



Teacher education is a deeply pedagogical process rooted in values, ethics, and the social purpose of schooling. Globally, it sits at the core of educational quality and fairness, as research in comparative and international education demonstrates: the training of teachers directly influences students' learning chances, social inclusion, and the democratic aims of schools. Teachers are not simply transmitters of curricula, but active professionals whose convictions, reflective skills, and ability to manage the complexities of classroom life give shape and substance to the educational experience itself.

The pedagogical dimension of teacher education frames teaching as a relational, context-aware, and ethically grounded profession rather than just a set of procedural skills. From a research perspective, this demands robust research methodologies that can critically examine the complex realities of schools and inform evidence-based policies. Equally important is the connection between theory and practice, which helps to bridge the persistent gap between universities and schools.

The contributions gathered in this volume reflect the richness and diversity of experiences showcased during the ATEE Spring Conference 2024, held at the University of Bergamo from May 29 to June 1, 2024. The volume presents 70 selected papers out of more than 300 presented by researchers representing over 40 countries.

This broad spectrum of studies highlights promising directions that can inspire renewed inquiry and concrete proposals aimed at improving contemporary educational systems.

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Teacher education research in Europe: trends, challenges, practices and perspectives

May 29th – June 1st, 2024
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Edited by Nicole Bianquin and Francesco Magni



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BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

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S. Agostino, 2 - Bergamo, Italy

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Develop teachers' professional identity through global internship

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Abstract

The globalization of education has introduced new challenges for Norwegian teachers, with increasingly diverse classrooms. To address this, internships in the global South have been integrated into Norwegian primary and secondary teacher education. This study is part of the "Long-Term Effects of International Practicum for Student Teachers" project. We conducted in-depth interviews with five teachers who had their internships in Uganda and South Africa and explored how these internships shape teachers' professional identity and global consciousness.

We ask how teachers perceive the relevance of their global internships in shaping their professional identity and global consciousness. We analysed their experiences in terms of personal and professional growth in light of teacher identity development and global consciousness. The results indicate that these internships foster personal development as impact on their teacher identity. Some teachers emphasised personal growth over professional development, while others emphasise their global sensitivity. Our findings suggest that international practicum experiences significantly affect teachers' personal and professional development, highlighting the need for better preparation and reflection opportunities in teacher education to cultivate global awareness.

Keywords: international practicum; teaching profession; teacher identity; professional development; global consciousness.

1. Introduction

For most teachers working in Norwegian schools, the process of globalisation has led to new challenges, since many classrooms have become diverse learning communities. Internships, such as internship in the Global South, are becoming more common in primary and secondary teaching education in Norway to meet these challenges. To include intercultural competence and global consciousness in preparing student teachers for diverse classrooms in Norway. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage these practicum experiences in the Global South after student teachers transition to professional teaching and development in the classroom with research knowledge.

This paper is part of a larger research project entitled 'Long-Term Effects of International Practicums for Student Teachers.' In this research collaboration, we emphasise teachers working in schools during the process of globalisation.

This study includes five teachers who spent internships at schools in Uganda and South Africa. We aim to investigate how the teachers' experiences gained from international practicums influenced their professional identity and global knowledge (e.g. Bourn, 2018; Deardorff, 2020; Mansilla & Gardner, 2007; Merryfield, 2008; Wilson, 1993).

The research question guiding this study is as follows: *How do teachers perceive the relevance of their global internships in shaping their professional identity and global consciousness?*

OsloMet has a long tradition of providing student teachers with internships in the Global South as part of their primary or secondary teacher education. As teacher educators, we run three-month internships, and during their practicums in the Global South, the five informants in this study worked on their bachelor's theses in teacher education at OsloMet. Since graduating, they have worked as teachers for more than five years.

2. Theoretical Inspiration

In the larger Norwegian research project, we began by using Wilson's (1993) theoretical categorisation of the impact of an international experience, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The impact of an international experience (Wilson, 1993, p. 22).

Wilson (1993) used the concepts of 'developing self and relationships' and 'gaining a global perspective' to analyse gains from participating in cross-cultural experiences. According to Wilson (1993), developing one's self and relationships concerns personal growth and interpersonal connections. Personal growth and development in this context relate to the acceptance of the self and others, as well as general maturity. They may also include dimensions such as increased self-confidence and independence. Interpersonal connections include the ability to engage in intercultural or cross-cultural interactions.

Gaining a global perspective involves substantive knowledge and perceptual understanding. Substantive knowledge concerns facts and an understanding of another culture, in addition to general awareness of global issues. It also concerns awareness of world issues, global dynamics and human or professional choices. Perceptual knowledge includes open-mindedness, anticipation of complexity, resistance to stereotyping, a more open attitude towards others and less chauvinism (Wilson, 1993, p. 22).

