



International service learning and critical global citizenship: A cross-case study of a Canadian teacher education alternative practicum



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HIGHLIGHTS

- A cross-case, longitudinal study about a teacher education international practicum.
- International experiences shape most student teachers as global citizens and this has an impact on their teaching.
- Critical literacy essential for the developing critical global citizenship educators.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to demonstrate how an international experience within a teacher education program shaped student teachers as global citizens. Our cross-case study of two cohorts of student teachers who participated in an international service learning practicum demonstrates the nuanced ways that international placements influence the development of critical global citizens and the impact on their teaching. Survey and interview responses, collected 3–12 months post-practicum, demonstrate that while there is considerable evidence that participants became culturally aware global citizens, there is less evidence that they became critical global citizens, who actively respond to inequities within and outside of the classroom.

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1. Introduction

Many teacher education programs in North America now include international teaching and service opportunities as a part of their B.Ed. Degrees. These are generally short-term placements and in some cases, international service learning (ISL) experiences where student teachers volunteer outside of traditional classrooms. One of the goals of these programs is enhance global and cross-cultural awareness and the ability of teachers to interact more effectively with culturally and linguistically-diverse students in their home countries. Harkins and Barchuk (2015) write, “providing pre-service students with diverse educational experiences allows pre-service teachers to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for facing the challenges of the global world” (p. 284).

There is much evidence of the popularity of international

experiences within teacher education programs in North America. For example, of the 13 Faculties/Departments of Education in the province of Ontario (Canada), ten now offer opportunities to engage in international placements. Ontario student teachers are keen to participate in international practicum placements. As one participant in Harkins and Barchuk's (2015) study declared: “When these alternative placements came out, there was a mad rush for signing up. There were multiple people applying for any given alternative placement. I think that speaks to how much interest there is out there among the student population in the education program, to try something new” (p. 300).

In response to this demand, the Faculty of Education at Northern University¹ in Ontario offered students an opportunity to participate in two weeks of community learning, service learning, or practice teaching in local, national, or international settings at their end of their nine-month program. This paper presents the results of

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¹ Pseudonyms are used in this article in place of name of the university and names of participants in the study.

a study about an ISL placement at that Faculty. The main question guiding the study was, “How, if at all, do international experiences within teacher education programs shape student teachers as critical global citizens?”

The paper is organized into four sections. First, we review the literature associated with the integration of international experiences into teacher education programs with a focus on Canadian literature. We outline our theoretical framework, followed by the methodology for our cross-case study. The third section consists of our findings, which are then analyzed, in the final section, using a *Critical Global Citizenship* conceptual framework to determine the degree to which our cases facilitated the development of critical global citizenship in our participants. We argue that while there is considerable evidence that the student teachers developed the dispositions associated with global citizenship (e.g. self, difference and global awareness), which in turn had positive implications for their classroom teaching, our evidence is mixed concerning the degree to which they became *critical* global citizens who actively work in solidarity with others to effect positive social change.

2. International experiences in initial teacher education: literature review

As international practicum opportunities in teacher education programs expand, there has been considerable amount of research on the positive impact of these experiences on participating student teachers (e.g. Batey & Lupi, 2012; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Hurtado, Coronel, Carrasco, & Correa, 2013; Kabilan, 2013; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009). Given that this is a study about a Canadian initiative, we focus below on Canadian research on overseas experiences in teacher education programs, noting here that the findings from those Canadian studies largely echo the findings from other related research about international practicum placements.

Research shows widespread evidence of the resulting benefits of international experiences for teacher education students. Of primary interest to our study are research findings on the impact of these programs in terms of teaching skills, knowledge and attitudes. Much of the existing research focuses on the personal and professional growth of student teachers, and especially the development of their professional identities (e.g. Cantalini-Williams et al., 2014; Grierson & Denton, 2013). As Cantalini-Williams et al. (2014) conclude, “[i]t is widely accepted that diverse practicum experiences contribute to professional growth among teacher candidates” (p. 22).

A number of studies show how these experiences enhance participants’ recognition of the global dimension and interdependencies of the world, fostering a clearer sense of the world as a global village (e.g. Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2012; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009). Teacher education students who participate in overseas practicum placements also become more aware of global and educational issues that can lead to infusing the curriculum with global content (Grierson & Denton, 2013).

Evidence shows these international programs successfully prepare teachers who are culturally aware, sensitive, and able to interact effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse students abroad and at home (e.g. Roberts, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Various studies also demonstrate how student teachers become more open-minded and respectful towards other cultures, and come to appreciate diverse perspectives (e.g. Grierson & Denton, 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Canadian participants in both Maynes et al. (2012) and Mwebi and Brigham’s (2009) studies, shifted their views about themselves and others, resulting in enhanced empathy towards their students.

Above all, the research demonstrates that through international practicum placements student teachers come to realize the importance of culturally responsive teaching, and positive perceptions of their own abilities to teach students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g. Cantalini-Williams & Tessaro, 2011; Grierson & Denton, 2013; Maynes et al., 2012; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). As Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2013) write: “International practica in developing countries can help pre-service teachers internalize key curricular concepts about culture, multiculturalism, pluralism, and multi-racism while supporting their life-long commitment to understanding themselves as global influences on children” (161).

Research also demonstrates that international practicum placements help to develop other teaching competencies including teamwork, cooperative skills and problem solving (Cantalini-Williams & Tessaro, 2011; Cantalini-Williams et al., 2014); enhanced curricular planning and delivery of instruction, cooperative skills, critical thinking and problem solving (Cantalini-Williams et al., 2014; Grierson & Denton, 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). Finally, there is much evidence about enhanced student teachers’ resilience and resourcefulness; as well as adaptability and flexibility to deal with unexpected and difficult situations, such as limited access to resources (e.g. Black & Bernardes, 2014; Cantalini-Williams et al., 2014; Grierson & Denton, 2013; Maynes et al., 2012; Roberts, 2007).

