

## Key Issues in an International Clinical Experience for Graduate Students in Education: Implications for Policy and Practice

Ann C. Gaudino  
*West Liberty University*

David M. Moss  
*University of Connecticut*

Eleanor V. Wilson  
*University of Virginia*

This study examines international clinical experiences in England with graduate education students from The University of Connecticut (UConn) and The University of Virginia (UVA) in the United States of America. Limited research available about international clinical experiences in the field of Education focuses primarily to only describe programs and provide authors' anecdotal evidence about the benefits and challenges of these experiences. This study is significant because it provides data about both the anticipated and actual benefits and challenges of an international clinical experience in education.

Focus group interviews were chosen as the method of data collection to best explore and understand the full range of perceptions of the students. Data yielded findings not reported in previous information about international placements: significant differences existed between the benefits and challenges anticipated by the graduate students and the actual benefits and challenges they experienced; and developing skills to self-reflect and reflect with peers and supervisors about their professional practice was a significant actual benefit experienced by all students. Students further reported that they did not anticipate developing reflective skills because it had not been a significant benefit of their undergraduate clinical experiences in the United States. In contrast, literature about teacher and teacher candidate development cites that the ability to reflect on professional practice is one of the most successful means of professional development.

Based on information in the literature and analysis of the focus group discussions, the conclusion outlines implications for policy, practice, and future research to improve clinical experiences in education both locally and internationally. The significance of the benefits of developing reflective skills during clinical experiences is also discussed.

*Keywords:* international education, global education, higher education, education policy, clinical experience, student teaching, self-reflection, study abroad, focus group research.

University teacher education majors in the United States participate in clinical experiences, sometimes referred to as field experiences or student teaching, as a requirement for their degree programs. During clinical experiences, students observe veteran teachers teaching classes and practice their own teaching skills by instructing children in Preschool through twelfth grade (ages 3-18 years). These practice teaching experiences are under the supervision and guidance of experienced teachers and university faculty.

With increasingly diverse populations in the United States, university accrediting bodies are requiring that teacher candidates complete clinical experience within culturally and linguistically

diverse schools. International clinical experiences, in which university students observe and teach abroad for a period of time, are a means of meeting these accreditation requirements.

There is limited research available about international clinical experiences in the field of Education. Reports and articles about the various benefits and challenges of such experiences are based primarily upon authors' anecdotal evidence. Perhaps for promotional reasons, available literature indicates that there are significant benefits and only a few challenges for students participating in international clinical experiences in teacher education. These benefits include: Developing global perspective, vision and understanding; improving ability to teach in diverse settings; developing self-awareness and self-confidence; promoting national security; and improving job opportunity (Deshoff, 2009; Kissock, 2005; Kissock & Richardson, 2009; NAFSA, 2010; Parker, 2008; West, 2009; and Zeichner, 2010). The only significant challenge addressed in the literature is the lack of support by university personnel towards international experiences (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991; Kissock as cited in Deshoff, 2009; Kissock & Richardson, 2009; Peretz, 2001; and West, 2009). Reasons stated include: concern about meeting local standards; difficulty in supervising international experiences; and not recognizing the value of international clinical experiences.

A study conducted by Educators Abroad Ltd., a company that organizes international clinical experiences, provides some of the only data about international clinical experiences in Education. Educators Abroad Ltd. surveyed their Global Student Teaching (GST) program graduates from 1993 through 2005. 232 graduates responded to the survey. When asked: 'Would you recommend the Global Student Teaching program to others?' "225 (97%) reported they would recommend GST to others" (Kissock, 2001, p. 4). When asked why, "they first referenced how it helped them become better educators; secondly how it fostered their personal development; and thirdly how participating provided direct benefit when they sought a teaching position" (Kissock, 2001, p. 4). While this survey data indicates that students who participated received certain advantages from their experience, it was conducted by the company to provide feedback regarding its own programs. Ideally, independent and more comprehensive research would more fully describe the benefits and challenges of such experiences.

To meet such a need, Dr. Ann Gaudino sought to conduct a qualitative research study with university students in the United States who had recently participated in international clinical experiences in education. She was interested in exploring and understanding the full range of perceptions of the students about the benefits and challenges of their experience. During the fall semester of 2011, she contacted The Association of International Educators (NAFSA) to inquire about what universities in the United States have established international clinical programs in Education and could potentially participate in such a study. Personnel at NAFSA recommended that Dr. Gaudino speak with Dr. M. David Moss at The University of Connecticut (UConn). Dr. Moss has been a featured facilitator and speaker for several Colloquia on International Teacher Education for NAFSA and coordinates an international clinical program in England for Education master's degree students at his university. Dr. Gaudino contacted Dr. Moss who secured participation by his students. He further recommended that Dr. Gaudino contact Dr. Eleanor Wilson at The University of Virginia (UVA) who also coordinates an international clinical program in England for education master's degree students. Dr. Gaudino contacted Dr. Wilson who also supported her students' participation in this study.

This study was approached with several research questions in mind. First, what benefits and challenges did students anticipate about their international clinical experience in education prior to attending? Second, what actual benefits and challenges did students experience from their international clinical experience? Finally, what future benefits and challenges did students anticipate resulting from their participation in an international clinical experience?

This study is timely and important for several reasons. Foremost, it provides qualitative data about international clinical experiences in education, an area in which little published research

exists. It focuses on both the anticipated and actual benefits and challenges of an international clinical experience in education and offers valuable information that can be used by universities to consider and develop policy and practice for their clinical experiences both locally and internationally.

