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Beyond the ‘welcome-back party’: The enriched repertoire of professional teacher behaviour as a result of study abroad

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Teachers perceive an enduring impact of study abroad (SA) on professional behaviour.
- SA learning outcomes for teachers are mostly related to skills and attitudes.
- SA effects cannot be studied without considering the context in which they could be applied.
- Primary schools as working environment influence the application of the learning outcomes of SA.

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ABSTRACT

To deepen the understanding of the long-term impact of study abroad, this qualitative, exploratory study examines the self-reported relationship between study abroad and professional teacher behaviour. Findings illustrate an enduring impact of study abroad on personal and professional development of the interviewed teachers, even after twenty years of teaching experience. This suggests that the impact of study abroad may continue throughout a teacher's career. The applicability of the outcomes, however, is dependent on the primary school as working environment. Influential factors such as high workload and beginning teachers' dilemmas lead to fewer opportunities to utilise the study abroad experience.

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1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and related organisations (e.g., European Association for International Education [EAIE], 2018; Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018; NAFSA, 2017) have promoted the importance of a period of study abroad for a long time, since it is claimed that this will enhance, among many other effects, global-mindedness and intercultural competencies (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Deardorff, 2006). Therefore, many actions emerged to stimulate international mobility as part of internationalisation of higher education. For instance, agreements made during the Bologna Process with the Leuven Conference of 2009 led

to the aim of 20% of all European students having experienced a period of mobility during a study by 2020 (Teichler, 2015). In general, this target has been reached already in the Netherlands, however, Teacher Education (TE) programmes lag with 15%, despite initiatives on international experiences (Huberts, 2016).

1.1. Study abroad in Teacher Education

European initiatives and those elsewhere (e.g., in the US, UK, Canada, China) see large groups of students travel around the world to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work and live in the globalised world (Deardorff, 2006; European Commission, 2016; IIE, 2018; UNESCO, 2018). This research refers to “study abroad” as the movement of students, crossing national borders to follow a study programme, including “all educational programmes that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin” (Kitsantas, 2004, p. 441). In this paper, study abroad is researched in

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the light of TE programmes and contains a diversity of activities abroad for student-teachers that result in progress towards an academic degree at the home institution. This is generally defined as credit mobility, distinct from degree seeking international mobility.

In TE, study abroad programmes were, and still are, not as popular as in, for instance, Economy and Business Studies or Environmental Sciences (Huberts, 2016). The Longview report (2008) claims that “limited time and resources have traditionally prevented teacher candidates from taking advantage of study abroad” (p. 21). In addition, TE programmes focused mostly on national schools and national curricula without paying much attention to international learning content and activities.

In more recent times, internationalisation has become more important for study programmes because of the increasingly globalised world and higher prevalence of multicultural societies. International learning content and activities also play a more important role in TE programmes in the Netherlands, although the implementation of this shows a varied pattern among TE curricula (Bodde-Alderlieste & Van der Meij, 2007). Inadequate international orientation of teachers, however, is “worrying, given that they are the teachers of tomorrow and will have to deal with an increasingly diverse mix of pupils in increasingly international classrooms and equip those pupils to become the world citizens of the future” (Huberts, 2016, p. 7). Teaching these pupils effectively requires teachers who are skilled to deal with multicultural aspects to stimulate their learning (Bennett, 1995; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Gay, 2000). Study abroad experiences might help newly qualified teachers to be better prepared for the profession and to work in these rich multicultural classroom environments (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed, 2013; Onderwijsraad, 2016; Quezada, 2004).

1.2. Impact study abroad

The impact of study abroad has been a major topic of discussion in the field of internationalisation of education with increasing numbers of students going abroad. Impact, in this study, is defined as “broad in terms of any long-term effect, whether intended, unintended, positive, negative, direct or indirect” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002, p. 24). This definition underpins the explorative nature of this study by conducting a broad investigation of outcomes of study abroad during TE, as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and changed attitudes. To comprehend how this learning is related to other aspects of study abroad, the Evaluation Model of Kirkpatrick (2018) is suitable for the analysis of this research. It predicts that, in the case of this work, a study abroad experience could have outcomes at four levels:

- 1) Reaction (feelings about the study abroad experience)
- 2) Learning (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
- 3) Application (use of learning and changed behaviour)
- 4) Organisational results (impact).

The IIE adapted Kirkpatrick's model to indicate the levels of change after international mobility and added a fifth level: external results. Outcomes of study abroad as new knowledge, skills and attitudes can be related to the second level of Kirkpatrick's Model. Previous studies (see below) indicated many forms of this level of learning and revealed both short- and long-term outcomes of study abroad.

Much work has been done on the generic short-term outcomes of study abroad. These are developments that appear early after a study abroad period and include personal aspects (Shafteel, Shafteel, & Ahluwalia, 2007), global citizenship (Braskamp, 2009), and

intercultural competence and 21st century skills (Deardorff, 2006; European; Teichler, 2015; Union, 2014). Others (European Commission, 2016; Shafteel et al., 2007) have described short-term outcomes such as open-mindedness, flexibility, cross-cultural adaptability, language learning, self-awareness, and appreciation of diversity.

