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Culturally critical examination of high-impact practices through a case study of graduate students' virtual teaching abroad experience

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Abstract

This study explores how instructors participating in teaching abroad applied high-impact practices (HIPs) and strategies to make their teaching effective in the teaching abroad setting, using a culturally critical lens. We interrogated the applicability of HIPs across different cultures, considering that they originate from U.S. higher education and cultures. Using a case study approach, we interviewed five graduate students who participated in a teaching abroad program, from a university in the U.S., teaching college students in India. Instructors implemented HIPs in the ways that they practiced in U.S. classrooms. They did not yield the same effectiveness due to the instructors' imperfect knowledge of the Indian students and the subtle epistemological ethnocentrism. The instructors reflected on their critical consciousness, which enabled them to view students as partners and sources of knowledge, and by employing a significant level of clarity in their communication to make HIPs more culturally responsive in the virtual class.

Abstract in Korean

본 연구는 교차문화적 관점을 바탕으로, 해외 파견 수업(teaching abroad)에 참여한 교수자들이 고임팩트 교수·학습 전략(High-Impact Practices, HIPs)을 어떻게 적용하였으며, 해외 수업 맥락에서 효과적인 수업을 구현하기 위해 어떠한 전략을

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사용하였는지를 탐색한다. 특히 HIPs 가 미국 고등교육 제도와 문화에서 발전하였다는 점을 고려하여, 서로 다른 문화적 맥락에서의 적용 가능성을 비판적으로 검토하였다. 사례연구 방법을 활용하여, 미국 대학 소속으로 해외 파견 프로그램에 참여해 인도 대학생들을 가르친 대학원생 강사 5 명을 인터뷰하였다. 교수자들은 미국 교실에서 실천하던 방식 그대로 HIPs 를 적용하였다. 그러나 인도 학생들에 대한 충분하지 못한 이해와 미묘한 인식론적 자문화중심주의로 인해 동일한 효과를 거두지 못하였다. 포커스그룹 인터뷰에서 교수자들은 자신의 문화와 HIPs 적용 교수법을 비판적으로 성찰하면서 성공적 교차문화적 수업경험을 위해 현지 학생들은 단순히 지식 수용자가 아닌 수업을 함께 구성해가는 필수 협력자로 인식하게 되었다. 또한 의사소통의 명확성을 크게 강화함으로써, 가상 수업 환경에서 HIPs 를 보다 문화감응적 방식으로 재구성하는 방법을 모색하였다.본 연구는 고등교육 국제화 시대에 해외 파견 교수자들이 타문화적 맥락에서 효과적이고 의미 있는 대학 수업을 운영하기 위해 요구되는 핵심 역량을 이해하는 데 기여하고자 한다.

Keywords

Cross-cultural teaching; college students in India; culturally responsive teaching; high-impact practices; internationalization of higher education

1. Introduction

High Impact Practices (HIPs) are defined as a set of educationally effective practices in higher education and have been widely adopted in the U.S. (Kuh, 2008). However, there have been questions about the cultural relevance of HIPs in multicultural educational settings. This is because what is defined as effective is influenced by cultural values, attitudes, and norms (Buchanan, 1990). In conjunction with education, effective teaching and learning are much aligned with the educational goals aspired to and promoted by the broader society and the political agenda (Buchanan, 1990). Furthermore, multicultural education scholars address the unequal power relationship between instructors and students in which instructors choose effective practices based on their own cultural rationale, imposing cultural incongruence in effective educational practices and goals (Gay, 2018; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Such cultural incongruence consequently creates disproportionate student outcomes and perception of second-class citizens around minoritized students whose cultures are often incongruent with the instructors' cultures (Gay, 2018; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In this regard, ideas around HIPs have been critiqued as largely shaped by the cultural values and interests of dominant groups in the U.S. which have access to define and claim effectiveness (Museus, 2014; Guiffrida, 2006), necessitating culturally critical examination of HIPs.

Culturally critical examinations on HIPs in internationalized higher education settings can be meaningful due to the growth of study abroad opportunities in forms of teaching abroad. Teaching abroad can be defined as a type of study abroad experience in which participating instructors teach in classrooms of local students in the hosting country. Traditionally, teaching abroad occurred physically in the host country. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual teaching abroad programs began taking place as well, in which the instructors taught the foreign classes virtually without relocation. Historically, teaching abroad in higher education has been studied within contexts of faculty development and promotion of international partnerships as internationalization strategies of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Haeckl & Manwell, 2009) or preservice teacher development (Quezada, 2004). The purposes of participants teaching abroad have been diversified in recent years. For example, the United States Department of Education began offering the Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) grant with an aim of strengthening the U.S. foreign policy goals (IDEAS, 2022). In addition, the selected initiative by the IDEAS grant includes various teaching abroad initiatives which entail the graduate students from the U.S. HEIs as instructors and facilitators for college level teaching abroad (IDEAS, n.d.). In short, the IDEAS grant gave rise to embedding teaching abroad aspects in graduate courses with a wider spectrum of curricular purposes with intentions of expanding the U.S. influence in educational system across the globe. More importantly, in the case that the funding agency and instructors in the teaching abroad initiatives are from the U.S., it is imperative to examine how the values around effective teaching practices are imposed or adjusted.

Opportunities for graduate students in the U.S. to participate in teaching abroad have expanded with the introduction of IDEAS grant, yet there is a great scarcity that focuses on their college level teaching abroad experiences. Studies have corroborated that, throughout their undergraduate and graduate years, graduate students and faculty in the U.S are professionally socialized to practice HIPs (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). While there is not enough evidence showing that graduate students replicate HIP in teaching abroad circumstance, the concepts of totality (Dussel, 2008; Levinas, 1979; Ydesen et al., 2011) and ethnocentrism (Reagan, 2017) could convey that individuals, particularly those with a professional or advanced education, are ontologically and epistemologically prone to select practices within one's cultural and disciplinary boundaries to assimilate the others. Buchanan also expounded that teachers "themselves are cultural beings" (Buchanan, 1990, p. 89). Thus, graduate

students from institutions in the United States are likely to attempt to utilize HIPs in teaching abroad classes for the effective development of learning outcomes as they are widely researched and administered practices in U.S. higher education without questioning the cultural relevancy of HIPs in different countries.