## Literature Review

### Benefits of International Clinical Experience

**Developing Global Perspectives and Teaching Diverse Student Bodies.** Many national organizations in The United States agree that teacher candidates who participate in international clinical programs develop greater global perspectives. The Association of International Educators (NAFSA) asserts that, “Through internationalization of curriculums and programs in teacher education, colleges of education can foster the formation of teachers with a global vision and global understanding who can contribute to the education of tomorrow’s global citizens” (NAFSA, 2010). The National Council for the Accreditors of Teacher Education (NCATE) concurs, stating that the primary goal of teacher preparation experiences abroad is to foster global perspectives in future teachers (NCATE, 2008). Finally, The Longview Foundation further asserts the urgency of implementing such programs stating, “The critical role of teachers in internationalizing P-12 education has never been clearer” (Longview, 2009, p. 7). To address this need, NAFSA initiated a colloquium in 2009 for Internationalizing Teacher Education. This colloquium meets annually with the goal of encouraging and supporting universities to promote field and clinical experiences abroad for teacher candidates.

Individuals who are leaders in the field on international clinical experiences in education concur with these organizations and further assert that educators are increasingly asked to work with children and parents whose native homeland is outside the United States. Dr. Craig Kissock and Dr. Paula Richardson (2009) assert that “teacher educators must embrace a global perspective, adopt and achieve global standards, modernize instructional processes, serve our global village, and broaden student perspective to fulfill our profession’s responsibilities for the future of our global village” (p. 6). They summarize that through international clinical experiences, prospective educators develop, “a foundation of experience and insight on which to base their initial actions and to refine their global perspective of life and teaching throughout their career.” (Kissock & Richardson, 2009).

Kissock challenges us with an essential question in teacher education: “Can we design and implement a teacher education program that prepares individuals to teach in any society in the world?” (Kissock, 2001, p. 3). He further challenges teachers to broaden their questioning from what is the in the best interest of their students to, “What resolution will better serve the interests of our global society?” Understandably, many teacher preparation programs are focused locally; they focus on state standards and curriculum and local practices needed for universities to be accredited and candidates to be certified. Zeichner agrees with Kissock that global education must further be addressed in teacher preparation and outlined in both state and national standards for teaching (Zeichner, 2010). In this way, both pre-service teachers and veteran are committed to its pursuit (Kissock, 2001). New teachers benefit from study and teaching abroad experiences which ultimately help them to interact with their future students (Deshoff, 2009) and help them to make their students more globally aware (West, 2009). Parker (2008) adds that producing teachers who are global citizens helps schools to serve immigrant populations more effectively; an area that is increasingly critical in the States today.

**Developing Self-Awareness and Confidence.** Authors concur that a significant aspect of international clinical practice is that students develop greater personal awareness and confidence because they reflect more on themselves (Bradley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Kissock & Richardson;

Martin, 2012; Marx & Moss, 2011; Stachowski and Brantmeier, 2002; Sumka, 2006; Wilson-Flourney, 2007; Wilson, 2009; Zeichner, 1996). Specifically, these experiences promote self-esteem, independence, and increased awareness of the need to know more about others in the world outside the US. (Cushner & Mahon 2002; Kaufmann, 1983; Mahon & Stachowski, 1992). Through studying abroad, significant gains are made in understanding cultural differences and developing a greater awareness of different ways of seeing and reflecting on issues which assist in challenging students existing views, beliefs and assumptions (Sumka, 2005; Wilson-Flourney, 2007).

**Increased Job Opportunities.** From their experience, Richardson and Kissock (2009) believe that, “employers recognize their schools need educators who can relate instruction to the cultural background, learning styles, and personal and future needs of their students. They will employ teachers who have demonstrated a willingness to develop a broader understanding of themselves and our global village” (p. 5). Furthermore these authors assert that as teacher education programs require their new hires to be able to teach with a global vision, “Employers will be increasingly reluctant to hire individuals whose life experience and understanding of themselves and others is limited” (p.5). Bradley, Quinn, and Morton (2009) affirm these assertions noting that student teachers develop a sense of professionalism and understanding of cultural differences during international internships that serves them well in the workplace. There is also evidence that students returning from international placements are better able to cope well with the diverse range and needs of society experienced in subsequent jobs (Mahon, 2002), have more flexibility and openness (Kealey, 1989), and apply creative solutions to classroom conflicts while promoting intercultural interdependence in their classrooms (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996).

### Challenges in International Clinical Experiences

**Resistance to International Clinical Experiences in Education.** One significant drawback to international clinical experiences is convincing teacher educators that teaching abroad is valuable in preparing future teachers (Kissock as cited in Deshoff, 2009). Together, Kissock and Richardson (2009) assert the need for teacher educators to break their “virtual wall of silence” (p.1). They must prepare educators for the globally interdependent world in which they will work and their students will live by opening the world to students through international experience and integrating a global perspective throughout the curriculum. “Teacher educators must acknowledge that education is a global profession; recognize they are preparing teachers for their future... and think and act globally in designing and implementing pre and in-service professional development programs” (Kissock & Richardson, 2009, p. 2). Goodwin and Nacht, (1991) concur stating that there is a “Level of academic arrogance on some campuses which questions the value of overseas experience for students.” As a result, study abroad is often viewed as trip away in which learning is compromised (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991).

