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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF
OVERSEAS COOPERATING TEACHERS'
PERCEPTIONS TO
STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Education

By


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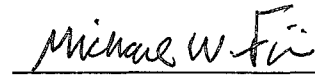
CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

December 3, 2012


I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Cynthia Louise Reilly ENTITLED A Qualitative Study of Overseas Cooperating Teachers' Perceptions to Student Teachers' Experiences BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Education.



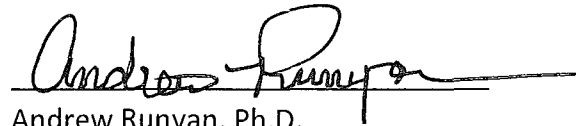
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ABSTRACT

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As the world becomes a closer-knit economic and academic community, teachers who have worked or completed their student teaching requirements overseas are sought after for their international experience and multicultural understanding. Previous research has explored the observations of overseas student teachers in order to understand better the classroom and foreign community experiences and to help develop overseas internship programs. In consideration of the important role cooperating teachers perform in the student teaching experience, this current research examined the inductive perceptions of cooperating teachers in order to corroborate and develop further what has been reported in student teacher studies. This research project applied qualitative methods to determine through the perspectives of cooperating teachers what elements of the student teachers' experiences led to a successful overseas internship experience.

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The Lord has portioned out to me a number of years to work in international Christian education in South and Central America. Those experiences in Paraguay and Costa Rica, working with students from around the globe, impacted my life and way of seeing the world in tremendous ways both educational and spiritual. I thank God for the road of life on which He has brought me. I thank Him, too, for the abilities and education He provides to bring this work to this point.

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Chapter One: Introduction

With the importance placed on globalization and multiculturalism in present-day American society, and on economic and educational fronts in particular (Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009), the education departments of undergraduate institutions increasingly focus on, not only incorporating cultural awareness and intelligence in their curriculum, but also providing students with the opportunity to student teach at overseas locations. Teachers who have worked or completed their student teaching requirements overseas are sought after for their international experience and multicultural understanding (Jacob, Swensen, Hite, Erickson, & Tuttle, 2010). Overseas-interned teachers often bring to their teaching experience benefits such as a stronger respect toward students, a greater patience with foreign-language learners, a focus on multicultural aspects within curriculum and the classroom, and greater flexibility and creativity utilizing teaching resources and strategies. Furthermore, new teachers frequently report that overseas student teaching can be helpful in initial hiring and interviewing experiences (Jacob et al., 2010). Overseas student teachers oftentimes exhibit characteristics that employers seek: the ability to perceive the world through another individual's perspective (or even another *culture's* perspective), the ability to challenge one's own beliefs and value systems, an increased confidence and stronger sense of self, being able to shift their perspective consciousness (realizing that the United States is not the center of the world or the center of decision-making across the world), abilities to "attend to individual differences," and the realization of how true cultural learning does develop in a person (Cushner, 2007;

Walters et al., 2009). Teerling (2008) reported that overseas experiences affected important advances in professional abilities, specifically, being a confident decision maker.

However, these important benefits sometimes come at the expense of self-sacrifice, anticipated and unanticipated challenges, and a self-imposed experimentation in one's personal and social life values. Working overseas in any venue demands that a person be willing to confront all the usual employment demands, dilemmas and drama—and add to that a new set of challenges, such as living in an unfamiliar setting, sometimes with an unknown or barely known language, and often among a people who bring entirely different viewpoints to the world in which the employee now shares. These situations create for the student teacher the experience of being one of the minority community (Cushner, 2007; Pence, 2008). Naturally, being able to work successfully through and within these issues helps to develop and sharpen various skill sets that future employers value (Bryan & Sprague, 2008).

Whether a student teacher performs this internship overseas or stateside, the cooperating teacher's role in such an assignment holds both long-term and short-term effects on that student teacher's education. The cooperating teacher strongly influences the student teacher through a transfer of educational knowledge, through educational experience, and through the formation of a professional identity (Cuenca, 2011). Furthermore, student teachers learn from these models how to perform in the professional setting of the school across key domains, such as how to interact with school staff and faculty, how to dress, and how to communicate with parents effectively (Johnston, 2010). In shorter-term effects, the cooperating teacher essentially operates as a mentor to the

student teacher (Snow-Gerono, 2009). The cooperating teacher often is the intermediary between the university supervisor and the student teacher, sometimes even described as being a protector when that university supervisor-student teacher relationship is awkward, distant, or intimidating.

In an overseas student placement, this relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher develops, not only along academic and professional lines, but also on social support lines as the student teacher combats the sensation of being foreign and lacking familiar relationships. In seeking out those with whom they could relate, overseas student teachers frequently look to cooperating and other teachers for conversational release and emotional support (Firmin, MacKay, & Firmin, 2007). Researchers also show that overseas cooperating teachers often go beyond what was expected by the student teacher in order to help the student teacher's adjustment to new environments, both within the school walls and outside (Firmin, Firmin, & MacKay, 2008).

Due to the importance of focusing on and improving the cross-cultural student teaching experience, recent qualitative studies have focused on the student teachers' overseas experiences, specifically as related to their expectations and preparations for working overseas and ultimately their post-experience perceptions and self-evaluations. In particular, Firmin, MacKay, & Firmin (2007) studied 13 overseas teachers, a sample chosen from a selective, private, comprehensive university located in the midwest United States. They were enrolled in an education program leading to state licensure for teaching in public and private school settings. With the aim of giving "voice" to the student teachers and to enhance pedagogical and supervisory needs, the researchers explored the student teachers' personal and professional experiences during the dual-challenge of their

first teaching experience (student teaching) and cultural adaptation in a foreign setting. The results from this research produced multiple qualitative themes. Perhaps the most relevant finding to the present study involved a bell-shaped curve phenomenon, reflecting student teachers' affective responses. Throughout their 12-week experience overseas, student teachers described themselves as having passed through three distinct emotional periods: a state of excitement (including anticipatory nervousness), a state of dysphoria (including discouragement among other negative emotions), and finally a state of enjoyment and fulfillment (thus leading to the emotional difficulties of saying good-bye and returning to home in the United States) (Firmin, Firmin, & MacKay, 2007).

Universities adhere to state requirements when engaged in overseas student teaching projects; these requirements apply to the cooperating and supervising teachers of the student teacher as well, and applicable documentation must be completed by cooperating and supervising teachers in order for the university to submit any student's application to the state for licensure (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008). Since the university typically does not exist proximal to the student-teaching experience, the cooperating and supervising teachers' roles become more crucial to the university in the ultimate grading and certifying by the latter. Distance supervision, an essential extrinsic factor affecting the experience featured in the study of overseas student teachers, is significantly different for those student teaching overseas than it is for students in the states. While both have the guidance of and final evaluation by a cooperating teacher in the classroom, the direct supervision of a university professor is not available overseas and, therefore, is performed by a qualified leader-teacher, principal or director at the overseas institution ("supervising teacher") (Cwick & Benton, 2009).

Understanding the affective highs and lows of this international experience, from the viewpoint of the student teacher, is important for the development of educational programs working to meet current global progress in all fields. Naturally, such studies are limited by providing the perspective of *only* the student teacher. Without an institutional supervisory presence on-site, the educational program has little tangible evidence to corroborate the reality of student teacher's perceptions, considering the emotional, and therefore subjective, element of those perceptions. Therefore, the voice of the cooperating teacher becomes a valuable element of corroboration and development in research. The overseas cooperating or supervising teacher on site has daily interaction with and observation of the student teacher in this dynamic situation. The cooperating teacher generally recognizes the importance of his or her role in the student-teacher's professional development (and, at the same time, enjoys the fresh input and ideas of an educational student who recently has been in a university classroom). Cooperating teachers also understand the influence of the daily close interaction they have with student teachers, and the responsibility they have in reporting to the university (Johnson, 2011).

A second reason to corroborate student-teacher perceptions involves the long-term projection of overseas internship programs. The availability and interest of overseas schools to provide the services of international student-teaching depends on continued beneficial experiences on both sides—the student and cooperating teacher. Sinclair, Dowson, and Thistleton-Martin (2006) reported that often teachers' motivations to sponsor a student-teacher develop from their commitment to self, students, and the profession. However, at the same time, the actual experiences often counter these positive

motivations and actually dissuade experienced teachers from serving in that cooperating capacity. Additional studies with overseas cooperating teachers, paralleling the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that create in student teachers such significant effect, potentially would enable undergraduate education departments to ameliorate programs already taxed in their efforts to meet the demands of current educational and economic trends and rigors.

Definitions

Cooperating teacher. A classroom teacher who is recruited by a teacher preparation department to host a preservice teacher in the field. The classroom teacher assumes multiple duties as role model, mentor, counselor, guide, sponsor teacher, friend, defender, confidant, and evaluator (Collins & O'Brien, 2003).

Cross-cultural. Refers to the exchange between two cultures or interaction between two or more differing cultures. It is generally used to designate that which extends beyond one set of cultural norms, traditions, boundaries, and unspoken gives and is applicable and relevant across differing cultures or in varying cultural contexts (Provenzo, 2008).

Cultural intelligence. In general, refers to people's success (or lack thereof) when adjusting to another culture. Specifically, this concept includes the traits and skills of people who adjust quickly and function effectively when they interact extensively in cultures other than the ones where they were socialized (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009).

Journaling. Private writing in which students reflect and respond to their experiences, culture, relationships, and personal growth (MacKay, 2006).

Student teaching. An internship period of at least 6 weeks and up to 12 in which the student teacher observes, engages related duties, and teaches with full responsibility for the class for a minimum of 3 weeks. For some student teachers, this period will be longer and will be their only student teaching experience. For others (including those student teaching overseas), it will be a second student teaching assignment, following a successful first experience in the United States (CC-TECC, 2009).

Supervisor or supervising teacher. The administrator or teacher at the site who visits periodically and oversees the student teacher. This person serves supplemental to the cooperating teacher. Where no other organization is designated, the supervisor is responsible for the care of the student teacher at the cross-cultural location (CC-TECC, 2009).

Third-culture kid. An individual who, having spent a significant part of their developmental years in a culture other than their parents' home culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

VoIP. Voice over Internet Protocol is a digital technology that allows individuals to make voice calls, using a broadband Internet connection, instead of a regular (or analog) phone line (Federal Communications Commission, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Cooperating teachers fulfill an important role in the student teaching process. They provide the student teacher with significant practical and theoretical direction, mentoring, and reinforcement in the final education project leading up to the teacher's graduation

and certification (Anderson, 2009). Furthermore, cooperating teachers provide the evaluation necessary to the university recommending a teaching license, attesting that the student has met minimum criteria for effective classroom teaching and class management (Anderson, 2007).

The cooperating teacher's role in the development of the new teacher is one of supervising, evaluating, and sometimes providing "sophisticated counseling/orientation" (Roberson & Doebler, 2001, para. 20). The authors note that student teachers attest to social support deriving from fellow teachers, specifically, from cooperating teachers. Anderson (2009) reported that the influence of the cooperating teacher can significantly and immediately affect and alter how a new teacher performs in the classroom.

Just as research examining the student teacher's response to this challenging, yet investing overseas experience provides feedback to the university, inductive perceptions of the cooperating teacher should be examined in order to corroborate and develop further what has been reported in student teacher studies. First, this research would give those supervising practitioners a voice in the dialogue that develops policies and procedures in the preparation of student teachers for the many classrooms around the world that await these teachers. Second, the research provides universities with understanding the cooperating teachers' viewpoints of potential negative factors that may prohibit their future involvement in overseas student-teacher programs. These international student-teaching programs have proven invaluable to future teachers and university administrations as educational institutions develop global awareness and cultural intelligence in their programs and more importantly, in their graduates.

Scope of Study and Delimitations

In this follow-up study, I applied qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions and observations of cooperating teachers who hosted student teachers in overseas classroom. The sample included 23 teachers, chosen from a set of international, American-curriculum schools who hosted teachers from a selective, private Midwest university working with the Interaction International, Inc. student teaching program—the same university from which the Firmin, MacKay, and Firmin (2007) teacher samples were drawn. This criterion sampling (Mason, 2010) provided consistency between the original study and the current one, as well as support for any program or policy changes based upon the original data.

Furthermore, the sample included those teachers who were hosted within the last six university semesters (three school years), so that data results were relevant to the university itself and applicable to reading current trends and developing timely policies (as warranted). Interviews with the sample group occurred in two waves; the second was administered for clarification purposes and afforded participants opportunities to provide elucidation and advance their perspectives. Interviews were semi-structured in format, allowing for participants to relate applicable information as needed. The questions had, as their objective, to discover the percepts that cooperating teachers possessed of student teachers who were educated at this one university.

The data collected did not focus on the student teachers' abilities to perform effectively, except as they related to the overseas adjustments and the cross-cultural experience. Interviews also did not appraise the competencies or content-abilities of the teachers. This would have been a separate study and would have had different

implications for the education department; furthermore, such data potentially would have been less useful for generalization purposes.

Significance of the Study

Global relations and advancements in every field compel universities to be at the forefront in creating culturally intelligent generations of teachers. Accreditation associations perceive this importance and set standards that measure it; employers value it in the teacher graduate (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2006). While the benefits of an overseas student-teaching experience have been touted and proven to be beneficial to teachers, universities, and students alike (Walters et al. 2009) merely having such a program does not guarantee those benefits. As such, just traveling to a distant location or even to a diversely-populated location within the United States does not guarantee that a student teacher will absorb cultural intelligence, that the university is globally minded, or that the money spent in the process will be a prudent investment. Appropriate and thorough educating and planning must occur before a university sends student teachers off to experience what should be a yielding investment for all involved.

In order to enhance these programs, universities conduct research that discovers the best procedures and pre-planning for the participants. However, research primarily addresses how those student teachers invest and respond to the overseas situation. Also of importance is the role of the international school at which the experience takes place. While the student teacher is the individual experiencing the challenge and rewards of the experience, the cooperating teacher views the same experience with perhaps more objective and experienced insight. The cooperating teacher may better determine the

realities and causes of various struggles and joys through which a student teacher passes. For the sake of future student teachers, it is important to explore, from the international institution's point of view, the reality of what student teachers report. On the negative end of the reality, overseas cooperating teachers can help identify what also potentially can be done in order to correct lack of preparation or ease the necessary adjustments to overseas living and working.

Furthermore, it is of value to the international school and overseas cooperating teachers that these experiences are developed to optimal productivity. If experiences bring conflict and difficulty, this may impede the international school's successful participation. Consequently, for those schools' benefits, a study of international cooperating teachers is essential to corroborate and expand reports of the aforementioned bell-shaped curve experience.

This study will aid the particular university in which the participants are enrolled, since it will give one measure of accounting of the university's investment in sending out student teachers internationally. In light of current accreditation requirements and, in light of the value placed on multicultural intelligence, education departments in general, and this one in particular, work to constantly ameliorate processes and policies to prepare their teacher graduates.

