

Preparing Social Work Students for International Interdisciplinary Practice: A Teaching Model and Its Impact on Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: *To promote international social work education and prepare MSW graduates for international careers, several teaching models have been developed, including intensive teaching in international settings, hybrid teaching with study abroad components, and applied learning through service learning and international internships. Benefits of international social work education range from increased knowledge and skills in addressing global issues through policy and advocacy, to significant improvements in multi-cultural competence and awareness upon participation in structured cultural immersion programs. Current challenges for social workers in international development careers point to the need for an interdisciplinary approach to best address complex global social issues. This paper proposes an international interdisciplinary teaching model that aims to prepare social work students for international development practice. Based on a pilot study of the proposed model, students showed significant increases in the self-efficacy of interdisciplinary international knowledge and skills.*

Keywords: *International social work, interdisciplinary education, self-efficacy, experiential learning, social work education*

Using scientific inquiry and knowledge of the person-in-environment approach, respect for human diversity, and a global point of view, social work professionals strive to achieve social and economic justice, prevent constraints on human rights, eliminate poverty, and promote quality of life for every individual (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008). For a profession with such a wide focus of practice, there is an increased challenge of promoting globally-minded social work practitioners. International social work provides the framework for educating global social workers and prepares students for international social development as a dimension of social work practice.

Over the past three decades, socioeconomic, political, and technological changes created a new range of social issues that require more diverse and innovative approaches, shifting intervention paradigms from a local to a global context of social work practice. New knowledge and skills are required, and existing professional realms have to go through a transformation process to remain relevant within the current context. With international social development issues requiring multidisciplinary approaches, an international interdisciplinary focus in social work education is one core element of this transformation process.

The internationalization of social work education was accelerated by the political and economic changes at the end of the 1980s. After the fall of the Communist regimes in

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Eastern Europe (1989-1991) there was a surge in the need for social work education and implicitly international social work curriculum development (Török & Korazim-Körösy, 2012). Immediate transfer of knowledge from countries with recent social work traditions (such as the United States) shaped the development of social work education not only in post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, but also in China and throughout Latin America, following a neocolonialist pattern challenged by local social justice and human rights activists (Cheung & Liu, 2004; Healy, 2008). However, it shortly became apparent that the imported American social work educational models did not necessarily fit within the local systems and practice paradigms (Cheung & Liu, 2004; Healy, 2008). This lack of fit can be partially attributed to the micro-practice focus in American social work in recent years, which did not respond to the imminent need for macro-social work practice competencies necessary in countries undergoing major socio-political change. The lack of attention to macro-social work practice was a barrier to effective solutions to social problems in developing countries. Focusing on a clinical social work model leaves out the social action traditions established by Jane Addams, Bertha Reynolds, and others (Specht & Courtney, 1994), undermining the opportunity of people in developing countries to receive appropriate social work services that address their life challenges and improve their well-being.

Globalization, increased migration, increased natural disasters, and changes in the nature of war also challenge the existing paradigms of social work practice in the United States. The third millennium was characterized by a renewed emphasis on human rights, indigenous knowledge, and the importance of systemic, structural changes. The CSWE responded by revising its standards of competency to include global practice and human rights (CSWE, 2008). As noted by Estes and Snell (2009), these changes required an added focus on multicultural competence in social work practice and a better understanding of global affairs. It became clear that international social workers have to redefine their profession and reclaim its place among other international development and human rights professions. A study conducted in 2009-2010 by Pittman, Luca-Sugawara, Rodgers, and Bediako (2015) under the direct coordination of the CSWE Global Commission identified very distinct skills sets that will require a transfer of knowledge from other disciplines (such as Economics, Public Health, Law, and Anthropology) as well as from other communities and cultures. Existing theoretical frameworks therefore need to be adapted to address different contexts (urban, rural, indigenous communities) as well as different practice settings (community/collective approaches, often within a context of chronic trauma).

To ensure the competence of the social work profession in working with other professions in a global arena, different models of international social work education continued to emerge—ranging from curriculum changes (to include international topics), to study tours and experiential learning (to link theoretical concepts to practice), to internships and international fellowships (to provide students with international practice experiences), as well as international student and faculty exchange programs (aimed to increase the scope of social work as a global profession). Also, more interdisciplinary collaborations were forged, to address the complex socio-economic and political challenges through a transfer of knowledge and skills, with over 200 joint degrees

developed in the United States within the past 25 years (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002; CSWE, 2013).

