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© Adriana L. Medina, Allison J. Spenader

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Introduction to Special Issue on Intercultural Development in Teacher Education: Sustaining Momentum for Study Abroad and Virtual Exchange Innovation

Adriana L. Medina¹, Allison J. Spenader²

Abstract

This introduction provides an overview of the articles included in this special issue. Collectively, the researchers addressed sustaining momentum for study abroad and virtual exchange in teacher education particularly around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The studies illustrate the value of expanding access to international experiences for teachers, both in-service and preservice, and the benefits of intercultural dialogue and reflection for teachers' intercultural development and teaching practices. Along with a summary of each of the articles included in this special issue, in this introduction, the guest editors provide a synthesis of how these articles address questions related to access, equity, and mobility; intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and the lived experiences of educators engaged in study abroad and virtual exchange. To usher in new ideas for future research, this introduction also offers other areas of inquiry that warrant exploration within the field of intercultural development in teacher education with questions that aim to help us capture the impact of teacher intercultural development on teachers' practices and on their students' intercultural learning.

Abstract in Swedish

Den här introduktionen ger en översikt över de artiklar som ingår i detta specialnummer. Gemensamt för artikelförfattarna var att de tog upp vikten av att bibehålla tempot för studier utomlands och virtuellt utbyte i lärarutbildningen,

¹ UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE, CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

² COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT AND SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, COLLEGEVILLE, MN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

särskilt kring tiden för COVID-19-pandemin. Studierna illustrerar värdet av att utöka tillgången till internationella erfarenheter för lärare, och fördelarna med interkulturella samtal och reflektion för lärarens interkulturella utveckling och undervisningsmetoder. Tillsammans med en sammanfattning av var och en av artiklarna som ingår i detta specialnummer, ger gästredaktörerna också en sammanfattning av hur dessa artiklar tar upp frågor angående tillgång, rättvisa och mobilitet, interkulturell kunskap, färdigheter och attityder; och de levda erfarenheterna av lärare som studerar utomlands eller deltar i virtuella utbyten. För att introducera nya idéer för framtida forskning erbjuder denna text också andra områden som motiverar forskning inom interkulturell utveckling i lärarutbildningen med frågor som syftar till att hjälpa oss att förstå inverkan av lärarens interkulturella utveckling på dennes pedagogiska arbete och på deras studenters interkulturella lärande.

Abstract in Spanish

Esta introducción ofrece una descripción general de los artículos incluidos en esta edición especial. Colectivamente, los investigadores analizaron como mantener el impulso de los estudios en el extranjero y del intercambio virtual en la formación del profesorado, especialmente en la época de la pandemia de COVID-19. Los estudios ilustran el valor de ampliar el acceso a las experiencias internacionales para los profesores, tanto en formación como en prácticas, y los beneficios de los diálogos interculturales y de la reflexión para el desarrollo intercultural y para las prácticas de enseñanza. Junto con un resumen de cada uno de los artículos incluidos en esta introducción, los editores invitados también proporcionan una síntesis de como estos artículos mencionan cuestiones relacionadas con el acceso, la equidad y la movilidad; el conocimiento intercultural, habilidades y actitudes; y las experiencias vividas de los educadores que participan en estudios en el extranjero y el intercambio virtual. Para dar paso a nuevas ideas para futuras investigaciones, esta introducción también ofrece otras áreas de investigación que justifican la exploración dentro del campo del desarrollo intercultural en la formación del profesorado con preguntas con el fin de ayudarnos a captar el impacto del desarrollo intercultural en las prácticas del profesorado y en el aprendizaje intercultural de los estudiantes.

Keywords

Education abroad programs; intercultural development; internationalization; teachers; teacher education; virtual exchange

1. Introduction

Study abroad has long been the gold standard for developing interculturality in teachers. However, recent data from Open Doors indicates that just 2.4% of teacher education students participate in study abroad programs in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2023). This percentage

has historically been low even though it is well established that study abroad is a high impact practice for intercultural development (AAC&U, 2008). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted and limited study abroad programs; yet, at the same time it underscored our global interconnectedness, initiated innovations in intercultural education, and called attention to teacher praxis and the important role of teachers in society. During this time, in place of study abroad programs, virtual exchanges were launched. The increase in virtual exchange programs removed mobility- and financial-related barriers, and it offered a feasible approach to embedding international experiences into existing teacher education courses. By moving international exchanges into courses, more preservice teachers were able to participate in meaningful intercultural experiences, and those experiences were more closely tied to the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed by teachers. Virtual exchanges have continued even though mobility programs have resumed.

