested in international higher education specifically.

Table 1: Participant Demographics					
PSEUDONYM	YEAR IN PROGRAM	STUDENT STATUS	ANTICIPATED JOB AFTER GRADUATION	GENDER	RACE/ETHNICITY OR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
Lydia	1	Full time	Faculty	Female	African American
Jiaoyu	5	Part time	Faculty	Female	International
Marie	2	Full time	Policy	Female	International
Ashley	4	Full time	Practitioner, Policy	Female	Black; Naturalized citizen
Onay	2	Full time	Scholar-practitioner	Female	International
Snoopy	3	Full time	Faculty	Male	Asian
Jenny	5	Full time	Administrator	Female	African American; Naturalized citizen
Katherine	3	Part time	Policy	Female	White
Belle	2	Full time	Scholar-practitioner	Female	Black
Sonia	2	Full time	Policy	Female	International
Priya	2	Full time	Faculty	Woman	Indian-American
Ron	3	Full time	Administrator	Male	White
Steve	2	Full time	Administrator	Male	White
Kate	3	Full time	Faculty	Female	Caucasian
Frank	2	Full time	Faculty	Cis-gender male	White
Tatenda	2	Full time	Policy	Female	International
Vanessa	5	Full time	Administrator	Female	White; Naturalized citizen
Talya	4	Full time	Faculty/Researcher	Female	Bi-racial
Carl	3	Full time	Administrator	Female	Black American
Betty	1	Full time	Administrator	Female	International
Jenna	1	Full time	Undecided	Female	International

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant either by phone or Skype. All interviews were conducted in spring 2015 and winter 2016. Data from each individual interview was organized and transcribed on an ongoing basis, including details on dates, pseudonyms, and any other notes that we took during and after the interviews.

When coding, we made categories that were based on the research questions and conceptual framework from which we interpreted emerging themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). We utilized deductive coding, which includes a "start list" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013, p. 81) based on this study's interview protocol and conceptual framework. We first searched for broad categories and then developed themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. Themes were coded by identifying appropriate phrases that related to our themes.

After concluding first cycle coding, we moved on to second cycle coding, which is "a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs" (Miles et al., 2013, p. 86). We organized the first cycle codes by clustering them under common themes or patterns that emerged from the interviews. This was an iterative process of reflecting and clustering codes into code categories. We continuously refined the pattern codes until we felt the final codes were representative of the participants' experiences.

Trustworthiness and Validity

Merriam (2002) indicated that triangulation is an effective strategy for confirming findings, which we accomplished by using multiple data sources and two investigators. Given the nature and the length of the interviews, we were able to collect rich data and use thick description, which has increased the trustworthiness of the data collected (Glesne, 2011). Our findings are based on the raw data we collected and the exact quotes from our study participants. We conducted multiple reviews of transcripts as a reliability procedure in order to reduce mistakes in participants' narratives of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Finally, we conferred with international higher education scholars regarding our study topic, the nature of our study, and the process by which we collected our data. We have also shared our preliminary findings with our peers proficient in qualitative research, who critiqued our findings and provided alternative viewpoints. These discussions helped us to confirm that our "tentative interpretations" (Merriam, 2002, p. 31) were appropriate and congruent with the themes that we identified from our findings.

Reliability often lies within the researcher who is the primary instrument for data collection. As the researchers, we were aware that our own biases, values, and perspectives influence our research lens; thus, our reflexivity affected how we made meaning of participants' worldviews. As such, the investigators' positionality was used as a form of reliability (Merriam, 2009). One author identifies as an U.S.-born first-generation Chinese-American. This author uses a critical perspective in her research approach as a way to incorporate the importance of critiquing and challenging the dominant paradigm and status quo that dominates social and educational structures in current society. The first author attended a doctoral program that had a heavy international influence; however, after completing her dissertation, she was left wondering if there was more training that could have guided her through her internationally-focused dissertation. This question led this author to develop this study in collaboration with the second author of this study. The second author identifies as first-generation American as her parents immigrated to the United States from Haiti. The second author also attended a doctoral program that had a heavy international influence. It was after traveling outside of the U.S. to conduct her dissertation research in Haiti that she began to examine her doctoral experiences and in particular questioned her preparation to conduct international research and her role as a researcher with multiple identities. We both recognize that we have an inherent bias that we bring to this study. Based on our prior experiences

and interests in international research, we do feel that international researcher development is critical for all doctoral students, and as such, we acknowledge that we are biased towards the topic of this study.

