Summary of a master's thesis affiliated with the research project Geographies of Internationalisation

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LEARNING DURING INTERNSHIPS ABROAD
AN EDUCATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF INTERNSHIPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Learning during Internships Abroad

An educational anthropological study of internships in the Philippines

Introduction

This is a summary of our master's thesis about how Danish social education students learn within cultural practices during internships abroad. The thesis is based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork among social education students doing an internship in Cebu City, the Philippines. We wrote the thesis in the field of Internationalisation of Higher Education (IoHE) and attempted to understand how IoHE unfolds in practice in social education internships abroad. We investigated how the political context of IoHE and the cultural context of the destination influence what and how students learn during their internship abroad.

Our interest in the field derived from our own experiences of studying abroad. Isaguru did an internship abroad as part of his social education. Minna studied abroad as part of her bachelor studies in social science and did an internship abroad afterward. These lived experiences along with our readings during our master studies made us profoundly interested in how students learn during internships abroad and how internationalisation processes of higher education unfold in practice.

In our literature search, we found that research conducted on internships abroad has generated a large number of publications, among others Cushner and Mahon (2002), Batey and Lupi (2009), Sahin (2008), Boysen (2017), Boysen et al. (2016). We found that most literature examines students' learning outcomes. Students' learning processes throughout their internships abroad has, however, not been studied to the same extent. In addition to studying students' learning outcomes of internships abroad, we were interested in studying students' learning processes[1] throughout their internship abroad.

Consecutive Danish governments have made different initiatives aiming at improving the quality and relevance of higher education through internationalisation, to generate growth and wealth, and make Denmark an attractive global collaborator, both politically, economically, and culturally (Regeringen, 2006; Regeringen and Ministeriet for Forskning, 2013). The argument goes that in order to make Denmark attractive globally, Danish institutions and companies need employees with global awareness and professionally relevant international competences (ibid). As argued by Adriansen et al. (2019), there are seven common instruments of internationalisation. Two widely used instruments are internationalisation abroad (i.e. all forms of education across borders such as internships abroad), and internationalisation at home, which is curriculum-orientated and refers to activities happening at the home

[1] "The combined interaction between the individual and its material and social environment with an internal psychological process of acquisition" (Illeris, 2007, p.227).

campus such as integrating foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities (Knight, 2011; Regeringen and Ministeriet for Forskning, 2013).

Within social education, internships abroad are a key component of internationalisation. The aim is to provide future social educators with intercultural competences[2] and global awareness[3], meant to prepare them with a global perspective for their work (Andreassen, Breusch & Clausen, 2020; Tonsberg, 2014). During 3.5 years of education, social education students must complete four internships, all varying in length, purposes, and goals (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet, 2019). Students can complete their second and third internship abroad and are encouraged to do so for at least one of these six-month internships (ibid). The Philippines is a popular destination for internships among Danish social education students. In 2017, more than 300 social education students from the three biggest university colleges in Denmark did an internship abroad. Among these, 19 percent from VIA, 21 percent from UCC, and 60 percent from UCL chose to go to the Philippines (Graulund, 2018). However, in the Philippines, there is no social education profession. This made us ask several questions: What and how are students expected to learn from their internship in the Philippines? What do students expect from their internship in the Philippines? What and how do they learn?

The problem statement of our thesis was:

Inspired by the practice-based learning approach in anthropology, we investigate how Danish social education students learn during internships abroad to identify how processes of internationalisation of higher education unfold in practice.

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[2] "Knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable one to interact across cultures" (Andreasen et al., 2020, p. 15).

[3] "Knowledge of the world outside the Nordic countries, as well as an element of understanding what drives major global processes, their local consequences and their commitment and interest in global issues in general" (Andreasen et al., 2020, p. 15).

Analytical Frame

We were inspired by the anthropological paradigm of practice-based learning (Hasse, 2013) and used this as our analytical frame. Over time, anthropologists moved the understanding of culture and learning from an evolutionary focus to a practice focus (ibid). They moved away from general cognitive learning theory towards a new practice-based understanding of learning, where learning is seen as a social practice locally tied to activities and practices (ibid). Particularly, the contributions of the American anthropologist Jean Lave (1988) have largely influenced the anthropological paradigm of practice-based learning. Employing 'legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) helped us to understand how students learn through engagement in the cultural practice of their internship institutions. Further, it helped us to understand how students develop new understandings of what there is to be learned and how they find new ways to use their pedagogical practice through engagement with cultural practices of internship institutions.