Method of Procedure

The sample of participants for the study consisted of 23 international teachers who performed the cooperative role for student teachers from a selective, private, comprehensive university located in the Midwest United States—the same university at which the catalyst study examined the student teachers themselves. All overseas

cooperating teachers participated through the Interaction International, Inc. student teaching program as part of public school licensure-teacher-tracks. This criterion sampling provided consistency between the two studies. Furthermore, sampling included those teachers who hosted student teachers within the last five school years, so that data results were relevant and applicable to determining current trends and potentially adjusting policies as necessary.

Participating cooperating and/or supervising teachers were contacted by email initially in order to request their participation. Due to the distance involved in interviewing teachers in international locations, all interviews were conducted via VOIP (i.e., Skype or Vonage phone connections). Studies show the legitimacy of telephone interviews when face-to-face meetings cannot be procured (Holt, 2010). In-depth interviews were conducted, assessing cooperating teachers' perceptions of the overseas student-teacher involvements. With permission from the interviewees, I tape recorded the interviews and all names used in the text for enhancing reading clarity are pseudonyms. The tape recorded interviews were conducted in semi-structured format, providing common questions throughout all interviews but also allowing participants to take the interviews in directions that are important to them (Seidman, 2006). The data were collected inductively, allowing the cooperating teachers to tell their own stories and express their percepts freely. Following Firmin (2006), I conducted two waves of interviews, allowing for consultation in between the two waves in order to deepen the cycles of understandings regarding participant data.

Maxwell's (2005) open coding strategies were used in data analysis. I assessed potential codes that developed from the first wave of interviews. Once the interviews

were completed, transcribed, and coded, I used the initial findings to guide questions for the second wave of interviews (Firmin, 2006). As such, the first waves were completely inductive, while the second interview waves enabled an effective focus on the main constructs being investigated in the study and focus on potential themes being communicated by most of the participants in their interviews. Cognizant of the prominent debate in qualitative research circles regarding the use of theory (Raffanti, 2006), some authorities insist that theory has no role in the design or interpretation of qualitative study (Glaser, 1992). Others, in contrast, find theory to be useful or desirable to incorporate at various stages in the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Respecting both perspectives, this research philosophically commits to the traditional, non-theoretical approach to qualitative inquiry. As noted by Lundberg and Young (2005), departing from traditional methodology and integrating theory runs risks that might threaten the study's internal validity. As such, I believe it is for the readers to apply theory to the findings, based on their own paradigms and assumptions (Glaser, 1978). Consequently, avoiding a discussion section with theoretical interpretation is not an oversight, but rather an exercise of what Glaser (1998) refers to as disciplined restraint.

After coding the data, I pared-away potential themes for which there was a lack of general support among most participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). As necessary, particular constructs sometimes were combined or collapsed when overlap warranted doing so. Some data from the interview process were discarded due to lack of universal support by the participants.

Internal validity was enhanced via the use of member checks (Merriam, 2002), asking various participants to provide feedback regarding the findings. Saturation (Flick,

2006) occurred at the end of the second wave of interviews. That is, I found that, through repetition continued among the participants, little new data was shared regarding the constructs being studied. In congruence with standard qualitative protocol, I believe this process provides confidence regarding the adequacy of the sample size for this particular qualitative design and study (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006)

Various constructs addressed include: (a) preparation for the overseas experience; (b) cultural differences that impact teaching; (c) foreign language effects; (d) expectations held by student teacher; (e) expectations held by the cooperating teacher; (f) relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher; (g) relationship with students; (h) relationship with host country nationals; (i) relationship with other staff and faculty; (j) spiritual influences and observations; (k) fitting in; (l) social support (including that from the cooperating teacher); and (m) adjusting to foreign culture. All these were discussed as student teacher experiences as seen from the cooperating or supervising teacher's perspective.

Chapter Two: Plenary Literature Review

Importance of Overseas Student Teaching

The culmination of any teacher candidates program of study, the student teaching experience, provides dynamic transition from the role of education student to one of an education professional. Student teaching is described as, not only a “rite of passage,” but even “the keystone experience” and “the most crucial phase” of undergraduate teacher training (Bell & Robinson, 2004, p. 40). It can be seen as the bridge between the “ivory tower” and the “real world.” It is not only an experience of receiving more knowledge, but the experience also provides a time of exploration, experimentation, and development of one’s skills and styles. At this point, the student teacher develops professionalism through independent teaching, gaining self-confidence, and—at the same time—reciprocally builds into the learning of those in the host classroom—students as well as oftentimes the cooperating teacher (Sahin, 2008).

Moreover, with the world becoming far more interdependent and interrelated through economies, education, politics, social endeavors and media, education in the United States should be at the forefront of preparing young people to have the requisite knowledge and perspectives regarding the culture and geography that will shape their futures and contributions to the international community. In this context, higher education in the United States should deliver the capacity for leading that campaign to its post-secondary students (Deardorff, 2009). Accreditation agencies have incorporated such requirements (Alfaro, 2008) in search of graduating teachers who meet multicultural

and language competence levels as set into place by the United States government back in the 1980s (Deardorff, 2009).

In addition to needs raised by the global reach of national politics, culture, and economy, even within stateside borders, classrooms have become more diverse, while “faculty lounges have not” (Walters et al., 2009, p. 154). Within the last ten years, 80% of the public school educators are middle-class Euro-American White women from rural areas, small towns or suburbs, yet 43% of the students in those same schools were considered to be within a racial or ethnic minority group. Due to the increased multicultural population demands, administrators look to elementary and secondary teachers to be more culturally aware and pedagogically adaptable. (Walters et al, 2009)

In light of demands for multicultural awareness, the international student teaching experience has come to be a potentially career-enriching and employability-enhancing option for student teacher candidates. Performing their final, long-term experience in an English-speaking international context provides for the student teacher increased “personal and professional competence in the form of instructional pedagogy, self-learning, and genuine multiculturalism (Cwick & Benton, 2009, p. 39). Overseas interns gain self-efficacy as they learn to cope and thrive in a foreign environment. Through the practice of “culturally appropriate” problem-solving, communication, and teaching, student teachers acquire a sense of self-confidence and ability they had not experienced before (Cwick & Benton, 2009).

Based upon this direct international practice, student teachers can enhance their experience on both pedagogical and personal life platforms. Moreover, immersion into a different culture can create a genuine multiculturalism which often is strikingly different

from the cultural awareness which most teachers sometimes report (Mahon, 2006). Alfaro (2008) reported that student teachers realize a difference between their head knowledge of cultures and that recognition of the complexity and influence of cultures that develops after having lived the difference within one. Students often begin to examine previously-held beliefs and stereotypes and even the image they have of their home country—all of which can develop in a person new sensitivities and approaches to both the people and programs within their classrooms (Marx & Moss, 2011).

Beyond providing for the student teacher candidate a personal and professional development, the overseas student teaching experience may offer benefits to others as well. The student teacher is, of sorts, an emissary of the United States—a pre-professional who represents the culture and standards of the home country. This dynamic provides opportunity to bring together culturally-separate and nationally-separate groups in the ever-shrinking world community (Quezada, 2004). Others who potentially benefit from this experience include the international host school and, specifically, the cooperating teacher who hosts the student. Collaborating teachers and student teachers reciprocate on both professional and personal levels (Jiang, Coffey, DeVillar, & Bryan, 2010); the school may benefit through new information acquired as well as international relationships built (Sahin, 2008). Additionally, the post-secondary institution can benefit through the connections with international schools, through the development of their programs, preparation (Jiang et al., 2010), and in meeting standards set on the national level (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008).

A Successful Overseas Student Teaching Experience

Just sending a student teacher candidate overseas to an international setting does not, in itself, create a successful product—either via the internship experience or in professional teacher. Researchers have demonstrated an array of elements that create successful student teaching experiences—most of which apply to both continental and international settings, and others which specifically apply to the overseas experience (FERENCE & BELL, 2004; QUEZADA, 2004).

Professionalism of student teacher. Success in the candidate teacher's classroom—whether stateside or internationally—requires that a student teacher should be “professional.” This broad label includes (not exclusively) the following attributes: knowledgeable, capable, organized, and prepared (EPPS, 2010). Responsibility and maturity, considering the position as an actual employment position, punctuality, appropriateness in dress and language, and promptness in completion of duties and seeking out additional responsibilities, integrate in the quality of “professional.” Maintaining relationships appropriately within the candidate's classroom and without the classroom also demonstrates professionalism and success (BELL & ROBINSON, 2004).

Bell and Robinson (2004) relate that cultivating efficient classroom organization and management, demonstrating one's belief in the craft of teaching, and life-long skill development also lead to student teacher classroom achievement. Likewise, a heightened sense of self-awareness and reflection (often produced through journaling) can facilitate a range of other necessary skills in educational development. Self-awareness and reflection can lead to self-guided improvement in pedagogical, professional, and personal areas (ROBICHAUX & GUARINO, 2012).

Preparation by the university. With respect to the overseas student teaching experience, pre-service preparation becomes a key to success on several levels. Most universities emphasize preparation in pedagogy but, when living overseas, attention also must be paid to the awareness and acceptance of significant differences in beliefs, customs, language, educational systems, and daily living practice (FERENCE & BELL, 2004). While multicultural awareness will not guarantee the prevention of culture shock, the student teacher will be more ready to recognize and confront such differences with appropriate assimilation or coping strategies (JIANG ET AL., 2010). Generally, significant cultural differences are factors outside of the student teacher's ability to control and therefore, are factors that may lead to stress. FIRMIN, MACKEY, and FIRMIN (2008) reported that, even when student teachers may believe themselves to be aware of what is to come, in the midst of the experience, they often wish they had had more preparation—especially in areas of culture and language. Pre-departure and re-entry programs tend to enhance the success of overseas internships, and students who have support specific to culture shock during the overseas stay generally report having higher success rates in dealing with culture and re-entry shock (BROWN & HOLLOWAY, 2008). These intensive dynamics, in tangent with programs that prepare and debrief an international intern, can also produce an ultimately successful experience (WALTERS ET AL., 2009). BROWN and HOLLOWAY (2008) relate the importance of understanding the stages of adaptation and shock to a long-term, foreign living and working situation. Student teachers overseas often learn that, even through stresses and shock emanating from foreign settings and cultures, they gain positive understanding of themselves and of the cultures around them (YANG, 2011).

Advocates on both sides of the issue debate whether or not preparation for language of the host country creates a successful experience. Many returning student teachers believe that it would have been an asset to be more prepared in the host country language in order to create deeper relationships with those beyond the English-speaking school inhabitants—with parents of students or with host families, for instance (Quezada, 2004). On the other hand, various studies indicate that, while a good command of the language is helpful, it does not necessarily create a faster or better adaptation to the foreign community, nor does it necessarily create a more successful experience overall (Gonzalez, 1993). Of greater effect is the ability “to pay attention to social meaning, to perceive folkways, values, ideology, unspoken language, hidden messages, shared conventions, and pre-suppositions” (Gonzalez, 1993, p. 894.)

Character of the student teacher. All student teachers—whether state-side or international—should be hard-working and show initiative, exercise flexibility (Morehead, Lyman, & Foyle, 2008), and be adept at coping skills (Stahl, 2005). When situated in an overseas situation, these qualities of flexibility, adaptability, and coping become even more essential due to the greater intensity of cultural distance and potential or actual distress. Therefore, the screening process of student teacher candidates by the university also carries greater import (Jacob et al., 2010). According to Bremer and Brooks (2009), “when there is a perceived discrepancy between environmental demands and one’s ability to meet those demands, an individual is likely to feel stress” (p. 495). In order to adapt in either a foreign or a comfortable environment, an individual must learn to cope with stress. In an overseas experience, student teachers will confront language barriers outside of the classroom and language obstacles inside the classroom (Yang,

2011); they may live within dietary, social, hygienic and logistic unfamiliarity and sometimes even repugnance. The student teachers need a strong ability to recognize differences, to realize when assimilation is required, and to possess willingness and the ability to do so (Xia, 2009). If they do not experience these qualities, then the student teachers may end up becoming overly stressed and ineffective or unable to optimally function in the role for which they came.

Teachability. As stated earlier, the quality of being a learner contributes to the success of the experience: this occurs on both the scholastic level such as learning new methods, curriculum, and styles (Morehead et al., 2009), as well as on the personal level, such as learning about self and how to deal with criticism and development as a person and as a professional. Ference and Bell (2004) and Alfaro (2008) note that the ability to self-reflect and to self-correct needs to go “beyond the normal” in foreign settings. As one potential means to facilitate this transition, a confidential journaling experience may provide students with a dedicated place and time to reflect on their own ideas, goals and practices toward personal and professional growth (Myers, 2012). A more public journaling experience can provide both the student teacher and the state-side university the opportunity to develop the teacher’s skills and improve weakness. Ultimately, reflection on one’s classroom experiences will develop an “effective educator who can handle the complexities of teaching” (Robichaux & Guarino, 2012, p. 292).

Self-confidence and independence. The profession of teaching requires and promotes a strong sense of confidence and self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Student teaching develops these traits as important by-products, but the student teacher who chooses an overseas experience accelerates and intensifies the need for these

attributes. In the foreign setting, student teachers no longer are surrounded by those who typically provide support, whether through encouragement, company, or informative helps. This phenomenon ultimately tends to foster independence in both personal and professional domains (Quezada, 2004). In such situations, student teachers often report growth in self-confidence and esteem, self-assurance, as well as a sense of accomplishment (Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2012). This self-confidence proves to be valuable, not only for future professional reasons, but even during the international experience, self-confidence and self-efficacy aid in coping with the challenges and stresses of living and working in the foreign environment (Cwick & Benton, 2009).

Spiritual sensitivity. The emotional elements of confidence and self-efficacy combine with a person's spiritual sensitivity, often incorporating hope and optimism (Jiang et al., 2010). This spiritual sensitivity dynamic may help foster sets of habits and disciplines that safeguard and/or enhance any particular experience (Anschel, 2010). Moreover, spirituality can become a support in situations involving problem-solving or coping with unexpected stresses—events frequently experienced by individuals living in foreign situations. Spiritual interventions, such as counseling, also can be beneficial to emotional, mental, and physical health (Johnstone, 2012).

Character of the cooperating teacher. While a successful student teaching experience begins with the character and character qualities of the student teacher, these same elements of the *cooperating* teacher, as host and mentor, create a potential dynamic experience of personal and professional growth and development for the student teacher (Weasmer & Woods, 2003). Cooperating teachers lead student teachers in curriculum, organization, and methods development. They also provide beneficial role models for

relationships, interaction with students and parents, fellow faculty, administration, and staff within an institution (Moscatelli, 2008). How the cooperating teacher confronts the daily situations and natural stressors in a classroom affects the experience and become the model for the student teacher.