Significantly less evidence is presented regarding the long-term outcomes of study abroad, meaning, outcomes that take longer to appear and are not immediately evident after a foreign sojourn for study. Studies conducted on long-term outcomes thus far have generally focused on a specific skill or outcome, rather than a holistic consideration of professional development. Aspects that belong in the category of long-term outcomes include global engagement (Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009), career progression (Browne, 2005), and career choices (Ostanina, 2005; Paige et al., 2009). Although long-term effects are investigated to a lesser degree, the importance of research into this should be recognised as this could explain how study abroad contributes to experiences later in life. Dwyer and Peters (2004) state that 95% of students who have studied abroad still benefit from the experience a long time after a period abroad. In addition, Paige et al. (2009) claim that the outcomes of study abroad only become evident years after the experience and therefore could all be considered long-term outcomes.

The study abroad outcomes described above are influenced by many factors and therefore differ per student. Prior to study abroad, student characteristics are already a starting point of the learning journey. Once abroad, level-based programme classifications are interrelated variables which influence the outcomes (Engle & Engle, 2003). In addition, critical situations, described as disorienting dilemmas in the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), will influence the learning of the pre-service teachers abroad. Walters, Charles, and Bingham (2017) even state that study abroad programmes “have a high potential for transformative learning” (p. 118), especially if a reflection on the experience is conducted (Engle & Engle, 2003; Hall et al., 2016). These explanations lead to a better understanding of the differences in study abroad learning outcomes among students and, in the case of this research, how this is utilised in professional teacher behaviour after graduation.

1.3. Application study abroad outcomes in teacher behaviour

In this study, professional teacher behaviour is seen as behaviour in and beyond the classroom as a result of personal- and professional development. This refers to the practical angle of professionalism, based upon the explanation of Kelchtermans (2012). It includes teachers' performance and attitudes, constructed of previous knowledge that was gained, personal preferences, beliefs, and values. As described by the Teaching Council (2012), professional teacher behaviour includes: a) Values and relationships; b) Integrity; c) Conduct; d) Practice; e) Development, and; f) Collegial collaboration.

Furthermore, this research focuses on professional behaviour as a possible outcome of study abroad, in constant interaction with the teacher environment. This context might be fundamental to indicate how and when study abroad outcomes are utilised. As Oliveira-Formosinho (2001) states: “the context in which one works serves to characterise the profession” (p. 60). Several contextual factors on various levels can be identified, which indicate a framework for professional practice and effect the work and lives of teachers (Day & Gu, 2010). Day et al. (2006) confirmed this by stating that situational, emotional, and psychological factors in conjunction with the “complexity of the schools in which they work and the pupils whom they teach” (p. 8) influence teacher

behaviour. The schools, including their influential factors, have their own policies, curricula, and guidelines for teacher behaviour. However, these guidelines are not only set by schools, but are influenced by other institutions on various levels (Van den Akker & Thijs, 2009, see Fig. 1).

Professional teacher behaviour is also influenced by learning from earlier experiences. In view of the described short- and long-term outcomes of study abroad above, teachers with study abroad experience might be better qualified to work in an intercultural environment if they can apply their specific intercultural learning. Findings of the application of study abroad experiences on teacher behaviour include shaping and changing a teaching philosophy, improved cultural consciousness, and reflection upon teaching and learning (e.g., Shiveley & Misco, 2015). Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) explain how learning during study abroad is related to value development. They state that firstly, formed values impact the educational decisions to study abroad. Secondly, since students are in a foreign country for educational purposes, they have the opportunity to examine their own values, beliefs and world views. This examination might either lead to “the accentuation of values brought by the students” or to “the acquisition of new structures and combinations of values and world views” (Bargal, 1981, p. 48). The opportunity for the examination of values depends on the study abroad destination (Biraimah & Jotia, 2013). Whereas some educational contexts abroad could lead to an increase of appreciation for own educational systems or materials, other destinations tend to result in a more negative opinion about one's own system and educational strategies. These adaptations of values influence the perceptions of teachers towards their profession.

Other studies concerning the application of study abroad experience in the teacher profession (e.g., Biraimah & Jotia, 2013; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Lee, 2011) describe a great impact on teacher's self-efficacy and self-awareness, appreciation for curricular materials, a sustained growth in knowledge of teaching methodologies, and making considered choices for curricular content. Additionally, supporting the work of Shiveley and Misco (2015), Klein and Wikan (2019) state that pre-service teachers were more open and tolerant towards people from another culture after study abroad. Of all respondents in their study, 98% also identified to feel better prepared and more competent to teach in multicultural classrooms. This increased feeling of competency could be due to a better understanding of various learners, as a result of having developed more empathy during study abroad (Boynton-Hauerwas, Skawinski, & Ryan, 2017). Marx and Moss (2001) explained that teachers themselves were cultural outsiders

during their stay abroad, and therefore, showed a greater empathy towards their pupils. This empathic ability could also help teachers to work better with language learners (Boynton-Hauerwas et al., 2017). Understandably, a greater oral proficiency as outcome of study abroad (Freed, 1998; VandeBerg, 2009) also contributes to this, and could help pre-service teachers to become culturally responsive, by differentiating more, based on cultural and educational needs (Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002).

