Eli Ottesen

Department of Teacher Education and School Research

University of Oslo

Email: eli.ottesen@ils.uio.no

Tor Colbjørnsen

Department of Teacher Education and School Research

University of Oslo

Internationalisation in leadership education: Opportunities and challenges in an Erasmus Intensive Programme

Abstract

Internationalisation in higher education is promoted as positive and important in education policies world wide, and an international perspective is regarded as crucial in leadership research and education. A central aim of the Erasmus Programmes is to increase student mobility, and although the number of students in such programmes has increased steadily over the years, we know less about the challenges and benefits for students and staff who participate, and how the experience of studying abroad may contribute to students' learning. The focus in this paper is on the Erasmus Intensive Programme (EIP) Leadership for Democratic Citizenship in European Schools for master students in educational leadership from Spain, Turkey, Poland, Norway, Ireland, and England. The aim is to explore the students' opportunities for learning. Wells' cycle of knowing is used as an analytical approach in an analysis of survey data, interviews and course material. The findings suggest that three key areas were pivotal for the students' opportunities for knowledge building: communication, critical thinking and the course curriculum. In the paper we discuss how aspects within these three areas enhance, and in some cases hinder, the development of the students as critical change agents able to lead democratic schools and engage in improvement.

The analysis indicates that the EIP had a potential to create learning opportunities. However, we point to challenges related to language and communication and choice of curriculum content. Moreover, our study indicates that designing for criticality is problematic in short term international programmes.

Keywords: internationalisation, leadership education, Erasmus Intensive Programme

Sammendrag

Over hele verden fremmes internasjonalisering som en viktig dimensjon for studiekvalitet, og internasjonalisering løftes som en sentral dimensjon i skolelederutdanning. Et viktig mål for Erasmus-programmene er å fremme studentmobilitet. Antallet studenter på slike utvekslingsprogram har økt gradvis gjennom en årrekke, men vi har per i dag lite kunnskap om på hvilken måte slike program bidrar til økt kvalitet, og hvilken betydning deltakelse i slike program har for studenters læring. I denne artikkelen undersøker vi et Erasmus Intensive Programme (EIP), Leadership for Democratic Citizenship in European Schools. Deltakerne var masterstudenter i utdanningsledelse fra Spania, Tyrkia, Polen, Norge, England og Irland. Hensikten med denne artikkelen er å undersøke studentenes muligheter for kunnskapsutvikling. Vi tar utgangspunkt i Wells' læringssyklus når vi analyserer survey-data, intervjuer og kursmaterieell. Tre områder viser seg å være vesentlige for studentenes læring: kommunikasjon, kritisk tenkning og studieinnholdet. I artikkelen diskuterer vi hvordan ulike aspekter ved disse områdene bidro til, og i noen tilfeller begrenset, studentenes muligheter for å utvikle lederkompetanse.

Analysen viser at designet av dette EIPet hadde et potensial for å gi gode muligheter for studentenes læring. Men den viser også at i et internasjonalt program er det utfordringer knyttet til kommunikasjon og utvelgelse av innhold. Dessuten tyder resultatene på at for å nå målsettingen om å bidra til at studentene utvikler kritisk tenkning kreves et lengre forløp enn et to-ukers internasjonalt program.

Nøkkelord: internasjonalisering, skolelederutdanning, Erasmus Intensive Programme

Introduction

There is growing evidence that leadership is important for student achievement and school development, and as a consequence, the preparation and development of school leaders has become a paramount issue across the world (Bush, 2011; Crow, Lumby & Pashiardis, 2008; Dempster, Lovett & Flückiger, 2011; Huber & West, 2002). Moreover, a number of studies investigate and compare leadership development programmes, for example regarding practices and approaches (e.g., Huber & West, 2002), theoretical perspectives (e.g., Wallace, Foster & da Costa, 2007) and curriculum (e.g., Bush, 2008). Although the studies mentioned above indicate that there is some evidence of convergence, leadership development programmes nevertheless differ along several dimensions, such as the level of government control, what the contents are, the methods used and the provision of learning opportunities, and their attention to international perspectives (Crow et al., 2008; Huber & West, 2002). Since

education usually is a national endeavour, it follows that leadership development addresses particular national issues and challenges. However, increasingly educational leaders need to develop awareness and understanding of international policies and pressures through participation in “global epistemic communities” (Crow et al., 2008, p. 7). The steady flow of international handbooks within the field of educational leadership over the past decades is an indication of the emphasis placed on comparative, global and educational issues in research. While the benefit of international learning networks for leadership development has been advocated (Webber & Robinson, 2004; Walker & Dimmock, 2002) there are few empirical studies that address leadership learning in international settings. For example, we have not found studies that explicitly address what might constitute the added value of internationalisation for the students’ academic achievements, or how international courses could be designed to enhance the students’ learning (however, see Webber & Robinson, 2004).