According to Russell and Russell (2011), cooperating teachers provide for the student teacher knowledge and experience in the content and method of classroom education. They also mentor and guide. For this to be successful, cooperating teachers should understand their role in the student teaching process—which may include teaching and guiding, role modeling, and even providing a type of friendship in some cases (Russell & Russell, 2011).

Beck and Kosnik (2002) report that student teachers tend to value emotional support in a host teacher, a peer relationship that includes respect, and collaboration in programming the classroom experience. While they also desire flexibility and understanding from the host teacher, student teachers also look for sincere and respectful feedback. Epps (2010) reported that the student teachers' most highly-valued trait in a cooperating teacher was the ability to teach content effectively. While it is important that a cooperating teacher is able to model and guide, Epps (2010) noted those qualities will be of little value, if what they model and guide is poor quality.

The cooperating teacher sets the tone and pace for the collaboration between the two in-classroom teachers during this experience. The approach toward leading the student teacher stems from previous beliefs about teaching and teacher roles. Furthermore, the cooperating teacher will determine whether the relationship between

cooperating teacher and student teacher is structured in ways such as parent-to-child, as shared authority, or as team teaching (Jorgenson, 2011).

Relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher. As has been intimated, the relationship and collaboration between student teacher and cooperating teacher is crucial to optimally achieving positive results in a student teaching experience (Brown & Holloway, 2008). The student teacher should show attentiveness to the position as guest in the cooperating teacher's classroom, which involves elements such as the respect of personal space, minding appropriate dress and style, and maintaining private life out of the classroom. At the same time, while professionalism and education are expected from the cooperating teacher, so is some level of respect and personal connection (Russell & Russell, 2011). Beyond the professional relationship, research demonstrates that both student teacher groups and cooperating teacher groups tend to highly value personal relationships between the two teachers (Jiang et al., 2010).

Weasmer and Woods (2003) note potential benefits of overseas assignments as they relate to the reciprocal nature of the learning that occurs within the student teaching context. The cooperating teacher is responsible for imparting academic and social knowledge, as well as for modeling that will affect the student teacher's future profession (Jiang et al., 2010). Cooperating teachers also tend to recognize and value this opportunity for what they themselves gain professionally from a new teacher candidate coming straight from the university with updated methods and curriculum (Kahn, 2001). Jiang et al. (2010) also notes that the interchange of ideas over the course of the student teaching experience adds depth to the personal relationship between the two teachers.

Social support for the student teacher overseas. Beyond the two immediate players in the student teaching experience, Bremer and Brooks (2009) note that the human element surrounding a student teacher in a foreign setting holds vital influence to the success of the experience. Additionally, Piotrowski (2009) advocates the importance of social support in facing challenges and conflicts. Therefore, this combined resource of human connection and relationship seemingly is of great value to a successful international experience (Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005). From social connections, the human individual receives emotional support (e.g., encouragement), informational support (e.g., advice), tangible support (e.g., food, money), or belonging support (e.g., acceptance into group). Whether these columns of support have been established and are on-going, or whether they are acquired at the point of this new foreign experience, these resources influence (positively or negatively) the student teacher's level of optimism, coping-ability, and even health (Thoits, 2011). On a proactive front, teachers involving themselves socially in the host culture can provide an increase in confidence as one confronts and overcomes challenging cultural differences (Pitts, 2009). Furthermore, social support becomes a crucial anecdote for the loneliness and isolation that occurs when one makes home in a distant, foreign setting (Chen, Yien, Huang, & Huang, 2011).

Social support frequently can occur through the student intern's family and friends back home, through their living arrangements, whether with host families or with fellow faculty (Chen et al., 2011), as well as through the host institution community (Jiang et al., 2010), or via the more infrequent, due to language obstacles, through relationships with host-country nationals (Pitts, 2009).

Spiritual social support for student teacher. Social support and spiritual support can integrate as a potentially valuable combination-resource in that one's social support can provide spiritual encouragement as well. Individuals are frequently more inclined to use religion in order to cope when they receive spiritual support from individuals in their church community (Kleman, Everett, and Egbert (2009). Furthermore, in the event of a distressing situation, individuals are more likely to look for coping strategies with and through that human resource (Kleman et al. (2009). While spiritual support can come from within the knowledge and faith a person already holds, when social support confirms that knowledge and faith, an individual will more likely depend on it. In an overseas situation, where stressors are heightened due to unfamiliarity and distance from traditional support sources, the church becomes another important social support (Bikos et al., 2009).

Purpose of Present Research Study

Properly understanding the affective highs and lows of the international experience from the viewpoint of the student teacher is important to the development of educational programs working to meet current global progress in all fields (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). Moreover, the salience of such study provides purpose, only if to enhance and ameliorate international internship programs and relationships. The educational institution sending out student teachers should seek success for the program and for the professionals involved. Studies providing the perspective of *only* the student teacher are revealing but, without an institutional supervisory presence on-site, the educational program has little tangible evidence to corroborate the reality of student teacher's perceptions and records.

In order to provide a corroborative perspective, this research study was initiated to give voice to (or the perspective of) the cooperating teacher. The on-site overseas cooperating teacher has daily interaction with and observation of the student teacher in this dynamic situation. Recognizing the importance of their role in the student-teachers' professional development and their influence through daily interaction with student teacher, cooperating teachers hold a vital share of knowledge in reporting to the university (Anderson, 2009). Insomuch, the availability and interest of schools around the world to host international student-teaching positions depends on continued beneficial experiences on both sides—the student and cooperating teacher. Cooperating teachers' motivations to sponsor a student-teacher develop from their commitment to self, students, and the profession (Sinclair et al., 2006). In those instances, cooperating teachers may be looking to encourage and collaborate with a fellow professional, as well as learn from that new teacher candidate (Russell & Russell, 2011). However, negative experiences often counter these positive motivations and actually dissuade experienced teachers from serving in that cooperating capacity (Sinclair et al., 2006). The purposes of this study is to corroborate previous results provided by student teachers and, more importantly, to demonstrate to the particular university what elements and processes are present on the field in the classroom under the supervision of cooperating teachers who also care to develop and improve the undergraduate teacher education process as well as their own institutions' offerings.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This qualitative research project focused on analyzing perceptions of international teachers who served in the cooperative role for student teachers from a selective, private, comprehensive university located in the Midwest United States—the same university at which a catalyst study (Firmin, Firmin, & MacKay, 2007) examined perspectives of the student teachers themselves. The Firmin, Firmin, and MacKay (2007) study provided insights regarding the affective highs and lows of international student teaching experiences from the viewpoint of a sample of student teachers. Perhaps the most relevant of findings involved a bell-shaped curve phenomenon, reflecting student teachers' affective responses. The present study considered the cooperating teacher's voice as an essential element of corroboration and development in research. As such, the present study concentrated on personal interviews with cooperating teachers in international English-speaking elementary and secondary schools. Interviews with these teachers were open-ended, but based on the same general, guiding interview questions used in the catalyst research with student teachers in international school placement (Appendix A).

Rationale for the Method

In order to effectively collect and understand the perspectives of the international cooperating teachers involved with the target university's student teachers, a qualitative research study was utilized to explore the phenomenon of cooperating teachers' personal constructs. Results of such analysis provided for a deeper understanding of student teachers' affective responses, provide the consideration of factors not seen by student

teachers yet revealed by cooperating teachers and, from both viewpoints, contribute to a clearer understanding of what creates a successful international student teaching experience. The emerging themes from the qualitative data enable cooperating teachers hosting this university's student teachers to provide voice in educational issues, particularly those involved with the university's education internship program and student teacher preparation.

Population of the Study

All overseas cooperating teachers utilized by this private, Midwest university routinely participate through the Interaction International, Inc. student teaching program as part of public school licensure-teacher-tracks. More specifically, the population of this study consisted of cooperating teachers in international English-speaking schools who have hosted student teachers from this university within the previous five years. Foreign contexts included Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Germany, China, Costa Rica, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Sample

Sample criteria. Utilizing a sample from teachers participating within the Interaction International, Inc. student teaching program, who were serving as hosts of student teachers from this particular university, provided consistency between the present study and the catalyst one. Sampling included those teachers who had hosted student teachers within the last five years, including over 75% of them having supervised a student teacher within the past three years, so that data were most relevant and applicable to determining current trends and adjusting educational policies necessary. Data were collected from 25 individuals out of an original 50 possible participants. The interview

from one participant was discarded after discovery that the student-teacher subject did not fit the specified criteria; the interview from another participant was discarded due to serious interruptions in the audio and video connection and consequential misunderstandings of some questions answered in written format. Of the 50 individuals who originally met the criteria, but did not participate in the study, two did not desire to participate, nine did not have the time or technology required, and 15 were not reachable, in spite of repeated and varied efforts.

The parameters of the study resulted in a limited, non-random population. Cooperating teacher participants worked with student teachers from one selected university (having a population of approximately 3300 students). Of the 23 participants, two were Hispanic, one was Asian, and 20 participants were Caucasians. Thirteen percent of participants were male and 87% were female, which roughly corresponds with the general population of teachers in stateside private schools, where 74% are female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Of the 23 participants, five were between 21 and 30 years of age, seven were between 31 and 40 years of age, seven were between 41 and 50 years of age, one was between 51 and 60 years of age, two were between 61 and 65 years, and one was older than 66 years.

Rationale for sample. The population of the present study was limited to teachers who had hosted student teachers from this particular university within a reasonable period of years (five or less) in order to maintain current relevancy. The size of the sample was limited by its purpose and criteria. Saturation (Bowen, 2008) occurred within the first wave of 23 interviews. This means that adding subsequent interviews to sample no longer added new potential themes to the study—so data collection

discontinued after the twenty-third interview. As such, repetition of constructs occurred frequently with little new data being presented even in the first wave of interviews.

Method of sampling. Among the population of cooperating teachers with the Interaction International, Inc. student teaching program, contact information for a group of 50 host teachers employed by the university within the last five was provided by the university's education department. Those individuals were contacted initially in order to request their participation by a known faculty member from the department, introducing me as a graduate student and legitimate participant in university research. Following the initial introduction, emails were sent directly from me, and the procedure often included contacting school supervisors or principals, since some teachers had relocated.

Procedure

Instruments. The main instrument for data collection was cooperating teacher interviews. Cooperating teachers who had hosted student teachers from this particular university were interviewed, in semi-structured style (Kvale, 2007), based primarily on questions that student teachers themselves had reported in the preceding research study conducted by Firmin, Firmin, and MacKay (2007). During the interviews, cooperating teachers responded regarding how the student teachers with whom they worked experienced various elements of a student teaching internship. The constructs addressed included, not exclusively: (a) preparation for the overseas experience, (b) cultural differences that impact teaching, (c) foreign language effects, (d) expectations held by student teacher, (e) expectations held by the cooperating teacher, (f) relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher, (g) relationship with students, (h) relationship with host country nationals, (i) relationship with other staff and faculty, (j) spiritual

influences and observations, (k) fitting in, (l) social support (including that from the cooperating teacher), and (m) adjusting to foreign culture.

Data collection method. The type of data collection involved conducting interviews with the cooperating teacher interviews conducted via VOIP (i.e., Skype or Vonage phone connections). Due to the distance involved in interviewing teachers in international locations, face-to-face meetings were replaced with video-by-VOIP interviews. Research has shown that telephone interviews can potentially be a satisfactory method of gathering interview data (Holt, 2010). All interviews were conducted via digital streaming, primarily with video enabled. In-depth interviews were administered, collecting cooperating teachers' perceptions of the overseas student-teacher involvements. With permission from the interviewees, I recorded the interviews digitally (mp3 format) and on tape. Pseudonyms are used throughout the present thesis for reading clarity. The interviews were in semi-structured format, providing common questions and responses throughout all interviews, but also allowing participants to take the interviews in directions that were important to them (Seidman, 2006). The data was collected inductively, allowing the cooperating teachers to tell their own stories and express their percepts freely. Following Firmin (2006), I requested of subjects a possible second interview, as needed, in order to clarify or deepen the understanding regarding participant data. The data was recorded and later transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis method. In data analysis, I applied Maxwell's (2005) open coding strategies. As such, the coding was completely inductive as certain constructs were addressed and new constructs were explored. Coding procedures were based on repetition of similar words, phrases, and constructs that were common among the research

participants. After coding the data, I culled any findings for which there was a lack of support by most of the participants interviewed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). As prudent, and as overlap warranted, some particular constructs were combined or collapsed. Additionally, at times, what initially appeared to be potentially promising themes later were discarded due to lack of plenary support by the participants.

Internal validity for the study was enhanced via the use of member checks (Merriam, 2002), asking various participants to provide additional feedback regarding frequently-produced constructs. After generating the research findings, I recontacted various participants, garnering their feedback regarding the potential legitimacy of the reported results. All were in essential agreement with the study's findings. Saturation (Flick, 2006) occurred within the first wave of interviews. That is, through repetition continued among the participants, little new data was shared regarding the constructs being studied. Saturation was demonstrated through a sufficient amount of data collection and constant comparisons yielded congruent information among both first and second wave interviews. Consistent with standard qualitative protocol, I believe this process provides confidence regarding the adequacy of the sample size for this particular qualitative design and study (Guest et al., 2006).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim to their original presentation. After all transcriptions were complete, each of the 23 interviews was coded, based upon repeated phrases, which were highlighted and noted in accord to a chart of reoccurring constructs. In the progression of analysis, these constructs eventually generated emerging themes, some of which had been the original focus in the interview questions, but many of which were new. A master list of codes emerged from analysis of the data (Appendix

B). Statements of like themes were combined at points in order to show frequency and therefore, strength and consistency within the new data. The themes were organized in outline form and documented through direct quotation as would strengthen the general and personal corroboration. The analyzed and coded transcripts along with the listing of codes are part of the data trail enhancing the study's internal validity (Benaquisto, 2008).

Safeguards to internal and external validity. Initial purposeful sampling fostered saturation and validity of data. In order to help guard against potential researcher bias in this research project, I used reflexivity via self-reflection on personal experiences, as well as reflection on comparisons to the Firmin, Firmin, and MacKay (2007) study. Through the process of analyzing data and reaching theoretical saturation, selective coding occurred and certain themes were validated through the lack of new data appearing. In order to avoid selective observation, I reviewed the findings with two faculty advisors, discussing how outcomes demonstrate similarities to and (especially) differences from the catalyst study indications.

During the analysis of data and in second-wave interviews, I specifically inquired confirmation of key themes via member checking. Internal validity was further substantiated by documentation of interviews, code analysis, and interview statistics (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). When writing the results of the study, low-inference descriptors were used (Chenail, 2012). Care was taken to include direct quotes whenever possible and to use words that similarly expressed the cooperating teacher's viewpoint if exact words were not possible. Validity therefore occurred in that the most direct relay of participants' actual language and meaning—with the least inference—was conveyed (Johnson & Christiansen, 2008).

