5-8-2020

Impacts of an international professional development program: A qualitative study

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Impacts of an International Professional Development Program: A Qualitative Study

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Education

College of Education

May 2020

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

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Abstract

This qualitative study with phenomenological components examined the impacts of a U.S. State Department-funded teacher professional development program, hosted at a liberal-arts university on the east coast of the United States in the spring semester of 2018. An initial review of the public literature revealed that it was challenging to find evaluation data pertaining to this particular program or ones of a similar nature. Through semi-structured synchronous online interviews with five program alumni, the researcher probed if—and if so, how—the professional development (PD) program had made the intended impacts on participants' (1) teaching methods/curriculum, (2) content knowledge in their personal teaching disciplines, and (3) international relationships/perceptions of other cultures. The results indicate that the program has impacted teachers' education philosophies, English language skills, understanding of other cultures, knowledge of effective teaching methods, and educational technology skills. Key take-aways include that the strengths of the PD program included that it was connected to teachers' individual classroom needs, included theory and practice, fostered collaboration between participants and U.S. educators, and facilitated myriad opportunities for meaningful interaction to foster intercultural understanding.

Keywords: international teacher professional development, intercultural, teaching methods, education philosophies

1: Introduction

Background/Issue

During the spring semesters of 2016, 2017 and 2018, a mid-sized liberal-arts university on the east coast of the United States was one of the four universities to host a U.S. State Department funded semester-long professional development (PD) program for in-service teachers from developing nations. For the duration of each aforementioned spring semester, the university hosted between 14 and 16 international secondary school teachers from 12 different countries in total: Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda.

Kaku (2012) observes that "All the technological revolutions ... are leading to a single point: the creation of a planetary civilization. Unless there is a natural catastrophe or some calamitous act of folly, it is inevitable that we will enter this phase of our collective history" (pp. 378-379). It is now the year 2020; we are still far removed from being a planetary civilization, but through faster means of information exchange and transportation, humans of different nations are becoming increasingly interdependent. If we aim to ensure our species survives, it is paramount we continue working towards a global civilization, at least to some degree. Cushner (2007) points out that understanding, collaborating and effectively communicating with people in an increasingly global society is key in making progress as a species, but that studying different cultures from the outside (usually from our own classrooms, using textbooks, videos, pictures and articles) does not provide students and teachers with what he asserts to be a vital aspect in culture learning: real-life experience with different cultures. This assertion clearly aligns with the primary objectives of the professional development program focused on in this

paper: participants' professional development and the fostering of global citizenship and "intercultural understanding" (Caruana, 2014, p. 85) through real-life lived experience.

As stated in the request for proposal (RFP) issued by the funder (USDOS) of the professional development program, another key goal of this particular program is professional development in terms of increasing participants' content knowledge and teaching strategies/skills. During the course of their semester-long stay in the United States, visiting secondary teachers--henceforth to be referred to as Fellows--worked on the aforementioned goals primarily through the activities outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
Key Program Activities Organized by Objective

Content Knowledge	Teaching Strategies	Global Citizenship
Audit two university classes related to their individual content areas and/or education in general.	Complete a 90-hour field experience at a U.S. secondary school. Prepare and co-teach lessons with a US host teacher in a secondary school.	Cohabitate an apartment with either one or two teachers from different countries, and with these housemates, attend social events with US friendship families over the weekend.
Take a customized-educational-technology course.		Facilitate cultural dialogues where Fellows share and discuss aspects of their cultures with their peers, professors, US university students and US secondary students.
Take a customized education course that focuses on teacher leadership, preparation/reflection for the aforementioned field experience in a U.S. middle or high school, and the design		Attend numerous cultural excursions (e.g., to Washington DC, sporting events, other universities, regional landmarks and

of in-service Professional Development Modules for use with peers upon return home.		museums, and educators conferences).

Each month, by means of semi-structured interviews, the principal investigator (henceforth to be referred to as PI) and the program manager (henceforth to be referred to as PM), gathered feedback from each participant regarding their experiences in the program. One month after alumni of each cohort had returned to their respective home countries, the PI emailed each of them four final interview questions. Although these interviews have provided the PI and PM with valuable feedback to aid immediate program evaluations, these data do not tell us much about the program's possible medium- to long-term effects. Through informal email communications and social media, the PI and PM have been able to catch glimpses of more longitudinal program impacts; however, we do not possess any formal data regarding whether or not the program has had the intended medium-to-long-term impacts: this is our knowledge gap. The focus of this study is on our most recent (2018) cohort, as these alumni experienced the program in its most current rendition.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to fill part of the described knowledge gap by finding answers to the following research question and its subquestions:

- What—if any—have been the impacts on participants of an international professional development program for in-service teachers from developing nations?
    - (How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods and/or curriculum?

- ○ (How) has the program impacted participants' content knowledge in their academic areas?

- ○ (How) has the program impacted participants' international relationships and views of other cultures?

Significance

It is imperative to fill the described knowledge gap for a number of reasons. First of all, program management and academic team members need to know if their efforts hitherto have been effective or not, so that they can (continue to) offer high-quality programs that are worth participants' sacrifices of spending a semester away from their families, schools and communities. Secondly, in order to write, apply for, and be awarded similar grant-funded programs in the future, we (program management) need to know if the design of our program has thus far yielded results considered favorable by the funder; simply relying on anecdotal knowledge and assumptions does not suffice. Third, success stories from previous cohorts may benefit the USDOS in justifying financial investment in programs of this sort. Finally, this study will benefit the field of adult education (specifically, andragogy), as it will add to the repository of knowledge regarding professional development of secondary educators in a study-abroad setting.

Researcher's Role

As I was the PM for this professional development program, I was heavily invested in its success, and I got to know the participants quite well on a professional and personal level. Naturally, I am hopeful that the program has positively affected our alumni. However, it has been my aim to come away with an honest perspective on strengths and weaknesses of the program, so that my colleagues and I will be able to take

this information into consideration when we design future programs. Knowing all

participants personally has had its benefits and drawbacks. When conducting interviews,

it was helpful being an insider in the group: Alumni know and trust me. On the other

hand, I realized that participants could be inclined to share with me primarily positive

feedback. I believe, though, that by phrasing my interview questions objectively and

prefacing that I was interested in honest feedback for the benefit of the program, alumni

felt free to share their true feelings and experiences: Constructive criticism offered by

interviewees supports this belief. Furthermore, I have utilized my researcher's journal to

address bias by being transparent about my interview notes, initial thoughts and coding.

The epoche stage (see: Methods, Table 3), has also helped me bracket (set aside) my own

biases.

Key Terms

   Academic seminar. This professional development program included an

Academic Seminar in which, during the first weeks, Fellows were presented with a

survey of educational foundations (e.g., philosophies, history, and methods), after which

they each indicated what classroom- and school-specific needs they wanted to address.

Groups of Fellows with similar needs (e.g., authentic assessment, differentiation,

classroom management, or critical thinking) then researched their topics extensively in

order to build a Professional Development Module (PDM) for the purpose of training

their peers in their home countries.

   Curriculum. The term curriculum can mean different things in different schools

of thought. However, it is generally understood to refer to either "the body of courses that

present knowledge, principles, values, and skills that are the intended consequences of

formal education" (Levine, as cited in Toombs & Tierney, 1993, p. 177) or "the name for the total active life of each person in college" (Taylor, as cited in Toombs & Tierney, 1993, p. 177).

Global citizenship. Caruana (2014) explains this term is "abstract and ill-defined," but that "intercultural sensitivity—embracing awareness as cognition and competence as behavior drawing on attitudes, knowledge, skills and action propensities to engage with difference—is vital effective global citizenship" (pp. 88-89).

In-service teacher. The compound adjective in-service is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) as "of, relating to, or being one that is fully employed." We may logically conclude, then, that an in-service teacher is a teacher who is currently employed (as a teacher).

Lived experience. Oxford Reference (2011) defines this term as "Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people" (para. 1). Given (2008) explains that lived experience, "as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge" (p. 489).

Positionality. Given (2008) defines positionality as follows: "Positionality is about the situatedness of knowledge. People experience the world from different embodied, social, intellectual, and spatial locations. How we are situated within social spaces and locations, taken in combination with our personal and shared intellectual

histories as well as our lived experiences, shapes each of our understandings of the world, our knowledge, and our actions" (p. 98).

Professional Development. As it relates to education is defined by the Glossary of Education Reform (2013) as a term that, "may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness" (para. 1).

Researcher's Journal. A researcher's journal "aims to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695).

2: Literature Review

The aim of this study was to gain insight in the short- and long-term impacts on participants of a U.S. State Department funded semester-long professional development program for in-service teachers from developing nations hosted at a mid-sized liberal-arts university on the east coast of the United States in the spring semester of 2018. Since impacts is a broad term, I have decided to zoom in on three aspects of teacher professional development in particular: 1) content knowledge; 2) teaching strategies; and, 3) global citizenship.

Evaluations of Similar Programs

Through my library research (including relevant databases) I was not able to find any program-evaluation data on the professional development program that is the focus of this study, nor was I able to find any useful evaluation data on programs of a similar nature. Biraimah and Jotia (2012) confirm that the majority of reports on the impacts of similar programs, such as the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad for university faculty and/or in-service teachers, focus on "(a) a compendia [sic] of lesson plans emanating from [participants'] experiences, (b) an analysis of perceptions of the host country, or (c) brief program descriptions," while significantly less literature is available "on participants' dispositions, knowledge, and teaching methodologies" (p. 436). King (2013) adds that "traditionally, measuring the impact of teacher PD [professional development] has focused largely on teacher satisfaction and ignored impact on teacher learning, use of new practices, pupils' outcomes and/or value for money" (p. 90).

As my library research had not yielded any data regarding medium- to long-term PD programs of this kind, I decided to reach out directly to the funder, who informed me

that "there are not currently any program evaluations [of the program in question] in the public literature" (IREX, personal communication, October 4, 2019). This confirmed to me that this study could indeed help fill an existing knowledge gap.

What I did find out through my literature review was that professional development programs for in-service teachers come in many forms--from brief to long, discipline-specific to general pedagogy, effective and ineffective (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Çobanoglu, 2018; Bando & Li, 2014; Kyriakides, Christoforidou, Panayiotou & Creemers, 2017; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Ayvaz-Tuncel and Çobanoglu (2018) confirm the importance of evaluating professional development programs, as they point out that, "Current research criticize[s] the inadequacy and inappropriateness of the traditional methods of teachers' professional development, although it has been insistently emphasized that professional development is a key point for the [sic] teacher training" (p. 160).

What makes some programs "inadequate and inappropriate"? What are the hallmarks of appropriate and effective programs? How should we measure the impacts of teacher professional development on content knowledge, teaching strategies and global citizenship? My review of the literature *has* provided me with answers to these questions.

Development of Content Knowledge and Teaching Strategies

Although the qualitative nature of this study allows for indications of the program's effectiveness to arise from Fellow interviews, it will be useful to base interview questions and evaluation measures on established characteristics of successful professional development programs. Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009) explain that they "define 'high quality' or 'effective' professional

development as that which results in improvements in teachers' knowledge and

instructional practice, as well as improved student learning outcomes" (p. 3). They

concede, however, that the latter may not be immediately evident after teachers

implement new strategies, and that it can be challenging to be confident that

improvements in student achievement are the direct result of teacher learning, as there are

many variables that could influence student achievement.

Mohan, Lingam, and Chand (2017) recognize that professional development is

often not connected to specific, relevant and multifaceted real-world (i.e., classroom and

school-specific) needs. Instead, professional development often comes in the form of

workshops, and even though teachers may get a taste of new knowledge and skills, this

type of professional development "can also often lack depth and tends to focus mostly on

content knowledge" (Mohan, Lingam, & Chand, 2017, p. 21).

Wei et al. (2009) suggest that analyzing participants' (changes in) teaching

methods and philosophies can provide insight into the effects of professional

development programs. At the same time, much of the literature shows that the duration

of professional development programs is a key factor: short workshops typically do not

yield any results, while "too many hours of professional development could [also] be

ineffective" (Kyriakides et al., 2017, p. 471). This, of course, raises the question: What *is*

the optimal duration of a professional development program?

Kyriakides et al. (2017) may be able to provide more insight regarding

appropriate program duration. Their study confirms their hypothesis that "teaching skills

can be grouped into five stages of effective teaching" (Kyriakides et al., 2017, p. 482),

and they explain that it generally takes more time (and training) to move up between

higher stages than it does to move up between lower stages. Bearing this in mind, there are different optimal durations of teacher professional development. This means that, "professional development opportunities should be structured to correspond to the professional needs of teachers" and that it is imperative "to examine the effectiveness of the programme offered, based on the changes identified in relation to teachers' skills" (Kyriakides et al., 2017, p. 480).

Bando and Li (2014) concur that "for in-service teacher training to be effective it has to have some specific characteristics, such as being connected to practice, intensive enough, linked to incentives, and continuous" (p. 3). In other words, it is important for in-service teacher training to be relevant to individual teachers' (classroom) needs, and that there is often a multitude of interdependent factors that lie at the foundation of successful PD.

Gore, Smith, Bowe, Ellis and Lubans' (2017) findings do not diverge much from any of the aforementioned keys to successful teacher professional development, as they explain that various researchers in the field of education report that there is a consensus that successful professional development programs "involve teachers as both learners and teachers … are needs-supportive … take place within the school day … are integrated into practice … cohere with school and system policies … and promote transformative practice, rather than accountability" (p.100).

In summary, thus far, the literature has taught me that teacher professional development should not be a one-size-fits-all endeavor; instead, teachers have different needs based on numerous variables, chief among which are, 1) different levels of experience; 2) widely varying classroom settings; 3) individual content areas; and, 4)

audience (i.e., learners) diversity. Also, teacher professional development takes time:

brief "afternoon workshops" generally have little effect (Kyriakides et al., 2017).

Global Citizenship

Banks (2014) explains that globalization brings with it multifaceted and

polarizing challenges with regard to how "nation-states can deal effectively with the

problem of constructing civic communities that reflect and incorporate the diversity of

citizens and yet have an overarching set of shared values, ideals, and goals to which all of

the citizens of a nation-state are committed" (pp. 130 - 131). Therefore, Banks (2014)

explains, educators are to cultivate in learners "the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that

will enable them to function in a global society" (p. 132). Indeed, one of the goals of our

teacher professional development program was for our Fellows to join us in an

exploration of what--if any--attitudes and beliefs we share, while simultaneously learning

from our diverse perspectives on matters related to education. The question is: Have we

made an impact in this area?

Secondly--in an effort to deanonymize the web of artificially drawn borders on

our pale blue dot (Sagan, 1994)—we intended our teacher professional development

program to foster personal, human connections with people from a multitude of nations.

