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Reyes L. Quezada

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Global Student Teacher Transformation Experiences: Living the Faith through the Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process

Reyes L. Quezada
University of San Diego, California

This study examined the reflections of six university student teachers from a Catholic university who participated in an international student teaching setting and sought to evaluate how they developed a global teaching ideology while student teaching abroad. Thomas Groome's Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process was used as a lens to examine the reflections of the student teachers. Using qualitative measures, the data analysis revealed four themes: (1) development of world citizens, (2) developing as a globally competent professional educator, (3) new knowledge of cultural and comparative educational systems, and (4) self-monitoring for improvement of efficacy and instructional practice.

There is concern that colleges and schools of education as well as local and national education systems are not preparing students to meet the challenges of international economies, political systems, and the migration of world cultures (National Commission on Asia in the Schools, 2001). "Issues are becoming global rather than national and they demand global rather than national attention" (Omorieg, 2007, p. 3). This has specific consequences for education, including the need for culturally competent teachers who can help students acquire global competencies (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Omorieg, 2007). "The belief is that a globally competent teacher is that teacher that is adequate and fit to teach globally. They are not only an effective teacher in their nation but in other nations of the world" (Omorieg, 2007, p. 3). With globalization at the forefront, many colleges of education have taken on the challenge to prepare Pre-K-12 educators, clinicians, and leaders who think and practice with a global and a social justice perspective, have international experience, and demonstrate foreign language competencies in their professional work (Heyl & McCarthy, 2003).

Developing international partnerships and creating training programs for prospective teacher and administrator candidates is one way to produce quality educators who are culturally and globally proficient. Despite promising findings on the benefits of international student teaching experiences (e.g., Alfaro

& Quezada, 2010; Mahon, 2007, 2010), most teacher education programs function from a local perspective and provide few opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in global experiences and student teaching placements (Heyl & McCarthy, 2003; Longview Foundation, 2008; Schneider, 2007). In this age of globalization we need to prepare globally competent citizens, work with international testing agencies and help globalize educational practices, provide experiences for students to work with diverse student populations, and develop global citizenship (Zhao, 2010). Catholic colleges and universities can be at the forefront in providing the skills needed to develop as culturally global citizens as we have a presence all over the world. As an institution of higher education we can be both an educational and a formational vehicle to social justice (Heft, 2006). Catholic institutions of higher education must become and provide opportunities for our students to be more attentive to other cultures and traditions. Our unique mission that promotes social justice and peace, appreciation of other cultures, and openness to other experiences are but a few skills that can be attained while student teaching abroad. Catholic colleges and universities can meet this challenge by integrating more global student teaching opportunities as part of their core teacher education programs and curriculum. These experiences provide student teachers an opportunity to interact with other cultures, and, therefore, see the dignity of each and every human being, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, economic status, or national origin, a principle of Catholic Social Teaching (Byron, 1998). Teacher candidates need to be taught social analysis so they not only see how they fit within society in their own country but within a global perspective. International student teaching immersion programs can bring about a deeper awareness of the needs and gifts of people from other parts of the world (Heft, 2006).

This study examined six student teachers in the Learning and Teaching Department of the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego, a Catholic university in the United States located in the southwest of California. It examined the student teachers' perceptions of their learning experiences in an international student teaching setting to evaluate how they developed their own global teaching philosophy while student teaching abroad. The purpose of this article is to document how these six student teachers moved from being "educational tourists," or those who take a visitor's approach when traveling to an international educational setting, to global teachers who transfer the learning outcomes from the experience into their own classrooms when they return. The hope was that student teachers experienced a transformation, becoming global teachers as a result of telling their

stories and hearing their voices as reflective practitioners. Thomas Groome's (1976) Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process was used to follow the self-reflective process of the student teachers.

The study first examines what it means to be a global teacher, followed by a discussion of the history of international student teaching placements and what research indicates are the challenges and benefits regarding the preparation and experiences of students in these placements. Groome's Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process is described along with the research methods. Four themes were derived from analyzing student reflections on their study abroad experience, shedding light into how to develop a culturally competent global teaching force.