External validity is weaker in this study due to the fact that no random sampling occurred within the data population. However, the goal of the research was an analysis project focused on one particular university and its particular population of student teachers. The results of this study can be generalized to the university's own program with the goal of improving future policies and procedures, and likewise it could be generalized to similar private universities with similar standards and programs in education.

Chapter Four: Results

In this study, I interviewed 23 cooperating teachers overseas in order to explore their perspectives regarding affective responses of student teachers from this private, Midwestern university. Cooperating teachers who had hosted student teachers from this institution responded to an open-ended survey that assayed student teachers' experiences. I recorded and later transcribed the interviews for analysis.

When analyzing the study's data, I found that themes emerged regarding cooperating teachers' perspectives. These included extrinsic (observable), intrinsic (non-observable), and religious (spiritual) elements that all affect student teachers' experiences. Whether conversation revolved around classroom poise, connecting with students, cultural stresses, friendship development, or relationships with the institute community, the overall positive tone and content of these observations suggested generally successful student teaching experiences. Extrinsic elements included (a) the evidence of preparation and the structure behind it, (b) the student teacher's disposition regarding the host culture, and (c) the existence of social support—distal and local—and how it facilitated success. Intrinsic elements were evident through the character of the student teacher, particularly in the areas of (a) adaptability, (b) self-awareness and “teachability,” (c) professionalism and overall presentation, and (d) ability to reach out socially. Beyond the student teacher's character, the ability to cope and methods of coping emerged as another intrinsic element of success. Religious aspects that proved influential were (a) a person's relationship with God, (b) corporate worship, (c) faith and prayer in coping, and (d) evidenced growth.

Cooperating teachers conveyed an overall sense of student teacher success and cooperating teacher satisfaction through every interview. Only one participant did not feel that her teacher candidate was a strongly prepared individual for the international teacher role, but she did not indicate that the experience was a failure or that the student teacher would not achieve the ability to work in an international setting.

Extrinsic Elements

Preparation. Most participants made specific comments regarding each of their student teacher's preparedness. The cooperating teachers referred, not only to curriculum and classroom preparation, but especially to preparedness for international placement and living. In referencing preparation, cooperating teachers used qualifiers such as "totally," "very," "definitely," and "as ready as possible." Participants summarized the preparation they saw with a sense of gladness, as this preparation benefited the participant's own experience. For example, Fran remarked about her student teacher: "I was pleased with her; I was pleased with the amount of preparation that she seemed to have." Noreen similarly reinforced this sentiment about her own student when she summed: "Beth was such a dream to have because she was so well prepared."

Emotional readiness and maturity. Cooperating teachers often judged the preparation of student teachers based on their perceptions of the emotional state or maturation of student teachers. In considering affective states, cooperating teachers witnessed that student teachers often expressed interest, curiosity, and a readiness to learn as much as they could from the time overseas. For example, about her student teacher, Bev shared: "[Briana] was definitely prepared when she got here. She was one of those girls that just came in really excited about her experience . . . she was like, 'I'm just going

to take everything good from this!” Student teachers anticipated a variety of experiences, including the culture, a new classroom, new foods, new housing, new sights, and new relationships. They seemed to have positive approaches to these new situations, even if they did not know what the situations would include experientially. Cooperating teachers considered this dynamic to be an important part of being mature and being ready for an overseas internship.

Cooperating teachers associated maturity with student teacher preparation as well. Student teachers were perceived as being relatively “grown-up” and mature, even beyond their age. This maturity was realized as a benefit in that personnel from host institutions felt they could trust student teachers to be responsible for their own care. Greg summarized the sentiments of most other cooperating teachers on this point when he confirmed this feeling about his student teacher: “She was . . . very mature, and that's what we thought for a 22-year-old. . . . Our sort of worry or anxiety is that we would have to carry her, but really . . . she was well-prepared for this internship.” Host institutions and cooperating teachers seemed to appreciate the fact that the student teachers involved in this study acted as independent adults and could manage living well on their own in new and foreign situations.

Specific preparation for living in a foreign setting. Cooperating teachers emphasized that it is crucial for student teachers to be very ready, on academic and emotional levels, to live and work in foreign settings. Regarding the overseas placement, participants’ statements consistently indicated student teachers’ readiness to meet the additional challenges of a student teaching experience in a foreign culture. Student teachers tended to be independent, self-sufficient, and did not need a significant

nurturance or special assistance. In these cases, cooperating teachers attributed preparedness to emotional awareness, university training, previous overseas experiences, language training (even if limited), and personal research. Fran was similar to most teachers when she said of Laura: “Absolutely [she was prepared to live overseas], I was very impressed with how she was able to handle herself.” Similarly, Owen also said of his student teacher: “I think he was definitely prepared to visit overseas. I don’t think it would have been too hard of a transition for him to live here.”

Student teachers’ previous overseas or multicultural experiences included a wide range of encounters, from spending time with third-culture residents at colleges in the United States to living or growing up overseas. As a side note, in reference to the student teachers’ preparations, a few cooperating teachers mentioned the benefit of knowing the host country’s language in reference to the student teachers’ preparations. However, at the same time, cooperating teachers regarded enthusiasm and researching the country as being at least as important as the language preparation. Gonzalez (1993) indicates that a good command of the host country’s language does not always create a more successful experience. Rather, what appears to be more effective is the ability “to pay attention to social meaning, to perceive folkways, values, ideology, unspoken language, hidden messages, shared conventions, [and] pre-suppositions” (Gonzalez, 1993, p. 894). Furthermore, all of the school placements for these teachers were in English-language based schools, so the plenary use of a second language would not occur within these particular classrooms. The second language would have potentially involved come into play with certain institution personnel, perhaps some parents, and those outside the school community.

Cooperating teachers were not always certain whether or not student teachers had completed any particular cross-cultural training, but six of them were certain that their student teachers had done so. At least nine student teachers previously had cross-cultural experiences, and four had grown up overseas. In each case, the previous experiences were said to have fed into the individual's respective preparation for this new experience. Bev illustrated the relevancy of this point:

[Briana] was born in Africa. Her parents were missionaries in Africa and then she lived in Haiti. This was all when she was very young . . . but her family is definitely one that, you know, encourages living in other places. I know that she has traveled; she's been to Ecuador and Mexico. She went to Kenya on a missions trip as well.

The university's role. Cooperating teachers also recognized the role of the university in preparation. Naturally, universities prepare future teachers by equipping them with knowledge and skills. To begin with, the university prepares the student teacher academically to teach in the appropriate content area and level. In the case of this particular university, beyond classroom coursework, the education program requires numerous field experiences in a variety of socioeconomic, public, and private classroom settings. Additionally, the university also screens teacher candidates before sending them to a foreign placement, enabling greater percentages of appropriately prepared student teachers to arrive in the international school classroom. University screening involves, not only an examination of the teacher candidate's classroom proven skills, but also an evaluation of how that candidate is likely to fit with a foreign culture and housing situation. The candidate's socialization skills are also considered. This particular

university provides the resources, advisor, and transition services for the overseas practicum. By the time these student teachers reached the foreign classroom, they had been trained, had proven their entry-level skills in managing classroom and curriculum through a variety of previous field experiences, and had been approved by the university's education faculty as individuals who could adequately address both academic and cultural challenges. Cooperating teachers referred to their reliance on this screening as an important element of the overseas placement. They commented on how well their particular teachers were fit for overseas services, and several recognized the university's role, not only in the preparation, but also the particular placement. As summarized by Irene: "When they come to us, they are on their last student teaching and [the university] only sends the ones they think are going to do a good job."

Cooperating teachers emphasized that the student teachers' academic preparation is essential to overseas practicum preparation. If a student teacher was not trained to address the already-rigorous expectations of student teaching, that teacher likely would experience greater stress due to of the additional living and language differences in a foreign setting. Evie shared the sentiments of most participants in this regard when she described her student teacher's abilities in this area:

Louisa was very well prepared and I think that was important. I've seen student teachers who just don't know the material and that was not the case where Louisa was concerned. I think it is very, very important especially with students who are going overseas to do their student teaching experience that they have to be very, very much on top of their game. They can't be struggling trying to figure out

lesson plans or materials or things like that and dealing with the changes in culture and shopping and sleeping. I mean, beds in China are like boards.

Preparation through personal research. Student teachers demonstrated readiness through their investment in personal research (and sometimes cultural training) before the experience. Cooperating teachers discussed student teachers' conscientious efforts to become informed and knowledgeable before their arrival at the international setting. Most student teachers came with an independent spirit of self-discipline, researching what they could ahead of time and, in some cases, even searching out their own transportation or housing options. Becoming informed frequently included personal research about the country, the institution and its curriculum, and/or communication with the school and cooperating teacher. For example, one student teacher impressed the cooperating teacher and principal when she initiated communication with the U.S. embassy in order to make arrangements for travel and living in the host country.

Cooperating teachers noted that students' research included both cultural and academic knowledge. Several had researched the country, city, and culture. Talia described the perspectives of most other cooperating teachers regarding this point when stating: "Gabriela was in touch with me via email before she came for her student teaching. She was very interested in being as prepared as possible before she came to Bangladesh . . . not only academically but culturally." Several cooperating teachers referred to student teachers who called or emailed ahead in order to obtain information about the school, curriculum, or students. While seemingly a simple and obvious step toward moving overseas, personal research not only prepares the student teacher for an educated start in the foreign experiences, it also provides a buffer, and even protection,

against certain stresses that would occur through unexpected or disconcerting cultural differences. Cooperating teachers emphasized the importance of asking questions and becoming informed both before and during the experience.

Disposition toward culture. Among those student teachers who had previously lived overseas, cooperating teachers' saw an evident enthusiasm for living and working in other cultures. However, many student teachers who had never lived overseas also demonstrated eagerness to do so in their present placements. Student teachers exhibited a second extrinsic element of success through their positive disposition toward the other culture or toward other cultures in general. Most participants emphasized that student teachers showed an interest and enthusiasm for the country and community of their new, temporary home. Key phrases such as "very enthusiastic," "involved in life here," "interest," "eager and willing," "more immersed," "very excited," "very open," "really excited," "excited to learn about the world and different cultures," "multicultural family," "experiencing," and "enjoyed being there" reflected this disposition to different cultures. Cooperating teacher participants related that this interest tends to take an individual beyond the level of head knowledge to the level of experiential knowledge of a setting. While many student teachers had conducted extensive, personal research about the country and culture, the eager disposition toward experiencing different cultures took the student teachers directly into the new culture through eating, speaking, touring, shopping, and visiting. For example, Maura said of Grace: "I think one of the things I appreciated the most was that she was just really willing to jump into the culture. She was willing to try new foods, and try new things." Additionally, Leah shared the willingness of her student teacher to mingle with those in her new community, even when it pushed the

barriers of language: “In the market, she would hear me speak some Swahili and try to pick it up and use it with them. When you try it with the Kenyans here they just love it. She was really trying to immerse herself.”

The repeated effort of becoming involved in new cultures also suggested that the student teacher understood student teaching as being more than just an internship in education. This overseas setting also provided for the student teacher an opportunity to participate in the lives of others—even when distinctly different—and demonstrate that life goes beyond just one’s classroom career. These student teachers participated in their respective classrooms as teachers, and then also in their communities as members. As an example, Kim reflected this sentiment when she spoke of Lynn’s ability to extend her interests beyond the classroom day into host culture living:

I appreciated not only the work that she did, but that she was involved in life here. It wasn’t just coming to student teach; it was very much involved in life in China, and so I knew that, as far as a student-teacher, she certainly was excellent, but as a teacher in another country, a foreign country, I felt that she did exceptionally well. It was exciting to see how smoothly she fit in that world.

One cooperating teacher, when speaking about a previous student teacher (not a candidate from this study), related how the opposite approach of cultural detachment negatively affected the overall student teaching experience. Rather than choosing to involve herself in the cultural experience, this particular student teacher chose instead to segregate herself and spend time alone. She committed to only the bare minimum of work commitment. This effect was evident in both the student teacher’s cultural

disposition and academic professionalism. In a similar fashion, Evie also mentioned the negative consequences of ignoring the potential opportunities for cultural involvement:

You have to embrace [the differences] and say ‘Yeah, I’m gonna take a look at it, and yeah I’m going to try things’ because, if you don’t, if you just try to stay in your own little space in your own little world, then . . . you feel isolated and then the stress levels just rise.

Almost without exception, the student teachers who had been supervised by the study’s participants were said to have become involved heavily in the culture of the country. However, one student teacher was less engaged with the culture because of the institution’s restrictions on outside-of-the-campus activities. Another was less engaged because of her personality and preference. Nonetheless, according to this student’s cooperating teacher, within the classroom, she treated those of every nationality or ethnicity with genuine courtesy. Overall, these student teachers evidenced an interest in the experience, not only as a student-teaching experience, but a culturally educational experience as well.

Social support. Many of the student teachers engaged themselves in the community and, consequently, reportedly reaped various rewards from developing relationships and social support. All participants attested to the value of social support. In general, social support was described as having provided “encouragement” and provided “strength.” Social connections were said to have provided “sounding boards” in stressful situations and were essential for occasional, minor “emergency” type situations. According to the research participants, the student teachers’ social support often came from distal and local support resources. Student teachers in foreign locations looked to

family and friends back home for support and, at the same time, they also reached out to new support, locally—sometimes based upon commonalities, sometimes based on housing proximities, and sometimes even based on exploring national differences. To illustrate this phenomenon, Savannah explained how student teachers could take advantage of different sources of social support:

Her parents were definitely very supportive of what she did. . . . they had a lot of cross-cultural experiences in their family [so they] could kind of relate to what she was going through . . . then at our school, her roommate for the time . . . had a common home culture that they could refer to. . . . so that was really helpful. And then she had [particular people group] that she had befriended who could help her with the local culture. . . . And then she always knew that she could come to my house, or if she needed help with anything, she could come among other people who were very willing to help if she had any questions or an emergency.

Distal social support from family and friends. Generally, social support was said to have started at the family level long before the actual student teaching experience began. Many participants emphasized the importance of social support from the sending country. Family and friends first provided emotional support when they were in favor and excited for student teachers' upcoming experiences. For example, Kacey relayed this idea when she spoke of Becca's situation: "I know that her family was very supportive and her family was really excited for her to come. I think that, when your family is supporting you, that gives you a good foundation."

The results of this study also demonstrated that the overseas student teachers had regular (even if not always reliable) access to technology, which often connected them to

the home-base of social support. Social support from home existed chiefly through family but also includes that of friends and fiancés or fiancées. Technology was said to have eased long-distance communication, and cooperating teachers frequently mentioned the use of email, chat, or VOIP communications between student teachers and their respective social contacts back in the United States. For instance, Yuri relayed of her student teacher: “Rachel also kept her connections with people at home—family and friends that were there—called them, talked to them, used the technology that she had available to her to keep relationships and keep that encouragement coming in that way.”

