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School of Education Student Capstone Thesis and Dissertation

School of Education

Spring 2021

What are the Lessons US Trained Teachers Learn Through an Experience of Teaching Internationally?

Olivia Berger
Hamline University

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS TEACHERS TRAINED IN THE U.S. LEARN THROUGH AN
EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING INTERNATIONALLY?

By Olivia Berger

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota
May 2021

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To my mom, dad, grandma, and all my family - thank you for being a constant inspiration to me, and an incredible support system, only encouraging me to continue doing what is best for me and what I love to do. This has been a long and challenging journey, and I wouldn't be where I am today without you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 10 |
| Significance of this Project | 11 |
| Professional Background and Personal Significance of this Study..... | 12 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 16 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW | 18 |
| Introduction..... | 18 |
| Essential Understandings of Being a Global Educator..... | 19 |
| Importance of International Exposure..... | 19 |
| Exposure through teaching programs..... | 20 |
| Deeper Focus on Fewer Subjects within Teaching Programs..... | 20 |
| Emphasis placed on firsthand learning over learning from a distance..... | 21 |
| Globally Minded Staff..... | 22 |
| Globally Minded Curriculum..... | 22 |
| Learning Through Experience..... | 23 |
| Culture Differences in Teaching Around the World..... | 24 |
| Effects of Teaching Internationally and Teacher Practice..... | 29 |
| International experiences transferable to U.S. classrooms..... | 35 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 42 |
| CHAPTER THREE: METHODS..... | 43 |
| Research Paradigm..... | 43 |
| Participants..... | 44 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Data Collection..... | 45 |
| Data Analysis..... | 47 |
| Ethics..... | 47 |
| Conclusion..... | 47 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH..... | 49 |
| Data Collection Process..... | 49 |
| Survey Results..... | 50 |
| Participant Information..... | 50 |
| Types of Schools..... | 52 |
| Education Programs..... | 52 |
| Countries Taught In..... | 54 |
| Teacher Background Information..... | 55 |
| School Information..... | 59 |
| Parent Information..... | 61 |
| Student Information..... | 64 |
| Services Offered..... | 65 |
| Differences of International Schools from US Schools..... | 68 |
| Disciplinary Measures at International Schools vs. US Schools..... | 70 |
| Lessons Learned that will Impact Teaching in the US..... | 71 |
| Lessons to share with New International Teachers..... | 73 |
| Biggest Challenges if Returning to the US to Teach..... | 74 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 75 |
| CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION..... | 79 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Major Findings..... | 79 |
| Limitations..... | 81 |
| Lessons Learned and Advice for New Teachers..... | 82 |
| Advice for United States Schools..... | 82 |
| Implications..... | 83 |
| Suggestions for Further Research..... | 85 |
| Final Reflection..... | 86 |
| Conclusion..... | 87 |
| REFERENCES..... | 89 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: Age of Participants Question 1 Response..... | 51 |
| Figure 2: Participant Information Question 2 Response..... | 51 |
| Figure 3: Participant Information Question 3 Response..... | 51 |
| Figure 4: Type of School Question 4 Response..... | 52 |
| Figure 5: Type of School Question 5 Response..... | 52 |
| Figure 6: Education Program Question 6 Response..... | 53 |
| Figure 7: Education Program Question 7 Response..... | 53 |
| Figure 8: Teaching Information Question 8 Response..... | 54 |
| Figure 9: Teaching Information Question 9 Response..... | 54 |
| Figure 10: Countries Taught In Question 10 Response..... | 55 |
| Figure 11: Teacher Background Information Question 11 Response..... | 57 |
| Figure 12: Teacher Background Information Question 12 Response..... | 57 |
| Figure 13: Teacher Background Information Question 13 Response..... | 57 |
| Figure 14: Teacher Background Information Question 14 Response..... | 57 |
| Figure 15: Teacher Background Information Question 15 Response..... | 58 |
| Figure 16: Teacher Background Information Question 16 Response..... | 58 |
| Figure 17: Teacher Background Information Question 17 Response..... | 59 |
| Figure 18: School Information Question 18 Response..... | 60 |
| Figure 19: School Information Question 19 Response..... | 60 |
| Figure 20: School Information Question 20 Response | 61 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 21: Parent Information Question 21 Response..... | 63 |
| Figure 22: Parent Information Question 22 Response..... | 63 |
| Figure 23: Parent Information Question 23 Response..... | 63 |
| Figure 24: Student Information Question 24 Response..... | 64 |
| Figure 25: Student Information Question 25 Response..... | 64 |
| Figure 26: Student Information Question 26 Response..... | 65 |
| Figure 27: Student Information Question 27 Response..... | 66 |
| Figure 28: Student Information Question 28 Response..... | 66 |
| Figure 29: Student Information Question 29 Response..... | 67 |
| Figure 30: Student Information Question 30 Response..... | 67 |
| Figure 31: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 33 Response..... | 69 |
| Figure 32: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 34 Response..... | 70 |
| Figure 33: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 35 Response..... | 71 |
| Figure 34: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 36 Response..... | 72 |
| Figure 35: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 35 Response..... | 74 |
| Figure 36: Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question 36 Response..... | 75 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Growing up in a middle class, mainly Caucasian family living in the suburbs of the Twin Cities, in Minnesota, I was given many opportunities to experience what I now consider to be one of my truest passions in life, which is experiencing other cultures. It started directly from my grandma and aunts who have been teaching English as a second language their whole lives. Their love for helping others learn English and understanding their students' cultures and where they come from, showed me what an impact teaching internationally or working with English language learners can have.

