"Keep Calm and Carry On": The Challenges of International Field-based Practice and Research for Graduate Students of Educational Leadership

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the challenges of an inaugural short-term study abroad program in the United Kingdom for American doctoral students of Educational Leadership. Findings, interpreted from an action learning perspective, demonstrate the opportunities for faculty seeking to expand perspectives of school leaders by visiting systems in other countries. Interviews with program participants were coded to reveal a complex interplay of factors impacting professional and academic growth. The results offer support for international programs to promote individual, group, and organizational learning.

Keywords: Doctoral short-term study abroad, educational leadership, action learning, professional and academic growth

The Study Abroad Program

During the summer of 2012, a group of four doctoral students and two members of the University of North Dakota (UND) Department of Educational Leadership (EDL) faculty participated in an exploratory ten-day study abroad program in the United Kingdom (UK). Students spent five days in British schools with planned exposure to school leaders and opportunities for doctoral research. To maximize cultural learning in several authentic social settings, participants were accommodated by host families for the duration of their stay and toured cultural sites in South-East England.

The vision for the short-term international study abroad program emerged from debate about how to best provide a professional education focused on the needs of practice exemplified by the 2012 work of The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). Guided by the future-oriented deliberations of CPED, the UK program promised to fulfill many of the priorities by providing challenging opportunities for field-based practice and research, exposure to culturally diverse communities and leadership practices, and a context for the practice of collaboration and communication skills. The director sought to explore the possibilities offered by international experience to expand the perspectives of current and future school leaders in the UND, EDL doctoral program.

Theoretical Lens

Action learning, according to Marquart & Waddill, 2004, draws on a "diverse array of learning theories" creating "common ground among all five adult learning orientations" (p. 186). Developed by Revans (2011) in the coalmines of Wales and England in the 1940s, reiterations of the theory (Garvin, 2000, Marquardt & Waddill, 2004, Leonard & Lang, 2010, Leonard & Marquardt, 2010 and Marquardt, 2011) have six elements in common:

1. A problem, project, or challenge;
2. A diverse group of learners;
3. A reflective inquiry process;

4. The power to take action;
5. A commitment to learning;
6. An action learning coach.

The work is framed from an action learning perspective because it provides a powerful lens through which to explore the outcomes of research and practice-oriented doctoral international programs. This paper focuses on the relationship of the first element, *problem* or *challenge*, integrating elements of professional and academic growth reported by program participants.

Purpose & Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges of a ten-day cultural visit to the (UK) from the perspectives of student, faculty, and UK hosts. The study seeks to answer the following question:

> How do the challenges of a doctoral international experience impact participants' professional and academic growth?

Research Design

Doctoral students through the Department of EDL in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at UND, were invited to apply for a pilot international research, professional andcultural experienceprogram in 2012. Five doctoral students were accepted. Students were accompanied by two EDL faculty members: Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, Assistant Professor and Director of the UK Cultural Tour; Dr. Sherryl Houdek, Associate Professor and EDL Chair. The pilot program was available to all doctoral students from cohorts based in Fargo and Grand Forks. Students submitted a written application for the UK Cultural Tour. Applications were reviewed and selection of participants was made by the EDL faculty.

Due to the overwhelming educational experience for students, faculty, department, college, and university, the faculty decided to pursue a formalized study of the project through qualitative research. Qualitative research provides the rich data which has the potential to significantly enhance the findings of the progressive, innovative UK Cultural Tour. The selection of this type of data collection is intrinsic to the methodology of the research. This tour opened the Educational Leadership (EDL) research door to participants in a manner never previously included within the EDL department. After the experience in the UK, participants shared their impressions, perceptions, and lessons learned through interviews with a neutral interviewer from another School on the UND campus.