These communications were said to have mitigated the homesickness and helped student teachers maintain relationships and projects, such as making wedding plans, and addressing family struggles back in the United States. Actual visits from friends and family, in a few instances, provided an even more direct contact with already-established support systems. One of the student teachers actually had a distant relative living in Taiwan, and so connection was physically made on the student teacher’s arrival for the benefit of support. Some cooperating teachers also mentioned that, although in this case university supervision was distal, they looked for support from their supervisor at the university via email and journal entries.

Local social support from international host school. During the course of the student teaching experience—especially at the beginning—student teachers were said to have found themselves removed from their accustomed social support. During the interviews, cooperating teachers overwhelmingly shared the availability of social support on site to students at the overseas school facilities. Specifically, all but one of the

participants mentioned the value of student teachers reaching out to fellow faculty and staff members as well as *vice versa*. Particularly, cooperating teachers described these relationships using words such as “support,” “looking out for somebody,” “encouragement,” “very warm family-like,” “comforting,” “accepting,” “taking them under our wing,” and “help.” Seemingly, an interaction occurred that created new columns of social support in the person’s life. Most international schools, aware of cultural adjustment stages and shock that newcomers sometimes experience, had established communities ready to encourage the student teacher newcomer. For example, Noreen stated, regarding her student teacher: “The whole ethos of the school is . . . very warm, very enlivening and very comforting. So she was supported, not only by me, but through the other staff members, my teammates on the third grade team and the principal as well.” Most participants also spoke about how their respective schools made the conscious effort to reach out and provide important social support to new student teachers. Only two teachers referred to the phenomenon of schools being so accustomed to transitive faculty that they no longer provided welcoming support to new teachers.

While the emphasis, overall, addressed personal connections between people, cooperating teachers also mentioned the importance of maintaining a professional relationship with faculty and staff at host institutions. Particularly, while it was important to nurture incoming student teachers in order to provide support, it was also important to recognize student teachers as colleagues and education professionals. From the cooperating teachers and other staff, student teachers learned professional procedures, routines, and local values. As student teachers experienced this modeling by professionals around them, they developed as well more confidence in their classroom

poise and professionalism. Cooperating teachers frequently mentioned the growth of confidence in student teachers as they passed through the course of the experience, and specifically, as they continued to confer with their cooperating teachers in regard to what occurred in the classroom--both successful occurrences and weak ones.

Cooperating teachers emphasized the importance of relationships operating bi-directionally. Just as much as student teachers needed friendships, so also was it necessary for student teachers to offer friendships. Sarah's comments about her student teacher expanded this idea, recognizing that relating socially was not only bi-directional but also two-tiered—not just a friendship, but a relationship between professional colleagues: “She is very friendly and seemed to make friends with the other teachers easily . . . She was accepted as a member of our collaboration team and also as a peer among other young teachers.” Not only did student teachers look for new friends in the new communities, but student teachers on the field as well looked to belong to the institutional community on a professional level.

Only two of the cooperating teachers mentioned alleged coldness or insensitivity of schools and churches that reportedly are accustomed to people coming and going, and evidently provide relatively low-levels of support. Participants noted that sometimes frequency of transitive faculty also created a spirit of emotional distance from newcomers at times. Individuals hesitated to make friends, in these particular situations, with individuals who might be only temporary friends.

Local social support from cooperating teacher. The cooperating teachers in this study expressed the importance of providing social support to the student teachers in their respective classrooms. Primarily due to age differences or similarities, cooperating

teachers defined their relationships as either mentoring (older to younger) or peer-to-peer (similar ages). Likewise, two tiers of social support were indicated to have existed in the international student teaching experience. Student teachers reportedly possessed optimistic goals for relationships on the professional level as well as on the personal level. Cooperating teachers described how they were able to interact on professional and personal levels with their student teachers; several cooperating teachers noted that this relating ability developed more deeply as their time together passed along. Conversations included classroom issues or methods, as well as struggles that the student teacher experienced—whether as a result of being in the new setting or of being far away from the home setting. In many instances, social and spiritual support was shared. For example Kacey described her relationship with Becca: “[We discussed] both teaching and life . . . She missed her family a lot certain days, so we were able to talk through it.” Some participants indicated that the relationship, whether peer or mentor based, included (in addition to a professional relationship) a close relationship such as “substitute mom” or “sister.”

Throughout the interviews, cooperating teachers referred to the existence of social support through phrases such as “really honest with each other,” “share a lot more of our lives,” “personal talks,” “we discussed,” “shared a lot,” “open, honest relationship,” “tried to check in as much as possible,” “discuss . . . life in general,” “talk through it,” and “trust.” For instance, Fran described an important moment with her student teacher, Laura: “She really opened up and she was very honest. . . . she had a breakdown in the office one time in front of me and let me be there to talk to the Father about it and

encourage her.” Such supportive relationships between cooperating teachers and student teachers included discussions and openness on both professional and personal issues.

Other local social support. Beyond social support formed with the classroom teacher, other relationships were noted to have been based on (a) commonalities among people who interacted with the student teachers (and due to language restraints, this often limited social support from host country citizens), (b) age proximity, and (c) families or roommate situations. Language issues were noted to be impediments to relation connections in some cases. Most of the participants mentioned that student teachers often tended to befriend people with whom they shared interests or similarities—typically travel, sports, outreaches, or church communities. Student teachers looked to those around them who were sharing similar experience. Most student teachers were said to have formed friendships with other students, recently graduated teachers, teachers their own age, or teachers going through relatively similar situations in life. As a concrete example, Owen reinforced this sentiment about Brandon’s friendship based upon common interests: “The other guy that lived at our house was also involved in soccer ministry, so the two of them had a lot in common, so that was pretty easy.”

Age proximity was the shared element mentioned by a number of the participants. Closeness in age often led to having like-interests, such as travel and sports. Savannah’s comments summarize what most cooperating teachers related in this regard:

There were some other . . . single teachers, who maybe had just recently graduated from college, and so they were somewhat the same age, and those teachers who were there could easily relate to her, and they liked to do the same

kinds of things—go out to dinner at certain places, or karaoke, or something like that.

Others, like Sarah, corroborated this view. Sarah said of Kelly, her student teacher: “She made friends with a group of younger, single teachers. [She] and her roommate would finish plans early in the week, in order to have time for social outings over the weekends.” Relating to those near in age and with commonalities was said to have provided for student teachers an opportunity to connect together, sharing more easily similar joys and stresses.

Another source of local social support for student teachers developed with their boarding accommodations. Those student teachers living with families—while such arrangements did not occur as frequently—reportedly developed deep attachments to those families, often irrespective of age. These student teachers not only experienced the culture more intimately (traditions and food), but they also experienced more familial involvement, undergoing struggles and joys along with the people who shared with them room and board. For example, Noreen referred to her student teacher as being “adopted” by the host family. Another student teacher, Lois, experienced a tragedy relating to the mother of the family with whom she lived, and that experience reportedly brought them to a “very close” place in their relationship. Families who included their student teacher residents in social and family events, and roommates who would “hang out” together, provided longer and deeper opportunities for developing relationships and, therefore, provided local social support for the student teacher. Based on terminology in interviews, these relationships seemed to be deeper and more meaningful.

Importance of social support in dealing with stress. In the overseas experience, two phenomena occur simultaneously: moving to a foreign setting and starting what is, in a sense, a new employment. These experiences create for student teachers varying levels of novel challenges and natural stresses. At the same time, students have removed themselves from the comfort of familiarity and the support of their family, friends, and previous “work” community. Whether from the home front or at the new location, social support was said to have been essential in helping student teachers cope with challenges and stress inside the classroom or outside in the new culture. Social support was particularly invaluable in helping to mitigate the effects of loneliness and homesickness. First, new people filled-in relationship voids and, second, social support through these relationships was indicated to have enabled student teachers to discuss experiencing new challenges and resulting stresses. Cooperating teachers observed that often social connections seemingly made cogent impacts in how overseas student teachers managed stress effectively. For instance, Fran shared thoughts similar to other participants’ experiences:

I felt like Laura did a really good job of opening up and telling us, being very transparent when she was feeling [homesick] and not just . . . deciding to stay in her apartment. She would go out and seek other people or seek other places or pour herself into work, even, so she wouldn't think about it.

Iris also reinforced the idea of the overseas home as being a potential source of coping support for her student teacher: “I know that she regularly Skyped with family members. So that might have been a coping mechanism or that might have been something that just

helped her not to have to struggle.” Likewise, Yuri spoke to how that support can be pulled by an individual from both local and distant sources:

I felt like there was some support in that area, especially with Lynnea, the other student teacher that she had there. . . . These days it is fairly easy to call or to share with people at home, so I think that because she could go to those relationships . . . she made weekly contact with friends and family for sure.

Intrinsic Elements

Student teacher’s character. Every cooperating teacher interviewed in the present study spoke about character traits of the student teacher that they felt were needed for overseas success. Participants recognized that not every person will enjoy or desire an overseas teaching experience. One teacher, for example, commented on this truth as follows: “If she's willing to do this, it’s because she wants to do this. She didn’t have to do it overseas, she chose that. . . . They really are [a special kind of person].” Noreen made the same general point regarding Beth: “I think she had the right personality. She was very open-minded and ready to just jump into any kind of new situation.”

Participants most frequently mentioned character qualities such as adaptability, self-awareness and interest in professional growth (including teachability), professionalism, and sociability. Professionalism included attributes such as maturity, confidence, diligence, initiative, and appropriateness in presentation and relationships.

Adaptability. In the overseas experience, adaptability was high on the list of character qualities that cooperating teachers said were needed for overseas student teaching success. In fact, most participants spoke about the quality of adaptability extensively. For example, Tonya stated of her student teacher: “Lois adapted perfectly . .

. She was surprised by some things [in the culture] but she learned to deal with it.”

According to cooperating teachers who live in these settings, adaptability to a new setting and culture included being flexible, practicing unfamiliar customs, adjusting personal space, tolerating what North Americans might perceive as inconveniences, and maintaining open-mindedness. Cooperating teachers mentioned that further challenges emerged in the classroom, including the lack of accustomed materials, changes in curriculum or schedule, or students being at different levels or from different religious backgrounds than what a student teacher had expected. In these cases, cooperating teachers all spoke positively of the student teachers’ flexibility and adjustment. For example, pointing out the importance of this ability to adjust, Noreen said of Beth,

That's exactly what international schools are looking for. You cannot be kind of wishy-washy . . . you can't hesitate when you are making decisions; you just have to go with it and understand that things might not go the way you planned. But you can't fall to pieces when that happens; you have to be able to keep going. She had that kind of personality, she could laugh at herself and learn from experiences really quickly and then move on.

Sometimes these adjustments in the classroom developed from having foreign language learners in their classroom or students who needed different pacing or style of instruction. In these cases, the student teachers needed to adjust as they moved from one class to the next, or even more frequently, from one desk to the next. Savannah spoke to Taylor’s abilities in this area: “She did a really good job of transferring her skills from one type and set of students to a new one. . . . She was really adaptable. She was able to change, if needed, and find a new way to say something.”

Most participants spoke particularly about student teacher participation and success in addressing the new and different cultural situation. The cooperating teachers included items such as foreign setting, food, language or accent, greetings and cultural norms, transportation means, and convenience differences. As an example, Maura reflected on her student teacher with an excitement that was typical of the other cooperating teachers when considering student teachers' approaches to the foreign situation: "She has done a really good job. She's adjusted to Thai culture. She loves Thai food. . . . She's adjusting well to all the cultural things." Talia likewise said of Gabriela: "She handled the transition beautifully and was not afraid or embarrassed to ask questions while she was here. She was very good at putting new cultural norms into her daily behavior both in and out of the classroom."

As unexpected situations arose, both in the overseas classroom, as well as in the living environments, the student teachers were said to have generally demonstrated positive attitudes, searched out necessary information, adapted quickly, and changed plans as necessary. Cooperating teachers frequently mentioned that student teachers responded to cultural stresses with resilience and a readiness to withstand the differences. Talia noted, as many participants did, that the character quality of adaptability is distinctly apparent in these student teachers: "Nearly everything is a surprise. . . . No one can prepare you for the sounds, the smells, the clamor, the culture. . . . For some people, this is a negative experience. For Gabriela, it was a challenge readily accepted." These student teachers seemingly accepted the challenges with excitement and readiness. Student teachers looked to their new colleagues for the information they needed to deal with inconveniences or language barriers. Cooperating teachers spoke about student

teachers who asked questions about difficulties or weaknesses in areas, and as soon as possible, would change their lesson to ameliorate content or methods.

Self-awareness and interest in personal or professional growth. Cooperating teacher participants noted and valued the student teachers' abilities to better understand themselves and to work on personal growth through a variety of methods and challenges. Student teachers were said to have been concerned with improving their abilities, not just in the future, but also in that same day or even next class period. Most participants discussed how student teachers learned about themselves and grew as individuals and as professionals. To describe the evidence of self-awareness and learning, participants used phrases such as "always thinking about new ways," "take time and reflect and think about it by yourself," "learned," "developed," "kept in the back of her mind," "came to a new place," "accepting your humanity," "gained," "grew," "saw him/herself stretched," and "surprised him/herself."

When discussing the student teachers' methods of self-awareness and growth, cooperating teachers frequently referred to self-reflection and discussion, and participants mentioned the idea of experimenting, either in the classroom or in the culture, as a means for development. Cooperating teachers stressed the importance of student teachers looking back on recently executed lessons, looking for feedback, and acting on the counsel and even correction offered by the cooperating teacher or other new colleagues. A few cooperating teachers mentioned that, generally, the training of a real-life classroom and the lessons of culture adjustments developed in these student teachers a greater state of maturity and independence. For example, Bev recalled the following advice that she gave to Briana:

You really need to take your time and reflect and think about it by yourself so be grateful for that opportunity to be able to be independent and . . . It's kind of a blessing, too, to be by yourself during this. She learned through that, as well. As well as conferring with colleagues, the practice of self-reflection and journaling was mentioned as useful to the student teachers as a response to classroom practices. In corroboration of this general principle, Fran said of Laura: "She was very reflective and she was able to work through what she was thinking and feeling . . . especially when problems came up."

Beyond self-reflection, many cooperating teachers discussed the conversations that contributed to the respective student teacher's character growth— whether addressing personal challenges or classroom situations. When cooperating teachers spoke of "classroom conversations" or criticisms, all student teachers appeared to be receptive and interested in developing their skills professionally. The ability to have such conversations and to receive criticisms from a mentor only recently known also demonstrated to the cooperating teachers a sense of maturity and valuable self-awareness in the student teachers. This finding was exemplified by Lynnea's statement regarding Tracee:

[We had] a very professional relationship because there were times when I had to have hard talks with her about 'This didn't work the best, you need to change this, next time consider this.' At the same time she was really open to suggestions and asking for help. . . . I didn't feel like she was intruding and she was teachable. And she seemed to trust me, too, and asked for help.