In this article we address aspects of the Erasmus Intensive Programme (EIP) “Leadership for Democratic Citizenship in European Schools”. The programme brought together students and staff from higher education institutions in England, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Spain and Turkey for a two weeks intensive learning experience during the summers from 2011 to 2013. The Erasmus programme was established by The European Union in 1987 to provide financial support for student mobility and for networks of cooperating institutions, and later for staff mobility and projects for curricular innovation (Teichler, 2009). The overall aims of EIPs are to encourage efficient and multinational teaching; to enable students to work in multinational groups, so that they will be able to gain new perspectives on the topics studied; and to allow staff to exchange views and explore teaching methods. The aim of this paper is to explore opportunities and challenges for students’ learning in the EIP.

The structure of the article is as follows: In the next section we provide a brief overview of the aims and provision of the programme. We then present our theoretical framework and methodological approach. In the next sections we impart results of the analysis, organised into four sections: students’ general expectations, language issues, cultural differences, and curriculum. Finally we discuss the results and implications for school leadership development.

Organisation of the EIP

The specific aim of the EIP was to collaboratively involve future and practising school leaders in their own professional development as critical change agents who would be able to lead more participative and democratic schools and environments and enable them to engage in school and community improvement. The learning objectives included the enhancement of collaboration and collegiality in improving learning, teaching, and school leadership; the pro-

motion of professional development and capacity building. The setup of the programme was intended to provide the students with a truly intensive learning experience. In each cohort fifty students¹ and project partners from six countries lived and worked together for two weeks, away from home and external commitments. A virtual learning environment (VLE) was made available to the students, and course material was posted in advance and during the EIP. Partners suggested reading materials for the various themes to be addressed in lectures and keynotes, which were uploaded to the VLE. Themes addressed included, for example, *Democracy in education*, *Democratic citizenship and leadership*, *Participative and democratic management of change*, and *Participation and democracy in school governance*.

The learning environment of the EIP was designed to give the students the opportunity to discuss the contexts for leadership and democratic citizenship; to become familiar with theoretical perspectives and research within these fields; to connect theory and practice; and to discuss the implications for practice. Throughout the EIP, activities alternated between lectures and whole group activities, seminars, and core group activities. The core groups were made up of participants from each country, with members of staff acting as “light touch” facilitators. The sessions took place in the morning and afternoon but often continued, on a voluntary basis, well into the evening. The students worked with assignments administered by their home institutions; workshops were arranged according to interests of the students.

Ongoing formative evaluations in a variety of ways were key parts of each day. This could consist of, for example, filling in evaluation sheets, shorter feedback on Post-it notes, a “raconteur” system with core groups taking turns reporting on the previous day’s learning at the start of each day, and student representation in review meetings. In addition, team members observed core group activities and conducted interviews with a selection of students, which resulted in evaluation reports.² The design of the course was based on theories of transformational learning and further adapted within a transformational leadership development framework (Precey & Jackson, 2009; Precey & Rodrigues Entrena, 2011).

In this paper we analyse data from student surveys, interviews and course material in 2011 and 2012. We explore the students’ learning opportunities and how the international context might contribute to the students’ professional development. In our analysis, we depart somewhat from the transformational learning framework. The next sections explain our approach.

Teaching and learning in an international context

An academic programme builds on a number of explicit and implicit premises. A key challenge throughout the cooperation between partners in the EIP was the

construction of a robust framework. Although the partners were influenced by approaches chosen in their home institutions, by policies and practices in their home countries, and by their own theoretical positions, Mezirow's theory of transformational learning guided the provision of the programme. Mezirow (1995, 1997) sees learning as "the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*" (1997, p. 2, emphasis in original). In order to facilitate such changes, educators must create situations to assist students to become able to recognise and critically assess their own assumptions and those of others. Through discourse, learners are assumed to validate their understandings and arrive at "best judgment regarding a belief" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10).

