

The Effectiveness of Peace Corps Master's International  
Program for Service Preparation

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MTSL 600: Research Perspectives in Second  
Language Education

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## **Abstract**

The Peace Corps Master's International program at Gonzaga University was established only three years ago as a way to combine a master's degree with the two-year service in the Peace Corps. There is little data regarding how prepared students participating in the Peace Corps Master's International (PCMI) program are for their two-year service in the Peace Corps. This study intends to provide more information from first-hand accounts of past and current students in the program with the goal of improving the program for future students. The study will evaluate the effectiveness of the program based on how prepared past and current PCMI-MA/TESL students feel when they enter their Peace Corps service. The differences between the Peace Corps training program and the training PCMI students receive will also be addressed. The data was collected through a questionnaire and interviews and then sorted into categories. The study found that PCMI participants are more prepared for the teaching aspects of their service in the Peace Corps, but incorporating more practice opportunities into the program would be more beneficial for PCMI participants in the field.

## Introduction

The Peace Corps Master's International (PCMI) program at Gonzaga University was established in 2010. The first student to join the program is currently in the process of completing the final requirements. As a recent member of the PCMI program at Gonzaga University, it seemed appropriate to evaluate how effectively the program trains pre-service teachers for their future Peace Corps assignments. The program is relatively new and there are still aspects that may require refining. This study intends to provide more information from first-hand accounts of past and current students in the program with the goal of improving the program for future students.

The study will evaluate the effectiveness of the program based on how prepared past and current PCMI-MA/TESL students feel when they enter their Peace Corps service. The study will also investigate the areas those students felt unprepared for and how the PCMI program at Gonzaga University can address those issues. Finally, the study will examine how the Peace Corps Pre-Service Training (PST) program compares to the PCMI program at Gonzaga University.

This investigation will be carried out primarily through a questionnaire sent to past and current PCMI students at Gonzaga University. The responses will then be analyzed and categorized into appropriate themes. A staff member from Peace Corps Master's International department was also interviewed and those statements will be included as well.

There are several terms that will be used frequently throughout this paper. The first is the Master's International program. The Master's International program is part of the Peace Corps and is a combination of the two-year service in the Peace Corps with a master's degree program. The possible degrees are all Peace Corps specific and volunteers are trained to be specialists in their fields. This paper will focus on training teachers in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The next term, pre-service training (PST), also refers to an aspect of the Peace Corps. PST represents the mandatory intensive training that Peace Corps volunteers undertake before being placed at their two-year site. Volunteers are trained in their field as well as in the native language of the country where they are serving.

The beliefs and practices of pre-service teachers will also be addressed in this paper. Pre-service teachers are those who have yet to start teaching in a classroom or have only been teaching for a short period of time. This is contrasted with experienced teachers who have logged

a substantial number of hours in a classroom. The idea of teacher beliefs must also be defined. Hongying Zheng (2009) provides the following definition, "Teacher beliefs can be represented as a set of conceptual representations which store general knowledge of objects, people and events, and their characteristic relationships." (p. 74). These beliefs originate from the teacher's general belief system and former experience and can influence their decision making, planning, and behavior in the classroom. The following research discusses the manner in which teachers' beliefs can affect their practices, especially in the case of pre-service teachers.

This paper will first review previous studies related to the stated research questions. The first section will provide an overview of the Peace Corps Master's International program including the current goals and reasons for the establishment of the program. This section will refer to an article discussing the TEFL portion of the Peace Corps as well as accounts from two returned Peace Corps volunteers in education. The second section focuses on the beliefs commonly held by pre-service teachers. Matthew Peacock's (2001) study forms the basis for this section. A study conducted by Ahmad Nazari and Negah Allahyar (2012) adds to the support for this section and focuses on the effect grammar knowledge has on pre-service teachers. The last section of the literature review will examine the effectiveness of graduate teacher education programs. This portion of the paper draws on a study done by Ramin Akbari and Babak Dadvand (2011) which attempts to determine the pedagogical knowledge of teachers with a master's degree in teaching English as a second language (TESL) and those with a bachelor's degree in education. The paper will then describe the process and methodology of the study. Finally, the data section of the paper will report the results and the implications of the study will be discussed.

Key words: TESL, TEFL, Master's International, PCMI, Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher's Beliefs

## **Literature Review**

The literature for this paper will be divided into three different categories. The first section will consist of an overview of the Peace Corps Master's International program. It will include aspects such as training techniques as well as an interview with a current member of the

Peace Corps Master's International staff. Then the paper will analyze literature on the beliefs of pre-service teachers and how these beliefs are incorporated into beginner teachers' practices. All of the participants in this study are categorized as pre-service teachers and it is important to examine how their beliefs impact their teaching. The last section of the literature review will address the impact formal teacher education can have on pre-service teachers. More specifically, the effects of education on the use of grammatical terminology by TESL teachers will be examined. The participants in this study have all completed one year of formal teacher training and this study seeks to discover the effects this training had on them during their service in the Peace Corps.