Research Process

Several steps preceded the interview component of the research subsequent to the overseas experience. Preparation of the tour by the trip's Director was organized, extensive, and documented. Detailed planning preceded student application. Multiple venues of communication introduced the tour: an initial campus meeting; group meetings; Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedure and documentation; newsletters; emails; Skype, telephone; Blackboard. Students were required to journal before, during, and after their trip and to reflect honestly on their experiences. Journal submissions were expected to contain records of events, observations, and reflections on preparation, participation, impact, and outcomes. Journal submissions were located on a secured, confidential Blackboard site and were accessed only by the Tour Director and the EDL Chair. Students were expected to remain cognizant of the research goal(s) decided between themselves and their dissertation chair. Subsequent to the group's return, interviews were conducted with the individual participants in the tour.

Decision to Pursue Qualitative Research

A qualitative study acknowledges individual contribution to research in a direct manner. Qualitative research methods include approach, relationships, site and participant selection, data collection and analysis, and strategies for correlation and coding based on acquired data (Maxwell, 2005). The unique data inherent in qualitative research lent itself particularly well to determine findings from the varied interviewees. Methodology was dictated by the research; the case study methodological approach most clearly addresses the UK Tour research. Creswell (2007) described the case study as research which "involves the issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context), (p. 73)." The self-identified setting for the UK Tour combined with the doctoral studies' educational framework dictated the selection of the case study methodology.

"In qualitative case studies, data tend to be gathered through the ethnographic tools of participant observation and in-depth interviewing" (Glesne, 2006, p. 13). Participant observation is reflected through the organizers' interviews combined with the reflections from the participants themselves.

"The truly effective question flows from an interviewer's concentrated listening, engaged interest in what is being said, and purpose in moving forward" (Seidman, 2006, p. 93). The interview questions centered on five primary categories: Preparation; School Experience; Host Families; Tours & Cultural Visits; Program Balance & Goals. Within these categories, the interviewer allowed the freedom to pursue areas of particular importance to the interviewee. Because the interviewer had not participated in the Tour, a neutral viewpoint was maintained throughout all conversations.

Participant Interviews

The neutral interviewer for this research was provided an "Interview Protocol," a series of questions used for each respondent. The interview questions elicited responses which determined the subsequent codes, categories, and themes. Rapport built during the interview contributed to a flow of impressions in the discussion and an appreciation for what each participant had to offer. Within the list of questions, adaptability was critical to encourage the free flow of discussion. Flexibility in interviews and occasional deviation from the prescribed list of questions produced a relationship which allowed participants to clarify and expound on responses via a non-judgmental avenue.

The interviewees shared opinions, impressions, observations, experiences, and learning which contributed to the research results. "Thick description" (Geertz, 1973) is description rich enough in detail that it is understandable to those outside the culture. Many of the comments made by the interview participants, directly applicable to the dissertation research and experience, illuminated the travel and self-broadening, educational adventure through an individual's descriptions of people, setting, and circumstances encountered in a foreign country.

Participant observation is characterized by involvement with people in their natural environment (Geertz, 1973). Held within the CEHD, the interviews took place in a familiar setting for the Tour participants. Listening to the verbal cadence in speech, distinctive language characteristics, grammar, as well as observing body language and eye contact contributed to the sum total of the interview. Resulting data from student preparation manifested itself in their conversations within four primary areas: professional; academic; social; and personal. Individually tailored goals contributed to the Tour adventure and to the insights with which each participant discussed the experience.

Shortly after the participants' return, interviews were scheduled with those people who chose to participate. This outcome interview was optional. It was a credit to the Tour Director, the EDL Department, and to the participants themselves that all individuals chose to engage in an interview; the participation was 100%. The following people were interviewed: four participating students; the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership who travelled in England with the group; the UK Cultural Tour organizer and facilitator; an associate of the facilitator who had personally studied in England; the spouse of the EDL Chair who accompanied the group.

Interview questions were written with thought and care to maximize the scope of the Tour experience. "The data you get are only as good as the questions you ask" (Glesne, 2006, p. 86). Combining the participant transcripts to obtain codes and categories from the data allowed a broad view of the Tour project. Handwritten interview notes augmented the transcriptions and clarified responses to maintain accuracy. Transcriptions combined with transcript notes uncovered gradients potentially missed in the interview. Reading transcripts as a unit contributed to the development of themes within the research. Combining transcripts helped to identify common threads from individual interviews.