Through the process of curating this special issue, we observed a trend in scholarly focus on virtual exchange models. The fact that the majority of proposals received for this project included virtual program models reflects a notable shift in the approach to international programming for the intercultural development of teachers. Regardless of whether this shift towards research on virtual exchange is a result of the pandemic's impact on student mobility programs, or an actual change in preference for program models, the change is apparent. Thus, the impetus for this special issue stems from the emergence of new challenges and opportunities within the field of K-12 teacher education.

The research presented in this issue represents a myriad of approaches aimed at developing intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006) in preservice and in-service teachers with the goal of moving K-12 education towards equitable, culturally sensitive, and globally sustainable educational goals. Building on previous studies of international education in teacher preparation (Longview Report, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011; Rets et al., 2023; Savva, 2017; Shiveley & Misco, 2015; Spenader & Medina, 2024), this issue seeks to expand our understanding of the potential of both program models and learning outcomes. This special issue explores trends in how internationalization is occurring in teacher education since the pandemic. One of the articles looked at in-service teacher professional development within a secondary study abroad program. The other articles focused on teacher-preparation programs with international exchange as an element of a required course.

2. New Directions in International Programs for Teacher Education

While many institutions continue to rely on education abroad experiences to develop interculturality in future teachers, study abroad poses challenges related to equity, mobility, access, and sustainability. COVID-19 impacted education abroad and propelled many institutions toward virtual exchanges. O’Dowd et al. (2020, pp. 146-147) define virtual exchange as “... a term used to refer to the sustained engagement of groups of learners in online intercultural interaction and collaboration projects with partners from other cultural contexts or geographic locations as an integrated part of their educational programs.” In particular, we note the growth in Globally Networked Learning and Collaborative Online International Learning (see SUNY COIL Center, n.d.). Virtual exchanges are increasingly being used to foster intercultural development as part of teacher education programs (Hilliker & Loranc, 2022; Rets et al., 2023; Rienties et al., 2020).

In the wake of the disruptions caused by the global pandemic, teacher preparation programs are re-assessing and re-imagining how to embed meaningful intercultural learning into teacher candidate experiences. Many programs and institutions have in recent years found a combination of both virtual exchanges and student mobility opportunities to be a promising model, notably State University of New York (SUNY), Florida International University, The University of San Francisco, Universidad de Monterrey (Mexico) as well as others. Future directions for cross-cultural education will certainly involve a mixture of domestic, international, and virtual experiences as part of teacher preparation. Additionally, teacher educators seek to make meaningful international and intercultural experiences accessible and equitable for teacher candidates. It is also critically important that programs be sustainable for institutions and for the faculty. The field of teacher education is evolving to deliver the benefits of intercultural experiences, with an aim towards positively impacting the K-12 students. This special issue represents a collection of research on innovations in intercultural development in teacher education through virtual exchanges and education abroad today.

3. Overview of Articles

This special issue features several articles addressing the needs of teacher education in an increasingly globalized context via study abroad, virtual exchange, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), and Globally

Networked Learning (GNL) opportunities. The researchers utilize a variety of qualitative approaches to describe the experiences and learning outcomes of specific programs designed to impact teacher development.

Amanda Baker and Laura Engel's (2024) article *Collaborative Cosmopolitan Capital in In-Service Teacher-Led K-12 Study Abroad Programs* pushes our understanding of internationalizing teacher development in an important direction by asking how international programs develop the intercultural competencies of in-service teachers. Framed within the short-term study abroad programs for 9th and 12th-grade students within an urban U.S. public school district, this study examined the experiences of the teachers who travel abroad with secondary students, focusing specifically on the potential of this program for developing cosmopolitan capital. This study explains how participation in a short term abroad program sustains teachers' global orientations towards teaching and fosters a community of professionals committed to global education. The authors describe how teachers working in a high school study abroad program received training in language as well as cultural skills development as part of their preparation. Furthermore, collaborative cosmopolitan-oriented professional development is an important added benefit of study abroad programming for secondary students. Cosmopolitan capital can be developed both for individuals and for the benefit of communities.