Later, Merryfield (2008, p. 363) focused on 'global awareness' as (a) reflecting on one's own cultural assumptions and the frameworks in which other people make sense of the world, (b) learning from people and scholarship in other countries and (c) making connections to engage citizens of the world. Merryfield (2008) emphasised that these actions are synergistic, since activities and assessments often bring them together as global experiences, such as in the Global South. Global awareness becomes meaningful when student teachers begin to act upon their interconnectedness (Merryfield, 2008, p. 365). Universities often claim to educate global citizens, but there is little evidence that this occurs (Lilley et al., 2015). Therefore, this small study of internships in the Global South provides thoughts for research on global awareness, experiences, knowledge, skills and consciousness.

Mansilla and Gardner (2007, p. 58) emphasised the following: Consciousness entails three core competencies: First is *sensitivity* toward objects in our environment (e.g., people, places, melodies, landscapes) with which the self comes into contact. Historical consciousness entails selective sensitivity for objects and circumstances that link us to past and future (an inscription on a wall, the shape of urban streets, a monument). Second, consciousness entails the competency of *organization*—the capacity to arrange such mental representations. Autobiographic consciousness distills patterns that reveal defining qualities of self. Historical consciousness, on the other hand, employs historical understanding to reinterpret experience along a continuum of past, present, and future, conferring new meaning on our experiences. Finally, consciousness entails the competency of *self-representation*—the reflective capacity to understand ourselves as knowers and feelers—and as historical actors. Through this latter competency, consciousness exercises its orienting function. Knowledge of ourselves, of what we value, of what makes us anxious, as well as knowledge of how we stand vis-à-vis the experience of generations before and ahead of us, necessarily shape the repertoire of options, commitments, and opportunities that we perceive.

In sum, Mansilla and Gardner (2007) concept of global consciousness '[capturing] the capacity to attend to global dimensions of our contemporary experience; to reflect on its tensions, issues, and opportunities by bringing informed categories and modes of thinking to bear; and to define our identities as members of complex global political, social, economic and environmental spheres.' They argued that global consciousness 'varies across cultures and regions as people situate themselves differently in geopolitical, cultural, and environmental landscapes. Thus, a study of global consciousness must be cross-cultural' (Mansilla & Gardner, 2007, pp. 62–63).

Deardorff (2020) emphasised intercultural competence as global consciousness or global knowledge. Many definitions highlight specific knowledge, skill and attitude dimensions of competence, and nearly all address differences between personal and professional selves. Intercultural competence, in essence, concerns improving human interactions across differences, whether within a society (due to age, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, etc.) or across borders (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5). Gaining a professional identity as a global actor could refer to having a professional understanding and positioning oneself within one's local or national context and within a global framework. This perspective reflects the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of our world and the need for professionals in all fields to consider the global implications of their work.

Korthagen and Vasalos (2010) described a core reflection approach in which student teachers combine the personal and professional aspects of becoming teachers. Here, personal beliefs and beliefs about the teaching profession are seen as among the linking pins in forming and further developing one's identity as a whole and one's professional identity in particular.

Beijaard and Meijer (2017) emphasised the 'personal' and the 'professional' in forming teachers' professional identities. A student teacher's personal beliefs about teaching and learning strongly determine the kind of teacher they are and the kind of teacher identity they wish to gain. Tensions may arise between what is personally seen as relevant by student teachers from the inside and what is professionally seen as relevant to the profession by other professionals from the outside. Developing a teacher identity is complex process of personal growth from the inside and professional development in interaction with others.

Teachers' professional identities refer to how educators perceive themselves in their professional roles within educational contexts. These identities are shaped by various factors, such as teachers' beliefs, values, experiences and work environments (Gibbs, 2018). To sum up these theoretical perspectives, one's professional identity as a global actor is about seeing oneself as part of a larger global community and recognising one's potential to contribute to this community in meaningful and impactful ways.

3. Methods

The empirical material in this study consists of in-depth interviews with five experienced teachers who participated in international practicums while working on their bachelor's theses as student teachers. Our sample was recruited from 55 student teachers who attended three-month spring internships between 2012 and 2016. For this research, we collaborated with four other higher education institutions in Norway using the same interview guide and methods. This study is inspired by a phenomenographic approach.