Without crafting a considered rationale against international/cross-cultural experience teacher education faculty rely on presumptions to block this initiative. They declare that: Only their standards are worthwhile and others cannot guide students in meeting standards of prospective teachers; student teaching abroad would be too different and would not prepare graduates for teaching in local schools; professional abilities and dispositions cannot be developed in other cultural settings; students are at additional personal risk while in another country/culture; students will have more difficulty finding employment, and that state licensing bodies and accreditation agencies would not be supportive (Kissock, 2001). They seem to ignore that this generation of teachers will live and teach in a very different world from their own (Peretz, 2001) and a world that is more globally connect than any other time in history (Marx & Moss, 2011).

**Self-Reflection on Professional Practice.** While literature concurs that a significant aspect of international clinical experiences is that students develop personal awareness and confidence

because they reflect on themselves, it does not discuss whether such experiences improve teacher candidates' abilities to reflect specifically on their professional practice. Self-reflection has long been cited as one of the best means of professional development for teachers and was asserted by both UVA and UConn students as the most significant benefit of their experience.

Self-reflection has been proven to be more effective to improve teaching than other forms of development such as in-services, conference, classes, workshop, and continuing education (AASPA 2002; Cogan, 1973; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 1996, 2001, 2007; Gaudino, 2008; Glatthorn, 1990; Glickman, 2002; Goldhammer, 1969; NPBTS, 2008; Stronge, 2002). Reflection can be enhanced through conversation with a supervisor or peers who provide additional suggestions from their perspectives (AASPA 2002; Cogan, 1973; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 1996, 2001, 2007; Gaudino, 2008; Glatthorn, 1990; Glickman, 2002; Goldhammer, 1969; NPBTS, 2008; Stronge, 2002).

Teacher candidates who are self-reflective and implement change in their professional practice exhibit a valuable skill for continuous formative development throughout their teaching career (Gaudino, 2011). Like most skills, the skills of self-reflection and implementing change in one's professional practice are skills that can be improved with guidance and effort (Costa & Garmston, 2002). University professors, supervisors, and cooperating teachers are in an ideal position to guide the candidate in developing these skills. This type of engagement is cited by candidates as being highly meaningful to their professional growth (Glickman, 1990).

Developing self-reflection in teacher candidates is not a new idea. The importance of formative development in clinical practice began as part of the Master of Arts Teaching program under the direction of Morris Cogan at Harvard University in the early 1950s. Many authors since have concurred on the value of conferencing to engage the teacher in self-reflection and to establish collaboration between the supervisor and teacher that focuses on the teacher's growth (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 1996, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Ribas, 2002; Stronge & Tucker, 2003). Such efforts help teachers to improve professional practice (AASPA, 2002; Blasé & Kirby, 2001; Brandt, 1996; Costa & Garmston, 1993; Danielson, 1996, 2001, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Dyer, 2001; NAESP, 2001; Ribas, 2005; Stronge, 2002; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Sweeney, 2001; Wolf, 1996). A trusting environment emphasizes growth and empowerment of the individual as the key to success (Costa & Garmston, 1993). In this type of environment teachers do not work in isolation, but rather they freely exchange perspectives on their teaching strategies (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Glickman, 2002). When teachers collaborate in this way, they create a community of learners (Brandt, 1996).

### **Methodology**

Masters of Education students at The University of Connecticut (UConn) and The University of Virginia (UVA) have the opportunity to participate in an international clinical experience as part of their program. During the fall semester of 2011, 14 students from UConn, under the direction of Dr. David M. Moss participated in a clinical experience in London, England. At the same time, 8 students from UVA, under the direction of Dr. Eleanor Wilson, participated in a clinical experience in Cambridge, England. Both UConn and UVA clinical experiences are a semester long, take place in England and involve only graduate students in education. The international clinical experience program at UConn had been in existence for 12 years while the similar program which Dr. Wilson directed had been in existence for 5 years.

It was agreed by Dr. Gaudino, Dr. Moss and Dr. Wilson that Dr. Gaudino would undertake a research study to learn more about the anticipated, actual and future benefits and challenges experienced by the UVA and UConn graduate students during their international clinical program. It was further agreed that the involvement of Dr. Moss and Dr. Wilson in the research should be clearly defined to ensure validity of the results and reporting. For this reason, Dr. Gaudino served

as the lead researcher, did not share the raw data with Dr. Moss and Dr. Wilson, and is the lead author on subsequent reports. The role of Dr. Moss and Dr. Wilson was both logistical and conceptual throughout the study, while the data analysis was completed by the lead author.

### **Participants and Setting**

During April 2012, Dr. Gaudino conducted focus group interviews with Masters of Education students at UConn and UVA who completed the afore mentioned clinical experiences in England during the fall semester of 2011. All students at both universities who attended the clinical experiences in England participated in this study. Each group of students was interviewed on its own respective campus. None had held a teaching position (either full or part time) prior to attending graduate school. The students' undergraduate degrees were from colleges and universities within five states including Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts. Of the 22 students, 14 were students at UConn and 8 were students at UVA, 20 were female and 2 were male, and 14 were elementary education majors and 8 were secondary education majors. Except for one student, all students planned to graduate in May 2012 and were actively interviewing and seeking employment as teachers for the coming school year.

