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## Developing Global Educators and Intercultural Competence Through an International Teaching Practicum in Kenya

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**Developing Global Educators and Intercultural Competence through an International Teaching Practicum in Kenya**  
**Développer des éducateurs globaux et des compétences interculturelles à travers un stage international d'enseignement au Kenya**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the extent and nature of changes in personal and professional behaviors, values, and attitudes of 46 Canadian teacher candidates who participated in a three week teaching practicum in Kenya. All participants completed a pre and post practicum Global-Mindedness Survey (Hett, 1993), participated in interviews, and engaged in personal and public reflections. Our results suggest that the Kenyan practicum significantly increased the teacher candidates' global-mindedness and intercultural competence. The teacher candidates' teaching practice was positively affected as reflected in their increased commitment to build community, improved skills in teaching English language learners, their ability to globalize the curriculum, and their confidence in the realization that they were their own greatest teaching resource. We theorize planned transformative learning opportunities during the cultural immersion of international practicums can greatly enhance the intercultural competence of teachers in today's diverse classrooms.

**Résumé**

Le but de cette étude à méthodes mixtes était d'explorer l'étendue et la nature des changements encourus dans les comportements, valeurs et attitudes personnels et professionnels de 46 enseignant-apprenants Canadiens qui ont participé à un stage d'enseignement de trois semaines au Kenya. Tous les participants ont complété un sondage sur l'état d'esprit global (Hett, 1993), avant et après le stage, ont pris part à des entretiens, et se sont engagés dans des réflexions personnelles et publiques. Nos résultats suggèrent que le stage Kényan a significativement augmenté l'état d'esprit global et la compétence interculturelle des enseignant-apprenants. Les pratiques d'enseignement de ces enseignant-apprenants ont été positivement affectées, comme en témoignent leur engagement accru à construire leur communauté, l'amélioration de leurs compétences à enseigner aux apprenants de l'anglais, leur habilité à globaliser leur programme, et leur confiance en réalisant qu'ils représentaient, eux-mêmes, leurs meilleures ressources d'enseignement. Nous théorisons que les opportunités planifiées d'apprentissage transformatif durant l'immersion culturelle lors des stages internationaux peuvent grandement renforcer la compétence interculturelle des enseignants travaillant, de nos jours, dans des salles de classe diversifiées.

**Keywords:** teacher education; international teaching practicum; global-mindedness; intercultural competence

**Mots-clés:** formation des enseignants ; stage international d'enseignement ; état d'esprit global; compétence interculturelle

Given the diversity of Canada's population, education must be intercultural. If education does not address the cultural reality of students it risks becoming a tool for the "inculcation of national or religious fundamentalism" (Coulby, 2006, p. 246). In this paper, we explore the extent to which international teaching practicums achieve the goals of intercultural education. Simply stated, intercultural education aims to develop the capacity of "learning to live in an ethnically and culturally diverse society" (Leeman, 2003). Specifically, we explore through the lens of

transformational learning, the personal and pedagogical changes of teacher candidates involved in an international teaching practicum in Kenya.

Countries in the Western world are becoming nations of minorities in which no group, including Whites, will be able to claim a majority of the population. Canada's population "continues to be more racially diverse as current immigration and Canadian birth patterns change the face of the population" (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009, p. 592), and is reflected in the student demographic of Canadian classrooms, particularly in metropolitan centers (Harvey & Houle, 2006). For many new teachers their first teaching position is in the heart of these settings (Hodgkinson, 2002). Levine's (2006) comprehensive study reported teacher education did not sufficiently prepare candidates in, among other areas, the individual needs of culturally diverse students, and students who have limited English proficiency.

Many argue that teacher education programs do not significantly alter the beliefs and values of new teachers (Bullough, 1991; Knowles, 1992), and there is often a mismatch between what teacher preparation programs think they teach and what new teachers feel they learned (Kosnik & Beck, 2009). We, as well as others (Cushner & Mahon, 2009), believe teachers continue to graduate from preparatory institutions without the necessary competencies to ensure educational equity to support all students in achieving their personal and professional goals in a globalized world.

Support for cross-cultural experiential learning to progress teachers' cultural perspectives has been evidenced since the 1960s (Taylor, 1969). In the 1980s, Wilson (1982) noted while there has been an intuitive acceptance of the value of intercultural experiences, "few connections have been made between the teacher's cross-cultural experience and his or her experience as a teacher in the classroom" (p. 184). More recently, researchers (Armstrong, 2008; Cushner, 2007; Lee, 2011) acknowledged the need to support teacher candidates' cultural sensitivity and globalization to prepare for the increase in cultural mobility. Findings from this international practicum study will contribute to understanding the connection between teachers' development of intercultural competence and their teaching practices.

