'I wasn't worried because I wasn't being judged': The development of pre-service teacher professional capital, pedagogical instinct and discretionary judgement during an overseas teaching placement.

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Pre-service teacher abbreviated to PST

Abstract

Assertions that experiences of teaching abroad encourage professional growth for pre-service teachers (PSTs) are discussed, with reference to reflections from 20 PSTs from a British university after a volunteer teaching placement in South Africa (SA). PSTs compare their overseas and domestic placement experiences. Data reveals that capacity for decisional judgement, willingness to follow professional instincts and take risks are influenced by perceived levels of professional scrutiny. Teacher expertise is discussed through the conceptual lens of professional capital. We conclude that decisional judgement and the skills to think on one's feet, are more likely to flourish under non-judgmental conditions.

1. Introduction

The present study evaluated the experiences of 20 PSTs after an informal, unassessed teaching placement in SA primary schools. Previous discourse exploring the outcomes of international teaching experiences (Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Charles, 2017; Klein & Wikan, 2018; Trent, 2011) have tended to focus on the development of PST values, beliefs and intercultural competence. Only a minority of these studies however, discuss professional and pedagogical developments, which were the focus of this research. Our objective was to better understand whether, and how, the PSTs experienced professional growth and development of expertise as a result of their experiences. The study aimed to identify ways in which teaching in an overseas context could have influenced this, and the potential transfer of any developments to their domestic practice. Its novel contribution is its focus on how changing the professional environment (from British schools to South

African township schools) influenced the PSTs' capacity for autonomous professional judgement and corresponding effects on their professional identities.

2.0 Conceptual framing

In many professions, including teaching, 'professionalism' is characterised principally by disciplinary knowledge, situational awareness, intuition and discretionary judgement (Taylor & Whittaker, 2018; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Brest & Hamilton-Krieger, 2010). Within this, practitioner judgement is considered a fundamental skill, which relies on both the *capacity* to think on one's feet and a *license* to make decisions. This is considered to be the essence (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), and heart (Taylor & Miller, 1996) of professionalism. The conceptual frame for the present study is professional capital, and in particular one of its three subsets, decisional capital, which describes both capacity and license to make discretionary judgements. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p.5) state that 'making decisions in complex situations is what professionalism is all about', claiming that decisional capital is characterised by 'competence, judgement, insight, inspiration and the capacity for improvisation.' Autonomy to exercise judgements thus appears central to professional practice. An examination of PSTs' perceived license and ability to make judgements forms the basis of this study.

3.0 Review of literature

3.1 Decisional judgement and the nature of teaching

Judgement arises from uncertainty (Downie & McNaughton, 2009; Hoyle & John, 1995) and according to Woods (1990, 1995) teaching and learning is full of uncertainties because every classroom situation is the result of what Clark and Yinger call 'uniquely configured events'

(1987, p.18). Teaching is innately complicated, involving innumerable judgements concerning a wide range of pedagogical and procedural aspects (Eisner, 1985). Shulman (2004, p.504) puts it in categorical terms, 'teaching . . . is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced and frightening activity that our species ever invented'. Tripp (1993) conceptualises teaching in terms of problem solving, suggesting that the essence of pedagogy is problematising critical incidents by developing situational awareness and exercising judgment about appropriate actions. For Eaude (2012), managing complex situations requires fluid professional qualities which, according to Furlong (2013), demand a balance between technique and judgement, often meaning that teaching entails deciding what is 'best' rather than what is 'right' (Coles. 2002). Woods (1990, 1995) has made the case repeatedly for the central role professional judgement plays in teaching, arguing that when teachers lack a license to judge 'they are technicians rather than professionals' (1995, p.3) and so may lack the capacity to improvise in response to unpredictability. Teachers require a repertoire of skills, some of which depend on adherence to structures and others on opportunities to maneuver around and within those structures. These descriptions of teaching appear to place decisional capital at the heart of teachers' professional work.

3.2 Practicum and the development of PST decisional capital

The literature highlights the important role which practicum plays in PST development (Ronfeldt, 2015; Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Gray, Wright & Pascoe, 2017; Grudnoff, 2011; Seagall, 2002; Wyckoff *et al*., 2009). However, it also shows that the nature of the school experience is crucial to the developmental usefulness of the practicum. Meijer, de Graaf & Meirink (2011) argue that given sufficient flexibility, school placements can provide transformative

moments in which PSTs take control of their own development. Learning from mistakes and seeing mistakes and challenges as sources of learning are both central to professional growth (Meijer, de Graaf & Meirink, 2011), and yet, neither can be guaranteed during school practicum. Adaptive expertise (Hatano & Inagaki, 1986), in which teachers approach dilemmas in flexible ways, can only be developed in placement environments which afford PSTs sufficient freedom to try out ideas and make mistakes. According to Moody (2009) the freedom to identify a personal teaching style while on school practicum is of vital importance to PST development, however, not all PSTs experience this. PSTs in Beck and Kosnik's (2002) study reported that being respected and treated as a teacher, having autonomy, the opportunity to work through difficulties and experiment were important aspects of school placement. According to other studies, positive practicum experiences offer PSTs opportunities for trying out new ideas in an environment where it is safe to take risks (Ulvik & Smith, 2011) and allowing them the freedom to implement practices more closely aligned with their beliefs (Hara & Sherbine, 2018). Conversely, where participants feel excessively controlled, insufficiently trusted to make their own judgements, or discouraged from taking risks, they can feel that their professional growth is hindered (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Of course, novices should not be given complete autonomy during practicum, but the evidence suggests that practice must contain a balance between freedom and support (Ulvik & Smith, 2011) as without sufficient license to experiment and discover the efficacy (or otherwise) of their ideas, PSTs might not discover their own professional competencies and frailties, or successfully forge their own pedagogic personas. Wong (2008) suggests that for PSTs on school practicum, the stakes can be too high to make mistakes and misjudgments, encouraging risk and judgement aversion which reduces opportunities to learn from experimentation. The literature surveyed suggests that this

learning requires degrees of freedom, autonomy and leeway within which to develop decisional capital.