Banks (2014) concurs that

> citizenship education should also help students to develop an identity and
>
> attachment to the global community and a human connection to people around the
>
> world. Global identities, attachments, and commitments constitute
>
> cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 2002). Cosmopolitans view themselves as citizens

of the world who will make decisions and take actions in the global interests that

will benefit humankind. (p. 134)

Cushner (2007) asserts that studying different cultures from the outside (usually

from our own classrooms, using textbooks, videos, pictures and articles) does not provide

pre- or in-service teachers a vital aspect of culture learning: real-life experience with

different cultures. However, for many teachers and students alike, it is not always

financially and logistically feasible to travel to scores of different countries in order to

experience different cultures first-hand. Caruana (2014) explains that international

mobility (i.e., travel) is not always necessary in order to learn from and about people

from different cultures; rather, there is often a wealth of untapped cultural knowledge and

lived experience on university campuses. Caruana (2014) points out that cultural

biographies of students of diverse backgrounds, if shared and discussed tactfully, can

greatly aid the cultivation of intercultural understanding. This is precisely what we

intended the cultural dialogues--where our Fellows shared and discussed aspects of their

cultures with their peers, professors, US university students and US secondary students--

to foster.

Professional Development Evaluation

Multiple scholars have pointed out that there is a knowledge gap concerning the

impact teacher professional development has on teacher learning, the use of new skills

and strategies, and its effects on students (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012; King, 2013). Although

it is not entirely clear *why* this knowledge gap exists, it is possible that the elusive,

multifaceted nature of this topic causes researchers to be hesitant to conduct studies that

go deeper than post-program participant-satisfaction surveys. Guskey (2002) explains

that educators participating in PD programs "traditionally … haven't paid much attention

to evaluating their professional development efforts. Many consider evaluation a costly,

time-consuming process that diverts attention from more important activities… Others

feel they lack the skill and expertise to become involved in rigorous evaluation" (p.45).

Despite all this, though, a number of professional development evaluation models

have been designed over the past decades. As reflected in Table 2, King (2013) lays out

differences and similarities between three widely used models: Kirkpatrick's (1960)

four-level model, Guskey's (2002) five-level model (which is based on Kirkpatrick's

model), and Bubb and Earley's (2010) twelve-level elaboration on Guskey's model.

Kirkpatrick's model. The article "Techniques for Evaluating Training

Programs" (1979) is a compilation of a four-installment article sequence Kirkpatrick

published in 1959. In each installment, Kirkpatrick describes one specific component of

an evaluation model for PD programs in a broad sense (not necessarily teacher

professional development specifically).

At the first level--participant reaction--participants are asked questions about how

they perceived a certain program. Kirkpatrick (1979) cautions, however, that even though

reaction is so easy to measure, [and] nearly all training directors do it … many of

these attempts do not meet the standards listed below:

1.   Determine what you want to find out.

2.   Use a written comment sheet covering those items determined in step one

above.

3.   Design the form so that the reactions can be tabulated and quantified.

4.   Obtain honest reactions by making the forms anonymous.

     5.   Encourage the conferees to write in additional comments not covered by the

questions that were designed to be tabulated and quantified. (p. 78)

It is important to stress that evaluation level one is not intended to measure participant

performance; instead, the sole focus should be on how the PD program was received by

participants.

     Kirkpatrick (1979) suggests PD program evaluators gauge participant learning--

level two in this model--through classroom performances and/or paper-and-pencil tests.

The next level (three) in this model is focused on post-program behavior (i.e., if the

participant is actually implementing what was learned or not). Level four in this model is

focused on organization results; however, Kirkpatrick (1979) warns that, due to a host of

possible interfering variables, it is often extremely difficult to measure organization

results. In the field of education, for instance, one may want to focus on student outcomes

of teacher PD; nevertheless, it would be naive to presume that changes in teaching

methods or teachers' behaviors are the only factors that potentially influence student

performance. Variables such as students' emotional well-being, the physical classroom

environment and time of day, for example, may all contribute to changes in student

performance. In other words, isolating the effect of teacher PD is not an easy task.

Kirkpatrick's model is a good starting point, but not the model I decided to utilize, for 1)

I was interested in first-hand accounts of Fellows' experiences; and, 2) step two in this

model would necessitate pre-program comparison data.

     Guskey's (2000) model. In the book *Evaluating Professional Development*,

Guskey (2000) lays out the shortcomings of many professional development evaluation

reports. To begin with, Guskey explains, many evaluations "are not evaluations at all" (p.

9). Instead, they are often simply reports of what happened--not of impacts or

effectiveness. Secondly, Guskey laments that PD evaluations are usually quite

superficial: PD providers "are often satisfied if participants enjoy the experience … [and]

regard their time to be well spent" (p.9). Lastly, PD evaluations rarely focus on medium-

to long-term effects. To secure continued funding, evaluators need to be able to show

impacts quickly. As a result "we often rush to provide evidence on effectiveness and

expect too much too soon. If quick and ample evidence of improvement is not

forthcoming, support for change is withdrawn and implementation ceases" (Guskey,

2000, p. 9).

     Guskey (2000) concurs that Kirkpatrick's (1959) oft-adopted framework has

value, as "it is helpful in addressing a broad range of 'what' questions;" however, the

framework is "lacking when it comes to explaining 'why'" (Guskey, 2000, p. 78).

Therefore, Guskey decided to build on Kirkpatrick's four-level model by adding a layer

of "why" questions explicitly connected to the context of education. Guskey has also

added an additional (fifth) component that is more directly focused on organization

support (a factor Kirkpatrick alludes to when describing what may influence changes in

participant behavior), which probes organizational policies and characteristics that either

impede or facilitate teachers' implementation of newly acquired skills and/or knowledge.

Table 2

A Comparison of Professional Development Evaluation Models

Kirkpatrick (1960)	Guskey (2002)	Bubb and Earley (2010)
		1) Baseline picture
		2) Goal
		3) Plan
1) Participant reaction	1) Participant reaction	4) The Experience
2) Participant learning	2) Participant learning	5) Learning
	3) Organization support and change	6) Organizational support
3) Participant behavior	4) Participants' use of new knowledge and skills	7) Into practice -- degree and quality of change
4) Organization results	5) Students' learning outcomes	8) Students' learning outcomes
		9) Other adults in school
		10) Other students in school
		11) Adults in other schools
		12) Students in other schools

Note: Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. *Professional Development in Education, 40*(1)

Bubb and Earley's (2010) model. Although Kirkpatrick (1960) hints at pre-program stages such describing a baseline (starting point), setting goals, and drafting a plan of action, and Guskey (2002) does emphasize the importance of such planning stages, neither one of them has explicitly incorporated the evaluation of these stages in

their respective models. Additionally, it may be challenging to determine participant

learning (i.e., gains in knowledge and/or skills) if there is no pre-assessment to establish a

baseline. Therefore, as shown in Table 2, Bubb and Earley (2010), in their rendition of

the earlier models, add three "pre-program" stages: 1) baseline picture; 2) goal; and, 3)

plan. Additionally, Bubb and Earley (2010) include four levels that focus on "cascading"

factors, where, through collaborative practices such as "professional learning

communities, team teaching practices, peer coaching or collaborative consultation,"

teachers' professional development can impact (9) other adults in school, (10) other

students in school, (11) adults in other schools, and (12) students in other schools

(numbered to correspond with Table 2).

  King's (2013) model. Despite Bubb and Earley's (2010) adding multiple useful

layers of detail to the two preceding evaluation models, I will explain why I chose to

ground my study in King's (2013) framework.

  Reflecting on the synthesis of evaluation frameworks as outlined hitherto, King

(2013) explains that while each successive model is slightly more detailed, the literature

shows that even Bubb and Earley's (2010) model does not include a number of key

variables "especially in the area[s] of collaborative practices … sustainability of

practices, whole-school change and development, … teachers' deep learning, teacher

commitment and teacher ownership of practices" (King, 2013, p. 97). Armed with this

knowledge, King developed the framework depicted in Figure 1.

  King (2013) then tested the newly developed framework in a qualitative case

study with different sites: five urban schools in the Republic of Ireland. The five schools

were purposefully selected because three years prior, teachers at these schools had

received professional development focused on literacy education. Based on the evaluation framework, King developed research questions and interview questions, which were then used to interview teachers and principals. King reports that interviews, "were transcribed as soon as possible after being carried out so that contextual cues and non-verbal cues were not lost" (p. 100). After that, King went through several stages of coding (initial assignment of topic codes, inductive data analysis, and recoding from specific and discrete to more general and abstract). Through a detailed explanation of the framework-revision process, King shows that the added areas of focus in the final framework (*shaded blue* in Figure 1) provide PD program evaluators with additional tools in composing a nuanced picture of potential professional development impacts.

The bottom part of this page is left blank intentionally in order to fit Figure 1 in its entirety on one page.
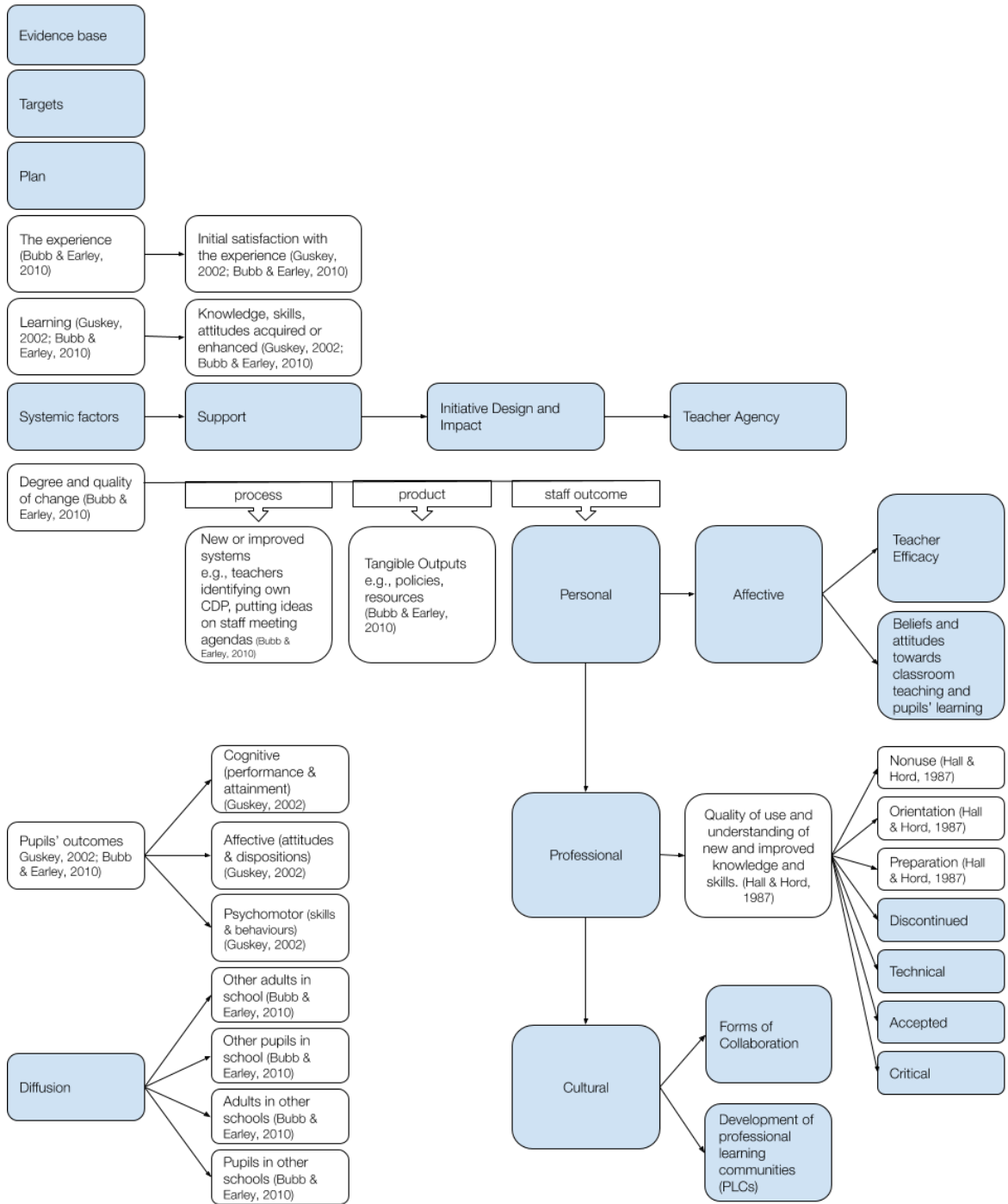
Figure 1. PD Impact Evaluation Framework. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: an evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013, *Professional Development in Education, 40*(1), p. 101.

It is important to stress that King's (2013) framework is not merely a synthesis of all three earlier models discussed here: It also includes a number of additional components that King (2013), based on a review of recent literature on the topic of PD evaluation, realized were missing in earlier models.

The first three additional areas in King's (2013) framework concern pre-program stages: (1) evidence base, (2) targets, and (3) plan. I have not directly based any research or interview questions on these components, for, although they are certainly worth evaluating, they fall outside the immediate scope of my study. My goal with this study was to purposefully focus on participants' experiences--not necessarily directly on pre-program-implementation stages (in that case, a more introspective study concerning the university team would have been more appropriate). However, I did realize that participant accounts could turn out to relate to the aforementioned stages--connections I will highlight in Chapter 5 of this document.

The next group of added areas of focus concerns systemic factors. These factors relate to organization support (e.g., from leadership or peers), program design and impact (how focused and structured is the program?), and teacher agency (King, 2013). As is the case with the areas related to pre-program stages, I did not design research or interview questions meant to directly probe systemic factors. Nonetheless, I did hypothesize that participants' responses might turn out to reflect systemic factors.

Table 3 illustrates how the components *Staff Outcome (Personal, Professional & Cultural)* and *Diffusion* relate to research subquestions one and three of my current study.

Table 3
Relating Added Components in King's (2013) Model to the Current Study

Research questions of current study	Relation to the additional components of King's (2013) model	
(How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods and/or curriculum?	**Staff outcome** ● *Personal* ● *Professional*	*Personal* 1) Teacher efficacy; and 2) Beliefs and attitudes towards classroom teaching and pupils' learning
		Professional Quality of use and understanding of new and improved knowledge and skills. (Hall & Hord, 1987)
(How) has the program impacted participants' international relationships and views of other cultures?	**Diffusion**	● other adults in school ● other students in school ● adults in other schools ● students in other schools (Bubb & Earley, 2010)
	Staff outcome ● *Cultural*	● Forms of collaboration ● Development of professional learning communities (PLCs)

Note: Partly adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. *Professional Development in Education, 40*(1)

In conclusion, after reviewing a number of evaluation models, I chose to base my study on King's (2013) evaluation framework, as it offers a number of additional layers of detail pertinent to the multivariate nature of the program that is the focus of my study.

Literature Review Takeaways

To lay a theoretical foundation for my study, I explored four main topics: (1) evaluations of programs similar to the one that is the focus of this study; (2) best practices in teacher professional development in the areas of content knowledge and teaching strategies; (3) the development of attitudes in line with global citizenship; and (4) professional development evaluation models.