Considering the effects of study abroad on the teaching profession, study abroad might thus not solely help the graduates, but also the next generation and wider community. This relates to the fourth and fifth level of Kirkpatrick's adapted Evaluation Model (2018) in respect of the results on community level and beyond. Namely, study abroad experiences will equip teachers in a way that they can stimulate pupils to be more internationally aware. This was already shown by Hansel (2008) as findings of her research showed that interest in study abroad experiences were handed over to the next generation.

To conclude, this research approaches professional teacher behaviour as professional behaviour in and beyond the classroom because of personal- and professional development. Various influential levels of education and curriculum design are considered, which influence teacher behaviour. These levels, combined with the notions and concepts regarding study abroad in the extant literature, led to the creation of a conceptual research model (see Fig. 1). This model illustrates the sequence of the learning process of student-teachers; from personal characteristics, through study abroad during a TE programme, and finally leading to the connection between study abroad outcomes and professional teacher behaviour.

2. This study

Although study abroad during a TE programme for the teaching profession seems to be relevant, the impact of study abroad in the form of professional behaviour is rarely described, but thought to be essential (Quezada, 2004). Impact research is necessary to show the long-term value of study abroad “as a worthwhile educational investment” (Potts, 2016, p. 7).

2.1. Research question

This study therefore investigated the perceived long-term impact of study abroad on professional behaviour of teachers in Dutch primary schools. It will shed light on the benefits of study abroad after graduation and how graduates can utilise this

Fig. 1. Conceptual research model.

experience in their profession, especially in current culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Multiple variables, including student characteristics, motives to study abroad, study abroad content, duration, and destination were considered to investigate the study abroad effects on professional teacher behaviour. In line with suggestions for further research of [Quezada \(2004\)](#), this research sought to “explore the transfer of knowledge, skills, and dispositions once candidates are employed” (p. 463) and therefore aimed to answer the following question: “*What is the perceived long-term impact of study abroad during a Teacher Education programme on professional behaviour after graduation?*”

This exploratory study used a qualitative design to “understand the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” ([Bryman, 2016](#), p. 375). In particular, teachers’ interpretations of the long-term impact of study abroad on their professional behaviour were explored.

2.2. Relevance

The significance of this research is threefold. First, insights into the long-term impact of study abroad are fundamental to TE programmes and their curriculum developers. Findings of this study could illustrate how study abroad might contribute to the development of potential teachers.

Second, research findings of this study can signal to primary schools the range of qualities teachers with study abroad experiences might have. These qualities might make teachers better prepared to teach a culturally diverse pupil population. Educating such a diversity of pupils requires cultural knowledge, multiple perspectives on teaching and learning, and skills to meet the needs of all learners ([Cushner & Mahon, 2002](#)). Being prepared for diversity, and cultural diversity in specific, is crucial, and might be stimulated through study abroad. Teachers who have not been abroad might benefit from the study abroad experiences of their colleagues and may be trained by them to include international dimension in the classroom.

Third, findings of this research might be beneficial for educational authorities and relevant peak bodies to alert policy makers to the range of qualities teachers have after study abroad. This might be particularly relevant for the process of internationalisation of education in the Netherlands, which is suggested to start at primary schools ([Onderwijsraad, 2016](#)). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP] even describes diversity as a “pervasive characteristic of any quality preparation program” (2013, p. 21). As evidenced by the many resultant effects, study abroad is of high value to prepare students for this diversity in the classroom ([Kuh et al., 2013](#); [Onderwijsraad, 2016](#); [Quezada, 2004](#)), and might therefore contribute to the internationalisation process.

3. Methodology

For this research, current teachers of primary schools in the Netherlands were considered as ‘cases’ or units of analysis ([Yin, 1984](#)). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine how study abroad affected professional behaviour after graduation. Primary inclusion criteria for the interviews were at least 3 years of working experience in the educational field and participation in a study abroad experience during a TE programme. Between September and December 2017, emails including research information and a request to take part were sent to a list of alumni of TE programmes in the Netherlands. These graduates were known to have participated in study abroad during their TE programme and were part of the convenience sample for this research. A reminder email was sent two weeks after the first request, resulting in a positive response from 17 graduates who had studied abroad

sometime between 1998 and 2015. At the time of data collection, these graduates were all employed as primary school teachers in various parts of the Netherlands.

All 17 Dutch teachers (15 female and 2 male) completed a teaching internship at a local primary school in a host country during their TE programme. Additional to the internship, some respondents either took courses at a university in the host country or conducted research for their bachelor’s degree during their stay. These combinations of activities resulted in a mix of study abroad content. [Table 1](#) gives an overview of respondents’ characteristics.

3.1. Data collection, instruments, and analysis

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. To ensure the voluntary nature of this study, all participants were informed about the design of the research verbally and by written information on the form, which was then signed by all teachers before the interviews took place.

During the 1-h interview, which was conducted by one of us, respondents were asked to reflect on their study abroad experiences during their TE programme. The first interview question concerned the details of the study abroad, including destination, duration, and content of the programme. After this introduction, two core questions were asked: “*In which manner influenced the study abroad your personal (and second, professional) development?*” Another part of the interview concentrated on the application of the learning, related to the third level of The Kirkpatrick Model (2018). The participants were asked to describe how the perceived study abroad outcomes affect their daily professional teacher behaviour.