An international programme where students' experiences are highly diversified could provide an excellent opportunity for transformational learning. The prescribed conditions for discourse, however, may be challenging to establish in an EIP for a number of reasons. One is that the majority of students are expected to speak in what is not their first language; meaning-making discursive processes presume that all students have an equal opportunity to participate (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Even if the students' mastery of "daily" English is acceptable, the ability to use it for academic reasoning, critical inquiry, or the evaluation of evidence within the discipline may be beyond their competence.

A further complication lies in culture and pedagogy. Although European educational cultures may be similar in many ways (Teichler, 2004), and higher education by and large has become "internationalised", it is reasonable to expect that students from different cultures will vary in learning styles and study approaches. Adapting to a learning environment based on experience, rational discourse, and criticality may be at odds with some students' prior learning experiences. Studies on internationalisation in higher education emphasise the need to make cultural assumptions and practices explicit and open to critical inquiry in order to help students accommodate expected cultural norms without compromising their own values (cf. Egege & Kutieleh, 2004).

In this paper, our concern is to explore learning opportunities in the EIP. In other words, we need to address the processes that emerged *within* the programme design, and discuss if and how such processes might stimulate the students' learning and increase their cross-cultural competence. One way of addressing such issues is through the framework of socio-cultural theory.

Framework for analysis

A central tenet of socio-cultural approaches is that learning is a "product of culturally-situated forms of social interaction" (Mercer & Howe, 2012, p. 12). In addition, socio-cultural theorists generally seek to explain the dialectics of group and individual processes by positioning group activities as constituted by individuals' mental processes and collaborative processes in semiotic activities

(cf. Sawyer, 2012). In the EIP, development may occur at the intersection of the students' variegated national and institutional cultures, when norms and values are externalised in discourse with the potential of being appropriated or transformed: "Who we become depends on the company we keep and on what we do and say together" (Wells, 2007, p. 100).

Wells' cycle of knowing (1999, p. 85) posits a model that relates four different opportunities for meaning-making. The model helps us understand the learning processes of the EIP, since the design of the programme seeks to make explicit the participants' unique experiences as practitioners in schools in their respective educational systems and settings and the different cultures' representations of professional knowledge in the field. Also, the EIP offered opportunities for working together in cross-national groups, potentially providing spaces for broadening and extending the students' understanding of leadership theory and practice.

In Wells' cycle of knowing, the first opportunity for meaning-making is *personal experiences*: the prior meaning or knowledge that makes up individuals' models of the world (Wells, 1999). Second, *information* is "other people's experience and meanings" (Wells, 1999, p. 84). For example, it could be meanings, theories, accounts, or stories the students have heard or read in the EIP, or elsewhere. In *knowledge building*, the students engage in meaning-making processes with these resources. The students collaborate in the production of (and response to) each other's verbal utterances, "constructing 'what is known' in 'what is said'" (Wells, 1999, p. 111). Knowledge building is a process of justifying beliefs and experiences through rational discourse and critical reflection (Bereiter, 1994). Such discourses are based on the commitment of participants to work towards a common understanding, to frame propositions and beliefs in a way that allows evidence to bear on them, to expand the body of collectively valid propositions, and to allow any belief to be subjected to criticism if it will advance the discourse (Bereiter, 1994; Wells, 2000, p. 73). Such commitments presuppose that participants acknowledge that what they know or believe—what their experiences are—is open to debate. The resulting *understanding* is personal and immediate; it involves the constitution of new (or reinforced) interpretative frameworks.

By leaning on Wells' theory of dialogic inquiry, and in particular his "cycle of knowing" model (Wells, 1999, p. 85), we analyse opportunities for learning in the EIP.

Methodology

We have analysed survey data and interview data collected during the Erasmus Intensive Programme 'Leadership for Democratic Citizenship in European Schools' in 2011 and 2012. The primary purpose for data collection was to

provide feedback to staff for course adjustment and development and to report to the National Agency. For this paper we have performed a secondary analysis (SA) (Castle, 2003; Irwin & Winterton, 2011) of the data collected for the evaluations. In qualitative research, SA is used to answer research questions that were not asked or to provide more in-depth analysis of issues emerging from the original study. Castle (2003) suggests several pitfalls in SA. One is that the researcher may not have control over the data collection process. In our case, we worked closely with the two researchers conducting the interviews, and the survey questions were jointly developed in the staff. Another danger is that the research questions guiding the original study may not be aligned with the new research questions. For this study we have made a purposeful selection from the overall data corpus by identifying questions that address the students' learning process. This means that we have omitted evaluation questions (both in the survey and the interviews) that addressed practical issues, such as for example accommodation and registration. A final risk when conducting qualitative SA is that contextual information may be missing or lost (Irwin & Winterton, 2011). The authors of this paper both were members of staff and thus present throughout the two programmes.