Thus, this study aims to explore how graduate students studying in the U.S. navigate and make sense of the implementation of HIPs in teaching abroad classrooms through a virtual teach abroad case. More importantly, it will be meaningful to explore how challenges of implementing HIPs arise in teaching abroad classrooms and how graduate students develop strategies to modify their practices of HIPs through a culturally critical lens. Ultimately, the study aims to provide knowledge on adequate instructional support for faculty and graduate students to create equitable teaching abroad classrooms that benefit both graduate students from the U.S. institutions and local students in the hosting countries since more and more graduate students participate in the teaching abroad opportunities. This study utilizes a case study method where the teaching abroad experience took place virtually connecting the graduate instructors in the U.S. to college students in India due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus benefit not only the in-person but also virtual teaching abroad opportunities in the future. Furthermore, this study engages in literature on political dynamics and cultures of learning between the U.S. and India, critically examining instructors' application of HIPs in a cross-cultural setting.

The study is guided by three research questions: How do the graduate students from U.S. institutions navigate and make sense of HIPs in teaching abroad classrooms? How do the graduate students from U.S. institutions perceive the challenges of implementing HIPs in teaching abroad classrooms? How do graduate students from U.S. institutions develop strategies to modify their implementation of HIPs in teaching abroad classrooms?

2. Literature review

2.1. Teaching abroad from U.S. to India

Teaching abroad in a higher education context is defined as a type of study abroad program, and the participating individuals come into an overseas classroom as teachers. Traditionally, teaching abroad was geared towards preservice teachers and faculty members teaching at international branches

(Quezada, 2004). In recent years, the US government and HEIs have extended their commitment to internationalization abroad (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Such commitment is reflected in the implementation of the IDEAS grant by the United States Department of Education (IDEAS 2022), promoting diverse forms of study abroad programs which are encouraged to strengthen the U.S. foreign policy goals (IDEAS, 2022). With the increased governmental and institutional interests, teaching abroad opportunities in higher education became diversified to include students at various degree levels and disciplines.

Furthermore, the U.S. government has intentionally built relationships through educational partnerships with economically rising countries that are not traditional allies, which can potentially result in the strategic expansion of teaching abroad in countries like India. For instance, although the U.S. and India have not been allies for political reasons, their relationship shifted, reflecting both countries' interest in securing international competitiveness and growing the presence of Indian American society (Davis & Hart, 2010). With mutual interest, the U.S. and India began to expand the bilateral relationships centering on technology, nursing, medicine, and graduate education (Davis & Hart, 2010). These two countries also have signed a bilateral agreement for strengthening educational exchanges, doubling Fulbright Scholarships for student exchange between the U.S. and India (USIEF, 2013). Moreover, with the increased interests of the U.S. government and HEIs in gaining cultural understandings of and increasing the U.S. presence in the Indian higher education system, the U.S. HEIs can now open their branches in India with the Foreign Educational Institutions Act passed in India (Cowen, 2020; Gawarikar & Pramanik, 2015; Sharma, 2014). In addition, India, then, was identified as one of the five countries that the U.S. Department of Education strategically chose to invest in as a newly rising non-traditional study abroad destination for U.S. students (Chow & Cho, 2011). In this regard, India has become a particularly attractive partner for studying abroad and service learning (Chow & Cho, 2011). Thus, the expansion of teaching abroad opportunities in India can be expected in conjunction with the growth of the IDEAS grant.

2.2. Cultural examinations of high-impact practices

The U.S. graduate student instructors may not have been purposefully trained to be instructors, yet they could unconsciously adopt the educational practices they have been exposed to as effective during their graduate trainings. Thus, the instructors are likely to enter the teach abroad classroom with their own beliefs and practices shaped by their culture and the way that they are

socialized to teach and confront students' learning that may not align with beliefs of others (Lee, 2010). For instance, HIPs are widely promoted and incorporated in college educational practices and are based on seven principles of effective practices (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, 2008). The core HIPs, thus, include (1) student-faculty contact; (2) cooperation among students; (3) active learning; (4) prompt feedback to students; (5) time on task; (6) high expectations, and (7) respect for diverse students and diverse ways of knowing (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, 2008). As these practices are prevailing and have been institutionalized across various disciplines in U.S. higher education (Koljatic & Kuh, 2001), graduate student instructors from the US institutions can be particularly interested in implementing these practices in Indian college classrooms.

Although HIPs entail teaching methods that promote diverse student success, it is imperative to examine how HIPs are implemented in classrooms. This is because the meanings, impacts, and delivery of instructional methods can vary across cultural contexts due to differential cultural values reflecting their unique histories (Rogoff, 1990; Rubenstein, 2006; Valiente, 2008). Hofstede (1986) identified the U.S. as having a highly individualistic culture and less hierarchy. In contrast, India was identified as having a strong presence of hierarchical and collective culture. In addition, Crabtree and Sapp (2004, p. 114, citing Hall, 1994) described the U.S. culture as monochronic, which "plac[es] the emphasis on schedules and discreet time units." There is a greater value on time management in the monochronic culture, especially "order in turn-taking and completion of one transaction or task before moving on to the next" while the Polychronic culture appreciates relationships and is more generous with plan changes to accommodate rising needs from a conversation and relationship, creating delays in responding queues (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004, p. 114). These cultural aspects shape the process of facilitating effective educational practices and thus cause dissonance in expectations on how to teach and how to learn in cross-cultural classrooms. In short, expectations and methods for HIPs can differ between U.S. graduate student instructors and Indian college students.