Due to the explorative nature of this study, all interviews were recorded and later analysed in a thematic manner using the thematic analysis method of [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), and subsequently labelled with the help of NVivo Pro to illustrate key ideas and concepts. This narrative evaluation approach helped to “develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry” ([Yin, 1984](#), p. 6). Although the researcher knew stories are based on subjective interpretations of events, these stories were used to illustrate differences and similarities between respondents. Additionally, it was considered that these stories might only be a fragmentation of events that are remembered and actually shared by the participants, recalling the greatest emotional experiences during their study abroad. However, memories could only be shared with the researcher through storytelling by the respondents and are seen as “a rich ground for the formulation of substantive theories” ([Bertaux & Kohli, 1984](#), p. 215).

Conclusively, the analysis led to the creation of several categories, obtained from a large collection of statements by the respondents. The emerging categories illustrated the entire process of study abroad experiences. This started with the background of the students, their motives and intentions to go abroad, the actual study abroad experience and content, and perceived short- and long-term learning outcomes.

4. Results

Two steps were taken to answer the question how teachers perceived the impact of study abroad on their professional behaviour. Firstly, teachers were asked to reflect upon their personal development because of study abroad and how they perceived the enduring impact of this on their professional behaviour. This step is supported by the work of [Shiveley and Misco \(2015\)](#) since they claim that personal development influences professional teacher behaviour. The second step concerned professional development of the participants and how they perceived this to be related to their

Table 1
Respondents' characteristics.

Respondent	Destination	Type of study abroad	Duration	Work experience
1	England	CU/IN	3 months	Senior
2	Suriname	IN	3 months	Senior
3	Aruba	IN	6 months (+8 yrs work)	Senior
4	Curacao	IN/RS	6 months	Senior
5	Curacao	IN/RS	6 months	Mid-level
6	Curacao	IN	6 months	Mid-level
7	Texas	CU/IN	4 months	Senior
8	Texas	CU/IN	4 months	Mid-level
9	Denmark	CU/IN/RS	3 months	Mid-level
10	Sweden	CU/IN	3 months	Mid-level
11	South Africa	IN/RS	6 months	Junior
13	Uganda	IN	2 weeks	Junior
14	Thailand	IN	2 months	Junior
15	Portugal	CU/IN	3 months	Mid-level
16	Belgium	CU/IN/RS	6 months	Junior
17	Spain	CU/IN	4 months	Senior

Note. CU = Courses at University; IN = Internship; RS = Research.

study abroad. In exploring the answers, the interview data showed three main connections between study abroad and professional behaviour: 1) study abroad and personal development, 2) study abroad and professional development, and 3) the application of study abroad outcomes.

Respondents described their professional behaviour as a result of their personal and professional development due to their study abroad. All respondents mentioned a range of outcomes, which they perceived to be the result of their study abroad experience. During the analysis phase, the outcomes were divided into knowledge, skills, and attitudes (see Table 2), since these categories were implicitly included in the stories of all respondents. Within the category attitudes, both attitudes towards self (identity) and attitudes towards others were mentioned (Meyer-Lee & Evans, 2007). Values were also placed within the category of attitude, as this was viewed as the underlying beliefs of attitudes.

In turn, the outcomes within the categories of knowledge, skills, and attitudes were thematically grouped to illustrate their context. Looking at professional teacher behaviour in a holistic way, personal and professional developmental outcomes were combined. Some outcomes were mentioned twice by one respondent by linking it to both the personal and professional area. In Table 2, all perceived learning outcomes are presented, in which the most important ones are shown in bold, including self-confidence, independence, English language development, creative teaching (including use of cooperative learning strategies), educational ideologies, and changed view on educational system and learning. The most often mentioned outcomes are discussed below.

4.1. Essential perceived study abroad outcomes of personal and professional development

The analysis revealed that some concepts were mentioned by the majority of respondents (mentioned by at least nine teachers). First, most respondents spoke about independence and self-confidence as perceived study abroad outcome. During the interviews, these terms were seen as related to one another. Teachers explained that living on their own and completing challenging tasks individually, led to greater independence, which, in turn, increased their self-confidence during the stay abroad. The following interview answer is representative for this, combining both concepts:

I only had myself to rely on, which I really liked. This gave a feeling of trust and self-confidence, because you actually took this step and succeeded. (Respondent 10)

Likewise, at least nine respondents referred to English language development as important study abroad outcome. The respondents did not relate this directly to currently teaching English as a subject in primary school. Instead, they described how they did make use of this perceived outcome to communicate with parents or children from other countries, or during more personal situations, including travelling.