A number of studies also point to the development of competencies for teaching in dual language classrooms and respect for teaching strategies used in other cultures (Cantalini-Williams & Tessaro, 2011; Cantalini-Williams et al., 2014). It is also claimed that international practicum experiences build a commitment to child-centred pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and enhanced communication skills (Grierson & Denton, 2013; Maynes, Cantalini-Williams, & Tedesco, 2014). Overall, the research is clear: participating in international experiences enhances student teachers’ competencies as future educators.

However, with the exception of Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) study, there is little research on whether international placements foster critical thinking capacities involving the development of deeply reflexive dispositions about self-positionality, privilege, global inequalities and injustices. While some of the above studies note that students became aware of their own identities and privileges, as well as what it was like to be viewed as a minority, there is much need for research to interrogate the complexities of these developments within the context of critical theories.

Finally, most of the research reviewed is either un(der)theorized (e.g. DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Walters et al., 2009); or draws on change and transformative learning theories (e.g. Black & Bernardes, 2014; Maynes et al., 2012; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), cultural competence (e.g. DeVillar & Jiang, 2012), or situated theories (e.g. Cushner & Mahon, 2002), rather than global citizenship theoretical frameworks. This is surprising, given that most of the authors consider international teaching placements as opportunities to develop capacities associated with global education. While some authors (e.g. Black & Bernardes, 2014; Maynes et al., 2012; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007) make reference to global education research, most do not explicitly situate their studies within a global education or global citizenship education framework. Moreover, the selected theories are more aligned with liberal orientations that focus on the role (and change within) the individual, rather than critical approaches that are attentive to power dynamics, social structures and how they influence individual choices. For these reasons, this study was designed as an explicit global education focus utilizing Larsen’s (2014) *Critical Global Citizenship* conceptual framework.

3. Conceptual framework: critical global citizenship

Larsen's (2014) conceptual framework of Critical Global Citizenship (CGC) is comprised of two core components: *Awareness/Analysis* and *Engagement/Action*. The first component, *Awareness/Analysis*, includes four overlapping and interconnected dimensions: awareness and analysis of difference, the self, the global, and of one's own responsibility. Briefly, 'difference awareness' includes recognition and respect for different ideas, values, and practices, and the privileging of certain kinds of knowledge (i.e. Western) over others. Critical global citizens are also aware of 'Othering' discourses and can analyze the historical roots of contemporary racism, while recognizing the possibilities of encountering difference, without diminishing the value of the 'Other' (Said, 1978). 'Self-awareness' means being aware of one's identity and understanding that identities are complex and capable of change. It also involves acknowledging that one's view of the world is limited, not universally shared, and is continually shaped within and by particular contexts. Moreover, it encompasses the capacity for critical reflexivity about one's own positionality, power, and privilege.

'Global awareness' is an understanding about the state of the planet, including existing environmental, political, social, and economic interdependencies and conditions, as well as the roots of inequalities in power/wealth globally and locally. Such ideas are not specific to Larsen's framework as previous global (citizenship) education researchers have come to similar conclusions, especially with respect to the formation of global perspectives (e.g. Hanvey, 1975; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). 'Responsibility awareness' means understanding that we have choices about how to respond to inequities and injustices. Responsibility is characterized by empathy, caring, and concern to others, society, and the environment. Additionally, 'responsibility awareness' involves understanding that we have *towards* the Other and challenges 'Othering' discourses that position those from the Global North as being able to help 'victims' of the rest of the world (See Fig. 1.).

Three related dimensions constitute the *Engagement/Action* component of CGC: 'Self-Action', 'Civic Action', and 'Social Justice Action'. Once one becomes aware of difference, global issues, as well as one's positionality, privilege and responsibilities, a critical global citizen responds to injustices and inequities. *Engagement/Action* means mobilizing one's own privilege and power to make a difference in the lives of those who are less privileged. This requires self-action, the everyday actions that one makes as a global citizen. CGC engagement also necessitates 'civic action', publicly responding to cultural, self, and global awareness by participating in the civic affairs and in the social life of one's community at local, state,

and national levels. And finally, 'social justice action' refers to broader social, structural transformations of power relations between and amongst individuals, groups and institutions, with the goal being changing tightly held values and assumptions in order to transform institutions and other power structures in socially just ways (Larsen, 2014). (See Fig. 2.).

Larsen's CGE conceptual framework aligns with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) work on democratic citizenship and Andreotti's (2006) soft versus critical global citizenship typology. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) distinguish between three different types of democratic citizenship, the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the social justice oriented citizen. The personally responsible citizen believes that to solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character, be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community. The participatory citizen works from the core assumption that to solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and structures. And finally, the social-justice oriented citizen supports the need for citizens to question and change unjust systems and structures as the route to solving social problems and improving society. This latter type of citizen who actively works to address injustice exemplifies what Larsen (2014) refers to as a critical global citizen.

Andreotti (2006) develops a more sophisticated analysis of the difference between 'soft' and 'critical' global citizenship education. The critical global citizen understands that structures, systems, institutions and beliefs need to change so that injustices and inequality are addressed. Andreotti argues that the critical global citizen feels a sense of responsibility *towards* the Other, recognizing that we are all a part of the problem and need to all be part of any solution for social change. Responsible and ethical action stems from critical reflection on power relations that maintain inequality and exploitation, an understanding of one's positionality and privilege from unjust systems and structures, and a desire to work and learn from the Other through dialogue and understanding. These ideas are very closely aligned with the critical aspect of Larsen's conceptual framework.