Culturally Competent Global Teachers

As the world becomes more interconnected and interdependent, the need for students in Pre-K-12 schools to acquire global competencies and the need to internationalize all aspects of education has received increased attention (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). A survey conducted by the American Council on Education (2000) concluded that 90% of adults believe that young children in schools should have an understanding of international issues. Becoming culturally competent global citizens and teachers requires a deep understanding and commitment to the theories of democratic and global citizenship. Heilman (2008) explained that global citizenship requires having curiosity and openness to new cultures, ideas, and experiences. Citizens must be compassionate to the needs of others and critically reflect on their experiences in order to make ethical judgments. Serving others creatively and having the courage to make ethical choices is also needed. Global citizens must be committed to self-reflection to enhance knowledge, skills, and dispositions to influence policy. Culturally competent global teachers, therefore, must be compassionate to student needs and their communities, critically reflect on their experiences, collaborate with school staff to reach instructional goals, and use their unique talents to serve students creatively. Global teachers must have the courage to become citizens of the world, opening themselves to new experiences in and knowledge of other countries.

International Student Teaching: Setting the Stage

Integrating international education in the Pre-K-12 curriculum requires a strong commitment by teacher education programs (Longview Foundation, 2008). There is a need for higher education institutions to internationalize their curriculum and provide international opportunities for teacher education candidates (Dessoff, 2009; Mahon, 2010; Tye, 2003), but research indicates that many teacher candidates do not participate or are not exposed to international content either in university course work or in professional certification programs (Merryfield, 1991; Sutton, 1999). Mahon (2010) found that only 74 out of 409 institutions surveyed indicated that they offered student teaching placements abroad and 27 out of the 50 state licensure agencies prohibit international student teaching placements. In addition, foreign language courses are taken on a minimal basis. Education majors participate the least in study abroad programs when compared to non-education majors (Hayward, 2000). Teacher education programs and schools of education should take a lead in providing opportunities for preservice teachers to participate in international student teaching settings. International student teaching placements can be a way to integrate study abroad experiences in teacher education programs.

International student teaching is not new. In the early 1980s some universities began to provide opportunities for their teacher candidates to student teach abroad (Cushner & Brennan, 2007). Today, Indiana University, Northern Illinois University, and Central Michigan University collaborate with American education schools in many countries where English is the primary language of instruction (Roberts, 2007). Other institutions of higher education have joined consortiums or developed partnerships with K-12 schools in other countries, including the Consortium of Overseas Student Teaching at Kent State University or the California State University system's International Teacher Education Program that is approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to certify teachers with a bilingual authorization in Spanish.

Many studies report positive effects of international student teaching experiences with regard to professional and personal growth. Many of these studies examine teacher candidates' professional perspectives and personal reflections as well as the perceptions of assigned host educators and host families. Crossley and Watson (2006) found that teacher candidates gain a better understanding of their own education systems, learn about other cultures and educational systems, appreciate the relationship between education and great-

er society, and become increasingly sensitive to worldviews and cultures from around the globe as a result of student teaching abroad. *Teaching Education* (Quezada, 2010) and *Teacher Education Quarterly* (Quezada & Cordeiro, 2007) recently released themed issues on international teacher education. Prominent themes reported in the studies in which teacher candidates completed part or their entire student teaching requirement abroad revealed that teacher candidates became more accepting of individuals who differed from themselves, acquired competencies in teaching children in other languages, experienced a decreased sense of ethnocentrism and increased awareness and appreciation of other cultures, became more open-minded, learned about other educational systems, increased their sense of self-efficacy, and gained competencies in innovative instruction and lesson planning (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Cushner, 2007; Mahon, 2007, 2010; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; Roberts, 2007; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). These studies also found that teacher candidates acquired the ability to internationalize their instructional foundations, and they noticed some instructional practices and challenges that are universal, such as classroom management. Another theme that was evident in many of the studies is that of building community amongst the student teachers and their host educators and families. Interest in international affairs increased as well as being more knowledgeable of national affairs. Many of these experiences were documented through reflective journaling as a method of capturing the rich stories of how teacher candidates transformed from being local citizens to global citizens.

SOLES Global Student Teaching Program

The University of San Diego's School of Leadership and Education Sciences (SOLES) has offered teacher education candidates in the Learning and Teaching Department the option to participate in a global student teaching experience for up to 16 weeks as part of their 33-unit teacher credential program since the 2000 academic year. Teacher candidates complete all course work on campus and are allowed to student teach abroad. Undergraduates complete their student teaching during their last semester as seniors and graduate students complete it during the second part of the teacher credential program. Under current Learning and Teaching Department policy, teacher candidates may complete up to 8 weeks of student teaching abroad but must complete 12 weeks in a California school in order to be sponsored by the university to earn a California teaching credential. Six graduate students from the Learning and

Teaching Department who completed student teaching placements abroad were selected for this study.