3.3 Decisional capital in the context of Teacher Education

High stakes monitoring of classroom activity (such as the audit culture prevalent in some education systems (Wilkins & Wood, 2009; Ozga, 2009; Graf, 2009) can present PSTs with further challenges, with PSTs feeling the effects of performativity as much as qualified teachers (Scales et al., 2018). Hara and Sherbine (2018, p.671) identify a reluctance on the part of schools and class mentors to offer PSTs freedom to explore pedagogical practices due to the prevailing audit culture. Professional standards in PST education can also have a stifling effect (Delandshere and Ayens, 2001; Yinger and Hendricks-Lee 2000), as a tendency towards reductionist descriptions of teachers' professional work makes PSTs feel 'compelled to perform' in order to demonstrate narrow interpretations of teacher effectiveness (Sinnema, Meyer and Aitkin, 2017, p.11) and tend to ignore harder to measure aspects of teacher professionalism such as judgement and flexibility (Knight, 2017).

Research examining the conditions in which decisional judgement develops in teaching is sparse, (some examples include Hordern, 2015; Ben-Peretz & Assuncao-Flores, 2018; Erskine, 2009) but does suggest that in order to develop expertise in decisional judgement certain experiences are necessary for novice professionals:

1. a degree of autonomy/flexibility (Rawles, 2016; Beck & Kosnik, 2002) by which to rehearse judgements

2. critical reflection (Schön, 1983; Coles, 2002; Pollard 2008; Ulvik and Smith, 2011)

3. expert mentoring (Tripp, 1993; Harrison, Lawson & Wortley, 2005)

Reference to the second and third of these is ubiquitous in professional literature; however, the first point is more difficult to locate. Whilst several models exist describing the characteristics of novice-expert transitions in a variety of fields (Dreyfus, 2004; Benner, 1984), each placing importance on discretionary judgement, reference to how the skill set necessary for this transition develops is hard to find (Rawles, 2016), especially in relation to teacher education. Schwartz and Sharpe (2010) proposed three conditions necessary for the development of decisional judgement, (a) the ability to frame a problem by applying it to beliefs, (b) skills required to make necessary adaptations and (c) appropriate experiences in decision making. Performative climates in teacher education might go some way to explain why the third of these conditions can be so elusive in practicum experiences. There is however, some evidence that teaching experiences in contrasting overseas contexts can offer some of the conditions necessary for the development of decisional capital.

3.4 The potential of teaching abroad

In reviewing literature on overseas teaching experiences, Kabilan (2013) points out that the benefits to university students are many and varied. They include enhancing knowledge and skills, broadening world views and cross-cultural effectiveness, coping with unfamiliar situations, developing global perspectives, increasing self-reliance, self-confidence and personal well-being (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Kuh & Kauffman, 1984; Lee, 2009; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Pence & Macgillivray; 2008; Rodriguez, 2011). Kabilan's interpretation is that developments in the personal sphere prompt developments in the professional sphere. Studies citing the professional benefits of teaching abroad for PSTs however, generally focus on the development of values, beliefs and intercultural skills and understanding (Brindley Quinn & Morton, 2008; Charles, 2017; Klein & Wikan, 2018; Trent, 2011) rather than

professional development. Where studies touch upon the development of professional skills and expertise, it is usually alongside discussion of intercultural developments. However, the few studies which present insights about professional development show that that international teaching experiences have the potential to enhance aforementioned aspects of pedagogical expertise which domestic practicum may tend to neglect. Teaching abroad can increase PST flexibility in classroom management, discipline and relationships (Garii and Walters, 2009), encourage risk-taking, classroom improvisation and creativity (often due to the unavailability of teaching resources) (Hayden and Thompson, 1999) and enhance PSTs' collaboration skills (He, Lundgren and Pynes, 2017) . Kulkarni and Hanley-Maxwell (2015) studied PSTs who had undertaken a teaching placement in East Africa, finding that developments in professional confidence, flexibility and making on the spot judgements could be attributed to 'having to teach on their toes' (p.69) regularly and that learning to act effectively in the moment developed with rehearsal and experience. In a study by Fitzsimmons and McKenzie (2006) Australian PSTs reported a range of personal developments arising from an overseas placement in Fiji, including confidence, resilience, reflection and managing change. The authors note the positive effects of these personal changes on the participants' classroom practice. The present study focusses primarily on the possibilities for professional pedagogical developments, and in particular PST decisional judgement.

In summary, there is growing discussion in the literature about the pressures which current classroom cultures bring to bear on PST development. Studies suggest that an appropriate balance of autonomy and monitoring is central to the development of decisional judgements. However, there appears to be a tendency for decisional judgement (autonomy,

flexibility, risk-taking) to be curtailed or limited on school practicum, imposing limits on the professional development of aspiring teachers. Small pockets of evidence exist suggesting that overseas teaching placements can offer conditions in which decisional judgement might thrive. With this in mind, the guiding research questions for the present study were:

1. What opportunities for professional growth did the overseas placement offer?

2. What specific conditions prompted these opportunities?

3.5 The overseas township teaching programme

Since 2012, PSTs in the second year of a three-year ITE degree programme at the British university in question, have been selected to travel to South Africa during the summer break. They teach in one of a cluster of township and rural partner schools in Kwazulu-Natal, where the mother-tongue is Isizulu but the official medium of school instruction is English. The township spans 28 sq. miles with a population of 119,497 of whom 99.43% are of Black African ethnicity. Partner schools are typical of the township and rural genre, characterised by basic school buildings, limited resources, large pupil-teacher ratios and predominantly transmission pedagogies (PIRLS, 2016). The same group of schools has participated in the partnership for several years and all had received and accommodated several cohorts of PSTs at the time of the research.