Finally, we note here that although much of the writing about democratic citizenship and global citizenship education is situated within the context of research on social studies education (e.g. Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), the CGC conceptual framework that we are deploying works from the

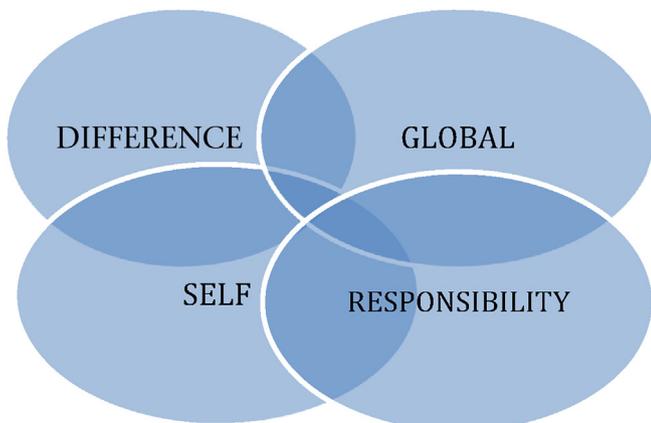


Fig. 1. Critical global citizenship: Awareness/analysis component.



Fig. 2. Critical global citizenship: Engagement/Action component.

assumption that although developing critical global citizenship is a pedagogical process, it is a necessary requirement for all teachers, regardless of grade level or subject area.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Cross-case study

As a qualitative research case study, we were interested in the participants' interpretations of their experiences, in light of the impact of this experience on their development as classroom teachers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). We draw on Stake's (1988) definition of case study as "a study of a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time" (p. 258). The point of presenting the results of our case study is not necessarily to generalize, but to provide insight into the issues surrounding international teaching/service placements and potential implications for teacher education programs. We use a cross-case analysis, which is a fitting approach with data from at least two related cases (Borman, Clarke, Cotner, & Lee, 2006; Yin, 2006). Finally, following all appropriate protocols, the research was approved by the Ethics Review Board at the university where the researchers were based.

4.2. Participants and data collection

There were two groups of student teachers in our study. The first group participated in an ISL practicum in Laredo, Texas facilitated by the non-governmental organization (NGO), Habitat for Humanity, in 2013. The purpose of the experience was for students to assist with the building of homes for low-income families living on the US-Mexico borderlands. We refer to this cohort as the Laredo group. The second group is comprised of two cohorts of students who participated in a similar program, but for an NGO in Lima, Peru in 2014 and in 2015. The purpose of that experience was to engage in community service work such as teaching ESL in a public high school, working to promote a play based curriculum in elementary schools, and promoting health education in a low SES communities. We refer to the 2014 and 2015 cohorts as the Lima group. In addition, our study included three group team leaders (1 female and 2 males) from the Faculty of Education who volunteered their time to facilitate these ISL trips.

Between 3 and 12 months following their international practicum placements, students were contacted by email and social media to complete a post-placement survey or engage in a post-placement interview. The reason for contacting students so many months after the placement was to provide analytical insight into the meanings student teachers attribute to the placement on their teaching. This is one of the strengths of our study given that most of the existing research on the impact of overseas placements in teacher education is not longitudinal as data was collected upon the immediate conclusion of the experience. Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus, and Skendall (2012) concur that other than the work of Richard Kiely (2004, 2005), few examples of theory based/driven longitudinal research on ISL exist.

Thirteen (13) of the 35 in the Texas group students and eight (8) out of the 22 in the Peru group completed the post-survey. Post-practicum interviews were carried out with one (1) additional Texas group student and six (6) Peru group students for a total of 28 participants (14 from each group). There were 5 male and 23 female students, ranging in age from 23 to 32, with the majority in their twenties. Eleven identified as being of European/White ethnic background, 1 Asian/Pacific, 1 Hispanic/Latina; and 4 spoke languages other than English. Ten had previous experience travelling

and/or living abroad and the other three had never travelled or lived outside of Canada. Half of the students were preparing to be primary school teachers and the other half, secondary school teachers. Interviews were carried out with the team leaders approximately one month after their group returned. Therefore, we have data from 31 participants (14 from each group plus the 3 team leaders).

Another strength of our study was the inclusion of multiple methods through surveys and interviews. In addition to basic demographics, the survey/interview was divided into three sections. First, students were asked six open-ended questions about their experience abroad. In the second section, students were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with statements such as:

- I take into account different perspectives before drawing conclusions about the world.
- Helping those in need is my personal responsibility.

The third part focused on changing actions/behaviors as a result of the experience. Students were asked to indicate how often they had participated in civic and social justice activities such as 'Donating money to charities' and 'Signing a petition' and classroom activities such as 'Talking with your students about charities/volunteer work' and 'Encouraging students to recycle.' Participants were also asked 2 open-ended questions about post-experience changes to their professional practice.

- Are there any other changes you have made in your teaching as a result of having participated in the Laredo/Lima ISL experience?
- How, if at all, do you feel you have become a better teacher through this experience?