Sets of empirical data may support different kinds of analytical interpretation. An alternative theoretical framework can provide additional information and allow the exploration of new themes. Thus, while the original evaluation gave insights about how the students appreciated different aspects of the programme and how it challenged or changed their frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997), our purpose in the secondary analysis was to identify if and how personal experiences and information are incorporated in processes of knowledge building to enhance the students' understanding of their roles and possibilities for action (Wells, 1999).

For each cohort, the data consist of two individual student surveys (one given the first week and the other the second week of the programmes), a group survey in which each national group discussed the questions and gave a joint answer and individual interviews with a randomly selected group of students of all nationalities during the two weeks. Moreover, we have analysed the reading material and keynote presentations offered to the students on the programme's VLE. Table 1 below shows the participation in surveys and interviews during the EIP in 2011 and 2012.

Table 1: Number of informants

	2011	2012
Individual survey 1	26 (n=49)	43 (n=48)
Individual survey 2	45 (n=49)	(not available)
Group survey	6 (n=6)	3 (n=6)
Interviews	12	6

Initially, the survey and interview data were organised according to Wells' categories. What did the students' responses indicate about a) opportunities for reflection on and explication of their personal leadership experiences and beliefs, b) new information presented in lectures and group activities, c) opportunities for collective meaning-making in group work, and d) what did they see as new insights. In a next step of analysis, the answers were linked to a few key categories: 1) culture/language difficulties, 2) critical thinking, and 3) curriculum. These categories are empirical, in the sense that they emerged as key concerns in the data. The choice of categories is also linked to the three common themes that influenced the design of the EIP: rational discourse, critical reflection, and the centrality of experience. While the overall evaluation of the programme indicates that the students were very positive about the experience (on a scale from 1–5, the average was 4.61 in 2011 and 4.55 in 2012), this new analysis of the students' responses provided information that further refined the results of the evaluation and shed light on issues that are central to our concerns in this paper. The reading material and keynote presentations were analysed according to perspective on leadership, empirical justification and the national origin of the author.

Results

As the overall evaluation indicates, there is little doubt that the students in the EIP found the experience to be engaging, rewarding, and valuable. The high ratings on the overall experience concur with their ratings on, for instance, the quality of teaching, academic/learning outcomes, and personal outcomes, which were all between 4.5 and 4.7 (cf. above, the standard questionnaire). These results were confirmed in the EIPs' evaluation surveys. Table 2 below shows a selection of results.

Table 2: Selection of results from evaluation surveys

Question	Year	Yes	No	N/A
Do you feel the IP is enabling you to think more deeply about leadership for democratic citizenship?	2011	100	0	-
	2012	93	7	-
Do you think you are developing your questioning and critical thinking during the IP?	2011	96	4	-
	2012	90	7	3
Has the IP enabled you to see more clearly the problems of leadership for democratic leadership in Europe?	2011	98	2	-
	2012	98	2	-
Will this [i.e. any concepts or models presented to students during the EIP] impact on your future teaching, and will it change your practice when you return to work?	2011	86	8	6
	2012	93	5	2

In the following sections we combine numeric results from the surveys, open survey questions (e.g., “What did you find most beneficial?” or “What did you find most challenging?”), and the interviews.

General expectations

Students choose to go abroad to study for a variety of reasons. For example, Nyaupane, Paris, and Teye (2010) found the desire to travel to be the most important motivation for student participation in shorter study-abroad programmes. While the questionnaire and interview questions were mostly related to the students’ academic experience and outcomes, in the interviews the first week the students were also asked about their expectations. While “having fun” was mentioned, the ability to build networks with students from other countries and to learn from the perspectives of others, were other important expectations. Moreover, they expected to learn about democratic leadership and methods for teaching and learning. Students for whom English was not their first language also hoped to improve their language skills.