Limitations

This study was about the perspectives of higher education doctoral students on their international research preparation. Given this narrow scope, this study does not examine statements from institutions on their programmatic missions or priorities as it relates to internationalization. An additional limitation is that the participants were interviewed at one point in time during their doctoral program. Although this does provide the opportunity for them to immediately reflect on their experiences, this does not evaluate any future changes that could potentially occur in their doctoral programs. In addition, we recognize that our participants represent one academic discipline, although we believe the findings from this study could be applied to multiple disciplines. Next, the majority of our participants were near the beginning of their doctoral training, and because they were within the first two years of their education, they may have limited perspectives on their doctoral program. Finally, all of the participants had a stated interest in international higher education. Given their interests, they provided a perspective that may be perceived to be more critical than what other students without a strong interest in international higher education may have offered.

Findings

Two major themes related to international research preparation have emerged: critiques of participants' preparation for international research and opportunities for supplemental preparation for international research. Overall, participants found very little support for international researcher development. In this section, we include participants' dissatisfaction with the international nature of their department. We also provide some examples of what has worked well according to participants' experiences in their programs, much of it related to co-curricular and outside departmental opportunities.

Critiques of International Research Development in Doctoral Program

Many of the participants discussed the limited international or global-focused aspects of their program despite their programs touting international perspectives as a major feature of programmatic priorities. Their critiques were related to the general doctoral curriculum and specifically research training in their methods courses. Some participants expressed that they had anticipated a curriculum that would have fostered their development as researchers or scholar-practitioners of international higher education, but instead, their programs fell short of their expectations. When some participants reflected on the experiences provided by their methods courses, they noted that the little exposure to international themes in the curriculum impacted their perception of their programs' efficacy in international research training.

Doctoral curriculum

The lack of international or global related themes embedded in the curriculum was a major point of contention for many of the students as they felt it diminished their ability to be effective international researchers. Many students discussed the need to take the initiative themselves to infuse international perspectives in their doctoral programs in order to ensure that their course of study was truly global in nature. Priya shared the following:

“I Don’t Think I’m Prepared”

I would say if I were to just go through the program and not take electives and not participate in any of the extra things that I have, I don’t feel like I would be very prepared to work or understand international higher education. I don’t think it’s necessarily built into the core curriculum.

Marie’s sentiments on her curricular experiences were consistent with Priya’s; she explained, “I think there was a deficit that I had to deal with by going outside of my department. Well outside of my program and outside of my department to really complement what the education that I was getting.” Priya and Marie’s experiences related to those of other participants who discussed the ineffectiveness of their program’s curriculum in preparing them for international work. Jiaoyu stated that she was “shocked” that at that point in her program, there was only one course that she had taken that talked about international issues. Jiaoyu further shared, “The only course in comparative and international education was mostly about how Americans played a role in international education affairs.” Jiaoyu’s experience was indicative of the U.S.-centric nature of the one international course she took in her doctoral program.

In addition to Jiaoyu, other participants shared that even though their programs emphasized international priorities, their coursework often prioritized U.S. higher education. Tatenda’s experiences highlighted her frustration:

You have maybe certain readings that are added to coursework just for you to have, I suppose, a different perspective...but I get the sense that even with that different voice it’s more of a way to teach you to think outside of the box and outside of the U.S. [because] when the testing and the finals and everything else comes, it’s still very U.S. based.

Frank noted similar feelings regarding the U.S. centric nature of his doctoral curriculum. Frank stated:

In some ways it has been so much and in other ways not at all. I don’t want to dismiss the critical thinking and the pretty big array of scholarship that I have been exposed to in the program, but I also still think we [do not] have a clear and cohesive understanding of what international education is. Certainly I don’t like to put boxes on things, but I do think having two or three definitions might be helpful. And sort of not really defining it at all, so like, is this about doing research with international students, is this about doing research in a country other than the United States? And what does international actually mean? Why is it so U.S. centric? Like international I think in [my program] means anything outside of the U.S. which is just so bizarre because it’s just U.S. centric.

Onay shared similar thoughts when discussing the global related in and out-of-class experiences she had. When asked about her international experiences in the classroom, she described:

In class, very limited and I have been very disappointed with that. I think the U.S. higher education system is quite self-preferential unfortunately. So the foundations of higher education course, we didn’t talk about anything but U.S. higher education. Higher education wasn’t even invented in the U.S. We went through the course with no reference to any other country but the U.S. I think it speaks volumes about the program.