Throughout the program students are required to reflect on their experiences. Reflective practice is a critical component of teacher education, as teachers need to be “skilled practitioners who are able to solve immediate practical problems, reflect on their practice in order to develop quality learning opportunities for their students and cope with rapid change inside and outside their classrooms” (Sach, 2000, as cited in Kisko & Richardson, 2010, p. 7). Valli sees the ability to reflect on one’s own practice as one of the most important processes in teacher education, guiding the teacher candidates’ personal construction of becoming a teacher (Valli, 1993, as cited in Kisko & Richardson, 2010).

Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process

Groome’s (1976) Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process was selected as a lens for examining how the student teaching abroad experience influenced the development of the teacher candidates’ cultural competencies. Shared Christian Praxis is a model of a self-reflection practice cycle and a methodology that is designed for the preparation of learning experiences or events. “It is a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their own sociocultural reality” (Groome, 1991, p. 135). Shared Christian Praxis includes a dialectical intersection of narrative and action that is derived from the reflection. Participants relate their present action and engage with the Christian story or vision, making meaning of the world. Gerkin (1984) and Metz (1980) believe that “praxis... always involves an essential narrative structure...By means of stories of the self and the world around us we hold together events, persons, and experiences that would otherwise be fragmented. To be a person is therefore to live in a story” (Gerkin, 1984, p. 52).

Shared Christian Praxis is implemented through five activities that Groome (1976) calls movements. These movements form a cycle of the self-reflective practice because they are employed flexibly and not as a locked-step approach (Clement, 2007). The five movements of the praxis cycle include (1) discovering life experiences, (2) reflecting on life experiences, (3) sharing the faith story, (4) integrating the faith story into my life, and (5) living the faith story.

In this study the learning experiences of the student teachers came about

while student teaching abroad. They reflected and shared their stories with regard to the events, persons, and experiences they encountered. Shared Christian Praxis was used as a lens into how participants developed their reflective and teaching skills through the five movements. The five movements of the reflective cycle are used as a continuum, but the faith components of each movement were not the focus of sharing their international student teaching experiences, as the student teachers were not placed in faith-based schools. Each movement in the cycle connects to the learning experiences and activities that were undertaken throughout the international student teaching experience to prepare these future teachers.

First Movement: Discovering Life Experiences

The first movement of the self-reflection practice cycle allows for two things: It provides an activity that grounds the event in the life of the participants, and it draws out the participants' experiences of a particular service event. Here the process engages participants in discovering how the topic, concept, and desire for the learning experience is already present in the participants' own life experiences. An example of the model's first movement cycle in this study includes the teacher candidates' prior knowledge that they wanted to student teach abroad. The student teacher candidates expressed the intent to teach abroad early in their teacher education program to the faculty and to their families and peers. While in their teacher preparation courses and practicum teaching, the student teachers participated in simulated experiences that prepared them for the teaching abroad experience. The teacher candidates were engaged experientially by completing an international student teaching application to both SOLES as well as to an overseas global student teaching agency. They completed reflection questionnaires and described and analyzed their reasons as to why they wanted to student teach abroad. They participated in an interview process where the student teaching placement coordinator and two faculty members inquired about what learning experiences and outcomes the teacher candidates hoped to accomplish as a result of student teaching abroad.

Second Movement: Reflecting on Life Experiences

In this movement of the self-reflection practice cycle the participants reflect on what was expressed in the first movement about their own experience. The

second movement of the cycle integrates reason, memory, and imagination either before the experience or after the experience has occurred. This can be seen when participants share actual stories of their experiences or actions they took in the learning context. Participants are invited to reflect critically on the meaning of the experience, share the results or consequences of their present experience, and identify implications for the future. In the case of the student teachers, they reflected on the process or pre-departure preparation and how the preparation could be improved as part of the student teaching program evaluation. For this study they wrote reflective journals and e-mailed about their learning experiences throughout their student teaching placement with the two assigned university supervisors, one from abroad and one from the University of San Diego. Some student teachers were able to share their experiences at an international conference along with student teachers from other institutions of higher education. They reflected on their current teaching situation as credentialed teachers and how the international student teaching experience had an influence on their teaching from a global perspective.