Michael Kopish and Zayimoğlu Öztürk's (2024) article *Collaborative Online International Learning: A Promising Practice for Developing Intercultural and Global Competencies with Turkish and American Teacher Candidates* examines the impact of a COIL program on the development of preservice teacher intercultural and global competencies. Students in teacher preparation programs in the United States and Turkey collaborated in their examination of progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals in their respective countries. Participants engaged in an autobiography exercise involving cultural identity exploration. Through critical inquiry and reflection, preservice teachers developed a deeper understanding of the complexity of identity as well as notions of power and privilege. Empathy was also strengthened as a result of the project, along with greater appreciation for the importance of communication and language use. The authors draw clear lines between the development of these competencies through participation in a COIL project and the desired outcomes for teachers as related to the globally competent education framework (Sant et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2015). Furthermore, this research illustrates the

potential of an asynchronous approach to online collaborative projects, and highlights ways in which SDG's can be incorporated into learning projects appropriate for preservice teachers.

In the article by Miriam Jorge, Andrea Machado de Almeida Mattos, Leina Jucá and Mara Barbosa (2024) titled *Seeing Local Experiences through Global Eyes: Duoethnography and the Internationalization of Language Teacher Education*, the authors present how four language teacher educators internationalized their courses and curricula during the pandemic. They utilized duoethnography to engage U.S. and Brazilian undergraduate and graduate students in dialogic encounters whereby each person composed their linguistic autobiography and their partner reviewed it. Together, in the process of creating a duoethnography, the partners discussed the themes that arose from their linguistic autobiographies. While the pairs discussed many topics such as language learning, international encounters, and future teaching, the authors chose to focus on the category of prejudice that emerged from the duoethnography data as they felt this was a particularly timely topic for teacher education. Through the dialogic encounters and the duoethnography methodology, the participants expanded their intercultural knowledge about themselves and others.

In Jennice McCafferty-Wright and Mya Kemper's (2024) article *Virtual Exchange in Teacher Preparation: Identifying and Disrupting Dangerous Narratives about the Middle East and North Africa Region*, the authors examine the knowledge and assumptions preservice teachers hold, in a post 9/11 context, about a region that is unfamiliar to them. Through the development of a virtual exchange between U.S. and Moroccan preservice teachers, candidates developed more positive generalizations about the MENA region, and indicated a desire to engage in teaching about people around the world. The authors note that prejudice and negative perceptions can be disrupted through virtual contact, and they highlight the potential for more profound transformation through longer, more carefully constructed, and nuanced interactions. McCafferty-Wright and Kemper's (2024) work sheds light on the importance of interrogating and transforming teachers' stereotypical thinking about peoples from a region that often is portrayed in a negative light.

In the final article *Intercultural Communicative Competence as a Contribution to the Development of Historical Consciousness of Prospective Teachers*, Carolin Hestler's (2024) examines how virtual exchange between universities from two different countries can promote intercultural

communicative competence and historical consciousness. Interviews with and written products from preservice teachers from the U.S. and Germany from two different virtual exchange projects were qualitatively analyzed. Findings indicated that participating in virtual exchange was found to contribute to changes of perspective in both intercultural communicative competence and historical consciousness. This examination of the relationship between the pedagogical goals of history didactics and current conceptualization of intercultural communicative competence offers interesting perspectives that can push both fields of inquiry in new directions.

4. Areas of Inquiry

This special issue seeks to illustrate the ways in which teacher education programs develop and support intercultural competence (i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) through virtual exchanges and education abroad for preservice and in-service teachers. The most recent Open Doors data indicates more than 73% of U.S. sojourners study abroad in Europe, and less than 10% study in Africa or the Middle East (Institute of International Education, 2023). The shift towards international programming that includes the experiences and voices of teachers around the world, and not only in the wealthiest nations, represents a much-needed development in our field (see Morley et al., 2019). The articles included in this issue involve teachers from Brazil, Germany, Morocco, Turkey, and the United States, among others. The diversity of educational contexts featured in the articles in this issue provides perspectives from around the world and includes voices of those in the Global South.

The manuscripts included in this issue examine international programs administered around the time of disruptions due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a result, the articles included here focus largely on virtual exchanges, demonstrating the ways in which institutions pivoted to address global challenges in an effort to provide meaningful intercultural experiences to teachers. In our call for papers, we identified several areas of inquiry related to the evolving approaches to international exchange being used in teacher education. The studies included here address several important questions related to intercultural development in teacher education.