### **Peace Corps Master's International Program**

The Peace Corps Master's International program was founded in 1987 with the goal of offering a way to combine a master's degree with the twenty-seven month service in the Peace Corps. As of December 2012, there are 84 graduate universities participating in the Master's International program and an estimated 700 PCMI volunteers overseas serving or awaiting to begin their service (USA.gov, 2012)

The Master's International program requires that volunteers complete at least one year in a graduate program to receive specific training in the field that the volunteers will be assigned to during their service in the Peace Corps. Participants in this program must be dedicated because the entire program lasts about 3-4 years including the service abroad (USA.gov, 2012, webinar). In contrast, the MA-TESL program at Gonzaga University can be completed in two full years. The Master's International program also requires that participants complete a master's project during their service.

An interview with a current Peace Corps Master's International staff member highlighted some of the more specific goals that the Peace Corps has for the program (personal communication, May 2, 2013). When asked why the master's program was established, the staff member responded that it was to ensure that the Peace Corps would receive volunteers that are highly trained in a specific sector. In this manner, the Peace Corps will be able to select from a pool of highly skilled applicants. The program also allows the Peace Corps to partner with graduate schools and together they can promote each other's programs.

The Peace Corps Master's International program incorporates more than 100 different fields in which participants can receive training (USA.gov, 2012). However, this paper will focus on only one field: TEFL. In an article written by Albert H. Marckwardt in 1963, around one fourth of all the volunteers in the Peace Corps were working in the TEFL field. TEFL teachers are assigned to work in a variety of different fields including elementary and secondary education, trade or vocational schools, universities, and adult education programs.

The substantial number of TEFL teachers serving in the Peace Corps indicates the need for effective teacher training programs. Marckwardt (1963) emphasized this need stating:

As a teacher of what will, for his students, be a foreign language, he needs to know something of the strategy and procedures of foreign language teaching, which he is not likely to have learned in the course of his undergraduate education. (p. 312).

In his article, Marckwardt (1963) points out the need for adequate training in English grammar as well as phonology. Specialty programs that train volunteers in these facets of the English language can be hugely beneficial to the volunteers. The Master's International program is an example of such a specialized program that will ideally prepare the volunteer for his or her two-year commitment overseas.

The Peace Corps includes a pre-service training (PST) program where volunteers learn techniques and the language specific to their sector and location. After reviewing accounts of previous TEFL volunteers, it appears that the PCMI program at Gonzaga University and the PST program teach similar principles and techniques. For instance, both the PST and Gonzaga's TESL program emphasize the value of teaching the four skills of writing, reading, listening, and speaking as well as different teaching methods such as the audio-lingual method, total physical response, and communicative language teaching (Parkes, 2009). Both programs also teach volunteers how to create pre-skill activities, during skill activities, and post-skill activities for each of the four skill areas. In her thesis, Parkes (2009) mentions that the majority of the teachers in her training group had completed a B.A. in Education or had experience working with youth but she does not make reference to the number of PCMI volunteers.

Another past Peace Corps volunteer recounted her TEFL training experience and mentioned, "[O]ur PST focused very little on different approaches and methods or any larger principles; it aimed instead to give us the tools we needed to teach in as short an amount of time as possible." (Calvert, 2007, p.8). This quote draws attention to a potential limitation of the PST

program as it lasts only a short period of time. Calvert (2007) reports receiving only 36 hours of TEFL training and Parkes (2009) indicates that the PST aspect of her service, including the language training, lasted only 10 weeks. On the other hand, the PCMI program at Gonzaga University educates students for a full year of intensive courses before the start of their service. The benefits of the PCMI program before beginning the two-year service in the Peace Corps will be further addressed in the data section.

### **Pre-Service Teaching Beliefs and Practices**

There has been ample research done on the beliefs and practices of pre-service teachers in the TESL/TEFL fields but little in regards to the effect training has on PCMI participants' beliefs. However, for the purposes of this study, the teachers that are entering the two-year Peace Corps service are considered to be pre-service teachers. Therefore, it is beneficial to review previous studies on how pre-service teachers' beliefs affect their teaching practices.

Matthew Peacock (2001) conducted a study to determine in what ways pre-service teachers' beliefs differed from those of experienced teachers. He also sought to discover whether the beliefs of pre-service teachers changed after three years in a TESL program. Based on the results of his study, Peacock claims that there are substantial differences in the way pre-service teachers approach vocabulary and grammar and the way experienced teachers address the topics. Even after three years in a teacher-training program, the pre-service teachers' beliefs remained the same. The majority of the teachers still believed that their students should focus on learning new vocabulary and grammatical rules rather than adopting communicative approaches to teach these aspects.