4.3. Data analysis

Analysis was iterative and inductive to discover and explore themes, categories, patterns, and relationships (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). We were conscious of addressing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) constructs for ensuring the trustworthiness in analyzing this research. Analysis processes also included individual and paired researcher efforts to minimize biases and ensure rigor. Data was first aggregated by question for frequencies and percentages of participant responses to the item on the rating scale to identify patterns. Where questions sought a retrospective view, emergent patterns and significant percentages were noted. Data was aggregated by each question with numbers assigned individual responses. In this way, categories and patterns became apparent by item and participant. Patterns were discussed and compared so that a common set of codes was established. Then, each researcher described and contrasted between the two cohorts so that analytic categories began to emerge. Memos summarized key themes and categories. Quotations exemplifying the themes were recorded and researcher reflections were included in each memo. Finally, analysis was converged to refine the final three categories, leading to the findings, which we address next. We have attempted to demonstrate a true picture of these cases by presenting sufficient details of our results for readers to be able to determine the credibility of the research.

5. Results

5.1. Self-awareness

Evidence from our data supports that this international

practicum placement enabled students to reflect more deeply upon their own identity, sense of self and privileges. When asked what they learned, responses across both groups included:

- I learned a lot about myself and my independence. I learned to appreciate different cultures and the way they educate their youth and live their lives.
- I felt like I truly made a difference in someone else's life and I was able to learn more about myself.
- [T]his experience allowed me to explore different parts of myself and challenge myself to teach, communicate and learn in ways that are just not possible without international experiences.

Students all agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that they “consider different perspectives when evaluating global problems” and “take into account different perspectives before drawing conclusions about the world around me.” This reflects awareness that their points of view are not necessarily shared by all, and that their own knowledge is shaped by broader contexts, as well as conscious and unconscious opinions, dispositions associated with global citizenship.

When asked to reflect on the impact of the experience, students began to identify privileges in their own lives. They described an enhanced sense of gratefulness for previously taken for granted “simple things” like housing, running water, and food. As Nusha (Laredo) explained, “Participating in this internship gave me a greater appreciation to all that I have in my life. The luxury of having a roof over my head, a vehicle to drive, an opportunity to go to school and succeed, and the relief of knowing where my next meal was coming from, are all things that I am grateful for.” Similar sentiments were expressed by the Lima group, Mark explained: “I felt much more grateful for what we have in Canada when I was in Peru. Little things that we take for granted here were much bigger problems in Peru.”

While these reflections may seem, at first glance, superficial, when considered with the team leader interview data we understand that daily reflections involved teasing out the meanings of deepening self-awareness and what it means to be privileged in an uneven world. Team leader Amani described that, “reflections included discussing and writing about assumptions and feelings from their experiences while attempting to make links between these experiences and professional practice.” Amani indicated that in her group, “several students talked about how this trip helped them to learn more about themselves and indicated that they were ready to make commitments to live differently once they returned home.” Similarly, team leader Kirk described that student teachers, “learned a new appreciation for their privilege in life but also of what's really important” through the ISL practicum and reflective discussions.

Self-awareness of one's own privilege and the concomitant responsibilities to address inequities, we attest, has the potential to impact teaching in positive ways. For example, Meredith (Laredo) stated, “It taught me more than anything that everyone has a story and everyone should have the same opportunities as everyone else. As an educator I learned to be patient and let students learn for themselves.” Gina (Laredo) explained how the placement caused her to reflect differently about her students and the materialism of Canadian society,

Since leaving Laredo I have tried to be grateful for what I have and not entitled to things I don't. I have also noticed with the children in my preschool class it is always want want want. As society changes I have realized how important it is to ... to focus on what we have, not what we want.

5.2. Difference awareness

Many participants commented on how the experience broadened their perspectives about cultural diversity, which influenced their teaching. As Susan (Laredo) reflected, “I learned that the culture of the families we worked with is quite similar to my own culture, where there is a great emphasis on family and togetherness.”

All student teachers ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement, “It is important for teachers to understand people who are different from themselves.” Most participants noted learning about the values, beliefs, different education systems, and social structures in another culture, and expanded their ‘difference awareness.’ Nusha (Laredo) explained:

The thing that stands out the most was learning about culture. [My hometown] is full of middle-class white residents, which is exactly the kind of family I grew up in. It was amazing to see a different culture first-hand and get to experience their traditions and ways of doing things.

Participants indicated that they learned to appreciate cultural differences, such as the ways that different cultures educate their youth. Survey data showed that all students agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statements, “I am open to people who strive to live lives very different from my own” and “I am accepting of other people with different religious and spiritual traditions.” The evidence also attests to the fact that students became more aware and respectful of cultural differences.

Amani (team leader) shared that as students were visibly living with difference they were becoming more aware of how culture is interwoven through every aspect of family, community, and daily life. Team leader Kirk described, “We talked about the difference in culture ... so I think what they learnt about the people there is the appreciation for that culture.” Learning about culture led to valuing both difference and our shared humanity. As Robin (Laredo), a student participant, explained, “I've learned that I had similar stories and hardships as the people I was helping even though we have very different cultures.”

Some described thinking more carefully about how their students' lives outside of the classroom affect their ability to learn in school, particularly those students who come from resource-poor families or communities. For Saeed, the experience in Laredo helped him to become more understanding as a teacher. Eight months after the international practicum he reflected:

I definitely received an eye-opener in regards to seeing firsthand what some families and children have to endure. It was an experience that brings the statistics to life that you read about. Experiencing what some families have to deal with made it easier for me to put myself in others' shoes and empathize with their situations.

And Maria (Lima) described how she developed a broader perspective about “the backgrounds that a child might be coming to class with. Having never experienced poverty in my life before I think it would have been harder to [understand] if I had a child or children in the class that maybe did have families that were struggling financially.”