I was able to find very limited information in the public literature about evaluations of similar semester-long international teacher professional development programs. This is likely because the primary means of evaluation for such programs are usually participant-satisfaction surveys, not detailed (qualitative or mixed-methods) descriptions of teacher experiences and possible PD program impacts (Biraimah & Jotia, 2012; King, 2013). Thus, I was not able to base my research methods on established evaluation models of medium- to long-term international educator PD programs.

Instead, I looked at what the literature says about characteristics of impactful teacher PD programs focused on content knowledge, teaching skills and global citizenship. Additionally, I explored general (non-international) models of teacher PD evaluation, and found that King's (2013) framework provided a useful starting point for my study. In Table 5 (Chapter 3, Methods), I will elaborate on how King's model relates to my research- and interview questions.

3: Methodology

The aim of this study is to gain insight in the short- and long-term impacts on participants of a U.S. State Department funded semester-long study-abroad/professional development program for in-service teachers from developing nations hosted at a mid-sized liberal-arts university on the east coast of the United States, in the spring semester of 2018. Specifically, my research questions are the following:

- What—if any—have been the **impacts** on participants of a U.S. State Department-funded international professional development program for in-service teachers from developing nations?

    - (How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods and/or curriculum?

    - (How) has the program impacted participants' content knowledge in their academic areas?

    - (How) has the program impacted participants' international relationships and views of other cultures?

The following section serves to explain my research design, how and where I have gathered data, what methods I have used for ensuring the reliability and validity of this study, and how I have analyzed my raw data.

Type of Study

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe, in qualitative studies, "the key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest [i.e., program] from the participants' perspectives" (p. 16), not from my own perspective, as my lens as manager of this particular program is likely quite different than theirs. Hence, I believe a qualitative study

was most suitable to answer my research questions, as this type of study enables the researcher to uncover, "how people interpret their experiences… [and] what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). The goal of a qualitative study is to generate a rich description of a phenomenon, person, or people's experiences. This type of study is centered around words, as opposed to a quantitative study, which, in the words of Braun and Clarke (2013), "uses *numbers* as data and analyzes them using statistical techniques" (pp. 3-4).

Another characteristic that distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative research is that the former relies on inductive reasoning--a process of drawing conclusions from data--as opposed to the latter, in which deductive reasoning (through which hypotheses are tested) is key. What this means in less technical terms, is that the researcher--who is the primary instrument for data collection--does not test hypotheses, but rather, "gather[s] data to build concepts, hypotheses and theories" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17).

As the aim of this study was to understand how participants experienced the program and how it affected them, it has been useful to approach this qualitative study from a phenomenological perspective, since "phenomenologists are interested in our lived experience" (Van Manen, 2014, p. 26); and, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain, "phenomenology is a study of people's conscious experience of their life-world" (p. 26). In conducting such a study, it is important that the researcher examines, acknowledges and brackets prior perceptions regarding a phenomenon temporarily, so that participants' experiences can be analyzed and compared as objectively as possible. The major

strategies generally employed in a phenomenological study and a description of how I

have applied these in my study are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4
Phenomenological Strategies Defined and Applied

Phenomenological Strategy		Definition	How it will be applied to my study
Phenomenological Reduction	Epoche	The exploration of the researcher's "own experiences, in part to examine the dimensions of the experience, and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints and assumptions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27).	In my researcher's journal (see: key terms) I have reflected on each of my research- and interview questions. This has helped me make concrete my existing perceptions of the program.
	Bracketing	After identifying them, the researcher temporarily puts existing ideas about a phenomenon aside in order to see the subject of study as objectively as possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). "To undertake the phenomenological reduction a researcher is required to abstain from the use of personal knowledge, theory, or beliefs, to become a perpetual beginner" (Bevan, 2014, p. 138).	After I had written my program reflections, I did my utmost to set aside these perceptions prior to commencing the interview- and data-analysis process. I let the data do the talking.
	Conduct in-depth phenomen ological interviews	Seidman (2006) explains that "Interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an "interviewee" whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice" (p. 17). Further, Seidman emphasizes it is important to actively listen, ask open-ended questions, listen more and talk less. When the interviewer does talk, it is "to ask	One advantage is that I did not have to conduct interviews with people I had never met; therefore, I conducted one ~ 1-hour interview with each participant. I elaborate on this under "data collection." During the interviews, I made sure to follow

		for clarification, seek concrete details, and request stories" (p. 81).	Seidman's (2006) instructions: I actively listened, let the interviewees tell their stories, and I only talked in order to request clarification or elaboration.
	Horizontal ization	Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) explain that "horizontalization stems from the idea that the researcher should be receptive to and place equal value on every statement or piece of data" (p. 400). During this process, the data is then organized into clusters of meaning (distinct themes).	I initially did not place any value judgments on my data as I coded it; I imagined myself a computer that was categorizing information into "buckets."

Sample

Through follow-up studies, I want to gain a holistic picture of the effects of the

program on *all* its alumni. For this initial endeavor, though, I wanted to learn from

success stories, so that I could identify how to best facilitate professional growth in future

programs. Therefore, I have generated a nonprobability (purposeful) sample of

participants who were able to share success stories. What distinguishes a nonprobability

sample from a probability (random) sample is that the objective is not to be able to

generalize results; instead, "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain

insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2016, p. 96).

For this study, it was my aim to identify a maximum number of six participants

from the most recent cohort (2018) to interview, as these alumni experienced the program

in its most current rendition. My goal was to have maximum variation (based on country, teaching experience and gender) because "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experience" (Patton, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 98).

In order to determine whom to interview, I emailed all 16 alumni a brief survey through which I intended to discover who among them would be willing, able and most suitable to be interviewed at this stage. Consequently, criteria included willingness to participate, maximum variation, and an indication of positive effects experienced as a result of the program. The survey consisted of the following questions:

Question 1:

Do you feel your professional life has changed since you returned home from ILEP? If yes, please provide brief examples, if possible. (Do not feel the need to provide a lot of detail; one sentence per example will suffice. You may, of course, write more, if you wish.)

Question 2:

As I explained, I'd like to schedule a time to interview you on the subject of ILEP. I prefer to use Skype, but you may let me know if you prefer a different platform such as Google Hangouts or WhatsApp. Please let me know, generally, when you would be available for this interview (which will take approximately 45 minutes).

A total of nine alumni responded to this survey. I ended up choosing a purposive sample of five individuals based on, 1) willingness to be interviewed; 2) ability to participate in a synchronous, online interview; and, 3) maximum variation. Although all respondents were willing to be interviewed, a significant time-zone difference and/or

limited Internet access proved challenging in a number of cases. As most of our 2018

alumni are teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it was challenging to

achieve much variation based on subject area (i.e., academic discipline). Among those

who met the first two criteria (willingness and ability), four are EFL teachers, while one

teaches geography, social studies and information and communication technologies

(ICT). Furthermore, variation based on gender was limited, as merely one respondent

who met criteria one and two is female; the rest are male. Among respondents, there *was*,

however, ample variation based on geographic location (five different countries), school

location (three urban, one suburban, and one rural), and years of teaching experience

(see: Table 7 in Chapter 4).

Data Collection

      Existing documents. The PI and PM interviewed (in person) participants of each

cohort thrice during their stay in the US, and once (asynchronously, through email) after

they had been back in their home countries for a month. The PI and I both have access to

these data. However, after reviewing the interview notes, I have decided not to utilize

them for the purpose of my current study, as I realized they would not help me answer

my research questions.

      Furthermore, the 2018 group of alumni have stayed in touch with each other and

us through a WhatsApp group (WhatsApp is a messaging and voice/video over IP

service). Through this platform, many alumni have shared their success stories with each

other and us; thus, I had anticipated possibly using this platform to identify participants,

but in the end, the email survey provided me with sufficient information on which to base

a purposive sample.

First round of interviews. I conducted synchronous online interviews from the privacy of my office, which features a lockable door and is relatively sound proof, so there was minimal risk of disturbances, interruptions or eavesdropping.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that, "rigidly adhering to predetermined questions [as is the case with highly structured interviews] may not allow you to access participants' perspectives and understandings of the world [i.e., the program]. Instead, you get reactions to the investigator's preconceived notions of the world" (p. 109). As questions in semi-structured online interviews tend to be more open-ended, I decided to utilize this type of format.

As a result, in contrast with highly structured interviews such as oral forms of written surveys, participants were able to share their views and experiences in their own words, not the researcher's. Using this approach, I was able to gain a deep and rich understanding of what the program looked like from a participant's point of view. Ideally, I would have liked to conduct in-person interviews; however, since participants have all returned to their native countries (spread out over four continents), this would have been a costly undertaking.

The next best thing was to use computer-mediated-communication (CMC) methods to conduct online interviews. This type of interviews can be conducted synchronously--in the form of a live video/phone call using Skype, Google Hangouts or WhatsApp--as well as asynchronously, in the form of written responses to interview questions. The former method had my preference, as the latter typically leaves more room for interviewees to research what they feel may be desirable responses, and interviewees, "may not respond to certain questions over email that they would likely

answer in synchronous video or voice-to-voice formats" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016,

p.115). All respondents indicated they preferred to use the platform WhatsApp. For all

five interviews--each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes--I abided by the same interview

protocol (See: Appendix 1).

     Timeframe. I sent out my initial email survey on October 31, 2019, and started

my first round of interviews in early November of that year. Each initial interview took

between 60 and 90 minutes. I sent out a follow-up email to each participant

approximately one week after each interview.

     Interview questions. My interview questions as they relate to my research sub

questions and King's (2013) PD evaluation framework are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5
Interview Questions as They Relate to Research Questions & Potential Follow-Up Questions

Research Sub question	Interview Questions	Potential Follow-Up Questions	Relation to King's (2013) framework
(How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods and/or curriculum?	Do you feel the program has impacted your teaching? Please explain. Do you feel the program has impacted your beliefs and attitudes toward students' learning? Please explain.	Have you made curricular changes? If yes, what kind? Do you use any different teaching and/or assessment strategies?	**Degree and quality of change:** ● Process ● Product
(How) has the program impacted participants' content knowledge in their academic areas?	Do you feel the program has impacted your content knowledge? Please explain.	Did you gain new knowledge about your content area?	**Learning** ● Knowledge, skills, attitudes acquired or enhanced

(How) has the program impacted participants' international relationships and views of other cultures?	Do you feel the program has affected your international relationships and views of other cultures? Explain.	Whom do you keep in touch with? How does this affect your (professional) life? Do you collaborate in any way with any Fellows of your cohort? What other international initiatives have you taken part in/initiated?	**Learning** ● Attitudes acquired or enhanced **Degree and quality of change:** ● Development of professional learning communities (PLCs)

Follow-up emails. Follow-up emails were based on the first round of data analysis, grounded in the phenomenological practice of horizontalization (explained in Table 4). In order to compose these follow-up emails, I carefully studied the interview transcripts, noted things that I needed clarified, and looked for missed opportunities. I also gave participants a chance to review the transcript and my inferences, so they were able to check if I had understood them correctly. Because my participants spoke so freely and abundantly about their post-program experiences, the need for elaboration was minimal.

Researcher's journal. I kept a researcher's journal to keep the data-analysis process as transparent as possible. Ortlipp (2008) explains that, "keeping self-reflective journals is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity, whereby researchers use their journal to examine personal assumptions and goals and clarify individual belief systems and subjectivities" (p. 695). As I explained earlier, I began my researcher's journal by writing my epoche. After that, I used it to reflect on my initial thoughts and assumptions during and after each interview, and then during the coding and data analysis process. I

scheduled a minimum of 30 minutes after each interview to write down my initial ideas in my researcher's journal.

Strengths and Limitations

The technology I have used to conduct the interviews has presented many benefits, but also drawbacks: Internet service in some of the areas our alumni live is not as reliable as one would desire, and the data (audio recording) from one interview was very difficult to understand due to interfering background noise from the interviewee's setting--something I had little control over.

I knew that each of the aforementioned techniques of data collection would have strengths as well as possible weaknesses. Sending out survey questions through email yielded data quickly and efficiently. Potential drawbacks I anticipated were participants' disinclination to respond to a lengthy survey; therefore, I kept my questions short and few, in the hope that this would lower the threshold to respond. Additionally, in contrast with a synchronous (face-to-face) interview, it would not have been possible to reword or clarify questions if a participant had misinterpreted a survey question. Hence, I made great effort to keep my survey questions clear and simple. Finally, although the consent form that participants were asked to read and sign (electronically) was of considerable length, it did not seem to have turned off any potential participants.

One benefit of online synchronous interviews was that they allowed for the participant and researcher to be in different geographical locations. Especially since I was interviewing participants spread out over three different continents, this was a great benefit. Secondly, many CMC platforms such as Skype have integrated recording features. Connectivity or network issues on either side of the "line" only once were an

obstacle, as one alumnus resides and teaches in a remote mountainous area where internet connectivity is nonexistent. This participant was prepared to travel to the nearest town in order to take part in my study, but due to the additional obstacle of a 12-hour time difference, getting our schedules to match turned out to be challenging.

The use of a researcher's journal has benefits as well as limitations. The chief benefit of keeping a research journal is that it "aims to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695). In other words, a research journal makes the researcher's thought- and decision-making process during the various research stages more transparent. Going into this study, I explained that a possible limitation of a qualitative research journal could be that it remains a subjective account, not a "hard measurement." Although this may be true, the journal has proven beneficial especially during the data analysis process, as it gave me a place to write down reflections and assumptions (or, emerging hypotheses, in terms of grounded theory).

Validity, Reliability, Transferability

Triangulation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advise that one popular method to increase internal validity of a research project is triangulation. Triangulation can take several forms; for this project, I decided to utilize triangulation of sources and analyst triangulation. Several quotes from different participants support my findings related to most themes that emerged through data analysis; this way, I relied on source triangulation to increase the internal validity of this research project (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Secondly, I employed analyst triangulation, which means that, "two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data [interview transcripts] and compare their findings" (Patton, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). More specifically, I have asked the colleague with whom I directed the program (the PI) to review my interpretations of the data to check if my inductive reasoning made sense to her. It was reassuring to learn that my colleague concluded that my coding through horizontalization made sense. As this project is a master's thesis, I was not able to ask my colleague to code and interpret the data independently, as that would be academically dishonest. However, when we (schedules permitting) build on this project in the future, it is highly likely that we will employ this strategy.

Member checks/respondent validation. A well-known strategy to increase the validity of findings in qualitative research is member checking, also known as respondent validation. This strategy guards against misinterpreting participants' responses by, "[taking] your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation 'rings true'" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). Thus, after my first round of data analysis, I sent each participant a follow-up email in order to check if any inferences I had made reflected their experiences or not. There was not much need for me to make a great number of inferences, though, as 1) all interviewees spoke extensively about their experiences; and, 2) the semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled me to ask clarification questions right-away. The inferences I did make—all related to underlying causes of reported experiences—were confirmed by the participants' feedback.