Third Movement: Sharing the Faith Story

In the third movement participants explore the learning experiences from various traditional venues (i.e., Scripture, Catholic faith tradition, teachings of the Church, and the faith-life of Christian people). In this movement the student teachers in this study were not asked directly to describe how their learning experiences related to faith. Rather, students were asked a number of questions related to topics such as becoming a “community with others” through their participation in the international student teaching experience, and recognizing the human dignity of the school children, the teaching staff, and the school community. Participants also reflected on authentic human development and how they developed professional roles while becoming effective teachers for the common good, serving all children. This reflects the University of San Diego’s Catholic mission. In particular it supports Catholic Social Thought’s teachings on promoting the common good as “involve[ing] working on developing in society all those conditions of social living through which each and every person can be enabled to achieve their authentic development more fully” (DeBerri & Hug, 2003, p. 23).

Fourth Movement: Integrating the Faith Story into My Life

Movement four provides participants the opportunity to correlate their experience and faith to the Catholic faith tradition. It allows participants to integrate the Catholic faith tradition and learning experiences back to their own lives and to mold it into their own meaning. The program provided participants many opportunities to express their questions, challenges, and opportunities while student teaching abroad, although faith sharing was not the focus. The student teachers participated in group discussions with other student teachers from other countries. Communication of these discussions occurred through e-mails with university supervisors and completing reflection journals and questionnaires as part of this study. The student teachers reflected on why they were involved in the international student teaching experience, including how it might lead to a richer life and greater understanding of effective teaching practices and the field of education.

Fifth Movement: Living the Faith Story

In movement five participants translate the learning into a faith response. Participants may be engaged in developing plans for the future through individual or group projects that involve them in living the faith (in the faith, school, family, or greater community). It takes the learning event in one situation and allows the participants to transfer the learning into a different situation or context. During this phase participants often take a learning experience, activity, or event and identify needed improvements or injustices. In this study, student teachers reflected on their experiences in the schools, comparing public and private schools within their study abroad placements as well as between school structures in their international settings to those in the United States. Students noted the differences and inequities in school resources between private and public schools in infrastructure, staff, and instructional materials.

Methods

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and voices of six student teachers with regard to their experiences while student teaching in various countries within the past 8 years. The student teachers responded to reflection questions via e-mail correspondence, online journaling, and written narratives

as part of their student teaching seminar course requirements. In addition, interviews were conducted upon their return. The following research question guided the study: As a result of participation in the SOLES Global Student Teaching Program, what and how have these experiences influenced your instructional and personal educational philosophy with respect to teaching students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds?

Participants

Participants included five Caucasian and one Latina SOLES teacher education candidates ranging in age from 20 to 23. Three participants completed a 16-week international student teaching placement and three completed a 10-week student teaching placement abroad while participating in the SOLES Global Student Teaching Program. The participants were self-selected from a group of 10 teacher candidates who took the author's student teaching seminar and for whom data was available. The student teaching experience occurred during the 2000-2008 academic years in the following countries: Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Italy, Spain, and Africa. Five were placed in urban elementary schools while one was in a rural school (Kenya). Participants student taught in classrooms ranging from first to fourth grade. Some student teachers had multiple opportunities to teach in various grade levels. For example, one student teacher taught literacy and language arts in the morning in Spanish in first and second grade and taught social studies and math in English in the afternoons in a fourth grade classroom.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through qualitative measures, which included interviews, observations, and reflective journals that engaged student teachers in dialogue about their own value orientation and teaching ideology, and archival documentation (Guba & Lincoln, 2001; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007). Data were collected from observation forms and mid-term and final evaluations completed by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The six student teachers participated in an elementary student teaching seminar that is required of teacher candidates and the author worked directly with each student teacher during his or her international student teaching placement through e-mail as the appointed university supervisor. In three cases teacher candidates were already teaching at the time of the study and were therefore interviewed in the fall

of 2008. The other three teacher candidates were interviewed after their return to the United States from their international placement. During the interview, teacher candidates were asked to reflect on their international experiences and how the experience changed their teaching ideology. Another primary source of data that was analyzed came from the narrative contents of the Professional Exit Portfolio that is required of all student teachers where students address the California Standards for the Teaching Professional Standards (CSTPS) as well as the California Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs), or the set of knowledge, skills, and abilities beginning teachers should have and be able to demonstrate (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2008). Most of the quotes utilized were from e-mails and reflective journals that were integrated as narrative essays in the Professional Exit Portfolio.