As the years went on, and I entered university, I jumped at any opportunity to go abroad. My first ever experience living internationally was in London, England. Although a similar culture to the United States, it still was a great stepping-stone for me to understand the mentalities and different ways of living the British have. Of course, my desire to live internationally was only fueled from this experience, and I set off for another study abroad experience in Australia after this. Throughout this experience, I made many local Australian friends who showed me the local Australian culture. After my completion of my undergraduate program, I again yearned for an international experience where I would be able to challenge myself on a daily basis, learning the ins and outs of a new culture. So, I headed off to Taipei, Taiwan to teach English as a second language and study Chinese. All of these personal experiences, along with my passion to help others, led me to enroll in the graduate program of Elementary Education where I would be able to apply my previous international experiences within my profession. I realized that had I not experienced these challenges of having to adapt to

new environments, ways of life, customs and languages, I would not have been as prepared for a full-time experience teaching internationally. Therefore, these first-hand cultural experiences have influenced my focus for this study.

If one wanted to fully immerse themselves and become an expert in an area of study, would that individual do it exclusively from one location? The likely answer is no. I ask then, why are many of our future teachers of today only learning from within a classroom about how to work, interact with and support students with vastly different cultures and upbringings to their own? This study will explore this question: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through the experience of teaching internationally?*

Significance of this Project

As the world becomes more accessible and far places are easier to reach, and the continued growth and need of the English language increases, more individuals are pursuing an experience of teaching internationally. Moreover, as universities continue to put an emphasis on cultural diversity and inclusion, graduates of these programs are going to feel much more prepared for a life teaching internationally. However, only having a small portion of first-hand cultural experiences and leaving the remainder to be learned within a classroom is not sufficient enough experience to thoroughly understand what to expect when teaching internationally. Therefore, I found it imperative to uncover the information deemed beneficial to help prepare teachers anticipating a career teaching overseas.

In an attempt to answer my research question, I will first review literature related to this topic in order to have a clearer picture of what is most useful for an experience teaching internationally and to provide a foundation for my study. I will then take direct information from different educators located around the world, their background, age, duration of time spent

teaching internationally, subject taught, school culture, parent relationships, student/teacher relationships, discipline, administration/teacher relationships and facilities as well as and overall satisfaction or feeling of being prepared when transitioning and teaching overseas. I want to know the positive and negative effects of teaching internationally as this directly affects me as a teacher; I believe that the findings this research uncovers will ultimately help me become more aware as well as a better educator.

Professional Background and Personal Significance of this Study

Immediately following the completion of my K-6 Elementary Education program at Hamline University, located in St. Paul, Minnesota, I left for a career teaching overseas in Prague, Czech Republic in August 2017. I had originally thought to stay in Minnesota and teach in an elementary school but having a prior history of living as well as teaching internationally, I felt a desire to relocate overseas again. Having received my license in K-6 Elementary Education, my courses did not specifically focus on teaching English language learners. However, prior to my move to Prague, I spent a year teaching English as a foreign language in Taipei, Taiwan where I received my TEFL certification. I always had an interest in working with non-native English speakers and those different from myself, coming from different backgrounds and having different upbringings from my own.

After months of searching, I finally accepted a lower-elementary teaching position in Prague, working within a bilingual, co-teaching program. For the last four years, I've been one of two head teachers within a lower-elementary grade class. In this bilingual program, students from the Czech Republic coincide their regular Czech studies alongside learning English in all subject areas. The duo of Czech and English teachers work together to plan the same units to be taught, but in his/her own native language. Most students enrolled in the program are native

Czechs, having both parents from the Czech Republic. However, there are a few students who come from bilingual households or have native English-speaking parents. After finishing student teaching and my program at Hamline University, I felt ready for an experience teaching internationally. However, having never taught as a primary educator in the U.S. or internationally prior to coming to Prague, especially in a co-teaching dynamic, there were many things that I was not prepared for in regard to teaching internationally.