In the interviews, most teachers also commented, in various ways, on a change in educational philosophy and value development. Being in a foreign country for educational purposes, respondents had the opportunity to examine own values, beliefs, and world views. Reflection on these differences led to a change in educational philosophy and value development among the respondents of this study. A mid-level teacher expressed this as:

My vision changed dramatically. I now realise how many perspectives there are; are you really sure about what you see and observe when you look at a child; is this the real and only truth? I also changed my view on developmental psychology and humanity. (Respondent 9)

Another respondent talked about value development in terms of the use of materials in education. She noticed that in the Netherlands, the children waste many supplies. Instead, she felt a huge appreciation for materials among the children in her classroom during her study abroad:

Sometimes, children [in the Netherlands] asked if they could get a piece of paper. Then, I wondered why they asked for it since they already had so much. Although they wanted to make something beautiful with it, I had my doubts and thought about Curacao. There, they adored every single piece of paper or printed photograph [...]. The difference is just so huge. (Respondent 5)

Lastly, appreciation of different teaching styles is worthwhile mentioning as a major perceived study abroad outcome. Based on changed perspectives and values, teachers described that their ways of designing lessons and teaching content changed. As appreciation for interaction and collaboration was enhanced, partly as a result of non-examples seen abroad, respondents adapted their teaching styles. This was also described because of having more knowledge about other cultures and better awareness of cultural differences. This led to adjustments in supporting children with various needs and selecting appropriate teaching styles and

Table 2
Perceived learning outcomes of study abroad.

	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
Teaching and instructing	knowledge about differentiation <i>second language learning and teaching</i> subject knowledge studied subjects English language development knowledge various teaching methods	<i>patience during teaching</i> <i>implementing differentiation based on level</i> creative lesson design <i>creative and sustainable use of materials</i> creating safe learning environment storytelling setting boundaries problem solving <i>flexible with curriculum and schedule</i> implementing cooperative learning strategies identifying needs of pupils creating an interactive classroom environment <i>designing intercultural projects</i> <i>effective use of voice</i> reflecting on personal life	awareness undesirable teacher behaviour determined <i>flexible</i> <i>relaxed, less controlled</i> self-confidence independence celebration and appreciation of own educational system
Educational philosophy and career	knowledge various educational systems	<i>reflecting professional identity</i> reflecting on educational ideologies and beliefs formulating professional goals	<i>adjusted career ideologies</i> changed view on children and learning revised vision on educational systems and –methods <i>adapted view on professional identity</i> <i>ambitious professional development (subs. studies)</i> ambitious regarding career opportunities
Interpersonal competence		<i>social skills</i> making and having friendships non-verbal communication <i>patience</i> problem solving skills conflict management intercultural skills <i>designing intercultural projects</i> implementing differentiation based on background non-verbal communication	<i>openness</i> positive mind-set independence celebration of diversity
Global competence	knowledge about other cultures English language development <i>second language learning</i>	<i>openness</i> interest in other cultures and countries consciousness of own norms and values intercultural appreciation celebration and appreciation of own culture celebration of diversity	

Note. Bold = mentioned by 9 respondents or more; italics = mentioned by 5–7 respondents; other = mentioned by 1–5 participants.

methods, once back home. Two teachers (Respondents 4 & 14) argued:

I especially saw many non-examples of teaching, so I really do the opposite of what I saw during the study abroad [...] such as my use of voice and applying cooperative learning, because that was not or negatively present there. I try to do the opposite of everything I disliked during the study abroad.

It impacted my use of materials [...] because they barely had any materials; they used everything they could think of to design and give a perfect lesson. Because of that, all children were very engaged. That was a real eye-opener.

These examples illustrate how intercultural activities or unfamiliar events during study abroad can lead to a change in the thinking and acting of a teacher.

4.2. Professional application

All respondents answered the question whether they used the long-term effects of study abroad in their current work in the classroom. Despite their optimism about these long-term effects, respondents expressed dissimilar stories about how, and if, they could use the experiences in their profession. Four interesting conclusions can be drawn regarding the application of the learning, based on the variety of the teachers' answers (see Table 3).

First, 9 out of 17 respondents claimed that their perceived learning outcomes of study abroad could be applied in their teaching profession, right after graduation. One junior teacher mentioned that they should be patient all the time to help pupils, especially with second language learners. This respondent felt more capable because of personal experience in learning another language abroad. Others mentioned possibilities of integrating learnings from study abroad in the profession, including differentiation in general, creative and sustainable use of materials, lesson design and content, and working with pupils or parents of various cultural and educational backgrounds. Some respondents also mentioned that they utilised the learning from study abroad, without being aware of it. A teacher (Respondent 15) with many intercultural interactions in daily work showed this as:

"I unconsciously use my study abroad in my daily work. I know that it [the educational system and culture] is so very different in other countries, so you cannot expect people from other cultural backgrounds to understand the Dutch culture immediately since they have a different background. But now that you ask this explicitly, I finally understand it. I really make use of my study abroad subconsciously; you make use of it but do not think about it all the time."

Whereas the first group of teachers was positive about the use of study abroad learning outcomes, 4 out of 17 teachers said that it was challenging or almost impossible to apply the outcomes in

Table 3
Applicability study abroad outcomes.