Domestic preparation sessions facilitated by the university's global centre over a series of weeks focused on educational, political and historical contexts of township and rural education, dominant pedagogies, approaches to teaching and professional expectations. This material did not form part of the ITE programme's core content. Following this, the PSTs travelled to South Africa, where after a brief orientation from local school Principals,

they began teaching full timetables of primary curriculum subjects. For the duration of their

four-week placement they lived in pairs with the family of a teacher from their school. The

school cluster had remained stable over several years so each school, its staff and pupils

were used to receiving PSTs annually, though host teachers sometimes varied from year to

year. All schools in the partnership routinely take PSTs on placements and the partnership

agreement between the SA schools and the British university upholds the schools' wish to

exercise jurisdiction over monitoring procedures for the British PSTs in accordance with

their own protocols. Following the overseas programme, PSTs are invited to evaluate and

distill their experiences through a questionnaire and a series of group reflection exercises

led by their university tutors. As the overseas programme was not established as a

professional development initiative, there was no formal mentoring, as described above.

This research study was designed to ascertain whether participation in the programme in its

current form brought any professional development benefits to PSTs.

4.0 Methodology and Methods

This paper presents the reflections of a group of British primary phase PSTs on their

experiences after teaching placements in township schools in South Africa. The study

invited the PSTs to reflect on their own professional growth, identifying areas of challenge,

strength, weakness, confidence and competence in relation to their experience in SA.

4.1 Participants

In all, twenty PSTs undertook the four-week informal, unassessed teaching placement in

township primary schools in 3 cohorts between 2017 and 2019. All were enrolled in a three-

year ITE undergraduate teacher education degree and all had completed at least two of

those three years, which included up to fourteen weeks of practicum in British primary school settings. Participation in the project was voluntary and self-funded and did not form part of their qualification. All undertook the overseas teaching experience in the summer break between the second and third (final) year of their degrees.   The students were paired and placed into the SA schools on the basis of a number of factors related to practicalities such as ability to drive and gender (e.g. for shared accommodation). Once back in the UK the SA pairings were not repeated for UK placements (again for practical reasons such travel constraints or a need to have a teaching experience within a certain type of school or within a certain age phase).

PSTs were selected by application letter and interview. Selected PSTs represented a range of performance on domestic placements but all had demonstrated required dispositions such as maturity, collegiality and critical thinking (determined by means of a selection interview). Selected PSTs represented a range of teaching confidence and competence, however the selection process excluded any PST who may have taught low quality or failed lessons. Participation in the research element was voluntary. Approximately half of the 2017 and 2018 cohorts (8) and all of the 2019 cohort (12) volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews. A range of induction and preparation sessions were facilitated, during which the PSTs were informed about the research element. Ethical consent was received from the university research ethics committee, and all participants received appropriate participant information sheets, withdrawal forms and signed consent forms. Data were anonymised for reporting.

4.2 The South African School Placement and Comparisons to UK Placements

Schooling in the SA placement schools was typical of that in urban township settlements in South Africa, characterised by basic facilities, large class sizes (50 pupils on average, but up to 70+ in some cases) and didactic pedagogies (Marais, 2016). The pedagogical styles experienced by the PSTs in the SA placements were therefore different from those experienced in the UK where classes typically hold up to 30 children and a more dialogic approach is typical. Through their UK placements the PSTs were also accustomed to having a range of teaching and learning resources available whereas in their SA placements teacher and student text books were the dominant teaching and learning resources. In SA, the PSTs were in placed pairs teaching children between ages 10 and 14, taking responsibility for the classes that they taught either individually or together. The placement lasted for four weeks and included a full timetable of teaching responsibilities across a range of subjects, including Mathematics, English, Humanities, Arts and Physical Education. Only Isizulu, the mother tongue, was off-limits to the PSTs. Lessons were usually one hour in duration and the PSTs took full responsibility for the planning, delivery and assessment of all lessons they taught. Some had the opportunity to lead staff meetings and demonstration lessons sharing British teaching methods and approaches to teaching English and Mathematics in particular.   The teaching placement undertaken in the South African schools was carried out on a voluntary basis. In this way it differed from the PSTs' domestic placements which are a more formal, integrated part of their programme of study. As such, the SA placement was unassessed, as this experience did not form any part of their university accreditation and occurred outside of university term times (during the British summer break). However, the PSTs were subject to the SA schools' regular monitoring and feedback systems. Typically, this would consist of informal learning walks carried out by the school principal or other senior staff members using informal conversations to provide feedback. Informal conversations about practice

with colleagues that the PSTs worked more closely with also occurred throughout the placement although these were not recorded or evaluated. During their volunteering period the PSTs were visited by a university tutor for pastoral purposes, but no formal assessment or appraisal of their teaching was undertaken. During domestic placements PSTs are observed teaching by both school staff (mentors) and university tutors and are provided with both informal and formal feedback. They use these feedback systems to devise a set of weekly targets which then inform their forward teaching and wider activities. Their progress against these targets is reviewed regularly with tutors and mentors who then write both an interim and final report to document their overall performance and measure it against domestic teaching standards (DfE, 2011).

Despite these differences many elements of this voluntary experience did mirror those of UK based placements. Like UK placements, the SA placements were organised by university staff, and PSTs were placed in schools by university staff rather than finding or selecting their own schools. Furthermore, like UK placements the PSTs worked full time in the schools planning, teaching, assessing and carrying out other professional duties, assuming the role of a teacher rather than a volunteer, who may drop in and out on a more flexible or part-time basis. In both placements the PSTs were expected to teach a full curriculum and timetable of subjects (other than isizulu in SA) and provide for the educational and pastoral needs of the children in their classes. For these reasons and for the purposes of this paper, the SA teaching experience will be referred to as a placement throughout.