In light of all these changes, as social work educators, we need to ensure that we promote best practices to prepare social work graduates to work within a global environment and collaborate across disciplines to provide best services to diverse population groups. This paper proposes an alternative model for interdisciplinary international social work education. Focusing on the impact of the interdisciplinary course, the model was evaluated using students' self-efficacy as an indicator of effective transfer of knowledge and skills.

Supporting International Interdisciplinary Social Work Education

Recognizing the challenge of preparing the social work cadre for 21st century social issues, in early 2014, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) changed the global definition of social work to recognize the value of indigenous knowledge for social workers. This change followed the CSWE (2008) competency-based professional education standards, charging social work educators to prepare students to practice with various competencies, ranging from engaging diversity and difference in practice to responding to contexts that shape practice (Education Policy 2.1.9). The 2008 CSWE standards stressed the importance of improving interdisciplinary knowledge and skills for social workers. Correspondingly, social work educators developed multiple teaching models focusing on either international education or interdisciplinary collaboration.

In 2015, the CSWE issued new Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Relevant to international interdisciplinary social work, the 2015 EPAS requires social work educators to consider the following competencies in their curriculum design:

- Engage diversity and difference in practice (Competency 2);
- Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice (Competency 3);
- Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services (Competency 4); and
- Acknowledge the implications of the larger practice context when assessing and intervening with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and consider benefits of inter-professional collaboration in this process (Competency 7 & 8, CSWE, 2015).

Previous research on international social work education models included intensive teaching in international settings, hybrid teaching including study abroad components, and applied learning through service learning and international internships. These studies revealed a number of positive outcomes on students' learning, including increased student understanding of the effects of globalization and the interrelationships between discrimination, oppression, and privilege across classes and national boundaries (Das & Anand, 2014; Gammonley, Rotabi, & Gamble, 2007); enhanced understanding of the

connection between social work practice and international social policies; improved intercultural skills and increased cultural sensitivity (Fairchild, Pillai, & Noble, 2006; Gilin & Young, 2009; Tesoriero, 2006); positive changes in self-awareness regarding knowledge and skills in addition to values and beliefs (Moorhead, Boetto, & Bell, 2014); increase in understanding of professional identity (Gilin & Young, 2009; Moorhead et al., 2014); a new perception of theory and practice with local and global applications (Cheung & Liu, 2004; Cornelius & Greif, 2005); increased employment opportunities; and improved fluency in a foreign language (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002). In regards to contributors to an enhanced student learning process, studies described that pre-trip planning, peer learning and support, debriefing and critical reflection, open communication between students and faculty members, writing journals and poetry, and an integration of post-trip activities were most beneficial (Das & Anand, 2014; Furman, Coyne, & Negi, 2008; Gammonley et al., 2007).

Empirical studies exploring the effect of interdisciplinary education on students' learning suggested that collaboration between disciplines expands non-social work professionals' knowledge of the social work discipline (Stone, Ekman, English & Fujimori, 2008; Supiano & Berry, 2013); promotes respect for and by non-social work professionals; grows personal and professional confidence and competence of social work students (Supiano & Berry, 2013); and strengthens social justice outcomes for collaborating professions (Jones & Jones, 2011; Stone et al., 2008).

While recently more attention was given to interdisciplinarity (or inter-professional collaboration, as stated in the 2015 EPAS) in social work education, particularly with disciplines such as health care, law, psychology, and media and communications, other disciplines, such as economics and environmental studies, remain at the margins. Considering the potential synergy of combining social work, economics, business, and environmental studies, we propose an alternative interdisciplinary model of international social work education. We present the concepts on which this alternative education model is built, explain the theoretical underpinnings that support it, discuss the model's potential effectiveness based on student assessments, and suggest further steps based on its impact on student self-efficacy.

