

Advancing Innovation in Global Education: Reflective Experiences of Prospective Teachers as Difference Makers

Iman C. Chahine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7066-3625>

University of Massachusetts Lowell, United States of America

North-West University, South Africa

Iman_Chahine@uml.edu

Abstract

This study investigates the reflective experiences of 13 undergraduate students as they engaged in a project-based learning environment in an undergraduate course on global and local issues in education. During the course, students' journal reflections that consisted of internal reactions and learning were qualitatively analysed over several iterations using a multi-layered coding scheme of both inductive and open codes. Results of the study revealed three major themes embedded within levels of expressions through which students narrated their experiences during the course. At each level, students' perspectives shifted as they negotiated and presented themselves in relation to others and to the course content. Theme 1 emerged at the lexical level: expressing distancing, involvement, and solidarity with topics and classmates. Theme 2 emanated at a textual/pragmatic level: dialogue as a vehicle to stress nuances of agentive positions and self-representations as capable educators, and theme 3 arose at the interactional/social level: chorality and an inherent sense that the voyage into the new land (education as a discipline) is essentially a collective enterprise. Through project-based experiential learning, students became invested in their local community while grappling with far-reaching global problems. In the process, they experienced firsthand how personal educational experiences are connected to universal ones.

Keywords: problem-based learning; minor in education; undergraduate level impactful experiences



Education as Change
<https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/EAC>
 Volume 27 | 2023 | #12772 | 17 pages



<https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/12772>
 ISSN 1947-9417 (Online)
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Introduction

Extensive literature in the past two decades has urged the global education community to focus on new learning approaches necessary to build capacity for the 21st century. Specifically, three major topics are addressed, namely, eliciting motivations for novel models of learning; identifying competencies, skills, and dispositions required for 21st century learners; and designing instructional practices to develop and sustain such capabilities (Scott 2015). Education for the 21st century, which focuses on character-building, citizenship, critical thinking, and problem solving (Schleicher 2014), raised calls for a growing chorus of educators to establish global partnerships and engagement that extend beyond curriculum and standards. The urgent call has been motivated by the following pressing questions: How can we equip pupils to prosper in a volatile, uncertain, and complex world? Does the conventional idea of what students should understand and be able to do by the time they graduate give them the skills needed to survive in that environment? What qualifications must graduates possess in order to succeed in a future world and in positions that have not yet been invented?

Redecker and Punie (2013) emphasise several crucial components of 21st-century learning, including personalisation, collaboration, communication, informal learning, productivity, and content production. In a similar vein, Kugemann et al. (2009) draw upon the importance of key personal skills that are necessary to engage in an efficient workplace environment, such as initiative, resilience, responsibility, risk-taking and creativity. Furthermore, social skills including teamwork, networking, empathy, and compassion are underlined characteristics that are equally important (Salas-Pilco 2013).

Arguably, equitable and relevant global partnerships are among the most rewarding experiences that can change lives, career paths and our shared world in the long run (UN 2022). Hence, providing students with opportunities and competencies to plan and develop equitable global partnerships based on a shared vision of worldwide collaboration and development is paramount to their development as teachers. By immersing students in the realities of day-to-day activities of local and international partnerships, students will be able to experience, firsthand, contemporary issues facing education and to engage with ongoing efforts that enhance development on a world scale.

This study explores the reflective experiences of students while engaged in exploring innovations in education on a local-global spectrum. This is part of a course titled Global and Local Issues in Education offered at a Northeast higher education institution in the United States. The study summarises the experience of students and their projects as they reflect on the global role of teachers as difference makers.

Course Description

The overarching goal of the Global and Local Issues in Education course is to instil the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes necessary for successful engagement in local and

international societies. By the end of this class, students were expected to have acquired the skills and attitudes necessary to effectively express their opinions and live out their convictions through global education. Furthermore, students were provided opportunities to gain a sense of personal responsibility from this course, understand how they may improve their lives and communities, and recognise the importance of their engagement. As an international educator and improvement science researcher in the United States and beyond, I wholeheartedly endorse the view that global education is a powerful and engaging motivator of students as well as an antidote to apathy and disengagement.