4.3 Research Design and Method

Paired interviews with PSTs who had been placed in the same school were held five months after their SA teaching experience, during their final UK domestic placements. These interviews invited the students to reflect on their experience in SA, comparing it with their current domestic placement experience, with particular emphasis on challenges and opportunities presented by teaching in the contrasting contexts.

The interview questions (below) were designed to elicit the PSTs' reflections about their experience of teaching overseas and encourage some comparison between their UK and SA classroom experiences. Emphasis was deliberately placed on their execution of teaching strategies and developing pedagogic personas. Participants were interviewed in their SA teaching pairs, though these pairs were not working together during their domestic placements, which were individual, not paired. Interviews were conducted over a two-week period after participants had finished their UK placements for the day. Participants could choose between their placement school, the university campus or another convenient location to undertake the interview. Most chose to come to the university campus, whilst a minority opted for their placements schools and one interview was conducted in a local coffee shop. Each interview was led by one of the three researchers, was audio recorded and lasted between 35 and 50 minutes.

Researcher-participant power asymmetry is inevitable in qualitative interviews according to Brinkman and Kvale (2019). Whilst none of the three researchers had been directly involved in visiting participants in their SA or domestic placement schools, they held positions of status in relation to the participants as lecturers on the teacher education degree programme. Dynamics created by this asymmetry had the potential to disrupt the

authenticity of participants' accounts and reflections, if they felt covertly coerced (Lukes, 1974) to shape their responses in light of the dynamics. This could lead participants to say what they believed their interviewer wanted to hear, for example. This effect was moderated by the following design factors. Firstly, all participants were demonstrably enthusiastic about sharing their reflections and it was clear that the interview itself gave voice to insights PSTs were keen to share. This served as a useful example of how power is always negotiated between actors (Thornborrow, 2002). Secondly, researchers were able to decide who would conduct which interviews based on the quality of existing relationships with each pair of participants. This meant that trust and rapport existed between participants and the interviewing researcher in each case (Prior, 2017). Thirdly, participants were invited to choose the location for the interview. This attempt to shift researcher positionality towards subordination and 'minimize the distance and separateness' (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009, p.279) between researcher and researched distributed agency to participants and prioritized their convenience and comfort in the interviews. The interview questions are shown in Table 1:

Table 1:

Interview questions

Question number	Question wording
1.	Which experiences so far (as learners, as PSTs) have influenced your current thinking about how to teach?
2.	Do you have a sense of the kind of teacher you would like to be?
3.	What would your typical South African/ UK lesson look like?

4.	Has your experience in South Africa/ UK changed your beliefs about the way that you should teach?
5.	Are you able to teach in the way you would like to in South Africa/ UK?
6.	Do you feel under more, or less pressure when teaching in SA than you did during your placements in the UK? Why is this?
7.	How comfortable do you feel 'taking risks' in your lessons in SA/ UK? What encourages you to do this and what prevents you from doing so?
8.	Do you think that your experience in SA will have an impact on how you have done/ will teach during your future placements and practice?

4.4 Data analysis

Each of the three researchers analysed the data individually, applying an inductive, thematic analysis to derive salient open themes arising from the data. This consisted of line by line coding of participants' responses. The researchers met subsequently (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to use a process of inter-coder comparison to combine thematic hierarchies, so that the responses from the PSTs were triangulated into one coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Frequent and consistent themes arose across all the data, which along with the participant verification gave the researchers confidence that they were indicative of a phenomenon worthy of comment and analysis. Participant verification was achieved by returning data to participants via secure cloud file sharing to ensure it was accurate and resonated with their experiences. This was undertaken once after transcription of the interview data and again at draft manuscript stage, prior to submission, to enable participants to comment on

interpretations of the data. At stage one participants were invited to comment via email to the lead author on accuracy and at stage two on accuracy and resonance.

5. Results

5.1 Initial Thematic Analysis

Analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed a number of thematic hierarchies (Table 2) with those having the higher number of occurrences being presumed to be of the most importance to the PSTs. Most strongly emerging (67% of all responses) were thoughts relating to judgements made about the PSTs and the impact that this had on their license and confidence to make professional judgements. All of the PSTs felt that there were fewer judgements made about their practice whilst in SA compared to domestic placement and this appeared to have a considerable influence on both how they saw themselves as teachers and how they behaved in the classroom. This theme therefore forms the focus of the work presented in this paper whilst other emerging themes will be discussed in subsequent publications.

Table 2:
Coded themes and frequency of responses within these themes from the pre-service teachers.

Theme	Total no' of codes	Code	No' of occurrences
Resources	23	Availability of resources	7
		Selection of the correct resource to use	5
		Conceptual understanding	11
Being Judged/	205	Levels of judgement	41

making judgements		Willingness to take risks/ try new things out/ make mistakes	23
		Perceived impact of making mistakes	6
		Overall confidence	21
		Confidence in own professional judgements	21
		Perceived ability to implement own professional judgements	22
		Impact of judgement on teaching strategies	22
		Impact of lack of judgement on overall professional development	22
		Professional identity (positionality and autonomy)	23
		Style and timing of judgement	4
Use of Textbooks	17	Making adaptation of textbook materials	17
Behaviour Management	6	Confidence in managing behaviour	6
Children's Learning & Progress	27	Baseline understanding	2
		Addressing gaps in understanding	4
		Adjusting teaching in light of learning	14
		Measuring progress	5
		Children's willingness to comment on own progress/ performance	2
Learning in a Second Language	21	Language as a communication barrier	13
		Implications for future practice	8
Misc	7		
Total	306		

5.2 Being judged

5.2.1 Making and Implementing professional judgements

All PSTs indicated that they felt less judged and had increased confidence in their own

professional judgements whilst teaching in SA compared to their domestic teaching

experiences, linking gains in confidence to the increased freedom they experienced to exercise judgement and decisional control. As PST 7 puts it,

'Not being judged made me feel more confident as I felt like I had more autonomy to make decisions and to do what the children needed.'