Concept definitions

This article addresses the body of knowledge and field of practice relevant for international social work and social development as a dimension of social work practice. Accordingly, we focus on teaching methods used for building knowledge and practice readiness for social work students preparing to work in international social work. To this extent, we propose the following operational definitions:

International social work

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defines international social work as:

[...] a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation

of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. (IFSW, 2014, para. 2)

International social development

International development, as a concept, a discipline, and a global aim, was born within the context of the post World War II (WWII) era, mostly linked to the safety threats created by WWII and the economic destruction in the aftermath of the war. Thus, it has its dominant emphasis on reconstruction (within a human rights framework emphasizing peace-building and cooperation) and economic development. Keynesian economics became the blueprint for international development, and global institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), its main stakeholders. Yet focusing on economic growth alone did not deliver the expected global development results (Thomas & Allen, 2000). The major international development agencies revised their strategies to integrate a focus on social development and introduced the people-centered approach to development (Easterly, 2006; Korten, 1984). The new millennium marked a greater step towards humanizing development by introducing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as the new international social development strategy (United Nations, 2000). To address the poor results of previous approaches to global issues, the MDGs challenged existing paradigms and required a change in mindset.

Building on the historical evolution of the international development concept, we define International Social Development as a field of practice and the related knowledge and skills necessary to achieve sustainable development through effective partnerships between communities, local and international organizations, international development agencies, and global bodies of governance, with the active participation of civil society. Sustainable international social development focuses on community capacity-building as the ultimate outcome of any development strategy. Within this framework, good governance becomes a tool for supporting effective community capacity-building.

Applied experiential learning

This paper focuses on a model of international social work education that integrates an applied experiential learning component and teaching concepts in an international context of practice based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). Learning experiences within international contexts, over short periods of time, are mostly referred to in the literature as "study tours." The educational model presented in this paper combines an intensive course with applied practice experiences. The overall learning process involved cultural immersion as well as constant reflection on students' daily experiences and integration of indigenous knowledge as part of the applied experiential learning process.

Interdisciplinary education

Studies in the literature describe three types of “multiple disciplinary” (Choi & Pak, 2006) education: (1) *Multidisciplinary education*, which yields knowledge from various disciplines where each discipline remains within their own boundary; (2) *Interdisciplinary education*, which produces knowledge through incorporation of disciplines where disciplines act as a whole to solve a problem exceeding the boundaries of their discipline; and (3) *Transdisciplinary education*, which refers to knowledge produced through collaboration of different disciplines where disciplines transcend their boundaries by sharing information and skills, as well as responsibilities (Choi & Pak, 2006; Dyer, 2003). For the purpose of this paper, interdisciplinarity combines these definitions and refers to the incorporation of knowledge from various disciplines to address complex global problems and the transdisciplinary sharing of information, skills, and responsibilities to improve problem-solving as it relates to global issues.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Within current contexts of practice, there are several ongoing adjustments to social work education that provide the basis for the alternative educational model proposed by this paper, each of them supported by a specific theory:

Globalization Theory: Integrating global contexts to provide effective responses to local issues. Globalization theory states that globalization and technological advancement reduce temporal and spatial distance between different elements to such a degree that local circumstances are affected by situations happening in another part of the world (Webb, 2003). This diminishing distance increased connectivity, which in turn has been affecting individual, cultural, social, political, and economic relations (Ahmadi, 2003; Webb, 2003; Wilson, 2012). While globalization contributed to creating a universal expectation for a standard of living based on Western values, this expectation has not been matched by the ability/willingness of local governance to provide equal access to resources (as reflected by current policies and programs). As a result of the most recent globalization wave, social workers had fewer resources to allocate, more interdependent problems, and more culturally diverse clients. Although this new reality poses challenges to preparing social workers with new knowledge and skills, it also creates new opportunities for shared learning once international social work is reconsidered.

Intersectionality Theory: Expanding the body of knowledge to include interdisciplinary approaches to international social work practice. Intersectionality theory addresses the interrelations of multiple dimensions of social life and structures (McCall, 2005). Based on this theoretical framework, in order to fully understand social issues, specifically inequality, a person should examine the entire form of diverse, intersecting, and conflicting dimensions of social issues rather than a single dimension. Since no single dimension can sufficiently illustrate an issue, intersectionality theory suggests an interdisciplinary approach to comprehend social issues (McCall, 2005). To link this theoretical framework to the discussion on globalization in relation to the social work profession, we note that globalization affects social relations and creates different dimensions of analysis and points of intervention. Therefore, in order to fully grasp the

globally interdependent nature of social problems and develop more effective, innovative solutions, social workers require an interdisciplinary international education.