The teacher candidates and two faculty facilitators (the authors of this study) had the unique opportunity to live, teach, and participate in many of the activities of a rural farming community in Kenya. The trip was supported by a Canadian non-governmental organization, Free the Children/Me-to-We, who organized accommodations, meals, and local travel arrangements. Our teaching assignments for the three weeks were in a primary school in grades three to seven. Although the official languages of Kenya are English and Swahili, all the students were English language learners whose first language was the mother tongue spoken by their tribe – either Kipsigi or Maasai. Many of the students also had significant gaps in their educational background due to family responsibilities.

Our teacher candidates and faculty facilitators worked directly with the Kenyan classroom teachers in a collaborative teaching environment. Teaching resources were limited to a chalkboard (black paint on a cement wall), chalk, and a teacher textbook. In the classrooms, 30-60 students sat three to a desk, and were limited to lined notebooks and shared pencils or pens. Most classrooms had a limited number of shared textbooks for the students. The candidates brought some supplies with them (colored paper, chart paper, markers, etc.). Our candidates taught in groups of two or three for four hours in the mornings. The afternoon and evenings were reserved for cultural excursions and collaborative lesson planning sessions, supported by the two faculty facilitators. As facilitators, the authors were present in the classrooms observing each of the candidates at least twice. Outside school hours the group was invited into the homes, high

school, church, and community health facilities of our Kenyan hosts, and participated in cultural events.

It is important to note the authors explore the value of international practicums from the perspective of the visiting group. This is reflected in our choice of terms: *intercultural* as opposed to *multicultural*. Although there is no consensus in how these terms are used in the literature (Leeman, 2003), from our point of view, “intercultural” tends to focus more on “contact” and “exchange” between groups, and largely assumes equal power relations between groups while optimizing educational opportunities for all students. On the other hand, thinking in terms of “multicultural” involves delving into the histories of racism and colonization. Multicultural education addresses the power differences between Western and developing countries, and the social hierarchies between white and racialized groups. It is the “early ethnic studies (and women’s studies) movement’s focus on individual group empowerment, as opposed to the intercultural education focus on intergroup harmony, that is specified as the historical antecedent of multicultural education” (Cushner & Mahon, 2009, p. 307). Critical to the discussion of bringing ‘education’ to developing countries, but beyond the scope of this paper, is the politicized (multicultural) analysis of Western ways of being and thinking imposed on indigenous students and communities. This was an issue the researchers struggled with both during the practicum experience, and in the writing of this manuscript. In the end, we decided that our limited experiences and positioning as white teachers only supported an intercultural account.

### **Literature Review**

To assist in understanding how the Kenyan practicum affected the teacher candidates, a review of the related literature was conducted to locate the research within the topic of international teaching practicums and intercultural education. Within education, there is a need to address “subjective culture” (Triandis, 1994) and to provide learners with an understanding of underlying cultural values, communication styles, and worldviews. Intercultural competence has been broadly defined as “appropriate and effective communication and behaviour in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2009, p. xi). Lonner and Hayes (2004) further explain that intercultural competence is multidimensional involving emotional, contextual, and interpersonal intelligences in the creation of a person who is emotionally caring yet controlled, sensitive to interpersonal dynamics, and genuinely perceptive when in complex and highly interactive situations” (p. 92). Hence, it is important for beginning teachers to critically understand their own practice if they are going to connect with their students, and be more conscious of the multiple realities and identities of the communities in which they work.

Allport’s (1954) seminal work on intergroup contact purported cultural awareness and the reduction of prejudice involved not only contact but also the building of authentic relationships. Allport’s contact hypothesis was strongly supported by Pettigrew and Tropp’s (2006) meta analysis of more than 500 studies. Knowledge, although necessary, is not enough to make teachers interculturally competent (Bok, 2006), and a trip abroad does not necessarily result in transformational learning or intercultural competence. Individuals may perceive themselves as knowledgeable or ‘experts’ on a particular aspect of African culture without being able to communicate effectively with people of African descent. Rather, it is through entering other lives that we begin to enter the world, have something to compare ourselves to, and thereby develop a wider perspective (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Wilson, 1982). Thus, interculturally competent teachers need to develop not only a knowledge of other perspectives but also deeper personal

understandings to “truly access the *appropriateness* of the behavior and communication” (Deardorff, 2009, p. xii, italics in original).