Research training

In addition to concerns related to curricular content, most participants cited frustration with receiving minimal training related to international research from their graduate preparation programs. More than half of the participants explained that they chose their specific doctoral program because they wanted a global emphasis in their higher education training, and they were under the assumption that their program could provide that international experiences as touted in

programmatically. However, most of these participants shared their disappointment with their doctoral experience when their programs fell short of meeting their expectations. Steve shared that the curriculum at his institution did not include very much international research training, and that in some regard, students interested in international research training in his program would find their preparation to be lacking. He explained:

I think mostly the program prepares us for a U.S. setting...in maybe one of the methods classes I've taken, sometimes we just speak so generally. We're clearly talking about the U.S. context, but we're not saying that and I think even just doing that would be a big deal so to say you know even in the U.S. context, this is what we would do...so I think the problem there is that if somebody is part of a research team or has some kind of change or then does some international research I don't know if they would always make that change or kind of realize what they're taking for granted...If you just sort of think of it and then share it I don't know how good the prep would be.

Frank agreed that there was little international research training in his courses. Frank expounded on his thoughts of his international research preparation and provided a critical account of his doctoral program and his training thus far:

I don't think I'm prepared to enter the field and do data collection and to design a study and do data collection and all of that. I do think I am prepared to do, to think critically about the international education scholarship that is coming out right now. I'm prepared to engage with that in some ways, but not, I don't think I could be an international education researcher with experiences that I've had thus far. And even if I were to take advantage of the opportunities that were optional, I think that would only be surface level.

Katherine was also critical about the nature of her research training and offered the following perspective of her program, stating:

I think there is a lot of focus on methods training in terms of qualitative or quantitative research methodology, but it still is lacking any explanation of what it's like to operate in another environment. So I don't think there is anything that has necessarily been done well in that regard.

All of the participants began their programs with an already established interest in international education. Although the majority selected their specific program due to its touted international perspectives, most of the participants agreed that their programs fell short of expectations. They perceived that the curriculum and research training did not prepare them for effectively conducting international research.

Opportunities for Supplemental Research Development in Doctoral Programs

Despite the critical nature of participant responses, some participants were able to verbalize positive aspects related to the international researcher development components of their program. Several of the participants' doctoral programs did not include specific international content courses or international research classes; however, many participants were able to find external, or co-curricular, opportunities to develop their expertise as international researchers. For example, Priya was able to supplement her international interest, explaining:

I think that the department and the college has put on a lot of-- they have brought in a lot of speakers and...not workshops, more so speakers on a variety of topics. I think that's one of the benefits of being here is that there will be people that come in from all over the place. Some of them have had international focuses.

Priya further elaborated on international opportunities that were available outside of her program requirements. She stated:

So last year for example when they were hiring for an international education something professor—I don’t know which department that was in—but they were hiring for a faculty position. And so I went to several of the job talks and so I think that that was, has been a valuable experience to kind of see different types of international research through those job talks that I would otherwise not have seen or be familiar with—outside of going to conferences because they were the types of things I would see at a conference presentation.

Belle also spoke extensively about using her own initiative to carve out additional international training that she was not receiving from her department. She credits her ability to create a globally-focused doctoral experience to her personal experiences, stating, “I’m older and I’ve had a career and a sense of direction of where I want to go in.” Belle was able to make strong connections with outside departments and programs, including participation in a global student advisory board. Belle described the advisory board:

A group of students, undergrad and grad. So we deal with international issues in terms of internationalizing the curriculum, dealing with international students, beefing up study abroad. Any sort of aspects of international education. We deal with those issues. I’m a part of that.

As illustrated by Belle, co-curricular experiences were vital to many participants’ desire to internationalize their research experience. Katherine was also involved in a student group at her graduate institution and was actually one of the founders of this organization. According to Katherine, this organization was started because “there are actually no opportunities in my program for anything internationally focused” and this was a common theme across all departments in her college. Because international education “very rarely happens in the classroom” across all departments, Katherine and other students took initiative and intentionally created a space for international education. She explained:

So some of my fellow students and I from across departments have actually started this student group where we try and get students and faculty who are doing research that has some type of global ed focus to just do brief presentations about that.