There are many theories that attempt to explain the reason pre-service teachers' beliefs do not align with experienced teachers but few are conclusive. One theory is that pre-service teachers lack the confidence that more experienced teachers have gained, especially in regards to teaching grammar. Ahmad Nazari and Negah Allahyar (2012) studied the current grammar teaching practices in Iran and the attitudes that the teachers have towards the subject. Their goal was to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' knowledge of the subject and their use of grammar terminology in the class. The study showed that the teachers' image of themselves was a factor in their teaching techniques. Teachers who felt less comfortable with grammar tended to avoid incorporating it into their classrooms and did not use grammatical



terminology in the classroom. One pre-service teacher even refused to answer questions about grammar topics due to her lack of confidence with the subject. The other extreme was the abundance of grammar terminology to overcompensate for insecurity. One teacher in the study reported, "I want to appear as a source of knowledge in my class and I don't want my students to doubt me. If I do not correct my students, they'll think I'm not knowledgeable." (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012, p.81).

Many researchers also claim that previous language experience can impact pre-service teachers' practices which is referred to as "apprenticeship of observation" (Peacock, 2001). Pre-service teachers incorporate the methods and techniques that they were exposed to when learning their L2. Peacock (2001) emphasizes the difficulties teacher educator programs face when attempting to change those beliefs which is evident despite three years of education, the teachers in Peacock's study still held the same original beliefs. He states, "[W]ork on beliefs should be an integral part of TESL core courses." (p. 189). Research shows that teachers' pedagogies and beliefs play just as an important role in their practices as formal training. The PCMI program at Gonzaga University focuses on developing and encouraging pre-service teachers to think critically about their teaching goals to prepare them for their future classrooms. The effectiveness of teacher education programs, such as the PCMI program, is another aspect that needs to be addressed when determining how prepared pre-service teachers are for their service in the Peace Corps.

### Teacher Education Programs

As previously stated, the purpose of this action research paper is to determine to what extent the PCMI program at Gonzaga University prepares students for their two-year service teaching English in the Peace Corps. Therefore, it is relevant to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher training programs in general. Many researchers focused on the impact teacher education programs have on pre-service teacher beliefs; however, the following study attempted to analyze the effects the programs have on the number of a teacher's pedagogical thoughts.

Ramin Akbari and Babak Dadvand (2011) wrote an article on the comparison of pedagogical thought units of teachers with a B.A. in English and teachers with an M.A. in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Mullock (2006) defines pedagogical thought units as the "accumulated knowledge about the act of teaching, including goals,

procedures, and strategies that form the basis for what teachers do in the classroom.” (p. 48). The study resulted in double the number of pedagogical thought units by M.A. TESOL teachers than teachers with a B.A. These results are likely to be affected by the influence of training that teachers in the M.A. program received. The study also indicated that M.A. TESOL teachers are more sensitive and considerate of their students’ affective filters which includes students’ feelings and emotions. M.A. TESOL teachers were more concerned about meaningful input and output as well as more frequently self-reflected upon their teaching practices. Akbari and Dadvand (2011) found that, “On the whole, the results obtained from this study indicated systematic changes emerging in teachers’ cognition as a result of their graduate training.” (p. 55) There is still more research needed on the effects graduate training programs have on pre-service teachers but this study does represent some of the advantages of programs such as Gonzaga’s PCMI program. However, the article does not address whether the Peace Corps’ PST program is comparable to a graduate program.

## Methodology

As all of the research was conducted through a questionnaire and interviews, this study is considered qualitative. A questionnaire was selected as the main method of data collection because the participants were unavailable for interviews. As Anne Burns (2009) writes, “It’s best to use a questionnaire, rather than interviews, when you want to get responses from several people and you don’t have time to interview.” (p. 81). The majority of the participants in this study have very limited means of communication and therefore, a questionnaire was the most efficient data collection method. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions in order to gather various perspectives on the topic (Burns, 2009). There were no numbers used in the study and all of the data was analyzed through inductive coding of the information. This section will outline the research questions that the study investigated as well as the data collection process.

## Research Questions

The goal of this study was to analyze the opinions of current and past PCMI students at Gonzaga University in order to determine the effectiveness of the program in preparing students

for their two-year service in the Peace Corps. The study set out to address the following research questions:

- 1) How prepared do past and current PCMI-MA/TESOL students feel when they begin teaching in the Peace Corps?
- 2) What areas of their service in the Peace Corps do PCMI-MA/TESOL students still find difficult or challenging and how can the program address those issues?
- 3) What methodology does the Peace Corps teach teachers during the three-month training period and how do their beliefs and training align with or differ from the PCMI program?

