

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”: Exploring administrator perceptions of international experiences for pre-service teachers

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Given the purported benefits pre-service teachers can gain from international experiences, we chose to conduct a qualitative case-study to explore the extent to which these experiences influenced the hiring decisions of local school administrators. We collected data using questionnaires and follow-up interviews and found that in many instances international experiences did influence hiring decisions. Yet, these influences were conditional, based on transferability to future classrooms, content area, and the location of the international experience. Implications of this study include the need to reexamine broad presumptive benefits attached to international experiences and instead inquire into the promises and challenges accorded to particular experiences.

[Keywords: international experiences in teacher education, student teaching abroad, teacher hiring practices]

For decades the field of global education has stressed the need to prepare teachers with a stronger global focus (Hanvey, 1976, 1982; Nash, 1976; Kniep, 1986). As our world continues to become more interconnected and our society more pluralistic, it is logical that teachers be asked to add global competence to the increasing list of skills necessary to be a successful teacher. The benefits often cited for globally prepared teachers include: improved cultural sensitivity; the means to deal with diversity, the ability to see various perspectives while challenging their own; the acquisition of additional language skills; and improved marketability. In this study, we focused on the extent to which any of the purported benefits of international education for pre-service teachers actually influenced the hiring decisions of school administrators in our immediate geographic area. After providing an overview of the relevant literature that promotes the advantages of globally prepared teachers, we address the question of whether the administrators of the school districts hiring the graduates of our teacher education

program have the same beliefs regarding the value of international experiences and the extent to which those beliefs influence their hiring decisions.

If we think of global competence as “a body of knowledge about the world regions, cultures, and global issues, and the skills and dispositions to engage responsibly and effectively in a global environment” (Longview Report, 2009, p. 7), teachers preparing students for the 21st century would need to possess this set of skills if they hope to develop them among their students. Global education within teacher education is, therefore, critical if students are to “develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for decision-making and effective participation in a world characterized by interconnectedness, cultural pluralism, and increasing competition for resources” (Merryfield, 1994, p. 1).

The American Council on Education (2001) found that 75% of the public believes that college students should study abroad (Hayward & Siaya, 2001). In a more recent national survey conducted by Lake Research Partners and the Tarrance Group Study, it was estimated that anywhere from 77% to more than 90% of Americans believe that it is important for their children to “learn other languages, study abroad, attend a college where they can interact with international students, learn about other countries and cultures, and generally be prepared for a global age” (NAFSA, 2010, np). Coursework alone is not sufficient to prepare the teachers needed to teach from such a global perspective. In addition to readings and classes, some sort of international teaching experience is “the key ingredient if the United States wants its future teachers to be culturally and globally literate to meet the challenges of this new age” (Quezada, 2004, p. 464). The Longview Report (2009) similarly claims that “interacting first-hand with people from another country or culture is an invaluable component of a good global education” (p. 21).

Support for such programs is growing at both the state and national level. An increasing number of universities are requiring some sort of global requirement for their undergraduate students. Currently 24 states have specific initiatives designed to support and increase global education in the K-16 public school system (Asia Society, 2010). The Study Abroad Foundation Act, sponsored by Senator Paul Simon, is currently pending in Congress. This legislation would create a national program that establishes study abroad as the normative experience for undergraduates (NAFSA, 2010). The program’s goals include increasing participation in quality study abroad programs and making study abroad a cornerstone of today’s higher education.

The need to prepare globally competent teachers has rarely been greater or the support to do so stronger. The advantages most often cited for preparing globally competent teachers include: an improvement in self-assurance, confidence, and flexibility; the ability to prepare responsible national and international citizens; improved pedagogical skills; a better understanding of the American educational system; increased cultural sensitivity; the ability to teach an increasingly diverse student population; the ability to acquire second language skills and to teach those students whose first language is not English; and, greater marketability.

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

BENEFITS OF GLOBAL EXPERIENCES

One of the most documented changes among students who study abroad is in the area of personal development and growth. By increasing levels of self-evaluation and successfully developing new relationships, students develop a sense of confidence, a stronger value system, and become more confident in their own abilities (Douglas & Jones-Ridders, 2001; Hartman & Rola, 2000; Hopkins, 1999; Laubscher, 1994; Quinn, Barr, Jarchow, Powell, & McKay, 1995; Zorn, 1996). Those who study abroad often gain a better understanding of themselves and their own culture and in the process find themselves challenging their old assumptions in each area (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002). In addition, student teachers, as opposed to those who travel abroad in groups on study tours, often live in more isolated settings and travel alone or with a single friend. The result is that they must be more motivated, resilient, and maintain a greater sense of self-efficacy (Quezada, 2004).

