



International teaching internships for future teachers: potential and challenges for learning

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Abstract

Internationalisation of the higher education system continues to have a strong impact on national education policies. From an international perspective, learning to teach in globally competent and culturally responsive ways is a core element of teacher education. For this purpose, academically and practice-oriented student teacher exchange programmes have been established. It is often taken for granted that corresponding internships abroad offer positive learning experiences, but research shows that these expectations are frequently not met. This paper; therefore, investigates if and how learning takes place in multi-week international internships, what shapes, enables, limits or obstructs this learning. The investigation is based on a qualitative-hermeneutic approach with data collected from group discussions and analysed according to the documentary method. The analyses led to two ‘ideal types’: the first is based on learning from contrasts and includes sub-types in which the student teachers’ perceptions and interpretations are differentiated or distanced to a greater or lesser extent. The second ideal type, in which learning takes place through challenges, is also divided into sub-types which differ in the degree of self-efficacy experienced by the students. The paper concludes with some suggestions on how pre-service teachers can be supported so that the learning potential of their internships can be exploited more fully.

Keywords International teaching internship · Mobility · Teacher education · Internationalisation

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1 Introduction

2 Areas and conditions of learning in an internship abroad

Over the past decade, internationalisation of the higher education system has had a strong impact on national education policies. As a consequence, teacher education, which has traditionally been considered as part of further professional education in many European countries, has been incorporated into the higher education system (Kyvik, 2009; OECD, 2005). In line with this, there has been a noteworthy change in Swiss teacher education. Following a major shift in the 1990s, teacher education now takes place at university level and while the curriculum has become more academically oriented, international components such as student exchange programmes have also gained significance. In fact, they have become a crucial part of the strategic development of teacher education (Denzler, 2014). Learning to teach in globally competent and culturally responsive ways is one primary argument for the internationalisation of teacher education in the twenty-first century (Gay, 2000).

International internships are regarded as particularly intensive, horizon-expanding and competence-enhancing experiences. They have gained enormously in scope and importance at universities of teacher education as part of increasing internationalisation efforts. However, they run the risk of primarily serving to position the universities in the tertiarised educational landscape, orienting themselves to quantitatively measurable variables such as the number of mobility activities and, in doing so, losing sight of the question of the actual qualitative gain that has been achieved (see authors 2011; Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010). It is therefore worth asking what this gain is, to what extent experiences from international environments are being introduced and applied in the traditionally local contexts of compulsory education, and how time spent in schools abroad can help prospective teachers develop their competences.

Research shows that the learning effects of internships at the individual level can be demonstrated in three main areas: firstly, in the development of foreign language skills (cf. e.g. Bracht et al., 2006; Vande Berg, 2009), secondly, in some aspects of personality development, especially increased independence and flexibility and improved self-confidence and sociability (see overview in Brunner, 2015) and thirdly, in enhanced 'intercultural sensitivity', for example through strengthened expectations of self-efficacy in dealing with social diversity (see overview in Dockrill, Rahatzad and Phillion, 2016; Leutwyler, 2014). However, research also shows that expectations of the benefits of internships abroad are often exaggerated (see Jackson & Oguro, 2018), that some participants fail to benefit from their learning potential (see inter alia Leutwyler, 2014), and that the effects can even be counterproductive, leading to increased stereotyping and devaluation of the constructed 'others' (for an overview, see Dockrill, Rahatzad and Phillion, 2016; Twombly et al., 2012). At the same time, it is not clear what limits the positive learning effects and how they can be facilitated and supported (Leutwyler, 2014).

This paper addresses these issues, examining *the extent to which learning takes place during international multi-week internships and what shapes this learning—that is, what promotes, limits or prevents it*. In the process, individual ways of dealing with situations as well as the relevant contextual factors are considered.

3 Methodological approach: qualitative-hermeneutic

The research question is addressed through the qualitative-hermeneutic approach of the documentary method according to Bohnsack (2010, 2013, 2014), including data collection with group discussions. Before the sampling, the data collection and the data analysis of the presented research are described, some general information about this methodological approach shall be given.