## Participants

All of the participants for this study are in the process of completing the PCMI-MA/TESL program at Gonzaga University. The participants have finished a year at Gonzaga University and are either currently serving in the Peace Corps or have returned from their service. PCMI-MA/TESL students that are still in the process of completing their first year at Gonzaga University have been excluded due to the fact that the research requires participants to have completed or to be in the process of completing their twenty-seven month service in the Peace Corps. A staff member from the Peace Corps Master's International department was also contacted and interviewed for the purpose of this study in order to represent the Peace Corps views of the program. The study consists of a total of five participants.

## Procedure

The participants in this study were approached either in-person, via E-mail, or by telephone by the researcher. The participants in the PCMI program at Gonzaga University were all contacted by E-mail as the majority of the participants are currently out of the country. The E-mail contained a short eight-question questionnaire that the participants were encouraged to fill out and return along with a consent form signifying their agreement to be a participant in the study. The questionnaire can be seen in Attachment A of the IRB form. One follow-up interview was conducted in person in order to clarify the responses and obtain detailed data about the topic. The data was collected over the course of a month in order to give the participants sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire. Once all of the surveys were returned, they were individually analyzed and categorized by common themes.

An interview with a Peace Corps Master's International staff member was also carried out by the researcher to investigate the goals and reasons behind the establishment of the Master's International program. The participant verbally consented to participate in the study before the interview was conducted.

The combination of the questionnaire and the interview provided a comprehensive view of the opinions of present PCMI students at Gonzaga University along with the opinions of a member of the Peace Corps staff.

## Data

The questionnaire indicated that the majority of the participants in the PCMI program at Gonzaga University served in the TEFL field in the Peace Corps with the exception of one participant who served as a Community Health Educator as her primary assignment. This participant, however, taught English in a local high school as her secondary assignment. Two other participants are teacher trainers or teaching in a school and the final participant works in primary literacy and conversation skills. All of the participants are working in the TEFL field in some form which validates their selection for this study.

## Results

After analyzing the data, it became evident that there are reoccurring themes in all of the questionnaire answers. The first category to be addressed is the required courses at Gonzaga University that the participants felt adequately prepared them for the service in the Peace Corps. There were also aspects that the participants felt underprepared for such as a lack of teaching experience. In terms of the Peace Corps PST program, all of the participants found many similarities between the two programs. The last section of the data analysis will address suggestions for improving the PCMI program at Gonzaga.

## Classes

The classes that the PCMI participants found the most applicable to their positions were Pedagogical Grammar, Phonology, and Sociolinguistics. Every participant reported that Pedagogical Grammar was useful for teaching in the Peace Corps. One participant recounted, "I did not take the grammar class but that would have been very helpful. I wish I had." (personal

communication, April 14, 2013). Another participant mentioned how the grammar class improved her confidence as a teacher. This statement directly aligns with the previously mentioned study by Nazari and Allahyar (2012). Learning how to teach grammar can have an impact on a pre-service teacher's confidence and level of comfort in the classroom.

The literature on pre-service teachers did not mention the importance of educating teachers in phonology or sociolinguistics but the common theme among participants indicates that this class is beneficial to include in teacher education programs. Phonology seemed to be particularly useful. One participant mentioned often being requested to teach phonology in his or her classroom. The same participant mentioned a desire to lengthen the Phonology course and create more opportunities to practice those strategies. While the participants felt that Pedagogical Grammar, Phonology, and Sociolinguistics were applicable to service in the Peace Corps, there were some aspects that the participants felt the PCMI program at Gonzaga University could improve.

### Feeling unprepared

The results of the questionnaire did indicate that the participants in the PCMI program at Gonzaga University did not feel adequately prepared for some aspects of their service in the Peace Corps. All of the participants wrote that they wished more time could have been allotted for observations or work with low proficiency level students. According to the literature, observing the practices of other teachers can be very beneficial to pre-service teachers and even help to shape their beliefs and future practices (Zheng, 2009). One student recommended incorporating a practicum to increase the amount of time to practice teaching skills.

Two participants also regretted not having any materials with them during their service in the Peace Corps. Materials collected over the course of the program can be beneficial for beginner teachers. In the questionnaire, one participant states:

I also wish I had a portfolio of lesson plans and ideas (both mine and my professors and colleagues) that I could have brought with me. I think this should be a requirement or at least brought up as a suggestion. I constantly wish I had more ideas or activities. (personal communications, April 14, 2013).

Parkes (2009) made the same comment about the need for a textbook in the account of her Peace Corps service. Compiling the work done over the course of the year into a portfolio would be a simple activity and could be a useful tool to teachers serving overseas.