Data Collection

The nuances of participants' observations are of pivotal importance to data collection. Because interviews were held shortly after the participants' return, the resultant data showed initial reactions with crisp, unedited, unseasoned responses to questions. These responses allowed researchers the opportunity to identify successes, deficits, accomplishments, potential, and performance of the participants and of the Tour. Relevant to the fact that this Tour was an innovative undertaking for the UND EDL Department, there is no basis for comparison. The Tour stands on its own merits. Perceptions of the individual participants varied widely. Resultant data proved to be particularly fascinating through the diverse reactions of those in the group.

Multiple factors contributed to those reactions. A few of those factors include: individual preparation for research and distance from home; family support and constraints; previous travel experience, including travel to foreign countries; health; student expectations; comfort level in a foreign setting; group dynamics; acceptance or resistance to cultural disparities; emphasis on personal research; relationships with the EDL faculty; current employment. "Substantive validation means understanding one's own understandings of the topic, understandings derived from other sources, and the documentation of this process in the written study. Self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 206). The research PI triangulated and validated the research results through codes, categories, and themes using Atlas.ti software. Codes, categories, and themes were validated by the two contributing researchers. (See Code Map Figure 1.). Hallmarks from the most salient data will be discussed in the ensuing Findings (Results) section.

Findings

This study finds that program participants, students and faculty support team, were greatly impacted by the challenges of first-time international travel and cultural experiences in the UK. Primarily focused on professional and academic priorities in the context of school placements in three Guildford, Surrey schools, students reported reactions to their experience of individualized school-based activities in de-briefing interviews conducted by a neutral researcher. Data yielded valuable insights concerning the challenges experienced by students and faculty during the five-day school visit providing potential for professionaland academicgrowth.

1. Professional Growth

UK/US School System Comparisons

De-briefing interview data confirmed the intensity of the verbal debate and critique engendered by school visits while in the UK. Students were challenged to examine comparative cultural and professional norms – reflecting on positive and negative differences between their experience of schools in the US and host schools in the UK. There is evidence of reflection on leadership practices, in particular the apparent trust and respect exhibited by administrators adopting collaborative management practices.

Leadership. Overall, school visits were believed highly beneficial with many leadership and instructional learning highlights. A stated goal to see "how the organization is run from top to bottom" was achieved by one respondent who also said: "I feel refreshed. I feel it has recharged me and given me a lot more confidence." She was not alone in finding leaders who delegatedresponsibility and believed team leaders in the UK schools to be "key players" in the organization. All participants reported working with selected exemplary leaders who "tapped into the strengths" of teachers, often in more challenging circumstances than experienced in the US. For example, one of the group noted cramped conditions, large classes, and limited preparation time compared to her own experience and marveled at the positive attitudes of staff who willingly stayed late into the evening. One described how her administrator spoke to pupils "like a mom." "That 'mom' feeling of disciplining, where her heart is in the right place" is believed to be particularly important when dealing with emotionally disturbed children: ". . . dealing with those behaviors where those kids need tough love."

Evidence of participants' reflective practice is found in the data with comments such as: "Really effective leaders have others help them to lead – and I brought that back with me. I need to be more of a leader – I've always been a doer." Others were able to identify behaviors exhibited by individuals observed in the host schools resulting in effective leadership: "I thought the leadership of the three headteachers was phenomenal. You know I spent most of my time at Shalford with [the Headteacher] and she had some [administrative] issue . . . I learned so much from the way she handled it . . . listening and being reflective and then asking her staff . . . you could tell there was common respect there." At the same location, teachers were observed during Planning, Preparation and Assessment time; the speaker told how the teachers would challenge each other "but there was no feeling of threat, where in my experience we have that threat. We just close our doors and teach the way we want to teach." She noticed: "The teachers were really reflective of their teaching practices in ways that a lot of teachers in the States are not."Interview data show evidence of thoughtful reflection on the leadership practices witnessed in UK schools. The difference between the US and UK experience expressed by one respondent as a dichotomy between "autonomy" and "micromanagement," prompteda pledge to delegate more in her own school.