Three overarching themes were examined in this course. The first theme focused on global knowledge and awareness as an additive to the framework of civic education. The second theme aimed at exposing students to the complete process of creating a successful community service project. The third theme centred on self-advocacy and public service to develop effective leadership and promote positive community outcomes. Subthemes include education, asset-mapped community development, environmental issues, and conflict resolution. The model in Figure 1 depicts the relationships the course strived to establish that are essential to achieving the overall themes and goals.

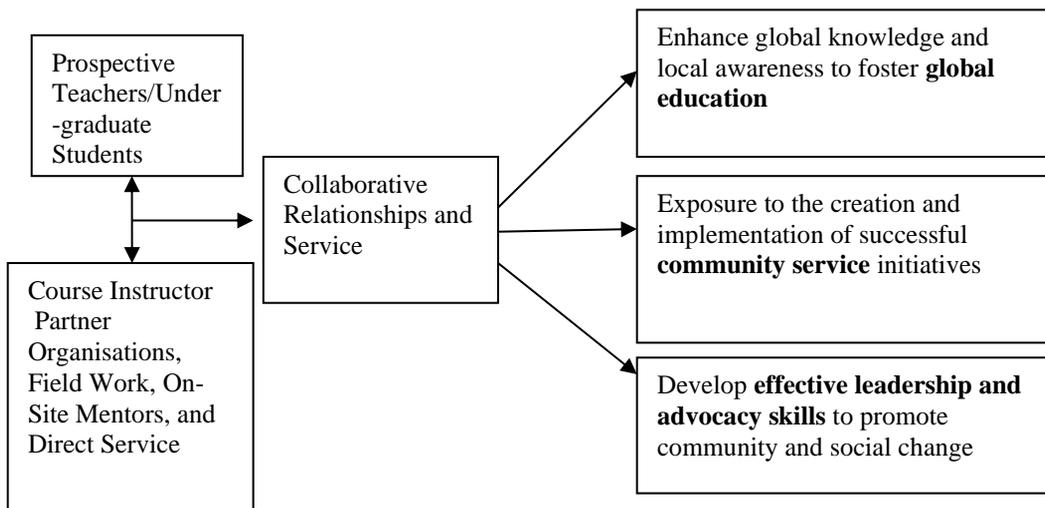


Figure 1: Relationships established during the global education course

The course comprised two components:

Part 1: Class work (Location: On campus). In this component, students examined several examples of global and local partnerships that particularly focus on education and development issues. They also went through the process of developing project ideas, finding existing programmes and partners, designing and maintaining

collaborations, and evaluating success. During the course, students were invited to engage in conversations about how to handle controversial topics in partnerships, build partnerships more equitably for all involved, and spread global thinking and engagement across the curriculum and school community. Strategies for communicating with global and local partners as well as several useful technologies were discussed and negotiated throughout the semester. During classwork, students actively engaged in a series of group sessions aligned to the course themes and facilitated by the instructor. The goal of these dialogues was to expose student to various concepts and discourses surrounding global education, community service, and youth leadership. Most importantly, the objective of these sessions was to provide an open platform for the students to analyse, discuss, and share the current state of their own communities. Within these sessions, the collective sharing of ideas was necessary to expose the participants to a greater sense of global awareness.

Additionally, students worked collaboratively in teams to expand their own understanding of community engagement, and each team was responsible for the creation of a model community service project. This collaborative provided a continuum for each student to further strengthen group relations and their own civic, leadership, and service goals. Through these interactions, students developed a stronger sense of collective leadership, and most importantly, the ability to resolve potential conflicts that arose within the group. Instructional time, collaborative work, and direct service were devoted to the understanding of global education and the contributing roles of leadership and service.

Part 2: Local and global immersion (Location: varies, online networking and/or travel to local sites). The immersion component afforded firsthand field experiences of local and international partnerships by immersing students in the authentic daily practices of diverse non-governmental organisations that serve educational causes. Students were assigned to several sites where they explored and reflected on existing initiatives that foster global citizenship and education for all. Students were also engaged in exploring basic competencies and key elements needed to deepen a vision of what could be possible when connecting classrooms to the world.