### **Training: PST versus PCMI**

After analyzing the answers to the questionnaire as well as the literature accounting the experience of two past Peace Corps education volunteers, it can be concluded that the two teacher education programs have many similarities. With the exception of one outlier who was working in the community health sector, all of the responses signified that the Peace Corps trains its teachers in the same practices and methods. The main difference, according to the data, related to the cultural aspect of the training. PST focuses much more on cultural aspects as the program is preparing the teachers to enter and live in a new environment for the following two years. The accounts by both Parkes (2009) and Calvert (2007) reinforce the similarities in the training programs. There was one area that one of the participants felt more trained to handle over volunteers who did not complete a Master's International program, which was the ability of PCMI participants to map the growth of the students. According to the participant, the Peace Corps PST did not train the volunteers sufficiently in this aspect.

### **Implications and conclusions**

Based on the data collected in this study, some recommendations can be made for Gonzaga University's PCMI program. The first suggestion would be to incorporate more opportunities for observations or chances to work closely with the teachers. One participant in the study suggested incorporating a practicum into the course requirements. According to previous studies, observing experienced teachers can impact a pre-service teacher's practices. Another recommendation would be to encourage PCMI students to interact more frequently with low proficiency level students. This would give PCMI students the chance to gain exposure to working with students that will be similar in level to the students they will be teaching during their service.

Course Design and Assessment is another course that is beneficial for PCMI students to complete. Although not stated explicitly in the questionnaire, Course Design and Assessment can

help prepare students for the experience of creating a course from scratch as will likely be necessary in the Peace Corps. Parkes (2009) recounts having to develop her curriculum without the support of a textbook or previously used materials. One participant in the study does regret not developing the final assessment plan based on the situation in the Peace Corps. If able to repeat the process, designing a course with low proficiency level students and without any resources would have been more applicable to the environment in the Peace Corps. The teachers at Gonzaga University should encourage PCMI students to design their course with their Peace Corps service in mind in order to make the course as relevant as possible to their future assignments.

The data also indicated the desire of some participants to have studied the language of their assigned Peace Corps location while in the PCMI program at Gonzaga University. This was an area that many of the participants felt unprepared for while in their PST. One way to incorporate this request would be to recommend using one of the two required electives to take a language course. Even one semester of the language may help the students who know what language they will be speaking to feel more prepared and adjust more quickly to their Peace Corps location.

Finally, improving communications between the PCMI students and the teachers at Gonzaga University is essential to improving the program. One participant stressed the difficulties of contacting teachers about final project requirements or for teaching advice. The Peace Corps Master's International staff member suggested that this was an issue for the Peace Corps as well. Communication can be challenging as internet may be limited but offering PCMI students more support with resources, teaching advice, and program requirements during their service can make the student feel more connected to the program.

### **Limitations and further study**

The most obvious limitation in this study is the sample size. The Peace Corps Master's International program is still relatively new and therefore, only a small number of participants are currently serving or have completed their Peace Corps service. There is also a shortage of research on the effects that teacher-training programs have on pre-service teachers. More studies on this topic are required to form accurate opinions on how effectively graduate programs train teachers. This study also only examined participants from Gonzaga University and did not take

into consideration the viewpoints of Peace Corps volunteers without an M.A. TESOL degree. This study could also benefit from more in-depth information regarding the training techniques of the Peace Corps PST program. Despite these limitations, the study does successfully indicate areas that can be improved upon in the PCMI program at Gonzaga University.



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**IRB**

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Title of Project: <i>PCMI-MA/TESOL program: A study of the effectiveness of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University according to past and current students.</i>		
Project anticipated starting date: <i>April 2013</i>	Anticipated termination date: <i>May 2016</i>	
New project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>X</u>	Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Change in protocol for previously approved project <input type="checkbox"/> <u>N</u>	
Funding: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>X</u> Non-funded <input type="checkbox"/> Internal funded <input type="checkbox"/> External funded Funding Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal in preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Pending agency decision <input type="checkbox"/> Funded		
Funding Agency (if applicable):	Grant or contract number:	
Request for expedited review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>X</u>	Request for full IRB review	
Abstract <i>This study is meant to better understand the extent to which the Gonzaga PCMI-MA/TESOL program prepares students to partake in their Peace Corps service. The researcher hopes to determine what areas of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program are effective and in what ways the program can be improved.</i>		
The information provided above is accurate and the project will be conducted in accordance with applicable Federal, State and University regulations. Signature, Principal Investigator _____ Date _____		
<b>Recommendations and Action:</b> Faculty Sponsor (for student) _____ Department Chair _____ Institutional Review Board _____ _____	Date _____ _____ _____ _____	Approve/Disapprove _____ _____ _____
Subject to the following conditions		
Period of approval: _____		

**Gonzaga University**  
**Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research**  
**Application for IRB Review**

**I. Research Protocol**

**A. Background of and rationale for this activity.**

*I am doing this study in order to determine how well the Peace Corps Master's International MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University prepares students for their two-year service in the Peace Corps. Through this research, I hope to determine what aspects of the program can be improved upon as well as what areas are effective in preparing the students to complete their service. I also will compare and contrast the three-month Peace Corps training program to the program at Gonzaga University.*