Enhanced awareness and appreciation for difference, in its many forms (e.g. cultural, linguistic, socio-economic) provoked students to change their teaching goals and practices. Through the ISL practicum, our participants gained insights for teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds as they became more attentive

to the cultural lives of their students. Robin (Laredo) explained how her goals as a teacher shifted: “in that I definitely want to incorporate culture into my learning and teaching experiences. I think it is very important for us to have a better understanding of different cultures around us.” To this end, during debriefing sessions with each of the groups studied, students discussed with their team leaders ways in which they could translate their new perspectives and worldviews into their own classroom teaching. Team leader Amani recalled formal and informal discussions with students about their deepening awareness of privilege and ways they could contribute to a more socially just world through their roles as teachers. She recalled that students “identified the need for empathy and compassion for themselves and most of all, for others.”

In particular, the student teachers who went to Peru developed capacities for teaching English language learners (ELLs). As Elspeth (Lima) explained:

I will be much more cognizant, helpful and aware of those ESL students in my classroom as well as different types of learners. Being a part of this experience also fostered a love of culture in me, which I believe will translate to my teaching ... I will be aware and will take into consideration the different cultures of my students and will celebrate and learn about these cultures as they become present.

Likewise, Maria (Lima) described how her thinking shifted:

I think this experience was definitely more meaningful as it was outside of the familiar Canadian context. I really can empathize what it is like for people who come to Canada and try to learn English I think I used to be a lot more stuck up and judgmental towards individuals who come to Canada and cannot speak the English language, but now I think completely differently about that.

Having the experience to teach ELLs in Peru evoked in our participants a desire to teach students whose first language is not English. In reflecting upon the ISL practicum, Grace (Lima) stated, “I am so much more interested in ESL/EAL learning and I have grown to develop a better understanding of these learners and more patience with them as well.”

5.3. Global awareness

A CGC is aware of global issues ranging from global warming to people's access to clean air and water, housing, food, and clothing. In particular, there is an understanding of global inequalities and the socio-structural reasons for these inequities. Participants were asked a number of questions about their views on poverty. Almost 80% of the students disagreed with the statement “People who are well off generally work harder than those who are poor”, with the remaining 20% neither agreeing nor disagreeing about this. This suggests that the majority of respondents were beginning to understand the systemic nature of poverty but the depth of this understanding is difficult to ascertain from the quantitative survey responses. The qualitative survey and interview responses were more illuminating. For example, Elspeth (Lima) noted:

Before this trip, I was under the (quite ignorant) assumption that most poor people are in their unfortunate situations due to poor decisions, lack of effort, etc. My beliefs have completely changed since this trip because I had the privilege of meeting a fantastic

community of people that are hardworking, loving, welcoming, and selfless.

While the majority of participants did not believe poverty was caused by deficits within individuals, there was less agreement on exactly *whose* responsibility this was with opinions on the statement, “Helping people living in poverty is the responsibility of the government,” ranging widely from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The learning that students engaged in about global issues such as homelessness and poverty provoked a desire in a handful of students to integrate global perspectives into their own teaching. Nine months after her Laredo experience, Susan noted that as a teacher she “made it a point to include more global perspectives on global issues - provide international examples of topics we are talking about.” And Beatrice (Lima), who was not yet in a full time teaching position, noted that she “would like to involve other countries/global issues in my teaching and not just focusing on Canadian/Eurocentric issue.” Finally, as noted above, we found some evidence about participants' sense of responsibility towards their own students, especially visible minorities, ELLs, and/or those who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.4. Awareness leading to action

We found some evidence of self-action, the mundane, everyday changes in one's life through which one becomes a global citizen, enhanced through the ISL practicum. Students developed a greater appreciation for resources such as water and energy and became more conscientious about their use. Comments from Beatrice (Lima) illustrate how shifting her perceptions about resource use led to changing actions: “It's always kind of bugged me about how people can waste like, a bottle of water, and it's like now, I'm noticing it more and it almost upsets me that people do that.” And later Beatrice continues: “I've become a lot more cautious about different things that I do. In terms of even just spending money, I think I am a lot more cautious of it ... I try not to overspend on things I don't need.”

The participants were probed about the extent to which they participated in the civic affairs of their own community. We found a range of responses. Overall, amongst both cohorts of students, there was little evidence in our survey responses of engagement in civic activities such as volunteering time at a charity, writing letter to a politician or other forms of civic involvement. Mark (Lima) summed up this finding, “I'm not going to lie, I have not really done anything since Lima. I do the, what do you call it, the blind donations ... I think I'm taking the easier way out but I guess it makes me sleep better at night to know the money is going somewhere but I'm hardly doing anything physically anywhere or anything like that.”

Some students argued that their attitudinal shift was more important than any immediate change in actions. As Christine (Laredo) explained, “It's not so much what I have done. It's that I have felt more empowered. I have realized how much I enjoy helping others.” Elspeth (Lima) described, “This experience definitely made me feel and think differently about my life. The way I approach tasks or problems is completely different than before. I look at situations and try and find the positives in it rather than focusing on the negatives.”

For others, the most significant change was to engage in further volunteer, charitable work either locally or globally. Some of the participants (5 Laredo/6 Lima) expressed a desire to do future work for an NGO. For instance, Georgia (Laredo) said, “I have caught the volunteer bug and look forward to working with different

charities.” Stephan (Laredo) stated, “I still want to be a teacher but I would also be happy working for an NGO especially if I could do public speaking about it and educate other people.” And Vasilios (Lima) explained, “I certainly think that some of my goals and ideas about what my future has in store changed based on this experience. I have always considered the possibility of working for an NGO, but after this experience, I would definitely consider it on a more real level.”