The graduate instructors from U.S. institutions are prone to execute HIPs in specific ways, reflecting U.S. cultural values. Buchanan (1990) addressed that the educational practices that are believed to be effective are shaped by culture and, thus, can vary across cultures, which subsequently mediates the effectiveness of the practices. For instance, in the U.S. classrooms collaborations and competitions are encouraged simultaneously as strategies to foster self-

achievement and individual interests, and behaviors such as independence, individual work, turn-taking, group work, having deadlines, asking questions to teachers, and vocal participation are viewed as valuable (Buchanan, 1990). This means that the graduate instructors from the US institutions teaching in Indian college classrooms are likely to practice HIPs by expecting and facilitating the aforementioned valued behaviors in the U.S. classroom. However, Buchanan also contended that some of these practices could be seen as arrogant and confrontational in non-U.S. classrooms, thus, "influence, positively or negatively, the learning process" (1990, p. 89). Similarly, Koul and Fisher (2005) conducted a study that critically examined the effectiveness of teacher-student interactions, which were seen as an impactful learning environment in Anglo-Saxon cultures, yet found mixed effectiveness in student outcomes in India. Other studies have also unmasked manners in instructors and students engage in the HIPs and their differential impacts due to cultural factors in the Asian cultural context (e.g., Hwang et al., 2002; Kim, 2015; Nevgi et al., 2008; Park & Kang, 2023). In this regard, cultural sensitivity and critical perspectives are crucial when U.S. graduates apply the HIPs in teaching abroad classrooms to generate intended meaningful learning outcomes.

2.3. Socio-cultural educational context in India

In order to understand how student learn in India, it is vital to understand Indian college classrooms in relation to the broader social, cultural, and political contexts of the destination country (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004). India, a country with the second-largest population globally, exists with linguistic, religious, and geographic diversities (Chanana, 1993). It has fifteen different national languages and hosts diverse religious and ethnic groups. Indian society can be also characterized as hierarchical due to the Castes and Tribes systems. Caste and tribal systems often also intersect with religions and geography. For instance, the compositions of religious groups are Hindus (80%), Muslims (14%), Christians (2%), Sikhs (2%), Buddhists (0.7%), and Jains (0.4%) (Kramer, 2021). Muslims are geographically spread both in urban and rural, yet the urbanization of Muslims is higher than that of other religious minorities (Chanana, 1993). Most Christians are in rural areas and mostly converted from Lower Hindu Castes or tribes due to the missionary concentration of untouchables and tribals in the North-Eastern Hill States (Chanana, 1993). However, Christian missionaries are at the forefront of modern Indian education and support India's health and education system (Chanana, 1993).

This permits the assumption that Christians are better represented in Indian higher education.

Moreover, studies have shown the role of socioeconomic status of Indian students in succeeding in higher education learning environment that has been greatly influenced by the western academic culture and colonial rules. English is constitutionally recognized as a secondary official language and has become the lingua franca in Indian higher education, particularly at the graduate level (Chow & Cho, 2011). Historically, Indian English has been mainly spoken among the educated class and used to link the West and India (Nevgi et al., 2008; Zaidman, 2001). Thus, using English is associated with one's higher socio-economic mobility, and English medium education is often seen as privileged and reflects students' social capital (Jayadeva, 2019; Rao, 2008). Koul and Fisher (2005) examined student-faculty international interactions in Indian higher education, problematizing the application of the student-faculty interaction model, often praised as an impactful learning environment in Western culture, without critically examining its impact in India. They found that Indian college students from wealthier and mainstream ethnic backgrounds perceived the student-faculty international interactions more positively than students with minoritized and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. More importantly, student-faculty interactions are valued in India. Yet, the authors emphasized that instructors should be culturally sensitive when forming student-faculty interactions with an understanding of diverse cultural beliefs about education. These studies foreground the importance of teaching abroad instructors with non-Indian cultural backgrounds to pursue understandings of which and why certain groups of Indian college students are likely to respond favorably to the ways in which they implement HIPs.

While Indian culture cannot be described monolithically due to its diversity across various aspects, cultural values can be discussed in ways that reflect the development of modern Indian society and the educational system. Despite the limited availability of literature in English, a few studies provided in-depth reviews of Indian cultural values and relevant phenomena in education. First, Alur (2001) comprehensively asserted that Gandhian values are one of the backbone values upheld with legacy in India. With the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, who led India's independence movement against British colonization, service to people (Lok Seva) is valued through the collective force of people with harnessed abilities to best serve the community (Lok Shakti) (Alur, 2001). The person who delivers the service (Sevak) must bear sacrifice or

love (Bhakti). The emphasis on collective force is manifested in the perception of community and state as Alur (2011) describes "it is not culturally dependent on the state for services, but socially and culturally dependent on the family structure and the community (p. 291). Other studies also have observed the influence of family-oriented and collectivist values resulting in positive perception of silence and ambiguity in conversations as a sign of respect or pursue harmony in the group in the Indian educational settings (Kim, 1993; Rastogi et al., 2022) At the same time, the Indian education system emphasizes standardized tests and memory-based examinations, which reinforce learning as an individual process and depreciate diversity in knowledge and perspectives (Dave & Hill, 1974; Raina, 2015). Teaching abroad instructors in Indian college classrooms should examine the ways in which the expectations for good teaching and learning differ across cultures.

In summary, HIPs may benefit student learning across cultures. However, we highlight that HIPs may not yield the same level of educational impact in countries other than the U.S. without instructors' abilities to critically examine the application of HIP by reflecting local cultural values in educational settings. For instance, the U.S. instructors can present collaborative and active learning opportunities in their classes, expecting students to immediately jump into group discussions in a competitive manner like in the U.S. collegiate classrooms. However, they may face a situation where no local students speak due to their orientation for communal harmony, yet they falsely develop a perception of local students as deficient, while being puzzled to apply active learning effectively in the Indian college classroom. Without acknowledging the intricacy of local cultural factors playing into making teaching practices effective, teaching abroad instructors can blindly apply HIPs and generate ineffective educational outcomes.