Data Analysis

The data for the present study was analyzed qualitatively using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) method of unitizing and categorizing components. The contents of the reflections and interviews were independently marked and coded in an effort to discover conceptual categories and themes in the student reflections. Individual coding efforts were compared to see if a set of common analytic categories would emerge. All the coded sections of these interviews were placed into their respective "provisional categories" using the method of constant comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process was intended to discover inductively the "latent content" of the student teacher reflections (Babbie, 1999). The data were read and re-read to assure coding reliability. The qualitative analytic process initially yielded various categories for coding the data. Within these categories, four reoccurring themes emerged and were used to organize and interpret the data.

Findings and Discussion

The data analysis can be understood in terms of the four themes: (1) development of world citizens, (2) developing as a globally competent professional educator, (3) new knowledge of cultural and comparative educational systems, and (4) self-monitoring for improvement of efficacy and instructional practice.

Development of World Citizens

Data analysis revealed themes of teacher candidates coming to a greater appreciation of other cultures and the capability of children to learn about other cultures. Participants came to a new understanding of the value of bilingualism and applied learning from their course work to their international student teaching placements. Teacher candidates realized the importance of learning about other countries and not seeing the world only through a U.S. perspective. All were able to see the importance of being student-centered and how children have an innate capacity to learn many things when provided the opportunity. One student teacher wrote:

The school setting is unlike anything I have ever observed in the [United] States. The children are encouraged to explore all aspects of education that many public schools do not have the funds to provide. They are able to participate in physical education, music, art, and many language classes. These students' innate ability to acquire knowledge in two or more languages proves to me how intelligent children really are if they are pushed. (journal reflection)

The teacher candidates realized that being bilingual is valued, yet in the United States it is generally seen as a subtractive component to schooling (Cummins, 1999). In fact, the teacher candidates were able to dig deeply into the training received at their university on how to help children who are learning a second language. For example, a student teacher wrote:

So far my cooperating teacher has placed me as an assistant with a particular student who is struggling in all the subject matters. He does not currently have an IEP but there is discussion of issuing one on his behalf. I have really enjoyed working with him one on one because it gives me an opportunity to utilize my background knowledge of how to teach a second language student. I am really tapping into the SDAIE [Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English] methods that I have learned about in my university. (e-mail reflection)

Many times in graduate seminars new teachers reflect that not much learning took place in their course work, yet many of the teacher candidates in this study identified how prior teacher education course work helped them.

Developing as a Globally Competent Professional Educator

Developing as a globally competent professional refers to learning new teaching skills that will help in new contexts. In this case, it refers to being able to take the skills learned during the international student teaching placement and apply them in the United States as future teachers. One student teacher reflected on how a dress-up day can actually be turned into a teaching lesson in career education. She noticed differences between the students who came from affluent families in her international placement and the students who were from low-income families in her practicum experience in the United States.

On Friday the school had free dress day. They typically wear uniforms but on this day if they brought \$2 (which went to support two children who they send money to in another country for school and living expenses, similar to the advertisements for feed the hungry children on weekends “only a dollar a day”) they could dress up as anything that started with the letters their class was given. We were E and V so I went as a vet. I like the idea of this and will be thinking about how I could do something similar at home. Being at a private school they don’t have to worry too much about students who may not have the \$2 donation in order to dress up, but at home I think it would have to be considered. Maybe you could just make it an optional donation to dress up and hope that most students did or some gave more than \$2 to make up for those who couldn’t give anything. (journal reflection)

Teacher candidates realized how much they learned with regard to teaching strategies and how innovative they could be depending on their teaching context. This entailed having to learn the host country’s curriculum and how to develop exciting lessons to support instruction, adapting to placements in public schools with minimal resources or private school settings with many resources. For example, a student teacher reflected on her knowledge from the multicultural education course noticing the importance of cultural context knowledge. Although the children were very smart and competent in their native language, not having the knowledge of American culture limited their comprehension of the American texts used to help them learn English. Therefore, she reflected on possible teaching strategies:

While working with Mexican students who use American textbooks, I

quickly realized that many examples in the book would go completely unnoticed by my students or would confuse them completely. This was simply because they had no cultural knowledge of the examples, such as American food, music, non-metric units of measurement, or locations. I will try to adapt any example to accommodate the needs and experiences of my students. If I was going to use an example with which I knew my students had no common life experience, I would take extra time to thoroughly explain that topic before introducing the example. (journal reflection)

Teacher candidates also reflected on how the student teaching experience enhanced their instructional creativity as well as their self-concept and how they developed professionally. Two student teachers had minimal educational resources. One student taught in a rural setting and reflected on how they thought “out of the box” to meet the needs of their students.