3.1 Methodology of the documentary method

The documentary method has been chosen as this approach allows to go beyond the analysis of self-observation and self-report which typically carry the problem of socially desirable statements that can be highly misleading in the interpretation of the data. Instead, this approach allows for a particularly elaborate way of reconstructing the respondents' orientations including their "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1966). This "tacit knowledge"—or "implicit knowledge", as Bohnsack (2010) calls it—is highly significant as it is the "kind of knowledge which gives orientation to action" (ibid., p. 100). According to Bohnsack (2010), reconstructing implicit knowledge means to gain insight on the structure of action, the *modus operandi*, the underlying logic that practice is oriented upon: "Asking for the structure of practice, for the practical accomplishment and construction of reality means asking for the habitualized practices, based on the incorporated experiential knowledge of the actors which guides their activities" (ibid., p. 101).

In order to access this "implicit knowledge", it is not appropriate to merely scrutinise the knowledge that is being explicated by the respondents and to take it literally. A different methodological procedure is necessary, one that implies a change in analytical stance which goes beyond the literal meaning and common sense. It requires a differentiation between asking *what* the respondents articulate as their reality, and *how* this reality is being constructed (ibid., p. 102–103). This differentiation leads to two consecutive steps of data interpretation, a "formulating" and a "reflecting" interpretation: For the "formulating" interpretation, the explicit meaning—the content of what the respondents have said—is reconstructed. This step results in a formulation of the topical structure of the conversation. For the "reflecting" interpretation, the "how" of the articulations is paid attention to in order to reconstruct the respondents' "frameworks of orientation" (Bohnsack, 2014, p. 225). These frameworks entail more than can be explicated by the respondents, they are often expressed metaphorically in depictions and narrations (Bohnsack, 2010, p. 104). In addition to the "formulating" and the "reflecting" interpretation, in the case of group discussions, it is particularly insightful to investigate the way the discourse is organised among the participants, who is agreeing or disagreeing with whom and what is not being said and quietly taken for granted as it belongs to a shared implicit knowledge among the group members (for details, see Bohnsack, 2010, 2013, 2014).

Through this analytical process—which entails "formulating" and "reflecting" interpretation as well as the consideration of the group discourse dynamics—contrasting aspects are successively related to each other and carved out, leading to some drafts of type structures which are then continuously proposed, verified or rejected and newly proposed until they appear to be robustly verifiable by the data. The validity and generalisability of such a type structure "depends on how precisely it can be differentiated from other possible types" (Bohnsack, 2014, p. 229). Accordingly, this process of constant differentiation is crucial, and

samples should include a range of different contrasts to allow the researchers to find out by comparison whether or in what ways the different aspects prove relevant.

Apart from the advantage of enabling an approximation to the respondents' perspectives and orientations beyond self-observation and self-report, this methodological approach has another great advantage by not relying on theoretical framings from the outset. It does not depend on interview settings with structured questions and topics that are brought into the conversation and which run the risk of reproducing the researchers' expectations. Instead, the investigation can be approached with an open mind, that is, the researcher conducts the group discussions with as little influence as possible, particularly at the beginning, leaving and providing room for the respondents to express themselves. Accordingly, the choice of the sensitising theoretical concepts for the interpretation of the data is left open at the beginning and only decided in the course of the analysis which involves multiple reflection loops.¹

The complex procedure of the documentary method can only be outlined very briefly here, for further details please refer to Bohnsack (2010, 2013, 2014).

3.2 Sampling, data generation and analyses

This examination focuses on participants of international multi-week internships for pre-service teachers. These internships are to be distinguished from formats like study abroad semesters as they do not emphasise the academic studying, but are designed to give student teachers the opportunity to learn about daily school life in a different context and to practice their teaching skills.

The *sampling* was structured according to different comparison horizons, as contrasting aspects are crucial for the chosen methodological approach. The sample consisted of a total of eight women and six men, some of whom were pursuing their studies in their first and some in a further educational path. Apart from these differences in gender and age, the following contrasts were structuring elements of the sample:

- *The internship programme:* The sample comprises student teachers that have taken part in two different study programmes from two different universities: Firstly, in the internship programme of the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) for prospective secondary teachers who have chosen English as one of their subjects and who were completing an 'Assistant Teachership' in the English-speaking world as an obligatory part of their education. These students are expected to reflect on their experiences regarding their English language competences and intercultural learning as well as on questions of professional development, teacher identity, curriculum and school context. They were prepared to write and interact on these issues in a blog and after return, they again reflected on their experiences by group presentations and blog analyses. Secondly, the sample enclosed student teachers who took advantage of an opportunity offered by the University of Teacher Education in Zug (PHZG) for prospective kindergarten and primary school teachers to complete a four-week internship in Australia, but outside the study programme and without the internship being credited as a study achievement. Nevertheless, they were given some support through a module that entailed discussions on how to deal with the experience of difference or unfamiliarity and on learning to become more flexible and open-minded.
- *The students' involvement in finding a destination:* Amongst those who participated in the programme of the PHZH, some of the student teachers organised their internship