Many researchers suggest if we are concerned about intercultural education, intercultural experiential learning should be a component of every teacher education program (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Merryfield, 2000; Merryfield, Jarchow, & Pickert, 1997; Sleeter, 2007; Wilson, 1982). Here, the idea of intercultural *experiential* learning, as opposed to intercultural experiences, is used to emphasize the engagement in the cultural immersion experience is planned, purposeful, critically analyzed, and reflected upon (Armstrong, 2008; Cushner, 2007; Wilson, 1982). Facilitated contact – through mentoring, coaching, training, transformative learning, or reflection – often develops greater intercultural competence than independent, unguided contact (Bennett, 2009).

Researchers have documented the professional and personal outcomes of teacher candidates who participated in international practicums. Professionally, American teacher candidates in the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching placed in sites that included Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand (Cushner & Mahon, 2002), perceived the international teaching practicum as enhancing their professional teaching practice. Similar results were reported by Australian teacher candidates in Thailand (Buchanan, 2004), American teacher candidates in Italy (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008), and Canadian teacher candidates in Africa (Mwebi & Brigham, 2009). American teacher candidates in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Thomas, 2006), reported the candidates improved their teaching practices for students who did not have English as their first language.

Personally, teacher candidates grew in self confidence and appreciated the opportunity to be immersed and participate authentically in another culture, rather than simply observe (Buchanan, 2004; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Thomas, 2006). The international practicum heightened the teacher candidates’ intercultural tolerance and cultural understanding of their respective practicum host countries (Buchanan, 2004; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Thomas, 2006). Key to the success of the Republic of Kazakhstan practicum was the cultural immersion of the teacher candidates, as they boarded with the teachers in the public schools while on their practicum (Thomas, 2006). The teacher candidates gained a better understanding of the importance of reflecting on their professional teaching practice and personal beliefs and values regarding stereotypes and prejudices of those culturally different from themselves (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Adulthood comes with the recognition that change is constant and there are no enduring truths. It is therefore imperative to “develop a more critical worldview as we seek ways to better understand our world” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5). The conceptual framework for this study draws upon the theory of adult learning known as transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 1996, 2000; Taylor, 2007, 2008), and the worldview of global-mindedness (Hett, 1993).

### ***Transformational Learning Theory***

Transformational learning theory is an adult learning theory based on the fundamental principle that adults make meaning and learn from personal experiences (Mezirow, 1991). It is part of a developmental process grounded in communication, where new meanings can be created through the re-interpretation of experiences, filtered through one’s expectations, beliefs, and assumptions

(Taylor, 2008). According to Mezirow (1996), meaning structures are based on meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Meaning schemes are specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings; meaning perspectives are general frames of reference, worldviews, or personal paradigms. Meaning perspectives are uncritically acquired through the process of socialization and acculturation with parents, teachers, and mentors. Mezirow (1997) contends that meaning perspectives become the lens through which we view and evaluate the world, and although they provide us with direction and meanings, they also distort our thoughts and perceptions. To understand how meanings evolve, Mezirow (2000) described three-phases of transformational learning involving content, process, and premise stages.

The *content stage* begins with dissonance created by recognizing a new situation or information as inconsistent with previous understandings; this is described as a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). It prompts one to engage in the *process stage* characterized by “self examination” due to “feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). This stage is pivotal as it can have a variety of outcomes. According to the dual process theory described by Gregoire (2003), there exists two possible routes for processing information: i) a systematic processing route requiring effortful cognitive processing and potential long-term change or ii) a peripheral processing route involving automatic, low level processing producing short-term or no change. Finally, the *premise stage* is characterized by the critical assessment of one’s assumptions.

The critical assessment stage of transformational learning has received significant attention from researchers. The ability to reflect critically appears to be a developmental process linked to experience. Merriam (2004) asserted, “mature cognitive development is foundational to engaging in critical reflection and rational discourse necessary for transformative learning” (p. 65), and this gives credence to the notion of providing teacher candidates with the opportunities and support to reflect critically. Gregoire (2003), in her analysis of conceptual change, further noted meaningful change is difficult and requires sufficient motivation, ability, and a supportive context to overcome the convenience of peripheral persuasion routes where discrepant information is simply assimilated into pre-existing frameworks or discarded altogether. In the absence of required support, and a threshold level of readiness and ability, an individual may feel threatened rather than challenged, and consequently be unable to accommodate new information, with no resultant belief changes. These findings suggest that without a supportive environment and the opportunity to experience and explore new perspectives, transformational learning is unlikely.