4.1. How have innovations in study abroad and virtual exchange (i.e., GNL, COIL, etc.) led to more meaningful learning and increased opportunity, access, equity, and mobility for teachers?

All of the studies included in this volume speak to the question of how study abroad and virtual exchanges support teachers' intercultural development. Equity and access to international education are at the heart of many initiatives, illustrating a concerted effort to transform the approach to international experiences in a way that expands inclusivity. The articles by McCafferty-Wright and Kemper (2024) as well as Baker and Engel (2024) speak to the importance of expanding access to international programs within teacher development. Teacher education students have not participated in study abroad at the levels seen in many other undergraduate fields of study. One reason for this is due to the need to meet specific mandated requirements set by state boards of education. International virtual exchanges embedded into required education courses are a viable solution to this challenge. COILs (see Hestler, 2024; Jorge et al., 2024; Kopish & Zayimoğlu Öztürk, 2024), virtual exchanges (see Hestler, 2024; McCafferty-Wright & Kemper, 2024), as well as equity-focused public school programs (see Baker & Engel, 2024) are examples of innovative approaches to expanding access to international experiences for teachers. As noted by Kopish and Zayimoğlu Öztürk (2024), even fully asynchronous exchanges have the potential for profound learning and growth.

4.2. How do study abroad and virtual exchange programs in teacher education help realize the goals for intercultural growth and global competence in teachers?

The articles in this issue illustrate how study abroad and virtual exchange can benefit teachers generally (see Baker & Engel, 2024; Kopish & Zayimoğlu Öztürk, 2024), and also offer insights with regards to specific content areas, namely language education (see Jorge et al., 2024) and the teaching of history and its didactics (see Hestler, 2024). The benefits of language acquisition in study abroad have been identified as meaningful for language teachers as well as teachers of other subjects (Spenader & Medina, 2024). The work of Jorge et al. (2024) in this volume adds to our understanding of the benefits of virtual exchange for future language teachers. Virtual exchange has also afforded new opportunities for the development of historical consciousness among social studies educators. Hestler's (2024) research shows how virtual exchange allows for the critical examination of historical events and a deeper appreciation for historical contexts, encouraging the disruption of students' perceptions. This

finding intersects with the development of deeper linguistic understandings in its examination of how language use changes over time. Furthermore, this study highlights interesting intersections between Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence model (Byram, 2021) and historical consciousness, which can help teachers develop more nuanced understandings of the complexities of historical issues for which they are creating curriculum. The emphasis on developing critical cultural awareness, development of skills of interpreting and relating, and engaging in intercultural dialogue are supported by carefully designed learning opportunities. McCafferty-Wright and Kemper's (2024) research also highlights the effectiveness of virtual exchanges for challenging problematic narratives and cultural stereotyping and for encouraging teachers to examine their own and others' cultural perspectives. These examples represent a myriad of desired intercultural competency outcomes, as well as numerous programmatic pathways towards meeting those goals for teachers.

4.3. How are intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed in teachers through international exchange?

The scholarship in this issue points us in several important directions for further inquiry. Hestler (2024) notes that more investigation of how virtual exchange projects focused on different historical topics could impact teacher content knowledge. She examines how being confronted with the perspectives of others raises awareness about one's own cultural attitudes and biases. Her article also looks specifically at how subject matter knowledge and pedagogical approaches to teaching history can be developed through participation in a virtual exchange. McCafferty-Wright and Kemper (2024) make a strong case for how virtual exchange can have a transformative impact on preservice teacher knowledge and attitudes towards less familiar cultural groups, reducing prejudice. Kopish and Zayimoğlu Öztürk (2024) encourage faculty to model their intercultural and global competencies for preservice teachers to ensure that they do not perpetuate cultural stereotypes and intellectual colonization as they engage in international exchange. This behavior modeling represents another pathway through which faculty help their students gain intercultural knowledge. Baker and Engel (2024) point to the potential for developing individual cosmopolitan capital via participation in a study abroad program, and they highlight how this professional development can be collaborative. Finally, Jorge et al. (2024) identify the use of duoethnography within virtual exchange as a promising approach for intercultural dialogue and reflection. The

authors point to the power of duoethnography as a tool for guiding teachers through cultural comparisons, discovery, critique, understanding of their teaching practices, and language use.