### **Defining Focus Group Interview Research**

Morgan (1998) states that "focus groups are fundamentally a way of listening to people and learning from them" (p. 9). Focus groups "promote self-disclosure among participants... [which allows the researcher] to know what people really think and feel" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 7). Focus group interviews have five features. Focus groups are "(1) people who (2) possess certain characteristics and (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest" (p.8). Several authors concur that focus groups typically consist of 4 to 12 participants (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Krueger, 1994; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan 1998; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Wilkinson, 2003). Krueger and Casey assert that it is best to "plan three to four focus groups with any one type of participant" (p. 26), which provides a more accurate account of the participants' perception than one or two groups. Focus group interviews should be considered when trying to: understand the range of ideas or feelings that people have about something; understand the differences in perspectives between groups or categories of people (often, people in power see a situation or issue differently from those who are not); encourage ideas to emerge from a group; and gain information on qualitative data already collected (p. 24).

There are both advantages and disadvantages to focus groups. Morgan (1998) believes that focus groups are an ideal method of gathering data when exploration, discovery understanding, interpretation, and meaning are sought. Scheueren (2004) believes that the benefits associated with focus groups include the following: A wide range of information can be gathered in a relatively short time span; the moderator can explore related but unanticipated topics as they arise in discussion; and the focus group does not require complex sampling techniques. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) add that focus groups provide data in the participants' own words allowing a deeper level of meaning to be ascertained as well as subtle nuances. Furthermore, the results are easy to understand and more accessible to decision makers and focus groups allow the researcher to interact directly with the participants which is conducive to asking and answering follow-up questions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Participants are more likely to be candid in a group setting than individual interviews because the researcher's attention is on the group rather than the individual. This means that participants will not be identified with their particular comments. Furthermore, participants may respond to all the questions or only those that interest them (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Disadvantages of focus groups include that the sample is not randomly selected and the quality of data is influenced by the skills and motivation of the moderator, therefore, the results cannot be

generalized or treated statistically (Scheueren, 2004). Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) add that results can be influenced by the presence of a dominant or opinionated member in a group who may cause the more reserved member to be hesitant to speak.

### **The Use of Focus Group Research in This Study**

**Procedures.** A letter for participants about this research project as well as about their rights as research subjects were given to participants at the beginning of each focus group meeting. The letter explained that there were no foreseeable risks associated with this project nor were there any benefits to the participants. There was no compensation for participants. Focus group discussion would be recorded in order to analyze the responses for patterns and neither the participants nor their responses would be identified in any way. Recordings would remain in the possession of Dr. Gaudino and would not be shared with Dr. Moss, Dr. Wilson or anyone else. Participation was voluntary and the participants could withdraw at any time. After reading the letter, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and their rights withdraw from the study if they wished to do so. None of the participants withdrew from the study.

Dr. Gaudino followed these systematic steps in each focus group. Ten questions were posed to each focus group. Each participant received a written copy of the questions. Dr. Gaudino then posed each question orally in the order presented on the written copy allowing for discussion of each before moving on to the next. Dr. Gaudino's involvement in the focus group discussion was to read the questions, answer any questions from subjects who needed clarification on the questions, redirect conversation back to the question if the conversation became irrelevant to the question posed, and ask subjects for further clarification of their responses if it appeared to be needed. Dr. Gaudino's goal was to keep the discussion focused on the questions and to limit the possibility of her perceptions and bias from affecting the conversation. The questions posed to the focus groups were:

- 1-Why did you choose to participate in an international clinical experience in Education?
- 2-Prior to going abroad, what benefits did you anticipate from this experience? What challenges did you anticipate with this experience?
- 3-Having completed the experience, what were the most beneficial aspects of your abroad experience? How are these experiences beneficial to your development as a teacher?
- 4-What were the least beneficial aspects or challenges of your abroad experience?
- 5-Looking to the future, what benefits do you hope to gain as a result of your abroad experience? How do you anticipate using your abroad experience?
- 6-Do you feel that your abroad experience will help you obtain a teaching or administrative job in the future? How so?
- 7-How do you feel your abroad experience will influence your professional practice in your (future) job as an educator?
- 8-Do you foresee yourself as an educator having other abroad experiences in the future? Please describe those experiences and why you wish to pursue them.
- 9-Would you recommend that education majors consider participating in an abroad experience? Why or why not?
- 10-Are there any other comments you have about your abroad experience? What questions did I not ask that you wish I had asked? What are your responses?

Participants sat at tables arranged in a square fashion with all participants facing one another and the center for the discussion. Dr. Gaudino collected all data through audio recording using the Audacity program and her own handwritten notes (which included key points in the discussion,

notable quotes, and her observations of body language and mood of group members). Each question was saved as a separate electronic file.

Data was captured through a Tape-Based Abridged Transcript. Kruger and Casey (2000) describe the Tape-Based Abridged Transcript Approach by stating that it, “Relies on listening to a tape recording of each focus group and then developing an abridged transcript of the relevant and useful portions of the discussion...It is a condensed version of the focus group discussion with irrelevant conversation removed” (p. 131). Data from the abridged transcript was organized using both Nvivo software and a Long-Table Approach (Kruger, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Trends and patterns were coded and analyzed both within role alike groups and across the role alike groups.

**Limitations of This Study.** This study was limited to two universities with a small number of participants and it is possible that a larger population sample involving students from more universities would yield additional results. The study only examined international clinical experiences in England during a Master’s program. Finally, while the literature suggests that focus group interviews involve 4 to 12 individuals, the UConn focus group interview involved 14 students. This was done in order to accommodate the schedule of the students who were accustomed, and had arranged their schedules, to attend weekly meetings. It did not appear that this effected student responses.