Thus, although most participants would not describe their doctoral programs as having a strong emphasis on international research development, many were able to supplement their research interests using their own initiative and taking advantage of opportunities outside of their department.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, participants did not feel that they were prepared by their programs to conduct international research. In fact, several of the participants felt dissatisfied with their inability to immerse themselves in international education, especially in areas of their curriculum and research training. Their perspectives on doctoral curriculum suggest that further program planning is necessary on the part of the department faculty if they are to ensure that students are developing their areas of expertise. Although many participants had anticipated that they would be immersed in international perspectives in their program, most were surprised to have received very little exposure to international higher education. For example, Jiaoyu, as a fifth-year doctoral student, was “shocked” that she had taken only one course that emphasized international education. Participants’ lack of exposure to international perspectives indicates that they may not be fully prepared

to work in environments that are reflective of the global world (Ellingboe, 1998), which is something that Gopal (2011) claimed is necessary in doctoral education.

Beyond the overall programmatic priorities related to international education, curricular critiques were common among many participants. Most participants did not feel as though they received sufficient exposure to international issues in their coursework, which can lead to narrow, U.S.-centric perspectives. Priya indicated this deficiency by sharing that her core curriculum did not include any international components. Tatenda and Frank also agreed, both stating that their coursework was very U.S.-centric. Although this was somewhat expected by Tatenda, an international student, she was still surprised by how little attention international research received in her higher education coursework. Topics covered in general coursework are interconnected with research training, and as indicated by Steve and Katherine, international research training was not sufficient in their doctoral programs.

The lack of international concepts in higher education is troubling, particularly because Pallas (2001) stressed that doctoral students should be trained for the world of educational research as it might become. Global priorities and internationalization of higher education affects all aspects of university life (Knight, 2004). Knight (2004) called for internationalizing education by incorporating global perspectives in the teaching, research, and service functions of academia. Thus, doctoral programs may consider going beyond the standard components of research training in the curriculum and seek to achieve comprehensive change, as described by Evans (2010) to be the enhancement of research knowledge and understanding.

Comprehensive change (Evans, 2010) includes the enhancement of research knowledge and understanding, and, in order to increase international research development, we recommend that doctoral programs conduct a curriculum review to determine ways in which they can make their research curriculum truly reflective of the global nature of education. Higher education doctoral programs should incorporate international perspectives in all researcher development courses as a baseline for all students. In addition, programs should consider offering more advanced seminars of research methods, such as utilizing indigenous methodologies or considering researcher reflexivity for students with multiple identities. By doing so, doctoral programs accommodate the desires of students with international interests as well as provide additional opportunities for individuals to broaden their researcher development. As a result, students can dig deeper into the different experiences that the international research contexts provide, such as issues related to intellectual neocolonialism (Herzog, 2013), U.S.-dominant methodologies (Murphy & Zhu, 2012), and intercultural relations (Fortujin, 1985).

Beyond what falls under the purview of doctoral program structure, our research illustrates how student initiative is an important factor in participants' attempts to internationalize their researcher development. A number of participants relied on their own initiative to ensure that they received a well-rounded international perspective in their doctoral programs. The doctoral student experience encompasses various components, including coursework, teaching, research, and co-curricular opportunities. As such, faculty and program administrators may want to consider emphasizing at the start of student's doctoral programs that they should not rely simply on coursework to have international experiences. Rather, students should use their own initiative to infuse international components in their assignments and research projects. Emphasizing the importance of initiative could serve as methods for supporting student's socialization to the doctoral experience and their preparation for successful academic careers (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Tierney, 1997).

Although initiative is an important component for student success, higher education doctoral programs should also contribute to well-rounded co-curricular academic experiences as a way to support students' overall intellectual development in researcher training (Evans, 2010). For ex-

ample, Belle and Katherine were involved in student groups that emphasized international education. Their participation allowed them to supplement their coursework with internationally-themed conversations and opportunities that came from membership spanning across departments. Co-curricular opportunities may provide avenues for gaining additional training that cannot be fulfilled by the curriculum and, at the same time, allow for more interdisciplinary discussions that could provide new opportunities for collaboration and training. By doing so, doctoral students’ epistemological change may be affected, which is “what people know or understand about research” (Evans, 2010, p. 23). Including a more holistic training that incorporates the influence of co-curricular opportunities can help promote a better understanding of the research process itself for doctoral students.