**B. Objectives of this specific research.**

*The objective is to determine the effectiveness of the PCMI- MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University in preparing students for their service in the Peace Corps.*

*Research Questions:*

- 1) 1) How prepared do past and current PCMI-MA/TESOL students feel when they begin teaching in the Peace Corps?*
- 2) What areas of their service in the Peace Corps do PCMI-MA/TESOL students still find difficult or challenging and how can the program address those issues?*
- 3) What methodology does the Peace Corps teach teachers during the three-month training period and how do their beliefs and training align with or differ from the PCMI program?*

**C. Describe how subjects will be involved, specify what they will do.**

*The research will involve both a questionnaire and a follow-up interview to collect the data needed to clarify the specific areas current PCMI-MA/TESOL students from Gonzaga University felt prepared for and how they felt they could have been better prepared.*

*I will provide a short questionnaire made up of 8 questions to 5 current PCMI-MA/TESOL students via E-mail. The participants will answer the questions the best that they can. Their answers will be used in the research. The follow-up interviews will be conducted by E-mail or in person and will not consist of more than 5 questions. I will use the data to suggest possible changes in the program in order to better meet the needs of the PCMI-MA/TESOL students. I will also conduct a short interview with members of the MA-TESOL faculty in order to determine what areas of the program they feel are successful and what they would like to change. Along with interviewing the professors, I will also attempt to contact a representative of the Peace Corps via E-mail to find more information about their process of training Peace Corps volunteers.*

*For questionnaire and possible interview questions, see attachments A and B.*

**D. Explain how data obtained will answer the research problem.**

*After finishing the data collection process, I will use the participant questionnaires and interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program and determine what areas can be improved.*

*I will review the participants' responses to the questionnaire and determine what aspects of their Peace Corps service they felt most prepared for and what they wish the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University had better prepared them for. I will also use the questionnaire*

*as a resource for determining how similar or different the Gonzaga program is from the three-month training period at the Peace Corps.*

*I will then analyze the follow-up interviews with the goal of developing a more in-depth view of the participants' opinions about the program.*

*The combination of the questionnaires and interviews will present me with a complete view of the opinions of present PCMI-MA/TESOL students at Gonzaga University along with the views of the faculty and I will use that information to determine what areas of the program can be adapted to better prepare future students for their two-year service in the Peace Corps. These questionnaires and interviews will be used in addition to research on the Peace Corps teacher-training program and the potential interview with a representative.*

**E. Identify alternative procedures if any, that might be advantageous to the subject.**

*The procedures the researcher has chosen for this study include a questionnaire and a follow-up interview. Both the questionnaire and the interview will be conducted via E-mail or in-person at the convenience of the participants. They are able to answer the questions at their leisure without having to give up their personal time to attend an interview in person unless they elect to be interviewed in-person. The in-person interviews will be conducted at the time and place of the participant's choosing as not to inconvenience the participant.*

**II. Human Subjects**

**A. Number of subjects, including individuals who serve as "controls:"**

*Participants: Normal subjects over the age of 18. They will all be present Gonzaga University PCMI-MA/TESOL students, MA-TESOL faculty, and a Peace Corps representative.*

**B. Source(s) and type(s) of subjects:**

*The subjects are current students in the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University. They are either currently serving their two-year service in the Peace Corps or have completed their time and returned to the United States. The other subjects include the professors in the MA-TESOL program at Gonzaga University and possibly a Peace Corps representative.*

**C. Criteria for selection/exclusion of subjects:**

*All of the students are in the process of completing the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University. The participants have finished a year at Gonzaga University and are either currently serving in the Peace Corps or have returned from their service. All participants are over the age of 18. PCMI-MA/TESOL students still completing their first year at Gonzaga University have been excluded due to the fact that the research requires that the students have completed or are in the process of completing their two-year service in the Peace Corps.*

*The professors are all faculty in the MA-TESOL program at Gonzaga University and were selected in order to give their opinions about the program.*

*The Peace Corps representative was selected to determine how the Peace Corps trains their volunteers.*

**D. How subjects will be approached and by whom:**

*The students will be approached either in-person or via E-mail by the researcher (Katherine Barba). They will be sent an E-mail explaining the purpose and objectives of the study as well as an attached consent form. After the participants have agreed to participate in the study, they will be sent the questionnaire and then the follow-up interview questions. The professors will be*

*approached first by E-mail and then in-person if they agree to participate in the study. The Peace Corps representative will be approached via E-mail or phone.*

**E. Location where procedures are to be carried out:**

*The participants will complete the questionnaire individually and return the answers via E-mail at their convenience. There will be no deadlines or time constraints to complete the survey. If there will be in-person interviews, they will occur in the Schoenberg building for International Studies during regularly scheduled business hours. The interview will take place at the time and location chosen by the interviewee after a consent form has been signed.*