Some participants came to see clearly, through their international practicum placement, that activism and social change depend on individuals working in solidarity with one another. This necessitates breaking down us-versus-them binaries that position ‘us’ in the Global North with agency and ‘them’ in the Global South as victims. Joan (Lima) is worth quoting at length to illustrate this point:

The biggest lesson I learned about service work is that just because I happen to come from a country that is more progressive and developed, it doesn’t mean I am better equipped or more able to fix problems in another country than their people are ... My volunteerism was about helping our Peruvian partners achieve their goal of bringing a different set of skills and experience to aid their effort, not about creating their goal and plan of action for them. I feel that I learned as much from our Peruvian partners as they did from me (if not more).

This point was also taken up by group facilitators in evening debriefing sessions in which students were encouraged to think more deeply about notions of serving versus helping. Miguel, a group team leader, remembered one such discussion with his group, in which he asked:

As teachers are we helping them? Or are we serving people? Is teaching an act of help or an act of service? I think that fact of even having the conversation is huge because help is implying there’s a deficiency while serving means that you’re honoured to be there, it’s something that you both benefit from in a reciprocal nature. While that teacher candidate never agreed with me around serving versus helping, we had the conversation and I think that’s a great starting place around defining a teacher’s philosophy and defining the impact that we want to have as teachers.

Finally, briefly, we note here, there was little evidence of the student-teachers engaging in social justice actions that contribute in meaningful ways to broader social, structural transformations of power relations between and amongst individuals, groups and institutions. We explore the reasons why we found no evidence of social justice actions in the discussion, which follows next.

6. Discussion

Our study, which took place many months after the ISL practicum, aimed to understand how that international experience shaped students as critical global citizens and influenced their classroom teaching. The data shows clearly that our participants felt that through the ISL practicum they developed a clearer sense of self, a deeper understanding of and appreciation for different perspectives, linguistic and cultural diversity. There is also much evidence in our study to suggest that this ISL practicum positively enhanced classroom teaching. Our participants developed a better understanding of the particular struggles that marginalized students face, and an ethic of care and compassion for those students. Moreover, many of our participants developed a sense of

responsibility toward the Other, especially ELL and other minority students, as well as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They spoke about their desire to teach ELLs; and new awareness about the capacities and needs of minority students in their classroom. This affirms findings about the potential of international practicum experiences in developing competencies for teaching in culturally diverse and dual language classrooms (e.g. Grierson & Denton, 2013; Kabilan, 2013; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009). The experience also broadened our participants’ attitudes and beliefs about global issues related to the environment, poverty, militarism and social injustice. This led some to incorporate global issues into their teaching, aligning with Grierson and Denton’s (2013) findings, developing what Maynes et al. (2012) call “global mindedness” (p. 84). Thus, we can see how the ISL practicum we studied enhanced self, difference, and global awareness, which would have positive effects on their teaching, especially with respect to meeting the needs of students from marginalized backgrounds.

These are all core aspects of Larsen’s (2014) CGC framework and in the context of this study, vital to the development of global citizenship. However, the CGC framework placed emphasis on a more ‘critical’ form of global citizenship, similar to Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) social justice citizen. Here we tease out and problematize the ways in which our participants developed the critical dispositions and actions associated with CGC, and the ways that they did not.

A CGC engages in critical reflexivity about her own positionality and the privileges she enjoys related to race, class and gender. Here our findings are more nuanced and illustrate differences between the Lima and Laredo groups. When asked, on our survey, to respond to the statement, “I am privileged”, 100% of the Lima students agreed or strongly agreed; compared to only 75% of the Laredo students. Short answer responses from the Lima group indicated that there were more students who developed a more critical and deeper understanding about the disparities that exist between their own privileged lives and the lives of those in their host communities. More than one participant from the Lima group talked about the concepts of privilege, race and change. The data shows how they began to think about what it means to be racialized and the benefits that come from being white. Elspeth (Lima) claimed that the experience “made me much more aware of my privilege and my position in the world ... While I cannot claim that my two week experience in Peru completely altered my life in Canada, it did make me more conscious and aware of my privilege and from this I am a more flexible, adaptable and gentler person.”

These ideas reflect the development of critical self-awareness about positionality and privilege that are reflective of other ISL research (e.g. Maynes et al., 2012; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). However, the Laredo students did not talk explicitly about the notion of privilege in their lives, but rather about appreciating the benefits of living in a western, industrialized nation such as Canada, including drinking clean water, having access to good housing, etc. It is difficult to know if this sense of gratefulness was based on an understanding of the privileges they enjoy as white, middle class students, or whether it reflects a lack of knowledge about the complexities of global poverty, as well as unstated and biased assumptions about what is considered a good or civilized life.

We noted above that some students came to understand their responsibilities in an unequal world to work together with the ‘Other’ to effect change. The theoretical framework we use directs our attention to the responsibilities associated with being a critical global citizen, both in terms of awareness and action. Larsen (2014) explains that the CGC:

challenges views that the West/white Europeans are better, more superior and have a responsibility to “help” the rest, who are viewed as victims. Rather, we need to see that we are all a part of the problem, as well as a part of the solution(s). In such a way, awareness of responsibility is a necessary precursor to responding/action. Without an ability to imagine that things can be otherwise and a corresponding awareness of one’s responsibility to address injustices, one cannot act (Larsen, 2014, p. 6).

Interestingly, we found some evidence about deepening perspectives concerning how social change occurs through people working together in communities. In this respect, the ISL practicum and service activities they participated in provoked some students to shift their perspectives of those in the host communities from helper/victim to partners and collaborators. Susan (Laredo) explained how changing attitudes about how to support communities necessitated “not having any preconceptions of the people in need.” These ideas, she claimed, were having a real impact on her teaching and commitment to address global issues with her students. Thus we see the link between shifting perspectives and actions taken up in the classroom.

