



Article

Educational Ideas on the Move: Student Teachers' International Teaching Internship

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Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork amongst Danish student teachers, this paper examines international teaching internships from a mobilities and spatial perspective. While the international teaching internship is regarded as a tool to develop student teachers' intercultural competencies, this paper shows how culturally shaped educational ideas travel with and are practiced by student teachers in new educational and cultural contexts. Therefore, this paper suggests that such internships may perpetuate and reinforce normative ideas about pedagogy and 'correct' ways of teaching, being a pupil, and a teacher. The paper finds that student teachers see some educational ideas and practices as universal and applicable everywhere and others as particular and spatially bound. This, the paper argues, reflects a hierarchisation of ideas based on an assumption of the superiority of 'Western' education, which results in processes of pedagogical othering. The paper further argues that international teaching internships represent an important avenue to critically discuss educational values and examine how values impact pedagogical practice, furthering students' professional development.

Keywords: International teaching internships, critical internationalisation, teacher education, educational ideas, pedagogical othering

Introduction

(...) We are not going down to point fingers and change everything and say we know better. Still, since we spend time discussing what good and bad teaching is during our courses in teacher education, we



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want to articulate the same way of doing things as we do in Denmark. But it may also be that there are some advantages to how they do it, for example, and that we don't necessarily know better. (...) It [bad teaching] will usually be something I expect to experience down there. (Interview, February 2020)

Every year, a small group of Danish student teachers replaces a 6-weeks teaching internship in Denmark with an international teaching internship¹ to practice their teaching skills in a new educational context. According to practitioners and students I talked to, the purpose of such internships is to better understand your practice by seeing the practice of others. In short, it is a way to expand one's 'pedagogical world'. Amalie is one such student, and shortly after our interview, she went to Kenya. The excerpt illustrates how educational ideas, e.g., about 'good' and 'bad' teaching, are situated in and shaped by local contexts and move with students as they go abroad. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and drawing on mobilities and spatial theories, the aim of this paper is to explore educational ideas and values reflected in the teaching practices of 15 Danish student teachers who participated in international teaching internships in both the Global South and North. Specifically, the paper examines the following research questions: How do Danish student teachers structure teaching practices during international teaching internships? Which educational ideas do the students' teaching practices and descriptions of practice reflect?

Educational ideas are here understood as knowledge of and values within education, for example, relating to learning, student-teacher relationships, and the purpose of education. They are normative and shape the pedagogical approach used in schools and classrooms. Pedagogy is a normative discipline that is both descriptive and prescriptive (Wiberg, 2016). What is understood as ideal, good, and valuable within education differs within pedagogical traditions and on a local, national, and global scale. These ideas and ideals are shaped and influenced by the respective national context's complex historical, political, social, cultural, and educational structures and are thereby culturally contingent without being static (Leutwyler et al., 2017; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012; Wiberg, 2022). According to Madrid et al. (2016), teachers carry hidden cultural and emotional assumptions about the best and most appropriate teaching practices for promoting learning. These assumptions are embedded in national identity and cultural ideology, and educational processes are thus exponents of fundamental cultural values (Schnack, 1994). Pedagogy and educational ideas are thereby culturally, historically, and contextually situated; however, they are not fixed or static. This calls for a theoretical approach that can tease out the spatiality of pedagogy and educational ideas.

¹ I use the term *international teaching internship* to describe structured and supervised teaching experiences in a foreign country. The length and scope of such experiences differ amongst countries and institutions.

Many researchers applaud international internships as sites of intercultural development for future teachers (e.g., Cushner, 2007; Lupi et al., 2012). A different strand of research challenges this assertion and argues that such internships risk reproducing ethnocentric assumptions among student teachers (Klein & Wikan, 2019; Madrid et al., 2016; Santoro, 2014; Sjøen, 2021). This paper contributes to this strand of research by using spatial and mobilities theories, which draw attention to the spatial dimensions of pedagogy and education and consequently provide novel perspectives on the tensions inherent to international teaching internships. Moreover, research shows that student teachers sometimes become confident of the superiority of their own culture (Parr & Chan, 2015; Sharma, 2020; Wikan & Klein, 2017), which partially undermines the objectives of international internships. Consequently, the research identifies intercultural competencies as a positive outcome of international teaching internships *and* problematises the meeting between educational ideas and values. The disagreement may be due to the paradox that international teaching internships represent. Student teachers, who study a value-based education shaped by culturally contingent ideas about and purposes of education and are taught that children learn better using specific pedagogical tools, go abroad to teach and practice their skills in contexts where other educational ideas are dominant and that might be both culturally and materially very different.