Committed teachers are needed to help students become responsible citizens, both of the world and of their own communities (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). If citizenship is defined at a more basic level, such teachers are needed to prepare a globally competent workforce. Employers widely recognize that it is not possible to work in isolation from the rest of the world, nor is it in their best interests if it were possible.

Study abroad students demonstrate greater objectivity in their own country, being able to recognize both positive and negative characteristics, and, hopefully, placing them in a better position to contribute to the common good (Laubscher, 1994). From a wider lens, the development of personal relationships that often emerge as a result of study abroad experiences can also be helpful in understanding and improving international relations. Alumni from such programs can work to forge stronger relationships between the U.S. and other countries (Sowa, 2002; Stephenson, 1999).

Students who teach abroad often return with a more creative pedagogy and a greater appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the American educational system. Opportunities to teach in other countries expose students to different ideas and procedures challenging their ideas that certain teaching strategies or administrative practices are universal. Many student teachers ultimately draw eclectically on the best of both systems (Moseley, Reeder, & Armstrong, 2008; Quezada, 2004). International opportunities also allow students to learn about best practices around the world and, often, subsequently develop course content with an increased international perspective (Smiles, 2001). These students often must also learn to teach under conditions in which there are fewer resources available, causing them to be more creative, flexible, and adaptive in their planning and implementation (Quezada, 2004).

International experiences help teachers develop the necessary skills, perspectives, and dispositions to incorporate a global dimension into their teaching and to increase their sense of cultural sensitivity (Heyl & McCarthy, 2003; Quezada, 2004). Those who student-teach abroad may now experience what it is like to be the ‘other’ for the first time (Gray, et al, 2002). Reexamining one’s own culture, along with previously

unquestioned values, leads to an increase in cultural awareness and a greater respect for those who are unlike oneself and who can contribute in ways previously not considered (Cushner & Mahon, 2004; Quezada, 2004). Additionally, the cultural knowledge students acquire helps to promote a better understanding of their own valuable cultural diversity (American Council on Education, 2001; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Coleman, 1998).

In order for future teachers to become more sensitive and have a clear understanding of the diverse student populations that they will increasingly find in their classrooms, teacher preparation programs need to include more international and global experiences (Blair, 2002). An increase in culturally sensitivity, coupled with a greater global and cross-cultural perspective of critical elements, can greatly assist teachers in effectively teaching the changing student population in the U.S. Although closing the achievement gap is an important goal, “if we really want to provide equal opportunity in the 21st century, education must also include a response to globalization, and that response must include a focus on low income and minority kids” (Jackson, 2008, np). Such teachers will better develop the pedagogical skills to teach their students, to appreciate multiple points of view, and to recognize stereotyping, among other valuable skills (Longview, 2009). They will also develop the ability to understand issues from multiple perspectives and to be more open-minded and less ethnocentric (Moseley, Reeder, & Armstrong, 2008).

Perhaps one of the more obvious benefits for teachers to engage in international experiences is that they greatly improve one’s ability to acquire a second language and, in the process, to better teach those students whose first language is one other than English. Residence abroad strengthens the study of foreign languages as students begin to experience communicative competence in another language (Coleman, 1998; Gray et al., 2002; Hopkins, 1999; Jurasek, Lamson, & O’Maley, 1996; Pellegrino, 1998; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). If the goal is truly to speak another language, then this acquisition is more likely to happen with some immersion experience in the culture one hopes to learn in (Davidson, 2007). If the goal is to be better prepared to teach those students who are attempting to learn content in a language other than their native one, then experiencing the cultural roots of others can assist teachers to do this (Blair, 2002).

Finally, there is a common belief that international experiences make students more competitive in the job market by promoting career and trade opportunities, increasing “worldmindedness,” and improving organizational effectiveness (Achterberg, 2002; Cox, 1993; Hopkins, 1999; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Levy, 2000). There is evidence that this is indeed the case in the field of business, where educational experiences abroad are valued and the longer the better (Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2008). Other evidence suggests that those students who have international experiences are more flexible, have a more positive attitude, are more likely to interact with colleagues, and have enhanced leadership skills (Bremer, 1998).