During the in-class component, students explored strategies that support the problem-based learning (PBL) model, through analysis of videotaped PBL lessons, discussions of PBL research, and other resources. They also engaged as “students” in PBL scenarios (mini-PBLs), while collaborating in groups to improve their own investigative skills and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, various applications with computers, calculators, probes, and other communication and analytical equipment were included as an integral part of the training. This helped students improve their skills in using technology for resource information, collecting/analysing data, and “publishing” results.

The overarching objective of this course was to make students more conscious of their roles in fostering passion and open-mindedness about regional and global concerns and helping to bring about change in their communities, schools, and the world. After completing this course, students were able to:

1. Design a data collection instrument for use in recording trends and other information obtained from site visits.
2. Identify professional organisations involved in educational initiatives and describe the organisations' vision, mission, intended audience and perceived importance.
3. Describe the various types of projects and services that are provided by the organisations visited and compare these services with those identified in professional and academic publications.
4. Compare and contrast the local and global initiatives provided by the various organisations.
5. Identify the knowledge and skills that are required now and in the future to establish global citizenship.
6. Describe the types of local and global partnership services that will need to be provided in the future.

In terms of teaching strategies, the instructor utilised several techniques to motivate critical thinking: cubing, small group enquiries, whole group discussion, cooperative learning, problem-based investigations, and tiered assignments. These routines helped make thinking visible and are practical tools for students to use in their teaching.

Problem-Based Learning Methodological Framework

The purpose of the course was to engage students in problem-based learning experiences where they had firsthand examination of the issues pertaining to global and local challenges. In problem-based learning, small groups of students are given context-specific circumstances and asked to describe the problem, determine the knowledge and tools required to research the problem, and suggest potential solutions (Duch, Groh, and Allen 2001). An inspection of the US Next Generation Science Standards (National Research Council 2010) and the standards from the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d.) shows that both organisations promote the learning of content through enquiry and applications to the real world. Based on these national standards, the focus is to include standards for both content and process skills. This means that for these disciplines, throughout kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) and in all courses, teachers are encouraged to engage students in problem-solving enquiries that help them apply their learning of concepts to real-world situations.

The design of these standards dictated that students should be actively engaged in enquiry through problem-solving explorations and investigations and, furthermore, that the enquiries be real and meaningful to the students (Li et al. 2020). According to the Buck Institute for Education, students typically engage in an extended process of enquiry in response to a challenging question or problem during PBL activities. While allowing for some voice and choice from the students, challenging projects were meticulously planned, managed, and evaluated to aid in the acquisition of essential academic material, the development of 21st century skills (collaboration, communication, and critical thinking), and the production of high-quality, authentic products and presentations. PBL investigative “projects” comprised the way students learn and master objectives and standards as opposed to projects that are only “applications” conducted at the end of a unit of study. PBL instructional units were often initiated by a prompt that focuses student attention on something real that offers an “unresolved problem” using system simulations (Cevallos-Torres and Botto-Tobar 2019) such as a current news article, a controversial issue, or a puzzling or discrepant event to capture student interest and attention. Students were encouraged to discuss, share ideas, conduct research and develop a “driving question” to investigate. During the project implementation process, PBL design protocols promoted student-to-student discussion, facilitated in-depth searches for information that helped answer the question and solve problems, and afforded opportunities for revision of ideas and reflections on decisions, as well as opportunities for sharing the products with people beyond the classroom and teacher (Larmer and Mergendoller 2010). PBL does not limit the use of inclusive instructional strategies that enhance quality learning in diverse classroom contexts. Rather, strategies are selected to support student motivation and productive engagement in those behaviours that result in positive intellectual progress for each student (Trullàs et al. 2022).