We drew on several theoretical framings and concepts in our study. First, we employed Illeris' content and incentive dimensions in the theory 'The Fundamental Processes of Learning' (Illeris, 2007) to frame students' ideas about possible learning outcomes as preconditions for 'what needs to be learned' and 'driving forces' behind their engagement and interaction at their internship institutions. Furthermore, the concept of 'geographical imaginaries' (Juul-Wiese & Adriansen, 2019) helped us to gauge how students' ideas about the pedagogical practice in the Philippines influenced their actions and in turn their learning processes. Finally, 'transformative learning' (Mezirow, 1992) and the 'development model of intercultural sensitivity' (Bennett, 1993) helped us identify how students develop new understandings about themselves and others and increase intercultural competences by engaging with cultural practices of internship institutions.

Fieldwork and Methods

During three months of fieldwork, we followed five social education students from a university college in Denmark during their six months of internship in Cebu City, the Philippines. The students were interns at four different institutions: a temporary shelter and processing centre for children in need of special protection, a preschool for children from underprivileged families, a preschool located in one of the poorest areas of Cebu City, and an orphanage for children at risk in the age of 2 - 20 years old. At the time of our fieldwork, there were 30 Danish social education students in Cebu City from different university colleges in Denmark. The four we followed were accompanied by students from other university colleges at their internship institutions.

Our project was based on ethnographic fieldwork with an interplay of different methods applied. We used participant observation (Madden, 2010; Davies, 2008) at the students' internship institutions. We took part in activities, everyday routines, supervisions, and various events with/of the students. The first couple of weeks, we made participant observations together creating a common ground between the two of us. Hereafter, we split up and rotated between institutions and students. Additionally, we spend time with the students in the afternoon and on weekends using 'ethnographic hanging out' (Madden, 2010) and 'instrumental conversations' (Madden, 2010). Our different backgrounds positioned us as `insider´ and `outsider´ of the field of research (see Adriansen and Madsen, 2009). As a social educator and former intern in a similar institution in Cebu City, Isaguru spoke the same professional language as the students and had a thorough knowledge about the cultural and environmental context the students were a part of. Therefore, we see Isaguru as an insider and so did our participants. Minna was positioned as an outsider to the field of social education as she has no social education background, nor had she been to the Philippines before our fieldwork. These different vantage points combined enabled us to ask different questions and to obtain nuanced insights. We conducted interviews with students, supervisors, international coordinators, managers, social workers and teachers at internship institutions and the receiving organisations in Cebu City. We used different kinds of interviews, including key-person interviews and qualitative semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups (Kvale, 1996). In total, we conducted 26 oral interviews and one in written form. We conducted four rounds of interviews with each of the five students before, during and after their internships abroad. Each interview focused on a theme, respectively 'motivation, expectations and preparations', 'experiences upon arrival and met expectations', 'pedagogical practices and learning goals' and 'outcomes from an internship abroad'. The last interviews were conducted over Facetime due to Covid-19 restrictions in Denmark in April 2020.

Now following, is a summary of each analysis chapter of our thesis.

Incoherency between the purpose and delivery of internationalisation of social education

In this chapter, we examined the purposes of internships abroad from the perspectives of students, their educational institution, and the Danish governmental level. We explored students' motivations and expectations about what to learn during their internships in the Philippines through 'incentive' and 'content' dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2007). Expectations, motivations, volition, feelings, and emotions regarding what can be learned, influence the students' learning processes and outcomes (ibid). These become driving forces for the students' learning process (ibid). During pre-departure group interviews, we found that students' ideas consisted of both personal and professional motivations and expectations for their internship abroad. Most students were motivated by the expectation for personal development through experiencing cultural differences. They said they wanted "to try something new", "to get to know cultural differences and obtain new perspectives", "to become better at seeing things from different perspectives", and "to become wiser about oneself". Students expressed that this personal development would also be beneficial for their professional development. As one student said, "I want to spend my stay in the Philippines working on getting a better professional approach, so I'm not emotionally affected". Another student said that she expected to become "a better professional when working with children with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds", and considered her internship abroad a good opportunity to develop these skills.