¹ This is the reason why in this paper the theoretical reflections are not presented in a chapter before, but within the results section.

themselves in consultation with the PHZH while others indicated a desired destination within the selection offered by the PHZH, and then accepted the internship they were allocated. Amongst those who took part in the programme of the PHZG, the available destination was a given, as only a stay in Australia was offered.

For the *data generation*, four group discussions were held, some of them a few weeks, others several months after their return from the four-week internship:

- Group A (16.03.2018) with 3 women of PHZG
- Group B (20.03.2018) with 1 woman, 3 men of PHZH
- Group C (20.03.2018) with 1 woman, 3 men of PHZH
- Group D (29.03.2018) with 3 women of PHZH

The group discussions were recorded as audio files, and then transcribed. All group discussions were conducted (cf. Bohnsack, 2008) firstly with a thematically open invitation to talk about the experience of the internship (“Please tell us about your stay”) including immanent follow-up questions. Following this, exmanent questions were asked about what the students considered their greatest learning gain from the internship, and what effects it had had on their pedagogical orientations, as well as on their dealings with migration-related diversity² in their home context.

The *data analyses* were pursued according to the procedure outlined above. The formulating as well as the reflecting interpretations were organised in a parallel process of two researchers who in a first step interpreted the data separately from each other. This enabled to control whether they came to similar conclusions and whether they oversaw some important aspects due to their respective blind spots. In a second step, they came into a discussion with each other, outlining more ways of interpreting the data, building respective theses while constantly reviewing whether these proposed theses proved true or needed to be discarded or modified.

4 Results: two ideal–typical interconnections

The data analyses led to the identification of two ideal types, with interconnections formed by variants or subtypes, each with its own characteristics.

For these typical structures, interestingly, none of the aforementioned contrasts of the sample proved significant. The sub-types and characteristics associated with the two ideal types cannot be linked with the contrasting factors found in the composition of the sample, such as age, gender, the kind of internship programme or the students’ involvement in finding a destination. Rather, they can be seen in students of different ages, genders as well as in both mobility programmes at the two universities mentioned above.

In accordance with Bohnsack (2001), these ideal–typical interconnections are to be understood as abstractions, which can occur in more or less contoured ways and are sometimes found in mixed forms. In the presented study, the ideal types are mainly found in strongly contoured ways and shall be presented along the most contoured cases each.

² The term «migration-related diversity» has become an alternative term for „intercultural diversity“ in Switzerland, as „intercultural“ is considered to be reducing (and ascribing) the complexity of diversity too much in terms of „cultural“ aspects, while „migration-related“ is broader and more likely to capture the reality by referring to all kinds of differing and othering practices related to questions of national or ethnic origin and belonging.

4.1 Ideal type 'learning from contrasts'

The *first of the two ideal types* is oriented towards 'learning from contrasts' and is particularly concerned with everything that differs from the familiar. This type has three subtypes, or variants: (a) with undifferentiated, (b) with differentiated and (c) with distanced perception and interpretation of what has been experienced.