Researcher's journal. I also used my researcher's journal as a reflexivity tool and audit trail. Finlay (2002) explains that "reflexivity in qualitative research [is a place] where researchers engage in explicit self-aware meta-analysis" (p. 209), which appears to be very closely related to the phenomenological processes of epoche and bracketing (see: Table 4). An audit trail "describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 252). Indeed, the audit trail has strengthened the reliability of my study, as independent readers will be able to evaluate "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 251).

Transferability. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that despite the fact that results from qualitative studies cannot be generalized in the same way that quantitative data can, that does not mean that "nothing can be learned from a qualitative study" (p. 254). Instead of trying to generalize the outcomes of this study, it will be more beneficial for other scholars to, as Patton (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) advises, extrapolate from the outcomes of this study "in order to think of other applications of the findings" (p. 255). I am hopeful that through my providing of rich, thick descriptions, others will be able to see connections to their personal contexts.

Confidentiality

Participants were asked to share their true experiences and opinions regarding the impact of this program; thus, I believed it was key that participants understood the interviews were private and that transcripts would be kept confidential. To ensure confidentiality, I have taken the following steps:

- All participants have been given a pseudonym;

- All participants have been asked to sign an informed consent form;

- Data has been encrypted and stored on a personal computer and backed-up on a locked-away external hard drive;

- Participants have been able to opt to debrief with the researcher. During the debriefing, participants have had the ability to make comments, ask questions, or request their responses to be changed or deleted.

Data Coding and Analysis

I followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) step-by-step process of data analysis as outlined in their book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*:

1. Category Construction

2. Sorting Categories and Data

3. Naming the Categories

4. How Many Categories

5. Becoming More Theoretical

First, I coded the interview data through a color-coding system according to my research questions; then, I categorized other emerging themes. After that, I number-coded sub-themes within each color category. Subsequently, within each sub theme, I letter-coded examples that supported reported impacts, as well as what program components participants attributed these impacts to (see: Table 6). Finally, I looked for links between individual themes and the theoretical framework that informs the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advise, I analyzed my data as I collected it, so that at the end of my data-collection process, I "[was] organizing and refining rather than

beginning data analysis" (p. 197). I analyzed each interview transcript as soon as I could, and during this process, I "note[d] things [I] want[ed] to ask, observe, or look for in [my] next round of data collection" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 196). Finally, I asked my colleague to peer-review the inferences I made from the interview data (analyst triangulation).

Table 6 *Coding System*			
	Question 1: Methods Curriculum	Question 2: Content Knowledge	Question 3: International Relations
Sub themes	1, 2, 3, …	1, 2, 3, …	1, 2, 3, …
Examples?	A_1, A_2, …	A_1, A_2, …	A_1, A_2, …
Attributed to?	B_1, B_2, …	B_1, B_2, …	B_1, B_2, …

The main challenge in the data analysis process was condensing the wealth of information from each > 1-hour interview down to the information most pertinent to the project. Here, horizontalization was helpful. As described in Table 4, while "placing equal value on every piece of data" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p.400), I simply categorized information into color "buckets" as reflected in Table 6. This made it easier to look for redundancies and select each participant's clearest examples and most insightful statements to include in Chapter 4, Outcomes.

4: Results

This chapter is broken down according to the coding system discussed in Chapter

3, Methods. Table 7 provides participant profiles and education contexts. Note that in

order to ensure confidentiality, participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 7: Participant Profiles and Education Contexts					
	Stefania McFellows	Momar Faye	Justin Case	Hugo Kaleeba	Najib Abutaleb
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Country	Brazil	Senegal	Indonesia	Uganda	Morocco
School type(s)	a) Urban Government-run secondary b) Urban Private	Suburban, government-run secondary	Urban, government-run secondary	Rural, government-run secondary	Urban, government-run secondary
Age range of students	a) 15 - 17 & b) 18 and up	12 - 16	12 - 16	13 - 20	15 - 19
Years of teaching experience at time of PD	8	10	7	24	11
Subject area(s)	EFL Portuegese Language Arts	EFL	EFL	Geography Social Studies ICT	EFL

Research Question One: (How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods and/or curriculum?

Three major themes arose among responses related to question one: Education Philosophy, Teaching Strategies, and Technology.

Education philosophy. Here, the term *education philosophy* describes educators' values, their perspectives on student behavior and performance, and how they make meaning of their new insights. The reason this category is grouped under teaching methods in this chapter (instead of under unanticipated consequences in Chapter 5) is because the impacts participants described have directly affected their ways of teaching.

In various ways, the program appears to have prompted participants to be more reflective on why, what and how they teach. Najib, Stefania and Momar have similar takeaways in this respect. Najib explained that the course Reaching the Reluctant Learner was particularly impactful on his perspective on student motivation:

> Before, I would think of struggling learners as students who were just not interested, or not motivated. Now, due to that course, I see things differently. Now, I try to understand why students behave a certain way; ultimately, the program has changed my way of looking at things. (N. Abutaleb, personal communication, November 6, 2019)

Stefania's story is similar to Najib's in the respect that she, too, now looks at her students with different eyes. Stefania experienced professional growth in this and other areas partly as a result of being able to take a step back from her classroom, observe other teachers and contemplate her own professional values:

I think that after [the program] I couldn't be the same teacher because I had some

time to observe other teachers … think of my career, think how I used to do

things and how I should do things. So it changed all my ways of teaching and my

way of thinking about my career; it had a great impact on my life, on my job and

my career. First of all, I changed the way I saw my students, so maybe I wasn't as

patient as I am nowadays. Maybe I wouldn't consider the students' feelings, their

ways of thinking, or the students' ideas. I think I used to go to school and only

teach. And I didn't get involved with my students. And then after taking part in

the program, I started thinking that these [things] should be part of my job. I don't

only have to teach but I also have to--so that I could have effective teaching--I

will have to listen to my students, and I will have to take into consideration their

thoughts, their feelings, their ideas: I should listen to them. (S. McFellows,

personal communication, November 24, 2019)

Momar explained that the impacts of the course Reaching the Reluctant Learner

and the Classroom and Behavioral Management Seminar were twofold. On one level,

these courses confirmed that the personal connections he had been fostering with his

students were of great value. Momar shared the example of one of his students whose

behavior at school had been perceived by the boy's teachers as abnormal in their culture:

The boy … behaves like a girl, and in our society homosexuality is something

that people cannot tolerate. And I could see some teachers say they would not talk

to the boy; they were looking down on him, and they would disrespect him. But I

could understand the boy very well and sometimes he would even come to my

house, simply because he could see the difference between how I talked to him

and the way others talked to him. (M. Faye, personal communication, November

10, 2019)

On another level, Momar elaborated how the aforementioned courses gave him

strategies to gain more insight in student behavior and building personal, yet professional,

student-teacher relationships:

[One of the professors] used to say that if you're living in an environment and

teaching there, you'd better go sometimes to visit the kids and know what they're

going through. Because if you understand their lives and things that they're going

through, you'll be able to understand them, and you'll be able to teach them. This

professor used to tell us that you should always ask yourself how you would like

to be remembered by your students. Those things have helped me a lot. (M. Faye,

personal communication, November 10, 2019)

While Stefania, Momar and Najib reflected on affective aspects of their respective

education philosophies, Hugo explained that since his participation in the program, he has

been much more deliberate in selecting curriculum:

In secondary school, we teach students about, for example, the trinity authority,

the rivers in the trinity authority, the dams, the history. We go to California, and

we do the same; we look at the dams, the irrigation… But why? Why do we teach

those things? [H. Kaleeba chuckles.] That shows you how much we teach that is

really not *that* useful… But one thing that I learned, that I got from social studies

methods… *Very* very useful to me, was the concept of essential knowledge from a

topic; that you understand what is the takeaway from the topic. For me, that was

revolutionary. We talk about it here, about learning objectives, but what is the

essential understanding at the end of the day? What knowledge, what skill, should

endure ten years down the road? So, we talked about the essential understanding.

So, even when I look at my courses today, even though it has a lot of those things,

I always ask myself what is it that is going to endure in this particular topic? It is

not asked for, but as a teacher, I always have that at the back of my mind. (H.

Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

In summation, accounts from multiple participants inform us that the program

effected various degrees of change in education philosophies. Three of the participants

see their students through different lenses, while one participant is thinking more

critically about the content he addresses in his classes.

Technology. During their time in the program, all Fellows attended a weekly two-

hour *Technology and Education* seminar where they received differentiated technology

instruction based on personal classroom needs they had shared in a pre-departure (i.e.,

before leaving their home countries) technology survey. Additionally, to help them in

being able to implement their newfound knowledge and skills upon returning home, each

Fellow received a $1,000 "technology stipend" from the funder of the grant. This stipend

was to be spent on any form of hardware or software that would be beneficial in

individual Fellows' school/classroom contexts. For example, a number of Fellows

decided that a reliable, up-to-date laptop computer was what they needed in order to plan

their classes, find and create (enriching) curriculum, or run educational software.

Alternatively, a number of Fellows who already had a suitable computer decided to

purchase a portable projector.

Hence, in order to clearly reflect the different ways in which the program impacted these Fellows, the category *technology* is divided into two subcategories: technology skills and technology hardware. In the area of technology skills, participants reported fairly diverse impacts: Some--as we knew from the pre-departure survey-- already had quite a bit of experience with technology prior to their participation in the program, while one of them--in one of the cultural presentations on education in his home country--joked that when teachers spoke of using tablets in their classrooms, they were referring to *slate* tablets, not iPads.

Technology Skills. Hugo explained that--prior to taking part in the program--his main strong suit had been the use of technology; he himself had been providing professional development for his colleagues nationwide, and his primary focus had always been technology. The difference is that now, though, Hugo integrates educational technology more efficiently in his curriculum, something that also aids in the development in 21st-century skills:

> You see, I am not new to student projects, especially tele-collaborative projects. They greatly help in developing 21st century skills. The problem we have always had is that our projects were not embedded in the subjects we teach. So we had to do them after school, and not necessarily connected to what we were currently teaching in class. We always had to justify why we do them. Some people criticized us for "wasting students' time." The eLearning project we have set up emphasizes use of technology, collaboration and project work. And we were concerned it would face the same criticism. That's when the program's training comes into play. The skills learned now enable me to develop projects linked to

the curriculum, projects that will be carried out as part of normal class. I have

already oriented seven educators in this aspect, who will spearhead [an] eLearning

Project. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, January 27, 2020)

In contrast, Najib shared that the program did strengthen his educational

technology skills: "My overall conclusion from this program is that it really impacted my

teaching, and the technology seminar gave me a chance to get first-hand experience with

how to use technology tools in the classroom" (N. Abutaleb, personal communication,

November 6, 2019). In line with Najib's remarks, Momar recounted: "In the program, we

were trained in the use of videos in the classroom by [our technology instructor]. Also,

sometimes we did our presentations with PowerPoint, and now I can say that I can use

PowerPoint very well in my classroom" (M. Faye, personal communication, November

10, 2019).

Technology Hardware. Gaining strategies and skills is one thing, but--as the

funder of the program realized--limited resources in the home country could be a serious

obstacle when it comes to implementing new ideas. That is why, as Momar pointed out,

another strength of the program is the technology stipend each Fellow receives:

> The program has allowed me to buy some materials that are expensive in my
>
> country, like a video projector and a good computer. Those things have been
>
> really helpful in my teaching. Now I can say that I teach things that I really love
>
> teaching, and my students are more engaged in my lessons because they see
>
> something new in the classroom. (M. Faye, personal communication, November
>
> 10, 2019)

What can be deduced from these accounts is that in regards to technology--in line with Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development--the program met participants at their individual levels of independent technology proficiency, from where their technology instructor helped them elevate their skills and knowledge to the next level.

Teaching strategies. This theme reflects what sort of foundational teaching skills, methods and strategies participants reported to have gained from the program. As a subcategory to this theme, I have identified responses related to what is known in the literature as 21st-century education, often defined along the lines of, "certain core competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving" (Rich, 2010).

Foundational teaching strategies. Stefania explained that in her pre-program days, she used to, "go to school and only teach the basics, like trying to teach them [students] grammar, or teaching them structures, and it wouldn't make any sense to them" (S. McFellows, personal communication, November 24, 2019). In other words, she used to primarily rely on fairly traditional language-learning methods. Now, though, she reports to employ communicative, student-centered strategies she learned about in her elective course, *Instructional Strategies for Teaching English as a Second Language*. Additionally, the Professional Development Module (PDM) Stefania worked on with three cohort members in the Academic Seminar provided her with tools to cater towards learners' diverse needs:

> Nowadays, I try to teach more about culture, American culture and English
> culture, and for the first time I tried to work with a project. I worked on a project
> that worked very well, where I put into practice what I learned from my PDM

[professional development module], that was [on the topic of] working with differentiation. It was a total success because the coordinator of the school asked me then to present this project for the other teachers. (S. McFellows, personal communication, November 24, 2019)

Momar too, expressed that the program had had a positive impact on his teaching, and that his Professional Development Module titled *Increasing Engagement Through Critical Thinking* had been received very well at his school. Momar explained that the SIOP model he had learned about in his elective class *Instructional Strategies for Teaching English as a Second Language* has benefitted his teaching a lot--as had learning how to use various types of visual aids in the classroom:

The program drastically impacted my teaching. Because before attending the program, there were some types of lessons that I wanted to teach, but I did not know very well how to. For example, ways to teach by using visuals in my class. First I did not have the materials. And second, I didn't know how to tackle these kinds of lessons. (M. Faye, personal communication, November 10, 2019)

While Najib shared that his major takeaways were centered around "hands-on methodologies, learning how to implement differentiation, and active learning" (N. Abutaleb, personal communication, November 6, 2019), Justin, an EFL teacher from Indonesia, explained that prior to the program, he would usually focus on one particular activity and language skill (reading, writing, listening or speaking) per class period. What Justin learned from his professional development was how to employ a more integrative approach to language teaching:

I learned from my high school partner teacher that he does several activities in one session. For example, first, he gave reading activities. Students read and summarize or paraphrase reading packs. Then, he moved to different activities like speaking. At the end of the session, he gives a writing assignment in which he asks students to reevaluate the reading. So I think those are wonderful strategies to do in an ESL class. (J. Case, personal communication, November 19, 2019)

H. Kaleeba's immediate response to the first interview question was, "Yes, personally I feel the program has had such a powerful impact [on my teaching]" (personal communication, November 8, 2019). As stated earlier, Hugo shared that his main strong suit in relation to instruction had for a long time been technology. However, he lamented that he felt a bit like a one-trick pony, in the sense that technology was virtually the only teaching tool he used to focus on. Hugo explained, though, that the program changed this, and that today he has more tricks up his proverbial sleeve--chief amongst which are differentiation and active learning strategies:

now, when I went through [the program], and since I've been back, I have the ability to use a wide range of tools. I used to focus on technology only. Now when I train them [other teachers], I'm looking at how they can be more effective. When you take a photograph to class, when you use PowerPoint in class, how can you be effective? How can you help students to think creatively, to critique the photo instead of simply for you to say "okay, this is the photograph, let me interpret it for you?" How do I engage the learners to create meaning, to understand? Those things I got in [the program]. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

21st-century skills. Takeaways related to, for example, fostering critical thinking, creative problem solving, adaptiveness, and interdisciplinary approaches fall under the umbrella of 21st-century skills. In the Needs Assessment for Professional Development Module (PDM) that was conducted during the first week of the program, many Fellows had indicated an interest in learning more about 21st-century skills. Without interview questions explicitly about these skills (to reduce the risk of leading questions) participants *did* provide statements that would indicate personal growth in this area:

> I can now apply strategies like, for example, a KWL. That's very interesting, because at first, it includes writing skills, and critical-thinking skills; students reflect on what they know and want to know. And I can also use discovery [inquiry-based] learning in combination with that. So now I can apply a lot of strategies; I can design more complex instruction. (J. Case, personal communication, November 19, 2019)

Many educators aim to nurture in their students the characteristic of adaptiveness in an attempt to prepare them for a fast-changing world, The topics of neuroplasticity and growth mindset relate to this objective, as a key tenet in this realm is that the brain--to a certain extent and under the right conditions--can adapt to respond to different demands. Hugo explains:

> One of the key areas that I have started talking about and integrated every day is the growth mindset. The first time I heard of growth mindset was in [the program]: I had never heard of it before. It was in the differentiation workshop where I was first introduced to growth mindset. When I came back, I went through [the instructor's] textbook. Now, we are trying to design workshops on

differentiation with other teachers, so I've been concentrating on growth mindset,

downloaded videos of Carol Dweck and others, and I registered for an online

course. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

What is interesting here, is that the workshop did not merely encourage Hugo to learn

about growth mindset and encourage him to differentiate his instruction; it also prompted

him to keep learning about this topic after his return to his home country.