Boaler (2002) studied the effectiveness of PBL and describes a three-year investigation of approximately 300 students attending schools with vastly different mathematics teaching approaches. Both schools were in low-income areas and the majority of the students at both schools were from working-class families. One of the schools used an open-ended approach to mathematics and the other a procedural, skill-based approach. Students who used the open-ended method showed greater levels of accomplishment as well as comparable levels of achievement. In a meta-synthesis of eight meta-analyses, Strobel and Barneveld (2009) compared the effectiveness of PBL with more traditional lecture-based instruction and concluded that PBL is preferred for long-term retention and performance-based applications, while more traditional methods are favourable for short-term retention. Vega (2015), following a review of nine different studies of PBL, argues that a growing body of academic research supports the use of project-based learning in schools as a way to engage students, cut absenteeism, boost cooperative learning skills, and improve test scores. These benefits are enhanced when technology is used in a meaningful way in the projects.

Broadly, PBL classes typically begin with problems rather than an explanation of discipline information, and students gain knowledge, skills, and comprehension through a tiered progression of problems presented in sequence. As a methodology, PBL focuses on a generic set of skills and attitudes that the participants acquire as a result of being immersed in the learning experiences (Strobel and Barneveld 2009). These include teamwork, chairing groups, listening, recording, cooperating, respecting others' views, critically evaluating the literature, self-directed learning, and using relevant resources and high-level presentation and communication skills. Furthermore, the framework reinforces certain roles that the participants should undertake in order to succeed in the learning process (see Figure 2).

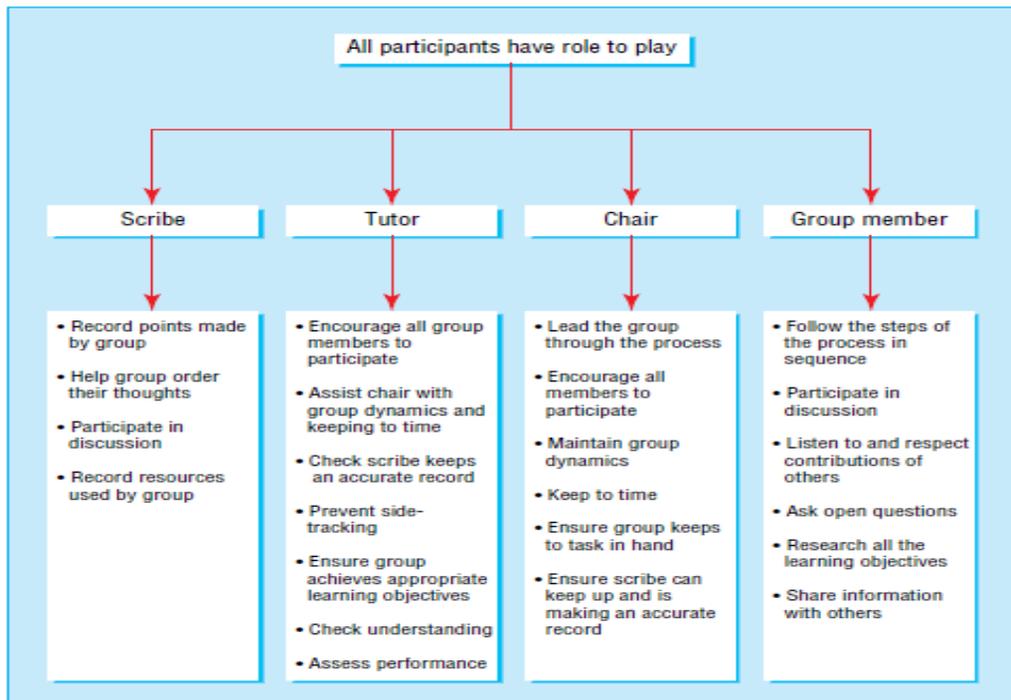


Figure 2: PBL participants' roles

With regard to the overarching objectives, the PBL process capitalises on the acquisition of theoretical as well as practical knowledge along with a set of cognitive skills including scientific reasoning, critical appraisal, information literacy, and lifelong learning (Wiggins and McTighe 2011). Additionally, the process reinforces the acquisition of specific attitudes such as valuing teamwork, interpersonal skills and recognises the need to address psycho-social issues as they transpire during implementation.

To describe the PBL process in detail, we employ the following diagram seen in Figure 3.