When we examined the study regulations, we found that the learning goals for internships do not distinguish between internships in Denmark or internships abroad and there is nothing in the learning goals related to internationalisation. Hence, the learning goals for internships do not represent the purposes of internationalisation of social education; to provide future social educators with intercultural competences and global awareness which prepare them to give their work a global perspective (Andreassen, Breusch & Clausen, 2020; Tonsberg, 2014). For the students, this means that their motivations for personal and professional intercultural development, which become driving forces in their learning process, are in conflict with 'what needs to be learned'. This became a complication for the students during their internship. Even though they wanted to experience and learn from their encounters with different cultures, and are driven by their expectations, they knew that they must focus on achieving their formal internship learning goals because that is what they would be evaluated on for their exam. In such cases, 'learning' can become problematised by the risk of being reduced to function as displaying knowledge for evaluation. When predetermined pedagogically structured content organises learning goals, there is a risk of exchange value

replacing the use value of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This contradiction between the use and exchange values of learning can manifest in conflicts between learning to know and learning to display knowledge for evaluation (ibid). This exchange value of learning became apparent when a student said, "I have reflected a lot on the methods they use here, especially on the differences of professional ethics here in the Philippines and in Denmark, but I have not written about it in the exam paper. I lack the space and it's actually not a requirement that we incorporate cultural theory". The student showed that she had learned to reflect on pedagogical methods in relation to cultural contexts, which can increase her ability to inter-act across cultures. Therefore, her learning had 'use value' for her. However, she did not include these reflections in her exam paper. Instead, she had focused on displaying how she had fulfilled her formal internship goals. In these cases, students are at risk of spending their internship period engaged with learning processes that have actual use value to them, but having to display a different exchange value knowledge for evaluation in their exam. As such, students are not being evaluated on their intercultural competences, but on their ability to display knowledge for evaluation.

Another consequence becomes evident when the purpose of internationalisation, such as in-tercultural understanding and international competences, is not included into the formal learning goals of social education internships abroad. The integration of the aims of interna-tionalisation of higher education on a governmental level becomes unsuccessful within so-cial education. From the Danish governmental level, the purpose of outgoing student mobil-ity is to educate students with professional relevant and globally requested international competences (Regeringen and Ministeriet for Forskning, 2013). The idea is that students gain professional relevant international competence, an international view, and better language skills by participating in outgoing student mobility programs. Furthermore, within social education, internships abroad are considered to contribute with new professional and social perspectives and more knowledge about oneself, profession, and the surrounding world (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet, 2019). Although we found that attempts are made by student supervisors and international coordinators to include literature on methods and reflections on 'cultural analysis', 'intercultural communication' and 'cultural identity' in the student preparation, this literature is only recommended and comes second to the formal learning goals. The reality for the students remains that when they return to Denmark their learning outcomes are measured in relation to their formal learning goals and not in relation to their development of intercultural competences and global awareness. The unique oppor-tunity to develop intercultural competences and global awareness, which internships abroad provide, seems not to be taken into account because the learning goals are the same whether students are on internships in Denmark or abroad. Some of the students also expressed this. One student said, "I can work with my internship goals, but something is missing! I might as well have done these activities in Denmark. There's a lack of focus on the culture in the internship goals. Why not take advantage of exactly that which is special about an internship

abroad?". It is paradoxical that students go abroad to a country without a pedagogical profession and are expected to learn the same learning goals as in an internship in Denmark. Furthermore, we wondered how students are expected to develop the professional relevant international competences, which is the political intention with internships abroad, if they do not formally have to learn anything other than what they learn in internships at home. We argue that this incoherency between the purpose and delivery of internationalisation of social education reveals a clear demand for reflection on the quality of implementation of internationalisation in social education.

How 'geographical imaginaries' can shape the course of the internship

In this chapter, we examined to which extent students' ideas about pedagogical practice in the Philippines influenced their learning process. We analysed the students' ideas about the Philippines with the concept of 'geographical imaginaries' (Juul-Wiese & Adriansen, 2019), which describes the imaginations people have about other people, places, and the world, and these imaginaries make certain actions possible and have an impact on events in real life (Juul-Wiese & Adriansen, 2019).