4.4. What are the lived experiences of teachers and teacher educators experiencing international exchange?

Two articles in this issue directly investigate the lived experiences of teachers engaged in study abroad and virtual exchange. Jorge et al. (2024) present rich descriptions of participant experiences through the use of duoethnography. Via virtual exchange, preservice language teachers analyzed their own experiences with prejudice and engaged in dialogue with peers abroad. The resulting findings are richly illustrative of nuanced and complex experiences. Furthermore, this article presents the perspectives of the teacher-educators as they reflect on their work in designing, implementing, and evaluating the virtual exchange.

Valuable insights about teacher intercultural development are also presented in the article by Baker and Engel (2024), where they look at in-service teachers' development of cosmopolitan capital as leaders of a study abroad program for secondary students. Participation in the program led to the teachers seeking out additional globally-focused professional development, while also forming meaningful connections within a community of professional global educators. Participants described both individual and community-focused benefits of this program. Both of these research projects present findings through the centering of the voices of teachers and teacher educators, revealing personal, first-hand accounts of intercultural development.

5. Future Directions

While the articles featured in this special issue represent innovative and meaningful progress in our understanding of the role of intercultural development in teacher preparation, it is useful to consider the questions that remain to be explored in the field. Here are some questions that would benefit from further research.

5.1. How are intercultural competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) developed in teachers through international education programs?

Research in this area continues to rely primarily on self-report data such as surveys and reflective narratives, and mainly employs a case-study approach to examine specific programs. We recognize the valuable insights afforded by

qualitative approaches to inquiry, but we urge more mixed methods studies. We look forward to studies that investigate quantifiable outcomes of international programs. As Qualified Administrators of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer Holdings Inc, 2022), we see potential benefits for the use of this kind of tool to capture the impact of international study for not only in-service and preservice teachers, but also for the K-12 students in their classrooms. Criterion-based tools can help us understand the magnitude of impact of international programs on desired outcomes. We also encourage scholars to use a variety of tools to assess global learning such as the AAC&U Global Learning rubric (2008), the Globally Competent Teaching Continuum (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019), the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES; Kozai Group, Inc., 2020), and others. These types of measurements give us a fuller picture of what teachers are gaining from international programs and where we might improve our practices.

5.2. How can we capture the impact of teacher intercultural development on their students' intercultural learning?

Educators around the world are calling for increased attention to embedding the knowledge, skills, attitudes of global citizenship, critical cultural awareness, and social justice goals into K-12 education (Oxfam, 2016; Wagner & Byram, 2017). Designing and delivering instruction that supports global or intercultural learning ultimately falls to teachers in the field. In our investigation of how teachers develop their capacity to deliver instruction for intercultural citizenship development, we found that teachers draw from their study abroad experiences to “inform practices, promote intercultural understanding, modify verbal and non-verbal communication, and modify assignments and assessments to meet diverse student needs.” (Spenader & Medina, 2024, p. 147). There is also evidence that there is a “meaningful immediate impact” on adolescents who engage in course-based virtual exchanges (Hansel et al., 2021, p. 22). While we have evidence that teachers draw on their international experiences to modify their curricula and their teaching, we seek to know more about the classroom practices they employ that support intercultural development in K-12 students. Evidence of teacher practices in the form of lesson plans, student assessments, and teaching observations all have great potential for answering important questions about how intercultural competencies developed in teachers are then fostered in their classrooms.

Comprehensive study of the impacts of teacher intercultural competence on classroom practices and the resulting student learning experience would

advance our understanding of the value of intercultural study as an integral piece in the K-12 education puzzle. Just as the Vande Berg et al.'s (2012) comprehensive Georgetown study provided valuable insights across a plethora of study abroad contexts, teacher education would benefit from large-scale research with a shared measurement tool. Recent research has utilized Portalla and Chen's (2010) Intercultural Effectiveness (IE) instrument with preservice teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of virtual exchange (Rets et al., 2023). Several existing frameworks hold promise for further development of helpful metrics, including the Asia Society Global Competency framework (2018), PISA's Global Competence framework (OECD, 2019), Barrett's framework (2018), the Globally Competent Teaching Continuum (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019), Oxfam's Global Citizenship framework (2016), and the work of Parmigiani et al. (2022). Such an effort would be complementary to the current piecemeal approach to the study of global competency development in teachers and students.