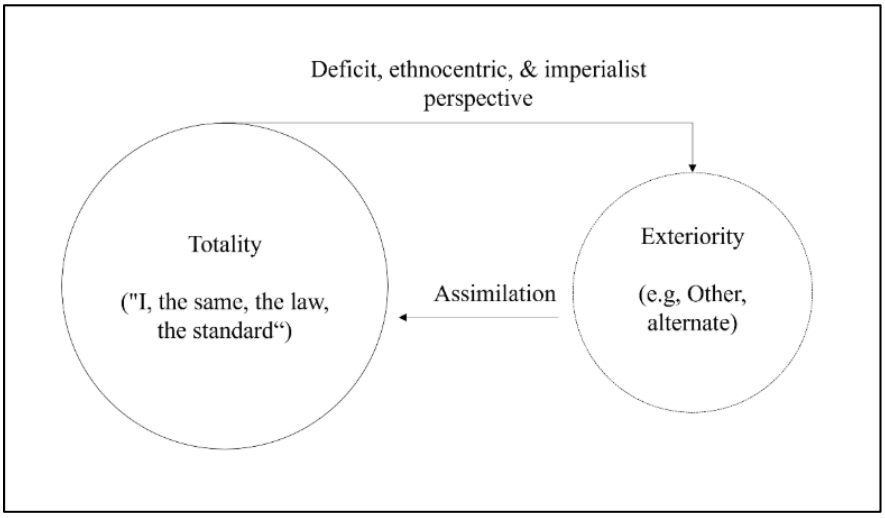
2.4. Conceptual framework: Investigating built-in biases through postmodernism

It is often challenging for teaching abroad instructors to examine their perception of effective practices and understand diverse approaches to teaching and make it relevant to the local cultural values using a culturally critical lens. Teaching to serve others can often be carried out with good intentions to share resources and knowledge, particularly from globally privileged countries to those less privileged when dichotomized Global South and North narratives prevail (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Hofstede (1986) also stated that it is pivotal to teach the teachers how to teach in cross-cultural classrooms, such as teaching

abroad classrooms, where the instructors come from outside the culture, especially from developed countries. Postmodernist theorists, thus, contend that such educational exchanges still underline modernistic thoughts promoting universality, totality, and dominance in prescribing collective human goals and valuing specific types of knowledge and practices (Giroux, 1988; Hedbige, 1988). In other words, postmodernism critically views that the act of realizing good intentions through sharing resources and knowledge often operates upon built-in biases that specific ideas and practices have more value to humanity—favoring the ideas and practices coming from the Global North.

Such built-in biases, even in the well-intentioned exchanges between countries in the Global North and South, are explained by the concept of totality (Dussel, 2008; Levinas, 1979; Ydesen et al., 2011) and ethnocentrism (Reagan, 2017). First of all, post-modernism describes the pursuit of modernization as an effort to totalize ideas and practices deemed valuable based on scientific assessment. Ydesen and colleagues (2011) summarize that, in the process of totalization, the concept of totality comes from the 'I' and that of exteriority from the 'Thou' or 'It' (see Figure 1). As Figure (1) captures, totalizing the exteriority means putting the Other in the same context as the Self, which unintentionally but systematically establishes deficit perspectives of the Other. Thus, attempts to totalize the exteriority often occur in the form of assimilating the Other into the Self's value system, resulting in further oppressing the Other and reinforcing otherness (Dussel, 1985 as cited in Ydesen et al., 2011).

FIGURE (1)
TOTALITY AND EXTERIORITY



Note. The figure was created reflecting existing literature on totality, exteriority, and postmodernism.

Based on the concept of totality and exteriority, we can posit that the teaching abroad instructors are likely to seek the meanings of their graduate trainings and who they are as educators (the Self) in contradiction to the Indian instructors and students (the Other). In other words, the teaching abroad instructors may tend to give themselves the power to define the Self and Other based on their perception of how similarly or differently the Other can navigate the educational practices the instructors employ. This means while applying HIPs in the teaching abroad classroom, the instructors may impose their assumptions about how HIPs should be facilitated and assess Indian students' performance based on their assumptions, essentially engaging in a practice of "totalizing the exteriority" by putting the Other in the same context as the Self.

Moreover, the inevitable built-in biases are often manifested in education as covert forms of ethnocentrism. Reagan (2017) argued that the built-in biases are, in fact, ethnocentrism and are often practiced covertly in ways that scholars and educators use "one's own society and sociocultural practices as the norm by which other societies are viewed, measured, and evaluated" (p. 5). The covert forms of ethnocentrism in education often take two unique forms, which are cultural ethnocentrism and epistemological ethnocentrism. First, cultural ethnocentrism mostly occurs unconsciously because the sociocultural context shapes and supports distinct biases and assumptions. In a qualitative study by Milligan (2000), U.S. Peace Corps volunteer teachers in the southern Philippines drew their self-images as being adventurous and generous, resembling the rhetoric of "pioneers." They all stated that cultures are equal but still implied a hierarchical relation between the US and Filipino cultures in educational settings, justifying the replication of their teaching from the U.S. in the Philippines. Second, academics and educators can also have a common form of ethnocentrism across different cultures through a form of epistemological ethnocentrism. Epistemological ethnocentrism concerns biases and assumptions common to an entire discipline for fields of study (Reagan, 2017). Epistemological ethnocentrism is deeply linked to the dominant paradigm in a discipline because it establishes the perception of what is important, legitimate, and reasonable (Reagan, 2017).