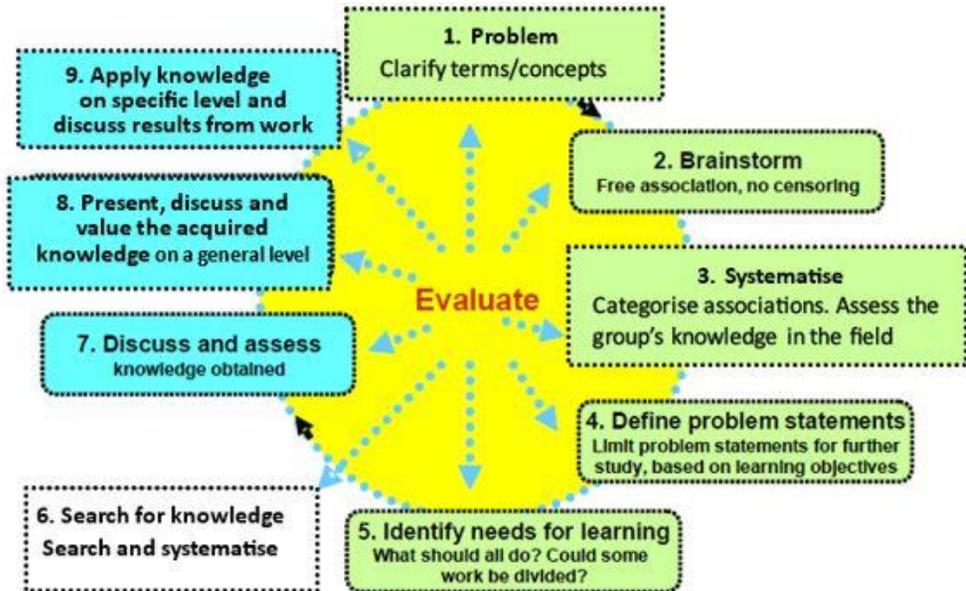


Figure 3: The PBL process

The course was inspired by the rich array of literature supporting PBL, and the critical need to build undergraduate students' capacity not only to meet or exceed test expectations but also to be well prepared as productive citizens and effective decision makers. Enhancing student learning outcomes and quality learning necessitated the move towards improved implementation of inclusive and equitable instructional approaches, such as PBL. It was the expectation of this course that more and more students will have greater opportunities to be well prepared for global education leading careers in the United States and beyond.

Reflection Journals and Community Engagement Projects

To evaluate student learning outcomes, students were required to submit five reflection journals to help them prepare for their final projects. Reflection journals consisted of questions, insights, feelings, experiences, and learning related to the reading assignments, class discussions and group work. It was an expectation that each reflection journal combines theory, practice, and reflection. Each reflection journal was approximately one to two double-spaced pages (that is, three to six paragraphs). Additionally, students were required to submit a Community Engagement Experience Report that describes a plan of how they will implement their group project. It includes the following components.

Description of the Community

Students described the target population or community they were visiting to implement their projects, including a justification for why this group of people is the ideal one to

reach in order to solve the issue or fulfil the demanded necessity. A focus on information related to the “ethnic” and cultural makeup of the population in the community was encouraged.

Description of the Agency

Students provided agency descriptions, which included a mission or purpose statement, demographic served, community outreach programmes, profit or non-profit status, and metrics used to determine effectiveness of the agency. Additionally, students gave a concise account of casual conversations and meetings with the contact person or agency, including any successful negotiations as well as any current or future issues with agency logistics.

Proposed Timeline and Additional Resources

Students described a suggested schedule for meetings with agency representatives, community informants, group meetings, and an estimated start date for the project. The instructor was present during project implementation. Additional resources acquired to assist with the implementation of their projects were also included.

To encourage collaborative work, each group developed a four-page community-focused research project, addressing the following: a) Defining a problem/challenge that a community faces; b) Assessing the opportunity for potential intervention; c) Identifying sustainable solutions that can serve the community for short- and long-term gains; d) Identifying resources needed to implement solution strategies with local and global partners.