PST3 stated that *'In SA the decisions were yours to make'* and related this directly to an increase in decisional capital. Direct rehearsal of deciding, implementing, evaluating and adapting appears to be iumportant here. PST 5 explains that

'I am just as confident in my decisions in the UK as I was in SA, I'm just not sure that I can put things in place as I want to in the UK. In SA they would value our opinion and so you can be more proactive'.

This contrasts with domestic practicum experiences where many felt that they need to have permission, or would feel too uncomfortable to implement their own professional decisions, or that this *'would be controversial'* (PST 4) due to concerns about the resulting judgements. Decisional capital therefore involves both the confidence to make professional decisions and the freedom to implement them, and both these themes emerged equally strongly in the findings. The relationship between this confidence and permission appears to be bi-directional; making judgements and following instinct develops confidence and increased confidence encourages greater autonomy and discretionary judgement.

Some participants stated that they felt more confident about their professional judgements during domestic practicum. Occasionally this was due to familiarity with systems such as smaller class sizes, or a better understanding of the structure and expectations. Often this related to having the opportunity to confer about decisions with a mentor for reassurance, in fact, suggesting diminished confidence in decision making in comparison to experiences whilst teaching in SA. PST 11 stated *'It is good to get a second opinion, I'm more confident in the UK as I had a back-up.'* Working with a mentor in this way, rather than feeling judged, was more akin to the paired-teaching experiences that the PSTs had had whilst working in SA. Analysis of participants' perspectives on their decision making in SA and UK classrooms suggests that the widely reported growth in confidence could relate to seeing the positive consequences of their independent decision making whereas in domestic classrooms the safety net of collaborative decision-making means that the consequences of these decisions were not entirely down to them alone. PST 9 describes how having a partner to team teach with

'helped as we could back each other up and we could chat about what was and what was not working. With your peer, you are equal. You are learning together; it was good to have the reassurance'.

PST 7 highlights the distinction between being supported and being judged by stating, *'I felt like I was watched and helped rather than judged in SA'.*

A frequent theme was a relationship between the external judgements of others and how this affected PST confidence on their UK placements. PST 15 put it this way,

'I am naturally a quiet person, so it has given me a confidence boost. No one is there to criticise you like there is in the UK.'

5.2.2 Thinking on your feet/responding to the unpredictable

Many PSTs described experiences of having to 'think on their feet', compelling them to exercise decisional capital. For some, this came in the form of being handed the chalk on their first day and asked to 'teach', for others the lack of formal systems of lesson planning or lack of materials and resources required them to work more creatively and instinctively. PST 16 described a recurring experience in the following way,

'The most valuable lesson was having to be able to think on your feet, not knowing what you were going to be doing that day. Just go in and the teacher will tell you what class – or sometimes not, you just have to walk round the school and find an empty class.'

The experience made her more comfortable and confident in situations requiring improvisation and calmer when making quick decisions. Common to all PSTs was a sense of increased confidence, the ability to go 'off script' and follow their instincts, increased professional agency, improved situational awareness and positive changes in professional identity during and after the township teaching experience. Teacher 19 explained a leap in confidence by saying,

'It's the confidence level, because you go with your gut, take a risk and just get on with it. I feel more confident in my own ideas and instinct.'

PST 15 reported that he often lacked confidence during UK placements, tending to panic and scrutinise his lesson plan when unexpected events arose. Asked why he felt more able to think on his feet in the township primary school he responded simply *'I wasn't being watched.'* Again, the lack of scrutiny seems to lead directly to an increase in decisional capital. PST 19 summarised a view expressed by all the participants that, *'It has made me comfortable with the unpredictable'*.

5.2.3 Taking Risks and Making Mistakes

A key element of professional capital is the license to make professional decisions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Doing so may involve a certain element of risk, particularly among novices in any professional sphere. The PSTs seemed to find the South African context more conducive to professional risk taking, with the willingness to take risks or make mistakes emerging strongly in the interview analysis. PST 11 explains,

'I found that I could do things in SA that I couldn't do in the UK. I wasn't worried because I wasn't being judged. Over here (UK) I would think twice, and not do it because you are constantly being observed and watched, so I play it safe'.

Of primary concern were the perceived implications of making a mistake whilst teaching during domestic practicum. The concern being that making just a single mistake could change the judgements made about them in practice reports, references, final grades or in finding a job once qualified. This contrasted with their experiences in SA where there appeared to be more space to make mistakes. As PST 4 states

'I felt more comfortable taking risks in SA as there was no one there to write it down on your observation form.'

For PST 17, the feeling that she could try out strategies, make mistakes and retry was important. Confidence came through feeling permitted and able to take risks,

'For me it was the ability to just have a go, try things out, take risks knowing I could always adjust things later or try something different in the next lesson.'

The PSTs' experiences in South Africa appear to have made them question their domestic school experiences in relation to their freedom to experiment with pedagogical strategies, and the consequences if these did not always work. PST 6 stated,

'There should be a mistake making culture because we are meant to be learning and trying things out, but it's not.'

Not only does it appear that whilst on domestic practicum the PSTs do not feel comfortable in making mistakes, they are not encouraged to try new approaches and to take risks. Again, the essence of teacher professionalism, the ability to make informed professional decisions and to implement them, seems stifled by the environment in which it is supposed to develop. This is exemplified by PST 4 who stated that

'All the time that I'm a student here (UK) I don't feel that I can take risks. I am conscious of people's judgements of me all the time here'.