Summation of question one. The consensus among all five subjects is that the

program has had an impact on their teaching methods and classroom practices. Main

areas of impact include education philosophy, 21st-century education, "hands-on

methodologies," and differentiation. Participants attributed growth in these areas to (a)

their elective courses, (b) collaboration with U.S. partner teachers, (c) the program's

Academic Seminar, Technology Seminar, and Classroom Behavioral Management

Seminar; and (d) the Differentiation workshop.

Figure 2 provides an "at-a-glance" perspective of insights gained in respect to

research question 1: (How) has the program impacted participants' teaching methods

and/or curriculum? The larger and darker the purple circle, the more that particular theme

came up in the interviews. The gold circles (not scaled) represent the factors that
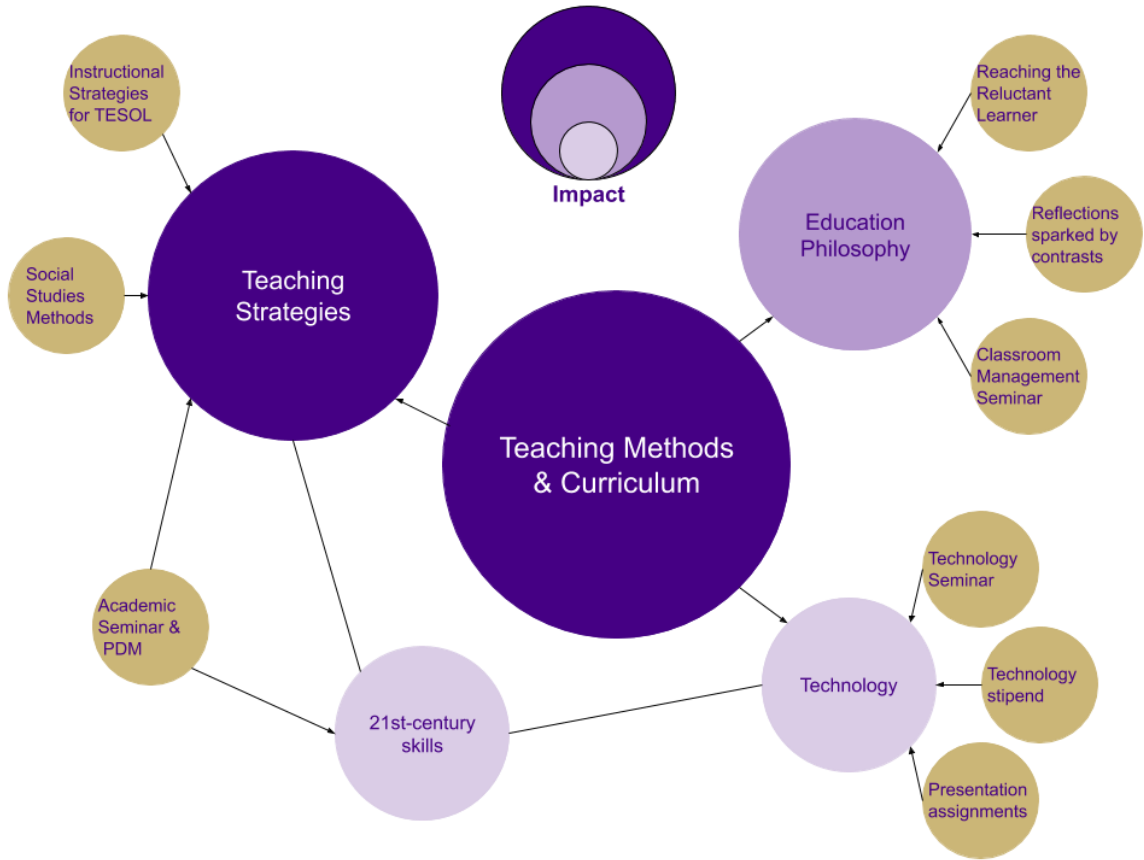
influenced these impacts.

Figure 2: Program Impacts on Teaching Methods and Curriculum.

Research Question Two: (How) has the program impacted participants' content knowledge in their academic areas?

In the realm of content knowledge and skills, participants reported various degrees of impact. Hugo's honest feedback was, "in terms of content knowledge, I did not learn very much. In terms of methods, *very* very much, but content, no. The geography that we teach here in Uganda is a lot more advanced than what I saw in the U.S." (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019). When I reflected on this comment in my researcher's journal after the interview, I wrote that I appreciated that Hugo was so honest with me in sharing that his content knowledge in the discipline

of geography had not grown as a result of the program. Hugo's candid response

supported my confidence in the validity of this interview.

English language proficiency. Although there were no hypotheses related to this

study, it would not have been unreasonable to predict that--especially for EFL teachers--

an immersion period in the target language could be beneficial. Najib, Stefania and

Justin's remarks support the idea that various aspects of the program strengthened their

proficiency in English, while Hugo explained in which way he could have benefited more

from the program in this area. Therefore, I decided the theme *English language*

proficiency would most logically be subdivided into the factors that fostered growth in

this area: (1) taking university courses in the target language, and (2) interaction with

others in the target language.

Taking university courses in the target language. Hugo, in response to my final

interview question (*Is there something I haven't asked you that you think is important for*

me to learn about?), actually remarked that in hindsight, he could have benefited more

from the language aspect of the program if he had decided to audit my Critical Reading

and Writing Course (as a number of his cohort members did, on top of their elective

courses):

> And you know, one thing that I missed, which my friend used to do, was to attend
>
> your lectures on academic writing. Things he showed me [were] the essays that he
>
> had written and the assignments that you gave, and how he was providing
>
> information to support his ideas. And I kept on saying, well, this is something that
>
> I need to learn. Because if I'm to write a proposal and to persuade someone,
>
> especially when you're writing the needs statement or the justification for a

project or grant, you need to be crystal clear in your descriptions, and I had seen

how my roommate had acquired that particular skill just in a few months. I kept

on saying, you know, I have missed this, this lecture. So this is one of the things

that if I were to come back, you would see me attending that particular unit of

writing. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

In turn, Najib, explained: "especially the readings, writing assignments, and

lectures in all the courses helped strengthen my English skills" (N. Abutaleb, personal

communication, November 6, 2019). Justin shared that the program especially built his

confidence in speaking publicly, as he used to have public-speaking anxiety:

So, if you asked me to do an interview like this, I would have preferred to do it in

writing rather than speaking because sometimes when I spoke, I couldn't arrange

my thoughts and make it a complete idea. So, the program helped me learn how to

do that, especially in my teaching. (J. Case, personal communication, November

16, 2020)

In a follow-up email, Justin explained that taking classes and holding presentations at the

university, and co-teaching U.S. high school classes fostered more confidence in this area

(J. Case, personal communication, November 19, 2019).

Interaction with others in the target language. Stefania pointed out that for her,

not only communicating with native speakers, but also with other non-native speakers of

English from different countries was helpful:

I was in touch with natives; I could hear authentic language. I think it changed the

context of the language because I could observe, and I could listen to native

people, and I could see the way you interact. It's different because we, when we

teach EFL here, we just watch videos and movies, or listen to music, but we never

have the chance to talk to natives. I think that I learned lots of things living with

[my international housemates] because they would say things in a different way,

so I could learn more vocabulary. (S. McFellows, personal communication,

November 24, 2019)

For Justin, the immersive experience was beneficial, he stated, because he had

learned English mostly through dialogue drills (a characteristic of the audio-lingual

method) divorced from context, but had had relatively little experience speaking English

with native or proficient speakers of the language:

So, in Indonesia we only learn formal English, like formal conversations, like

thinking in passwords. For example, if someone says to you "good morning," you

have to answer "good morning," and if someone asks you "How are you?" you

answer "Fine, thank you, how about you?" Like that… In our textbooks, we only

have very limited information about culture, especially about the United States,

but by being in the United States for five months, I learned a lot about using

casual English and culture. (J. Case, personal communication, November 16,

2019)

Justin elaborated in a follow-up email that especially interacting with his friendship

family and American classmates had been very helpful in strengthening his

communication skills in English (J. Case, personal communication, November 19, 2019).

In conclusion, the most recurring theme related to research question two turned

out to be development of English language skills. Major influences here, according to

these five alumni, were their university courses, field experience (i.e., partner-school

placements), and authentic interactions with not only native speakers of English, but also other non-native English speakers. Figure 3 provides an "at-a-glance" perspective of what program components impacted participants' content knowledge in the content area of English.
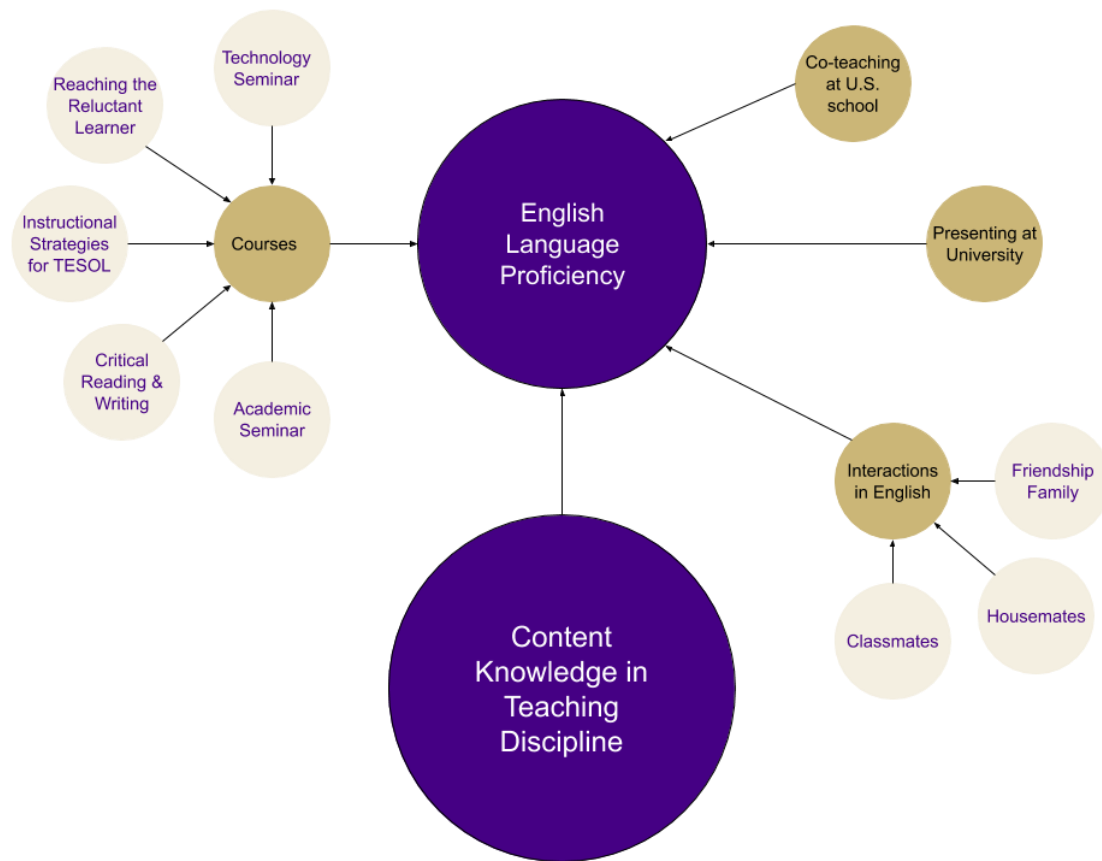

Figure 3: Program Impacts on English language proficiency.

Research Question Three: (How) has the program impacted participants' international relationships and views of other cultures?

In terms of Global Citizenship, the main goals of the program were to foster among Fellows a more nuanced understanding of the United States as well as of each other's respective cultures; for Fellows to enhance their networks, and for them to serve

as cultural ambassadors promoting mutual understanding between the U.S. and their

home countries. Research question three revealed four major themes: 1) perspectives of

U.S. culture; 2) connections with the United States; 3) fellows' perspectives of each

other's cultures; and, 4) connections among program alumni.

More nuanced perspectives of U.S. culture. There was a strong consensus

among those interviewed that the program had provided them with a better understanding

of U.S. culture. Najib, Justin and Stefania shared that although they had been teaching

EFL, they had not had any first-hand experience in any English-speaking countries.

Justin's remarks illustrate this point:

> The program was my first experience with the U.S.A. I used to have an idea about
>
> the U.S.A. from TV and from the internet, but the program expanded my
>
> knowledge about that. For example, I had never seen New York before; I had
>
> never seen the Smithsonian [in Washington. DC] before. But now I've been there,
>
> and I know this place; I know this culture. I saw a lot of things I had never seen
>
> before on the excursions. Yeah, that's why the program completely changed me.
>
> Not completely. Well, you see what I mean. (J. Case, personal communication,
>
> November 16, 2019)

Hugo pointed out that his interactions with classmates, professors and people at

his U.S. partner (practicum) school had given him a better understanding of Americans

on a professional level: "I think I learned a little more about Americans, and how they

work, the concepts of how they teach people. Those are things that I feel have been

helpful for me" (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019). After I asked

him in which way(s) these insights had been helpful to him, Hugo explained that through

his experiences in the U.S., it has become easier to communicate and negotiate

effectively with people from, for instance, the U.S. Fulbright team and the U.S. embassy

in Uganda.