Data supporting the perceptions of teachers regarding the applicability of study abroad outcomes		
<i>Applicable</i>	Representative quotations “Especially [possible to apply study abroad] while working with pupils from Syria. Sometimes, they react differently compared to other children. [...] I give them more time and opportunities which I really learned abroad.” “It is often mentioned in the margin of discussion on other topics. Like last week in a geography lesson in class in which I showed pictures from my study abroad to discuss differences among schools in various countries.” “I can use it by dealing with cultural differences and especially now, because I have many cultural differences in my current classroom. I think you learn [from your study abroad] to differentiate easily. Also in language and with language learners.”	Experience Mid-level (R15) Senior (R2) Senior (R7)
<i>Not applicable – high workload</i>	“Quickly, [the study abroad in] Antwerp disappeared from my daily thoughts since there were so many things I was supposed to do [in school].” “Although I really wanted to apply the study abroad learning outcomes, I was too busy at the start of my career. Suddenly, you have to run an entire classroom yourself, so I barely had time to use it.”	Junior (R16) Mid-level (R9)
<i>Not applicable – discrepancy educational philosophy</i>	“It is really hard to make use of it. It [the primary school] has very strict rules; this is the way it should be done. I try to do something else sometimes but that's only possible to a certain extent.” “They [the school] was fixed on their own programme, so it was really hard [to use the long-term effects], I wanted to use it, like writing letters to Denmark [...] but it just didn't fit into the existing programme.” “It [making use of the study abroad] is just very difficult. Our school principle is much more focused on test results and achievements. Pupils most score high on tests, otherwise you will be held responsible. Because of that, it's difficult to use those experiences.”	Mid-level (R5) Mid-level (R9) Senior (R2)
<i>Postponed application</i>	“I really wanted to use it but I was too busy in the first years of teaching. You need to do everything on your own, so I barely had time left. But later, while having shared-job teaching, it was possible! And I really used it from that point forward. I had many ideas and strategies to design my lessons, based on my experiences. Now, I was able to apply it due to less workload and personal pressure.” “During the first years of teaching, I really followed the ideas of others and kept my ideas at the back of my head. Now, I realise that I like to do other things and would love to go on field trips with my pupils, or do baking classes, to really let them experience things.” “I wanted to use it earlier, but they were two completely different worlds [study abroad and school environment home country]. Now, years later, I talk about the study abroad many times and introduce the theme Asia in all groups with storytelling and I always motivate and stimulate children to look beyond their horizon.”	Senior (R1) Senior (R4) Mid-level (R14)

their profession, due to a high workload, especially during the first years of teaching. This group described this phase as the “survival phase” while being busy with classroom management and organisational aspects of teaching. These teachers struggled with the many obligations and experienced too much pressure to apply the learning outcomes of study abroad. Out of this group of four teachers, three explained that this difficulty decreased after some years of work experience and therefore described it also as postponed application.

A third group of teachers (4 out of 17) illustrated at least as much difficulties in applying the learning outcomes of study abroad in teaching. Instead of referring to the workload as an obstacle, these teachers felt a disconnection between their personal and the organisational educational philosophy. After study abroad during the final year of the TE programme, respondents experienced a strong development and an adjusted view on education and learning. Schools, however, have their own pre-defined and formulated policies and ideologies, which may or may not be in line with the teacher's personal beliefs and educational philosophy. If these two philosophies are disconnected, the personal and professional identity may conflict. Therefore, this disconnection was mentioned as a reason for not being able to utilise study abroad experiences.

Whereas some respondents clearly stated that the outcomes were or were not applicable, a few teachers mentioned that the learning could be applied, but only years after graduation. Especially more experienced teachers illustrated their teaching journey as very chaotic and stressful at the beginning, changing into calmer and better organised years later. Then, they experienced more confidence to be creative in teaching while making use of study abroad experiences. This is an interesting finding since it shows that the impact of study abroad stays intact for a few years and can be utilised after the experience of initial obstacles.

5. Discussion

This study was designed as an exploratory investigation into the perceived long-term impact of study abroad' on professional teacher behaviour in a primary school. Findings indicate that teachers perceived their study abroad experiences as beneficial for their professional behaviour in the longer term. Many long-term outcomes of study abroad on professional behaviour were identified, of which some were mentioned by almost all respondents (see Table 2). A few of these outcomes will be discussed in further detail.

5.1. Independence and self-confidence

Firstly, independence and self-confidence were mentioned by nearly all respondents as long-term outcomes of study abroad. This result is in line with conclusions of Klein and Wikan (2019). Findings of their study show an increase of self-confidence of 27% among student-teachers, moving from 56% prior to study abroad to 83% afterwards. The respondents of this study described how becoming more independent also gave them more confidence. This might be related to the concept of ‘accomplishment’ as described by De Graaf and Slagter (2013). This also reflects the theory of self-efficacy associated with independency. Bandura (1971) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). This study supports other research of this concept (e.g., Cushner & Mahon, 2002) by showing that study abroad contributed to a higher self-efficacy and confidence. In a more contextual manner, confidence as a perceived long-term outcome of study abroad, will affect professional teacher behaviour, as supported by Klein and Wikan (2019).