This led them to question the purpose of their domestic practicum as exemplified by PSTs 3 and 1 below, showing a desire to be given more space to experiment away from the pressures of judgements, potentially allowing greater opportunities to reflect on their practice for themselves.

'If we had a week where the teachers did not judge you so that you could be experimental and try things out. If the teachers knew that things might go wrong but that we weren't being judged that would be great because we would have the chance to practice and I feel that we would learn a lot. We would make our own mistakes and we could come up with our own solutions with the teacher to guide us.' (PST 3)

'If we could have a lesson a week (during UK practice) where we just teach the class on our own that would really help. I have never taken a class in the UK and not been watched. It would really give me confidence to know that I could do it and that my judgements are good.' (PST 1)

PST 14 illustrates how the increased freedom to make mistakes in SA has influenced her domestic practice,

'My ability to take risks with my teaching has improved. In my year 3 (domestic) placement I felt more confident to not do things by the book and I did more things out of the box. Doing it in South Africa gave me the confidence to do it in the UK.'

5.2.4 Professional Identity/Autonomy

A theme common to all participants (emerging with 23 occurrences), and linked to a growth in confidence, was an increase in professional autonomy, a development of professional identity linked to the expectations placed on them. All reported a feeling of being treated like teachers and contrasted this with being positioned firmly as a PST, or novice during their domestic practicum. This phenomenon was not intentionally built into the SA teaching programme. PSTs were not primed to expect or adopt such a positioning during the preparation sessions, instead this occurred organically. This issue is discussed through the lenses of post-colonial theory in a separate publication (Carter, Author & Vickers-Hulse, *in press*). Being welcomed as a teacher (not a trainee), imbued with an assumed expertise, appears to have resulted in a distinction between the ways in which the PSTs identified themselves when teaching at home and in SA. PST 9 reports,

'I identified more as a teacher in SA than I do in the UK. The teachers there wanted to learn from us. Over here you don't feel that you can give the teachers ideas'.

Similar ideas came through in all the interviews, as illustrated in the following two quotations,

'There (SA) I felt I was more able and allowed to do a lot more. The teachers just expected you have a go. Whereas on placement it's quite [patronising voice] "well you are only a first year so you can't do this and you won't be able to do that." Here [UK] it is more about what you can't do.' (PST 17)

'I think there [SA] they talk to you like you are their equal, so you behave as one. Whereas here [UK] you feel like there is a hierarchy' (PST 18)

Feeling positioned as an expert rather than a novice derived, in part, from the lack of any evaluative scrutiny from the SA teachers or school principals. As PST 15 states;

'...in South Africa they didn't have a judgmental bone in their body so no one was ever going to look at you and say you were rubbish. So, you it gave you the opportunity to experiment and try things out.'

When asked to describe the impact of this professional trust PST 18 responded,

'If people expect a certain level from you, then you feel like you have to rise to that and it makes you better'.

This contrasted with the clear perceptions of pecking orders, concerns about being judged and being attributed an assumed incompetence on UK assessed placements. PST 6 exemplifies this by stating

'In the UK we try to slot into how the class teachers do things. You wouldn't dare to do things differently because they write your reports at the end'.

PST 8 further explained 'You are doing existing practice because you know that's what they want to see.' This erosion of professional identity and autonomy contrasts sharply with the participants' experiences of working in South African schools.

Freedom was another recurring theme, which came in the form of unmonitored practice and being trusted to teach well by the host teachers; they were all ascribed an assumed expertise which afforded them a certain license to operate with the autonomy of a teacher. This was usefully summed up by PST 20

'There was something liberating about being able to decide what to teach and how

to do it. It made me realise that I really do enjoy teaching.'

Others linked the freedom which came from being positioned as an expert to the quality of their reflections on practice. PST 17 suggests that she found more value in self-initiated than mentor-initiated professional reflection,

'If you messed up then you reflect on it, rather than having someone telling you that you

have done it wrong in which case you reflect on what they are telling you rather than what

you are doing.'

5.2.5 Purpose of Teaching

The removal of the pressures of judgement in SA appears to have resulted in an increased focus on pupil learning (the second most strongly emerging theme, see Table 2). Many of the

PSTs contrasted this with their home teaching experiences where the focus appears to be much more on their performance as teachers. PST 10 illustrated this by stating that whilst in SA,

'I thought more about how I was going to teach and what the children were going to get from the lesson. It was less about your performance. Removal of the external pressure has shifted the focus onto learning rather than you as a teacher. Here (UK) I think about my performance as I'm graded.'

PST 6 added that

'In SA you really care about them learning something (you do here (UK) too) but the pressure of having to achieve in the UK is the driving force.'

PST 2 added,

'In SA I was always thinking 'does this kid get it' and this is what I am bringing back into my teaching here'.

Many responses echoed this and indicated a desire to become more reflective about the impact and outcomes of their lessons on the children. PST 2 continued,

'I need to stop thinking so much about other people's judgements and start to focus more on what the children are learning'

extending the focus on learning rather than performance into their domestic classroom practice.

PST 15 echoed the same point,

'A lot of the time in the UK you aren't doing the planning or the teaching for you, you are doing it for the people that are judging you and who are making sure you meet the standards that you need to meet.'

The implication here, that the structures of formal assessment result in practice motivated by factors other than pupil progress, is interesting. Without observation, progress tracking, scrutiny of trainee paperwork and lesson grading, PST 15 planned and taught the best lessons he could for the benefit of the children; his preoccupation was what the pupils needed rather than what an assessor wanted to see. PST 17 articulated a similar point in reflecting on the differences between the township teaching experience and her formal UK placements,

'When you are on placement (in the UK) usually you have targets and things you are meant to tick off by the end of your placement, but there you are just teaching to (pause to find the word)....teach. There it's more about the children's progression.'