The Capabilities Approach: Enhancing social workers' capacity to address injustice and promote human rights through international social work practice. The Capabilities Approach stresses that the level of justice in a society depends on the level of equality of freedom and opportunities to achieve and use individuals' own abilities (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2007). In other words, evaluation of justice in a society can be done through assessment of individuals' capabilities to function—the more equal these capabilities are, the higher the potential for justice in that particular society (Fraser, 1995). Education is crucially important to implementing the Capabilities Approach because it is the key to development and supports the exercise of numerous other human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011). With this point of view, the Capabilities Approach indicates the need for reconsideration of social workers' roles in achieving justice by ensuring their clients' equal access to resources and the implicit development of their full capabilities.

Experiential Learning Theory: Develop social workers' self-efficacy by fully exposing them to an interdisciplinary international context. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) suggests that learning is an ongoing dynamic process, which includes interactive dimensions of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). In other words, ELT states that a learner acquires knowledge from his/her experiences in an environment, reflects on the receipt of information while testing out the knowledge in the environment, reflects on the outcomes of testing, and acts on the knowledge by adjusting it along continuous experiences (Kolb, 2015). ELT emphasizes that an effective learning process requires practicing each dimension. When applied to social work education, ELT indicates that social work students need to be exposed to interdisciplinary international contexts to have concrete experiences and enhance their practical capacity in the globalized arena. Additionally, students need to reflect on, conceptualize, and actively apply their emerging knowledge. The alternative education model introduced in this paper applies each dimension of ELT in an effort to increase students' self-efficacy and their subsequent readiness for the field of international social work and social development.

An alternative model for interdisciplinary international social work education

The proposed model includes an intensive interdisciplinary MSW course, taught in an international context, as well as the pre-departure orientation/preparation for the international immersion, the applied/experiential learning central to the model, and the dissemination of knowledge upon return. Figure 1 illustrates the structure of this course along the lines of ELT and self-efficacy. Using strategies that helped previous scholars and the ELT framework, the educational model followed these stages:

Preparation

1. *Introduction to the benefits of interdisciplinary international education:* Two planning and orientation meetings were held within a month before departure.

2. *Introduction to the course:* The course syllabus was shared with students two weeks before the departure.