While participants believed there to be a great deal to commend in host schools, they also observed the apparent miss-match between the high level of academic excellence and the comparatively low level of general building maintenance.

This was perceived as a cultural difference to be further explored. Accustomed to paper napkins in public eating areas, hand soap in bathrooms, clean bins, and custodial assistance during the school day, it was difficult for one participant not to see this as neglect. The observation prompted a reexamination of priorities in financially strapped education systems and of perceived cultural attitudes to hygiene. This example of cultural critique is not uncommon; for example, Brown & Holloway, 2008, p.41 in an ethnographic study of international postgraduate students in the South of England report: ". . . dissatisfaction with the host country, sometimes leading to hostility." The authors posit that students were "overwhelmed by negative symptoms . . . associated with culture shock." Mildly exhibited in professional discussions, this tendency was also evident in student evaluations of accommodation with host families demonstrating the challenge of adjustment to unfamiliar cultural values.

Instruction. Instruction in the host schools was generally thought to be of high quality while it was also acknowledged that what was observed might not be typical. Each of the respondents engaged in comparisons between the host schools and their own experience in US schools finding greater pupil autonomy, integration of the arts, engaged learning, and informal assessment practices. One student observed infant (elementary) school pupils working together as "learning partners." "They're constantly interacting with their partner, they're conversing most of the lesson. And I don't think we do that very much over here. I think it's, you know, teachers talking and kids are listening." In the same setting, teachers engaged in formative assessment by observation and note-taking while pupils were active in the pursuit of learning goals established in the first 15-20 minutes of the session.

The observations in two other schools were so different from the experience of the observer that she was moved to suggest "the training might be different here."

> There was a learning noise that was common, and that was expected in the UK schools, whereas in the USA schools it may be very common and acceptable in teacher's minds that – that students are learning if they are quiet – they're looking and listening and that everyone's facing this way. I would say 99% of the classrooms I've visited, students are working in groups, working with a partner, or just having an overall discussion and just overall engaged in their learning while collaborating or talking with their peers. It was a delightful learning noise everywhere.

In the more challenging environment of one secondary school, the respondent told how "when I did an interview or went and observed – like the teachers were kind of embarrassed because of the kids' behavior, but it was like I was home. I mean, it wasn't any different than what I am used to."While this student likened her experience to the US school in which she worked, another contrasted the integration of the arts in both of the schools she visited. She described her experience of a lesson: "It was incredible to see how they were given the freedom to create and – and do what they wanted to do to make their final project. I loved that about those schools."

Power and Privilege. Host schools were chosen to reflect the socially and economically diverse Guildford community. While one of the secondary schools with an exceptional record of academic achievement was a popular choice of middle class families, the other – located in a working-class council housing estate – suffered declining rolls and struggled to achieve targets for improvement efforts. Faculty team members were particularly attuned to the impact of power and privilege, made more obvious during an evening visit to a prestigious Public School in Godalming. The schedule included a mini-bus tour of Guildford; the route was planned to educate group members about the neighborhoods from which schools enrolled students.

Performance data from national standardized tests were reviewed and discussed during orientation sessions with participants before leaving the US. "League Tables," listing the academic performance of British schools, are published each year. Attention was drawn to the relative performance of the host schools and comparable accountability measures in the US. Schools in North Dakota are poised to implement Common Core State Standards in Language Arts and Mathematics by 2014;host schools adopted the National Curriculum for England and Wales in 1989. The visit provided a unique opportunity to learn from education professionals with considerable experience of national curriculum standards andassessment.

Professional Development and Role Expectations

Host school program coordinators, the Headteacher (Principal) in two of the three schools, directed and modified daily schedules while also acting as mentors during the five-day school experience. Faculty program coordinators monitored daily journals posted in the program Blackboard site, visited host schools, and met with students periodically for informal evening activities.