Language and communication

The lack of language skills has been found to pose a barrier to student mobility (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit, & Vujić 2013). In the EIP, there was no formal requirement for English language proficiency, and there was variation among the students in this regard. Thus, comments in the open survey questions and interviews showed that students from non-English speaking countries were concerned that language and communication was a challenge. They had difficulty understanding lectures, and felt that lecturers spoke too fast and used complex terminology. For example, one student wrote that she “did not have the chance to equally take part”; another commented that he did “not always understand the question/topics” (survey 2011). Moreover, students, especially from Poland, Turkey, and Spain, mentioned that “question and answer” activities during plenary sessions were usually dominated by native English speakers, which might be an indication that other students did not feel confident enough to speak up. The surveys also suggested that the students needed more time for clarification in national groups. Thus, one might question to what extent the content of the programme was conveyed in a manner that enabled it to be used as a resource in knowledge building activities in the core groups.

Nevertheless, all students were positive about the core group activities, which appear to have constituted a safe and supportive environment (surveys 2011 and 2012). In interviews, the students from all countries unanimously praised the good support from their peers, and native English-speaking students claimed to make an effort to speak slowly, explain and clarify.

Despite the support and the generally positive experience of the core group activities, we did find some indications that there were challenges. When native English-speaking students act as “legitimate” translators of academic content,

this may work to silence students who might see things differently but lack the words to express their understanding. Students from non-English speaking countries, however, were not confident in formal settings. One student said, “some people speak too fast; it’s so hard to take part. I fear being asked in a large group and not understanding”. Other students said that they were nervous in discussions, and that they did not always understand the questions or topics.

Cultural differences and critical thinking

Our analysis shows that one asset of the EIP is that the students gain insight into cultural differences, for example how culture has a bearing on the way in which educational systems and curricula are constructed, and on the practices of teachers and school leaders. The surveys showed that a large majority of the students found that the EIP had enabled them to see the problems of leadership for democratic citizenship in Europe more clearly, and to think about solutions to some of those problems. The percentage of students who answered these questions positively, increased from the survey in the first week to the survey in the second week. The students also felt that their new understandings of the problems of democratic leadership would have an impact on their practice when returning to work. A majority of the students replied that discussions in core groups helped them to broaden their views and perspectives, and that they wanted to try to become more critical and to understand other perspectives. This indicates that in the students’ views, cross-cultural understanding and criticality were both outcomes of the programmes.

For example, one student stated that “different ideas from different countries enabled us to see problems”; another noted that “we were made aware of different values and cultures”. There are indications, however, that although the students shared information about differences in leadership approaches and educational systems during the programme, they addressed and critically discussed such differences to a lesser extent. Students commented that they needed more time to discuss issues, because it takes time to develop the skills required for people from different cultural backgrounds to be able to interact openly and effectively and build the trust that is imperative for critical discussions. Nevertheless, when asked specifically about questioning and critical thinking in the veys, almost all of the students agreed that the EIP experience had contributed to their development (see Table 1). For example, one of the students elaborated: “Now I am questioning what I knew. I am thinking more about concepts, and questions become more in-depth.” Another student said: “I am trying to be more critical and understand other perspectives.” Thus it seems that the centrality of reflection is closely related to the notion of criticality in the students’ comments, and there was evidence of an increased commitment among the students to reflective practice. Also, the lectures and formal and informal discussions among the students seem to have provided an impetus for enriched and renewed reflection.

The curriculum content

Curriculum refers to the way that content is selected and ordered, intended learning outcomes are described, learning activities are designed and carried out, and achievement is assessed (Leask, 2008). We have detailed above how learning activities were organised, and that assessment was the responsibility of the students' home institutions. In this section, the focus is on the content; i.e., the keynotes and course material that were offered to the students.

The keynotes

Each day of the EIPs started with a keynote delivered by the international staff (sometimes by two people of different nationalities), or by an invited lecturer. As a rule, the keynotes would build on research and connect to leadership practice; however, they were mainly linked to the interests, research, and practice of the lecturer in charge. In this way the students were presented with a variety of approaches and national examples over the course of the EIPs. Nevertheless, our analysis of the keynotes indicates that less effort was expended to make approaches explicit, or to connect across the presentations. Also, although lecturers were from all six participating countries, English and Irish staff played a central role in the introductory lessons and summaries, and all guest lecturers were from the United Kingdom. As such, there was the danger that Anglo-American cultural presumptions dominated the content and work processes.