When Danish social education students travel to the Philippines to do an internship abroad, they set out to live, work, and learn in a new context. Analysing students' ideas about this new context by employing 'geographical imaginaries' allows us to recognise how these ideas influence their learning processes during the course of the internship abroad. We found that students' ideas about the Philippines play a crucial role in what they expect from their internship and affect how students act and learn. However, we found ideas dissolved as students' worldviews shift and they develop new understandings over the course of their six months of internship.

A commonly shared idea among the students was that pedagogical practices in the Philippines are less professional compared to Danish pedagogical practices. In a pre-departure interview, a student said, "In general my expectations for their professionalism are low. Of course, things are done in a certain way, but I think they just do it without reflecting on the purpose". Another student said, "I don't expect the practice to be based on much theory or pedagogical methodological reflections, as in Denmark". As all the students referred to their own practice as 'better' or 'proper' practice, we came to see that these ideas reflected notions of 'adult North' and 'young South' (Valentine & Meinert, 2009). Valentin and Meinert (2009) describe how colonial missions in the 19th century provided nations in the global North with the right to comment on what 'proper' practice is and intervene in what they considered improper social practices of the global South. This created a hegemonic position where "the global North assumes it has a parenting role towards the global South, where the 'adult North' can bestow rights and duties on the 'young South'" (ibid, p.24). We found that when students perceived themselves as the professional and knowledgeable 'adults' who know what 'proper' practice is, while perceiving Filipinos as the unprofessional and unpractised 'young' who do not have a 'proper' pedagogical practice, they had difficulties recognising the purposes of the Filipino pedagogical practice during their initial encounters at their internship institutions. Furthermore, students also had difficulties recognising similarities between their own pedagogical practice and the practice at their internship institution, which caused them to reject supervision from the internship institution. At one of the internship

institutions, the supervisor presented methods used within the institution for a student. The methods were grounded in pedagogical theory, which can also be found within Danish social education. However, the student did not seem to recognise or acknowledge this similarity. The student said, "she [supervisor] cannot teach us anything", perceiving herself as the knowledgeable adult and rejecting the supervision. In this way, the student's 'geographical imaginaries' caused her to focus on working with her own 'proper practice'.

Interestingly, we found that temporality and exposure to local practices was of significant importance. After a period of two to three months, the students began to develop new understandings that stood in contrast to their 'geographical imaginaries'. From the many meetings between the students, the children and the staff at the internship institutions, along with their general engagement with the local practices while living in Cebu City, students began to notice the context of the applied practices in their internship institutions and recognised the use value of these local practices. In the beginning of the internship one student said "There is no caregiving. They are bad at acknowledging the children", perceiving the practice of the staff at her internship institution as less professional compared to Danish pedagogical practices. After three months she said "They do it differently, not wrong". As the quote shows, we see that the student learned to see Philippine cultural practice as different, but equally valid. They began to see how their own practice, which they initially understood as the 'proper' practice, was conditioned within a Danish context, and learned to reflect on pedagogical methods in relation to the local cultural contexts. One student said, "I learned to see which needs the children here really have, not what we think they need. They were not comfortable with the care I'm used to providing". Another student mentioned, "It doesn't hurt to push the children a little more, because they can do a lot more than we think. Some of their methods are really good. But some I agree with more than others". Furthermore, a student indicated how certain aspects of the Philippine practices could be beneficial in Denmark, when saying, "The kids know how to do a lot of practical things here, they learn faster. They give the children guidelines and let them try for themselves. We could learn from that".