Based on the concept of totalization and covert cultural and epistemological ethnocentrism, teaching abroad instructors are prone to believe HIPs can be universally effective and neglect to critically reflect on the cultural assumptions underlying the process of conducting HIPs. For instance, tjhe teaching abroad instructors would promote faculty-student interaction,

cooperative and active learning, and encourage students to share diverse ideas by choosing classroom discussion as a mechanism to facilitate HIPs. The instructor would expect students to participate in the discussion in an active (competitive) and vocal way, while still respecting one another by taking turns (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Hofstede, 1986). However, although Indian students value each different HIPs, they may interact with faculty and peers in classroom discussions as students in the U.S. do due to the different power relationship between the instructor (Hofstede, 1986) and students and value for harmony (Alur, 2011; Kim, 1993; Rastogi et al., 2022). Without such reflection, the teaching abroad instructors are likely to assess Indian students as incapable of benefiting from HIPs. Thus, examining how graduate instructors in teaching abroad classes in India can illuminate how instructors make sense of HIP applications and navigate the tensions between their beliefs on good teaching and learning across two cultures.

As it is inevitable that individuals be free from built-in biases based on postmodernism, the U.S. graduate student instructors teaching in India can benefit from pedagogical frameworks incorporating culturally critical consciousness. This is because the examination ultimately needs to shift its focus to transforming teaching practices, which requires guided choices of actions grounded in empirical and practical foundations. In fact, Gay (2018) suggested culturally responsive teaching as a framework for teachers to critically examine their cultural beliefs about educational practices and possible incongruence between teachers' cultural beliefs about teaching and learning and those of students. When attempting to overcome such incongruency, Gay contended that teachers must share three elements: "power, resources, and responsibilities" (2018, p. 22). In addition, Gay (2018) elaborated that sharing the three aspects in a classroom means seeing the students as co-constructors of classroom experiences, a framework allowing student input in developing course objectives and contents through extensive communication with students and care for their growth. Extensive communication with and care for students are even more emphasized as Gay (2018) further argued that it is inevitable for us to live with unknown others in society as diversity inherently exists, resonating with Hanvey's (1982) argument that attaining global perspectives starts with recognizing our inevitable limits to fully understanding the other. While the teaching abroad instructors are subject to assessing the others' (Indian students) learning practices based on their assumptions and standards, it is also important to situate the teaching abroad instructors as capable of evolving to utilize their critical consciousness by exploring how they experience the

challenges and develop strategies to make HIPs cross-culturally relevant in their teaching abroad classrooms.

3. Method

We applied a case study approach using thematic analysis in conducting this study. According to Yin (1994), the experiences of individuals can be best revealed through a specific context, and case studies enable researchers to unmask the hidden connections across shared experiences. In other words, the identification of various factors and their interactions can be better captured in a specific real-life situation. Yin (1994) also defines a case study as a process of empirical inquiry, whereas other researchers apply the case as a unit of study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In this study, we operationalize the case study as a methodology that allows researchers to navigate the empirical inquiry on complex contemporary phenomena through an available and observable context. Our case study approach employed a mixed-methods coding strategy with inductive and deductive sequential triangulation, applying thematic analysis (TA) by Braun and Clarke (2021). We used MAXQDA, an online coding software that allowed us to assign codes to each and maintain them in an organized manner.

3.1. The case: Teaching abroad course with Indian students

From the beginning of December 2020 until May 2021, 15 graduate students (14 female students and 1 male student) at a four-year Midwestern public university served as curriculum developers and instructors for teaching abroad courses opened to college students in India. Prior to delivering courses, the US graduate instructors had an orientation focused on the logistics of the project and afterwards spent a month developing course lesson plans for four courses: 1.) reading academic texts; 2.) note taking; 3.) essay structures; and 4.) giving presentations. With the tight timeline, preparation for the courses focused on setting up the class and finalizing logistics rather than on learning about the history and culture of education in India. Once the teaching abroad session began, the instructors met weekly with the faculty member, who was the co-Principal Investigator for this exchange. At the meeting, the instructors discussed various topics, including the course progression, challenges, and successful teaching examples. There were two graduate students in the team who were immigrants from India. At the weekly meeting, the instructors had the opportunity to consult with them about different cultural values and nuances in Indian education.

Indian undergraduate students were recruited by the U.S. Consulates in four regions in India. Over 120 Indian undergraduate students were enrolled in the program, divided into four classrooms by the region they live in India. Two to three graduate instructors were in charge of one of the four topics (reading academic texts; note taking; essay structures; and giving presentations), and each classroom of students rotated the course and instructors every three classes. Each week, the undergraduate students attended one 60-minute live session via Zoom, taught by the graduate student instructors.

The classes had lectures with visual aids, often PowerPoint slides, and classroom and group discussion sessions. The students also engaged in four independent assignments via Google Classroom, designed and implemented by the graduate student instructors. The instructors offered feedback on student assignments and checked attendance, as the participating Indian students were going to receive a certificate of participation in the course offered by this program. While demographics of students were not collected, different naming traditions among Indian students showed that students with different ethnic and religious backgrounds in India participated in this program. English proficiency of the Indian students varied. Students come from various higher education institutions across India, and some attend religiously affiliated colleges (i.e., Christian-mission-based colleges). Though this project was initially proposed to be in-person in India, due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the project switched the classes to be delivered online, creating a virtual teaching abroad format. While the virtual environment was a unique factor in the classroom structure, we focused on the intercultural dynamics in teaching and learning at the locus of our study and analysis that could be observed in both virtual and offline environments.

3.2. Participants

Five female graduate students who participated in the virtual learning program as teaching abroad instructors participated in individual 1:1 interviews and a focus group session. Though this number is relatively small, it was one-third of the graduate instructors who participated in this unique teaching abroad case. All of them had been teaching either pre-college students or college students for their professions. All of them belonged to education graduate degree programs: four of them were in doctoral degree programs, and one student was in a master's program. One of our participants was an international student who studied in the U.S. for more than five years. Each of these students participated in an hour-long one-on-one interview held via Zoom

and the interview was recorded. After initial individual interviews, we conducted a focus group session with all five graduate students via Zoom. At each interview and focus group, we explained the study protocol approved by the IRB and obtained consent from each participant.