The course material

The course material was organised on the VLE by the lecturer in charge according to the themes addressed each day. Based on our analysis, we found that the material for the most part was supportive of the approach taken in the lectures. That is, journal articles and other material generally strengthened the arguments put forth in the lectures; there were only a few examples of course material that criticised the approach of the keynote. In addition, the course material (with a few exceptions) was written by Anglo-American researchers, or presented research conducted in Anglo-American contexts (including Ireland and Australia). Although this probably reflects the current condition of leadership research internationally (cf. Hallinger & Chen, 2015), it may nevertheless indicate a certain cultural bias and might constrain discussions about what is taken for granted by people from such cultural backgrounds.

Discussion

The aim of the EIP was to engage the students in the specific kinds of communication, cooperation, and community that will enable them to develop as critical change agents who would then be able to lead more participative and democratic

schools and environments. To achieve this aim, a learning environment was designed in which students would be introduced to research on leadership, democracy, and citizenship as a basis for discussing contexts for democratic leadership, and for analysing and considering implications for practice. In this way, participation in the EIP would enhance the students' understanding and develop their dispositions to act creatively, responsibly, and reflectively within their respective practices as teachers or school leaders. Wells suggests that understanding is "the culminating moment in a cycle of knowing [that] starts with the personal experience which, amplified by information, is transformed through knowledge building into understanding" (1999, p. 85).

Students' experiences played an important part in the EIPs. In core group activities students from different national contexts shared experiences in intercultural encounters. However, the usefulness for learning purposes requires intercultural competence: the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable understanding and respect, appropriate responses, and positive and constructive relationships and self-understanding (Barrett, Huber, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 7). The students described the atmosphere in the core groups as a supportive one, and reported that the EIP strengthened their awareness about cultural differences. The EIPs were short and intensive, which could have been an impediment to developing the sufficient trust and responsiveness required to question others' views and practices.

A further complication was that many of the students who participated were not practising teachers or school leaders. While this might have been an asset to be utilised for learning, the structure of the programme (and the construction of the group tasks) did not accommodate this situation. Wells (2000, p. 84) sees "experience" as the meanings that are constructed over the succession of events that make up a person's life trajectory; they are the backdrop on which new meanings are generated. If some students' experiences are not legitimised as being relevant, this may be an impediment to the learning process.

In Wells' framework, *information* is understood to be other people's interpretation of experiences (Wells, 2000 p. 84), for example course material and lectures. How useful information is for the students' learning depends on how it is presented and used, and to what extent it connects with (or challenges) their experiences. Dimmock (2002, p. 34) argues that "those generating theory make limited attempts to bound or limit their work geographically or culturally" (Dimmock, 2002, p. 34), thus potentially inhibiting the students from understanding leadership in their own cultures (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). When cultural assumptions and expectations are not made explicit, this may result in "cultural colonialism" (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p. 77). Lecturers need to recognise how they, too, are culturally constituted, and make room for epistemological plurality (Ryan, 2011).

Information is also shared in informal ways, and for the students, getting to know other countries' educational systems, policies and practice was seen as a

significant value of the programme. Knowledge about diversity may help people to discover their own contexts. As Slagstad (2003, p. 378, authors' translation) argues: "You will learn to find yourself via the other, the transmitted, that which is strange, in a critical explorative approach." This does not happen "by itself", however. The phrase "critical explorative approach" in Slagstad's quote is a key which leads us to the third category in Wells' model, *knowledge building* (Wells, 2000, p. 85).

Wells (2000, p. 86) makes a distinction between *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transformation*. When students listen to lectures, read articles or share experiences, this amounts to knowledge telling. Such a "telling" then "becomes a knowledge object for others, to which they can respond in various ways—by extending, questioning or rejecting it" (Wells, 1999, p. 107). In order to promote understanding, students must actively and intentionally engage with the information with deliberate, constructive effort. In knowledge building activities, students are expected to "move from knowing to wondering, from certainty to vulnerability" (Kedian, Giles, Morrison, & Fletcher, 2015, p. 4). They need to open up to the influence of others, and to the possibility that their assumptions and preferences might change; they must engage in critical validation of their own and others' presuppositions; criticality addresses reasons for and implications of beliefs and actions. The daily sessions of core group activities could be advantageous for this kind of knowledge building. There are complications, however. First, criticality and critical thinking are problematic concepts (Dunne, 2015) and may mean different things to students and teachers within and across national contexts. Second, a safe environment is a necessary condition for displaying one's assumptions and inclinations; at the same time upholding a safe environment may be detrimental to criticality, for example when the students acknowledge differences in opinions rather than explore the grounds for such differences. Third, language difficulties could impede on knowledge building processes in which relevant information is shared, negotiated, challenged, and validated. Studies have shown that non-native English speakers often lack confidence in their English abilities and are afraid of making mistakes. In addition, their listening skills and comprehension may be at a disadvantage (Andrade, 2006). Thus, although most students believed they developed their questioning and critical thinking during the EIP (cf. table 1), it can be called into question to what extent the knowledge building activities were conducive to the students' development as critical change agents.