This paper examines this paradox by explicitly attending to the mobility of educational ideas and how they structure teaching practices in new contexts in countries in both the Global South and North. The paper thereby addresses current key challenges within the internationalisation of teacher education. Furthermore, it contributes to international education studies by exploring the multiple mobilities involved when students, educational ideas, and teaching practices move. Mobilities and spatial theories allow such an exploration, as they enable a study of not only the movement of people but also the movement of ideas, practices, and the consequences such mobilities might have (Jöns et al., 2017; Larsen, 2016; Sheller & Urry, 2006). These newfound attention points, both methodologically and analytically, offer a fresh perspective on the practices inherent to international internships, including the implications of these. It enables a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding these internships, and the paper provides valuable insights for educators and practitioners involved in internationalisation and international student mobility.

The following section situates the study in existing research, followed by a presentation of the analytical framework. Then, I present the methodology. The subsequent analysis is divided into three sections that focus on the ideas of good practice, the materiality of classrooms, and students' good intentions. The paper concludes by discussing international internships as sites of intercultural development.

State of the art: International teaching internships

Since the 1990s, internationalisation has been a critical issue in university strategic plans, international policy statements, declarations, and national visions for the development of higher education globally (Knight, 2012). Developments within teacher education also reflect these changes (Holmarsdottir et al., 2023).

Student teachers are seen as a group for whom international mobility is essential (Ballowitz et al., 2014). Due to increased forced and voluntary migration across the globe, it is argued that teachers must be qualified to teach culturally diverse classrooms and be professionals in managing intercultural settings (Wernisch, 2017). International experiences are seen as significant in developing such competencies. The type of international experiences investigated within teacher education studies is often international teaching internships where student teachers go abroad for a shorter period (e.g., Abraham & von Brömssen, 2018; Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Most studies of student teacher mobility focus on the professional and personal benefits of such internships (Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Lupi et al., 2012). Positive outcomes include developing professional skills and increasing readiness to teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Tran et al., 2021), becoming more empathetic, and beginning to question stereotypes (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). However, Parr and Chan (2015) point out a potential bias because most research into international teaching internships is authored by educators interested in reporting these programmes' success.

Several scholars have recently questioned the benefits of international internships (Abraham & Margrain, 2022). Studies critically explore whether student teachers develop the anticipated competencies or whether they act as promoters of their Western educational ideals (Klein & Wikan, 2019; Madrid Akpovo et al., 2018; Madrid et al., 2016; Santoro, 2014; Sharma, 2020; Sjøen, 2021; Wikan & Klein, 2017). For example, Parr and Chan (2015) argue that such internships might reinforce students' assumptions of the superiority of their educational practices. Similarly, Klein and Wikan (2019) find that ethnocentric and deficit notions of otherness are reinforced among some students. In a study of US student teachers in Kenya and Nepal, Madrid Akpovo et al. (2018) found that the students exerted a "privileged position" by assuming that quality in Kenya and Nepal could be "fixed" by adopting Euro-Western pedagogies and policies. Furthermore, they discuss the difficult meetings between educational ideas and consequently the affirmation of national love for own Western educational ideas, which, they argue, preserves neo-colonialism in the educational sector (Madrid Akpovo et al., 2018; Madrid et al., 2016).

This paper expands the scope beyond the student teachers themselves to explicitly include the knowledges, practices, and ideas they carry with them. It investigates how these mobilities influence and bring change and allow for a deeper understanding of the complexities of international internships. This calls for a theoretical approach that can tease out the mobility and spatiality of educational ideas.

Theoretical framework

In the 1990s, a spatial turn emerged in the social sciences and humanities, which shifted the scholarly focus towards examining the spatial dimensions of various phenomena (Warf & Arias, 2008). Spatial theorists (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Massey, 2015) advocate for a relational understanding of place and space and study the world as interconnected through flows and networks instead of binaries. The perspective acknowledges the significance of spatial context and practices in understanding and interpreting human experiences and phenomena. Particularly, spatial theory recognises that spaces are not neutral but embedded in power relations and hierarchies (Larsen, 2016; Massey, 2015), and analytically, it attends to the change in physical space and the power dynamics such changes might convey. In this paper, spatial theory informs the analysis in two distinct but interrelated ways.