5.3. How have international programs adapted to meet the needs of teacher preparation programs and in-service teacher professional development?

We see a general trend towards the use of COILs and virtual exchanges, and a push to include international programs as a part of teacher education for all candidates. We agree with McCafferty-Wright and Kemper (2024) who state that virtual exchange has the potential to offer authentic intercultural experiences and is a model that should be embedded within teacher preparation more universally. Additionally, in-service teacher professional development should focus more on incorporating intercultural development. However, there are real challenges to implementing virtual exchanges in teacher education. Resources are not always available to support faculty interested in designing, running, and sustaining programs, there are teacher shortages at the K-12 level, faculty report feeling burned out, and students report Zoom fatigue (Stevens Initiative, 2023). We recognize the challenges facing teacher educators and the complexities of this important work.

5.4. How does meaningful intercultural development within teacher preparation programs lead to improved, tangible benefits to teacher practices?

Studies presented in this volume speak to how study abroad and virtual exchange in teacher preparation builds intercultural competencies that support global competency goals for K-12 classrooms. As described by McCafferty-

Wright and Kemper (2024), disrupting harmful stereotypes and prejudice is important to ensure equitable educational experiences for K-12 learners. Jorge et al. (2024) and McCafferty-Wright and Kemper (2024) point out that teacher perceptions can be shifted even in a relatively short virtual exchange, helping teachers develop more nuanced understandings about culture. Baker and Engel (2024) identify potential dangers of teachers perpetuating inequalities, and they highlight how building cosmopolitan capital can counteract this tendency. They note that teachers who build their cosmopolitan capital via study abroad participation commit to increasing equity and working to teach for global citizenship. Hestler's (2024) work highlights how observing an international faculty member's pedagogical approach as part of participating in a virtual exchange leads to new realizations about teaching; this finding sheds light on how preservice teachers can begin to consider the ways in which teaching is a cultural act. Together, these articles deepen our understanding of the benefits of virtual exchange and study abroad for shifting teachers' attitudes and understandings about cultural complexity. More investigation of the practices that teachers employ in classrooms and subsequent student learning outcomes is imperative if we are to fully understand the extent to which we are meeting our goals of educating future global citizens.

5.5. What is the relationship between faculty intercultural competence, teachers' intercultural competence, and the development of intercultural competence in K-12 students?

A core goal of K-12 education is to foster global competencies in the next generation. A focus on developing intercultural competencies in teachers so that they can effectively educate students towards those aims is imperative. In a previous study focused on Intercultural Citizenship development (see Wagner & Byram, 2017; Wagner et al., 2019), we stated that "If the aim is to foster Intercultural Citizenship in K-12 students so they can be better future citizens of the world and work towards solving world issues, then a precursor is to foster Intercultural Competence in preservice teachers" (Spenader & Medina, 2024, p. 121). At the university level, Hoff and Medina (2022) make a similar suggestion for building faculty capacity for global learning. It is an essential prerequisite for teaching and assessing global student learning outcomes for study abroad and virtual exchange.

It might seem logical to presume that faculty with high levels of intercultural competence would be well-suited to design and facilitate intercultural exchanges that are effective for meeting cross-cultural learning

goals within teacher education programs. Yet, more understanding is necessary with regards to the internationalization of the academic self (Sanderson, 2008) among teacher educators. We wonder how interculturality is developed in faculty, and what implications that holds for student global learning outcomes. There is a need for research that examines how a faculty member's capacity for internationalization is related to supporting teachers' global learning outcomes.

5.6. What direction is the field moving towards internationally?

Increased focus on embedding global or intercultural citizenship goals in K-12 education are evidenced by educational initiatives such as the Asia Society Global Competence (2018), PISA Global Competence (OECD, 2019) and Intercultural Citizenship (Wagner & Byram, 2017) frameworks. The PISA framework includes targeted focus on teaching about global issues in order to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Similarly, we see a focus on social justice education within the Intercultural Citizenship framework. In order to meet these evolving educational goals, teachers must be prepared to teach about the SDGs and utilize pedagogies of social justice.