Method

The study employs an exploratory case study design to examine the reflective experiences of students as they engage in a course on global partnerships in education. Yin (2017) states that the need to comprehend a real-world example is what drives case study research. The case study is exploratory in nature since it aims to unfold the experiences participants encounter during immersion. Yin (2017) argues that “what” questions lend themselves to explorations facilitating the generation of further hypotheses and propositions. The focus, as Thomas (2011) maintains, lies in examining phenomena that call for research into fields that result in more innovations. Bybee (2010) explains that a fundamental challenge in education is tackling real-world issues within a global context.

Participants

Thirteen (four male and nine female) undergraduate students and prospective teachers participated in the course. The course is part of a Minor in Education programme that provides opportunities for undergraduate students from various majors who are interested in teaching or working within diverse educational settings, teaching

internationally, or more broadly work in after school programmes and community outreach. While the minor coursework does not meet the qualifications for a teaching licence, the programme provides a solid foundation in education that will be useful in a variety of careers.

Four of the students were sociology majors; three studied psychology; two studied history, and the other four students were each from economics, world languages, creative writing and moderate disabilities fields. While seven of the students were in their senior year, four were sophomores and two were juniors. Of the 13 participants, nine self-identified as white, two as Asian, one as African American and one as Latina. The majority of students were from lower middle-class to middle-class backgrounds and had been born and raised in the northeast United States. Most had limited exposure to global education before enrolling in the course. In the findings, we identify the participants only by their initials.

Data Analysis

Journal Reflections

The qualitative analysis of the students' reflective narratives was conducted over several iterations and employed a multi-layered coding scheme of both inductive and open codes, that is, codes derived from the data and in vivo codes, where students' words are used to code the journal narratives. Because the purpose of this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' reflective experiences as a result of engaging in the course activities, the open coding procedure was a suitable means to generate categories that exemplified their experiences. Open coding is an effective method for describing, identifying, and categorising students' experiences as expressed in their journals. Through sensitising questions and systematic comparisons, more distinct concepts emerge. Therefore, the use of open coding facilitates the extraction of potentially important latent variables related to students' developmental processes and outcomes. To further examine the types of experiences students narrated, in vivo codes depicted instances where students, for example, reflected on the new insights related to knowledge, skills or dispositions acquired during the course. The breadth and scope of experiences were also examined, noting changes in not only the depth but also the focus of the narrated journals. Distinctive themes that emerged were highlighted with illustrative quotes from the journals throughout the findings.

Early in the coding process, the emphasis was on how students perceived their experiences as well as their internal reactions, including the emotional markers that were prevalent in their storylines. As such, the analysis focused on the expressions of identity as a process that shaped their discourses. The approach employed here emphasises the fact that students as narrators create and formulate a variety of meanings that embody their multiple connections with their social groups and communities. Through their narratives, students created and negotiated understandings of the realities of engagement in real local and global contexts, which ultimately shifted and modified their existing

views about the nature of education. The analysis of reflective journals was carried out along three expression levels: the lexical/linguistic level, the textual/pragmatic level, and the interactional/social level (De Fina 2003).

Findings: Levels of Expression

Broadly, there was clear evidence of three levels of expression through which students narrated their experiences in their reflective journals during the course. At each level, I discerned how students' perspectives shifted as they negotiated and presented themselves in relation to others and to the course content.

Lexical Level: Expressing Distancing, Involvement, and Solidarity with Topics and Classmates

At the lexical/linguistic level, I examined students' use of pronouns in the way their stories are told and as a reflection of their sense of positioning. Benveniste (1971), a pioneer in the analysis of pragmatic functions on pronouns, asserted the central role of pronouns in establishing connections between texts and contexts. Admittedly, Collington (2002) has rightly marked "I" as a shifter because it switches the focal point of conversation between speaking subjects. Its hollowness affords subjects the opportunity to negotiate collective meaning they all own by simply using the first-person pronoun. Students narrated experiences using the first-person pronoun to define the self, highlighting the intricacy and usefulness of the first-person pronoun in the context of the course. Of particular interest was the pronoun switching where students alternate between the use of "I" and "we" and the uncertainties that are created and fostered through these shifts. I argue that the occurrences of these pronouns constitute strong means for the expression of alignment or misalignment in students' interactions with other students in class and with community members at large. For example, one student stated,

Working collaboratively can be hard for me as I tend to dominate a conversation, especially if it is a topic I am passionate about. I hope to work on this by allowing my classmates to take the lead and use active listening skills to learn from them.