First, spatial theory draws attention to the spatial dimensions of pedagogy and educational ideas. As previously mentioned, educational ideas are considered culturally situated as they bear the imprint of culture and are imbued with knowledge (Shi, 2020). Components of culture are reproduced through educational processes (such as teaching practices and arrangements of classrooms), and these processes are in themselves exponents of cultural values (Schnack, 1994), meaning that they are not independent abstractions that have universal validity (Shi, 2020). Spatial theory brings attention to some educational ideas being seen as universal, while other ideas are regarded as particular and place-bound, as well as the implicit hierarchies underpinning such distinctions.

Second, spatial theory enables an analysis of spatial practices in the classroom, as seen in the work of, for example, Fenwick et al. (2011). They show how a teacher arranges the classroom, allows specific kinds of knowledge to be developed and gives preferential treatment to particular types of learning, ways of socialising, and being a pupil or teacher (Fenwick et al., 2011). Attending to the spatial arrangement of classrooms and organisation of teaching activities uncovers the implied expectations of, e.g., pupil behaviour and 'good' ways of teaching.

The spatial turn was followed by the mobilities turn and the emergence of the 'new mobilities' paradigm, reflecting a growing interest in mobility, circulation, and flows (Sheller & Urry, 2006). It extends the scope beyond the physical movement of individuals and material objects by examining

communicative, imaginative, and virtual mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006). It also explores the circulation of knowledge, concepts, and practices (Jöns et al., 2017). A mobilities perspective lets us explore how educational ideas move, are in flux, and materialise alongside the student teachers, while a spatial perspective allows us to examine how classrooms and teaching practices are shaped as a consequence of these mobilities.

Furthermore, I include the 'pedagogical othering' concept, inspired by Rao et al. (2019). They use the concept to examine migrant academics' experiences with teaching in higher education institutions. They found that migrant academics experienced feelings of being different and out of place in their academic teaching roles, referred to as othering, because their pedagogical values did not align with their institution's dominant and widely accepted pedagogical cultural norms and beliefs (Rao et al., 2019). While Rao et al. (2019) use the concept to examine how migrant academics are faced with pedagogical othering from native academics and the policies and practices of their host institutions, I use it to analyse the implications that taken-for-granted assumptions about the universality of some educational ideas might have.

Summing up, spatial and mobilities theories enable an analysis of international internships that uncovers processes of othering in international teaching internships by changing the focus to include the mobility of ideas and practices and paying analytical attention to observations and articulations. Adopting this perspective, the paper goes beyond the conventional learning outcomes typically associated with international teaching internships.

Context and methodology

In Denmark, teacher education is a four-year vocational bachelor's degree. Students alternate between attending classes at the university college (UC) and practising their teaching skills through internships in different school settings. One of three six-week internships can be carried out abroad and runs parallel to the national internship (Bruun, 2019). The objectives of the internship are the same for those going abroad and those staying in Denmark, and all internships conclude with a graded written assignment and subsequent oral assessment. The assignment should reflect how the students have worked with the following three competency goals: relation work, didactics, and classroom management (Lærerstuderendes Landskreds, 2023). The students' attention during the internship is structured by these focus points, which are culturally specific and situated in nationally shaped ideas of how to become a good teacher. There are no specific objectives relating to international internships, and there are no mandatory follow-up evaluations.

Before an internship, students are prepared through lectures focused on the main objectives of the internship. It is locally determined how UCs structure the process, for example, what literature to read and whether students are taught in joint lectures, smaller classes, or a mix. Participants in this study studied at the same UC but at two different campuses in a bigger Danish city (henceforth referred to as Campus 1 and 2) and were prepared differently before the internship. Both groups had a mid-term evaluation with a lecturer. Participants from Campus 1 attended joint lectures aimed at students interning in Denmark and abroad. The themes revolved around the specific goals of the internship. They also attended classes only with students going abroad, where they discussed the specificities of interning in a foreign country and how to work with the competency goals in an unfamiliar context. This group was presented with questions relating to the mid-term evaluation, such as “What is the purpose of schooling?”, “How is classroom management practised?”, “How is the good pupil-teacher relation characterised?”. Participants from Campus 2 attended classes with only other students interning abroad. These lectures focused on the general issues and regulations of the internship and the specificities of going abroad, such as ethical dilemmas during international teaching internships. They also discussed the prejudices they risk bringing into the internship and read a text about internships in the Global South². However, as the preparation is locally determined, also by the lecturer in charge, it is challenging to create a generalised overview. There are, as mentioned, no objectives related explicitly to international internships, which allows for local interpretations of how students should be prepared and how, if at all, the internship should be evaluated (in addition to the exam).