These new understandings stood in contrast to the students' initial ideas about the Philippine pedagogical practices and their 'geographical imaginaries' began to dissolve over time. We found that the social education students' ideas about the Philippines resembled the findings of Juul-Wiese and Adriansen (2019), who critically examined diverse and at times contradictory imaginaries that Danish teacher interns and Philippine teachers had of each other. A key finding in that study was that the Danish teacher interns referred to their own practice as 'better' or 'proper' compared to the practice of the Philippine teachers. This played a crucial role in what teacher interns expected from their internship and influenced their actions throughout the course of their internships abroad. However, social education internships are of a six months duration in contrast to the Danish teacher internships' comparatively short

duration of six weeks. We found that the social education students' 'geographical imaginaries' in fact began to dissolve after a period of two to three months. Therefore, we argue that the length of the internship abroad and extended exposure to local practices is of significant importance. We find that this nuances and develops the findings of Juul-Wiese and Adriansen (2019). This also highlights the methodological value of long-term ethnographic fieldwork in revealing patterns of continuity and change over a broader time span.

Employing Bennett's 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity' (1993) to our analysis, helped us to analyse how the development of 'intercultural sensitivity' can create shifts from ethnocentric to ethnorelative worldviews. The shift entails students to move from experiencing their own culture as 'central to reality' (Hammer, et al., 2003) to experiencing their own culture "in the context of other cultures" (Ibid, p. 425), dissolving their 'geographical imaginaries' as a consequence. This is an addition to the existing body of knowledge on 'geographical imaginaries', as we found that long-term internships abroad can provide opportunities for students to develop cultural sensitivity and ethno-relative understandings, which in turn can dissolve 'geographical imaginaries'. As 'geographical imaginaries' are at high risk of shaping the course of the internship and cause students to reject to learn the pedagogical and didactic methods from the "young South", our findings suggest that an increased internship duration can positively influence students to find learning opportunities when going on internships abroad. Furthermore, as the development of intercultural sensitivity is associated with the development of intercultural competence (Hammer, et al., 2003), we stress the importance of dissolving 'geographical imaginaries' to increase learning possibilities regarding the development of intercultural competences.

Learning through cultural practices and students' identification of learning outcomes

In the third analysis chapter, we examined how learning processes occur through engagement with cultural practices. First, we employed Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice' to our analysis and showed how students learn through participation and engagement in the cultural practices of their internship institutions. Next, we examined the students' learning processes and learning outcomes of their internships in the Philippines by employing 'transformative learning' theory. The analysis shows how social education students in our study developed new understandings about themselves and others and an increase in intercultural competences by engaging with the cultural practices of their internship institutions.

We found that students became able to learn the cultural practice of their internship institutions by spending time observing and participating in the ongoing practices of their internship institutions. This created opportunities for the students to develop an understanding of what there is to be learned, as they are both "absorbing and being absorbed in the cultural practices" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95). During an interview, a student explained that she often found that Danish social education methods could not necessarily be used at her internship institution, "Should I do as I would have done back home? Because sometimes it just doesn't make any sense at all. The children are not used to being comforted and given a hug like in Denmark. They want to be left alone. At first, I thought this was because our relationship wasn't good, but now I have a good relationship with the children and I know that I still can't use acknowledgement in the same way I would in Denmark. It wouldn't make sense".

We saw a recurring theme of personal growth when students described their personal reflections on how they had changed during their internship. One student said, "It was difficult at first, but I learned to be independent. I become more responsible and, in that way, I have grown a lot". Another student said, "I feel that I have become more mature and have learned to make decisions myself, and to act myself". As students explained what influenced their personal growth, we found that learning from cultural practices was recurring in their narratives, both from interaction with staff at the internship institutions and from interaction with the children. Students also stated that they adopted new values and views. For example, a student said, "To set yourself aside and be open to other ways of doing things really expands your worldview". Another student said, "My values have changed. Before, things had to be my way. I also expected to get something back. Now I want to do something for others

without the need to get anything back. It's become a value to me". Moreover, students experienced professional development throughout their internship, learning by engaging professionally in new ways. One student said, "I learned to see which needs the children have in reality (...) I found how I could make myself available but let the children come to me". Moreover, the student narrated how she had developed professionally as a social educator because of her personal changes. She said, "This has given me more structure and calmness in my life. It helps me study and I think I can use it as a social educator in the future". Her statements exemplify an increased self-sufficiency and self-direction in her life, which has nurtured her academic studies and future professional work.