### ***Global-Mindedness***

Teaching is a relational act and how teachers perceive themselves as related to their students and the world community is central to being an effective teacher. Most people see their worldview as coherent and tend to interpret events in ways that are consistent with their view. According to Golay (2006), “worldviews that are narrow, ethnocentric, or discriminatory run counter to attitudes conducive to teaching” ... and “shifts in worldview that makes it more inclusive, ethnorelative, and tolerant are what should be the goals for study abroad and intercultural education in general” (p. 7). In an attempt to develop an instrument to measure the construct of global-mindedness, Hett (1993) sought to understand the extent to which university students developed a worldview in which they saw themselves as connected to the world community, and felt a sense of responsibility for its members. This orientation was reflected in specific attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours including:

. . . an appreciation of the diversity of the cultures of the world, and a belief that all have

something of value to offer. There is also a belief that one's actions can make a difference. A globally-minded person thinks in terms of what is good for the global community and shares an awareness and appreciation of the interrelatedness of all peoples and nations. (Golay, 2006, p. 8)

We use the concept of global-mindedness as a measure of the impact of an international teaching practicum on teaching practices and personal worldviews, or to use Mezirow's term, meaning perspectives.

## **Method**

This mixed methods study employed a concurrent embedded strategy (Creswell, 2009, p. 214) meaning that both types of data were collected simultaneously, with the qualitative (secondary) data embedded or nested within the quantitative (primary) data. Creswell (2005) noted that the strength of a mixed method design is in combining the generalizability of the quantitative data with the clarifying information of the qualitative data. The current study addressed the following research questions: (1) How has the experience of an international practicum in Kenya affected teacher candidates personally and professionally? (2) In terms of transformative learning, how has the international practicum experience affected the teacher candidates' understanding of intercultural education?

### ***Data Collection and Participants***

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from 46 teacher candidates attending the three-week Kenya practicum on two consecutive years: 21 candidates in 2010, and 25 candidates in 2011. One hundred percent participation was achieved in the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. For the quantitative data, each candidate completed a pre and post practicum Global-Mindedness Survey (Hett, 1993). The global-mindedness survey measured five dimensions or sub-scales: responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, globalcentrism, and interconnectedness. The survey consisted of a 30 item Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey was chosen for its strong validity and reliability and was developed through a process of retroductive triangulation and grounded in sociological theory construction. The internal reliability, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, was .90 for the overall tool and alphas for the sub-scales ranged from .70-.79 (Hett, 1993). A Content Validity Index (CVI) was established by a panel of four content judges with an overall CVI of .88 (Hett, 1993). Duckworth, Levy, and Levy (2005) and Kehl and Morris (2008) further validated the instrument.

As part of the qualitative data, the teacher candidates participated in semi-structured individual pre and post practicum interviews. The interviews were guided by statements adapted from questions used by Cushner and Mahon (2002), and Buchanan (2004). Further, qualitative data included personal reflections (journals and photographs), and public reflections (in the form of "daily highlights" shared at the end of each day and group presentations), which were used to further explore the interpretations and meanings the participants derived from their experiences as recorded in the global-mindedness survey.

### ***Data Analysis***

Taylor-Powell and Renner's (2003) five-step process was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. The interview data was organized according to the global-mindedness dimensions as well as other emerging themes to bring meaning to the data. These categories were related to studies previously described in the literature and analyzed through the lens of the transformational learning theory. Transforming the raw data by way of coding, categorizing, and organizing the

information facilitated in drawing conclusions. Verification of the results involved constantly comparing information from the various sources to test the sturdiness and conformity of the results.

## Results

The results were in the responses given in the surveys and interviews, and embedded in the journals, photographs, discussions, and presentations shared by those who participated in the Kenyan practicum. We have used pseudonyms in place of all the names of our teacher candidates. Paired samples *t* tests were conducted to explore differences in pre and post ratings of *global-mindedness* and for each the five sub-scales of global mindedness. Cohen's *d*, which is a measure of the effect size is also reported. Effect size provides additional information, as it is an indicator of the magnitude of the difference between two variables (e.g., pre and post for each scale). A value of *d* greater than 0.8 is considered large, a value between 0.2 and 0.8 is considered medium and a value between 0 and 0.2 is considered small.

Table 1 shows that across all scales candidates on average had higher post scores than pre scores and this difference was statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) for all scales. In regard to effect size, for all statistically significant effects the magnitude of the difference was large except for the *responsibility sub-scale* and *global centrism sub-scale*, where there was a medium effect.