3.3. Positionality

The first author of the study is an international doctoral student from South Korea studying instruction and curriculum in higher education. The second author is a faculty member who studies pre-service teacher education. The third author is an international doctoral student from India studying higher education. All of the authors have diverse study abroad and teaching abroad experiences and are interested in epistemological justice.

3.4. Limitations

Due to COVID-19, the program was conducted over Zoom without the graduate instructors traveling to India in 2021. While this is not the traditional form of teaching abroad where the instructors get to immerse themselves in the local culture while teaching, we found this unique situation of conducting teaching abroad in a virtual space to be conducive for researchers to explore the teaching practices themselves without the influence of social interactions with the local students.

4. Findings

Based on our analysis, we found that the graduate instructors experienced challenges in incorporating HIPs to yield ideal learning experiences in the teaching abroad classrooms due to (1) their imperfect knowledge of the other—the Indian students, their culture, and their learning environment—and (2) unconscious deficit perspectives on others. However, the graduate instructors gradually recognized culturally responsive approaches to define and practice HIPs in the teaching abroad classroom. From their experiences, (3) new components of HIPs emerged in the teaching abroad classrooms: culturally critical consciousness, clear communications, perception of students as community partners, flexibility to amend teaching and course, and seeking multicultural instructional supports.

4.1. Challenges of incorporating effective teaching practices

The graduate student instructors teaching Indian college students in the program course faced several challenges when attempting to implement the

HIPs conventional in the U.S. The participants ruminated on what hindered those HIPs from being effective in the teaching abroad classrooms.

4.1.1. Imperfect knowledge of the other

One challenge the instructors faced when incorporating the conventional HIPs was their imperfect knowledge of students. Our participants expressed their limited knowledge of how Indian college students learn effectively and how cultural values could shape effective educational practices differently. This sometimes made it difficult for our participants to effectively employ the HIPs—commonly practiced in U.S. college classrooms—in the teaching abroad classrooms where all students were Indian. For example, the graduate instructors often attempted to facilitate classroom discussions for active learning and peer-peer/faculty-student interactions in the classrooms. However, Susan stated, "I don't want to make any generalization, but based on my limited experience, that students were waiting for us to call their names instead of volunteering to participate, and that also was not something we immediately picked up on" during the classroom discussion. Here, Susan illustrates her initial expectations for the Indian students to participate in the activity in a way that is more common in the U.S. Subsequently, her limited knowledge of how Indian college students engage in learning hindered her from facilitating effective discussions in the classroom. Sara, another participant in our study, described the constant frustrations the instructors experienced due to a lack of their cross-cultural knowledge when applying HIPs. Sara stated,

> It was incredibly frustrating because we always come at it with assumptions—like we have assumptions about how it's going to work, and they have assumptions about how it's going to work, and those aren't the same. And there's not a clear structure, or it felt like too much trial and error.

In summary, our graduate student instructors first tried what they knew about teaching and considered effective and then recognized the limited knowledge of cultural values and norms that facilitate learning differently in Indian college classrooms as a hindrance in making the HIPs effective in the teaching abroad classrooms.

4.1.2. Epistemological ethnocentrism: Borderline between culture and education

Our participants struggled to navigate what is culturally respectful and what is educationally impactful. In other words, they were aware of the need to

respect different cultural norms and values in Indian college classrooms and improve their cultural knowledge, yet they tended to impose their perception of what HIPs should entail, which was often observed throughout our interviews. Considering that epistemological ethnocentrism is intertwined with disciplinary paradigms and beliefs, the graduate student instructors tended to legitimize implementing HIPs in the traditional ways in the U.S. regardless of diverse cultural values and norms facilitating effective learning in India. For instance, Megan explicitly acknowledged that cultural difference in education is a major barrier to making their practice of HIPs effective, stating that "part of it was like a cultural difference there in terms of what's expected of an education system or a college course. So, that made it difficult; that was one circumstance." However, the graduate student teachers felt guilty when adjusting their practice of HIPs to reflect the cultural norms in India, as Lily mentioned:

> [My] education (in the U.S.) tells me that I should be doing group work and stuff like that. So, it was definitely hard to balance. Because if I'm lecturing, I feel like I'm doing something wrong. You know, that's just not how we're taught to teach.

Furthermore, the graduate student instructors tended to apply cultural relativism by implying deficit perspectives of Indian college students' ability to follow their ways of implementing HIPs. We often observed their comments about the student's lack of participation, preparedness, communication, or willingness to complete assignments in the teaching abroad classrooms. Sophia also contended:

> American students understood, even without building that kind of norm, that I expected participation, and that they would get more out of it with participation, that participation was acceptable, and that I wasn't judging them all the time whereases I felt like [the Indian students] who participated were mostly participating because they felt confident of their answers. Not necessarily that they could take risks with that. And it also felt like they were doing a level of teacher pleasing, whereas my American students don't feel as compelled to give me what they think I want to hear.

Sophia's comments unearth her own unconscious assessment of the Indian students against the American students she taught. This corroborates the Self's unintentional practice of generating otherness of Others based on the cultural values of the Self (Ydesen et al., 2011). Furthermore, the comparison

occurs in a very subtle way—a relativistic way. Yet, Indian students were still being evaluated based on Sophia's cultural values and perspectives.

4.2. Strategies to implement culturally responsive teaching practices

Despite the challenges stemming from the imperfect knowledge on Indian college students and navigating the boarders of respecting cultures and good educational practices, the teaching abroad graduate instructors began to re-define HIPs in their intercultural teaching and learning environment. They explored strategies to improve their teaching practices to be more responsive to the local culture by actively using critical consciousness, clear communication about expectations and actions, and viewing students as community partners.