The choice of specific pronouns signifies the kind of roles that students assign to themselves and the responsibility in partaking in certain actions. To illustrate, one student indicated,

In the project we get to apply all that we have learned into a real world context which will help cement these ideas into my head forever. I cannot wait to continue to work on this project and see what change we can make to education on a local level.

Furthermore, students sometimes decided to refer to themselves in more impersonal forms as "you" by shifting between first- and third-person pronouns. Such switching occurred particularly when students distanced themselves from the context of the discourse. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

Being able to look at a community that is very different from my own is very eye opening. You don't realize how many people could be in need until you have to think of a project like this. It is then that you realize that there are so many things that you could do to try and make this world a better place, locally and globally.

Textual/Pragmatic Level: Dialogue as a Vehicle to Stress Nuances of Agentive Positions and Self- Representations as Capable Educators

As one student reflected,

Another instance that specifically stood out to me was when a little girl was crying in the classroom. I had asked her why she was so upset, and she told me that her feet hurt because her shoes were too small. The teachers didn't allow her to take her shoes off. To me this felt very cruel to force this child to be in pain because she didn't have a pair of shoes that fit her. I couldn't help but think there was a better approach here.

This incident that the student reports is essential in forging her image as a person capable of managing sensitive situations that emerge in a classroom setting.

Similarly, another student explained,

The staff in particular do not believe the kids would even benefit from a program to help kids with their academic success. They said that due to the lives they live and their role models, whether that be family or friends, they do not care about their education. In my opinion, this mindset can be sensed by the teens as they are very receptive to others' opinions of them. If they are thought of as unmotivated and treated as such, then they will not be motivated to succeed.

As one student disclosed,

As a teacher, [I] have to come up with things to look for and listen for to tell if a student has competency in the specific thing I'm are looking for. I should also make sure that I look for my successes and not dwell on my perceived failures. This will encourage me to keep going and keep up with that global partnership if I recognize the things that I'm doing right.

Interactional/Social Level: Chorality in Emphasising the Role of the Group and an Inherent Perception that the Journey into a New Territory (Education as a Discipline) Is Essentially a Collective Enterprise

As the course progressed, it became evident how students through their narratives began to forge an "educator" identity through the expression, discussion, and negotiation of affiliations as well as a sense of belonging to the field. Underlying the ascription of membership are the values and emotional significance students associate with that membership. Therefore, the dynamic process of forging self-identification and reckoning that unfolded through narrated experiences was arguably susceptible to contextual affordances and constraints that the course offered. Consequently, students'

notion of self is framed in relation to the circumstances they encountered and the new roles they adopted. As one student explained,

After meeting with the group, it's clear that the more this group meets, the better and clearer everything gets. I am finally beginning to see how everything we have done in class is connecting together since the beginning. The group all helped each other make the community engagement report. I found that it is obvious we have a lot of similar personalities when it comes to classwork, and this was a small problem. We all have the mindset to "make the project ours", and this was a bad way to work on a project together. We have gotten over it by fairly and evenly dividing work, where we can all check each other's work as well.

Another student contemplated,

Over the course of the current semester, I feel as though my knowledge of issues affecting education on both the local and global level has increased significantly. I had really never thought about things like global competencies or global strategies and how they could possibly affect students' minds.

Temporal/Spatial Level: Narrative Chronotopes as Instruments for Calibrating Students' Experience in Global Education

Students' continuous use of the time-place nexus in their reflective narratives created a vivid picture where the course experience exploded into a veritable kaleidoscope of reflective, imaginative and emotional encounters. The composition of meanings reflected through the relationship between the narrative time and space is what Bakhtin refers to as the "chronotope" (1986, 84). Bakhtin's term "chronotope" refers specifically to the two core elements of any story: one's position and physical movement in space, and how these two relate to the passing of time. Embarking on understanding the logistics of building global partnerships in educational settings, students' narratives were arguably shaped through a number of principles that pertain to the temporal aspect of establishing global educational partnerships. For example, one student explained,

Another example of a pitfall [in global partnerships] is having uncommon priorities. This could be a major downfall to a partnership because at the end of the day, the goals should be the same. If both partners are not working toward the same end goal, this causes confusion and wastes a lot of time.