Teaching abroad has helped me use my imagination more so than if I would have stayed in the [United] States. The school where I teach has no textbooks for the students and very little resources otherwise. This leaves me to develop lesson plans from what I can find in the limited books in the school as well as the Internet. I must use the resources given to me as well as become more creative to teach the students in the fashion I believe is the most effective and that is hands on. For instance, instead of number cubes and such for math, I scrounge for blocks or toys to show how to work out division problems. Hurdles like these I would not have to face in an American school, but I am so glad I am receiving this opportunity to really trust myself to make the subject matter applicable to these students without textbooks, overheads, and technological classrooms. I have learned how creative I really can be to help these students receive a powerful and memorable education. (journal reflection)

Another teacher candidate wrote:

Studying abroad has given me confidence and a new point of view of all the opportunities that surround me in this world. The teachers I had the great opportunity to work with have shown me how important it is to continue to stretch yourself professionally and individually. Teaching

in other countries brings a new light to education. As a professional, a person must depend on himself or herself to adapt to the new environment as well as adapt to the school and the children. I think that pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone in every aspect of life helps you grow professionally and individually. (Professional Exit Portfolio)

Participants learned to adapt their instruction based on university supervisor feedback. They thought critically on how to improve their instruction. For instance, one teacher candidate reflected:

I had a capacity lesson observed by [my supervisor] on Wednesday. It involved measuring capacity of objects using water outside. I thought that it was successful in many ways....One comment by [my supervisor] was that the students did not understand standard units versus non-standard units. In retrospect I have thought of some better ways to go about this information and I think it is a lesson worth teaching again with a few changes. I might ask the students to stand up against a wall and measure out 12 feet each by going foot to foot; they could then compare the difference that their non-standard feet caused (and mine) versus using 12 inches from a ruler. (e-mail reflection)

The participants' reflections provide evidence that these student teachers were applying what they had learned in their course work and practicum experiences in the United States to their international student teaching placements and in turn were thinking of ways in which their experiences in these international settings could be applied once they returned home.

New Knowledge of Cultural and Comparative Educational Systems

Participants compared and contrasted their practicum experiences in the United States with those in their international settings and as a result came to a deeper understanding of different cultures, school learning communities, universal aspects of teaching, and education systems throughout the world. Student teachers wrote about learning new cultural customs and traditions as a result of their weekend travels as well as field trips and content lessons that were part of the school curriculum, particularly when teaching social science and history of the country in which they were placed. One student teacher placed in Mexico reported:

I have been learning a lot about the culture of Mexico while being here. I have taught about Flag Day, their day off in honor of the Constitution, and many other things. I will soon get to travel to another state within Mexico in order to experience the culture and history of Mexico along with my fourth grade class. (journal reflection)

The relationships and how teachers treated one another formed a community of learners where there was support in and out of the school environment, helping to scaffold the participants' learning. For example, one participant reflected:

The English International School of Padua has been an excellent outlet for me to get acclimated to my environment. Everyone at the school—teachers, assistants, directors—all are willing to lend a helping hand around the school and the city. There is definitely a bond amongst all of them. They travel together, go out to dinner after school, and generally appreciate each other's company. I have found this atmosphere very welcoming and exciting in this foreign place. (e-mail reflection)

Participants noticed similarities and differences between their international host schools and schools in the United States. For instance, the student teachers noticed that some aspects of teaching are universal, including that “kids will be kids”:

Another challenge is the same one that I had at Carson elementary [in California] during my two week [practicum]. It is sometimes hard for me to get and keep students' attention. I have learned that I need to be firmer with my students. When I say that what they do will have a punishment, I need to follow through with that. This way, my students will take me seriously. (journal reflection)

Student teachers discussed what they had learned about the educational system in the host country, drawing comparisons to schools in the United States. For example, one teacher candidate who was placed in Italy learned about differences between three educational systems (United States, Italy, and Britain).

