

Becoming global teachers in a divided world

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ABSTRACT

A typical strategy for internationalization of teacher education is to send students on different types of exchange programs or practicum arenas abroad. The aim of this practice is for student teachers to develop global awareness, intercultural competence, professional understanding and personal empowerment. However, some critics have raised concerns about the possible outcomes of international practicums, such as strengthening negative cultural and/or racial stereotypes and fostering neocolonial attitudes. For instance, when students travel from the Global North to the Global South, culturally shaped and normative educational ideas might travel with the students and reinforce the notion of the superiority of ‘Western’ education in Global South settings. This paper draws on more than 15 years of research on international practicum cooperations between higher education institutions in Norway and Southern Africa. This includes research on both the long-term and the short-term effects of international practicums, as well as looking at the views of the local partners receiving the international students. It also investigates if being part of a mixed practicum group with both international and local students, either abroad or at home, lead to increased intercultural competence and global awareness. Theoretically, the paper draws on Mezirow’s (1997) transformative learning theory and post-colonial approaches to international education.

Keywords: international practicums; Norway; Southern Africa; transformative learning