**Table 1: Pre and Post Global-Mindedness Survey Results**

Variable	Pre		Post		<i>t</i> (46)	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Total Scale Score	120.00	10.29	128.51	7.74	-6.83**	1.00
Responsibility Sub-scale Score	28.32	3.62	29.32	2.98	-2.46**	0.36
Cultural Pluralism Sub-scale Score	34.55	3.22	37.11	2.12	-7.10**	1.04
Efficacy Sub-scale Score	20.77	2.52	22.60	2.07	-5.98**	0.87
Global Centrism Sub-scale Score	19.74	2.63	20.91	2.42	-2.98**	0.43
Interconnectedness Sub-scale Score	20.06	2.57	22.19	1.80	-5.92**	0.86

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Note: *d* represents the Cohen's *d* effect size and is interpreted as follows:  $0 < d < 0.2$  is small;  $0.2 < d < 0.8$  is medium; and  $d > 0.8$  is large

The medium effect of the *responsibility* and *global centrism sub-scales* may be explained, in part, by noting that teacher candidates who would find an international practicum attractive may already have a highly developed sense of moral responsibility for the well-being of others and a willingness to make decisions based on global concerns. A participating teacher candidate explained her perspective following the practicum in this manner, "I think my priorities have not necessarily changed, but [have] been enhanced" (Jamie).

Using the concurrent embedded strategy (Creswell, 2009), we used the qualitative data (i.e., interviews, journals, photographs, "daily highlights" discussions, and group presentations) to further elucidate our quantitative results (i.e., Global-Mindedness survey). The nesting process

clarified the findings in relation to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of the teacher candidates within each of the global-mindedness dimensions.

*Responsibility* is defined as the belief that we have a moral responsibility to be mindful of others and improve conditions for people in all parts of the world (Hett, 1993, p. 143). This concern was evident in our candidates. All the participants spoke of their responsibility to conserve natural resources. For example, a candidate noted, “the awareness that Kenya was experiencing a drought had me conserving water while I was there, and that translated to my daily life back in Canada” (Morgan). Similarly, Casey stated, “I definitely want to be the change in our community and can foresee myself promoting a more sustainable, less energy consumption lifestyle.”

*Cultural Pluralism* can be described as a recognition that other cultures have different but valuable ways of being, thinking and doing, and taking pleasure in exploring other cultures (Hett, 1993, p. 143). The teacher candidates immersion in the community heightened their cultural awareness and sensitivity to their host community. According to transformational learning theory, when confronted with a different perspective, an individual has to somehow reconcile the new knowledge with previous understandings. This requires a certain level of open-mindedness, and the need to “learn more, and assume less” as one of our participants noted (Carey). The orientation toward community as opposed to individuality (Nwosu, 2009), and the generosity of the Kenyan people affected our group who noted, “how right Kenya has it” (Taylor). Rene, offered this perspective on one of the local leaders, “She told us to take anything we want from her house. We were a group of about 30 people, fully clothed, sunglasses, hats, water, sunscreen, and much more . . . yet she still welcomed us to anything in her house.” Recognizing different ways of living helps break down previously held assumptions and stereotypes. Moreover, through the direct experience of other cultures our own culture is reflected back upon us. The following observation speaks to a developing understanding of cultural pluralism:

Being immersed in a different lifestyle I am aware that the people of Kenya, and more specifically, the people in the [host] community are happy, and we must not feel sorry for them and their way of life because it is how they have lived for so long and how they continue to live and provide for themselves and their family. (Rory)

Our teacher candidates were interested in exploring how this community lived as evidenced by the many questions they asked. In particular, the Maasai traditions held special interest. Further, all our candidates learned a few phrases in Swahili to better communicate with their students and host teachers. At the end of the practicum, Kim, one of our candidates was able to make a farewell address to the school community speaking in Swahili.

*Efficacy* is the notion that one’s actions and involvement in international issues can make a positive impact on the world (Hett, 1993, p. 143). Of all the sub-scales, this belief was the most commonly stated. The efficacy concept took many forms including commitments to “be more resourceful, [and] less wasteful” (Reese), as well as to “grow a garden, [and] buy locally” (Kelly). In reference to her practicum experience, Chris stated, “Kenya has changed me for the best... I will be the change [in] my own life and hopefully [in] others.”

*Globalcentrism* described in the words of a candidate, is the ability to “think of others before I think of myself” (Vic). It refers to thoughts and actions that are globally centered, as opposed to considering only of one’s own country or community (Hett, 1993, p. 143). Many comments made by our candidates regarding the conservation of resources – some of which have already been mentioned – could fall under this category. Devon’s promise to “consume less

paper and electricity” is another example.

Global-centered thinking also occurred within the teaching context. Our group brought with them many colourful teaching resources (stickers, coloured paper, crayons, etc.). They quickly realized that their students would not have access to these consumables after we left. As a group, and out of their own initiative, the teacher candidates decided they would teach only with the resources available to Kenyan teachers. One of the lessons was an art class using only found materials. The results were as beautiful and creative as any lesson the authors have seen.