Participants

For this paper, I spoke with 15 second or third-year student teachers (12 women, three men) between 23 and 30 years old. I recruited them at meetings about international options and through emails sent out on my behalf by the UC’s international coordinator. I let the interested students contact me after the meetings and via email, and we arranged interviews together. The participants went to nine different countries in respectively East Africa (two countries), Eastern Europe (one country), Northern Europe (four countries), North America (one country), and South-East Asia (one country).

I did not act as a supervisor during fieldwork in Tanzania and was not responsible for anything related to the internship. While I lived in the same dorm as the female participants, this did not raise any conflicts or doubts regarding my role as a researcher. All names and mobility trajectories are

² I base this on observations (Campus 1), interviews with participants from Campus 2, and a lesson plan (2016) provided by a lecturer from Campus 2.

pseudonymised to comply with the Danish Code of Conduct (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014), and all country names have been replaced by countries with similar cultural and socio-economic characteristics. Furthermore, participants signed a statement of consent regarding their participation.

Methods

The paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between December 2019 and November 2020 as part of a larger research project investigating the spatial dimensions of the internationalisation of higher education (Adriansen et al., 2019).

This study examined the mobilities associated with international teaching internships through ethnographic fieldwork (Madden, 2017). The strength of the ethnographic approach is that it allows for a rich and contextualised understanding of a phenomenon (Hastrup, 2010). By adopting an ethnographic lens, the study aimed to explore mobilities from different perspectives, resulting in a comprehensive data set in the form of detailed fieldnotes and interview transcripts. For this analysis, I draw on fieldnotes from observations and interviews with 15 participants, some of whom I interviewed at multiple phases of mobility and others I interviewed after their return to Denmark. The analysis is primarily based on interviews conducted after the 15 participants returned.

During the fieldwork phase, multiple methods were employed. This included observations of pre-departure and evaluation meetings as well as classroom observations. Moreover, a significant aspect of the study involved living alongside nine student teachers during their internship in Tanzania in February-March 2020³. The immersive experience allowed for firsthand insights into their daily lives, teaching practices, and discussions surrounding teaching. Informal conversations provided new perspectives on what we addressed in more formal interviews. Such conversations, simultaneously informal and instrumentalist, are a cornerstone in ethnographic methods as they can lead to otherwise hidden insights (Madden, 2017). In this case, particularly teaching experiences and thoughts about pedagogy were often discussed more spontaneously during lunchtime than during interviews. Also, I often talked to the participants shortly after they finished teaching, which resulted in spontaneous and 'fresh' representations of their practices. Additionally, classroom observations were carried out with two participants in Tanzania, enabling a more detailed exploration of teaching practices and approaches.

³ The internships were shortened by one week because of the Covid-19 pandemic. While this was a topic of conversation, it did not seem to influence the participants' experiences with or perception of teaching.

As mentioned, this paper draws on interviews with 15 participants. They were conducted in Danish, recorded, and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 ½ hours. Five interviews were conducted via Zoom software because of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing measures. The online format allowed me to gain insights that, at the time, otherwise would not have been accessible. The interviews focused on experiences with being and teaching abroad. The open-ended questions were a way to subtly steer the interview while simultaneously allowing for expansions and detours (Madden, 2017). Notably, some participants spontaneously shared teaching materials or photographs taken during the internship. While the participants talked about teaching more generally, they also explicitly described the teaching they observed and carried out themselves. This allowed for a subsequent discussion and exploration of the educational ideas and values inherent to teaching activities.

In working with the empirical material data (interviews and fieldnotes), I was inspired by a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) that identifies, analyses, and interprets patterns of meaning within qualitative data. From the outset of working with the material, educational ideas were of interest. Spatial and mobilities theories guided the attention towards which educational ideas were reflected in comparisons, teaching activities, and classroom organisation. Based on this, I performed a thorough reading and coding of interview transcripts and fieldnotes. As suggested by Fernandes and Barbeiro (2015), I used OneNote to organise the material in themes and collect relevant excerpts and memos under each research question. Consequently, the main themes addressed in this analysis are Pupil-centred Learning, Classroom Management, and Reflective Practice.