The school varies in many ways from what I have seen and worked

with in my years of schooling in California. There are many factors that go into this variation though that I have never seen. For instance, the fact that [the school] is a private school, it is international, it has the curriculum that is a balance between the British and Italian systems, and from what I have understood from many of the faculty members, it does things much differently than most schools. (e-mail reflection)

A teacher candidate placed in a school in Mexico noticed the differences between age and grade level placement as well as differences between private and public schools in Mexico and the United States.

The age difference and reading ability between kindergarteners [in the United States] and my first graders here in Mexico is unbelievably different, and I get confused sometimes what grade I am teaching here. I found out that most of the first graders here at [the school] are a lot older than what I expect a first grader to be in the [United] States. Instead of being around the age of 6, many are 8 years old. It has been very interesting to see the differences between the two countries and between a private school and a public one. (journal reflection)

Another teacher candidate who was placed in Australia noticed differences in instructional approaches. In the United States she observed that her practicum teachers used a high volume of worksheets to supplement the basal texts. In Australia, no books were used and the worksheets were given after a short lecture.

The major difference that I notice in my class here [in Australia] is how information is delivered to students. They have no books for specific subjects. If the students are expected to work individually it is given to the students as a worksheet after a small lecture. However, most of the learning in the classroom is done in an exploratory manner. Rather than being told about probability the students were each given two dice to roll so that they could figure out on their own that some numbers had a higher probability of being rolled than others. (e-mail reflection)

A teacher candidate served as an observer as she wanted to learn the physical education games so she may introduce them at a later date in the United States:

Yesterday we had an all day sports day....It was a great experience for

me because I got to see three different sports that we do not have in the U.S. (netball, Australian football, and handball). I stayed by a teacher who knew the rules and tried to learn them so that I can introduce the games to students at home and use it during P.E. (e-mail reflection)

The participants learned from their firsthand experiences in their international student teaching placements and were able to compare these settings to their knowledge of educational practices in the United States, leading to deeper understanding of educational systems around the world.

Self-Monitoring for Improvement of Efficacy and Instructional Practice

Teacher candidates monitored their own teaching schedules, which assisted in improving their organizational skills, their efficacy, and their teaching practice. They reflected on instances of feeling homesick, persevering throughout the placement experience, and transitioning out of the classroom. In many instances teacher candidates expressed homesickness after 2 to 3 weeks, dealing with their emotions in many ways. For example, one teacher candidate reflected on how she missed her family as a result of teaching a lesson on heroes.

Last Monday was one of the hardest days. I was doing a lesson on “What makes a hero” and had to step out of the classroom because I started crying. I knew I couldn’t use my mom or dad as an example without tears but when I tried to explain why a friend from home was my hero I just lost it. I was trying to use someone that wasn’t an athlete or movie star because that’s who all the students automatically think of, but it backfired on me a bit. (e-mail reflection)

One candidate realized that “sticking it out” until the end of her placement had a positive result for her as a future professional as well as for the children she taught.

I think that my largest personal achievement was being able to make it to the end of the placement. It was hard throughout the experience but I can now say that I made it. I am also glad that I have been able to get to know the students well enough to realize that something was going on to affect their behavior and learning during the day. (interview response)

The participants realized that there would be an end to the experience for which they had to prepare. Despite home sickness, some had a difficult time transitioning out. One teacher candidate began to sense that she would miss the students once she left her placement but realized that her transitioning out of student teaching was for the best, as the children needed to reacquaint themselves with their teacher.