Another student noted,

Even though that does not relieve the pressure that the project is due toward the end of the semester, but it does show that partnerships do take time, even short-term ones like this one may possibly be.

In a similar vein, one student reflected,

[There are] different ways that people can fall into equity pitfalls. This was really important to me because these problems are real and happen often when partnering up. This is not just for partnerships alone, but it is for all times through life where one would have to work collaboratively with others.

Additionally, the emphasis on spatial positioning and geo-locational presence was also evident in students' designations of what could count as a successful global educational partnership. To illustrate, a student elucidated,

In the context of future plans as a teacher, I do hope to do programs such as grant-based teacher travel fellowships or Fund for Teachers to participate in an experience abroad to possibly make connections with other teachers and their classroom.

An in-depth examination of the spatial and temporal changes that students encountered revealed that students have developed transferrable life skills, and advanced new knowledge as a result of their course experience. The nature of the information, on the one hand, and the pace and intensity of the course activities, on the other hand, are jointly responsible for the formation of two poles in which students' experiences oscillated. Charged with chronotopic energy, it is within the relationship between these two poles, namely, the textual and the extra-textual, that the time and space markers reside.

Conclusion: High Impact Community Engagement Projects

Overall, students were engaged in the community work and conducted their studies efficiently and purposefully. Their projects investigated several high-impact practices, including learning communities and affordable school resources for underprivileged communities. It was obvious that students benefited from opportunities to build new knowledge from various community partners who use various approaches. Learning through experience using place-based education provided a basis for understanding and engaging in local and global change. PBL allowed students to examine global issues at the local level, emphasising a strong sense of place and a pathway to tackle global problems. As such, students saw the long-lasting impact of universal challenges such as discrimination and poverty. Through project-based experiential learning, students became involved in their local community while dealing with global problems replicated throughout the world. In the process, they came to realise that individual experiences encountered at a personal level can be largely tied to universal ones worldwide.

We, my students and I, have seen that the opportunity to become locally involved in the immediate community is important to the course's success. Through immersion in community work, students developed essential communication and teamwork skills to solve immediate problems that emerged in context. Tackling local manifestations of global issues equipped students with the necessary skills to invest in and respect a community's values and concerns. These skills, such as perspective-taking and

successful communication across cultural barriers, are necessary to build students' intercultural sensitivity and acceptance of others. In addition to helping students address local issues successfully, the course aimed to build bridges between education institutions and the communities educating informed citizens towards a more inclusive and just society. Scaffolding students' experiential learning as they engage in addressing local concerns, communicating effectively with others, and working together to effect change was a worthy endeavour. Specifically, I report the following outcomes: 1) the course capacitated students with combined hands-on education and community service to promote civic responsibility; 2) it provided students with skills and opportunities needed to take action, lead, and serve; 3) it initiated discussions on new ways of viewing the world and themselves, and elevating the focus on issues of the day; and 4) it helped students acquire knowledge, experience and leadership skills that could benefit them in their schools and home communities.

Although the course is still in its infancy, we are hoping to extend lessons learned from the pilot to education students and prospective teachers in the initial certification programmes. While the current general education coursework is organised primarily by disciplines, our current approach to education, primarily at the undergraduate level, is focusing more on big questions that could provide a better organisational programme structure. Similarly, while most of our education majors participate in activities beyond the classroom, we hope to broaden these possibilities and promote problem-based and experiential learning. By utilising broad questions situated within meaningful contexts for our education coursework, our community-based local and global perspective course provides a strategy to aid students in making thoughtful decisions about their education while outlining how their majors offer solutions to global issues. I believe that this new course provided a real-world setting for learning, multidisciplinary viewpoints, and application outside the university—as well as the chance to address persistent problems to ongoing challenges, affirming the role that education and educators can play in making a difference in people's lives.

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