The clarity about the purpose of teaching and the PSTs' focus on the children's learning, led some to a renewed sense of professional purpose. PST 16 noted,

'For me it was the turning point. I realised this is what I want to do. In the UK you feel you are not doing it for the children sometimes, you feel you are doing for other people. You are planning the lesson not for the children but for the people that are watching you.'

A correlation between autonomy, the development of an ability to make and implement decisions in complex situations and a sense of purpose in professional practice is evident. Experiencing a renewed sense of purpose when teaching in SA, suggests that constraints placed on trainees during their formal home placements have the potential to generate disillusionment even before the qualified professional practice begins. In PST 20's case, an informal overseas placement sharing few structural similarities with her formal assessed placements in Britain to date, unlocked a renewed sense of purpose.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Positionality

That the PSTs felt less judged and inhibited in their practice during a non-assessed placement than an assessed one is no surprise and reflects distinct differences in the purpose and structure of the two placements. The consequences of these differences for their professional capabilities and identity are significant however. Despite having only completed two-thirds of their teacher education degrees, the PSTs were immediately positioned as experts by their SA host schools. It appears that this recalibration of external expectations had the effect of recalibrating internal expectations, adjusting how PSTs viewed themselves from incapable to capable, tentative to confident, novice to expert. This

was illustrative of the well-established causal relationships between autonomy and motivation, satisfaction and performance (Argote & McGrath, 1993; Dwyer, Schwartz & Fox, 1992; Spector, 1986), and assertions about the additive effect of enhanced professional identity on practice (Vidovic & Domovi, 2019; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sachs, 2005). Langfred and Moye's (2004, p.935) description of autonomy as individuals being granted 'substantial freedom, independence and discretion in carrying out a task' closely matches the experiences the PSTs described during their township teaching placements. It is unsurprising then that their interview responses indicated increased professional satisfaction and motivation. Evidence of increased performance is harder to locate in the data, however a causal link made by one participant between increased expectations and 'better' teaching suggest that her performance was enhanced (at least in her own view) and it seems reasonable to presume that a likely catalyst for this was increased autonomy.

According to Harré (2011), positioning is the process by which rights and duties are either bestowed upon or assumed by individuals. PSTs' capacity for decisional judgement is influenced by how they position themselves and how they are positioned by others (Scales *et al.*,2018) and could potentially be further influenced through the mechanisms used to assess classroom performance, as evaluative instruments for assessing PST practice tend to encourage passivity and non-agentive positioning in the classroom (Caughlan and Jiang, 2014). A discussion point for this study is whether having the rights and duties of a qualified teacher bestowed upon a trainee can be said to enhance professional identity in ways which trigger characteristics of teacher expertise. The journey from novice to expert necessarily involves a configuration of common elements; experience, time, reflection and mentoring. These factors cannot be bypassed and, in particular, time cannot be cheated; the novice has

to put the hours in. However, this data does suggest that repositioning the novice/expert

relationship and bestowing upon novices expectations and assumptions about practice

usually reserved for experts, can have the effect of positively influencing their professional

identity formation and accelerating their professional development. Yarrow and Millwater's

(1992) analysis of PSTs' reflections after an overseas practicum suggests that the experience

was empowering precisely because it encouraged the novice teachers to draw on inner

resources they may not have been aware of possessing. Data presented in the present study

appears to show that being positioned as experts in SA may have elicited more expert

teacher behaviours from the PSTs compared to their domestic practicum.

As Kulkarni & Hanley-Maxwell (2015) found with PSTs working in East Africa, being forced to

think on their feet and exercise their judgement increased PST's confidence and comfort

with the unpredictable. Reflections from PSTs in the present study indicate that these

experiences were developmentally significant to them. Harré and Moghaddam's (2003)

description of 'positioning' as subtle presuppositions about what individuals can say or do in

particular circumstances, suggests that being positioned as an expert includes being granted

additional permissions. This appears to correlate with the sense which participants in the

present study reported of being 'seen as an equal (PST 18)', the liberating feeling of 'being

able to decide what to teach and how to do it' (PST19) and being 'allowed to do a lot more'

(PST18).

6.2 Permission to make decisional judgements

It may be that the most significant consequence of the permissions afforded to the PSTs,

was the license to trial their lesson ideas and make mistakes. The feeling of being trusted

professionally comes through tangibly in most of the interviews and is discussed by Frowe (2010, p.34) as being a 'central component of what it means to be a professional.' His argument, which corresponds closely with the experiences of the PSTs in this study, is that judgement does not reside in the realm of the propositional, but the tacit and the individual. The implications of this for PSTs wanting to develop this vital skill are that judgements arise intuitively as a consequence of the interaction between self and context, not from external structures or rubrics. In the SA context, the structures permitted, encouraged and even necessitated judgement-making, but the judgements themselves came from the PSTs. Discussing Bransford and Schwartz's (1999) concept of adaptive expertise, which characterises experts as uniquely able to go beyond routine competencies and solve novel problems, Von Esch and Kavanagh (2018, p.241) suggest that settings most conducive to supporting its development in PSTs permit them to 'experiment, make errors and try different solutions and methods.' Claxton's (2000) discussion of the conditions in which intuitive practice emerges echoes this, suggesting that pre-requisites to its development are environments that are 'convivial, playful, cooperative and non-judgmental' (p.48). The last of these conditions in particular chimes with data in the present study, as whilst in SA they were able to rehearse the skills of adaptability and improvisation, to judge for themselves when they had succeeded or mis-stepped, and learn from the experiences. Adaptations evident in PST responses often involved challenges associated with language barriers and high pupil-teacher ratios. These included deviating from lesson plans, on the spot decisions to introduce outdoor learning activities, reteaching episodes not fully understood by pupils and managing varying degrees of success and failure in introducing novel practices, such as small group collaboration and partner talk. The data suggests that the more permissive, less judgmental SA school context encouraged PSTs to become more 'adaptive' in their practice.