Knowledge Building

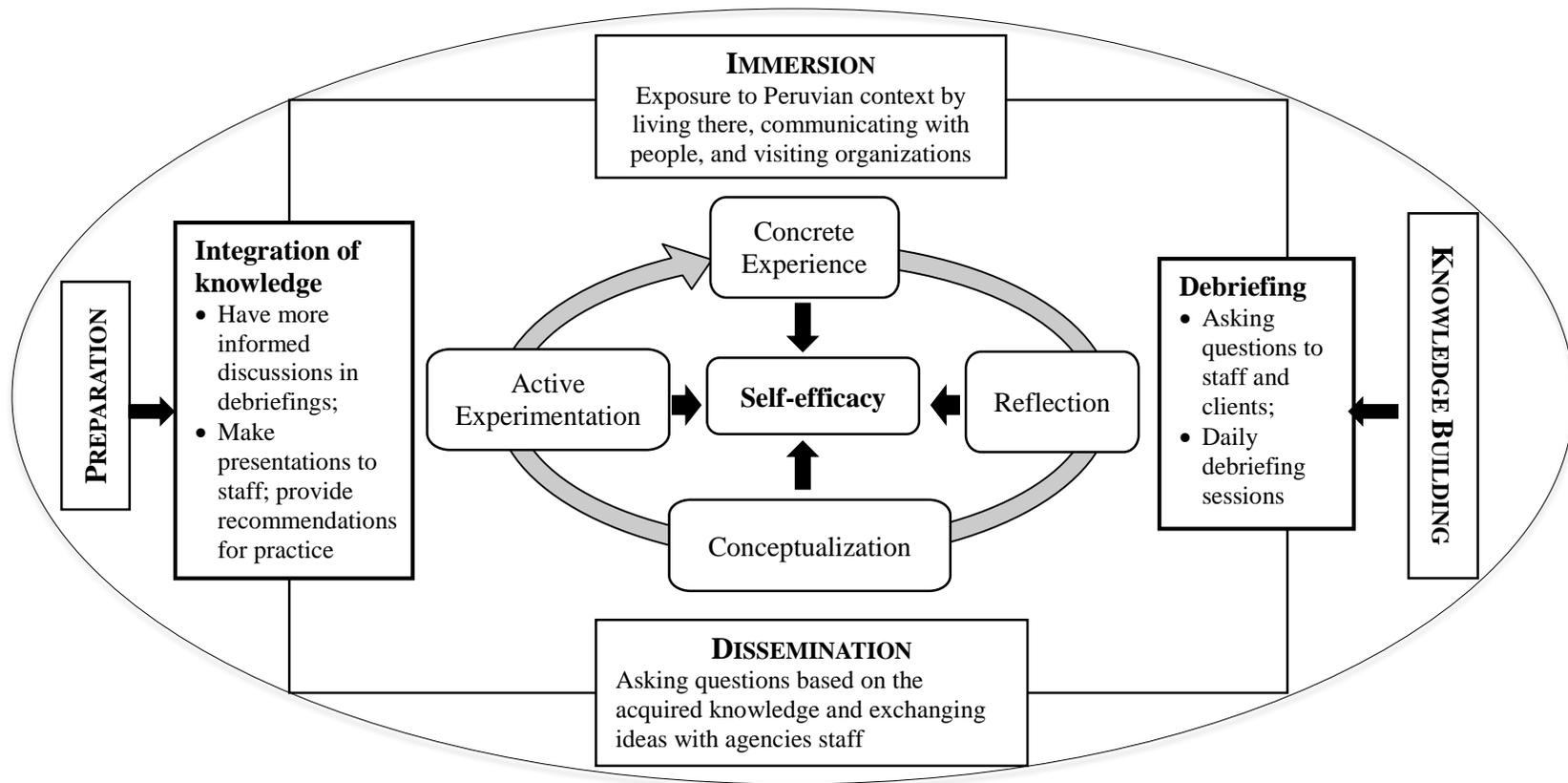
3. *Knowledge development:* During the first six days after arrival in Peru, instructors from the U.S. and Peru taught students about the history, social, economic, and political structure of the country; social problems; and the effects of globalization.

Experiential Learning

4. *Applied knowledge:* Students spent six days learning from community organizations and banks in urban areas (in Lima), rural areas (around Cuzco), and indigenous communities (in the High Lands).
5. *Contextualization and Reflection:* Each day included debriefing sessions for knowledge application, skills-building, and reflection.
6. *Knowledge sharing and dissemination:* For the last two days students worked in groups on different issues, discussed their topics with other groups, and gave presentations to other students as well as staff from the community organizations. A final poster presentation disseminated knowledge and experience to students and professors in the U.S.

The aim of this course and of the proposed experiential learning model was to enhance MSW students' skills in the areas of community building, community organizing, community needs assessment, and capacity mapping, stakeholder analysis, and advocacy in an international practice context based in Peru. The course was centered on the following themes: (1) theoretical perspectives of international social development and social work in a global context; (2) globalization, global issues, and the local consequences of these issues; (3) human rights and the implications of choosing to become an agent of change from a human rights' perspective; and (4) current approaches, best practices, and future trends in international social development. In particular, the course emphasized three essential aspects of development: (1) microcredit as a poverty reduction strategy; (2) historic trauma and its impact on specific population groups such as women, rural communities, and indigenous communities; and (3) migration and impact of migration on development, specifically relating to indigenous communities. An evaluation of the 3-week intensive course titled, *International Social Development and Capacity Building in a Global Context*, was used to further examine the proposed model.

Figure 1: International Interdisciplinary Education in Peru in Experiential Learning Theory Framework



Methods

The study used pre- and a post-test surveys to analyze the impact of this education model on students' self-efficacy. The pre-test survey was conducted at the beginning of the first class and the post-test survey was administered at the end of the final class. Institutional Review Board approval for the course was obtained before participants departed from the U.S. Students were informed about the study, and a written informed consent accompanied the surveys they were invited to complete.