Similarly, but on a more personal level, Momar emphasized that he greatly values

the memories and lasting connections he made with his friendship family during his

semester in the United States:

> My host family... I would like to talk about them because those people also have
>
> made things easy for me when I was there in the U.S., because they helped me
>
> understand what an American family was like. They showed me different places
>
> on weekends, and that was something that has impacted my life because suddenly
>
> I realized, you know, people aren't always working on weekends; they just go out
>
> just to have some fun. Now, every weekend, my daughter and I go somewhere
>
> together. (M. Faye, personal communication, November 10, 2019)

This seems to indicate an unintended impact of the program, namely, that Momar's views

of his own habits have shifted. This has resulted in his spending more quality time with

his family on the weekends. When I asked him if he was still able to get all his work

done, Momar explained that this healthier work-life balance actually makes him *more*

productive overall.

Connections with the United States. As discussed earlier, all alumni have kept

us (program management) and each other informed about major life and career events

through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Through email, Momar

has kept in touch with his friendship family and his *Classroom and Behavioral*

Management Seminar professor. This way, Momar explained, he had been able to keep

benefiting from his professor's knowledge about educational psychology. Hugo reported

that as a result of his participation in the program, he has been able to build valuable

connections with individuals representing U.S. entities such as the International Research

and Exchanges Board (IREX), the U.S. Department of State (USDOS), the U.S. Embassy

in Uganda and various U.S. based universities:

> Now I have interacted with the Fulbright team in the U.S., as a result of writing a
>
> proposal, which I would never have done, had it not been because of the program.
>
> For me it's been *that* impactful, and certainly it has given me an opportunity now
>
> to interact with the American Embassy and American Center. They are giving me
>
> the opportunity to invite teachers to train them. Right now I'm applying for a grant
>
> at IREX. I wrote to the embassy to request a place to train teachers from, and they
>
> granted me the opportunity. I am now more closely linked to the Education
>
> Department of the US Embassy. So when they get people to come to Uganda to
>
> talk about careers, about studying abroad, they contact me and then I mobilize for
>
> my school. So that's how much it has changed things for me; it has opened doors.
>
> (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

Fellows' perspectives of each other's cultures. Through various examples,

participants illustrated how the program had fostered a better understanding of each

other's cultural backgrounds:

> It [the program] made a significant impact in my experience; I made friends with
>
> people from other countries, not only the United States, but also from the Middle
>
> East, from Africa, from Brazil. So I learned a lot about other cultures. Especially

M. Faye, Alice, Joe and I used to discuss our cultures every day. (J. Case,

personal communication, November 16, 2019)

Stefania explained that her more sophisticated understanding of other cultures has

greatly benefited her teaching, as she is able to make content more meaningful by

connecting it to her personal experiences with people from around the world:

I learned a lot from cultures that before I had just heard about on television. I

didn't know a lot about the other cultures we had there with us. I didn't know a lot

about Indian culture, African cultures; I knew something but not a lot. I can now

tell my students about the way people live around the world. Because sometimes

we think the way we live is just the way things are, and it's not. It's nice because I

have some things to show students, so it has impacted the way I see those cultures

and it also has affected my teaching because I can tell stories. When I'm working

with texts, and maybe the text is about Indian culture, I can tell students

something more because now I know people there. Now I have examples to give

them. I have pictures to show them and they like it; they feel interested. They feel

very proud of their teacher because 'oh, my teacher has been to the US and has

talked to Indian people, and to African people and people from Mexico.' So it

really impacted me, my teaching and the way I see cultures. (S. McFellows,

personal communication, November 24, 2019)

Finally, there was agreement among all five participants that cohabitating an

apartment with peers from different countries had provided them with the opportunity to

have meaningful conversations with each other. Momar, for example, explained that he

very much valued having meals with his apartment-mates: "They used to cook meals and

invite me to have lunch with them, you know? And we'd talk about many different issues" (M. Faye, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Justin, one of Momar's apartment-mates, independently (and without my prompting) confirmed that he, too, greatly valued the conversations he had with his apartment-mates:

> They [my cohort members] had a significant impact in my experience: I made friends with people from other countries--not only the United States, but also from the Middle East, from Africa, from Brazil. Yeah, so I learned a lot about other cultures. Especially [Momar] and [James] and I usually talked about our cultures every day. (M. Faye, personal communication, November 16, 2019)

> In some instances living with apartment-mates from other countries also facilitated an additional degree of connectedness between Fellows and each other's families, which was well illustrated by Stefania's remarks: "I could talk to their families because sometimes we have conversations via video via WhatsApp. So it changed the way I saw their cultures, and it made me respect them much more" (S. McFellows, personal communication, November 24, 2019).

As program management, we sometimes found it challenging to make suitable apartment-mate pairings, and it was easier for some Fellows than for others to adapt to living in a foreign country with apartment-mates who had until recently been complete strangers. At least two of the three other universities that had received the same grant in 2018 made the decision to house Fellows individually in studio-apartment-like dormitory rooms on campus. Although such settings may have their own distinct benefits, accounts shared by Momar, Stefania, Hugo, Justin and Najib indicate that living with apartment-mates likely adds another layer of intercultural understanding.

Connections among program alumni. When it comes to the ability to maintain international connections, Fellows shared mixed experiences. Some have been able to stay in touch with a number of international cohort members; others reported that while they had strong connections with alumni from their own native countries, it had been more challenging to stay in touch with their cohort members from other countries. Another group, to which Momar and Najib belong, expressed that they had stayed in touch with their international friends, but mainly on an informal/social level, not professionally.

Belonging to the former category, Justin explained that he has been able to collaborate on professional initiatives with international cohort members in neighboring time zones: "Now I have a larger network. For example, we [alumni from Malaysia and Indonesia] are working on scrapbooks. We ask our students to complete projects in our and other [teachers'] classes, and we exchange our students' work. So, we now have working projects" (J. Case, personal communication, November 16, 2019).

Alternatively, Hugo candidly explained that it had been challenging to maintain professional connections with international cohort members, but that on the other hand, there *has* been strong collaboration among program alumni from various different cohorts in his home country of Uganda:

> As far as explaining my disappointment, which is partly because of me and partly
> because of other people; we have not been able to maintain this strong connection
> with the alumni community that we found while in the program. Yeah, we send
> some messages and what not, but would it not be wonderful if we wrote for
> example, joint proposals? *That* would be useful. One thing that I'm really happy

about is the alumni team of Uganda. We formed an organization (they call it

[program name] Uganda) and through that we've secured funding from the US

embassy to train teachers in different parts of the country. So the grant helps us to

keep together to keep refreshing our schemes. It's a great, great opportunity. And

you can only get it when you have gone through the program. (H. Kaleeba,

personal communication, November 8, 2019)

Stefania's account has parallels with Hugo's: According to her, there had been a strong,

lasting personal as well as professional connection between the six cohort members from

her home country of Brazil, but it had been challenging to stay in touch with Fellows

from other countries (S. McFellows, personal communication, November 24, 2019).

In conclusion, it appears that although the program *has* kindled lasting personal

and professional connections between alumni, there is still room for growth in this area.

All participants reported to value their new perspectives on other cultures, as well as the

friendships and professional connections they made during the program; however, it often

seemed to be challenging to nurture and keep vibrant those relationships. Figure 4

provides a schematic perspective of insights gained in respect to research question 3.
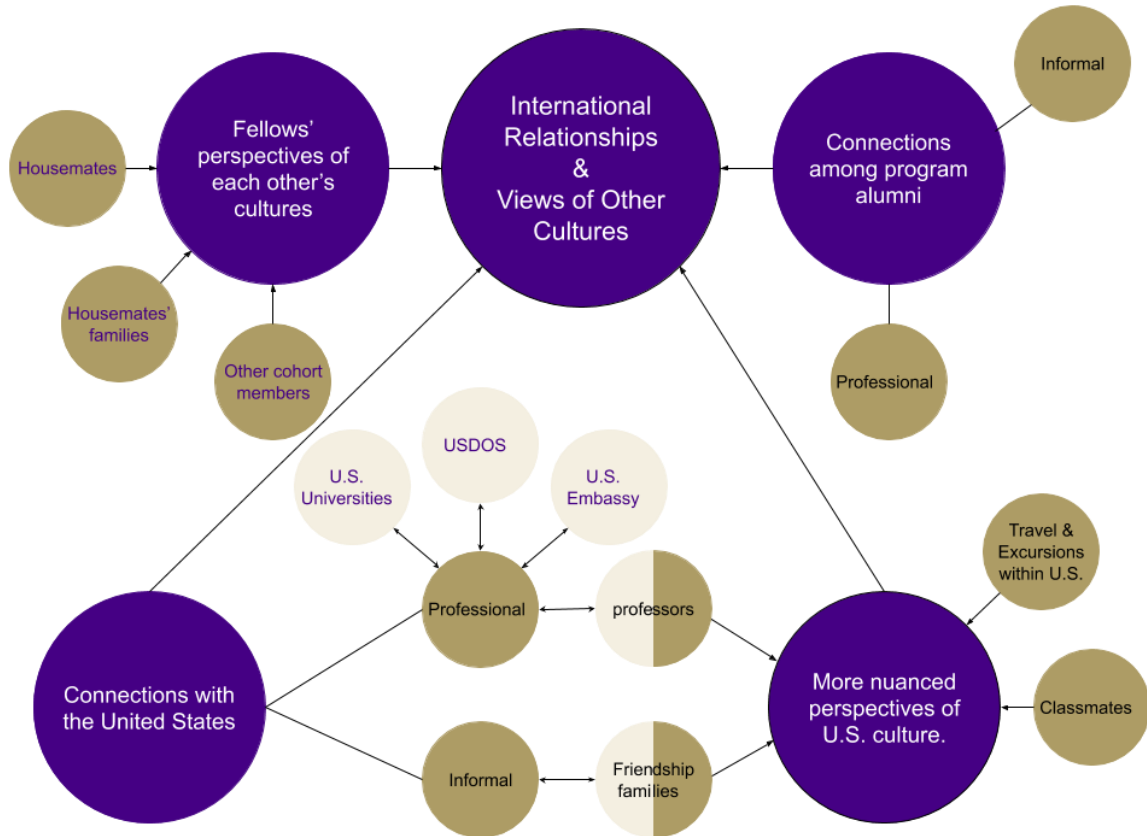
Figure 4: Program Impacts on International Relationships & Views of Other Cultures.

Chapter 4 in Summation

In conclusion, interviews with five alumni from the 2018 cohort revealed that the program had positive impacts on all participants' teaching methods (research question 1). Areas where the most growth was reported were, respectively, the following: (a) teaching strategies, (b) education philosophy, (c) technology, and (d) 21st-century skills. Growth in these areas was attributed mainly to various university courses taken during the program and participants' reflections on different strategies observed in partner schools.

Furthermore, all participants reported that the program had impacted their views of other cultures, and fostered (to various degrees) enduring international relationships (research question 3). In these realms, participants reported that (a) international

housemates and cohort members, (b) U.S. professors, classmates and friendship families, and (c) excursions had been the most significant influences. In the realm of content knowledge/language skills, the program benefited mostly the four interviewed EFL teachers.

However, the program does not appear to have furthered the geography teacher's content knowledge (research question 2) much, if any, which is likely because the university does not offer graduate-level classes in the academic discipline of geography. EFL teachers explained that the immersive experience had been the most significant factor to foster growth in foreign-language skills. Key components of this immersive experience included (a) taking college courses in the target language, (b) co-teaching at U.S. secondary schools, and (c) authentic interactions with native and proficient speakers of English.

5: Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this qualitative study with phenomenological components was to find out what—if any—have been the impacts on participants of an international professional development program for in-service teachers from developing nations. In this chapter, I will (a) interpret the meaning of participants' remarks; (b) highlight connections between participants' remarks and the review of literature relevant to this study; (c) explain the limitations of this study; (d) discuss implications that insights gained may have; and, (e) share thoughts on future research.

Interpretation and Literature Connections.

This section is organized according to the three research questions that guided this study. I will discuss the program's impacts on participants' teaching methods and curriculum, their content knowledge, and finally, international relationships and views of other cultures.

Teaching methods and curriculum. Through various examples, all five participants illustrated how the program has expanded their knowledge and advanced their teaching methodologies--two hallmarks of effective professional development programs defined by Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009). Teacher professional development is most successful when it is connected to classroom- and school-specific needs (Bando & Li, 2004; Mohan, Lingam & Chand, 2017). The way the program was designed, Fellows had great agency in choosing their courses and topics of study. The value of this design was reflected in multiple participants' responses. Hugo, for instance, explained that before his participation in the program, his main strong suit had been technology, but that the courses he had selected (*Social Studies Methods &*

Literacy-Based Learning) helped him expand his arsenal of instructional strategies. Similarly, both Momar and Stefania were able to expand their content knowledge regarding language acquisition and add to their teaching toolbox through the course of their choice, *Instructional Strategies for Teaching English as a Second Language.*

The adaptive nature of the program also ensured the ability to *differentiate* in the area of educational technology skills development. This proved valuable, as there was significant variability in technology skills among Fellows. Clearly, a one-size-fits-all approach would not have worked. During this program, though, while Fellows such as Momar and Najib gained familiarity with PowerPoint and the use of videos, Hugo, with his advanced technology skills, was able to build skills in order to better embed educational technology in the curriculum.

Stefania's and Momar's accounts of how they implemented their Professional Development Modules (PDM) are powerful examples of how the Academic Seminar significantly increased the likelihood that the program was relevant to participants' individual professional needs and able to cater to each Fellow's individual stage of effective teaching (Kyriakides et al., 2017). In line with this are the indications that Fellows are likely to have moved up between different stages of effective teaching (Kyriakides et al., 2017): While Justin learned how to incorporate multiple language skills and critical thinking in his individual lessons, Hugo has been able to zoom out and reflect on ways to design a more integrated curriculum. This, too, supports that the program was designed in such a way that educators in various stages of competence were able to receive "level-appropriate" professional development.

Noted changes in participants' teaching philosophies can also be indicators of positive effects of professional development programs (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). As outlined in Chapter 4, a significant number of Fellows shared that they had indeed reconsidered and/or altered their teaching philosophies as a result of the program. Momar's reflection on the impact the course *Reaching the Reluctant Learner* had had on his perceptions of personal, yet professional, student-teacher relationships is a good case in point. Participation in the same course also caused significant shifts in Stefania's and Najib's perspectives on student behavior and motivation, while Hugo shared that the *Social Studies Method*s course he had chosen had stimulated him to think critically about his teaching goals.

Content knowledge. The program appeared to have a significant, positive effect on teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL). As EFL teachers Najib, Stefania and Justin confirmed, the program had a positive effect on their grasp of the English language. These three participants attributed their English-language development to various program components: (a) communicating with native speakers of English; (b) communicating in English with non-native speakers of English from other countries (as supported by Long, 1985); (c) taking university classes taught in English; and, (d) holding presentations in English.

Hugo, who teaches primarily geography, explained that the program had not fostered significant growth in him in terms of content knowledge. This may primarily be due to the fact that we had not been able to recruit geography faculty who were willing and able to enroll additional students that semester.