Likewise, when addressing personal problems, productive dialogue and self-awareness was said to have helped student teachers experience personal growth through the situation. In their personal and professional growth, student teachers developed professional skill, knowledge about emotional or spiritual self, confidence in self as a teacher, social and communication skills, and independence as individuals on their own. Of those five traits, more cooperating teachers mentioned the growth in confidence over the other qualities, but professional skill followed closely. For example, Maya referred to situations in the classroom and school culture where Makaela developed the professional side of herself as she prepared for a future full-time position in the field: “I think she personally was already that kind of person but it really strengthened her skills. . . . I think she became more confident in being the teacher of the classroom.”

The search for and acceptance of constructive criticism and feedback—teachability—impressed the participants in the study. Cooperating teachers stated that these student teachers most often received constructive criticism well. Furthermore, the student teachers frequently sought information from their host teachers in order to improve their abilities in the classroom. For instance, Irene said of Liz: “She was very teachable, flexible, and willing to learn and change or adapt lessons or even time schedules if necessary. She had a great attitude!” Most student teachers were said to have exhibited general respect, good attitude, and an eagerness to discuss, practice, and experiment. Student teachers most often were said not to have reacted defensively to criticism. For example, Owen shared, “[Brandon had the] ability to deal with criticism. . . . He never got defensive; he tried to understand what I was saying and then improve in that area.” Several cooperating teachers emphasized that, not only did their student

teachers listen to the feedback from teachers or principals, they also turned around and used the information or fixed the problem. Leah shared such a commentary: “And after meeting with John and myself about ways Madison could improve it, she was just on the ball with that. She improved.” This proactive interest in growth and experimenting involved trust on the student teachers’ parts, and cooperating teachers were said to have enjoyed the reciprocal friendship developed with these students.

Professionalism. A variety of characteristics represented what cooperating teachers observed in the area of professionalism and, throughout the interviews, cooperating teachers reflected that these characteristics impressed them and made the experience beneficial for all those involved. For instance, cooperating teachers were pleased to have student teachers who were prompt, reliable, and hard-working. For example, Greg stated: “What Hannah showed the most, from day one, was her professionalism . . . just her sense of confidence. . . . she really showed, from day one, this sort of professional quality and integrity in her character.” When student teachers demonstrated professional values, the cooperating teachers felt able to entrust their classroom and students to the student teacher.

Cooperating teachers noted that, if the student teacher in the present study demonstrated reasonable professional qualities, then more time and emotional investment was available to the student teacher for the aspects exclusive to the overseas situation. According to cooperating teachers, four particular traits of professionalism occurred frequently: (a) maturity and confidence, (b) appropriate poise and presentation among students and staff, (c) instructional capabilities within the classroom, and (d) initiative and involvement, which overlapped with assiduousness. While, at this age and

educational point, a certain maturity level and confidence is expected, most of the cooperating teachers interviewed praised this specific aspect of professionalism in their respective student teacher. They intimated, also, that an overseas student teaching experience required more maturity and confidence than a comparable state-side experience would. For instance, Tonya shared about her student teacher Lois: “She seemed very mature to me. . . . She did miss home, but she was okay. . . . she didn’t seem overwhelmed by it or anything.” Cooperating teachers noted a sense of confidence in the student teachers, even coming into the experience. Reported appropriate poise and presentation included knowing how to appropriately relate to students, despite not being too much older than the students they taught and also to staff, in spite of being significantly younger than many of them. In particular, it was mentioned that student teachers were careful to maintain a professional distance from students near to them in age. Appropriate presentation also included confidence in the classroom, despite the inward fears they experienced, as well as calmness in the classroom, despite sometimes experiencing stress or even calamity. Representative of the participants who attested to this quality of professionalism, Evie related the following about her student teacher: “She was very wise. . . . She would talk to me about the frustration. . . .but she didn't let the students see that frustration, and that is commendable, especially for a student that is doing her student teaching.” Student teachers also were said to have possessed the ability to keep personal frustrations or stresses from distracting their teaching or engagement with students

Similarly, cooperating teachers shared examples of how student teachers taught and related to students personally, yet professionally, with the students in their respective

classrooms. For example, Kate commented about Vicky: “She did very well interacting with the kids. She was a good communicator. She would give examples to them before she would introduce them to the material. . . . She was very sensitive with [students].” Students who possessed initiative and involvement also often were noted to possess diligence and a reasonably strong work ethic. Most participants made comments about the student teachers’ initiative to seek out additional work or involvement in the classroom or school community. To illustrate this point, Leah offered an enthusiastic commentary on Madison’s performance in this area:

She was above and beyond what I expected, because as far as research, planning, organization, ideas, willing to stay after school, meet me on the weekends, she went above and beyond what I had expected. . . . The principal, who also felt the same way—he’s actually trying to recruit her to come back, because she did such a marvelous job.

Similarly, Donald said of his student teacher: “Linda was involved in our teachers meetings, and she had a good initiative about when she was planning something and she needed resources, going and talking to those people.” Cooperating teachers repeatedly referred to the initiative and hard-work exemplified by these student teachers. Student teachers accepted extra assignments willingly, and student teachers volunteered for work beyond required hours. They helped students after hours, they attended extra-curricular club events, and attended and assisted with sports activities. Student teachers working at boarding schools offered to help with dormitory residents, even providing for dorm parents some relief from evening duties. At both boarding and traditional host schools, the extra efforts of participation with students demanded more than just the student

teachers' presence. For example, Lynnea was impressed with Tracee's involvement in extra-curricular activities and students' sports. Many activities required extra work on Tracee's part: "She would go to the dorms, do tutoring, have dinner and hang out, she really immersed herself well. . . . [she volunteered] time in the dorms to give dorm staff some time off, and help with cooking and laundry." Cooperating teachers reported that student teachers often eagerly involved themselves on work teams, they routinely accepted additional responsibilities without complaint, and they frequently volunteered for extra tasks or after-school positions frequently.

Sociability. Just as cooperating teachers mentioned social support as an essential element in constructing a successful experience, most also discussed the student teachers' assertive role in making successful social connections. Understanding the importance of being a sociable visitor in the new setting was said to enable student teachers to fill in social support gaps reasonably quickly. Student teachers did not merely wait for others to be friendly toward them. Rather, they evidently worked to develop those relationships, often initiating them—even with host country residents, as they were able. Cooperating teachers used expressions such as "quick to make friends," "fit in very well with people," "very open to meeting people," "a social person," "open and outgoing," "encouraging," "pretty social," "friendly and outgoing and made lots of friends," "integrated herself," "comfortable socially," and "very bubbly, very outgoing." Iris shared the following about Kara, for instance: "Really, she was a really open, really warm kind of personality so that is always an invaluable asset with a friendship." Fran expanded on this thought in her description of Laura, indicating that, when student teachers are distant from established support groups, they must tap into their social natures:

I think she was very good one-on-one or in small groups with being willing to open up and to connect with people. But a lot of that is out of necessity, too, she didn't have, you know, her friends that she would normally have.

In a proactive sense, the student teachers observed in these studies either naturally or purposefully reached out socially to others in their community. Whether for the sake of their own needs, or for the sake of experiencing relationships and culture, the student teachers were seen to be quick and frequent in developing friendships.

Student teacher's coping ability. Because living and working overseas creates for an individual a new array of cultural norms and experiments, the participants noted that overseas student teachers experience high levels of stress. For example, Sarah questioned: "Why shouldn't the first few weeks be hard? New responsibilities, new culture, new customs, new language, less support." The ability to cope in a foreign setting emerged frequently as an element of success in the overseas teaching experience. Cooperating teachers noted that coping abilities in student teachers was strong, and they emphasized the importance of being prepared professionally so that classroom competency (subject content, methodology, organization, and the like) was already mastered, rather than a debilitating stress. As mentioned by one participant, the student teacher needs to be "at the top of his or her game" in the classroom because the student teaching experience will not be the only challenge faced—and, therefore, not the only stress. When discussing the character of their respective student teachers, the study's cooperating teachers shared that their supervisees generally were confident, mature, and carried positive dispositions toward other cultures. Most participants discussed three

particular methods of coping: (a) searching out information before and during the experience, (b) distal and local social support, and (c) spiritual and reflective resources.

Cooperating teachers described various stresses of overseas student teaching as they affirmed student teachers' abilities to work through them. Student teachers had to face multiple new challenges all at one point in time. Not only do they find them in the midst of unfamiliar living and eating conditions, they have begun a new employment with a new community without any of previously developed social support. However, cooperating teachers were impressed by the abilities to cope that these student teachers had. The positive observations of student teachers' abilities to work through these challenges by becoming more informed was exemplified by Maya when discussing her student teacher: "Mikaela coped very well, because she was very good at talking to people she didn't know, and confident enough to question when she wasn't sure, how to do things, what was the appropriate response sort of culturally." Becoming involved in the school or local community was also important according to cooperating teachers. For example, Evie corroborated about her student teacher an ability to cope through involvement with work and new friendships,

In the beginning, Louisa was just realizing "it's going to be three and a half months, and I don't get to see my family . . . but I think that she kept herself busy, and she made contact right away with people that she knew as well as making friends with staff right away so she just really didn't have a lot of time to be alone.

Searching out information as a coping method. Cooperating teachers shared various coping methods they saw in the student teachers' struggles. Several mentioned the importance of becoming informed. Having information about an institution, country

or culture proved to be an important method of coping with the unknown and with stressful situations. However, being informed about the institution, country or culture appeared to be more a successful preventative strategy. Student teachers knowing information ahead of time appeared more successful in avoiding stressful situations. For example, Talia shared the following example relating to this point: “Because of all the email communication we had before Gabriela arrived, we felt she was as ready as possible for the challenges of teaching at [the school].”

Distal and local social support used for coping. While discussed earlier as an extrinsic element of a successful experience, social support also proved essential to helping a student face crises. Regarding specific types of social support used in coping—emotional, tangible, informational, and belonging (Thoit, 2011), cooperating teachers discussed primarily the emotional and the informational. Emotional encouragement from new colleagues seemed to frequently provide a coping resource. However, for many student teachers, new social support providing information and answers to questions appeared to be a significant coping resource. Donald’s example addresses both: “Connections with the other people at the school is one of the most important things, so they can give you just the advice you need and the encouragement and support you need.” Not only did social support provide prevention against loneliness or homesickness, but it also provided the remedy for loneliness or other stresses when they occurred. As Evie shared the following about her student teacher:

A couple of times Louisa felt a bit overwhelmed with all the work that she had to do, and she talked to me about it and she talked through it. . . . It was important that she . . . did bring it up and did talk about it.

Cooperating teachers noted a variety of stressors and the importance of sharing those challenges with those in the new host community. Student teachers mentioned feelings of loneliness, of being overwhelmed by an unfamiliar workload, and by the new environment. Cooperating teachers recognized the importance for student teachers to share their stresses with others, and they also noted the usual willingness of new colleagues to provide this support when needed. To his student teacher, Thomas shared a recommendation: “If you need help, let’s talk about it. You don’t need to act like everything is fine if things inside are really rough. . . . Let me know what you are struggling with so I can help you succeed.”

Spiritual and reflective resources. Participants spoke of a third coping mechanism for stress: personal reflection or spiritual resources. An individual’s religious faith served as a valuable support among various potential coping skills. Religious elements were said to have included primarily faith, prayer, and corporate worship. In discussing the spiritual habits of their student teachers, cooperating teachers frequently mentioned the practice of prayer and also the evidence of individuals’ faith demonstrated through interactions with and reactions to others. Cooperating teachers were able to identify how student teachers perceived God’s participation in the plan of history or the plan of their personal lives. Primarily through conversations, cooperating teachers saw how the student teachers considered God’s perspective of their life as a base for their own respective faith and spiritual strength. Cooperating teachers also related the value of the

student teachers' personal time spent reading the Bible or worshipping with others of similar faith. Talia illustrated these findings when she mentioned the emotional status of any expatriate, depending upon their faith in a foreign setting:

Everyone in [particular country] has moments of homesickness, especially at holiday times and times your family in the States is doing things you'd like to be involved in. However, keeping your focus on God's will for your life and spending time with Him every day are the two things that will help get you through those tough times the best.

Religious Elements

This present study was conducted with participants who hosted student teachers from a private, Baptist, liberal arts university, and I gave research attention to the religious (spiritual) practices, as perceived by those participants. Student teachers from this university represent a population of students who study Biblical world views and theology and who ascribe to having a personal evangelical faith in God that transcends an informational or literary level. For example, Irene's statement about her student teachers described such faith:

Most of my student teachers seemed to have an intimate relationship with God and turned to God's Word for encouragement. I have prayed with my student teachers and encouraged them as I can through His Word. My last student teacher seemed to have a very close relationship with God and this was reflected in her attitudes toward the students, staff and others around her. She depended on God's strength to help her through difficult situations . . . their lives indicated that they had a personal walk with God.

This statement considers a variety of aspects practiced in a spiritual relationship, such as time spent in God's word, prayer, reflection on Christian qualities, and trust in God for regular strength and in times of challenge. Other participants also mentioned aspects of group worship and personal growth.

Spiritual relationship with God. A relationship with God as described by numerous participants, was based on the individuals' trust in God, as well as their daily devotion to reading the Bible and praying to God. This time spent with the Lord was noted to be an influence in the character of student teachers, particularly affecting how they related with their classroom students and colleagues. Cooperating teachers saw in the student teachers character qualities based on Biblical values, such as patience or joy, when dealing with students or colleagues. Also, student teachers shared in their own testimony or teaching the principles taught in the Bible. Talia shared: "I know that Gabriela spent time in the Word daily and that was evident in her conversations and her dealings with her kids. She also made some excellent contributions to our teachers' devotional times each morning."

According to some, the daily time spent in spiritual devotion was necessary in order to provide spiritual and emotional, and sometimes even physical, strength. Through personal devotional time, student teachers were said to have gained physical energy and positive emotional dispositions to face their days in their respective classrooms. For instance, Kacey shared about her student teacher:

She has a really good strong foundation, so I think it was really easy for her to pull her strength from Christ as she was experiencing even just fatigue and things

like that. I think she definitely has a joy and I think she was able to . . . just draw her strength from Christ.

Kacey's statement showed the dependence on the spiritual in light of this foreign setting and its various challenges. That dependence and subsequent gain of inner strength resulted in greater abilities to perform as student teachers and to cope in light of the unfamiliar circumstances. Maya reiterated: "Mikaela's ability to cope could really be attributed to her faith and relationship in God, and she did cope very well." Various cooperating teachers had discussed with their respective student teachers the presence of God in their personal lives, particularly in light of seemingly being alone in a new foreign setting and employment. In speaking of her student teacher, Yuri indicated the importance of this faith in light of feeling socially alone in a foreign situation: "We did talk about relying on God and how important that is to a single female, and how that when you move across the world, it's you and God, and that's really about it."