Individualized daily schedules provided opportunities to observe leadership activities and to meet key personnel, for example, Senior Management Team (SMT), School Board, and Staff Meetings.Limited experience of leadership was predictably challenging for three of the four students. In one case, there was some discomfort experienced in the role of observer – implying a "judgmental/inspectoral" function. While administrators could potentially learn from the visitor's perceptions of their schools, one respondent found there to be few formal opportunities forfeedback. Evidence of growth resulting from what participants *took* from the experience is apparent in the data; there was an expressed desire to *give* professional insights in a more equal partnership and an appreciation for rich professional dialogue and networking opportunities.

Professionalism. Group members were challenged by matters of "professionalism" and role expectations.Contact between students and professors in classes and advising relationships is typically short-term within controlled and emotionally secure settings spanning a maximum of two days duration. Tour participants were brought together in close proximity for an extended period in professionally demanding contexts. This experience, together with feedback from host school coordinators in debriefing meetings, challenged preconceptions and enabled faculty to take "a fresh perspective on our students," and they on us. Faculty debated qualities of leadership: What is the "essence" of leadership? Can it be taught? What are students learning from us about leadership? How consistent are we as a department in our expectations of professionalism? Are there universally acceptable leadership practices? Is leadership culturally defined? Do students need leadership experience to benefit from the doctoral program in educational leadership?

Preparedness. Feedback on the subject of preparedness demonstrates a somewhat differingorientation between individuals reflecting personal and professional roles. Students generally prioritized family responsibilities andpreparation for a period of absence but also recognized the impact of events prior to leaving.

Professional preparedness to learn from the UK experience was believed by faculty to be somewhat dependent on previous leadership experience and potential for future employment as a school administrator in the US. For one student, the priorities expressed during interview were inconsistent with the agreed-upon program goals. The value of professional learning for leadership by attending an SMT meeting, a required activity for each of the four participants, was questioned.

While school schedules were designed to meet individual needs and research goals, there was also an expectation that students be prepared to learn from exemplary administrators by participating in routine leadership meetings. This proved a meaningful experience for three of the four studentsbut was clearly resisted by the fourth who sought to have greater control over her program in order to pursue research activities exclusively. This raises questions regarding the preparedness of students to benefit from an international experience in educational leadership also questioningthe balance of UK school activities and program goals.

School Program Balance. Perceptions of UK school schedules seemed dependent on context and individual motivations. For example, in the intimate environment of the small village infant school, with planned visits to other schools, the student reported no "time crunch" and the flexibility to modify the schedule when needed. The intensity in the larger school schedule was described as "invigorating" but the first of the five-day school experience as "overwhelming." UK school hosts believed the five-day visit to be optimal – any less was thought too short for the US guests to acclimate and obtain the desired information; any longer too difficult for them to sustain. Participants and hosts all agreed on the need for more time to reflectand to engage in informal sharing with peers.

2. Academic Growth

Student group members were required to register for two dissertation credits, complete journals in Blackboard, and gather data for dissertation studies. Research plans emerged from advising sessions and assignments completed for the Advanced Qualitative Research course in spring 2012. Students were encouraged to conduct the US element of a comparative study before collecting data in the UK. The complex coordination of coursework requirements, includingAdvanced Qualitative Research and data collection in UK schools, was demanding work for everyone concerned. Preparing the IRB submissions for permission to conduct research locally and in the UK required the cooperation of students, EFR instructor, advisor, and UK-based program coordinators. The process forced the pace of planning in the host schools but also created a focus for the visits in June. While the initial goal was for students to engage in less focused work-shadowing of administrators, what emerged over time were programs tailored to very specific academic goals.

Host school coordinators demonstrated their commitment to the UK Tour program by their attention to detail. Armed with the IRB forms, they went to great lengths to provide opportunities for observation and interviews in the educational settings described in the documents. For example, arrangements were made for one student to meet with the Coordinator of Traveler Education for the County of Surrey and for him to accompany her on visits to a traveler park for observations and interviews. This level of support was repeated in each of the host schools. Students visited feeder or receiving schools, alternative learning centers, models of multi-age teaching, were invited to administrative team and board meetings, and taught lessons in their specialist subjects. Everyone played their part in creating a highly interactive, purposeful, and stimulating schedule for our students.