Variant (a), with its *relatively undifferentiated* way of perceiving and interpreting, is exemplified in the field report of a student who spent her internship abroad at a school in Great Britain. Her description is structured in such a way that she hardly introduces any differentiating aspects in observations that would allow for substantial differentiation within the experienced context, and instead categorizes them sweepingly according to what she considers to be better or worse in comparison to what is familiar to her. For example, she reports on the tradition of school uniforms, to which she is unaccustomed, and does not attempt to understand this tradition in its various facets and with its advantages and disadvantages, but merely makes the criticism that the uniforms provide too little protection against the cold (D, ll. 29–36). Furthermore, she observes that in the classroom great emphasis is placed on 'old English texts' and poetry from the nineteenth century, but does not differentiate, for example, by considering their educational relevance, instead criticizing them sweepingly as "not at all contemporary" (D, l. 451) and assuming that they were only emphasized because this "poetry stuff" (D, l. 373), as she calls it, is of great importance for passing external examinations. In turn, she regards this orientation towards external examinations as of little use for the students' professional future, believing that the contents of these examinations prepare them too little for the world of work. In this context, she asks herself: "Is this doing you any good?" and justifies her criticism with the revealing statement: "Yes, and above all it is not our approach at all!" (D, ll. 373–451). Although her criticisms may occasionally be justified, it is striking at this and other points how quickly she makes a judgement about what she has observed and how much this judgement is oriented towards an inherent logic of 'better or worse than us'. Her statement "Yes, and above all it is not our approach at all!" seems to her sufficient to justify her criticism: she appears to assume that "our approach" is basically the 'better' or 'more progressive' one. This basic assumption remains unchallenged by the group and is confirmed in other places, for example by another participant telling us that the teaching there—in Great Britain—is "how we taught perhaps 30 years ago" (D, l. 352).

The same interconnection is found in the discussion of Group C, where a student who was in the United States reported that there was "no proper curriculum" and "no learning goals" (C, ll. 385–388). He does not approach the situation in a differentiated way by asking, for example, whether there is a reason for this or whether there were curricula or learning goals in a form unfamiliar to him, but rather sees first and foremost a deficiency and a corresponding need for development. He says he tried to "bring in something from Switzerland that they might be able to benefit from" by saying to some teachers at the school that it would help "if you tried to work with learning objectives". He does not limit himself to giving this advice, but also asks the teachers to improve their teaching by saying: "Work more with other social forms [...] so that you introduce some variety, because otherwise things get boring. Then you'd have fewer disruptions" (C, ll. 395–401).

In this group too, an interpretative framework involving the higher-valued 'own' is evident in many places and is not questioned by the group. This attitude of 'bringing in something from Switzerland' and thus being helpful is made even more questionable by the fact that the advice is offered by an inexperienced student addressing experienced teachers.

The mindset shown here is one in which the participants approach the internship situations in a relatively undifferentiated manner and with generalised preconceptions. They quickly arrive at a judgment, proceeding from a basic assumption of the higher-valued 'own', which tends to put their perceptions of the 'other' in a negative light.

This contrasts with *Variant (b)*, in which the students report and interpret their perceptions in a relatively *differentiated* manner compared with *Variant (a)*. For example, after his internship in Singapore, one student says that there were many differences and that many things were "new to him", "such as, for example, in the morning all the students assembled and sang the national anthem" (C, ll. 299–305). This student refrains from spontaneous evaluations and initially describes the observations as "differences" and "new" in a value-neutral way. He gets involved in all the "new" things, which demands a lot from him, because at first he feels it is "not so easy to teach maths in English" (C, l. 307), and he finds that he is expected to present mathematical derivations according to exact specifications, so that he has to inquire constantly about the local form of presentation (C, ll. 306–313). At the same time, he keeps an open mind about what he has experienced. For example, he becomes better acquainted with the morning singing of the national anthem—a ritual that is perceived as highly irritating by many students during their internship abroad because of the "celebration of the national"—and describes it in a differentiated way as one element of everyday school life, in which students learn responsibility by being involved in many activities which contribute to the school community (C, ll. 488–491). In other observations too, he is interested in different facets and sometimes weighs advantages and disadvantages against each other. For example, he is impressed by the cooperation among the teachers and experiences how they meet regularly, for example to discuss and evaluate essays according to agreed criteria, thereby checking whether their evaluation is fair. However, he emphasises that this form of cooperation takes a lot of time: "So this exchange between the teachers really impressed me a great deal. But of course, it's true that these meetings take a lot of time, yes, they do take a lot of time" (C, ll. 625–643).

The same kind of mindset is found in a student who was in Great Britain and who initially noticed what was unfamiliar to her, above all the intense surveillance of the school premises. She also refrains from undifferentiated, hasty evaluation and allows herself to be impressed and inspired by various things during her internship. For example, she is amazed at the pupils' ability to discuss literature (C, ll. 418–426), and in view of this, she has differentiated thoughts about the extent to which competition is conducive to learning (C, ll. 502–552). She rethinks her pedagogical beliefs about the extent to which learning can and should take place without the pressure of grades, inspired by an assignment she observed in which the pupils created games on the topic of the Middle Ages: "... with this game, the medieval game, where they could simply do without grades. I am so attached to grades in my lessons ... If the pupils don't want to participate in the lessons, it's about 'it would be good for your grade' ... and I've now decided to try out different learning activities, to create opportunities that are not tied to marks" (C, ll. 678–683).