International relationships and views of other cultures. As a result of (a) interactions with American classmates, professors, partner teachers and friends, (b) program excursions, and (c) independent travel within the U.S., all participants came away with a more nuanced perspective of the United States. Furthermore, through social media platforms and messaging services, all participants have at least informally kept in touch with members of the university team. Incidentally, participants have been able to keep in touch with professors and friendship families, and one Fellow reported to have made professional connections with U.S. institutions such as the State Department and the local U.S. embassy.

What the interviews made abundantly clear was that--in line with Cushner's (2007) analysis of intercultural immersion experiences--the program fostered among participants a better understanding of not only the U.S., but also each other's cultural backgrounds, without having to travel to each individual country.

Connections to King's (2013) Evaluation Framework

When connecting the data to King's (2013) framework, the following pictures emerge related to (a) pre-program stages, (b) the experience and learning, (c) systemic factors, (d) degree and quality of change: process and product, (e) degree and quality of change: staff outcome, (f) pupils' outcomes, and (g) diffusion.

Pre-program stages. Although these stages were not the focus of this study, I, as program manager, believe it would be useful to summarize the pre-program stages in order to provide a more holistic view. As represented in Figure 5, what King (2013) refers to as evidence base, "where schools review where they are currently by gathering evidence" (p.107), I refer to as *starting point*, as in the case of this program, the initiative

for PD generally did not come from the schools, but from the individual teachers themselves. Targets were set collaboratively by participants, faculty advisors, instructors and program management, who then incorporated these targets into the program plan.
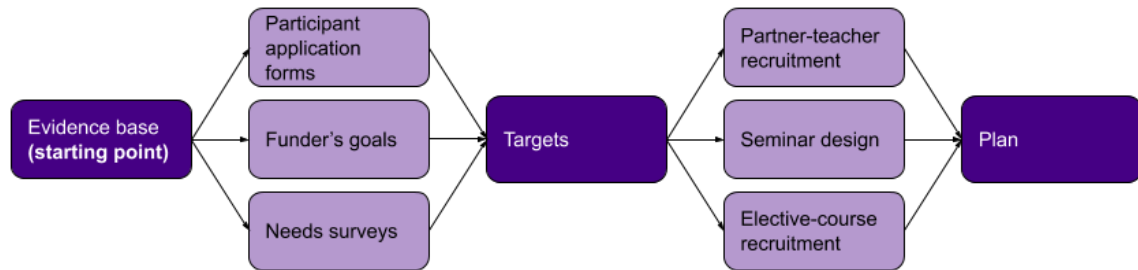

Figure 5: Pre-program Stages. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

The experience and learning. The interviews of this study took place in November of 2019, which was approximately 18 months after the program had ended. We did not distribute an initial satisfaction survey, and the funder informed me that there was no such data available in the public literature either. Although we did hold monthly interviews with each individual Fellow during the course of the program and checked in with them collectively at least twice per week, the interview data generated related to the *experience* is not yet integrated in this study. Figure 6 shows how these data would be integrated in King's (2013) evaluation framework, as well as how King's dimension of *learning* connects to the current interview data.
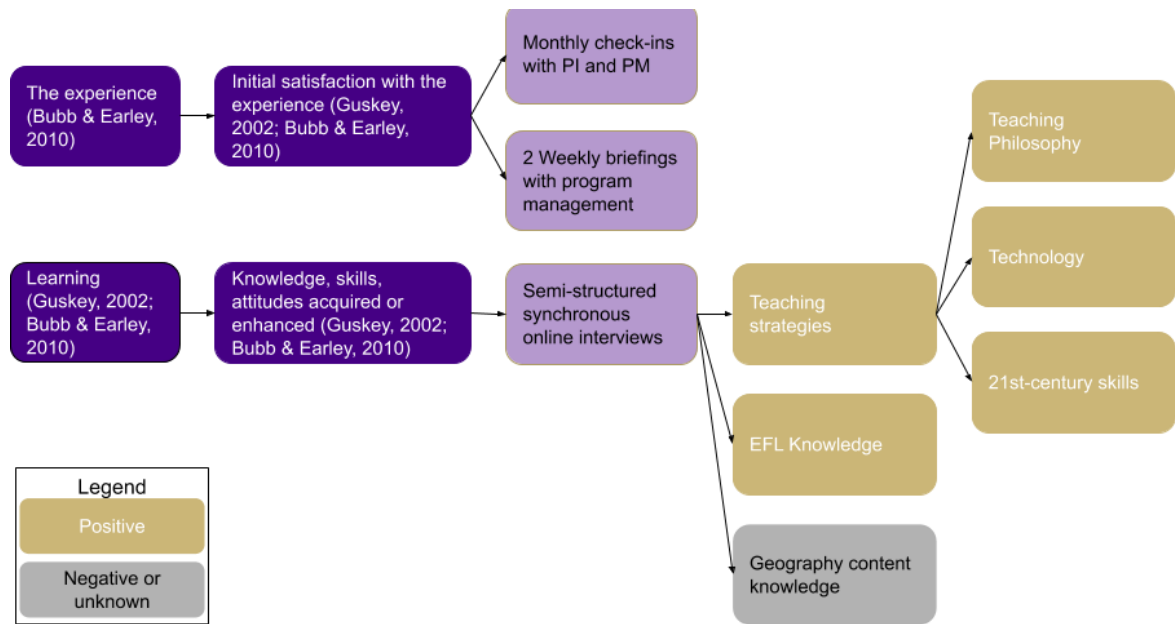
Figure 6: The Experience and Learning. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

Systemic factors. King (2013) breaks down systemic factors into three categories: (1) support, (2) initiative design and impact, and (3) teacher agency (Figure 7). Momar, as did other participants, shared that he draws motivation from his students' support: "When I was coming in school, all the students were waiting at the door, and when they saw me going into the classroom, you could hear them all shout, because they were happy to have me as an English teacher" (M. Faye, personal communication, November 10, 2019). On the other hand, it became clear that levels of enthusiasm with which new ideas are welcomed do vary.
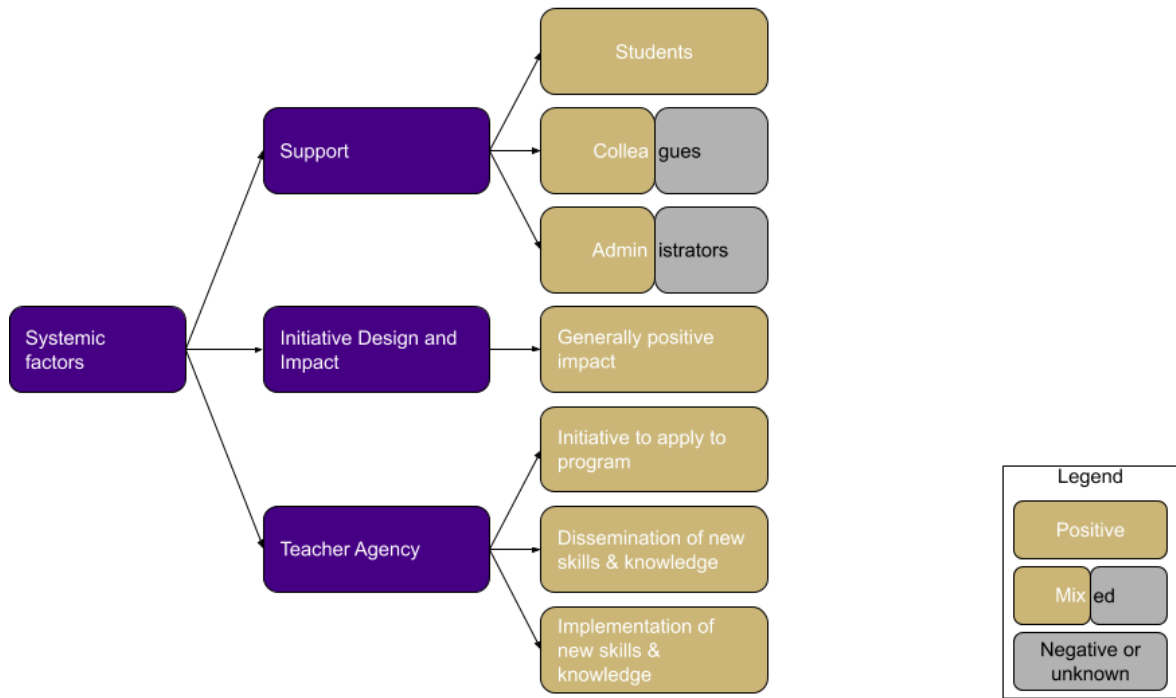
Figure 7: Systemic Factors. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

Hugo's story illustrates what this has looked like for him. In line with what the other five participants reported about their students, his students, as well, have been excited about his new teaching strategies:

> You know how good it feels when you meet students on the compound, and they're discussing the things you are teaching in class and the students of your stream and sharing with students from other streams telling them about how wonderful an experience they had in a class. Students or other students coming to you, and requesting you to show them the things that you showed your class. So that energy, that feedback that I get from the students keeps me going. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

Despite Hugo's students' overwhelmingly positive responses, however, some colleagues have unfortunately been skeptical and in some cases, perhaps even jealous. An observant school administrator appeared to be able to see through their resistance, though:

> I have had people say, these [strategies] do not work, and you know, not all of us will use projectors…They think it is showing off. You do things that cause you to sometimes say 'okay, even when I see this, I need to remain humble; I need to have the students talk and show that it works.' An administrator came into class and found me teaching about tourism in Germany. So I showed a video, and I had discussion questions that I gave to the students. So as they're watching, they were taking notes of things they were seeing that were useful that would answer the questions. And then I had to ask them to write down questions they had. And after that, we had a discussion. So, then he said "You know, this is new because you let *them* get it, and you let them ask questions; they were all attentive. People who don't attend your class don't know what exactly is happening. They see you go with the projector, and they think 'maybe you're showing off.'" (H. Kaleeba, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

In another example, Hugo illustrated how polarized colleagues' and administrators' attitudes towards his sharing his ideas and new skills are. In this case, he decided it would be better if instead of leading a PD session himself, he would invite a Fulbright exchange teacher to his school for six weeks, so she could lead it. This, Hugo explained, he had hoped would take the spotlight away from himself, and cause less envy among his colleagues. Despite this effort, many still appeared to be resistant, though:

So I thought I needed another person to say hey, what this guy is saying, we have

tried it, it works. But I can tell you some people did not attend the workshop. I

came across people who were against it, madly against it. You wouldn't believe

that it is happening. Why would someone in an administrative position in a school

not want people to train? This is something that can improve their learning, the

teaching outcomes: you are looking at improvement. And then someone said,

"You know, this is just because *this* person is not the one who brought the idea…

So now *you* are going to shine, and they don't like that." (H. Kaleeba, personal

communication, November 8, 2019)

On a more positive note, Momar shared that his colleagues had responded

positively to some of the very same ideas Hugo's colleagues so vehemently opposed.

Whether his school's administrators would be willing and able to financially support

Momar and his colleagues' ideas, however, was not clear at the time of the interview:

And for me something I really appreciated was that because of the program, I can

create something new in the teaching profession. And something that I would like

to add is, you know, in general here, teachers when they were meeting, they were

always complaining about salaries. They still complain about salaries, but there

was something that I really liked during our last meeting. Okay, because when I

came back they asked me to lead the English faculty of my high school, and they

asked me to ask the administration to buy local papers for [their classes] and some

[audio]speakers because they had seen me using those kinds of things. Now

they're no longer focused on money; instead, they want materials to change the

way they teach.

After the meeting, I took the requests to the vice principals of the school, and they said that they would meet up, and they would meet us very soon. So far they haven't met us, but I wonder if they'll be able to buy the projectors, because they are very expensive here. The school has got one, and some days they use mine, but I only have one. Imagine you've got something like 16… (M. Faye, personal communication, November 10, 2019)

In conclusion, some Fellows, upon return to their home countries and classrooms appear to face a more uphill battle than other alumni of the same program when attempting to implement their ideas. What they seem to have in common, though, is that their students are generally quite supportive of their teachers' changes in teaching methods.

The evaluation of the design of the PD initiative was not part of this study; however, based on interview data, it would be fair to state that the program appears to have had an overall positive impact on those interviewed. In relation to agency, the final branch of systemic factors in King's (2013) model, it can be deduced that "teachers [showed] commitment and ownership [by] acting in intentional ways to enable change" (p.106). Participants showed this by, for example, taking the initiative to go through the program's rigorous application process and actively working on implementing and disseminating their newfound knowledge and skills.

Degree and quality of change. Some participants did continue their professional development. As Hugo mentioned (see Chapter 4, 21st-century skills), after the program, he has continued to explore and apply the concepts of neuroplasticity and growth mindset. Participants also mentioned that they have suggested (with varying levels of success) topics for staff-meeting agendas, applied for mini grants (through the funder's

alumni network), and have been trying to secure school funding for new teaching and

learning supplies such as projectors and newspapers. Another tangible output is that

participants have access to new "human resources" such as their program professors,

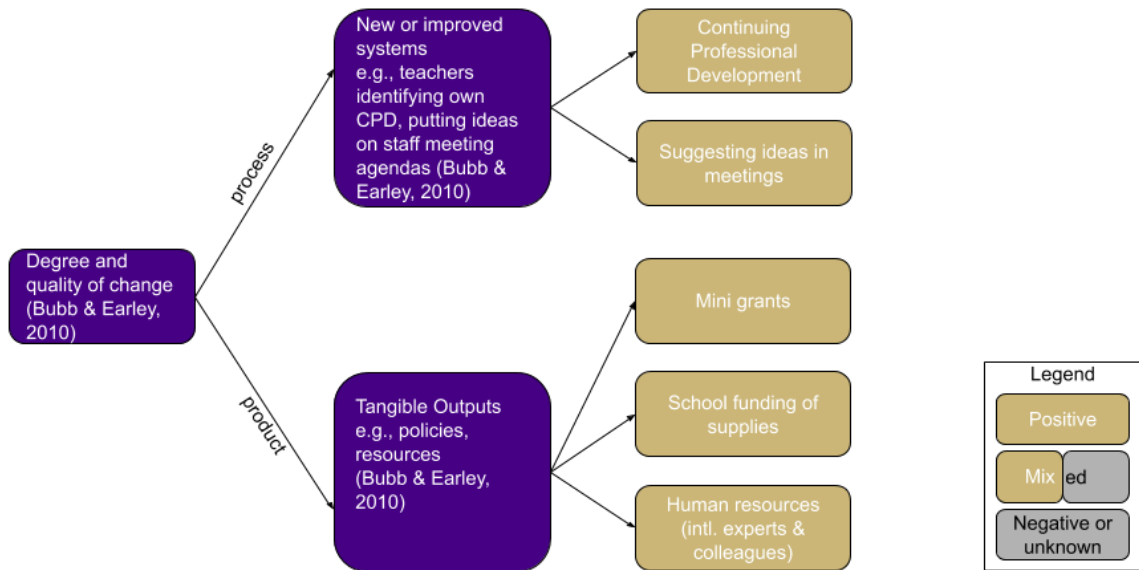other alumni, and U.S. State Department connections.