Research

The importance of the process undertaken to prepare students as a group for UK research was acknowledged by the post-doctoral student who compared the support for the group with her own experience of preparing for a dissertation proposal. Advising sessions, often incorporated into group meetings, provided direction for planning and topic choice. For example, one student described an extended period of personal research before meeting the advisor to narrow the focus to a researchable topic: "I did a lot of research . . . the last year and a half or so. Everything I did – all of my essays I had to write for class and projects I started to prepare myself – everything I was looking at was focusing on the [topics of] Common Core and assessment."

Participants drew support for academic goals from a variety of sources during the year preceding the trip. Courses in Education Foundations and Research and the EDL course Research in Educational Leadership were all given special mention. In studying Advanced Qualitative Research while planning comparative research in the US and UK, one student described the relationship between the two: "I got the understanding of how to do qualitative research generally [by taking EFR510] but then really began it in EFR 520 where I kind of got the opportunity to do my pilot study, which I will integrate with my research for England."

School schedules for three of the program participants were heavily focused on activities designed to promote research goals.Student experience reflects this emphasis. Most participants responded flexibly to circumstances as the reality of qualitative enquiry in a culturally unknown environment was realized. In one case, the participant was disappointed by resistance to the recording of interviews and the need to write notes. In another, there was dissatisfaction that the tight scheduling necessary to serve transport needs disallowed her from following up on opportunities she believed to serve her research goals. With that said, participants were generally satisfied.

One respondent reported: "Everything we did at the school supported my research. I didn't necessarily know to what extent until I got the chance to kind of reflect in journals during the evening. But there was so much information." This sentiment was echoed by another respondent who, when asked how the trip had contributed to her doctoral experience, replied: "Well it really helped with my research . . . having that actual experience of having conversations and meeting some of the families was really important." The impact of working with the Surrey coordinator for Traveller education and the experience of visiting Traveller communities were key activities for this group member.

The academic journey began for students and faculty more than one year *before* embarking on the UK Tour in June, 2012. Now one year *after* the Tour, participants continue to reflect on the experience and anticipate the completion of dissertation research in 2013/14. Students and faculty are benefiting from closer collaboration between the Department of EDL, Department of Teaching and Learning, and Department of Education Foundations Research.

Discussion

The scope of resultant data from the United Kingdom Cultural Tour is expansive, multi-layered, and compelling. Growth in integrated yet diverse areas was a salient outcome of this pilot international collaboration. Many focus areas intermingled: personal and professional growth in graduate level doctoral students; Educational Leadership program development; individual doctoral student leadership background, skills, and demonstrated potential. Each area impacted others, generating issues and questions which enhanced goals of the students, faculty, department, college, and university.The action learning frame consisting of six unified elements centered the focus for data analysis. In addition to the challenge for augmenting their dissertation research, participating students embarked on this academic and cultural opportunity with varying degrees of personal travel experience; for most, international travel was a first.

Commitment to the Tour, however, was a commitment to learning in a novel environment linked with an element of personal uncertainty. Diversity among the learners stemmed from varying degrees of administrative experience coupled with distinctly divergent research foci. Generally, students demonstrated a naiveté in readiness. Conversely, administrative preparation for the trip was extensive and comprehensive ranging from broad issues such as passports to nuances of packing a suitcase. These anticipatory details wove through the fabric of required journal reflections. The Tour provided a precise, deliberate, carefully selected academic connection blended with an expansive opportunity for cultural immersion. Although participants were provided a myriad of travel areas to consider prior to departure with multiple options for extra-curricular events and were encouraged to take the initiative (action) to individually investigate then select their choices, most did not prepare their personal itinerary outside of the Tour's established, organized activities. Thus, some participants' criticism of scheduling upon Tour completion was mitigated. Throughout the Tour, participants relied heavily on their accompanying faculty members, primarily on the Tour Director (action learning coach).