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

Yet, to what extent does this greater marketability transfer to public education? Do the administrators of those school districts hiring the graduates of teacher education programs have the same firm convictions regarding the value of international experiences among pre-service teachers that many in the business community hold? This was the driving question for this study as we examined the reasoning personnel directors in one region of a Midwestern state in the United States employed when considering applicants with international experiences. Specifically, the research question we asked was: To what extent (if any) do international experiences influence administrator hiring decisions in public schools?

METHODOLOGY

We chose to conduct a qualitative case study given the dynamic nature of the research problem, the interpretivist research questions, and the bounded nature of administrative decision making that forms the unit of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). Because case studies are extremely useful for understanding a particular and unique problem in an in-depth way, we decided to study administrators in one region who are charged with hiring teachers, as a case.

Data collection

In response to the research question, we collected numerical and narrative data through online questionnaires and follow-up phone interviews within a qualitative research design (Maxwell, 2010). We invited and administered the questionnaire to 18 respondents from the 38 largest school districts in one quadrant of a large Midwestern state. The questionnaire contained five broad closed-form questions, with some questions containing sub-questions, and five open-ended questions relating to the rationale for closed-form responses (Slavin, 1992). Our typical-case purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 1990) focused on administrators charged with making hiring decisions. Purposeful sampling lacks a rigid formula and instead relies upon criteria such as accessibility, representability, and interest (Toma, 2006), all of which qualified for interview sessions. The overall response rate was 47%. In order to maximize the response rate to the questionnaire, we used various techniques that have been known to increase rates. First, the structure of the questionnaire employed the strategy of preliminary notification (Yammarino, Skinner & Childers, 1991; Cole, Palmer & Schwanz 1997; Dillman, 1991; Fox, Crask & Kim, 1988), which has shown to increase responses from as low as 8% (Fox, Crask & Kim 1988) to as high as 29% (Yammarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1991). We also used less effective but still statistically significant strategies, including university sponsorship (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988) and a relatively short and easy to follow survey format (Cole, Palmer, & Schwanz, 1997).

The second phase of data collection involved individual interviews with questionnaire respondents to explore more deeply the *meaning* these administrators make of the varying manifestations of international experiences for pre-service teachers and the

impact those experiences have on hiring decisions (Erickson, 1986; Patton, 1990). We invited all the questionnaire respondents to participate in interviews and we designed the semi-structured interview protocol to fit within the research questions, to provide illumination for the study, and to be anchored in the reality of the respondents given their questionnaire responses (Glesne, 1999). We conducted eight interviews throughout with questions tailored for each respondent based on their questionnaire (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Data analysis

Rather than apply analytical tools *a priori*, we drew from the suggestions of numerous qualitative methodologists, as well as the data, to inform an emergent approach. Although analysis often draws on the researcher's past experiences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a), we intentionally set out to make the comparisons, category constructions, and interpretations explicit and grounded in the best available analytical techniques appropriate for this study. We also employed an explanation building analytical heuristic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2009) with an eye toward the how and why administrators make hiring decisions in light of international experience among pre-service teachers.

We reduced data into manageable forms that allowed for interpretations through a process of dissecting, dividing, and reassembling data into understandable forms (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b), first collecting and summarizing all questionnaire and interview data, then disaggregating data by categories, both in numerical and narrative forms. For purposes of credibility and accuracy, we reached and cut across multiple data sources (Merriam, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994), using the interview data to clarify questionnaire findings. We separately read through all interview transcripts and coded for emergent themes.

Data analysis did not, therefore, start when data collection ended, but rather it enjoyed constant interplay between conceptualizing meaning and redirecting subsequent data collection. This sort of evolving grounded understanding (Misco, 2007) allowed for theories to develop, yet, tentatively withholding these ideas in subsequent interviews because theories would evolve as a result of new interviews and exploring negative cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The analysis, therefore, led to a recurring comparison of incidents and inductively conceived categories (Merriam, 2001).

FINDINGS

Questionnaire and interview responses suggested that if a teacher candidate has international experiences then hiring officials view this experience positively, which may likely help a candidate obtain an interview. Yet, we found nuanced conditional statements associated with this finding. If a teacher candidate has international experiences, then the overall effect of that experience on an administrator's final hiring decision depends upon multiple factors. The value of international experiences for

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

pre-service teachers is, therefore, conditional, which provided the organization of the findings. If a teacher candidate has international experiences, then:

- administrators generally view this positively;
- administrators expect that the teacher candidate has increased sensitivity to diversity;
- if interviewed, the burden of proof to demonstrate transferability of this experience to the interviewing school rests with the interviewee;
- the value of this experience matters more in some subject areas than others;
- the value of this experience depends, to a small extent, on the country in which the experience was gained; and
- if that experience was student teaching, it is important that a portion of it be in the United States or it be in a transferable setting to the interviewer’s school.