## Findings

### Rapport and Responses

A palpable and visible sense of joy, enthusiasm, and camaraderie was present as students from both universities entered the interviews. Before the interviews commenced, students told stories of their classes, job prospects, and families to one another and took time to “catch up” on all that was new. During the interviews, all students were actively engaged in responding to the questions. Students responded to all ten of the questions posed to them. All participants appeared comfortable in voicing their opinions openly, honestly, and without hesitation. A sense of goodwill and trust between participants and between the participants and Dr. Gaudino was present at all times.

### Anticipated Benefits and Drawbacks

All students anticipated that living and teaching in England would be a culturally rewarding and challenging experience. They were attracted to the clinical teaching abroad experiences offered through UConn and UVA because the experience “was conducive to our major” and they looked forward to “being part of the entire school community in England.” One student summarized the feeling by stating, “Knowing I was going to get to see and teach in a school system abroad and I want to be a teacher was awesome.” One UVA student anticipated that having an international clinical experience arranged through Cambridge University would “look good” on his resume and others in the group voiced agreement.

The students anticipated few challenge such as homesickness, missing friends and relatives, and yearning for everyday items local to their home or university. Others stated that while they anticipated difficulty financing the experience, they were eventually able to find scholarships or other funding sources.

### Actual Benefits

All students at both UConn and UVA indicated that the actual benefits of their international clinical experience in Education were greater than they had anticipated and that they would readily undertake the experience again. All students reported that learning to self-reflect on their professional practice and learning to reflect on professional practice with peers and supervisors were the most significant benefits of their experience abroad. All agreed that they “seemed to



evolve to the point of focusing on self-reflecting and having reflective discussions to improve their professional practice” and all students agreed that they had not anticipated developing reflective skills to be the most significant benefit of the international experience because it had not been a significant part of their undergraduate clinical experiences in the United States. One UConn student stated, “We became obsessed with self-reflection. We would go to school all day, talk on the way to internship, then to class, then continue, then ‘Whoah it’s ten thirty at night and we have to wake up at seven we need to stop.’” Another UConn student continued, “It was so good...I don’t think I’ve ever had that level of professional conversation. ..No one in this room anticipated we would become so close and have this level of conversation.” Finally, a UConn student concluded, “Others who didn’t have this experience haven’t learned how to reflect or the importance of doing this.”

UConn students also agreed that the Inquiry Project they conducted helped them to develop reflective skills. Specifically, they examined the intended aims and outcomes of global education as described within the British National Curriculum and investigated teachers’ beliefs and attitudes along with the implementation of various aspects of global education across the curriculum.

UVA students had similar comments. One stated that, “Learning how to self-reflect and reflect on my practice with my supervisor was the best benefit of this experience.” Another UVA student summarized the feelings expressed by the group by stating, “We really became peer advisors to each other...As peer advisors, we were interdependent and I valued opinions of the other students in this group.” Another UVA student added that they all benefitted from the “more extensive written reflection on lessons required by schools in England, the more detailed lesson plans, goals, etc.” and that “in America we did not have this experience.” Another student added, “We had so much attention from professors and our cooperating classroom teachers. All the reflection was something I didn’t feel was as important here in America, now I feel it was important and overlooked...continuing that professional development.” Another UVA student continued, “Developing a network of coworkers was key to our development in England. The teachers and professor in England opened my eyes to how supportive teachers can be with each other.” One student asked, “Why have I not had this the whole time I was in America?”

UVA students also concurred that their weekly seminars with an education professor in England, “helped us understand the components of the educational system there.” This experience included introduction to curriculum approaches in primary schools along with extensive explanation of policies and procedures that govern teaching in British primary schools. While they also received this background explanation from their classroom cooperating teachers, all students felt that the seminars were valuable to acquaint them while also providing an environment in which they could discuss these system differences together. In this way, “we compared our American system and English system which helped us to understand both even better.”

In addition to developing reflective skills, all students agreed that they had learned to teach and live in a more diverse atmosphere than they had ever experienced in their lives. UConn students commented that London is very cosmopolitan and they had not been in that type of diversity. Students at both universities agreed that they had more confidence in their ability to meet the needs of children in diverse settings. They felt that learning “to teach students from around the world was a valuable benefit of this experience.”

Some students indicated that they felt more confident in themselves personally as a result of the international clinical experience. Others commented that they felt as “outsiders” because the culture was different from what they experienced. Initially, this was daunting, but the students who asserted this point agreed that it was a great strength of the program. One stated, “I’ve never been such an outsider for such an extended period of time. Everywhere I went people thought I was different. I learned a lot about myself personally from being outside my usual environment.” One added, “I feel more comfortable seeing myself as an adult, having adult conversations, and advocating for myself now.”

Finally, students were complimentary of the “excellent leadership and support” provided by Dr. Moss and Dr. Wilson in their international clinical experience. Both groups stated that these professors “made the experience excellent, fostered the development of reflective skills, and showed care and concern for every student.”

### **Actual Challenges**

All students stated that benefits of the experience far outweighed the challenges. One student summarized the feeling by stating, “There is nothing in this international experience that would prevent me from doing it again.” Challenges experienced by the group were within two areas: Challenges in aspects of everyday life abroad and challenges they experienced when they returned home.