The mindset here therefore consists of a curiosity about unfamiliar things and a reluctance to rush to judgement. It is interesting to note that the impressions are consistently more positive than in *Variant (a)*, and that inspiring ideas and inspirations are mentioned in a differentiated way, without one's 'own' or familiar things being devalued.

Finally, *Variant (c)* is characterised by *distanced* perception and low or only partial participation. One of the interviewees, for example, is far more interested in his extracurricular activities than in the internship itself. Although he does take part in some discussions that interest him about the education system in the United States, he does not contribute to the actual teaching. In this way, he circumvents the official requirements for the internship and

does not rise to the challenge of learning from it. He collects some superficial impressions by observing the lessons, noting that a lot of teaching is done frontally or that the classrooms are equipped with “lecterns” where the teachers “often” stand to speak to the class (D, ll. 335–336), but does not go deeper into teaching issues and wonders whether he has actually benefited professionally from this internship: “What benefits does it bring you—will I be a better teacher after the AT?” (‘AT’ stands for ‘Assistant Teachership’) (D, ll. 279–280). He also feels that the four weeks allotted are too long and thinks that he would have got such an “impression” “even in two or three” (D, ll. 344–345).

The interconnections to be found here are between self-chosen limited participation and remarks showing relatively distanced or superficial observation, and at the same time a paucity of learning gain in relation to the student’s own pedagogical orientations or beliefs.

All these three variants are primarily oriented towards a perception of contrasts in teaching and the school system, but show different degrees of differentiation. In this connection, it makes sense to refer to what is repeatedly emphasized in the context of reflection concepts: that “separation of observation and evaluation should be seen as an essential factor of reflection” in order to counteract hasty judgments (Hilzensauer, 2017, p. 40). This emphasis goes back to John Dewey (1910), who wrote: “Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful” (ibid., p. 13). In order to endure this painful moment, one needs “willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance” (ibid., p. 13).

It may be precisely such moments of uncertainty that students in *Variant (a)* want to avoid, causing them to defend their beliefs relatively unreflectively, thus—in contrast to *Variant (b)*—missing out on inspiring insights. This is probably exacerbated by the fact that beliefs about the way school is “supposed” to be are relatively resistant to change (cf. Baumert & Kunter, 2006; cf. also the remarks on “Grammar of Schooling” by Tyack & Tobin, 1994 and Quesel, 2012). In addition, when confronted with the fact that pedagogical demands are typically structured by requirements that may seem contradictory (cf. Helsper, 2002), students understandably long for stable orientations, particularly in the vocational preparation phase and under the already unsettling circumstances of an internship abroad.

4.2 *Ideal type ‘learning from particular challenges’*

The *second ideal type* begins in a similar way, in that it too is initially oriented towards contrasts, but then experiences a form of *special challenge* that can develop in two directions: in *Variant (a)* with the experience of low self-efficacy, and in *Variant (b)* with the experience of high self-efficacy.

Variant (a), for example, is found in the case of a student who, at the very beginning of her internship in Australia, encountered a teaching style with a great deal of frontal teaching. She not only found the quality of the teaching disappointing, but also had a poor relationship with the teacher assigned to her, and thus felt “completely disillusioned” (A, l. 21). She also had different expectations regarding her role and felt frustrated about this as well, since she had only been allowed to “sit there and watch” (A, l. 94), while on the other hand she felt “exploited” by being assigned unskilled tasks (A, l. 95). In view of this disappointment she views her entire internship in a frustrated and negative light.

The interconnection between the experience of low self-efficacy, a special challenge and finally an overall negative experience is also illustrated in the story of a student who travelled to Central America: she was surprised that she could not leave the house in the evening because of the high crime rate. The feeling of limited room for manoeuvre continues with

her experience of being mainly used as “a cheap helper” (B, l. 643) and being unable to change anything about it. Instead, she got the impression that probably “they did not want me to get involved at all” (B, ll. 306–307), which also led to her reporting almost exclusively on negative things and abandoning her plan to work abroad later on: “I wanted to do that once, but for the moment it’s buried” (B, ll. 444–445). Since this abandonment extends beyond Central America to all foreign countries, she may well see the cause of her disappointment not only in the circumstances of her internship but also in her own abilities. She may be saying to herself: ‘I used to think I could handle this, but now I realize I’m not as good at it as I thought.’