The interview guide consisted of questions referring to the informants' descriptions of their experiences from their global internship with questions like: How the internship has influenced their teaching about global and multicultural issues, their professional identity and their personal growth. The intention with the interview guide was to invite the participants to describe and reflect on how their experiences from global internship has influenced their professional identity, practice and global consciousness. Through an abductive analysis of the material, it underscores the significance of the teachers' internships for their professional identities and personal lives. We empirically study the global consciousness of today's teachers through their experiences of internships in the Global South. After first using Wilson's (1993) framework thematically we analysed the material in terms of our informants' substantial knowledge, perceptual understanding, personal growth and interpersonal connections, we found that the participants emphasised their personal growth based on their personal and professional development from their global practicums. As a consequence of our abductive analysis process the second thematic analysis of the material, we developed an analytical framework for teacher identity based on the informants' personal growth and professional identity and global consciousness.

The teachers were informed about the research aims and ethical requirements for confidentiality, consent, information and anonymity, as well as their right to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation or consequences. In the results, we have given our five informants fictive names.

4. Result

In the following, we present how our teachers perceived the relevance of their internships as practical placements in the Global South in shaping their professional identities and global consciousness.

4.1 Professional identity

Ann emphasised that she was *'very grateful for all the equipment we have'* in the Norwegian classroom. *'I am generally quite creative and work around what we have, instead of spending a lot of time and energy creating a whiny atmosphere in the workplace,'* she said. Her thoughts on her professional identity were based on her experiences in the global classroom.

Ann said, *'It was indeed a useful experience because I have had students who have felt like outsiders. Feeling bad looks and being outside are healthy. Everyone should experience it.'* Her professional identity peaked at personal experiences of being an outsider in a foreign classroom.

Ines reflected upon her professional identity, feeling that *'I have gained a lot from it, but how much it has affected my everyday life as a teacher and my professional work – I have some doubts about that.'* She emphasised personal growth rather than professional growth and that when she was a student teacher in the Global South, *'some of those things became less important there, while other things became more important'*. She said that the experience as a student teacher had been crucial for her teaching but was not part of her global consciousness as a teacher.

Britanny stated, *'I deliberately only applied for a job in Oslo East, which was the most exciting and rewarding.'* She felt very comfortable in her professional work there, but she also described variations in schools in Norway. On a professional level, she looked back at the practicum in the Global South, saying, *'There was not much we could contribute to in the classroom there.'* She became very interested in working in a multicultural classroom environment in Norway. On a personal level, she emphasised, *'I think that you become open, tolerant and humble in meeting students from other cultures.'* Moreover, working with cultural and linguistic challenges were important for developing her professional identity. She also worked with interested organisations after her practicum in the Global South.

Ida's conversations with professional teachers in the Global South were about their motivation for being teacher. Their teacher identity, *'where they were very noble,'* she stated. She describes her global experiences as; *'I became more robust in creating a teacher identity when I felt powerless as a student teacher in the classroom in the Global South.'* Ida felt safer in the classroom because *'those situations globally were so pedagogically chaotic.'* This involved cramming in a large amount of school practice, with very little focus on professional reflections, while one had to learn things by heart and write things on the blackboard. *'I was also very impressed by the students. Many did very well under difficult circumstances. We talked about it a lot, and when we saw it, maybe we reflected on what we didn't want to take back home,'* she said.

Annie said that the global internship had not given her autonomy as a teacher in Norway, although she emphasised her personal growth: *'I learned a lot about myself and how I, for example, dealt with new challenges, difficult things or unexpected situations. I left the teaching experience and practice there.'*

4.2 Global Consciousness

Ann argued that the practicum had strengthened her empathic ability, and she understood some thoughts as *'our different worldviews.'* She felt that student teachers were not well prepared for what students needed in the classroom in the Global South. Her global sensitivity appeared to be from seeing herself from the outside and trying to understand global perspectives in another context.

Ines also peaked at the uniqueness of the practicum in the Global South: *'I tried to have both my way and their way. After all, we were guests,'* she stated. *'That was not all we dared to comment on. This practicum was the most different; regarding practicum experiences in my teacher education, the most important impact was personal growth.'* Her global understanding as an outsider, as a visitor rather than understanding the teachers in the global south thoughts and identities.

Britanny described another classroom environment in the Global South in which she would not *'disturb'* or *'recreate'*. She emphasised that the practical exchange had given her an interest in global issues and how things were connected in this world. She stated, *'It affects the choices I've made since - yes, definitely.'* It seems that she saw it as a loop of global experience, increasing her global awareness rather than her global consciousness.

Ida said, *'I think I used the years afterwards as a frame of reference to understand the world.'* She argued that she had increased her multicultural and international orientation. She thought that it was very sad and reacted to the fact that *'the students wanted to speak Afrikaans but went to the English class because it had a higher status.'* She reframed her global understanding based on her experiences in the classroom in the Global South.