5.2. English language development

Secondly, consistent with the literature (De Graaf & Slagter,

2013; Engle & Engle, 2003; Freed, 1998; Hadis, 2005; Hansel, 2008; Shiveley & Misco, 2015; Vande Berg, 2009), this work shows that study abroad might contribute to language development and, in the case of this study, particularly English language development. Almost all respondents mentioned this as a long-term outcome of study abroad. This could be explained by the fact that English is increasingly seen as a lingua franca (Fang & Baker, 2018) and is, therefore, also often the language used during study abroad. Another explanation of this perceived long-term outcome is given by Hansel (2008) and supported by Tam (2016) and Varela (2017). Their studies described that study abroad participation is already associated with having a higher level of fluency in more languages. A more prominent role for English language learning during the first years of TE, which is already more visible in TE programmes nowadays (Bodde-Alderlieste, Salomons, & Schokkenbroek, 2018), is thus necessary for enhanced participation in study abroad. This language learning during TE could motivate more students to take part in study abroad, and consequently, further develop their language skills. This is a relevant finding, especially since multilingualism plays a more important role in primary schools in the Netherlands nowadays, as part of internationalisation of the current educational environment.

5.3. Educational philosophy & value development

Underlining other research (e.g., Biraimah & Jotia, 2013; Kabilan, 2013; Shiveley & Misco, 2015), this work also found that study abroad could lead to a revised vision on educational systems and methods. Reflection on differences might lead to a change in educational philosophy and value development. Teachers in this study elaborated on this by describing how studying abroad in an unfamiliar educational environment changed their view on learning, teaching, and education in general. They strengthened their existing beliefs, adapted professional visions, or formed new values after confronting situations. This supports the theory of transformative learning, which describes these challenging situations as a stimulus for learning (Mezirow, 1991).

Findings of this study are in line with the work of Dolby (2004) on how study abroad might contribute to the development or adjustment of values and how this, in turn, affects professional teacher behaviour. Namely, study abroad “not only provides the possibility of encountering the world, but of encountering oneself” (Dolby, 2004, p. 150).

Apart from the theory of value development through transformative learning, another explanation for the development of values during study abroad could be the theory of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). This theory argues that learning is “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Eventually, if reflection is included as a crucial step to transform and learn from an experience (Engle & Engle, 2003), this learning process could lead to a renewed role of the individual, based on changed values and beliefs.

The connection that appeared between value development and subsequent teacher behaviour is an interesting finding. This provides some support for the idea that study abroad effects can go beyond learning. In this case, the study abroad outcome ‘value development’ changed teaching behaviour accordingly and thereby reached another stage of effect: impact.

5.4. Teaching styles

Lastly, an adjustment in teaching style appeared to be an important long-term effect of study abroad for almost all teachers, underpinning the work of He, Lundgren, and Pynes (2017) and Lee (2011). A change in teaching style and instructional strategies could

be the result of an adjustment in intercultural thinking of pre-service teachers after study abroad (Boynton-Hauerwas et al., 2017). Awareness of cultural differences and related knowledge about cultural systems, will lead to adjustments in supporting children with various needs, and selecting appropriate teaching styles and methods. In view of this, a change in teaching style as a perceived long-term outcome could be seen as interrelated to the previously mentioned outcome; educational philosophy and value development.

Interestingly, change in teaching style was mostly mentioned as the result of a negative experience during the study abroad. Respondents of this research described how mentor teachers during study abroad illustrated negative examples, for instance by screaming a lot and only using teacher-centred learning methods. Also, having limited teaching materials and resources abroad, which could be seen as negative, led to a change in teaching. As referred to in the quote on page 17, teachers could become more flexible and creative with teaching materials after study abroad, as already stated in theory (e.g., Hayden & Thompson, 1998; Quezada, 2004) or become more creative in general (Crossman & Clarke, 2009). Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, and Chiu (2008) also showed that multicultural experiences play a role in creative performance. All of this illustrates how intercultural activities or unfamiliar events during study abroad can lead to a real change in teaching styles, in various ways.

5.5. Knowledge acquisition

After reviewing all answers, we can make some remarks about the study abroad outcomes. The respondents' answers were ultimately categorised under knowledge, skills and attitudes, as all teachers referred to these categories. However, whereas skills and attitudes were included in all responses, the knowledge category was only cursorily described. An explanation for this might be that the focus of this research is on professional teacher behaviour. Questions were asked on how teachers utilise the study abroad in their classroom. This may have focused the interviewees on skills and attitudes whilst thinking about their professional behaviour. Nevertheless, in order to use certain skills and to show an attitude, a certain level of knowledge is required. It could be, therefore, that respondents subconsciously benefitted from knowledge as an outcome of study abroad and thus did not mention this often during the interviews.

Another explanation for less attention to the knowledge category, congruent with findings of Biraimah and Jotia (2013), could be the differences in destinations and types of study abroad programmes. Whereas some teachers followed courses on educational studies, others completed internships abroad. This might have led to diverse learning outcomes.

5.6. Work environment and applicability of learning outcomes

Day et al. (2006) showed that a school context influences teacher behaviour, which also featured in this work. Although most teachers were positive about the use of the study abroad learning outcomes in their profession, some respondents indicated that there were influential factors in the school that limited them in applying the learning outcomes early in their career (see Table 3). This could be explained in numerous ways. First, the guidelines set by the government and school policies or other influential factors for curriculum design (Van den Akker & Thijs, 2009), might contradict with teachers' personal educational preferences and philosophies, partly resulting from their study abroad. Van den Berg (2002) explained this as the interaction of personal experiences with the context of the work environment. Respondents

referred to the difference in educational philosophies as a blocker to utilise the study abroad experience, which could also be related to the work of Pillen, Bijaard, and Den Brok (2013). They describe tensions that relate to beginning teachers' professional identity, including conflicting conceptions of learning and teaching. These conflicting conceptions can lead to pressures in the professional identity, possibly resulting in an adjustment of teacher's learning and functioning. Since Pillen and associates (2013) focused on beginning teacher's tensions, one would assume that these tensions would lessen after some years. This study underlines this, as more experienced teachers referred to an enormous pressure during the first years of teaching, which gradually decreased as the years passed by (see Table 3).