Spending time observing and participating in the ongoing practices of their internship institutions also created opportunities for the students to work with their formal learning goals within their internship institutions, as they learned the cultural practice of their institution and gradually found ways to work with their formal internship goals. An example from one student was, "It was a turning point when I had been there for some time. I could joke more with the employees and had more of a sense of community with them. I dared to take the initiative to do a lot of things because they knew what they could expect from me and the other way around. So, I was more confident in saying what I wanted to organise". We found that during the first couple of months of their internships the students did not carry out activities related to their formal learning goals. The students had mainly focused on getting to know the structures, rules, and people at their institution, what everyday life was like and the practice at their institution as well as overcoming language barriers. Furthermore, the absence of academic supervision during their internship was another reason why students did not carry out activities related to their formal learning goals during the first couple of months of their internships. A student said, "There should be more supervision from home during our internship. It is not enough. We haven't received any material on the learning goals, so it was pretty much up to myself to figure out". Supervision from their educational institution in Denmark was arranged to be held on Skype halfway through their internship and students did not have access to supervision regarding their formal internship goals at their internship institution, as their supervisors at their institution did not share the same educational background as them. The students dealt with the insufficient academic supervision in different ways. A student participated in training days in Denmark over Skype, because she needed information about how to work with her learning goals. Another student sought help from a returned social education student who did an internship in Cebu City a few years back. This student stated, "She has been my replacement supervisor". It is not exceptional for social education students on internships abroad to express the need for academic supervision. In 2017, an evaluation of social education students' internship in the Philippines (Graulund, 2018) revealed that the majority of the students from UCC, UCL and VIA criticized the level of supervision given to them and that half of the students from UCC did not receive supervision during their internship in Cebu City 2017. Many of our participants shared this reflection as many of them found supervision insufficient or non-existing during

their internships abroad. Consequently, students had trouble in identifying their own learning outcomes.

During interviews, we experienced that several students became very insecure when we asked them about learning outcomes concerning anything other than formal internship goals. A student said, "It's hard to explain what I have learned". During an interview held after returning to Denmark the student said, "I understand how important it is to have a cultural understanding when working with people. Mine came after I got home (...) I chose an elective course called 'Cultural Meetings and Interculturality', which helped me reflect on what I learned". The course had provided her with the adequate theoretical knowledge on 'cultural meetings' and 'interculturality' for her to become able to recognise these aspects of her own learning process of her internship abroad. Even though we had found that during the course of their internships students had developed increased cultural sensitivity and ethno-relative understandings, which are characteristics of the development of intercultural competences (Hammer, et al., 2003), the students had difficulties recognising these aspects of their own development. In light of these findings we argue, that when students were not thoroughly introduced to theoretical knowledge regarding 'cultural meetings' and interculturality, they experienced difficulties identifying their own learning outcomes in regard to anything other than formal internship goals. Furthermore, the absence of preparation and supervision regarding the possible development of intercultural competences and global awareness, caused students to miss out on valuable learning outcomes.

Concluding remarks

Internationalisation of higher education is claimed to enhance the quality of education and research (Egron-Polak et al., 2015) and it is often driven by a dynamic combination of economic, political, socio-cultural and academic rationales (Egron-Polak and Marmolejo, 2017; Egron-Polak et al., 2015). Our thesis aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on IoHE by providing valuable new insights to how internationalisation abroad unfolds in practice for a small group of social education students during their internships abroad. We identified an incoherency between the purpose and delivery of internationalisation of social education and argued that this incoherency has an impact on what students learn during an internship abroad. In this regard, we highlighted the need for reflection on the processes of integrating an intercultural dimension into the delivery of social education. Taking on a practice-based approach to analyse learning processes and outcomes, we sought to provide nuanced insights on how engagement with communities can create opportunities for students to learn during internships abroad. Students take away a variety of learning outcomes, however, as we showed how students' ideas influence the course of their internship, we argued how important it is that preparation and supervision take into account students' ideas about the geographical placement of their internship and what they perceive there is to be learned. Furthermore, imaginaries are socially shared and transmitted (Salazar, 2011) and we argued that supervision affects students' imaginaries, their learning possibilities, and their ability to articulate their own learning outcomes. In this regard, we highlighted the importance of further development of supervisors' international knowledge and experience to provide students increased access to theoretical teaching and supervision and help students to become able to achieve the full potential of learning outcomes during their internships abroad.

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