Thirteen students enrolled in the course: ten women and three men. All of the students participated in the pre-test. Eleven students completed the post-test survey (response rate=84.6%). The pre-test survey collected information on demographics, knowledge and skills, reasons for taking the course, and expectations. A Knowledge scale and a Skill scale were used to assess students' self-efficacy in regards to the knowledge and skills introduced by this course. Information on reasons for taking the course and students expectations were obtained through open-ended response items.

The post-test survey collected information on students' confidence with changes in knowledge and skills; contributions of the course to prepare the students for international work. Data on gains, challenges, and recommendations about the course were obtained through open-ended response items.

Measures

Self-efficacy is an individual judgment or belief about an ability to accomplish the required tasks in a given situation (Bandura, 2006; Woody et al., 2014). In this pilot study, we define self-efficacy as change in confidence in students' abilities to apply knowledge and skills that are necessary to work effectively in the international social development field. Self-efficacy was used as the core indicator of the effectiveness of this model. To measure self-efficacy the pre/post course survey included a Knowledge and a Skills scale.

Knowledge Scale: The knowledge scale consisted of 10 items and measured students' confidence with discussing and applying core concepts introduced by the course. Students were asked to rank their level of confidence from 1 (not confident at all) to 7 (most confident) on the course concepts, including international development, globalization, global markets, financial markets, microfinance/microcredit, international development policy, MDGs, poverty as a global issue, environmental issues/climate change, and indigenous communities-cultural awareness.

Skills Scale: The skills scale consisted of five items and measured students' confidence with understanding and utilizing capacity mapping, stakeholder analysis, market feasibility study, risk assessment, and strategic planning when working with communities and microfinance institutions. Students ranked their confidence level from 1 (not confident at all) to 7 (most confident) for the five skills.

Findings

Participant Characteristics

Most of the students (76.9%) in the course were women. Participants' age ranged from 22 to 51 with a mean age of 33.7 (SD=9.54). All of the students, except the research assistant, were advanced MSW students. Over one- third of the students spoke English only (38.5%), and the rest of the students were either bilingual (English/Spanish) (30.8%), conversational in two languages or more (23.1%), or proficient in more than two languages (7.7%) (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Participants Characteristics (n=13)*

Characteristic	<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Age	13	33.7
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Gender		
Female	10	76.9
Male	3	23.1
Language Skills		
English only	5	38.5
Bilingual (English and Spanish)	4	30.8
Conversational level in two languages	3	23.1
Proficient in more than two languages	1	7.7

All students had some prior international experiences (Table 2); for about half of the students (46.2%) this prior experience was from a combination of travel and work. Participants' prior experience with microcredit/microfinance ranged from none (31%) to very limited or limited (69%), and 61.5% had previous exposure to international course content.

Table 2. *Previous International Experiences of Students (n=13)*

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Prior International Experience		
Travel only	6	46.2
Travel and work	3	23.1
International volunteering	2	15.4
Other	2	15.3
Prior Experience with Microcredit/ microfinance		
None	4	30.8
Very limited	6	46.2
Limited	3	23.1
Prior Courses with International Content		
Yes	8	61.5
No	5	38.5

Reasons for Taking the Course and Student Expectations

Students were asked to identify their main reasons for taking the course. Students' responses were analyzed for common themes. In order to fully preserve student voices, quotes were not modified or corrected. A majority (75%) of the students mentioned the desire to gain knowledge in international social work. For example, one student reported:

[The main reason that I decided to take this course is] to apply and expand concepts in an innovative and exciting way, i.e., outside the classroom and the country with fewer students, and a feeling of academic community.

In addition, half of the students wanted to take this course to obtain knowledge in general, and to be able to apply and expand concepts in a different country (see Table 3).

I would like to immerse myself in other countries and cultures from a social work standpoint. It is important to get out of the "bubble" of America--see other needs and process--opening myself to new social work. Cultural opportunities will make a better person and social worker. There is always something new to learn.