Second, the ethnic or cultural composition of the classroom or school might influence the extent, and the way in which, teachers can make use of the outcomes of study abroad in their current position. In culturally homogeneous classrooms, it could be that existing learning outcomes such as intercultural communication or cultural knowledge are not used automatically. Less specific cultural learning outcomes such as being flexible in teaching or making sustainable use of materials might be useable in possibly every context.

5.7. Reflection

As Engle and Engle (2003) stated that reflection is a crucial step in a learning process and in study abroad programmes, the application of study abroad outcomes might have been more substantial if a post-travel reflection was included. Reflection should therefore be a structural part of study abroad programmes to further support professional behaviour with a deeper understanding of the study abroad outcomes. (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014; Klein & Wikan, 2019).

It may, however, be questioned if students in TE programmes are able to reflect on the new experiences immediately. Reflection itself is a learning process and needs guidelines to make it useful and to go beyond a description of feelings and emotions (Ash & Clayton, 2004). It might also be that it is not a lack of reflectional skills, but the impact of study abroad might still be latent and that outcomes of the experiences only manifest themselves years later (Wong, 2015). Bruner (1991) points out that students mostly talk about their study abroad in stereotypical manners and commonly use general statements. A reflective activity might stimulate their level of detail when they describe their study abroad, which could lead to more awareness of learning. Otherwise, study abroad could be only an experience, without further impact on students' lives.

6. Conclusion

This was an exploratory study with the common limitations of qualitative research. However, findings might help understand which aspects play a role in how study abroad can contribute to internationalisation of primary education. The present study adds to the growing body of research that underlines the benefits of study abroad for TE students. The relevance of study abroad for these students is supported by the current findings as the respondents all described perceived long-term effects of study abroad, related to both personal and professional dimensions. Most teachers indicated that they possessed enhanced professional behaviour for working with pupils and their parents from various backgrounds, and they admitted to be better able to organise classroom or school-based activities that improved the intercultural understanding of pupils.

This study also found that the study abroad effects cannot be considered without the specific context in which they are to be

applied. Findings show that certain effects endure over time, but were not always able to be used, due to for instance, a lack of connection with the work environment or beginning teachers' dilemmas. The impact of school policies on the optimal application of the learning outcomes of study abroad needs further investigation.

The outcomes derived from this research might first be relevant for the investigation of internationalisation of education, especially in primary schools in the Netherlands. While in the Netherlands the government and schools increase the focus on internationalisation in education (e.g., Onderwijsraad, 2016), this study has begun to illustrate the contribution of teachers with study abroad experiences to this process. Therefore, further research should be undertaken to investigate the internationalisation policy plans and goals of Dutch primary schools, to see how this could be related to the qualifications of teachers with study abroad experiences. Schools might benefit from the experiences and ideas of teachers with study abroad experience while working towards a more internationalised curriculum.

Second, this study shed light on the importance of study abroad for the teacher profession and this should be a signal to TE programmes to encourage more students to go abroad. Apart from more general attention for study abroad opportunities, TE programmes should take note of the learning outcomes, such as presented in this study, and use these to motivate more students to go abroad as well as to provide these as a lens with which these students might focus on opportunities for their development. This makes the poor growth of study abroad as a curricular instrument in TE (only 3% in ten years - Huberts, 2016) a worrisome trend that must be reversed.

Lastly, not only the quantity, but also the quality of study abroad programmes during TE could be revised to maximise the long-term outcomes. Curriculum developers might re-arrange study abroad programmes by looking at the variables that influence study abroad outcomes (e.g., motivation, duration, reflection) to enlarge the effects for the teacher profession. As Sandström and Hudson (2018) state, there should be "a greater call for an increased focus on the quality and purposefulness of actions taken related to internationalisation" (p. 6), of which study abroad programmes are part of.

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers valuable insights into one part of a research triangle; the link between study abroad programmes as part of TE, primary schools in the Netherlands having multicultural classrooms, and teachers' qualifications. A longitudinal study might give stronger insights into the connection between study abroad and teacher behaviour, but is beyond the scope of this initial investigation. A natural progression of this work is to quantitatively investigate the extent to which the themes that arose play a role in shaping professional behaviour.

Whilst it is clear that study abroad during TE programmes is relevant for student teachers to potentially develop a broad range of competencies required for the profession, the nature of the primary school environment might be a crucial enabling factor for the application of the learning outcomes. To respond to the virtually unavoidable internationalisation process of education, graduates with international study experiences must be enabled to make use of this in their early years of practice. Should internationalisation of education become commonplace in primary education, then the value of study abroad of students in a TE programme will continue long after graduation and goes beyond the 'welcome-back party'.

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