**Voluntary Participation**

**A. Describe the method for ensuring that subjects understand that their participation is voluntary and that they do not feel coerced.**

*The participants will be informed by the E-mail of the purpose of the study and that their participation is voluntary and anonymous. They will be reassured of this fact by signing the consent form (attachment C) which explicitly states that they have permission to withdraw from the study at any time and their answers will not be used in the study. There will be no penalty for their withdrawal from the study.*

**B. Will subjects receive an inducement, e.g.. payment, services without charge, extra course credit? Specify details. What is the rationale for offering the inducement?**

*The participants will not be offered an inducement to participate in the study. All participants in the study will be able to request a copy of the final action research paper that is to be submitted for a grade in the Research Perspectives in Second Language Education class at Gonzaga University.*

**C. If subjects are children and they are capable of assent, describe provisions for soliciting their assent as well as the provisions of soliciting permission of their parent(s) or authorized representative. If there is an assent form or standard briefing statement for children, provide a copy as an attachment (Attachment C).**

*Not applicable to my study.*

**D. Attach a copy of the consent form to be signed by the subject and/or any explanations of the research to be given orally to the subject (Attachment D). If no consent form is to be used, explain the procedures to be used to ensure that participation is voluntary. (See instructions for contents of consent forms and safeguards for vulnerable populations.)**

*Not applicable to my study.*

**E. If any deception (withholding of complete information) is required for the validity of this activity, explain why this is necessary, and describe a debriefing plan and/or attach a debriefing statement (Attachment E).**

*Not applicable to my study.*

**III. Confidentiality and Anonymity**

**A. Will participation be anonymous, that is, the investigator will have no way to identify subjects by appearance, name or data?**

*The questionnaires and interviews will not be anonymous to the researcher, as they will be conducted via E-mail. However, the participants will remain anonymous in the data and final paper and their name and personal information will never be given.*

**B. If data are collected that could be associated with individual subjects, describe the methods to be used to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained. (Confidentiality for data is required unless subjects give express written permission that their data may be identified.).**

*I will use pseudonyms and avoid mentioning any information that will easily identify the participant to ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained.*

**C. Who specifically will have access to some or all of the data? What provisions are there for control over access to documents and data?**

*The researcher will have access to all the data collected. I will be collecting and analyzing all of the data alone. The professor of the research class at Gonzaga University will have access to the final action research paper as well as rough drafts. All drafts will include pseudonyms of the participants and omit all other identifiable information.*

**D. How long will data be held? How will they be ultimately disposed of?**

*The raw data will be held in a secure place for three years as is stated by federal guidelines. After this time, all paper documents will be shredding, recordings erased and destroyed, etc.*

#### **IV. Risks/Benefits**

**A. Will subjects in the proposed research be placed at more than minimal risk, as defined by federal policy?**

*Subjects in this study will be placed at no more than minimal risk as defined by federal policy.*

**B. Nature and amount of risk (including side effects), substantial stress, discomfort, or invasion of privacy:**

*The participants will not be placed under any substantial stress or discomfort. There will not be any invasion of privacy or risk of side effects from the questionnaire and interview process. The participants will be provided the interview questions via E-mail and are able to answer those questions at their convenience. They will be aware that they can remove themselves from the study at any point.*

**C. What steps are being taken to reduce the level of risk, including any follow-up planned as part of the risk mitigation procedures?**

*As stated on the consent form (Attachment C), the participants are able to remove themselves from the study at any point. They will be assured that they will be able to do so with the support from the researcher.*

*The in-person interview will be held in a public space chosen by the participant after the consent form has been signed.*

**D. Plan for handling adverse effects:**

*The participants will be able to discontinue their participation in the study at any point if they feel stressed or uncomfortable with the situation. The decision will be supported by the researcher.*

*The participants will be given all of the support and resources necessary to handle adverse effects should they experience any.*

**E. Arrangement for financial responsibility for adverse effects:**

*The participant will be responsible for any adverse effects that require payment that this study causes.*

**F. Describe the benefits to the subject and/or society of the proposed research. Why do the benefits outweigh any risks that may be involved?**

*This study will benefit the participants and the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University. The participants will be able to share their input about the program and offer any suggestions to make improvements that will benefit future students. The PCMI-MA/TESOL program will be provided with an evaluation of its effectiveness and possible areas for improvement.*