In *Variant (b)*, on the other hand, dealing with a particular challenge takes a somewhat different course, for example in the case of a student who spent his internship in India. Although he was fascinated by India and had done some research about it before his internship, it had been “more intense and crazy” (B, l. 171) for him than expected, so that he had felt “overwhelmed” by it (B, l. 180). At the same time, he had been expected to take over parts of the teaching right from the start, which he did not feel able to do, since he “didn’t even understand their English”, and did not “get along” with the teaching style, because “their method of teaching” was “actually only question, answer, question, answer” (B, ll. 325–327), while in addition the classrooms “simply had nothing in them” (B, l. 328), meaning that hardly any infrastructure or teaching material was available to him. This student deals with these challenges by allowing himself time to get used to things: “And I told them, yes, I would very much like to get to know the school and the system first, and that went on for two and a half weeks ... or I just needed time to get used to it a bit” (B, ll. 320–328). Through this development process he experiences himself as self-effective, because he is given the time to get used to things, finds ways to cope with the circumstances and finally experiences teaching and relationships as being so positive that he says he was “simply captivated”; a “solidarity” with the colleagues had developed which “did (him) good”, and he could “well imagine” working as a teacher in India one day (B, ll. 566–581).

This connection between a particular challenge, the experience of self-efficacy and an ultimately positive verdict on the entire internship is also found in other accounts. One example is the case of a student in Chile, who found that the school class was almost completely handed over to her, which initially challenged her, but which she then managed well, especially on the relationship level, so that she speaks of a particularly enriching experience. She feels strengthened in her expectation of self-efficacy with regard to working with foreign language or immigrant children and decides, on the basis of this experience, to look for an urban immigrant neighbourhood as her future place of work: “I don’t think I would have applied or even considered applying to such a school if I hadn’t known what it’s like to come to a country and not be able to speak the language one hundred percent, or realized that you yourself can be the one who is coming into the country instead of being someone who lives there, always teaching people from another country ... it used to be like that for me; yes, now you have someone in the class who doesn’t speak German, it’s like an extra effort, but now I actually see it as quite nice when you have children in the class who come from another background” (A, ll. 561–577).

In both *Variants (a)* and *(b)*, therefore, a particular challenge is experienced—for example in the encounter with the unexpected or unfamiliar. In this context, the question of the scope of action which is available or actually used, and thus the question of expected or experienced self-efficacy, becomes the decisive factor. In Bandura (1997, p. 3), the expectation of self-efficacy is understood as a subjective belief that one can cope with demanding situations and challenges. Key sources for the development of such self-efficacy expectations are experiences of success that are interpreted as such by the individuals concerned. However, positive

Table 1 Overview of ideal–typical interconnections

Ideal type		Variant (sub-type)	Characteristics of variant
Learning from contrasts <i>"I know better what I (don't) want."</i>	a	Variant with undifferentiated perception and interpretation	Spontaneous evaluation of the 'other' with the basic assumption of the higher value of one's 'own' Defensive consolidation of existing beliefs
	b	Variant with differentiated perception and interpretation	Desire to understand the 'other' Inspired rethinking of existing beliefs
	c	Variant with distanced perception and interpretation	Limited learning Little examination of one's own beliefs
Learning from particular challenges <i>"I know better what I can (can't) do."</i>	a	Variant with the experience of low self-efficacy <i>"I can do less than I thought I could."</i>	Weakened self-efficacy expectation in the role of teacher in general ...and sometimes in relation to future employment abroad or in immigrant neighbourhoods in particular
	b	Variant with the experience of high self-efficacy <i>"I can do more than I thought I could."</i>	Strengthened self-efficacy expectation in the role of teacher in general ... and sometimes in relation to future employment abroad or in immigrant neighbourhoods in particular

encouragement from significant persons and beneficial environmental conditions can also be influential factors (cf. Bandura, 1997, pp. 6–7; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 42–45). At the same time, Bandura (1997) emphasizes that the way a given environment, with its socio-structural influences, is utilised varies considerably from person to person. Some know how to make the best use of the situation, while others are quickly discouraged by obstacles (ibid., p. 6).