I have stopped teaching one subject in fourth grade (mathematics), but have continued all the same with the first grades. I felt a little frustrated when they told me that I would slowly stop teaching the fourth grader subjects, one by one, depending on which I started out teaching first. Next week, I will not teach science any more, and after that, I will stop teaching language arts. I imagine I will do the same with the first grade classes, and now I realize the importance of this. It is just as important that I slowly back away from working with these kids all day long as it was for me to slowly work my way *into* student teaching for the first time with the students. It is not so much for me as it is for them, their minds, and their confusion. I truly feel like I love these kids and will miss them greatly when I have to return in 3 weeks to San Diego. (e-mail reflection)

Discussion

International student teaching opportunities are one way to develop future teachers to become culturally competent global educators. Providing a venue of reflective practice allows individuals to assess their own learning experiences. The student teachers in this study were able to navigate through Groome's (1976) Shared Christian Praxis Learning Process model of reflective practice. The teacher candidates were able to prepare for their learning experience in advance as they completed all of the necessary program requirements, they were able to reflect on how the experience could be improved from pre-departure to post-arrival after completing a program evaluation form, and they were able to travel and student teach abroad, discovering new life experiences. They shared their success stories and the teaching challenges they experienced with their mentor teachers, school staff, and their university supervisors as well as with this author. They were able to see how the new learning experiences would be of value when they returned to the United States either to complete their student teaching or as future teachers. Their reflections provide evidence that they became culturally competent global citizens and teachers based on theories of

democratic and global citizenship as expressed by Heilman (2008). They had curiosity, expressed through their openness to new cultures, ideas, and experiences. The student teachers were compassionate to the needs of their students and their communities. They critically reflected on their experiences to make ethical judgments, collaborating with school staff and their master teachers to reach common instructional goals. The participants in this study used their unique talents to express their creativity to serve their students and the community. They had the courage to leave their families and friends to participate in an international student teaching placement. These teacher candidates recognized the value and need to become citizens of the world as they committed themselves to student teach abroad so they could enhance their knowledge and acquire necessary skills and dispositions.

The transfer of the learning experiences was evident in participants' reflective journals, their e-mail communications, as well as in their discussions with this author. They learned to develop as world citizens and as culturally competent professional educators. These six student teachers gained new knowledge of cultural and comparative educational systems, and they self-monitored for improvement of performance, enhancing their instructional practice. This reflects Crossley and Watson's (2006) findings that international education experiences help teachers gain a better understanding of one's own educational system, satisfy intellectual and theoretical curiosity about other cultures and education systems, gain a better understanding about the relationship between education and greater society, identify similarities and differences in educational systems, and improve international understanding and cooperation through increased sensitivity to different worldviews and cultures. The student teachers moved beyond educational tourists to that of becoming culturally competent global teachers (Quezada, 2004).

Conclusion

If the role of Catholic higher education institutions is to produce globally minded competent citizens who value people from different cultural backgrounds and different faith traditions, and support issues of peace and social justice around the world, they need to continue to plan, develop, and implement study abroad programs for undergraduate and graduate students. The term study abroad can mean and take many forms. It can be a semester-long experience where university students are enrolled as full-time students and enroll in courses at other institutions of higher education in other countries living

with host families to a 10-day experience as part of a course led by faculty. In colleges of education, one form of study abroad is to allow teacher candidates to student teach abroad. It is one way to provide an intercultural and international experience that is meaningful and allows the building of relationships worldwide. The hope is to provide our teacher candidates with a rich experience that creates structures to develop a deep understanding of world cultures and dilemmas, and experience different educational systems in order to give them the tools to become effective globally and culturally competent teachers in their own classrooms. This can only be successful if colleges and schools of education and its faculty have a vision to embody the internationalization of their school, their curriculum, and their faculty.

Many students in Catholic colleges and universities come from affluent families. Therefore, a task is for colleges and schools of education to provide these international student teaching experiences to those who typically are not experienced in cross-cultural matters. Other challenges include recruiting teacher candidates from ethnic minority groups and teacher candidates who do not have the financial resources to participate in student teaching abroad. How do we instill the importance of these international student teaching experiences within the faculty and structure of our teacher education programs and state licensing agencies? Most important, how do these international student teaching experiences change a teachers' ideology, and how do these skills transfer into classrooms when teaching?

Although there are many challenges and questions that need to be answered, the research that has been conducted on international student teaching demonstrates the value and importance of the experience as a way to develop cross-cultural knowledge and develop teacher dispositions in order to think and act from a global perspective. These international student teaching opportunities can be the catalyst for Catholic institutions of higher education to develop culturally global teachers of the 21st century.

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Reyes L. Quezada is a professor and director of the master's program in Curriculum and Instruction Department of Learning and Teaching in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. Correspondence concerning

this article should be sent to Dr. Reyes L. Quezada, School of Leadership and Education Sciences, University of San Diego, 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, California 92110-2492. E-mail: rquezada@sandiego.edu