4.2.1. Culturally critical consciousness

Culturally critical consciousness can be defined as one's awareness of power imbalance in cultures and subsequent decision-making. In other words, it is one's understanding of the power disparity in deciding what educational practices are effective when there can be diverse values and perceptions of effectiveness among cultures (Gay, 2018). The U.S. graduate instructors were influenced by their cultural and epistemological ethnocentrism when navigating to find effective practices in their Indian college classrooms. However, they also continued to examine their cultural and ethnocentric biases to make the class more culturally relevant for the Indian students. For instance, Lily and her colleagues challenged their "feelings of anxiousness or uncomfortableness [because of] a cultural difference in how we taught versus how students were used to learning [in India]." They intentionally practiced becoming versatile with diverse types of communication and encouraged written interactions through chatting and poll features. These allowed the U.S. graduate student instructors to facilitate their classroom discussions more effectively than when giving the Indian students only one option of oral participation as the classrooms they taught in the U.S. These forms of interactions were more conducive for the Indian students to practice their cultural values of respecting for others through a form of modesty than oral participation in classrooms where students are likely to compete for the oral participation in a limited given time.

The critical consciousness also resulted in the graduate student instructors inviting students' perspectives. They gradually acknowledged their lack of cultural knowledge in India and began to grasp the importance of paying

attention to the different cultural practices of Indian students to make their teaching more impactful. For instance, Lily described the changes her team made during the course:

> One of the things that we did it was we had students look over the five foundational learning strategies so things like spacing, elaboration, that type of stuff, just foundational skills, and we asked them which one do you think is going to be easiest for you to put into practice tomorrow and why? And we got some really good feedback on those things too… the things that worked best for any of the assignments were having it relate to students' lives outside of being in the program and their foundational knowledge that they already were coming in with. That was beneficial to us[, too].

Lily's comment demonstrates that learning about how her students related to the course materials to their daily lives helped her identify teaching practices that could improve the local students' learning experience.

Furthermore, the more the graduate student instructors become aware of the roles of Indian students in making the class effective, the more they noticed they were not prepared enough to be in such a multicultural classroom. For the program, the instructors knew the content they were expected to teach, but they expressed that they felt a lack of instructional support to teach Indian students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Susan stated, "I wish we had received more training about the Indian context. In general, like the minority populations in India" as she learned that there were Indian students who were religiously minoritized in her classes. The participants in this study all expressed the need to understand the educational system and the cultural and social context in India and sought out relevant information to gain a general understanding of the type of instruction that Indian students value.

4.2.2. Clear communication

The graduate student instructors found ways to clearly communicate their expectations to the Indian students. This clear communication allowed them to employ highly effective practices in their teaching, which benefitted the Indian students. For instance, the graduate instructors gradually understood gaps in the assumptions of certain practices and languages between the US college classrooms and the Indian classroom. Certain effective teaching practices that are predominant at the postsecondary educational level, such as group or breakout sessions, were not as effective since the Indian students had

to figure out the expectations of what to do during the group sessions. Thus, Susan illustrates the need for clear communication:

> That was an effective strategy [e.g., explaining the expectation of tasks and practices] that I came up with. When I say our breakout rooms in a Zoom setting [for active learning], they don't understand that they need to know that it's something that they do in group work in their actual in-person settings. So, students had a hard time transitioning between languages. So, the technical languages, I mean, the terms [e.g., breakout room], then I just need to explain this to them. And that was the strategy. It was more straightforward. Explain that to them, call their names, do this, do that. Kind of like stuff commanding?

This example also shows that the instructors tend to implement practices that are familiar to be effective in the U.S. classrooms based on assumptions that how those practices are being done would be the same in the Indian college classrooms. The unspoken assumptions behind the practices had to be clarified to yield the effectiveness of the practices across the culture. However, as Susan noted, the graduate students struggled to find the balance of being between a facilitator with clear communication and an authoritative instructor who tells all the steps to do to the students.

4.2.3. Viewing students as community partners

When instructors view students as partners in their learning, the most crucial step is to build a relationship with students. This is the foundation step even before beginning to teach subject matter. While the instructors in this project recognized the need to build relationships with students, they found that difficult to accomplish. Megan understood the importance but detailed the challenges in her interview when she stated,

> how important it is to build relationships with your students. And that goes back to [another principle] … respect for diverse students and diverse ways of knowing … if you want to learn what works for your students, you have to get to know them and you have to build trust. So, one way to interact with students one-on-one ... is to use feedback in an interactive way.

Megan's comment demonstrates that getting to know the students she was working with helped her improve her intercultural use of HIPs. More importantly, as the instructor began to see the local Indian students as partners in improving the effectiveness of the intercultural classroom, they became open

and flexible to changes in their courses by letting go of previous beliefs on the best teaching practices.

5. Conclusion

In our study, the teachers were graduate students, including an international student, in the School of Education at a U.S. university. By investigating why and how these graduate student instructors utilized and re-invented HIPs to shape meaningful educational experiences in a teaching abroad program with Indian college students, this study illuminated the cultural and professional tensions surrounding the assumption of "best" college teaching practices in a multicultural environment. The study also revealed the ways that the teaching abroad instructors made agentic choices to redefine effective teaching practices in such a setting.

First, our findings unmasked that the challenges graduate student instructors faced in navigating and making sense of HIPs in Indian collegiate classrooms resembled the philosophical tension between totality and exteriority (Ydesen et al., 2011). The instructors, trained in the U.S., often applied HIPs and evaluated Indian students on their ability to use and participate in the HIPs based on the instructors' cultural and professional standards shaped by their American graduate education. Notably, even the international graduate student instructor exhibited implicit biases favoring U.S.-centric pedagogical norms (e.g., faculty – student interaction to occur vocally, student's voluntary turn-taking to patriciate in the classroom discussion, and so on). This highlights how graduate training in the U.S. may unconsciously perpetuate certain expectations and assumptions about the best teaching practices based on the cultural values in the U.S., and can instill a false assumption that the HIPs should work for everyone.