Even so, the EIP experience seemed to provide the students with opportunities to develop new understandings of leadership in democratic schools, and with a commitment to become democratic leaders in their home contexts. According to Wells (2000, p. 84–85), *understanding* is personal, holistic, and intuitive: an interpretive framework that is oriented to action. The litmus test is, of course, what actually happens when the students return to their practices, which could be an interesting theme for future research.

Conclusion: Implications and limitations

In this paper we have explored the learning opportunities and how the international context might contribute to the students' professional development in an EIP that aimed to involve future and practising school leaders in their own professional development as critical change agents able to lead more participative and democratic schools and environments. While the EIP seemed to promote communication, cooperation, and community across national groups, we are less confident that the students' criticality was developed. On the whole, both students and staff experienced a support and consensus orientation. A "safe" environment is important for students and staff, but it may at the same time be detrimental to the aim of developing critical change agents.

The overall results from this small study suggest that international programmes like the EIP may be a good supplement to the regular teaching and learning that takes place in master's programmes in educational leadership, mainly because they add value to the students' "home" experiences and because to some extent they address wider global issues and concerns (cf. Lumby & Foskett, 2015). However, as mentioned above, this study reports on data that were collected for evaluation purposes, and aligned with the needs and concerns of the funding agency. Also, as shown in table 1 above, response rates were not optimal, and results from a small-scale study like this cannot be generalised to a larger population. Since we rely on interviews and survey data, we cannot make claims about the actual processes of meaning making, and, importantly, we do not know the implications of the international experience for the students' work as leaders in their home schools. Nevertheless, this exploratory study offers evidence of both challenges and opportunities for internationalisation in leadership development.

A note needs to be made about the authors' roles in the design and delivery of the programme. We were both members of staff and present throughout the two programmes. However, we have conducted the re-analysis carefully, paying special attention to any bias, and other members of staff have commented on the paper on several occasions.

In the design of future programmes that bring educational leadership students from different nationalities together, it is important to address the asymmetry that may exist between students based on differences in levels of mastering a common language, as well as the possibility that the curriculum may be biased. Finally, there seems to be a need to connect short term programmes like EIPs more firmly to the home institutions' programmes in order to allow for post-programme learning and reflection to continue among the participants.

References

- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities. Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131–154.
- Barrett, M. D., Huber, J., & Reynolds, C. (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Bereiter, C. (1994). Implications of postmodernism for science, or, science as progressive discourse. *Educational Psychologist*, 29(1), 3–12.
- Bush, T. (2008). *Leadership and management development in education*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Bush, T. (2011). School leadership development: top-down or bottom-up? *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, 39(3), 258–260.
- Castle, J. E. (2003). Maximizing research opportunities: Secondary data analysis. *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*, 35(5), 287–290.
- Crow, G., Lumby, J., & Pashiardis, P. (2008). Introduction: Why an international handbook on the preparation and development of school leaders? In J. Lumby, G. Crow, & P. Pashiardis (Eds.), *International handbook on the preparation and development of school leaders* (pp. 1–17). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dempster, N., Lovett, S., & Flückiger, B. (2011). *Literature review: Strategies to develop school leadership. Insights*. Melbourne: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
- Dimmock, C. (2002). Educational leadership. Taking account of complex global and cultural contexts. In W. Allan & C. Dimmock (Eds.), *School leadership and administration: The cultural context* (pp. 33–43). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2005). *Educational leadership: culture and diversity*. London: Sage.
- Dunne, G. (2015). Beyond critical thinking to critical being: Criticality in higher education and life. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 71, 86–99.
- Egege, S., & Kutieleh, S. (2004). Critical thinking: teaching foreign notions to foreign students. *International Education Journal*, 4(4), 75–85.
- Hallinger, P., & Chen, J. (2015). Review of research on educational leadership and management in Asia: A comparative analysis of research topics and methods, 1995 – 2012. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 23(1), 5–27.
- Huber, S. G., & West, M. (2002). Developing school leaders: A critical review of current practices, approaches and issues, and some directions for the future. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 1071–1101). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Irwin, S., & Winterton, M. (2011). *Debates in qualitative secondary analysis. A timescapes working paper*. Timescapes Working Paper Series, no 4. Downloaded May 3, 2016 from <http://forscenter.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/wp4-march-2011.pdf>
- Kedian, J., Giles, D., Morrison, M., & Fletcher, M. (2015). Leadership development as a dialogic process: the rationale and concept of an international leadership institute. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (ahead-of-print), 1–21.
- Leask, B. (2008). Internationalisation, globalisation and curriculum innovation. In M. Hellstén & A. Reid (Eds.), *Researching International Pedagogies. Sustainable Practice for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 9–26). New York: Springer.
- Lumby, J., & Foskett, N. (2015). Internationalization and Culture in Higher Education. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(1), 95–111.