The candidates’ decision to teach using only resources available to local teachers was pivotal in their development of intercultural competence. Their decision marked a shift from the expediencies of personal teaching concerns to the acceptance of responsibility for teaching decisions on culturally different others. As a condition of transformational learning, the candidates demonstrated the high level of cognitive effort needed for potential for long term change through what Gregoire (2003) terms *accomodation*. Transformational long term change requires motivation, ability, and a supportive context in order to challenge deeply held assumptions. Permanent change is not a simple task, and Kreber (2004) noted the greater importance of critical reflection around goals and purposes in education when compared to reflection around intruotional and pedagogical knowledge. She emphasized the need to be more concerned with *why* we teach rather than *what* or *how* we teach. This sensitivity to the consequences of one’s actions as they impact other people was summed up by a teacher candidate, “I more firmly believe that I am a member of a global community and that there are things I can do in order to make this life experience better for all globally” (Sam).

*Interconnectedness* is an awareness and appreciation that peoples all around the world are interconnected which results in the felt presence of the global human family (Hett, 1993, p. 143). This connection and interdependency was recognized in Cam’s words, “Wherever you go in the world people still laugh, cry, and want the best for their families, at the basic level we are all human.” The advice offered by Dorian prompted us to “remember we are more alike than different.” Shared practices make this connection obvious as noted by Kim’s experience of chasing after a kicked ball:

Here I was some 6000 km away from home in a foreign place with very few things in common but yet we all knew how to play football. It is one of the few commonalities between people across the world. It connects people through social, cultural and language barriers.

Not all the qualitative data nested neatly into the quantitative data. We found a significant portion of our qualitative data could fall into more than one of the Global-Mindedness sub-scales. For example, Chris shared that she made a promise to “make someone feel special every day.” Depending of the context and interpretation, this could be seen as a “deep personal concern for people” (Responsibility sub-scale; Hett, 1993, p. 143), or a “belief that an individual’s actions can make a difference” (Efficacy sub-scale; Hett, 1993, p. 143), or an “appreciation of the interrelatedness of all peoples” (Interconnectedness sub-scale; Hett, 1993, p. 143). We found similar ambiguities in the 30 items comprising the Global-Mindedness Survey, which led to questions regarding the differentiation of each of the sub-scales. From our perspective, this challenges the instrument’s validity – whether the test “measures what it says it does and relates directly to the test’s purpose” (Fantini, 2009, p. 475), and reliability – how well the “instrument produces consistent results each time it is used” (Fantini, 2009, p. 475).

Furthermore, we found that the Global-Mindedness Survey (Hett, 1993) did not provide specific insights as it pertains to *teaching practice* in intercultural settings. Here, the focus is not on intercultural competence, but rather, how an intercultural environment heightened the teacher

candidates' awareness of their own teaching practice – a useful discussion when describing intercultural education. In fairness, “a single instrument is usually inadequate for measuring all aspects of intercultural competence” (Fantini, 2009, p. 465), and due to the multidimensional and multi-perspective nature of intercultural competence, it is recommended that assessment include, a “mix of quantitative and qualitative methods ... including interviews, observation, and judgment by self and others (Deardorff, 2006, p. 241). Analysis of the qualitative data revealed emergent themes associated with the attitudes, values, and actions related to teaching practice. The following themes emerged outside the Global-Mindedness Survey.

### ***Flexibility in Teaching***

From the first day, teacher candidates taught one hundred percent of the instructional time. The candidates were challenged with: limited teaching resources; all students were English language learners; student age and academic ability within each grade ranged significantly; no special education support or identification; and all the candidates were culturally different from their students. The candidates had to be creative in their teaching, and Avery noted, “I think that I have developed the use of my imagination”. Another teacher candidate expanded on this theme by explaining:

As a teacher, I was challenged in Kenya to differentiate my instruction because of the lack of resources that we are so accustomed to in our Ontario classrooms. I learned I am creative and capable of being an effective teacher in a variety of settings and can make meaningful connections with my students regardless of cultural and language barriers. (Casey)