Evidence presented above in our findings section illustrates how other participants experienced similar perspective transformations about people in the Global South whom they initially thought they were going to ‘help’. For example, Beatrice (Lima) commented, “Being immersed in the location kind of divides or smashes that us-versus-them or us-and-them kind of context.” Joan’s reflections above speak to an enhanced awareness about the possibilities of mutual learning through authentic engagement with those in the host communities. Thus we can see how the ISL practicum experience provoked students such as Beatrice, Joan, and Susan to change their perceptions about those who serve and those who are served, and began to break down us-versus-them binaries. Moreover, what we see in these particular students are expressions about the dispositions associated with a critical global citizen; an individual who recognizes the value of learning and collaborating **with** the Other, so that people (Peruvians and Texans in this case) maintain their own autonomy to define what development or progress looks like within their own context.

Students as we discovered were encouraged to think deeply about these ideas in evening debriefing sessions. Miguel, one of the Laredo team leaders, recalled a difficult discussion with one student-teacher about the differences between ‘serving’ and ‘helping’. He explained in his interview that having such conversations enabled the students to see how helping implies a deficiency (in the one who is helped) and serving implies that both parties benefit from the reciprocal relationship that develops in such situations. Miguel’s reflections along with similar reflections from some of the other participants alert us to the fact that the learning associated with global citizenship is a difficult, long-term and often uneven process, and that ISL placements can be the beginning of that journey. Thus, while some students may have developed some dispositions associated with global citizenship others may not have, but through critical reflection over time come to see the world in new and more critical ways.

6.1. Mixed evidence of ‘critical’ global citizens

The discussion above would suggest that in response to the research question guiding our study, the ISL practicum shaped our participants as critical global citizens. However, we are reluctant to make such a broad claim about the impact of this two-week ISL program. For instance, the surveys provided mixed evidence of

students discussing their understanding of why people are poor. This may also be due to the fact that critical analysis about global issues are difficult to articulate on a survey or interview, and that we did not probe students sufficiently about the systemic reasons underpinning the existence of global disparities. Our findings are somewhat surprising though, given that evening debriefing sessions in both ISL placements aimed to provoke students to think more critically about their daily experiences during their time abroad.

Additionally, our findings are mixed about the extent to which short-term ISL placements can support the development of teachers as ‘social-justice oriented citizens’ or ‘critical global citizens’. Amongst both the Lima and Laredo groups, we found little evidence of our participants either engaging in social justice actions or indicating that they would encourage their students to do so. They were more interested in being involved in volunteer activities with local, mainstream charities. While these aspects of civic actions are important, we argue that they do not represent the actions associated with CGC. Working for social change within established systems and structures is representative of Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) participatory citizen or what Andreotti (2006) refers to as ‘soft’ global citizenship. However, this is not reflective of Larsen’s model that posits the CGC as one who has developed deep analysis of the systemic nature of inequities and actively works in collaboration with the ‘Other’ to transform institutions and other power structures in socially just ways. Thus while some students expressed newfound knowledge about the need to work in solidarity with Others, we found no evidence that they actually followed through on this.

Reaching a level of critical understanding about power and privilege, the systemic roots of poverty and injustice in our world and radical structural solutions required to address these issues involves considerable time, as well as an openness to reflect critically upon issues, one’s taken-for-granted privileges in an unequal world and to humbly acknowledge that ‘we’ in the West do not have all of the solutions. Two weeks is far too short a time to engage in this deep learning through confronting what Britzman (2000) calls ‘difficult knowledge’. Moreover, as Britzman argues, there is still much work to be done within teacher education to develop a theory of knowledge beginning with self-knowledge through experience to realize that the world outside the classroom actually matters. This can be traumatic for those involved, something teacher education has not yet come to terms with. She writes, “[w]e have yet to grapple with what knowledge does to teachers, particularly the difficult knowledge of social catastrophe, evidence of woeful disregard, experiences of social violence, illness, and death, and most generally with what it means to come to terms with various kinds of trauma” (Britzman, 2000, p. 202).

Engaging with this knowledge, which our participants were confronted with on a daily basis, takes considerable effort and time. While there was limited time and scope invested in pre-departure orientation, with most focused on the logistical and safety dimensions of travelling abroad, team leaders considered reflection essential and provided students with opportunities in the evenings to debrief and reflect upon their daily experiences. For example, during one evening debriefing session with the Laredo group, the team leaders, Kirk and Miguel, encouraged students to think deeply about the military presence on the US–Mexico border. Miguel noted that seeing the military presence there provoked students to think about the risks individuals (from Mexico) took to flee to the United States and implications for their own classroom teaching. The experience, according to Miguel, “made it real for them” and provided further opportunities to discuss what it was like for refugee children in their own classrooms back home. Such discussions with the student-teachers resulted in a deepened “sense of appreciation

for the struggle that so many people who have made it to Canada have gone through and endured.” This is the kind of ‘difficult knowledge’ that teacher education needs to encounter and there is considerable potential to engage with this kind of knowledge through ISL placements such as the ones we studied.

However, while team leaders provided students with opportunities to engage in critical reflections, there was room for improving how students (and team leaders themselves) recognize their own privileges as outsiders coming to ‘help’ and how they are implicated in patterns of inequality and injustices in today’s world. Ultimately, scholars understand that it takes time and persistence to push against well-established values, beliefs and ideas that are both consciously and unconsciously held for transformation to occur (Britzman, 2000; Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 2007).