Analysis

Ideas of best practice

I don't know how bad off they are. I have no clue. Like, if they are seriously bad off, you can give them something by just being there. If they are okay off, you can give them some basic education and maybe have time to sit with the individual pupil. (...) Down there, they don't have much time for the individual pupil. (Interview, December 2019)

This quote sets the tone for the first part of the analysis, which focuses on the educational ideas expressed by the participants. Here, Rose is talking about what she thinks she has to offer while teaching in Tanzania, namely time and attention, which she imagines to be in short supply 'down there'. There was a consensus among the participants that time to talk, help, and listen to each pupil was important. Also, ideas about the importance of pupils' perspectives, experiences, and constructions of meaning and equal access to learning, usually associated with a learner-centred approach (MiCreate, 2019), recurred throughout the interviews. The assumption was that all pupils

need individual attention to learn, regardless of culture or country. This assumption was reflected in the participants' teaching activities, which, to a large degree, were designed to develop the skills and competencies the participants regarded as important and through strategies the participants believed to be appropriate.

In the excerpt below, Sophia, who interned in Iceland, discussed her perceptions of the teaching she observed and later introduced herself.

They [pupils] are not asked to reflect the same way [as Danish pupils]. That was also what our Danish supervisor, who worked there, thought was the most difficult, that the children don't reflect. They are not asked to reflect. (...) They don't learn more than describing. We had a short story course where we spent a long time saying: 'Don't just give us an account of the short story; you need to tell me what happens in it.' Then, we talked about narrative techniques and types. All those sorts of things to, like, figure out what is behind the story, right? They [pupils] really found that challenging. But they also liked it. But it was also really, uhm, different. (Interview, July 2020)

In these reflections, a conflict is observed when Rose and Sophia use their point of reference as the norm for teaching. Embedded in the excerpts and the teaching carried out are taken-for-granted assumptions relating to best teaching practices, pupil-teacher relations, and competencies pupils *should* develop, i.e., being reflective. The student teachers seem to be caught between believing in the superiority of specific values and methodologies and working in culturally and materially different contexts.

In Denmark, the national aims of *Folkeskolen* emphasise the importance of developing participatory, democratic, and responsible pupils through activities conducted in the spirit between intellectual freedom, equality, and democracy (Ministry of Children and Education, 2018, §1, stk. 3).

Furthermore, the organisation of teaching must be varied to correspond to the needs of the individual pupil and challenge all pupils, thus providing equal opportunities for all. Considering that student teachers are trained to plan and organise their teaching to meet the prescribed standards, as determined by legislation, related circulars, and detailed subject descriptions (Mottelson, 2010), it is not surprising that the participants share these assumptions and bring them into their teaching albeit in a new context. They are taught that some pedagogies are better for promoting learning and thereby, so to speak, socialised into national educational traditions (Tange & Jensen, 2012).

However, assumptions about the merits of specific ideas and approaches risk undermining these ideas' effectiveness depending on contextual factors, such as local culture, resources, and educational goals (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012).

Ideas about best practices in education were often expressed through comparisons to the teaching the participants observed in the initial days of their internships. All participants, except one in North

America, repeatedly mentioned that they wanted to distance themselves from ‘classic ways of sitting with a book’, thereby highlighting a preferred interactive teaching style. The narrative was dominant, and the participants employed different methods to ‘deal with’ this. In continuation of such critiques, dialogue-based teaching was positively emphasised across interviews. The participants referred to particularly group work and different games when discussing dialogue-based education. Martin, who interned in Armenia, incorporated Cooperative Learning (CL) strategies⁴:

We made a point out of making CL exercises and getting the children to speak, and yeah, it was very communication-based teaching.

He described the teaching he observed as based on a behaviouristic approach and focused on tests and rote learning, which he did not applaud. He continued:

When we weren’t allowed to decide the content, we had to change the things we knew we could. Like yeah, the classroom, the atmosphere, and how the pupil like [acted]. (...) We took the role of the liberated Westerners (...). Yeah, and of course, we did a lot of movement teaching, using their bodies. Because there wasn’t much of that either, it was very butt-to-bench [sedentary teaching]. (Interview, May 2020)

In different ways, the participants tried to put the pupils at the forefront of educational practice, which reflects a Euro-Western child-centred approach (Madrid Akpovo et al., 2018) that is also emphasised in the aims for *Folkeskolen* (Ministry of Children and Education, 2018). These perspectives seemed to make the participants plan activities supporting their ideas of good teaching, being a good teacher, and how pupils learn ‘best’. Some practices and approaches, such as games, dialogue, participation, or individual attention, were consequently elevated to be global ‘best practices’ applicable no matter the context. In comparisons of observed and carried-out teaching, the participants often constructed a perception of some forms of teaching from a deficit perspective. This was evident for participants across destinations.