Checklist to be completed by investigator	Yes	No
<p>A. Will any group, agency, or organization other than G.U. be involved? If yes, please specify.</p> <p><i>The Peace Corps will also be involved in my study. See Attachment D.</i></p>	<b>X</b>	
<p>B. Will materials with potential radiation risk be used, e.g., x-rays, radio- -- isotopes? If yes, please indicate:</p> <p>1. Status of annual review by Radiation Safety Officer (RSO). If approved, attach one copy of approval (Attachment F).</p> <p>2. Title of application submitted to Radiation Safety Committee (RSC).</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>C. Will any other hazardous materials come in contact with research subjects? -- If yes, indicate nature of hazard and steps taken to mitigate risk to subjects.</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>D. Will an investigational new drug (IND) be used? -- If yes, give name, proposed dosage, how administered, status with FDA, and IND number. Enclose one copy (Attachment G) of: (1) available toxicity data; (2) reports of animal studies; (3) description of human studies done in other countries; (4) a concise review of the literature prepared by the investigator.</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>E. Will other drugs be used (including over the counter drugs)? -- If yes, give names, dosages, how administered, and side effects.</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>F. Will medical, academic or other records be used?</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>G. Will audio-visual or tape recordings, or photographs be made?</p>		<b>X</b>
<p>H. Should this activity be covered by adverse effects insurance? -- If yes, explain why</p>		<b>X</b>



**ATTACHMENT A**

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**QUESTIONNAIRE:**

How long have you been serving in the Peace Corps?

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What is your position/project?

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What aspects of the PCMI program do you feel prepared you the most for your service?

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What class(es) at Gonzaga was/were the most applicable to your position?

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What did/do you feel unprepared for?

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What do you wish you could've done in the PCMI program before entering the Peace Corps?

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---

Did the information you received during the training period align with the beliefs and techniques taught in the PCMI program?

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Do you think you were better prepared for your position than people that did not complete a Peace Corps Masters International program? In what ways?

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Please add any comments you have.

## Attachment B

### Follow-up Interview Questions:

These questions are dependent on the participants' answers in the questionnaire but possible interview questions can include:

*In your opinion why was that class most applicable to your position?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Based on your experience, what do you think can make the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga more effective?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What aspect of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program did you find the most useful and applicable to your service in the Peace Corps? Why?* \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Faculty Interview Questions:**

*How effectively do you think the PCMI-MA/TESOL program prepares students for their service in the Peace Corps?*

*What do you think the program can do to better prepare the students?*

*As a professor, what goals and expectations do you have for PCMI students?*

### **Peace Corps Representative Questions:**

*Can you please describe the three-month training period for English teacher volunteers?*

*What methodologies do the Peace Corps teach volunteers? Is there one teaching method that the Peace Corps finds to be more useful than others in the field?*

*What aspects of teaching do the Peace Corps focus on during training?*

*In your opinion, are PCMI volunteers more prepared for their service than other volunteers? If so, in what ways?*

## Attachment C

### *Participant Consent Form:*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear participant,

This semester, I would like to complete a research project for my Research Perspectives in Second Language Acquisition class on the effectiveness of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University in order to see how well the students are prepared for their service in the Peace Corps and what areas can be improved. This involves a questionnaire, follow-up interview, and noting your responses.

I would like you to take part in my research. I will be using excerpts from your questionnaire and interview answers in my final research paper. I will never use your real name or give out any personal information about you.

If you agree to this, please complete and sign the form below for my records. Thank you!

#### **Information Release Form**

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission to Katherine Barba to use my words in her research project. I understand that my real name will not be used. I understand that my identity as an informant will remain confidential. By signing this letter, I understand that the findings of this research may be used in an action research paper for the completion of my Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language at Gonzaga University. If information from this study is to be used in any other way, Katherine Barba will contact me to obtain my written permission.

I have read and understand this form. I understand that by signing this form, I am voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research and that I may withdraw from the research at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature/date

Katherine Barba  
Gonzaga University  
E 311 Boone  
Spokane, WA 99258  
(267) 261-4551  
[kbarba@zagsmail.gonzaga.edu](mailto:kbarba@zagsmail.gonzaga.edu)

**Attachment D**

*Letter of Permission to Conduct Study:*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear participant,

This semester, I would like to complete a research project for my Research Perspectives in Second Language Acquisition class on the effectiveness of the PCMI-MA/TESOL program at Gonzaga University in order to see how well the students are prepared for their service in the Peace Corps and what areas can be improved. This involves a questionnaire, follow-up interview, and noting your responses.

I would like you to take part in my research. I will be using excerpts from your questionnaire and interview answers in my final research paper. I will never use your real name or give out any personal information about you.

This research proposal has been reviewed by Gonzaga University's Institutional Review Board and approved on \_\_\_\_\_.

If you agree to this, please complete and sign the form below for my records. Thank you!

**Information Release Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission to Katherine Barba to use my words in her research project. I understand that my real name will not be used. I understand that my identity as an informant will remain confidential. By signing this letter, I understand that the findings of this research may be used in an action research paper for the completion of my Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language at Gonzaga University. If information from this study is to be used in any other way, Katherine Barba will contact me to obtain my written permission.

I have read and understand this form. I understand that by signing this form, I am voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research and that I may withdraw from the research at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature/date

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