Students cited that work days were “long and exhilarating but also tiring.” They left home at 7:00 a.m. and sometimes did not return until 9:00 p.m. at night if there were evening activities at school. Students acknowledged that this level of immersion was beneficial, but some would have liked more time for sightseeing. Others acknowledged, however, that finances would have prevented them from traveling more even if they had the time to do so. Students also acknowledged that there was a lack of resources which they would have had at home. Things such as computer printers, magic markers, and other supplies for creating lesson materials were in shorter supply. However, all students acknowledged that these items were readily available at their schools and they could simply stay later after school to utilize them. Students also acknowledged that just getting accustomed to a new routine and locating everyday needs (such as groceries and laundry) simply took more time and effort to access. One student summarized, “All the little things that are natural at home, became more of an effort. I couldn’t just throw laundry in my washing machine. We had to rely on public facilities and transportation and had no car. There was stress that was created in a certain respect from this.”

Both UVA and UConn students also reported difficulties upon returning home. First, friends and family wanted to know about the social aspects of their experience more than the professional experiences. They were frequently asked about what sights they had seen, but rarely were asked about their teaching experience---the primary purpose of their attendance. One UVA student exclaimed, “It was harder to adjust to coming home! When we got home, people were ‘how was your trip?’ and no one really cared any more about our teaching placements.” Another added, “Responding to the question ‘how was your trip?’ was difficult. Try to explain it and it falls flat. They just want to know the sites you saw. We knew the level of experience and conversation we had.” All students again cited that the reflective conversations they had were the most significant benefit of the experienced. Coming home, they missed the level of self-reflection, peer interaction and reflection and conversation with their cooperating teacher. Several agreed stating, “We knew the level of conversation we could have and it wasn’t there anymore. We feel like after our experience, our outlook on education changed a lot. We were missing people who had a similar perspective.” All students commented about how “isolated” or “alone” they felt when they came home. One UConn student stated, “Coming back and separating was hard. It felt like quarantine over vacation. We went from literally spending every minute in deep reflective analysis to ‘How do I live my life now?’”

Students from both UConn and UVA also acknowledged that when they returned, many professors at their universities were either “uninterested”, “unsupportive” or “critical” of their experience. One UConn student summarized the feeling by stating, “Professors were so hands off and didn’t want to ask about what we learned or did in London. I felt like it could be brought back here so much. But, some professors’ attitude was ‘You went, you’re back, forget it’. There’s this stigma. It isn’t a concern we could have anticipated.” The attitude of professors appeared to be further reflected by classmates. Another UConn student summarized, “Coming back and being in class with other kids we were deemed ‘The London group.’ We came back with this high level

of thinking and analysis...I felt myself shutting out and forcing myself to stop talking about my experiences because I didn't want that to reflect badly on myself with friends and in school."

### **Anticipated Future Benefits and Challenges**

None of the students stated any anticipated future challenges. All students at UConn and UVA felt that they would be better teachers and that they would have an advantage in the hiring process as a result of their international clinical experience in Education. This included having "a more global view of education" and "being better able to teach children from around the world." Students had the opportunity to teach students from more diverse backgrounds than they had taught in The United States. One UConn student stated, that the experience, "Made me want to be in a diverse classroom. I'm looking to work in diverse schools that have a diverse community now." Students also expressed that they would be able to adapt aspects of the English curriculum to their classrooms and elementary majors felt they benefitted from teaching subjects as varied as Buddhism and dance.

Some students at each university felt that the experience would help them to obtain a job, while others stated that the experience "set them apart in a good way during the interview process." Students at both universities agreed that their course of study made them "all look the same on paper" in terms of their qualifications. For example, they have all taught in low socio-economic settings, high minority settings along with school placements in less diverse settings. Teaching abroad was an experience that would make them "stand out" in the interview process. A UConn student stated, "Our university program makes us homogenous. We've all had the same clinical experience, but this international clinical experience is something that clearly separates us from our peers and other universities in the USA. It won't secure a position but it gets you a foot in the door." Another UConn student added to this statement saying, "A lot is how you articulate what you learned from the experience. We were so reflective over there, and that reflection, knowing our teaching intimately--- it will help us find a job. Also, you need to articulate specifically what you are going to take from this experience and how you will implement it here." UVA students also felt that by teaching abroad they had proven their ability to adapt and be successful in a new school environment and that this quality would be appealing to future employers. One student summarized, "We came into new country, acquainted, learned a new curriculum and succeeded. This is something that is really valuable as a teacher. Being able to say I've done this and I was successful will be significant in a job interview."

All students at UConn and UVA stated that their international clinical experience inspired them to want to pursue more international teaching opportunities. This included teaching in other countries, teaching in United States Department of Defense Schools in other countries, teaching through service organizations such as the Peace Corps, performing teaching through mission-type work, or leading student groups abroad. All students indicated that they intended to pursue these types of activities in the future.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

### **Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research**

Actual benefits discussed by the students aligned closely with literature which suggested that developing global perspective, improving ability to teach in diverse settings, developing self-awareness and self-confidence, and improving job opportunity were key benefits of participating in such in an international clinical experience in teacher education. Increased articulation of the professional benefits with students may assist students in realizing the full extent of the benefits they can anticipate. This could potentially assist with recruitment of students to international clinical opportunities in Education. Alumna from international clinical programs in Education could be utilized to promote and discuss these benefits with potential recruits. Education faculty

within each School of Education who themselves studied or taught abroad could further enhance these conversations. Similarly, both groups could also discuss the challenges.