International experiences are positive

School administrators who are responsible for hiring teachers viewed teacher candidates who had international experiences more favorably than those who did not. The majority of respondents (78%) viewed international experiences as positive, with 44% responding that it strongly influenced their hiring decision. No respondents indicated that international experiences were mildly or strongly negative. Although respondents felt international experiences helped to “round out” individuals and to better understand global economic connections, the structure or duration of the international experience had little impact on administrator’s attitudes. One administrator from a mid-sized, suburban school district stated that, “in a global economy, exposing our students to someone who has ‘lived’ [in an international setting] is seen as a positive.” An administrator from a large urban district echoed this statement:

I am interested in candidates who appreciate the flattening of the world economic and employment markets. Those who have had experiences that suggest an appreciation of this idea are more attractive than those whose educational focus is more narrow.

Another administrator from a large suburban district wrote that:

All other factors equal, I like that a teacher can speak to another culture with first-hand experience. This is very important into today’s global economy and very good for cultural awareness.

Other administrators primarily focused on how international experiences would better prepare teacher candidates to connect with students’ content and the community. A mid-sized urban district administrator suggested that “the more experiences that a teacher has coming into the classroom the better this prepares them. Teachers deliver instruction best when they can speak personally about their own experiences.” Another administrator from a small suburban district added that it is “more beneficial to teaching if the candidate has an experience that requires them to truly engage in the

community and culture.” A third administrator from a large suburban district indicated that “all other factors being equal, a teacher with experience abroad would certainly have an advantage because of the real-world experiences and connections they can bring to the classroom.”

A fourth administrator from a large urban district recalled:

Our superintendent’s vision is that students will see the world as globally as opposed to provincially. I ask every candidate at every interview, ‘do you have a passport?’ We want teachers who have seen the world and have a global perspective.

Collectively, the administrators we surveyed voiced a preference for teacher candidates with international experiences, as these candidates are better able to understand the global economy, connect with students’ content and community, and bring their global connections into the classroom.

Increased sensitivity to diversity. Beyond a general sense that a teacher candidate who had international experience was better prepared to infuse global connections in their teaching, the single most important attribute that administrators believed these teachers would bring to their school district is the ability to relate to diverse student populations. Administrators recognized the increasingly diverse makeup of their student populations and believed that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. Regardless of the type of school district, administrators look for teachers who are able to understand and connect with a diverse student population in ways that will assist them in their teaching. For example, one administrator from a small rural district suggested that:

Such an individual would be familiar with expectations and customs from other countries. International experiences then, I would expect, will increase a teacher’s diversity awareness and acceptance of students.

Another administrator, from a large suburban district, claimed that:

This experience [international] would help with our ever-changing student body. I think as diverse as the population of students is becoming, it really helps when the new staff understand where these kids are coming from. I know they can’t ever be an expert in all cultures, but if they can appreciate some, then they will have a better understanding of the kids that they will have. It [international experiences] helps them; the more diverse our student populations are becoming, such experiences helps them get a job.

Other administrators cited the ability to “deal with different students better” as a result of international experiences and “communicate with students and parents in a positive fashion.” Related to this increased sensitivity to diversity, administrators also voiced benefits of instruction, including “an instructional approach and/or understanding of the culture from which students may come.”

School administrators assumed that international experiences were, by definition, experiences in which teacher candidates interacted with different cultures and

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

individuals. Respondents suggested this interaction might possibly transfer to the classroom and be manifested as an increased understanding and appreciation for diversity. This assumption added value for candidates who had international experiences, as opposed to those who did not, and was one factor that increased the likelihood of being considered for a job interview.

Interviewee must demonstrate transferability of the experience. Getting a job interview and getting a job are, of course, two different things. One of the themes that emerged from the data analysis was that administrators have a positive, yet conditional, view of teacher candidates with international experience. Although international experience is helpful for securing an interview, the degree to which this impacts the final hiring decision depends largely on how well the teacher candidate demonstrates the transferability of that experience to the classroom setting. When we asked administrators to comment on the extent to which a candidate’s international experience was a determining factor in making a job offer, they cited the need of a candidate to “sell” how their international experience would help them be a better teacher in their school. One administrator from a mid-sized rural district put it this way:

A candidate’s international experience brings something to the table, but it does not make or break my decision. I have to get some kind of a read during the interview of that experience. What made it a good learning experience? It could have been good or bad, but what did you learn? I would expect the international experience to positively impact the individual’s professional preparation. If it does not, then it would be irrelevant to my decision to hire a person.