Co-curricular opportunities are important because curricular change can be a difficult and long process that is not feasible for immediate implementation. As a supplement to potential curriculum changes, programs should consider providing co-curricular opportunities for their students, such as student groups, brown bags, invited speakers, and webinars to complement the curriculum with international perspectives in researcher development. Including these various components will contribute to the “advanced level of specialized knowledge and skills” (Weidman et al., 2001, p. 5) that students will find necessary for their chosen careers.

In addition to departmental co-curricular opportunities, Priya and Belle gave examples of going outside of their academic department to find support for international research. Some of their examples included attending job talks for new internationally focused higher education faculty and making connections with faculty from other departments and centers on their campus. Given the interdisciplinary nature of higher education, faculty can work toward bringing in the resources of their universities or colleges to the confines of their programs. They can facilitate connections with other departments and experts by cultivating relationships that can help students in creating dissertation committees, learning of additional international resources and opportunities, and developing contacts in higher education at their universities and beyond. This external departmental exposure can enhance student’s epistemological change by expanding students’ knowledge of “theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which they locate and undertake their research activity” (Evans, 2010, p. 23).

An additional external resource could be international education centers and institutes found around the country. For example, the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) at Boston College boasts both a quarterly publication and program staff that have expertise on the intricacies of higher education that occurs globally as well as the internationalizing of higher education. By consulting with centers like the CIHE at Boston College or organizations such as the Institute of International Education, academic departments that are seeking to hone the international components of their programs can begin to address some of the gaps voiced by their students.

We recognize that our participants operationalize international researcher preparation in a variety of ways. For example, Priya viewed internationalization of research preparation to include outside speakers or to hire more international scholars in her college. Frank considered expanding worldviews and perspectives to be a way to prepare for international research. With such broad definitions from our participants, our findings indicate that each participant, program, and institution may have very different definitions and processes for international higher education.

Our findings reveal that more work is needed in doctoral students’ preparation for international research, particularly in areas related to their intellectual development as researchers (Evans, 2010). As asserted by Qiang (2003), doctoral programs must prepare their students for the academic and professional knowledge necessary to be successful in their scholarly careers. By working on developing their curricular priorities and co-curricular opportunities for researcher development, doctoral programs can ensure that their students are prepared to be scholars of interna-

tional higher education. Although our findings and implications may not be generalizable for all higher education programs, this study provides some insight for higher education programs and scholars to start the conversation on how to better prepare doctoral students for international research.

Recommendations for Future Research

We have several recommendations for further research to move beyond this exploratory study on international researcher development. First, as related to our limitations, we recommend conducting a longitudinal study to examine how participants' thoughts may change after graduating and entering the academic workforce. As a result, participants could talk in retrospect about their attempts and experience actually doing international research post-graduation. Also, we would like to make the sample size more robust, particularly because there could potentially be findings that differ between international students and domestic students. We acknowledge the complexity of studying both U.S. participants doing work outside of the United States and international students in U.S. programs who want an international (non-U.S.) experience. Further disaggregating the experiences of domestic and international students would provide a more robust understanding of how doctoral programs can better internationalize their curriculum.

Another area for future research would include interviewing students who may not be as well-versed in international higher education. As stated in the limitations of this study, the participants represented a population of doctoral students who have a preexisting affiliation towards internationalization. Gaining the perspectives of students who are not as internationally minded would assist in understanding the gaps in internationalizing research training for all students.

Perspectives from faculty in higher education programs would be beneficial in understanding faculty perspectives and efficacy in international researcher training. In addition, further nuancing the differences between lack of international training and a mismatch in student expectations and espoused programmatic values would provide a more holistic understanding of international researcher development. Finally, a comparative study with other countries could provide some good insights on how U.S. doctoral education and researcher training compares around the world.

Conclusion

This qualitative study provides insight on how U.S. doctoral students perceive their preparation as emerging international researchers. As indicated by the findings, higher education doctoral programs need to evaluate their current doctoral curriculum in order to ensure students are learning what is necessary for participating in the global academy. Current doctoral education research tends to emphasize pedagogy and teaching (Åkerlind, 2008; Evans, 2011; Nguyen, 2012) while overlooking researcher development. Gilbert (2004) argued that doctoral curriculum related to researcher development needs to be studied, and as evidenced by this study, our participants are not receiving the international research training they believe is critical to their development as scholars. Doctoral students are conducting research in an increasingly internationalized education system; thus, doctoral researcher development should be critically examined to ensure that higher education researchers are prepared to capably conduct research in international contexts.

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