### ***Technology and Other “Flashy Circus Performances”***

Prior to their departure for Kenya the teacher candidates were made aware of the limited teaching resources available. As a result, they took with them instructional materials (to leave in Kenya) but also many colorful supplies (consumables). As previously described, due to the candidates developing understanding of sustainable educational practices, all the candidates decided not to use the consumables. At the same time, a new understanding regarding the use of technology in the classroom began to emerge. It was noted that the constant use of technology, described as “flashy circus performances” (Harley), could be a crutch for poor teaching, and expensive teaching resources were certainly not the foundation of good teaching. One candidate commented,

teaching does not need to comprise of a bunch of technology, fancy lesson plans and coloured pencils ... I learned in Kenya very clearly that resources do not equal learning. I found that even with limited teaching resources, teaching and more importantly learning can occur. (Lane)

Pat concurred, “I have been reminded from my trip to Kenya, that technology and ‘things’ do not always matter or make a lesson better. Sometimes the ‘stuff’ adds too many distractions and does not aid in a successful learning environment.” Upon returning to the Ontario classroom, many candidates stated that they used technology only when it was appropriate, and not for every lesson.

### ***Building Community***

After each day of teaching the teacher candidates gathered in the communal lodge and planned lessons together. The benefit of teacher collaboration was a consistent theme threaded across both trips and affected all candidates. The positive energy among the candidates during this time together was tangible, and as a candidate described, “The collaboration of people can be

unbelievably powerful”. Parker continued to explain, “You literally saw when we were planning lessons all these ideas floating in the air. And everyone getting inspired by each other and that was so powerful”. Reagan concurred, “I realized that your biggest resource is not the textbook, the computers, the television, the videos, the mind maps, the chalkboard – it is each other”.

The teacher candidates developed what is described as an esprit de corps. Candidates could only work until 10 p.m., at which time the generator was shut off and all lights were out for the evening. On no occasion was one candidate left to plan by him or her self. Planning was always a team effort and before anyone left for bed they would ask the other teams if they needed help. As stated by Morgan, “I learned the importance of interpersonal relationships and working together. I learned when you put your trust in others they will gladly stand by your side and return the sentiment”. There was evidence that the candidates coached and learned from each other. They were “constantly checking in with [their] teaching partners and building off of each other’s ideas, feedback and praise” (Carey). Taylor clarified, “. . . whether I had fifty more math notebooks to mark, or entire lesson plans to prepare, my teammates offered their help without a second thought”. Mackenzie explained, “I think the collaboration with other teachers . . . seeing their styles and approaches, it really made me grow as a teacher”.

An orientation toward group and community is considered an African cultural trait (Nwosu, 2009). Although the candidates’ assigned teaching groups fostered working together, Western society tends to place greater emphasis on individuality, independence, and competition. During their stay, the candidates developed an understanding of how community is foundational to a society where survival is a lived reality. The ethic of community found its way into our teaching practice. One candidate reflected, “I learned the importance of community and feel a strong urge to make my classroom a big community, more so than I did before I left” (Avery). Chris stated, “I would like to encourage a safe and welcoming learning environment that the Kenyan school community extended to me.” Mich had this to say:

Because of this Kenyan experience, when I have students from another country I won’t see them as different or from somewhere far away. I will see them as a student, as a person. Wherever they come from I won’t think of stereotypes like poverty or terrorism, I will think this student has probably left people that cared for them to pursue opportunities in Canada and I will have a very inclusive and globally aware classroom.

### ***Self Confidence***

Increased self confidence developed from direct participation in the international practicum. Adrien proclaimed, “ I learned . . . I have the potential to be a highly resilient person”. In speaking about how her confidence in teaching improved because of her practicum experience, Blair stated, “I feel so much more confident just standing in front of the class, knowing that I do have the strategies needed to be an effective teacher”. The ability to teach in unique conditions proved affirming to the teacher candidates. “I have a lot more confidence than some because I was able to teach and students were able to learn with so many barriers between us such as language, social, and economic differences ” (Ashley). Another stated, “I learned I am adaptable. I was skeptical about my ability to teach a foreign curriculum but I learned I am quick to think on my feet” (Mel).

### ***English Language Learners***

The data support the candidates’ improvement in teaching English language learners. The Kenyan students were instructed in Swahili in grades one and two and English instruction began in grade three. Regardless of the language obstacles, the candidates used their creativity,

patience, and perseverance to teach. As Ariel stated, “you just couldn’t help but be flexible in Kenya, you were forced into it and it was good”. Most candidates taught without the host teacher in the classroom. Another candidate, Pat, described a challenge repeated throughout the practicum, “Oh surprise, you don’t have a translator today and your kids [sic] hardly speak Swahili or English. Have fun teaching them a literacy lesson on *does* and *didn’t*. ”

### ***Globalizing the Curriculum***

The teacher candidates became more cognizant about globalizing the curriculum after the international practicum. The candidates reported integrating Kenyan knowledge and experience into current teaching practices. For example, “In my Canadian classroom, I definitely embrace cultural difference in a different way. I feel I use the diversity of a classroom as a teaching tool” (Kim). He continued,