Corporate religion. Cooperating teachers also noted that student teachers, from the start of their time in the foreign setting, sought avenues for corporate spiritual fellowship. The most frequently mentioned activities were worship and Bible study (specifically, church attendance), although participants also referred to group events and corporate ministries. For example, Sarah shared the following about Kelly: "She knew the importance of a faith community and was involved with more than one church here." Yuri's student teacher, however, "found a church that she was happy with and stuck with it." Various teachers involved themselves with ministry through churches they attended regularly, while others, through the school or other organizations, assisted with ministries in the neighborhood or city community. Corporate religion was said to have strengthened

the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship by providing company and accountability. Corporate religion for these student teachers provided, not only more support from social constructs, it also reportedly provided a sense of belonging through church group events (whether biblically-based or entertainment-based) and a sense of purpose through ministry opportunities

The roles of faith and prayer in coping. Cooperating teachers shared that both the social support and the spiritual support of faith (religion) provided another coping method for student teachers facing new and intensified challenges (due to foreign setting distant from traditional family and friends). Beyond gaining strength through daily time spent in Bible study and prayer, students practiced prayer individually or corporately in order to help manage internal stress and conflict. Prayer also was practiced between cooperating teachers and student teachers. Several cooperating teachers discussed group prayer or devotional settings in which student teachers expressed their personal needs for spiritual intervention. Also, between cooperating teachers and student teachers personally, time was spent in sharing personal needs and consequentially time together in prayer. As an example, Evie shared about herself and her student teacher in this regard: “She prayed a lot. I know, and we talked about that because I’m very much a woman of prayer. She would ask me to pray for her in certain situations when she felt that something was really tough or whatever.” While prayer was discussed by cooperating teachers as a regular habit of good spiritual discipline, they more often mentioned prayer as a coping support for those times when extra stressors came into the student teachers’ lives. For instance, Thomas remembered times with his student teacher: “I realize that there are ups and downs, and so I said, ‘Well, let’s pray together about it.’ I prayed with

her quite a few times about different problems that she was having.” Prayer among two or more individuals was a frequent recourse when student teachers sought out others to help with personal situations.

Growth outcome. Cooperating teachers spoke also about the spiritual growth that occurred in the lives of the student teachers, both through the challenges they encountered and through trusting God to take care of various stressors. Cooperating teachers mentioned that student teachers developed a deeper trust in God, since they had to experience a challenge away from their traditional support groups. For instance, Nancy stated simply about her student teacher’s growth: “I think it was great to see God teach her how He is her sustainer and comforter.” These comments came from cooperating teachers who seemed to see results in the lives of those student teachers practicing spiritual disciplines, such as faith and prayer. Kacey expounded that, in Becca, God was “growing trust in her, trusting that as she was leaving America to go to [a particular country] by herself that God was going to protect her and God was going to take care of her while she was here.” Cooperating teachers discussed the importance of spiritual growth as part of the independence the student teachers developed through the course of their overseas experience.

Summary

The 23 cooperating teachers related overall positive observations of their student teacher experiences in these foreign settings. Themes presented in their remarks included extrinsic elements such as preparedness, disposition toward the host culture, and social support. Likewise, subjects frequently mentioned the intrinsic elements of the student teacher’s character, such as adaptability, self-awareness and teachability, professionalism,

and social abilities. Furthermore, cooperating teachers discussed the importance of religious or faith elements in the success of student teachers going overseas; the time spent in the relationship with God, the reaching out through corporate worship and community ministry, the use of faith in coping, and the evidence of personal growth were practical applications of faith in the lives of these student teachers. While discussion of stresses and challenges arose, cooperating teachers in this study observed strong professionalism and coping skills. Strong emotional waves (or a bell-shaped curve) did not feature similarly as it had in the catalyst study.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine, through the perspective of cooperating teachers, the experiences of teacher candidates completing student teaching overseas. These cooperating teachers had hosted student teachers from a selective, private, comprehensive university located in the Midwest United States. A plenary literature review revealed a variety of elements that create a successful overseas student teaching experience, and previous research from this particular university corroborated many of those elements and emphasized a series of affective phenomena that these student teachers experienced overseas. Questions rising from the catalyst study led to the present, particular area of research: did host cooperating teachers see the student teaching experience in the same light as student teachers had?

Potential Applications of the Findings

Successful overseas student teaching. As fast as education programs must adjust to varied global economic, social, and political stimuli, education programs need to be continually monitoring and assuring their constituency of success in the overseas teaching experience. The university's goal is to have overseas student teachers to provide services and receive services that ensure success in this transitional experience between theoretical education and career placement. Furthermore, this goal should be continually present for all student teachers sent. Toward success in that objective, the university and

the student teacher should know what elements of character, action, and preparation they need to demonstrate.

Preparation for an overseas student teaching experience requires not only a rigorous training in pedagogy, but also an understanding of what student teachers will confront while living and working in a foreign setting. While no one can be entirely prepared for the unknown culture, food, language, or logistics of working in a foreign setting, an individual can be ready and informed on a number of levels. Student teachers who anticipate internship overseas can research the country and culture, as well as the stages of culture shock that they may encounter over the course of time spent overseas. They also can look for cultural opportunities beforehand in order to prepare for the culture to which they are heading. In regards to work, cooperating teachers stressed the importance of researching the curriculum of the school or nation before arriving in the country.

Results from the present study suggest that a successful student teaching experience depends significantly on the persons of the teacher candidates themselves. Teacher education students considering an overseas student teaching experience should be individuals who know themselves well emotionally and spiritually, and committed to personal and professional growth. Student teachers in this study demonstrated the effectiveness of overseas student teachers' need to evaluate their abilities to adapt, their positive dispositions toward foreign cultures, and their willingness to be involved with their host school and culture. Student teachers facing an overseas student teaching experience should exercise professionalism in that they are aware and respectful of the cultures they currently inhabit, and take initiative in work. They understand that being

prepared involves (a) possessing the emotional and spiritual energy to cope with stress experienced from the challenges in the classroom of a foreign culture, and (b) anticipating those differences and challenges within the context of the distinctive stages of culture shock one will experience when living in a foreign culture. Teacher candidates should understand the importance of social support and how community with others provides tangible and emotional support for both parties.

Successful university program. Considering the importance of the student teaching experience—stateside or overseas—the university should continually monitor, not only the performance of student teachers in regard to meeting graduation and certification requirements, but also the overall efficacy and efficiency of the student teaching program. Cooperating teachers in this study indicated that the particular university from which these student teachers came held to high standards of monitoring their overseas student teaching program. Cooperating teachers saw these standards held through the levels of student teachers' academic and emotional preparation. Cooperating teachers also relied on the university's screening and providing only well-trained and mature teacher candidates. The results of this study emphasize the importance of this maintaining and continually monitoring this standard of excellence. This monitoring will continue to relay to university program directors and administration whether or not the program meets their goals for a capstone internship and for institutional accreditation. The study of both student teachers' and cooperating teachers' perspectives is important due to the physical distance from direct administrative oversight. Information from both groups can help researchers understand the rigor and effectiveness of the experience and where gaps may exist in service to education students or host schools.

Furthermore, the results of the present study compared with the one by Firmin, Firmin, and MacKay (2007), exploring student teacher's emotional experiences, highlighted aspects of the university program's effectiveness. In the current study, while cooperating teachers observed that student teachers may have had emotional struggles, they were impressed with the professionalism of the interns. These were student teachers were said to have been reasonably adaptable to their foreign setting and who seemingly did not allow stresses to significantly affect their work in the classroom or relationships with students. These results attest to some strengths of the program's training and screening process.

Naturally, a university's education department strives to produce prepared, knowledgeable, and caring educators. This present study indicated that this particular university did prepare its student teachers in academic and procedural areas so that they did not have to spend extra time and emotional energy on routine, pedagogical challenges. In light of the other differences and stresses that they will confront in a foreign setting, student teachers need to be "on top of their game" in the classroom—they need to be as knowledgeable and as proficient as possible.

As the university evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of future overseas student teaching, the present appraisal may benefit future student teachers. The education department can maintain various effective attributes of the program and ameliorate those not meeting positive evaluation. The student teacher candidate potentially can, therefore, receive the continuity of a rigorous and valuable program, and the reputation of the school likewise will reflect that quality.

Success for the cooperating teachers and host schools. First, the present study has potential benefits for the international host teacher and school in that, even in an internship setting, an obvious need exists for prepared teachers in the classroom. Cooperating teachers do not want to turn over a classroom of children to an inept teacher-in-training for even a short amount of time, let alone several weeks or months. In the present study, several cooperating teachers mentioned their initial trepidation in anticipating internships with student teachers whom they did not know. While, in these specific cases, the potential concerns proved unfounded, cooperating teachers also related other instances where student teachers were not prepared to the degree they needed to be at an overseas location or where student teachers did not have the “heart” (disposition) to be at an overseas location. These more challenging situations demand more work and attention of the host school, even to the point where host teachers reportedly sometimes needed to repair damage or fill gaps left by a student teacher.

A second area in which the host teacher and school is affected through the internship involves the reciprocal nature of the experience. Cooperating teachers value their student teachers’ stays in their respective classrooms as opportunities for both groups to grow professionally and for cooperating teachers to have a personal relationship with young people developing professionally. Cooperating teachers reported that they enjoyed learning the new methods, creative ideas, and new technology brought to them from the university, by energetic young teachers. Furthermore, they indicated valuing the personal investment they have in another person’s life and the quasi-friendship that sometimes evolves. If student teachers arrive needing more care and teaching than the cooperating teachers can provide, or if the student teachers are in so

much personal and emotional need that the host teacher is continually tending to them, the host teacher may become worn and frustrated and, certainly, the cooperating teacher does not receive sufficient counter balancing from the experience in such cases.

A potential response of international schools that repeatedly undergo wearing experiences on teachers is to discontinue hosting student teachers. In such cases, the student teaching experience becomes an over-burden, demanding too much extra time, paperwork, and care for team members who do not carry their own weight, relatively speaking. The international school ultimately will not accept teachers from overseas (i.e., the United States) in these scenarios. Naturally, participation-denial works against the university trying to meet accreditation standards and trying to provide a multiculturally-equipped teacher graduate. In sum, the results of the present study has the potential to aid the university education program by maintaining a valuable international student teaching program.

Differences in Perspectives.

Previous outside research. This study generally aligned with previous regarding what creates a successful student teaching experience, especially in light of the overseas setting with the extra challenges of unfamiliarity, cultural differences, and adjustments to social support structures. Only one characteristic mentioned by Bell and Robinson (2004) in their research did not factor significantly in the present study of cooperating teachers' observations. In a statement directed to the student teacher, Bell and Robinson asserted that a "great predictor" of success in the profession is a passion for teaching children (Bell & Robinson, 2004, p. 4). Among the 23 cooperating teachers interviewed, a few teachers referred to the term "passion" in regard to teaching in general. For example,

Thomas said of his student teacher Brittney: “She certainly had a passion for teaching. She enjoys teaching.” Two other participants used the term when referring to a content area of teaching in which the student teacher had interest. Fran referred to both a passion for teaching and a passion for content area when she spoke of Laura: “I think she had more of a passion for teaching. She loves books and just wants to share the joy with others.”

In a second wave of interviews, when I specifically asked whether or not passion is an important quality, one cooperating teacher understood “passion for teaching children” as a natural characteristic of any teacher: “I think without passion for the children it would be hard for any teacher to be successful.” Others related the passion for children as more of a connection with the children and being able to relate to them. They also used the connection with children as a description of student teaching success. Two participants referred to their student teacher’s passion for student success, and another spoke of a student teacher who had a “passion to serve the Lord with all her heart.” Yet another cooperating teacher described “passion for teaching children” as something developed over years of teaching. Overall, however, when directly asked if the student teacher had a passion for teaching children, only two of ten cooperating teachers said unequivocally “yes.” In sum, in light of the overseas experience, the concept of “passion for teaching children” may be eclipsed by a focus on so many other challenges of learning and living during that time period.

Previous catalyst study. Result differences between the catalyst study and the current study only emerge in relation to the perspectives on the affective responses of overseas student teachers. Firmin, Firmin, and MacKay (2007) reported a bell-shaped

curve phenomenon, reflecting student teachers' affective responses. Throughout their 12-week experience overseas, student teachers described themselves as having passed through three distinct emotional periods: a state of excitement (including anticipatory nervousness), a state of dysphoria (including discouragement, among other negative emotions) and, finally, a state of enjoyment and fulfillment (thus leading to the emotional difficulties of saying good-bye).

This current follow-up study used the same open-ended questions as the affective response study, but it involved cooperating teachers who had observed student teachers from the same university. Even though I used the same initial outline to generate responses, the emphasis on an emotional phenomenon in student teacher response did not appear with equal frequency or without prompting. While cooperating teachers did note a variety of stresses, only five out of 23 mentioned the possibility of homesickness or loneliness as a noticeable stress. Cooperating teachers mentioned other challenges but, when purposely probed regarding stress, they frequently mentioned how student teachers did not show significant indicators of stress or frustration in the classroom and they reportedly did not let stress or frustration substantially affect their teaching. When probed about coping abilities again, cooperating teachers praised the teachers for their abilities in coping. Even while several cooperating teachers mentioned stresses in light of coping methods implemented by student teachers, the stresses discussed were *not* the overall emphasis of what the cooperating teacher shared about the student teacher.

Biblical Integrative Component and Implications

The goal of any student teacher should include professional excellence and success. As presented in God's Word, followers of Christ will seek out those attributes,

not only for their own benefit, but also for the sake of God's glory and representing His kingdom. In 2 Peter 1:3, God calls believers to meet that standard, and He provides the power to fulfill it: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (English Standard Version). Furthermore, the Apostle Paul instructs in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Beyond the university supervisor or the school superintendent, God is the final judge of a believer's work. As the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

Many of the attributes necessary for a successful overseas student teaching experience are also Biblical characteristics that believers should pursue, specifically in employment situations. In Luke 19:17, Christ teaches workers to be diligent and faithful in their work. Through a story, Christ commends the servant who follows through on actions and does quality work. Also, the writer of Hebrews teaches that followers of Christ should be diligent in life and work: "And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Furthermore, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, the Apostle Paul teaches that employees are to respect those working with and above them: "Respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you."

A salient element of success in the student teaching experience was said to have involved the importance of knowing and understanding one's emotional and spiritual self.

While the Bible revolves around the concept of knowing God—both intellectually and relationally—an important purpose of the Scriptures is so humans can see themselves in the correct perspective as created in God’s image and with the purpose of glorifying Him and finding fulfillment in Him. God created humans, and they have purpose according to “the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace” (Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 1:16-18). Without living with Christ, humans can do nothing of eternal value and are without worth (John 15:4-6); but with Him, Acts 17:28 states that “we live and move and have our being.”