It must be acknowledged that conceptualizations of intercultural learning are often approached from a Global North perspective. We would be wise to interrogate existing global and intercultural competence frameworks in terms of their potential cultural biases and blind spots, as some have done regarding the PISA framework (Engel et al. 2019). Further work needs to be done to understand the needs and perspectives of the Global South in order to transform our societies through educational practices in pursuit of social justice around the world.

We hope that this special issue inspires further critical conversations around the issues of intercultural development in teacher education and the resulting impacts on K-12 education worldwide. According to the UN's Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) report, "Since Higher Education Institutions educate and train decision makers, they play a key role in building more sustainable societies and creating new paradigms. As educational institutions, they have the mission to promote development through both research and teaching, disseminating new knowledge and insight to their students and building their capabilities" (Barratt et al., 2021, p. 3). As teachers and teacher educators, we are the change makers who can advance educational practices that move us towards a more equitable and globally-minded society. We look forward to continuing the important work of preparing teachers to

enact global and intercultural competency goals within classrooms around the world.

6. Concluding Note

Motivation for this special issue stemmed from ongoing conversations we have had over several years. We first met at the WISE annual meeting at Wake Forest University. We connected over a mutual interest in intercultural development of preservice teachers through study abroad. We both work in teacher education but are also active scholars and practitioners of study abroad programs at our respective institutions. We drew on our experiences in teacher education and international programming to inform the direction of this special issue. It was re-invigorating to read the proposals submitted and to interact with colleagues in the field while working on this issue. Thank you to all who submitted proposals and participated in the peer review process. Thank you also to the editor, managing editor, and editorial assistant of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. We are excited about the inspiring scholarship happening in our field, and we look forward to the dissemination of promising research that is forthcoming in the area of intercultural development for teacher education. We are hopeful and highly interested in knowing the answers to enduring questions around the value of international programs for the intercultural development of teachers who must meet the needs of students in our global society.

Guest Editor Biography

Adriana L. Medina is a Professor of Reading Education in the Department of Reading and Elementary Education at UNC Charlotte. She earned her Bachelor's in Secondary Education at Vanderbilt University, her Master's in Reading at Florida International University, and her PhD in Reading at University of Miami. Dr. Medina has over 30 years of teaching experience at the elementary, middle school, and high school level, as well as at the college and university level. As a classroom teacher, Dr. Medina taught 7th and 8th grade English, Reading, and Language Arts. As a teacher educator, she has taught undergraduate and graduate classes on Teacher Action Research, Teaching Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners, Diagnostic Assessment and Instruction in Reading, Middle/Secondary Reading and Writing, Teaching Reading to Intermediate Grade Learners, Reading Comprehension, Content Area Literacy, Mindfulness and Education, Identity through Art, Communication and Critical Thinking, and Multicultural and Global Education.

She also takes students to study abroad, collaborates on COIL and GNL projects, and teaches abroad. As a researcher, Dr. Medina has experience in school-based educational research and in the evaluation of instructional programs. Her research interests include students who struggle with literacy, teacher education, the impact of study abroad experiences and virtual exchange, and global learning. Dr. Medina has contributed to several textbooks and articles with regards to her areas of interest and is the co-author of the text *Studying World Languages: An Interactive Guidebook*. Dr. Medina is an award-winning educator. She has received the Bank of America Teaching Excellence Award and the North Carolina Board of Governors' Award for Excellence in Teaching as well as UNC Charlotte's Faculty International Education Award.

Allison J. Spenader is Professor of Education at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, a private Liberal Arts institution in Minnesota in the United States. She holds a PhD in Second Languages and Cultures Education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Her Bachelor's degree is in Scandinavian Studies and her Master's is in Teaching English as an International Language, both from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She taught English as an International Language in Poland and has more than 20 years of experience as a world language teacher at Concordia Language Villages summer immersion programs (Minnesota), as well as the American Swedish Institute and at the University of Minnesota. She works with preservice teachers, primarily in World Languages and English as a Second Language licensure tracks. She has led semester-long programs in Australia and the United Kingdom, and short-term programs in Sweden, Denmark, and the U.K. Her love of international study can be traced back to being an AFS year program participant to Sweden at the age of 16. Her scholarship focuses on using critical content-based methods for language teaching, the development of Intercultural Competence, and training teachers for Intercultural Citizenship education. Having recently completed COIL training, she is currently working to launch a virtual exchange as part of the teacher preparation program in which she teaches.

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