All students expressed that the greatest benefit of their international clinical experience was developing the skill to self-reflect and reflect with supervisors and peers on their professional practice. All students felt that these skills were paramount to their development during the international clinical experience as well as their development throughout their careers as teachers. Also significant is that none of the students anticipated this benefit; they stated that it had not been a significant benefit of their undergraduate clinical experiences. Furthermore, their undergraduate clinical experiences occurred within five different states within the United States which indicates that this is not a localized anomaly in a single university or state. Literature supports that these reflective skills are one of the most successful and accessible forms of professional development for teachers and that teacher candidates who can self-reflect and implement change in their professional practice have a valuable skill for continuous formative development throughout their teaching career (Cogan, 1973; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Danielson, 2007; Gaudino, 2008; Gaudino, 2011; NPBT, 2008; Stronge, 2002). Universities should examine how their policies and practice can better assist undergraduate education majors with developing reflective skills which is important to their professional practice. University supervisors and cooperating teachers are in a key position to assist teacher candidates with developing the skill of self-reflecting to improve professional practice. Key to these discussions is supervisor's ability to utilize a flexible structure to lead and differentiate a cognitive-based discussion with the candidate. Universities should consider how they can assist supervisors and cooperating teachers with developing skills to lead these guided, cognitive discussions with teacher candidates. Accrediting bodies could support these efforts through policies requiring and assessing these aspects of education programs.

Similarly, accrediting bodies could provide incentive for universities to increase international opportunities in teacher education. While it may not be possible to require teaching abroad as an admission or graduation requirement, other means suggested in the literature can be utilized to enhance global educational awareness.

Students would also benefit from university practice among faculty that would encourage and support their participation in international clinical experiences in Education and incorporate the students' international experiences into coursework. Comments from the all students aligned closely with literature which expresses that university faculty tend to be unsupportive of international clinical experiences and this response lacks merit. Universities should consider what action would encourage greater faculty support. For internationalization to truly have the desired impact of preparing global teachers, the international clinic experiences of teacher education programs must not be viewed as isolated from the rest of the program. Review of curricula, domestic clinic placements, and professional learning for faculty across the program are essential to identify and promote high quality experiences which cut across the teacher education experience for students.

Finally, both the literature and subjects in this study suggest that teacher candidates who participate in international clinical experiences have an advantage in the job market. However, there is no data specifically relating international experience and the hiring process. Similarly, there is no data to support the assertion of the literature that international clinical experiences for teachers and teacher candidates can improve national security for The United States. These are substantive topics that warrant further investigation.

Future research would be helpful to compare university and accrediting body perspectives with students perspectives on the effectiveness of university practice aimed at developing students' abilities to self-reflect and reflect with peers and supervisors on professional practice. It is possible that universities and accrediting bodies believe that these skills are being taught. Yet, the student perspectives in this study suggest the need for different practice. Future research could seek to provide data regarding the hiring of teacher candidates who participated in international clinical

experiences. Such data could more conclusively demonstrate whether teacher candidates with international clinical experience have an advantage in the job market.

### Author Bios

**Ann C. Gaudino, Ed.D.** is an Assistant Professor of Graduate Education at West Liberty University, One University Drive, West Liberty, West Virginia, 26074 U.S.A; E-mail [agaudino@westliberty.edu](mailto:agaudino@westliberty.edu). Her research interests focus on teacher evaluation, induction and mentoring, clinical practice, and international education. **David M. Moss, Ph.D.**, is an Associate Professor at the Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-3033; E-mail [david.moss@uconn.edu](mailto:david.moss@uconn.edu). His research interests are in the areas of curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, global education, and environmental literacy and directs the U.K. based teacher internship. **Eleanor V. Wilson, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education in the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22904; E-mail [evw2u@virginia.edu](mailto:evw2u@virginia.edu). She works with preservice and graduate students who study effective clinical practices in schools and directs the Curry in Cambridge program.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ann C. Gaudino, Ed.D., West Liberty University, One University Drive, West Liberty, WV 26003. E-mail: [agaudino@westliberty.edu](mailto:agaudino@westliberty.edu)

