

# GLOBAL SOUTH PLACEMENTS: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS AND PREPARATION

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## 1. CONTEXT

- Government of Canada new International Education Strategy, which has emphasized a desire for post-secondary students to have international experience in “non-traditional” locations, where there are “emerging economies (Government of Canada, 2020).
- University policies have followed suit, offering more international experience and increasingly broadening regional offerings. Universities have also emphasized experiential learning and are offering these opportunities within and outside the classroom.



International Education Strategy [cover photo] (Government of Canada, 2020)

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTION

*Are Canadian universities providing ethical preparation for students going on long-term placements (6-12 months) to the Global South?*

**Global South:** countries predominantly in the Southern Hemisphere with low-income, high levels of inequality, poverty and insecurity (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Global North would therefore refer to a country contrary to this, ie. in the Northern hemisphere, with high income and low levels of poverty

**Placement:** position facilitated through a university for which a student travels outside of the country for an educational opportunity

**Ethics:** moral dilemmas surrounding and implicated within Global North-South student placements, related to power and privilege (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013)

## 3. METHODOLOGY

- Semi-structured interviews with Canadian students who were either on, or had recently returned back from (within 6 months) a placement to the Global South (n=17)
- Surveys with Canada university staff members, who are responsible for international mobility programming (n=5)
- Literature and document review

Data gathered from these three methods were analyzed using grounded theory, as outlined in the diagram below.

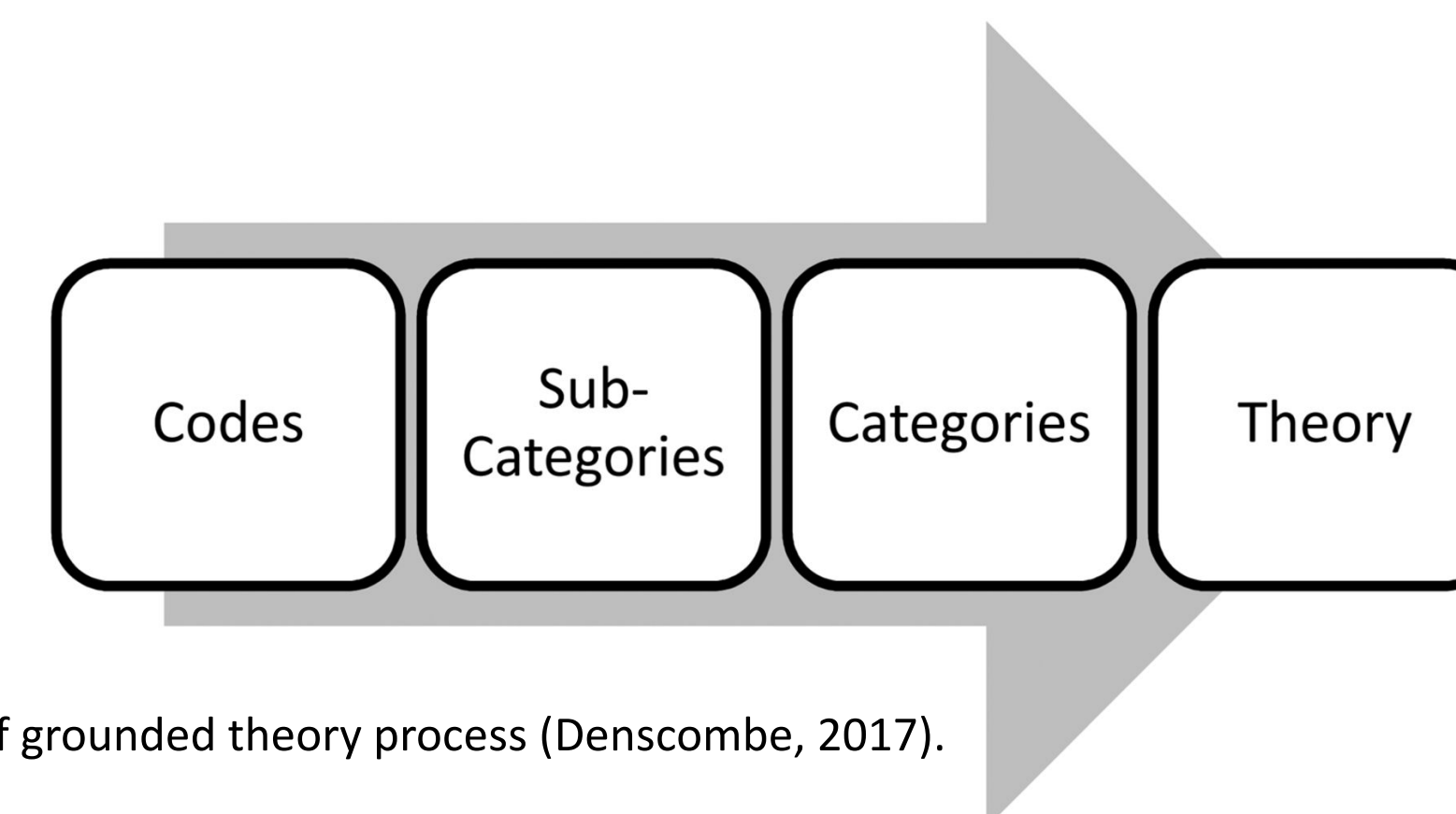


Figure 1. flowchart of grounded theory process (Denscombe, 2017).

## 4. FINDINGS

### Finding 1:

There is overwhelmingly a lack of ethical training for these programs. Not only is training curriculum inconsistent across Canadian institutions, it is also inconsistent across programs from the same institution.

### Finding 2:

Students need the support. In many cases, students could identify ethical dilemmas they had experienced, but did not know how they should work through them, and expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and powerless.

### Finding 3:

Having ethical training impacted students positively. In one case study, where students got ethical training halfway through their placement, they identified that their reflections and thought process shifted significantly.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

*To enhance student and partner organization experience, Canadian universities should provide students with the tools and skills to act ethically and practice self-reflexivity on their placements.*

Thus, two key recommendations to make in support of this argument are improved training and improved reflection.

### TRAINING:

- There needs to be dedicated time to discussion of ethical dilemmas, including understanding: power, privilege and positionality
- Online modules are suitable, but this training requires an in-person session as well
- Training should include: readings, case studies and reflection
- Furthermore, case studies can be built around previous student experience for greater relevance

### REFLECTION:

- Ethical issues are complex and thus they require constant self-reflexivity
- Reflection creates space for students to work through issues
- Currently, reflection exercises overemphasize professional development. While this can still be a component, ethical considerations should also be included
- Having both a personal, written reflection as well as group-reflection is ideal, and this should occur across entire placement experience (before, during, after)

## REFERENCES

Denscombe, M. (6th Edition) 2017. *The Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Research Projects*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

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Tiessen, R., & Kumar, P. (2013). Ethical challenges encountered on learning/volunteer abroad programmes for students in international development studies in Canada: Youth perspectives and educator insights. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement*, 34(3), 416–430.