To sum up, participants’ educational ideas became evident in describing and comparing the teaching they observed or imagined and the teaching they carried out. Notably, a learner-centred approach, dialogue-based teaching, and skills such as critical thinking and the ability to reflect were highlighted.

Arranging educational spaces

In a classroom in Tanzania, 29 middle school pupils line up in two rows, ready to practice the English names for different colours. The two Danish student teachers in charge have planned a competition where pupils from each team run to the blackboard and point to the colour the student teachers say. Pupils quickly huddle together to see which team gets the point. After a couple of rounds, the activity is complete, and the pupils return to their seats. Later the same day, the student teachers observe the

⁴ Cooperative Learning is an American method that refers to instructional methods in which pupils of all levels work together in small groups towards a common goal (Slavin, 1982).

local teacher during a regional language class. First, the teacher writes on the blackboard while the pupils write and draw in their notebooks. Next, the teacher asks questions, which pupils independently answer. The teacher says 'Good' when they answer correctly, and the class claps. Finally, one of the student teachers sighed and whispered to me, 'like, just think about the difference between this and what we have just done'. (Fieldnote, March 2020)

How educational spaces are arranged is interesting, as different educational arrangements produce and make possible different kinds of knowledge (Fenwick et al., 2011). The described teaching activity aimed to make the pupils learn the English names for different colours through a game and movement around the classroom. They repeated similar activities both in and outside the classroom and generally made a point of including activities where the pupils moved and played. In this specific situation, it becomes evident that different modes of teaching are compared and ascribed value when the participant whispers, 'Think about the difference between this and what we have just done'.

In a follow-up interview, one of the participants said, '(...) you learn faster from it [playing], and they [the children] find it more fun'. Here, making the pupils run and changing the mode of interaction between pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher reflects ideas of how pupils learn best. This indicates an assumed universality of methods that promote learning, which leaves little space for alternative beliefs and ways of being a pupil. Similar reflections recurred in interviews with other participants. However, the participants also acknowledged that this mode of teaching is not the best approach for all pupils. These perspectives are developed in the next section.

How the participants arranged the classrooms had the purpose of promoting specific modes of engagement. Sophia explained:

We agreed from the beginning that we wanted a dialogue in the classroom. Where we didn't "take" the blackboard but like participated in a dialogue. We also got permission to change the table setting because, at first, they [pupils] sat weirdly separated uhm at their own tables almost. We got permission to make a U-shape to like, so we could stand in the middle and be part of the conversation. (...) But this kind of brought them together in a completely different way. (Interview, July 2020)

The spatialisation of pupils and teachers and the prompts to change the modes of interaction rest on specific ideas and ideals favouring an interactive teaching style. The spatial arrangements call for particular kinds of engagements with, e.g., books, co-pupils, and teachers that promote ideas of the 'right kinds' of knowledge. In the excerpt, Sophia describes how she seeks to induce dialogue and participation from all pupils by changing both her and the pupils' positions in the classroom. Following Fenwick et al. (2011), it can be argued that a subtle form of power is exercised in the spatialisations or orderings of space because the participants, very physically, construct a perception of appropriate teaching from a deficit perspective. Re-arranging the classroom is thus not a neutral

but value-laden activity that reflects ideas about how pupils ideally should be, i.e., participating orally, cooperating, and being ‘an active learner’ (Wiberg, 2022).

An introduction to the Danish Education System mentions active participation as a characteristic feature of the system. Specifically, ‘Treating pupils (...) as independent individuals with a right to form their own opinion and a duty to participate actively in discussions is a matter of course in Danish education. (...)’ (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2021, p. 3). This does, of course, not mean that these values are particularly Danish. Still, they are fundamental in Danish education policies and are featured as prominent in the participants’ narratives, as witnessed by Sophia above. Rote learning, for example, was across interviews described as a pedagogy *non-grata* and seen as an old-fashioned and less developed approach to teaching than active, dialogically based teaching activities. They emphasised this as a counteraction to ‘the teacher going through... like... slavishly going through what the schoolbook says’, as a participant interning in Kenya said. A participant in the Faroe Islands described working in books as

(...) classic or a little old-fashioned teaching. In Denmark, we have moved towards something that engages pupils in different ways and where they take responsibility, where you work more project-based, and not really with books. Uhm... but I don’t know if that’s true. (Interview, July 2020)

This reflects a general tendency: the participants were inspired by the ideal of a democratic teacher who facilitates knowledge-sharing and participation rather than being an authority. However, while trying to displace the balance of power between pupil and teacher by changing the mode of interaction, these changes can be seen as subtle expressions of power because these changes build on value-laden ideas of how teaching ideally should be carried out.