### References

- American Association of School Personnel Administrators. (2002). *Teacher of the future*. Alexandria, VA: American Association of School Personnel Administrators.
- Association of International Educators (NAFSA). (2010). *Internationalizing teacher education: resources from NAFSA's 2010 Colloquium*. Retrieved from <http://www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?id=21253>
- Blasé, J. & Kirby, P. (2001). *Bringing out the best in teachers*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- Bradley, R., Quinn, S., & Morton, M.L. (2009). Consonance and dissonance in a study abroad program as a catalyst for professional development of pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 525-532.
- Brandt, R. (1996). On a new direction for teacher evaluation: A conversation with Tom McGreal. *Educational Leadership 53* (6), 30-33.
- Cogan, M. (1973). *Clinical supervision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Costa, A. & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for Renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.
- Cushner, K. & Mahon, J. (2002). Overseas student teaching: affecting personal, professional, and global competencies in an age of globalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 6*, 44-58.
- Danielson, C. (1996). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Danielson, C. (2001). New trends in teacher evaluation. *Educational Leadership 58* (5), 12-15.
- Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching, 2nd ed.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Danielson C., & McGreal, T.L. (2000). *Teacher evaluation to enhance professional practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Deshoff, A. (2009). Teaching the world. *International Educator*, May-June 2009. Retrieved from [http://www.nafsa.org/File/\\_mayjun09\\_teaching.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/File/_mayjun09_teaching.pdf)
- Dyer, K. (2001). The power of 360-degree feedback. *Educational Leadership 58* (5), 35-38.
- Gaudino, A. (2008). *Key issues in the teacher evaluation process of a Catholic school system: Implications for policy and practice* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://gradworks.umi.com/3349263.pdf>
- Gaudino, A. (2011). Promoting self-reflection in the teacher candidate. *The Field Experience Journal 8*, 27-36.
- Glatthorn, A. (1990). *Supervisory leadership: Introduction to instructional supervision*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Glickman, C. (2002). *Leadership for learning: How to help teachers succeed*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Goldhammer, R. (1969). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.
- Goodwin, C. & Nacht, M. (1991). *Missing the boat: the failure to internationalise American higher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hargreaves, A. & Goodson, I. (1996). *Teachers professional lives: aspirations and actualities*. London: Falmer Press.
- Kaufmann, N. (1983). *The impact of study abroad on personality change*, doctoral dissertation, Indiana University Bloomington.
- Kealey, DJ. (1989). A study of cross cultural effectiveness: theoretical issues, practical applications. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations No 13*, 387-428.

- Kissock, C. (2001). Practical experiences in teacher education. Keynote Address presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Globalising Teacher Education Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 2001.
- Kissock, C. & Richardson, P. (2009). It's time to internationalize teacher education. Paper presented at the International Council on Education for Teaching 54<sup>th</sup> World Assembly December 14-17, 2009. Muscat, Oman.
- Kitzinger, J. & Barbour, R.S. (1999). Introduction: the challenge and promise of focus groups. In R.S. Barbour & J. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Developing focus groups research: Politics, theory and practice* (p. 1-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kruger, R.A. (1994). *Focus groups. A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Longview Foundation. (2009). *Teacher preparation for the global age: The imperative for change*. Silver Spring, MD: Longview Foundation.
- Mahon J.M. & Stachowski, L. (1990). New horizons: student teaching abroad to enrich diversity. *Action in Teacher Education 12* (3), 13-21.
- Martin, L. (2012). *International student teaching in non-Western countries: Impact on first year teachers* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://educatorsabroad.org/resources.aspx>
- Marx, H. & Moss D.M. (2011). Please mind the culture gap: intercultural development during a teacher education study abroad program. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62* (1) 35-47.
- Marzano, R. (2012). *Becoming a reflective teacher*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Morgan, D.L. (1998). *The focus group guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. (2008). *About us*. Retrieved from [http://www.nbpts.org/about\\_us](http://www.nbpts.org/about_us)
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2008). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: a national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3D&tabid=715>
- Parker, W. (2008). International education: What's in a name? *Pi Delta Kappan, November 2008 90* (3), 196-202.
- Peretz, M. (2001). The impossible role of teacher educators in a changing world. *Journal of Teacher Education Vol. 52 No. 1*, 48-56.
- Ribas, W. (2005). *Teacher evaluation that works!* Westwood, MA: Ribas Productions.
- Scheuren, F. (2004). *What is a survey?* The American Statistical Association. Retrieved from [www.whatisasurvey.info](http://www.whatisasurvey.info)
- Stachowski, L. & Brantmeier, E. (2002). *Understanding self through the other: Changes in student teacher perceptions of home culture from immersion in Navajoland and overseas*. Knoxville, TN: International Education. The H.W. Wilson Company.
- Stewart, D.W. & Shamdasani, P.N. (1990). *Focus groups: Theory and practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stronge, J. (2002). *Qualities of effective teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Stronge, J. & Tucker, P. (2003) *Handbook on teacher evaluation: Assessing and improving performance*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Sumka, S. (2005). The impact of study abroad: educational travel as a model for responsible tourism. *Transitions Abroad*. Retrieved from <http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/study/articles/studymay1.shtml>
- Sweeney, B. (2001). *Leading the teacher induction and mentoring program*. Arlington Heights, IL: SkyLight Professional Development.

- West, C. (2009). *The internationalization of teacher education: three case studies*. NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Retrieved from [http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/NAFSA\\_Home/Resource\\_Library\\_Assets/Publications\\_Library/InterTeacherEducation3CaseStudies.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/NAFSA_Home/Resource_Library_Assets/Publications_Library/InterTeacherEducation3CaseStudies.pdf)
- Wilkinson, S. (2003). Focus groups. In J.A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research questions*. (p. 184-204). London: Sage Publications.
- Wilson, A. & Flournoy, MA. (2007). Preparing students for the intercultural experience: orientation and trainging. In K. Cushner &S. Brennan (Eds.), *Intercultural Student Teaching: A Bridge to Global Competence*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Wilson, Eleanor Vernon. (2009). Curry in Cambridge: the first year. Northeastern Educational Research Association Conference Proceedings, 2009, Paper 32. Retrieved from
- Wolf, K. (1996). Developing an effective teaching portfolio. *Educational Leadership* 53 (6), 34-37.
- Zeichner, K. (2010). *Preparing globally competent teachers: A US perspective*. Keynote address presented at the 2010 Colloquium on the Internationalization of Teacher Education, Kansas City, June 2010, Retrieved: from [http://www.nafsa.org/File/zeichner\\_colloquium\\_paper.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/File/zeichner_colloquium_paper.pdf)