The student who wanted to gain knowledge in a specific population group reported that:

As a bilingual counselor and working with victims of sexual assault, I would like to increase my knowledge on what women experienced beyond the U.S., their trauma, their coping mechanisms, how culture influenced them dealing with the trauma.

Students were also asked to identify their top three expectations from the course. Students' answers were grouped under four main themes (see Table 3). The "other" category included cultural immersion, improving Spanish, and seeing the inner workings of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Reasons for taking	n	%
To gain knowledge in...		
International social work	9	75.0
General	6	50.0
Microcredits	4	33.3
Communities	3	25.0
A specific population group	1	7.7
Expectations from the course		
To gain knowledge/skills in...		
International social work	7	58.3
Microfinance/microcredits	6	50.0
Other	6	50.0
Indigenous communities	5	41.7

Students' Self-efficacy: Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

To measure students' self-efficacy, we used the Knowledge and the Skills scales described above. The Knowledge scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, and the Skills scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.73, both values indicating acceptable statistical reliability. To determine the changes in students' confidence, we conducted paired sample t-tests on the pre and post scores for both scales. Findings indicate statistically significant changes for both scales (see Table 4). Due to the small sample size, we also conducted a non-parametric statistic test, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, for each scale. Results indicate significant differences in both knowledge ($z=-2.67$, $p=0.008$) and skills ($z=-2.67$, $p=0.008$). Some items in the knowledge scale were particularly impacted by this course: knowledge of global markets ($M_{Pre}=2.0$; $M_{Post}=5.0$; ES Cohen's $d=4.24$), financial markets ($M_{Pre}=1.6$; $M_{Post}=4.9$; ES Cohen's $d=5.57$), and microcredit ($M_{Pre}=2.8$; $M_{Post}=6.0$; ES Cohen's $d=2.45$). Similarly, students' confidence with strategic planning skills in micro-finance institutions (MFIs) ($M_{Pre}=1.1$; $M_{Post}=5.1$; ES Cohen's $d=4.31$), market feasibility assessment skills ($M_{Pre}=1.6$; $M_{Post}=4.8$; ES Cohen's $d=3.75$), and stakeholder analysis skills ($M_{Pre}=3.1$; $M_{Post}=6.1$; ES Cohen's $d=2.78$) greatly increased.

Table 4. Changes in Student Confidence of Knowledge and Skills

	Pre-Test (n= 9)		Post-Test (n=9)		Comparison			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p*	Cohen's d**
Knowledge	3.2	1.13	5.5	0.39	6.59	8	<.001	2.80
Skills	2.3	0.89	5.4	0.74	8.70	8	<.001	3.79

*2-tailed **Effect size

Assessment of the Course Experience

Upon completing the course, about half of the students reported that this was the one course that prepared them greatly for international work (45.5%), while another 36% stated that it was one of the courses that contributed to their preparation for international work (36.4%, $n=11$). One student stated that this course greatly prepared him/her for international social work, along with individual experiences in other countries and their own international contacts.

In order to understand what contributed most to preparing students for international work, students were asked to rank six different components of this educational model on a scale from 1 to 7 (with 1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest): lecture/presentations, field applications, immersion in an international context, interdisciplinary content/group work, link between course and assignments, and other. Table 5 shows the contribution of each component according students' ratings.

Table 5. *Contributions of the Course Components to Student Learning (n=11)*

Course Components	Mean	SD
Immersion in an international context	6.8	0.40
Interdisciplinary content/group work	6.2	1.22
Field applications	6.0	0.77
Link between course and assignments	5.8	1.67
Lecture/presentations	5.7	1.10

Findings suggest that the largest contributions were the immersion in an international context ($M=6.8$) and the interdisciplinary content ($M=6.1$). In addition to these components, one student noted the contribution of self-reflection. Another student reported that the interaction with the Peruvian people contributed the most because it was helpful to gauge their needs.

When asked about their utmost gains from the course, one student stated:

It was a very positive experience! Being in the field with the indigenous community helped me better apply concepts that I learned in class.

Most students (70%) stated that they gained knowledge from the interaction with community members (including women, indigenous communities, and poor people in urban and rural areas). Several students (60%) stated that they gained knowledge from general observation (observations included bottom-up development and culture). One student described the overall experience and perceived gains from this course:

I came with the expectation of evaluating the different aspects that contribute to social and economic development of communities. It was extremely important for me to visit the urban and rural sector in which I could see all the visible work that people are doing to survive and to contribute to their economy.