The teaching abroad instructor's biases on how students navigate the HIPs based on their standards can reinforce the socio-economic disparity in India. The students who are familiar with the process of HIPs carried out by the U.S. instructors are likely to come from a family with privilege and with greater exposure to English-medium Western education (Jayadeva, 2019; Rao, 2008). However, in India's sociohistorical context, students' educational backgrounds are deeply intertwined with class, ethnic, caste-based inequalities, and English fluency often correlates with socioeconomic privilege (Jayadeva, 2019; Rao, 2008). Kubow (2018) argued that omitting the diverse values and linguistic backgrounds of minority students in the classroom ultimately impairs

democratic citizenship by generating imbalanced relationships with self and others. Thus, it is greatly crucial for the teaching abroad instructors to question what types of students are well-appraised in their teach-aboard classrooms and reflect if they unconsciously apply a deficit and othering approach to the student assessment based on students' ability to exhibit familiarity with English and Westernized educational practices and cultural values.

However, the participants in the study recognized that the ineffectiveness of HIPs stemmed from cultural factors rather than the content they taught in the cross-cultural classroom. They began to utilize their critical consciousness of those cultural assumptions and developed strategies to practice HIPs by applying clear communications and seeing students as partners in transforming HIPs to be cross-culturally effective. For instance, with critical consciousness, instructors can take steps such as optimizing clear communication with students to remove cultural assumptions about how things should go. Instructors also invite students to be partners to co-construct a meaningful learning environment to complement their imperfect knowledge of the culture of the Other (Indian college students), rather than oppressing the role of the Other in specific ways in the classroom. More importantly, such co-constructive mindsets are integral for instructors to be able to appreciate and be inspired to advance their own teaching by integrating different ways of teaching and learning they observed during the teaching abroad program (e.g., Briscoe & Robino, 2022; Ellinghaus et al., 2019). Furthermore, based on our findings, clear communication and working with students are particularly more pivotal when using the online tools, including Zoom, because how students interact with the tools and peers can be very dependent on the cultural contexts in virtual environment.

The findings from this study can benefit the teaching abroad instructors to better prepare themselves for the cross-cultural classrooms. For instance, based on the findings of the study, the authors designed a sociohistorical mapping workshop and offered it to the new cohort of graduate student instructors in the same teaching abroad program before the course began. The workshop focused on learning about potential implicit ethnocentric biases they may hold and how to challenge such biases to generate meaningful cross-cultural learning experiences for both instructors and local students. During the workshop, the graduate instructors were asked to work in groups and draw separate chronological timelines of significant historical moments in the US and India. The instructors were then asked to first reflect on how each historical

moment shaped US society and culture, and to examine how those cultural aspects are manifested in how they facilitate HIPs in the US classrooms. Afterwards, the instructors were asked to repeat the same in the Indian context. Through this activity, the instructors recognized that each culture and country underwent unique pathways to espouse different cultural values shaping educational practices, and thus, one could not simply make hierarchical judgements on each other's cultural assumptions and beliefs in the classroom. Furthermore, because working with local students in partnership requires time to build a trusting relationship between instructors and students, we suggested that the next cohort not rotate the teachers by content topics if possible.

The lack of efforts to understand the cultural constructions of relationships with others, the U.S. higher education's internationalization abroad and the U.S. graduate students' experiences in teaching in foreign countries can only benefit themselves while exacerbating linguistic and cultural imperialism and reinforcing the hegemonic global order. This results in discomfort and ineffectiveness of local college students' learning. Milligan (2000), thus, underlined critical explorations of the Self and Others and cultural responses to the moral imperative in revealing "our unwitting participation in the process of internal colonization and cultural imperialism" (p.114). In this regard, U.S. graduate student instructors should be trained to be culturally critical even with HIPs, which are intended to support diverse students' learning in the U.S., through practices of problematizing their good intentions to serve others. Such a culturally critical lens can benefit both U.S. students participating as instructors and the local students in the hosting country.

This study contributes to the expanding scholarship on internationalized higher education and study abroad by examining U.S. graduate students' teaching abroad experiences with Indian college students. Although the data were drawn from virtual teaching settings, the challenges (e.g., ethnocentric tendency) and strategies (e.g., critical consciousness, clear communication, seeing students as partners) discussed are fundamentally applicable to in-person cross-cultural classrooms. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating critical consciousness among instructors as a means to resist unintentional cultural imperialism and promote equitable, culturally responsive teaching practices in internationalized higher education contexts. Future research should also consider incorporating the perspectives of students in host countries to holistically assess how instructors' critical awareness shapes the development of democratic and inclusive teaching abroad environments.

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Ethical approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Indiana University Institutional Review Board (protocol #10988).

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study is not publicly available.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Semi-structured Questions for Individual Interview

- Did you apply any of these high-impact practices in your virtual teaching abroad class?
- How did you incorporate those practices? Could you provide some specific examples for that?
- What are the challenges that you experienced in applying such a teaching practice?
- Please describe some of the contexts generated by those challenges.
- What were the most effective teaching practices in the class?
- What was not the most effective teaching practice in the class?
- How did you deal with when the high-impact practices were not working?
- What would you do differently if you get to teach this course again?
- What kind of support would have been helpful?

Focus Group Questions

- How would you describe your teaching experience in virtual teaching abroad?
- Did you feel prepared for this virtual teaching abroad?
- Did you know anything about Indian culture prior to your teaching experience?
- If yes, how did this influence your teaching style?
- How would you like to go about collaborative learning if the course was offered again?
- What forms of small group discussion can be effective in the virtual teaching abroad classroom?
- What would be important for the success of students from minoritized backgrounds in India in the online learning environment?
- We say that “In and out of classroom interactions with peers or faculty is important”. What does “out of the classroom” mean in a virtual teaching abroad class?

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