In contrast, and with relevance to what this study can tell us about UK based practicum experiences, it seems that the structures for assessing PSTs' progress in the UK may in fact inhibit the very progress they aim to measure. This is both interesting and concerning. This leaves PSTs and teacher educators in a 'catch-22' situation whereby only rehearsal of making classroom judgements facilitates developments in practice, but the instruments of scrutiny which aim to assess professional development cause a reluctance to rehearse. Paradoxically, when consciously focusing on one's own development (during domestic placements), development can be stifled by preoccupation with targets and judgments about progress; yet when not (i.e. in SA, where the focus was purely on practice) development appears to accelerate. Discovering that one's own judgements and decisions can be 'right' or yield desirable outcomes rather than being concerned about, and therefore possibly restricted by, the judgements of others makes a useful contribution to PST development.

7.0 Limitations

The authors acknowledge that generalisable claims about growth in decisional capital arising from such teaching experiences are problematic. Firstly, the participants were a self-selecting group who volunteered for the programme and as such it is likely that some at least were already predisposed to taking risks, moving outside their comfort zones and with a commitment to professional and personal self-improvement. Some of the professional gains evident in their accounts are likely to be a result of this. Secondly, alongside the apparent professional development benefits of this overseas teaching experience there were also drawbacks, some of which may in fact have undermined the PST's professional

growth. For example, they were not mentored at all during the placement (the importance of which is ubiquitous in the teacher education literature) and whilst they did report acting as critical friends to one another and appear to have partially filled this vacuum by assuming greater personal responsibility, there was an absence of expert critical questioning and discussion about their practice. Professional developments depicted in the data are all self-reported, no objective measuring instruments were used to establish growth in confidence.

The authors also acknowledge the importance of post-colonial discourse when researching global North-South education partnerships, particularly in circumstances where PSTs from the global North teach in global Southern schools (Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Martin, 2012; Cook, 2008; Zemach-Bersin, 2007). Critical discussion about the tendency for such programmes to merely reinforce new forms of imperialism, colonialism and hegemonic thinking about the 'other', and their potential contributions to reverse such tendencies (Charles, 2017; Carrington and Saggers, 2008; Marble, 2012), is vitally important. This analysis is not developed here but is the focus of a separate article (Carter, Knight & Vickers-Hulse, 2021) in which the British PSTs' township teaching experiences (including some who also participated in the present study) are analysed using the theoretical frame of post-colonial theory.

8.0 Conclusion

This small-scale study aimed to elicit reflections of twenty PSTs from a British university after a teaching placement in South African township primary schools. The data indicates that this experience encouraged and enabled the PSTs to rehearse the skill of discretionary, decisional judgement. The conditions which facilitated these aspects of professionalism

were: the absence of formal monitoring or assessment, feeling trusted to act autonomously and being positioned, at least in part, as experts. Analysis of the data suggests that the first of these conditions was key in unlocking the others.

In considering whether these conditions could be replicated to any useful extent in a domestic school placement, it is important to consider whether evaluative judgement of PST practice can realistically be decreased and PST autonomy increased. Could the current culture of performativity and audit prevalent in UK and comparable education systems support such developments? The authors suspect not, at least not to the degree enjoyed by the PSTs during their SA experience. Creating the conditions in which PST decisional capital can thrive within a framework of competency descriptors and monitoring would prove challenging. As previously discussed, tessellating policies of competency rubrics, pupil-progress agendas and instruments of PST monitoring create an atmosphere somewhat at odds with allowing greater autonomy for PSTs. However, based on the responses from the participants in the present study, all of whom reported a growth in confidence and associated this with the greater autonomy they experienced, if school placements are intended to offer PSTs 'practice and engagement in real world educational settings' (Curtis, Martin & Broadley, 2019, p.78), the authors conclude that mechanisms for increasing pre-service teachers' decisional capital and license to act (Hargreaves and Fullen, 2012) whilst on school placements should be explored.

8.1 Implications for teacher preparation

The clearest implication for teacher preparation arising from this study is the need for PSTs to experience periods of unassessed, independent classroom practice. One potential means

to facilitate this came from PSTs 1 and 3 who suggested that assessed domestic placements, could include a week, perhaps at the end, during which no formal monitoring occurs, no judgements are made and therefore increased decisional capital is afforded to PSTs. This could take the form of teaching more lessons (or parts of lessons) without a class mentor present, increased responsibility for planning, greater responsibility for management of non-lesson transitions (e.g. movement of pupils between lessons or to/from break times), license to make more improvisational, in-the-moment decisions about teaching and learning or responsibility for managing problems arising from mistakes. During such a period there would be no formal monitoring, judgement or grading of PSTs. Analysis of the data has led to the following hypotheses about professional development benefits for PSTs. Firstly, they would see the consequences of pedagogical decisions, knowing the decisions had been their own. PSTs may experience the boost in confidence arising from their productive decisions and assume personal responsibility for problematizing poor ones. Secondly, independent, unassessed practice would necessitate resourcefulness and encourage PSTs out of their comfort zones, drawing on their own initiative and problem-solving skills, rather than defering to the reassurance of consultation and subordination to a mentor. Finally, this format has the potential to move PSTs on from a focus on their learning, towards a focus on pupils' learning. The results of this study have led to the planning of future research to evaluate the efficacy of these hypotheses. PST 3 noted that this approach would only be fruitful with expert mentorship from the class teacher.

We would make our own mistakes and we could come up with our own solutions with the teacher to guide us.' (PST 3)

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