Figure 8: Degree and Quality of Change—Product and Process. Adapted from

"Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based

framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

Degree and quality of change: staff outcome. As explained prior, it is difficult

to directly measure the effect of teacher PD on student performance; however, there is a

direct link between teacher competence and student performance (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 1979;

Wei et al., 2009). Interviews revealed that according to the five participants themselves,

they have received positive feedback on their performance from their students,

supervisors, and some of their colleagues. During the interviews, participants shared a

number of examples of changed beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and students'

learning. The participants' examples of their use of new skills and knowledge indicate that most of them did not merely copy new strategies; rather, they implemented them in ways that suit the needs of their personal situations. This indicates a *critical* level of use of new knowledge and skills: "that is, an ability to adapt programmes to meet the needs of individual pupils" (King, 2013, p. 105). Lastly, participants provided examples of various degrees of collaboration (as I expand on under *implications*). Figure 9 provides a schematic representation of PD impacts on staff (faculty and administration).
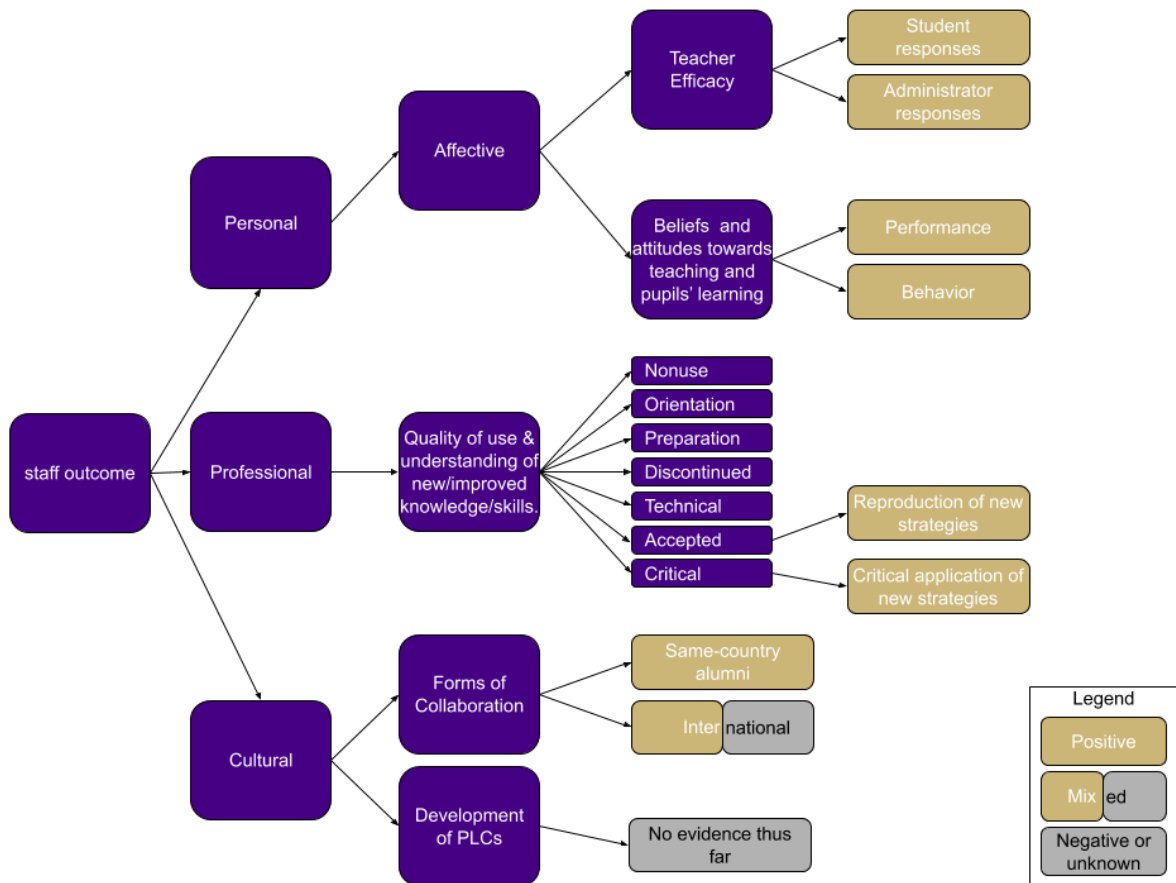

Figure 9: Degree and Quality of Change—Staff Outcome. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

Pupils' outcomes. Participants reported anecdotal evidence of better student performance and improvements in skills and behaviors. For example, they reported that their students had been more attentive as a result of different teaching strategies and philosophies. Participants posited that as a result of this, the quality of their students' work had increased. Additionally, Fellows shared various examples of positive student attitudes and dispositions (see Figure 10).
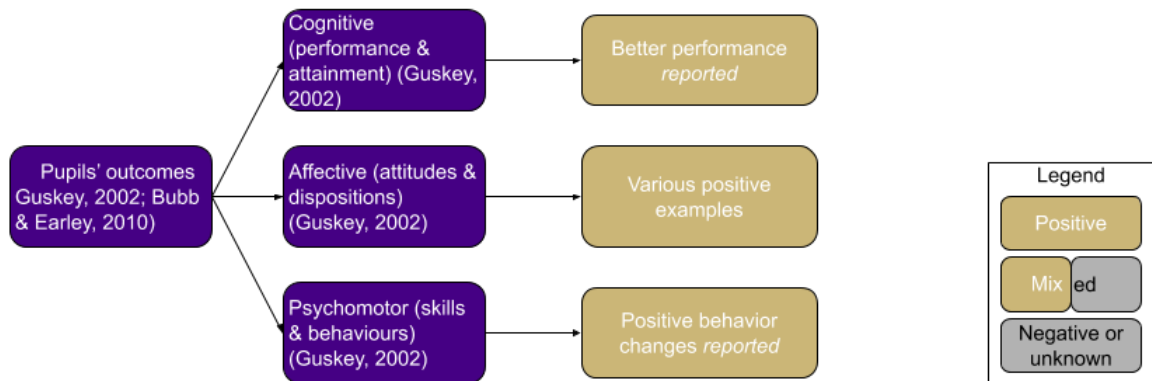

Figure 10: Pupils' Outcomes. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional Development in Education, 40(1)

Diffusion. Especially through Hugo's examples it became clear that the program has the potential for considerable diffusion (see Figure 11). In response to my final interview question, he shared that he now disseminates his knowledge among 35 schools within a two-hour radius of the school where he works:

> Before I came to the US, I used to talk to young people to help them to explore different options in life. And I used to do motivational talks in my own school; I do this for free. But now I have a clientele of about 35 schools. I go to them; I talk to them about career choices, about how to revise, how to take notes, how to behave as a student, and how to prepare to be a [post-secondary-school]

candidate. I work with various teachers with this course, in order to identify areas

to talk about. Now one of the key areas that I have started talking about and

integrated every day is growth mindset. (H. Kaleeba, personal communication,

November 8, 2019)

Through anecdotal evidence (e.g., social media stories and informal email

communication) with alumni from this and other cohorts (2016 and 2017), we have

learned that Hugo's story is not an oddity, as more program alumni have reported to have
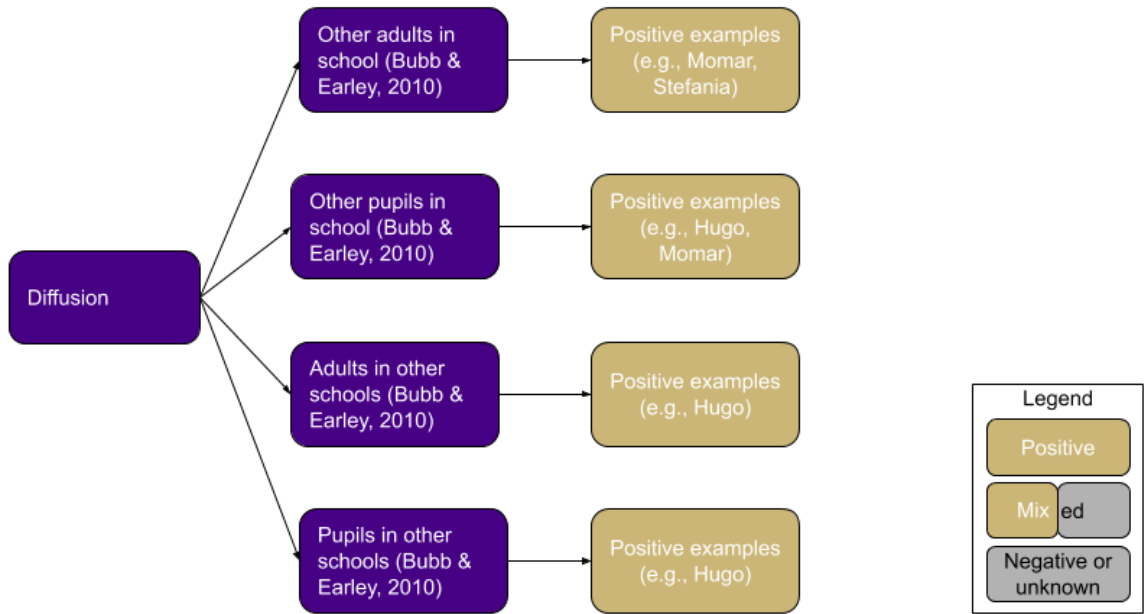
been asked to speak at other schools.

Figure 11: Dissemination. Adapted from "Evaluating the impact of teacher professional

development: An evidence-based framework," by King, F., 2013. Professional

Development in Education, 40(1)

In conclusion, King's (2013) framework has been a useful foundation for this

study. A possible addition to this model could be a teacher action research component

branching off pupils' outcomes and/or degree and quality of change. This could (a) help

generate data on if/how alumni apply new strategies and the efficacy of these strategies, and (b) continue their PD. Additionally, it could provide them an opportunity to share their post-program activities with us and each other, and possibly contribute to a more intentional alumni learning community.

Limitations

Although I believe that my purposive sample provides a useful representation of how the program affected teachers from diverse backgrounds, the picture could have been even more comprehensive if I had had the time and resources to interview all fifteen 2018 alumni. Still more interesting would this picture become if I could have interviewed all alumni from the preceding two cohorts (2016 and 2017), as well.

As various program evaluators point out (e.g., King, 2013; Wei, et al., 2009), the goal of teacher professional development is, obviously, higher student performance. However, differences in student performance are difficult to link directly to teacher PD, as--although an integral factor in effective education--teacher competence is but one among many potential variables affecting student performance. I do recognize, though, that comparisons between pre-teacher-PD student performance and post-teacher-PD student performance would add yet another valuable dimension to the picture painted by this study.

Implications

Based on the current five participants' accounts, when designing future programs, it will be valuable to take into account the successful aspects of the program, as well as the areas where there appeared to be room for growth that alumni highlighted. The adaptive nature of the program made it possible for professional development to be

tailored to each individual Fellow's personal classroom needs. To accommodate this, a

varied, extensive list of elective courses, seminars and workshops for Fellows to choose

from is paramount. It is helpful to know early in the planning process what each Fellow's

content area(s) is/are, so that university faculty can be approached about hosting Fellows

in their courses as early as possible. In the case of Hugo, for instance, there were simply

no upper-level geography classes on the course list. It is also imperative a program like

this employs highly skilled and culturally sensitive Customized Education Seminar and

Technology Course instructors, so that instruction in these foundational courses can be

tailored to the varied needs of participants, too.

Secondly, although living with housemates can at times be challenging for

program participants, all participants thus far have pointed out that they learned a great

deal about other cultures by cohabitating an apartment with international colleagues.

Next, a number of participants reported that it had been challenging to maintain

professional connections with international cohort members. It would be good for the

funder as well as host universities to brainstorm if sustained international collaboration

between alumni can be facilitated somehow.

Further Research

I decided not to interview each individual alumna or alumnus; instead, I focused

on a select number of alumni--whom I identified through a short initial survey--from the

2018 cohort. In the future, I do intend to expand on this study in order to form a more

holistic and longitudinal picture of the program's impacts.

Another limitation of this study is that I have focused primarily on alumni who

had stories of growth to share; this narrowed my focus, but had the benefit that it helped

me gain knowledge regarding the successful components of the program. Through including all alumni in a follow-up study, I hope to identify all possible components of the program that would benefit from revision, so that we can keep doing our utmost to respond to real-world needs.

Furthermore, for this cohort, as well as for the two preceding cohorts (2016 and 2017), program management recruited a culturally sensitive clinical psychologist who--with support of a female doctoral candidate--facilitated weekly discussions on topics related to intercultural communication. For further research, it would be interesting to probe if this was perceived by participants as a helpful component in terms of navigating house- or study-mate challenges or not. Lastly, adding interview questions more intentionally designed to probe participant perspectives on their U.S. school placements, friendship families and cultural excursions would contribute to a more holistic picture of the possible program impacts.

Final Remarks

This qualitative study with phenomenological components examined the impacts of a U.S. State Department-funded teacher professional development program, hosted at a liberal-arts university on the east coast of the United States in the spring semester of 2018. Through an initial review of the public literature it became evident that it was challenging to find any evaluation data pertaining to this particular program or ones of a similar nature. Often, as King (2013) concurs, "measuring the impact of teacher PD [professional development] has focused largely on teacher satisfaction and ignored impact on teacher learning, use of new practices, pupils' outcomes and/or value for money" (p. 90).

Through semi-structured synchronous online interviews with five program alumni, the researcher probed if—and if so, how—the professional development (PD) program had made the intended impacts (program goals) on participants' (1) teaching methods/curriculum, (2) content knowledge in their personal teaching disciplines, and (3) international relationships/perceptions of other cultures.

The results indicate that the program has impacted teachers' education philosophies, English language skills, understanding of other cultures, knowledge of effective teaching methods, and educational technology skills. Key take-aways include that the strengths of the PD program included that it was connected to teachers' individual classroom needs, included theory and practice, fostered collaboration between participants and U.S. educators, and facilitated myriad opportunities for meaningful interaction to foster intercultural understanding.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Pre-interview

- "Catch up" informally and explain the study.

- Explain participants that they may, at any time, stop the interview or opt not to answer a certain question.

- Remind participants that I will be in "researcher role," which means I will let them speak as much as possible without any interruptions. In order to avoid skewing the data (their responses), I will also limit as much as possible positive or negative reactions to their responses.

The following open-ended questions may lead to other, unplanned questions in this semi-structured interview.

1. Do you feel ILEP has impacted your teaching? Please explain.

2. Do you feel ILEP has impacted your beliefs and attitudes toward students' learning? Please explain.

3. Do you feel ILEP has impacted your content knowledge? Please explain.

4. Do you feel the program has impacted your international relationships and views of other cultures? Please explain.

5. Is there something I haven't asked you that you think is important for me to learn about?

Post interview

- Ask participants if follow-up emails are OK.

- Thank participants.

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