Annie emphasised that the global experience left her *'with some internal processes that had started. It's a selfish answer, but those are my personal experiences, and they were how I learned about myself and the others I was with.'* She felt like an outsider in a very privileged way. She pointed out, *'Your skin colour determines a lot for you. People want to help you because you're White. It's not a good feeling like that—really, no.'* Her feelings of Whiteness in terms of global sensitivity should be discussed.

5. Discussion

We asked how teachers perceived the relevance of their global internships in shaping their professional identities and global consciousness. Discussions of global consciousness in terms of challenging diversity have been seen in other studies regarding the reflections of teachers from the Global North on their experiences during internships in the Global South to develop their professional identities (Helleve, 2019; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Lehtomäki et al., 2018; Sjøen, 2023; Steele & Leming, 2022). It is interesting to see that the teachers reflected on the concept of 'otherness' many years after their internships in the Global South.

Gibbs (2018, p. 9) argued that to fully understand the development of professional identity, particularly in relation to education, the process of dialogue with others—of 'othering' and being 'othered'—is a main concern, with identity formed in relation to others. Our teachers' global experiences of Whiteness many years after their practicums in the Global South led them to have other concerns regarding 'otherness', which gave them important global awareness in developing their professional identity-building interactions as student teachers with teachers' identity building in the global south as part of their teacher education.

Internships in the Global South mean global experiences in another educational context. We are unsure whether our teachers had limited reflections on their self-representation as global citizens (Goren & Yemini, 2017; Lilley et al., 2014; Pais & Costa, 2017), both regarding their personal and professional selves, after their practicums in the Global South. The five teachers reflected on their roles in other classrooms during their global experiences as student teachers compared to their 'controlled' practical placements at home throughout their teacher education in Norway.

The internships in the Global South influenced and developed at a distance their teaching practices, thoughts on interactions, relationships with students and decision-making processes in a reflective way as global experiences. To develop student teachers' self-reflections as global citizens after practicums in the Global South, we need to better prepare them for their practicums and give them space to reflect on their global experiences.

Student teachers' now take part in teacher education in the north two years after completing their BAs and so will develop their reflections on practicums from the Global South. They can be positioned as global actors by being teachers in the Global North with partners in the Global South. Our student teachers embraced global sensitivity and understanding to develop empathy, relationships and social justice from their internships abroad throughout their teacher education.

Reflecting upon global consciousness, such as Whiteness, involves becoming aware of issues and working on challenging and dismantling the structures of privilege and bias through decolonisation that made them global sensitivity through their internships abroad (Mansilla & Gardner, 2007). Specifically, the global experiences as Whiteness and professional roles within the context of the global community to enhance inclusive education for all are biased knowledge. This means recognising how one's own perspectives may be shaped by these systems of power and striving to listen to and amplify the voices of marginalised or overlooked learners. Our teachers described having this privileged position during their internships as discomfiting and undesirable; the feeling of Whiteness was uncomfortable in a decolonised world.

Our teachers described their practicums as experiences in which they enhanced their competences in inclusive classrooms by managing a larger number of students. They reflected on postcolonial thoughts of professional development rather than subjective thoughts of another worldview as a global consciousness (Klein & Wikan, 2019). Global teacher practice and professional identity refer to how educators perceive and enact their roles within a global context. This perspective acknowledges that teaching and learning are increasingly globally interconnected, and it has significant implications for student teachers in developing their personal and professional selves through internships in the Global South. Our informants emphasised their personal development rather than their professional work regarding practicums in the Global South. We can give student teachers' better reflections on their global experiences throughout their teacher education.

Overall, internships in the Global South provide opportunities to understand other cultures and engage in other school systems and cultures to educate global citizens. The teachers used their experiences in multicultural classrooms in Norway. Developing pedagogical skills to teach students from different sociocultural contexts and prepare them for an increasingly globalised and multicultural world in everyday classrooms is necessary to develop their professionalism. Practicum opportunities during teacher education should be part of students' research knowledge building. We can draw several findings from the lived experiences of the student teachers who worked in schools during practicums in the Global South.

Our findings indicate that the teachers' global thoughts, sensitivity and understanding dominated their global consciousness of reflections, overshadowing their global self-representations. Their global consciousness was based on their experiences of cross-cultural practicums, in which they reflected on their personal development rather than on their professional growth. Lastly, the implications for teachers' professional identity development in their teacher education due to their global consciousness must be further studied and developed.

6. Conclusive remarks

We aimed to investigate how student teachers' internships in the Global South influenced their personal and professional identities as teachers to enhance their global consciousness during their teacher education. The teachers perceived the relevance of their global internships in shaping their professional identities and global consciousness to a limited extent, as discussed. The results reveal that global practicum experiences impact student teachers' personal and professional self-development. Many more follow-up reflections on the internship are needed in teacher education to enhance teachers' roles in educating global citizens.

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