An important element to this study deals with the Christian’s role to make disciples internationally. Biblically speaking, the Christian is commanded to go throughout the world to complete the mandate of sharing the news of the Lord Jesus Christ’s salvation for all mankind. Matthew 28:19 states “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Whether an individual resides in North America or Southeast Asia, the command from the Lord Jesus is to teach His gospel so that persons of all ages can become part of his body of disciples. Several of the host schools where cooperating teachers participating in this study were located have that as a specific ministry goal for their institutions.

Outside research, as well as this study, also pointed out the importance of the cooperating teacher as a mentor to the student teacher. This, too, relates to the Biblical principles of the disciple or the student becoming like their teacher. In Luke 6:39-41, Jesus is recorded to have taught that “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.” Paul presents a similar teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:1 (and in 4:16) as he instructs that his followers should follow his

example just as He followed Christ's example. The Bible impresses upon Christians that teaching comes not only through words and texts, but as much or more so through mentoring and example.

Another important element demonstrated by the present study and previous research, involves every individual's innate need for social interaction and support. As the Bible presents, God created humans in the image of Himself—in the image of God the Trinity. Just as the Trinity is relational (John 1:18; 16:14; 17:4-5), so are humans. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the members of the Trinity glorifying one another (John 16:14; 17:4-5), the relationship is self-giving (as opposed to self-centered). Each person elevates others above self (Philippians 2:1-4). In the same way, human beings are most fulfilled and joyful when living lives of selflessness (Mark 8:35). Fulfillment in this life ultimately comes from living centered on God and reflecting Him toward others through words and deeds.

Both the concepts of being created to glorify God and to meet the needs of other humans culminate in Romans 12:1-13. Here, the Apostle Paul connected both concepts in a passage that speaks first to a Christian becoming a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" as to "discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." He then reminds the believer that "As in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." The Apostle Paul communicated that Christians do not function best alone but, rather, as a blended body.

Strengths of the Study

I designed this study with purposed sampling based upon interviews with only those who met pre-determined criteria. The conditions not only required participants who specifically had hosted student teachers from the particular private university, but it also maintained a specific limitation on timing of the student teaching experience—five years—so that (a) participants could remember without substantial difficulty or error, and (b) the information would be relevant to the current program and participants.

Internal validity was strengthened in that all 23 participants related information about student teachers from only one particular university. I used the same group of open-ended questions in the follow-up study as had been used in the catalyst study with overseas student teachers. To provide consistency in comparing the studies, I interviewed a follow-up group of cooperating teachers, discussing the same topics of the overseas student teaching experience. A number of participants provided negative examples when comparing these student teachers with previous student teachers from other institutions. In a second wave, I revisited some of the highlighted themes and obtained no new information. In an effort to examine differences between outside research and what first-wave interviews presented, I did ask direct questions in regard to one particular topic. The responses to direct questioning did not present data that conflicted with what the participants had earlier revealed.

Furthermore, the use of low inference descriptors in the presentation of the findings has to ground the results and provide additional assurance that I accurately portrayed the voices and observations of the participants. I made a conscious effort to include as many verbatim responses from the research participants as was reasonably

feasible. To offset researcher bias, I continually reflected on my predispositions during interviews, and I reviewed data findings with two advisors.

A final strength of the study was my personal previous involvement in international education. Having experienced over seven years of teaching or administrative ministry overseas, I have participated firsthand in the experiences of both cooperating and student teachers in the international school classroom. My administrative experiences of recruiting and hosting student teachers provided a deeper understanding of the interview discussions and an ability to both relate and further probe what cooperating teachers seemingly were expressing during the interviews. In my years overseas, I had observed two student teachers and two other new teachers from the participating university; those reflections and evaluations were consistent with the data obtained during the study's interviews.

Limitations of the Study

Remaining threats to internal validity. Although interviews provided a rich data set, the possibility exists that only individuals with positive experiences responded to the original request to provide interviews. Of the 50 requests, only two individuals, in particular, distinctly declined to discuss the experience, and I was later informed that one of those cooperating teachers had an unpleasant experience. Further, while only two individuals denied accessibility merely because they did not want to participate, another 15 were not accessible after several efforts to reach them. Therefore, I do not know if the lack of response was due to preference, technological hindrances, contact limitations, or the prospective cooperating teachers not wanting to share negative experiences with me.

Another limit of the present study involved the extended length of time that passed from many of the participants' original experiences. While 10 of the interviews occurred within the same year as the experience (some immediately following), and seven of the interviews occurred in the year following the experience, another four occurred two years following the experience, one occurred three years afterward, and one occurred four years after the experience. Participants who experienced a greater lapse of time, since the experience, could not as clearly recall details. In the second wave of interviews the effects of that distance in memory became more pronounced. For most interviews, lack of remembering details seemingly was not a factor. Albeit, an element of selective memory or bias can occur with any length of time between experience and recall.

Another limitation to the study was my inability to use random sampling, which meant the results potentially would be less generalizable to other universities. Instead, a purposive sampling occurred, based on research goals. The target sample was a group of overseas teachers who have hosted student teachers from a select Midwest university within the last five years. Therefore, no reasonable randomization could occur within the sampling, and limiting the established criteria for participants produced a smaller data set.

Remaining threats to external validity. The parameters of the study resulted in a limited, non-random population. Cooperating teacher participants only worked with student teachers from one selected university, which has a population of approximately 3,300 students. Two Hispanic, one Asian, and 21 Caucasian participants comprised the study group. Only 13% of participants were male and 87% female. This generally corresponds to the general population of teachers in stateside private schools, where 74%

are female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Of the 23 participants, five were between 21 and 30 years of age, seven were between 31 and 40 years of age, seven were between 41 and 50 years of age, one was between 51 and 60 years of age, two were between 61 and 65 years of age, and one was above the age of 66.

The limited sampling number of 23 cooperating teachers, as well their purposed composition, potentially restricts generalization to other universities. However, although the results cannot be generalized to *all* colleges, the results may represent the voice of the cooperating teacher overseas hosting student teachers from similar, private universities.

Suggestions for Future Research

One question I asked teachers in the second wave of interviews—that did not appear in the first interviewed round—resulted from research literature that emphasized the necessity of “passion for teaching children” determining teacher success. While research indicated that passion was crucial for a career in education, the present cooperating teachers did not stress this quality, even when directly questioned about it. Furthermore, each participant defined “passion” differently. For example, while one teacher indicated that “passion for teaching children” was an assumed or natural characteristic of any student teacher, another teacher indicated that it was a characteristic developed over time. Cooperating teachers emphasized many other elements related to how they perceived student teaching success. Then, in the second wave, the cooperating teachers interwove the idea of “success” with “connecting to the students.” At times, they even joined the idea of “passion for teaching children” with the idea of “connecting with students.” Being a very subjective element, and due to the varied interpretations, this

concept of passion as an overseas student teaching requirement could be further explored relative to its importance at the international student teaching level.

In consideration of the differing opinions regarding preparatory language study, further study could test the success rates of student teachers with higher foreign-language skills. Both the catalyst and follow-up study at this university indicated the desire of student teachers to receive additional language training, and even cooperating teachers discussed its benefits. However, the research literature suggests that foreign language development is not as important as understanding other cultural cues and traditions in the host culture (Gonzalez, 1993). While perhaps not of direct importance in the overseas (English-based) classroom, second language ability could have potential implications regarding successful adaptation to overseas living and to successful interactions with foreign-language learners in the English-based classroom overseas.

In light of the added stresses incurred in an overseas student teaching experience, it would be useful to examine the effect of technology on distal social support. Internet-based communications have changed how expatriates in all careers are able to connect with home-based social support. How has this more frequent connection changed both the choosing of an overseas placement and the actual experience thereof? Knowing the answers to these questions will benefit universities as they maintain their international programs at current levels of excellence and accreditation.

The sample used in the present study contained a small number of minority individuals. The university at which the study was conducted had a minority population of only six percent at the time of data collection. In this present study, only three participants represent minority populations. Future research should focus on the

experiences that minority individuals experience as host cooperating teacher overseas, comparing the results with the current study.

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Appendix A

Cooperating/Supervising Teacher Questionnaire

Overseas Cooperating Teacher _____

Number of experiences as a cooperating teacher? _____

How many from Cedarville University? _____

How long ago did this experience take place? _____

Teaching grade/subject: _____

School size (approximate): _____ Including which grades? _____

Type of school (private, religious, international, American, etc.)?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS in light of one particular experience as best possible (if a variety of experiences are recalled, please indicate as such):

1. Preparation:

- a. What kinds of things do you know that your student teacher did to prepare for this overseas teaching experience?
- b. Was he/she prepared to live overseas – emotionally, language-wise, spiritually?
- c. What could they have done better? What specific preparation might have helped him/her?

2. Culture:

- a. What cultural differences impacted the teaching/learning process for the student teacher?
- b. How did the students' culture(s) affect the teaching/learning process?
- c. How did any language differences affect the student teacher's internship experience?
- d. How were the overall teaching/learning processes affected by the social/cultural differences between students and student teacher?

3. Imagined vs. reality:

- a. Did you feel that the student teacher had expectations of the experience that were not met? If so, what were they?
- b. What things seemed to surprise the student teacher during the experience? What kinds of things happened that he/she was not expecting?
- c. Did you, the cooperating teacher, have any expectations of the experience that were or were not met? If so, what were they?

4. **Relationship with teacher & students:**
 - a. How would you characterize your relationship with your student teacher?
 - b. How would you characterize the relationship of the **supervising** teacher/principal and the student teacher?
 - c. Did you or the supervising teacher anticipate any problems with the student teacher before his/her arrival?
 - d. Address your thoughts, concerns, feelings, and apprehensions about these relationships, and how you believe the student teacher perceived the relationships?

5. **A typical day:**
 - a. Specifically, what kinds of situations did the student teacher encounter in a typical day (actual teaching, tutoring, dealing with parents, meetings, recess duty, etc.?)
 - b. What parts of the day did the student teacher seem to enjoy or look forward to the most?
 - c. What roles throughout the day did the student teacher perform the best?

6. **Encouragement from God's Word:**
 - a. As the student teacher encountered new and difficult situations, what signs of spiritual resourcefulness did you see?
 - b. How was the student teacher able to look to his/her Bible or devotions for encouragement?
 - c. What particular verses or spiritual encouragement did you share with the student teacher?

7. **Making Christ Known:**

In what ways did the student teacher reach out with the gospel to those around him/her?

 - a. Within the classroom?
 - b. Outside of the school campus (with ministry outreach)?

8. **New Friends:**
 - a. Did the student teacher make new friends during the experience—students, other teachers, people at church?
 - b. How quickly was the student teacher able to make new friends?
 - c. As far as you can perceive, what made those friendships special?
 - d. In regard to those friendships, what occurred when the student teacher left to go back to his/her home country? Were those friendships continued?

9. **Fitting in:**

- a. How was the student teacher accepted into the culture of the school?
- b. How was the student teacher accepted into the general culture of the country?
- c. What barriers would have to be knocked down in order to find that acceptance?
- d. How did any of those three factors affect the student teacher's teaching experience?

10. **Adjusting:**

- a. For the student teacher, what things did you perceive were difficult initially for him/her but were overcome as time passed?
- b. Why do you believe these got easier?
- c. What encouragement can be given to someone who is having a rough first few weeks as an overseas intern?

11. **Social Support:**

- a. How did the student teacher manage social support during the overseas experience?
- b. How did he/she handle loneliness? Homesickness?
- c. What other emotional aspects of the experience seemed to affect the student teaching?

12. **To God be the Glory:**

- a. What are some things that you saw God do in the life of the student teacher or in the lives of those around him/her during the student teaching experience?
- b. Give specific examples of times you clearly saw God's hand at work.

13. **Teaching—answer only the questions below that APPLY:**

- a. What general **difficulties** did you see the student teacher experience? (did any of this result from cultural/language differences?) How did he/she work through this?
- b. What general **frustrations** did you see the student teacher experience? (did any of this result from cultural/language differences?) How did he/she work through this?
- c. Describe some **failures** that the student teacher had? How did he/she work through this?
- d. Describe some things that the student teacher **should improve** upon or do differently in the future?
- e. Describe some **successes** that the student teacher had in the classroom?

14. Supervision:

- a. Provide your candid feelings as a cooperating/supervising teacher about the support provided by the university faculty from a distance?
- b. What might improve the process?
- c. What should not be modified?

15. The future of the student teacher:

- a. What do you feel the student teacher learned most about him/herself during the experience? What plans for the future might have changed due to their experience?
- b. What changes did you see in the student teacher throughout the experience?
- c. What life lessons did the student teacher learn?
- d. How has the student teacher's life changed?
- e. In what ways has the perspective of the student teacher changed?
- f. Do you know anything of the student teacher's transition back to the states and how that went?

16. Other: What other factors may have affected this experience that we have not talked about?

Appendix B

List of Codes

	Code	Subcode	Expanded definition
1	Preparedness		
2		Preparedness re: relationships	
3		Preparedness/expectations	
4	Cedarville		items to do with Cedarville University, in particular
5	Setting		Host country setting/physical data descriptors
6		school stats	
7		timing of experience	
8	Language differences		
9		Language stresses	
10	Cultural differences		
11		cultural differences affecting teaching	
12		School culture acceptedness	how student teacher is accepted into school culture
13		Culture acceptedness	How student teacher is accepted into host country culture
14	Emotional factors		
15		Transitions/adjustments	Adjustment to host country setting
16		Transitions/departure	Transitions at end of experience/return to US
17		Emotional factors affecting teaching	
18		Emotional factors/stresses	
19		Emotional factors/failures	
20		Emotional factors/successes	
21		Emotional factors/homesickness	
22		Emotional factors/loneliness	
23		Classroom stresses	
24		Coping	Coping mechanisms/resources engaged for stress/frustration
25		Classroom success	
26	ST personality/character		Student teacher personality/character traits
27		ST self-awareness and development	
28	ST expectations		ST Self-awareness and personal development
29	CT		Cooperating Teacher
30		CT's expectations	cooperating teacher's expectations
31		CT's personality/character	cooperating teacher's personality/character traits

32		CT advice	Cooperating teacher's international teaching advice/recommendations
33		Improve upon	Cooperating teacher's suggestions for ST improvements
34	CT/ST relationship		Cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship
35		CT/ST mentoring	Cooperating teacher mentoring of student teacher
36	Supervisor		
37		Supervisor/ST	Supervisor/student teacher relationship
38	ST roles		Student teacher roles and responsibilities
39		roles_favorites	Favorite roles/responsibilities of student teacher
40		roles_best performed	Best performed roles/responsibilities of student teacher
41	Spiritual resources		Spiritual resources applied by student teacher
42		God's hand	Instances of God's working in the life and around the life of the student teacher
43	Classroom outreach		Student teacher's Christian/gospel outreach within classroom
44	Outside ministry		Student teacher's outside-the-classroom Christian/gospel outreach
45	Social support		
46		friendships	friendship support on-site
47		family support	family support from distance
48	University support		Cedarville University's support provided for cooperating and/or student teacher
49	South Korean presence around the world		
50	Living overseas versus visiting		