Another administrator from a mid-sized suburban district similarly noted that the value placed on a candidate’s international experience was in a potential form and “depends on how well they incorporate it into the interview.” This administrator added that the “burden of proof [was] up to person being interviewed.” The interviewee had to “convince him that it [international experience] is an asset for his district.”

Valued in some subject areas more than others. Another theme that emerged from the data analysis was that the degree to which international experiences are valued varies, for some administrators, depending upon the subject area of the position for which teacher candidates are interviewing. Most administrators rated foreign language education as the area most important for teacher candidates to have international experiences. Collectively, these administrators rated the remaining subject areas, in descending order, social studies, science, math, and language arts as those that would benefit from teacher candidates who had international experiences. One administrator from a large suburban district suggested that: “foreign language and social studies, require a fundamental understanding of other cultures to bring the experience to life.” Another administrator from a small suburban district stated, “foreign language and social studies curriculum directly involve understanding world languages and cultures, both of which would benefit from international experiences.” One administrator from a large suburban district commented that the value of the international experience was

“all relative to their subject area and whether they can use their experiences in the instruction.”

Some administrators even made distinctions within the same content area (for example, social studies). One respondent claimed that international experience was valuable “especially for foreign language and social studies but not much for language arts,” and went on to state that the international experience would “enhance the teaching of the content in world history but not U.S. history.” In short, administrators placed varying degrees of value on the subject area as it relates to international experiences.

The country matters. We asked administrators to determine the value they placed on the international experience teacher candidates gained in the following ten countries: Australia, Belize, China, England, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, and South Africa. School administrators placed a higher value on the experiences teacher candidates would gain in China, Japan, India, and Germany, and the least amount of value on experiences in Belize and South Africa. In the main, administrators preferred countries in which they believed the experience would either contribute to connecting with immigrant students or the subject matter. For some administrators, this meant they preferred country experiences that had a similar curriculum focus. For example, one administrator from a mid-sized urban district suggested that:

Those countries for which I have assigned some value are those that have a perception of math, science or socio/political or linguistic relevance to my district’s student population.

Another administrator from a mid-sized suburban district valued countries that they believed were similar to the country background of some of their students, stating for example that, “these countries are where we are seeing some of our students come from.” Other administrators placed value on countries they were familiar with above those they were not. For example, one administrator commented that, “I really don’t know much about Belize so I marked it as neutral, but I believe the other countries listed would provide a wonderful learning opportunity.” Another administrator from a large suburban district took the position that, “it [the country] depends on the position I’m looking to fill. If someone has teaching experience in Belize and they are in biological sciences, then it is a plus, but if I need them to teach English or math, it could be a negative.

Needs some student teaching experience in the U.S. or transferable setting. Administrators were skeptical of student teaching abroad without a complimentary or transferable experience. When asked if, all other things being equal, they would likely hire someone who has *student teaching experience* abroad rather than someone who has not, their responses were mixed. Administrators’ responses suggested a need to know that the student teaching experience was one that would transfer to the classroom setting in their district. For example, one administrator in a large urban district suggested that:

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

We have hired several international teachers who only taught foreign learners. Their inexperience with American learners, especially urban, caused some disconnect. We want a global perspective, but also experience with American urban learners.

Another administrator from a small suburban district reiterated this point, noting he “wouldn’t necessarily want this to be the only student teaching experience” and believed that the candidate “still needed to have some student teaching in the U.S.” Another administrator from a small rural district suggested:

If I knew that the student teaching experience in a different country was in addition to student teaching in the states, I would have put highly valuable. However, if the student teaching experience is only in a foreign country, the experience may have no relevance to the educational structure, testing, content standards, benchmarks, et cetera, and its imperative for our new teachers to understand these things.

The same administrator indicated that the ideal situation would be a student teaching placement that was split, partially abroad and partially in a school similar to theirs, or alternatively, one in which the student teaching experience was abroad but in an American setting (such as the Department of Defense for Dependents). Such a student teaching experience would “allow one to be open to different cultures and views, yet practically speaking have experience with an American system.”