The spatial disciplining of the classroom aims at constructing specific modes of engagement amongst the pupils, which reflects an implicit hierarchisation. This reflects that the classroom as a space is not just a value-neutral container but dynamic and constantly produced by practices and engagements (Fenwick et al., 2011). Haldrup et al. (2006) argue that banal and bodily everyday practices can contribute to processes of othering. In this case, changing the classroom arrangement or carrying out activities that promote, to them, essential competencies can be seen as acts of pedagogical othering. Consistent with other research (Madrid Akpovo et al., 2018; Parr & Chan, 2015; Sjøen, 2021), this study shows that hierarchical notions of educational ideas are reproduced through international teaching internships, however not only in Global South contexts, which others have studied. Deficit constructions of teaching practices and, in continuation of this, the promotion of specific values through teaching and the spatialisation of classrooms was evidenced in destinations across the Global South and North.

However, while the participants, no matter the destination or the pedagogical practices already present, highlighted ideas and practices they found to be good through contrasts, there are nuances to this. These are unfolded in the next section.

Escaping good intentions

It was a focus of mine not to bring a Western approach to teaching, just to say, “That’s how we do it”. I really wanted a balance because it would be a culture shock for the pupils and teacher, and I didn’t want to disrespect her. (Interview, September 2020)

Most participants I talked to described experiencing a different educational system as one of the main motivations for doing an international teaching internship. In and by itself, this reflects an awareness that pedagogy and schooling are situated practices influenced by the cultural, political, and social context they form part of. In contrast to the Norwegian participants in Wikan and Klein’s (2017) study, the participants in this study reflected upon how local culture influenced classroom practices. They talked about how it would be impossible and unethical to discard the context of where they were teaching, which indicates both awareness and reflexivity about pedagogy and teaching practices being culturally situated. The participants were generally very excited to be experiencing ‘something different’ and talked about not wanting to impose upon local teachers’ practices, which the introductory quote reflects.

However, in multiple instances, the participants’ descriptions and my observations of teaching revealed preferred styles of teaching and the dissemination of educational ideas, which contrasted with their descriptions of what they intended to do. The same participant as above also said that,

It was more or less the same each morning, the same routine. (...) There is a reason for that: there are many pupils and a need for boundaries. (...) But then I brought a whole different kind of teaching, where it was playful to learn English, right. (...) They had never experienced that before, and it was really motivating for them.

The excerpt exemplifies an inherent ambiguity in many participants’ narratives, particularly taken together with their practice descriptions. This shows an analytical potential of attending to the teaching practices and the ideas inherent to these, as this can reflect ambiguity inherent to self-representations and actions. This represents a dilemma for the participants and shows how difficult it can be to transcend one’s assumptions about quality teaching. Again, the participants seem to be caught between what they have learned is best pedagogical practice and the cultural and material differences they engage in the contexts of the internship. While the international internship is an opportunity for acquiring a richer and more complex understanding of pedagogy and one’s positioning within it, it risks confirming pedagogical stereotypes if this is not thoroughly discussed at multiple stages of the internship.

Another participant told me that their teaching style aimed to show pupils that there were alternative ways of learning than they were used to. I asked her whether they also wanted to inspire the teachers. She confirmed this,

Yes, you could say that we would like to do that too. That's what I think. The thing about inspiring, it's not to say that our way is better. We really thought a lot about this, because we didn't want to come and be the ones like 'this is how you should do it'. We just wanted to show how else it can be done. Yes, I think it was so that the teachers might also be able to see some other... but they also said that you are here so we can learn from you. So that was also one of their purposes with us being there. (Interview, June 2020)

The challenge here is not that the participants share their educational ideas, as an exchange of ideas is partly the purpose of international internships. However, the exchange of ideas was often more one-way than an exchange. While the participants interned in different contexts, they also had different conditions for teaching, and to varying degrees, they were asked to follow a curriculum and methods. For example, the teachers in both East African countries asked the participants to include written assignments, as it was the custom for parents to check their children's schoolwork. Otherwise, they were given free rein.

As witnessed in the analyses, this meant that they not exclusively but often drew on the same educational ideas and employed the same methods as had they been in Denmark. This is not odd, as the participants are studying to become teachers within an educational system that promotes specific values. Still, it did mean that some participants were confirmed in what teaching practices are 'best' even though several described their teaching as only partly successful. They risk reinforcing their assumptions of the superiority of educational practices and values they know from home (Parr & Chan, 2015), even though this is not the intention of the international internship. The organised cultural encounter, which the internship is, designed to create intercultural communication, thereby ends up reproducing or reinforcing national stereotypes and hierarchies.