Larsen’s CGC framework situates change for the CGC within processes associated with reflexivity, dialogue, and the development of ethical relationships with the Other. Ethical relationships depend on the development of critical literacy which, according to Andreotti (2006), consists of providing space for individuals to reflect upon their own particular contexts, privileges and positionality in an unequal world. What is necessary then is to give student-teachers meaningful opportunities to think deeply and critically about their own taken-for-granted assumptions (about poverty and notions of ‘helping’, for example), and “how we came to think/be/feel/act the way we do and the implications of our systems of belief in local/global terms in relation to power, social relationships and the distribution of labour and resources” (Andreotti, 2006, p. 49).

Engaging with our own and others’ perspectives is the foundation for transforming our views, identities, and actions in socially just ways, which is at the heart of critical global citizenship. Supporting student teachers in becoming global citizenship educators through ISL practicum placements demands that opportunities for the development of critical literacy be embedded in these programs prior to departure, throughout the placement, immediately after the placement, and, in the best case scenario, over the long-term. Thus, we conclude that while the benefits of the ISL program in our study were many, in other respects it was too short a time to enable students to develop the capacities necessary to become ‘critical’ global citizens, and further work needs to be done to incorporate critical literacy throughout international teacher education practicum placements.

7. Limitations

There are a number of limitations of this study. The first is the lower than desired response rates. These rates are unsurprising, given that the request to participate in the post-survey/interview was sent after students returned home from their placements. To address response rate issues, Cantalini-Williams et al. (2014) recommend that student teachers be encouraged to participate in research carried out on international teaching placements, with incentives offered to yield higher response rates. Another limitation is the self-selection bias in those who chose to participate might not well represent the entire target population, but rather only a subset who found the international practicum to be a positive experience. The questionnaire that we devised was based on our interests for research but was not validated in any way. We are also aware that our position, as researchers-educators may influence the data that were created in the survey or interview despite our efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis. We noted above that our survey and interview instruments did not probe students deeply enough about their encounters with difficult knowledge.

Furthermore, like other case studies, there is limited

generalizability, although the cross-case nature of our study certainly contributes to the validity of our results. The point of presenting the results of this case study here, however, is to illustrate some of the potential effects of the wider scale shift to including international, experiential practicum experiences within teacher education programs. Finally, while we have presented evidence that suggests that the international practicum placement was having (or would have) an effect on teaching, this is based on students’ perceptions of the transformation they underwent at one point in time, early in their teaching careers. This alerts us to the need for further longitudinal, empirical research in this area in order to demonstrate the ways in which transformation through international practicum placements are sustained over time and manifest in classroom settings.

8. Conclusion

In his recent book, Westheimer (2015) argues that schools should educate students to be active, responsible citizens in a democratic society. He makes the case that educators have the opportunity to influence how students understand the world and how they view their capacity to shape it. According to Westheimer, educating future citizens for democratic societies requires schools that teach students to ask critical questions, expose them to multiple perspectives and viewpoints on important issues, provide opportunities to analyze different perspectives and engage with controversial issues. While Westheimer’s discussion focuses on democratic citizenship, as teacher-educators we are committed to developing teachers who are able to educate students not only as democratic citizens, but also as critical global citizens.

Our study builds on the growing body of research about international teaching and service initiatives within teacher education programs. However, as we noted above in our literature review, there is a lack of research that explicitly uses a global citizenship education theoretical framework as the lens through which to evaluate the impact of these programs. Additionally, in building upon the initial Laredo, Texas study with data from two further cohorts of student-teachers who went to Lima, Peru our findings are more robust compared to single-case studies.

Above all, this study stands out in taking a longitudinal approach, surveying participants both immediately after the international practicum and then surveying/interviewing them 3–12 months later when many of them had begun their teaching careers. Other authors have called for longitudinal studies on ISL given the paucity of research in this area (e.g. Eyler, 2011; Jones et al., 2012). We completely agree with Eyler (2011), who argues that while retrospective studies of the impact of ISL programs are crucial, “a genuine longitudinal study in which careful data about the ISL experiences were gathered and the cohort then tracked over time would be more powerful” (p. 236). Our findings provide evidence about how transformations that occur through international practicum placements are sustained over time and have the potential to inform teaching practice in positive and progressive ways.

The international placements in this study were two weeks in total, including travel days. Thus, student teachers were engaged in service activities for approximately 10 days. There is considerable evidence, as reviewed above, in the research literature of the benefits of short-term international teaching and service placements for teacher education students. As Olmedo and Harbon’s (2010) argue, even short-term international experiences can be of great value for participants:

Placing teacher candidates even in short-term international learning and living situations, especially those that bring them in close interaction with teaching contexts in the host countries,

can begin to raise awareness of why a global perspective is necessary ... they can also sensitize teachers to the frustrations that their own students face when in classrooms taught in a national language that they do not understand (Olmedo & Harbon, 2010, p. 86).

However, despite these positive outcomes, we found less evidence that this ISL placement produced global citizenship educators who could be defined as critical thinkers who were transformed through engagement with difficult knowledge. Only a handful of students appeared to have developed a deep understanding of their own power and positionality; systemic reasons for poverty and injustice; and a commitment to working for social change. None of the participants, however, demonstrated that they were engaged in social justice actions to ameliorate injustices and inequities that exist in the world. Thus, while we have documented the value of this international practicum placement for the student teachers in our study, we also note the need for further opportunities to develop critical literacy skills before, during, and after the placement in order to become educators who engage deeply with the global nature of the world within their local classrooms.

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