The least useful aspects noted by students included logistics (40%), time constraints (50%), and limited opportunities for unmediated interaction with community members (20%).

Discussion

Two key elements of the educational model presented are used to contextualize findings: (1) the international element—addressing global issues in an international context and (2) the interdisciplinary element—building capacity across disciplines, through knowledge and skills. Students' self-efficacy was significantly changed as a result of their participation in this comprehensive educational model, with both their perception of readiness for international work and their ability to integrate interdisciplinary knowledge increasing by the end of the program.

Students' self-efficacy changed significantly between the pretest and the posttest, and the effect sizes were moderately strong. Students started the course with some prior exposure to international social work, and their confidence with related social work

concepts was higher than their confidence with concepts from other disciplines - in this case, microcredit and finance-related knowledge. The knowledge on financial markets scored the lowest levels of confidence both for the pre-test and the post-test values. Yet it also recorded the steepest change in confidence (with 3.3 points increase between pretest and posttest average scores), followed by students' confidence with their knowledge of microfinance/microcredits, which also increased significantly (3.2 points).

When examining the skills introduced by the course and their impact on students' self-efficacy, students started with the lowest level of confidence with strategic planning in MFIs ($M_{Pre}=1.1$) followed by market feasibility study skills ($M_{Pre}=1.6$) which remained lowest at post-test ($M_{Post}=4.8$). The confidence with skills related to strategic planning for MFIs recorded the greatest increase of 4 points between pre- and post-test values.

Overall, changes in self-efficacy were greatly impacted by interdisciplinary knowledge and skills students acquired through this course. The findings indicate that the course was effective in transmitting the knowledge and skills students expected to receive and in integrating the interdisciplinary content/skills. Students' highest expectation was to learn about International Social Work, followed by the desire to learn more about microfinance/microcredits, which recorded the greatest positive change in students' confidence. It is also interesting to note that, when asked what course components most contributed to their learning, students identified immersion in an international context, the interdisciplinary content of the course, and the (interdisciplinary) hands-on field applications.

Learning from economists, human rights activists, government officials, and agency and program directors greatly contributed to the students' satisfaction with the course and overall experience of feeling more prepared for international social work. However, the most impactful transfer of knowledge came from the various communities students interacted with: women, indigenous communities and their leaders, and people in marginalized communities in urban and rural areas. The effect of the interdisciplinary nature of the course was compounded by the participatory learning approach that characterized all activities during this experiential learning/study tour.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that affect the results of this pilot study. First, the small number of students enrolled in the class prevents any generalization of the findings beyond this group. Also, the self-efficacy measures introduce a level of subjectivity to students' assessment of their confidence. This limitation could be addressed if other measures of efficacy were added (e.g., content evaluation of students' projects or the use of the same scale items with agency and community representatives—asking them to evaluate the changes in students' knowledge and skills based on their performance on different tasks during field applications).

The educational model proposed was designed to include multi-disciplinary student teams—with Economics and Business students working together with Social Work students on different field applications. Due to external factors beyond our control, only

social work students participated. However, we addressed this limitation by working across disciplines with professors from the Economics department in Peru and at the home institution and with economists and finance experts providing students with multidisciplinary course content.

Conclusions/Next Steps

While the findings of this pilot study are tentative, this learning experience stresses the importance and benefits of international interdisciplinary social work education. These findings point towards both curricular and methodological changes to improve students' readiness for international social work practice. On one hand, curricular changes should facilitate adding Economics and Finances content; on the other, teaching models should incorporate more participatory, experiential learning. We need to further explore the benefits of interdisciplinary student groups working together and to measure the impact of their work on communities and agencies.

Future research should compare the effectiveness of this model with other models (e.g., shorter study tour/experiential learning, case-based international interdisciplinary education, etc.) to identify strengths of each model and challenges that need to be addressed to increase their effectiveness and impact. By preparing students to work in diverse, international contexts and participate in international development efforts, we are fulfilling social work's mission to pursue justice, address global issues, and promote human dignity and human rights.

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