I learned that Africa cannot be generalized as a continent, as it is such a vast region, with many different people, languages, cultures, and lifestyles. Today, when I share stories of Kenya, I am reminded to be specific as to where I was. When someone asks me, “how was Africa?” I explain to them where I was specifically, ensuring that people are aware of Africa’s vastness and it is impossible to generalize it.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The discussion is directly related to each of the research questions. The first question addressed the teacher candidates’ personal and professional experiences of an international teaching practicum. It can be stated unequivocally, in support of previous research, the international practicum enhanced the personal and professional teaching practice of the teacher candidates by way of their heightened intercultural competence and cultural understanding of the host culture (Buchanan, 2004; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Thomas, 2006).

Personal changes were reflected in the Global-Mindedness scores of the teacher candidates. Their improved self confidence was evidenced in their statements about overcoming adversity and challenges. They expressed a deeply felt personal concern for other people and thought in terms of what was good for the global community. Finally, they recognized the interrelatedness of all peoples and the need to build community.

Similar to Mwebi & Brigham (2009), professional teaching practice changes were expressed in the candidates’ commitment to globalize the curriculum. There was clear evidence the candidates developed a deeper understanding and sensitivity to the diversity of their Kenyan students. For example, the candidates differentiated for the Kenyan students’ cultural heritage (as different from Eurocentric perspectives) by providing culturally appropriate examples in their instruction and assessment, and attempted to use students’ tribal vernacular when appropriate. The candidates also showed an increased commitment to be more flexible in their teaching and learning, an awareness that technology and expensive resources are not always necessary, and they underscored the benefits of collaborating with peers. Moreover, similar to previous studies, the candidates improved in their instruction and confidence to teach English language learners (Buchanan, 2004; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Thomas, 2006).

The second research question addressed transformative learning experiences and understanding of intercultural education. The results support the the notion that participating in a

practicum is a transformational learning experience. The results from the Global-Mindedness Survey demonstrated the change in perspective, pre and post practicum, in the statistically significant changes across all global-mindedness dimensions. Nesting the qualitative data into the survey data provided further evidence of transformational learning. Consistent with the literature (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008), the opportunity to reflect through journaling, presentations, and guided debriefing sessions assisted the candidates in understanding and questioning their personal beliefs and values. Chris explained that the presentations were a consolidation of their experiences during a process of “challenge, reflection and discovery.” She went on to explain how the daily highlights were “opportunities to draw out life lessons or teachable moments . . . and [helped to ensure] we succeeded. We reflected everyday, . . . and then I think part of my discovery came when I was there”. The Kenyan practicum experience directly challenged their biases, beliefs, and previously held assumptions.

Similar to Mwebi and Brigham (2009) the results indicated the teacher candidates were becoming aware of a worldview perspective that was not solely Eurocentric. In Jesse’s words, “I see the world in a new light...through another set of eyes. It may sound cliché, but playing games with our students, building alongside Kenyan workers, and carrying water next to [community leader] Mama Jane, really helped to make things clear.” The candidates began to challenge a Eurocentric curriculum that marginalized certain groups and favoured particular notions of progress, competition, and individuality. Lane explained, “I have an urgency to bring worldly inquiry into my classroom.” The candidates evolved in their stance toward social justice for all groups (Dei, 1994). Bailey claimed, “I already had a mindset of bringing the world into my classroom and having my students invested in social issues. I now have a greater comfort level with bringing in a culture that isn’t the one I grew up in”. This shift in perspective has implications for the diversity of the Canada’s education system, including addressing the needs of First Nations’ students.

Literature on international practicums highlights the need to incorporate global dimensions and intercultural competencies in the curriculum of teacher preparation programs (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009). Teacher candidates influence a generation of students and must have a critical sense of global issues and intercultural perspectives to improve social justice and the human condition globally. The results from this study support the view that international practicums can provide a needed context for global education and positively affect teacher candidates, both personally and professionally. To become global educators, candidates are encouraged to immerse themselves in an intercultural context. Our data supports the practice of international practicums in that they allow candidates to examine their own biases, to personally experience other ways of knowing, and actively engage in transformative intercultural experiential learning. The results of this study point to possible directions for future research. Exploring the long-term changes of the candidates by conducting a longitudinal study, which follows the career trajectory of the participants, would determine if the international practicum experience has a lasting impact on their personal and professional lives. Investigating the impact of international teaching practicums on host communities would also add a valuable multicultural perspective to our understanding of this practice.

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