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The need to prepare globally competent teachers has never been greater. One route to achieve this kind of competence is the international experiences housed within teacher education programs. The benefits of these experiences for future teachers include:

- personal development and growth of the teacher;
- an increased ability to help students become more responsible citizens, both of the world and their own communities;
- the development of a more creative pedagogy;
- a greater appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the American educational system;
- the ability to incorporate a global dimension into their teaching and to increase their sense of cultural sensitivity;
- a better understanding America’s cultural diversity;
- an increased effectiveness in teaching a changing student population in the United States;
- an increased capacity to acquire a second language and, in the process, to better teach those students whose first language is one other than English; and,
- an improved competitiveness on the job market (Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2008).

It was the final benefit, documented in business, but not education, that brought about the research questions guiding this study. In short, we sought to explore the extent to which administrators charged with hiring decisions perceived a need for a more globally prepared teacher, and the advantages associated with such a teacher. In response to this question, we administered a questionnaire and engaged in follow-up interviews in order to mine administrators' nuanced responses associated with this question.

The findings indicate that administrators charged with hiring decisions, regardless of district size or type, shared the belief that globally prepared teachers are beneficial and desirable for a variety of reasons. Yet, administrators often attached conditional statements to this general belief and positioned it as highly contextual. In short, the administrators we interviewed favored teachers with international experiences over those without such experiences, and this preference would help such a candidate receive an interview. It also emerged that, during the interview, the burden of proof to demonstrate the transferability of that international experience to the relevant school setting fell squarely on the interviewee. For example, administrators believed that teacher candidates with international experience had the *potential* to be more sensitive to diversity, to relate better with English language learners, and to bring a more global perspective into their classrooms. Yet, administrators felt teacher candidates had to demonstrate how this potential might be realized in concrete ways.

Administrators also suggested that the benefits derived from international experiences were greater for teachers teaching foreign language and social studies than for science, math and language arts (though this varied among administrators and most saw some benefit for all subject areas). Administrators also considered the country where the international experience took place as a factor, with most preferring experiences in countries they believed would help the teacher better connect with the content area they were teaching or the students that might be found in their school. Administrators suggested that international experiences connected to student teaching needed to either be in countries or systems which would allow for maximum transfer to the local school setting, or be split to allow for a domestic student teaching experience complimented with an international experience.

The benefits administrators expressed in our immediate geographic region correlated with some, but not all, of the benefits discussed in the national literature. Specifically, none of the administrators we interviewed mentioned teacher candidates with international experiences possessing advantages in the area of personal development and growth, having an increased tendency to help students to become more responsible citizens of the community or world, having a more creative pedagogy, or demonstrating a greater appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. educational system. Not finding an intersection with these advantages does not undermine their potential, but rather participants in our study simply did not voice their importance.

Administrators charged with hiring decisions did express other benefits cited in the literature that they believed teachers with international experience had. These included

“Student teaching abroad will help you get a job”

an expectation that such teachers were more likely to incorporate a global dimension into their teaching, would possess an increased sense of cultural sensitivity, and that this cultural knowledge might prove helpful in promoting a better understanding of cultural diversity. Administrators also believed that teachers with international experience would be better prepared to teach an increasingly diverse student population within their schools, that these teachers would be better equipped to assist students who were English language learners, and would possibly have acquired some level of proficiency in a second language themselves. Administrators in our study expressed a favorable attitude toward teacher candidates with international experiences and indicated that, all other factors being equal, they would be more likely to interview such a candidate. This value of international experience is consistent with the benefit cited in the literature of such teacher candidates being more competitive in the job market.

The administrators we interviewed consistently asserted that international *student teaching* was not necessarily valuable, *sui generis*. Rather, administrators needed some assurance that any student teaching experience abroad would transfer to their school setting. This meant that the country or the school system had to be similar, or that the student teaching abroad experience was complimented with a similar time spent student teaching in an American setting. If a student teaching placement was split between domestic and international settings or a degree of compatibility could be demonstrated, the value of the international student teaching placement was, therefore, enhanced.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the benefits of international experiences for teacher candidates most often cited in the literature were believed by those who hired our graduates at the local level and whether such beliefs positively influenced hiring decisions. We found that in many instances they did, and that the perceived benefits were viewed in practical ways, including the extent to which teachers with international experiences would improve the educational quality of their schools. Yet, these administrators did not note other commonly cited benefits. Given the findings of this study, we must resist attaching presumptive benefits to international experiences student teaching abroad and, instead, further explore the actual benefits of the experience among those charged with hiring decisions. Moreover, we contend that a clear need exists to explore the promises and potentialities of split placements, in order to student-teach both domestically and abroad.

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