Challenge ostensibly centered on academics and environment. The UK Tour experiences, however, self-reflected through interviews, showed flashes of personal anxiety and subsequent adjustment in all areas of the trip. Working with UK seasoned professionals, carefully selected for their expertise and accomplishments, and "living" within an educational system dissimilar from their own, albeit for a short duration, afforded a unique learning opportunity for US educators.

The student learning opportunity with concomitant results was multiplied in outcomes for EDL departmental consideration. The Tour called into play discussions and evaluation of the "essence" of leadership and areas which can, and should, impact the future of the department. The EDL department practices and implementation of stated mission would be well served to benefit from self-scrutiny via the UK Tour research conclusions relevant to the degrees conferred by the department and departmental expectations. Tour data has the potential to enrich the EDL purpose which will subsequently enhance current students and future graduates who will represent the department and the university in their professional academic institutions.

Student work experience, personal and academic preparation, faculty expectations, and leadership practices coalesced into a singular experience for the individual participant. Potential ramifications for EDL and the CEHD are profound. If the UK Tour "lessons learned" are evaluated and implemented, where applicable, the department, college, and greater University will be the beneficiaries of an unparalleled opportunity for growth. The most meaningful benefits, however, will be for the heart of EDL education, the students.

Limitations to the Research

A central limitation to the pilot program was the number of student applications. Due to the pilot study nature of the Tour, this EDL Department option was attractive to many students less experienced in educational administrative positions. It would be anticipated that future tours would draw from a larger applicant pool due to several factors: departmentally defined guidelines and specifications based on research analyses; empirical success of the pilot Tour; closely integrated doctoral dissertation benefits. The research study conclusions emanating from Tour data thus far have included only initial perceptions, observations, and outcomes from student and faculty participants. A retrospective interview, six months to one year post-Tour, would allow a more comprehensive view of implications from the experience and the application of results.

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Figure 1: UK Cultural Tour Interview Data Code Map: Professional and Academic Growth

Codes: Student Interviews	Themes	Codes: Faculty Team Interviews
1. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH		
• UK/US comparison – critique/reflective practice/attitude change/revelations/ perspective-taking • Professional expectations – collaboration/delegation/trust/respect and "unique practices" – school uniform/tracking/pre-service education/ supervision and evaluation/hiring practices • Professional debate – conflicting beliefs and values – understanding? • Cultural norms – hygiene/security/"good" teaching • US applications	*UK/US Comparisons Cultural and Professional Critique*	• UK schools, power, and privilege • UK/US comparisons, cultural critique and adaptation
• Professional rejuvenation • Leadership practices and development – autonomy vs. micro-management • International collaboration • Providing feedback • Observer role – judgment/inspection?	*Professional Development and Role Expectations*	• Skill Development • Professionalism • Networking/Professional dialogue • Professional development – education and leadership practice • Fresh perspective on students • Professional relationships – peers and UK school hosts • Leadership challenge • Educational Leadership Department expectations and norms • Qualities and "essence" of leadership
• Preparedness • Financial planning • Bringing past experience from US	*Preparedness*	• Leadership experience and preparedness • Impact on future EDL doctoral program and admissions • Learning and depth of understanding
• Overwhelming school schedule • Professional vs. academic goals	*Balance*	• Learning in host schools – freedom to explore vs. planned experience • Program overload
2. ACADEMIC GROWTH		
• Dissertation research - tour group collaborative processes • Education Foundations and Research (EFR) - courses/advising/academic connections across departments • Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications • Methodological limitations – expectations vs. reality – flexibility and adaptation	*Research*	• Dissertation research • EFR collaboration • Cross-department collaboration (EDL-EFR)
• Professional knowledge – arts integration/ project-based learning/student-centered classrooms • Concept clarification e.g. poverty • Attitude-reinforcement vs. challenge	*Learning and Depth of Understanding*	• Professional knowledge • Reflective practice • Intellectual curiosity