The analyses show that in *Variant (a)* students experience challenges in combination with a lack of flexibility or limiting scopes of action. Furthermore, they are also unable to expand their scope of action and to influence the situation in a satisfying way, thus, they do not experience their self-efficacy. In *Variant (b)*, on the other hand, students experience challenging situations in combination with social acceptance and their own self-efficacy.

While students in *Variant (a)* get the feeling that they can do *less* than they thought they could, and for example give up their plans of one day teaching abroad, students in *Variant (b)* find that they can do *more* than they thought they could and as a result feel strengthened not only in their role as a teacher in general, but sometimes also in specific domains such as teaching abroad or in urban immigrant neighbourhoods.

The following table shows the two ideal types, each with corresponding sub-types (variants) and their characteristics. Learning from contrasting experiences leads to more clearly defining or reconsidering one's beliefs and consequently to knowing better what one *does or does not want* to learn from these experiences, while learning from special challenges leads to knowing better what one *can or cannot do* regarding one's competences as a future teacher (Table 1).

5 Unused potential and support possibilities

The identified types show that the internship experience and the learning that can occur through these experiences differ substantially depending on the way participants deal with contrasts (ideal type A) and also depending on the way they deal with challenges (ideal type B). In both cases, the learning can be limited as well as facilitated in the interplay of the respective dispositions, the internship conditions and the experiences made. In other words: in both cases, some unused potential can be identified. The question therefore arises as to what forms of support are needed in order to exploit the learning potential more fully.

In the case of *Variant (a)* in the ‘*learning from contrasts*’ *ideal learning type*, the wasted opportunity particularly consists in the students missing out on many learning experiences due to their spontaneous and tendentially negative overall evaluation of contrasts to their own background, and to their relatively undifferentiated perception. Accordingly, support could consist in encouragement to behave more in accord with *Variant (b)*, that is, with caution in spontaneous evaluation and differentiated perception that keeps one’s mind open to unknown aspects from which one can learn. This does not mean approving of everything uncritically, but rather using the opportunity to be stimulated by other modes of behaviour, pedagogical orientations or educational systems in order to recognise and possibly also reconsider one’s existing beliefs.

It is noticeable that the statements associated with *Variant (a)* are apparently based on an interpretation framework which assumes that one’s ‘own’ is more valuable in a relatively general sense. Positive experiences with one’s own educational system may well be encouraging and motivating for one’s teaching activities, but this optimistic assessment of one’s ‘own’ may also reflect world views that imply a general devaluation of the constructed ‘others’ and reproduce a discourse that—according to postcolonial theoretical approaches—is widespread (cf. also Martin & Griffiths, 2014). It would therefore be useful for the students to examine their personal world views in the context of these discourses and to become increasingly aware of the blanket devaluations of ‘others’ which these world views may contain—also regarding how they deal with migration-related diversity as teachers.

Regarding *Variant (c)*, which is characterised by a self-chosen distance from events, the first priority is probably to avoid situations that cause students to take such a distanced attitude, for example by requiring that teaching performance is a key criterion for successful completion of their internship.

As far as the ‘*learning from particular challenges*’ *ideal type* is concerned, there is a special need for support for *Variant (a)*. As a first step, it is certainly important to design internships without the kinds of restrictions that lead students to ask themselves—like the student in Central America—“What am I actually doing here?” (B, ll. 148–149). For this purpose, it would be worthwhile for the university to make sure that the framework conditions of the placements are supportive for learners. At the same time, however, it is up to the students themselves to find their own balance between under- and overchallenging themselves, thereby developing self-efficacy and making the best possible use of their scope for action, even if it is limited. Here too, students can learn from the representatives of *Variant (b)*: they did not take the challenges personally, interpret them as a threat to their recognition or as an attack on their abilities, but rather considered them against the background of the particular circumstances, and thus strengthened and incorporated their own expectations of self-efficacy. It may therefore make sense to support students in *Variant (a)* situations in finding appropriate strategies for interpreting challenges, and to prepare them for potentially difficult scenarios even before their internship. This preparation would include developing

appropriate ways of managing expectations, encouragement to use room for manoeuvre creatively, and emphasising the need to find a balance between under- and over-exertion.

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