- Mercer, N., & Howe, C. (2012). Explaining the dialogic processes of teaching and learning: The value and potential of sociocultural theory. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 1(1), 12–21.
- Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. R. Welton (Ed.), *Defense of Lifeworld* (pp. 39–70). New York: Suny Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (74), 5–12.
- Nyaupane, G. P., Paris, C. M., & Teye, V. (2010). Why do students study abroad? Exploring motivations beyond earning academic credits. *Tourism Analysis*, 15(2), 263–267.
- Precey, R., & Jackson, C. (2009). Transformational Learning for Transformational Leadership. *Professional Development Today*, 12, 46–51.
- Precey, R., & Rodrigues Entrena, M. (2011). Developing the Leaders we Want to Follow: Lessons From an International Leadership Development Programme. *Contemporary Management Quarterly*, 2011(2) 70–83.
- Ryan, J. (2011). Teaching and learning for international students: Towards a transcultural approach. *Teachers and Teaching*, 17(6), 631–648.
- Ryan, J., & Viete, R. (2009). Respectful interactions: learning with international students in the English-speaking academy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(3), 303–314.
- Sawyer, K. (2012). Extending sociocultural theory to group creativity. *Vocations and Learning*, 5(1), 59–75.
- Slagstad, R. (2003). Universitetet som dannelsesinstitusjon [The university as an institution of formation] In R. Slagstad, O. Korsgaard & L. Løvlie (Eds.), [*Dannelsens forvandlinger* The transformation of formation] (pp. 246–255). Oslo: Pax.
- Souto-Otero, M., Huisman, J., Beerkens, M., de Wit, H., & Vujić S. (2013). Barriers to international student mobility evidence from the Erasmus program. *Educational Researcher*, 42(2), 70–77.
- Teichler, U. (2004). The changing debate on internationalisation of higher education. *Higher Education*, 48(1), 5–26.
- Teichler, U. (2009). Internationalisation of higher education: European experiences. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 10(1), 93–106.
- Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (2002). Moving school leadership beyond its narrow boundaries: Developing a cross-cultural approach. In K. Leithwood, P. Hallinger, G. C. Furman, K. Riley, J. MacBeath, P. Gronn, & B. Mulford (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 167–202). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Wallace, J., Foster, R., & da Costa, J. (2007). A survey of existing school leadership preparation and development programs. In J. M. Burger, C. F. Webber, & P. Klinck (Eds.), *Intelligent leadership* (pp. 183–210). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Webber, C. F., & Robinson, J. M. (2004). Internationalization and educators' understanding of issues in educational leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 68(spring 2004), 264–275.
- Wells, C. G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry : towards a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, G. (2000). Dialogic inquiry in education: Building on the legacy of Vygotsky. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research* (pp. 51–85). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, G. (2007). Who we become depends on the company we keep and on what we do and say together. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 46(1–2), 100–103.

¹ The students were practising school leaders or teachers; a few were student teachers. They were all pursuing master's degrees in their home institutions. While some master's programmes were in educational leadership (England, Ireland, and Norway), some were in general leadership programmes (Poland) and some in teacher education (Spain and Turkey).

² In 2011, Jill Blunden and Marion Minhall collected data and wrote the report; in 2012, this work was carried out by Gregorio Vicente Nicolás and Maria Rodrigues Entrena.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank our colleagues from Canterbury Christ Church University, Murcia University, Jagellonian University and University College Dublin for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Specifically, we thank Jill Blunden, Marion Minhall, Gregorio Vicente Nicolás, and Maria Rodrigues Entrena, who collected the qualitative data.