It points to the belief that some values within education and approaches to teaching are universally applicable. At the same time, other pedagogies, such as rote learning, are understood as more particular, place-based, and 'backwards'. However, participants interning in both Northern European countries and East Africa emphasised that Danish pupils might benefit from learning more basic skills in relation to, e.g., mathematics and grammar and that it is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel and create fun, engaging, active teaching activities. They thereby acknowledged the benefits of teaching methods, which they previously were sceptical about. This indicates the potential of the international internship as an arena where students' critical consciousness about the situatedness of pedagogy can be developed. This is discussed further in the next and final section.

Discussion and concluding remarks

At the beginning of this paper, I described international teaching internships as a way for student teachers to gain a greater understanding of their practice by seeing the practices of others and teaching in a new context. It is considered a way to expand students' 'pedagogical worlds' and understanding, and existing research argues that internships contribute to intercultural competencies. However, a different strand shows that internships unintendedly risk reproducing hierarchical assumptions relating to pedagogy. In this paper, I have continued this strand of research by giving analytical and empirical attention to the mobility of educational ideas and the implications of this.

The paper makes a novel theoretical contribution by employing spatial and mobilities theories to analyse the complexities of such internships. A spatial perspective recognises the culturally situated nature of educational ideas but also acknowledges that pedagogy is relational, dynamic, and developing within social contexts. This challenges the ideas expressed by the participants that some pedagogies or approaches to teaching are universal while others are place-based. Consequently, the paper demonstrates how spatial theory illuminates the power dynamics involved in such internships. For example, the analysis shows that the spatialisation of activities in and outside the classroom and changes in the spatial arrangement in the classroom is a subtle form of power. The implied expectations inherent to these spatial arrangements risk constructing other ways of teaching or being a teacher or pupil from a deficit perspective. Hence, the classroom is not a neutral or universal space. The spatial lens also helps to bring forward how the student teachers are caught between believing and being taught that some pedagogies are superior for promoting learning and being faced with culturally and materially different educational contexts and values. This is unproductive if we want the student teachers to develop their intercultural understanding and appreciation.

The proposition here is not that student teachers should avoid doing an international internship or that teacher education should discourage international internships because it might contribute to pedagogical othering. International teaching internships inevitably involve the mobility of educational ideas and potential clashes. The proposition is that this tension is embraced as a premise for preparing the student teachers. Aydarova and Marquardt (2016) argue that engaging students in examining their assumptions about educational systems in other countries before the international teaching internship might counteract the feeling of alienation that Wiberg (2022) describes can be provoked in the meeting between educational ideas. Specifically, I propose that a spatial approach would enable student teachers to critically engage with taken-for-granted assumptions about the universality and particularity of educational ideas. Before their departure, they need to discuss what

is pedagogically feasible in different material, social, and cultural contexts. This could be an examination of what culturally, nationally, and place-specific produced understandings of the role of teaching and learning they carry with them. Back in Denmark, they need to continue the work and apply this analysis to their practice. This, however, presupposes that UCs continuously follow up on the student teachers' experiences and outcomes.

Consequently, an essential contribution of this paper is its focus on the values that unpin teaching practices and the need for critical attention to these values in the context of international teaching internships, where different educational ideas are bound to meet. This is an opportunity to destabilise taken-for-granted assumptions and perceptions to allow for and acknowledge alternative perspectives of education and pedagogy to fully expand their 'pedagogical worlds'. This requires preparation and scaffolding among the student teachers before, during, and after an international teaching internship (Klein & Wikan, 2019; Skrefsrud, 2022). This is, however, difficult in a context such as the Danish, as the international internship runs parallel to the national. This means that depending on the UC, the preparation is rather general and less specific to the destination, and the evaluation is – if any at all – brief. Furthermore, the duration of the internship and the fact that the student teachers are assessed against objectives in their subsequent exams that do not consider the international internship's specificities and extracurricular aims might hinder the student teachers from fully benefiting from teaching abroad.

In conclusion, the paper argues that international teaching internships are valuable sites for examining how values affect pedagogical practice and theory. The challenge is to ensure that such internships do not reinforce pedagogical othering or maintain power relations but instead promote critical reflection about teaching, which can be accomplished through a heightened focus on the situatedness of educational ideas.

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