Firstly, I was not prepared for the different styles of pedagogy and methodologies in teaching within the school, the dynamics and relationships between various parties, such as teacher/administration, student/teacher, and parent/teacher. Additionally, I was not prepared for the differences in disciplinary tactics, inclusion and support programs and staff offered, accessibility within the school, and finally the resources available.

In my school in Prague, I found a major difference in pedagogy and the way in which the teacher interacts with the students, as well as understandings of students' needs, and the backgrounds and interests of individual students. From my experience working alongside native Czech teachers, they keep their interactions with their students quite professional. Additionally, there is a two-fold difference in the understanding of the students and their needs in the Czech school system. First, unlike the United States, when Czech students change classrooms and teachers from year to year, a background and description of the students' needs and any important information is not passed on to the next teacher, making it much more difficult to differentiate and be prepared for the unexpected. However, unlike the United States, many elementary teachers in the Czech Republic stay with the same group of students for their first five years, some even up to the ninth grade; therefore, this might be why there is less need to write up information cards about each student, as the primary teacher already knows everything

about each student's needs. There is a major difference in methodology that I was not prepared for within my first few years of teaching in the Czech Republic. For example, many teachers I have observed and worked alongside mainly have a traditional method of teaching, much like how I was taught as a young student, where students sit in rows, all faced towards the front of the classroom, learn through memorization and textbook work. This was an adjustment for me, as someone who relates more to a social-constructivist theory and cooperative learning approach, where students do not often use textbooks, regularly have group work and are encouraged to share their interests and have two-way communication. This was a lesson that I learned as a new international teacher, that different cultures value different teaching practices and styles of learning.

The next cultural custom I was not prepared for was the relationships amongst various groups within the school system. For example, within the Czech school system, there are no teachers unions for expatriate teachers in the public schools. Therefore, many teachers must advocate for themselves, not the administration, which is very challenging at times. Next, the relationships between teachers and students is different, as it is less regulated than in the United States. Teachers are allowed to give students hugs, some forms of physical contact are not seen as unacceptable, holidays, birthdays and events are all celebrated, and food and drinks are allowed to be given to students at any time. Yet another surprising practice for me was that when getting ready for physical education class, the lower primary grade students in the Czech Republic all change their clothing together, openly in the same area.

Furthermore, I was not prepared for the relationship between the parents and teacher. From my personal experience, a significant portion of the guardians of my students either claim to not speak English well, or at all, which has presented me with many challenges. As many of

the guardians of my students do not feel confident enough to communicate with me in English, they most times do not communicate at all. Without having consistent communication, it is very difficult to build a strong parent-teacher relationship, which oftentimes leads teachers, including myself, to feel insecure about parents' views of them; teachers may consider themselves to be threatened, attacked, judged or undermined by parents (Mandarakas, 2014). Lastly, I have expectations of parents that are similar to other teachers, where parents support their children with reading and homework (Mandarakas, 2014, p. 24). I was not prepared for these differing parental roles, as many parents hesitate to ask for advice or support if they do not understand how to complete the assignments, are unsure of when the assignments are due, how to use English applications and programs, and worry to read to their child, in fear that they will use and teach the incorrect pronunciation of English words. This then leads to a slower growth in their English language abilities and requires me to spend more time individually working with students in the classroom.

Lastly and possibly the largest challenge I encountered and still have to be flexible with on a daily basis, is the lack of involvement of the native English-speaking teachers within the inclusion programs for students with disabilities. In contrast to the United States, Individual Education Plans or information about students with disabilities are considered to be a medical issue in the Czech Republic and therefore are kept in medical files. Therefore, this kind of student information was especially hard to obtain as well as understand, because of the added language barrier, and therefore ultimately hard for me to implement and utilize within my teaching. As a result, most of the assessing of students was done from an informal standpoint, looking at their areas of needs overall, then providing students with attainable goals between student and teacher. Additionally, from my personal experience, I did not observe there to be

enough support staff available such as paraprofessionals for students to work with one-on-one. Therefore, struggling students or those who are having a hard time staying on track or pace with the curriculum of their fellow peers, do not have many opportunities to be pulled out of the classroom. I did observe some in class support or push-in services, but primarily to students in severe need of personalized one-on-one assistance. Finally, within my specific elementary school, there is also no accessibility for students who have physical disabilities, such as ramps or an elevator. Students who are on crutches or in a wheelchair are forced with the challenge to use the stairs or remain on the ground floor.

It is pertinent that individuals understand the challenges prior to teaching internationally, so they in turn can be aware of what they will need to overcome and how to successfully adapt to the cultural differences within their new host community's environment in and outside of a school environment. Alternatively, it is important for these teachers to be aware of differences within their host country's educational system, such as classroom environment, student/teacher expectations, teacher role and methodology practices to be able to compare these differences and possible similarities to the United States' educational system.

Summary

In conclusion, I will be using my past educational experiences and experience of transitioning into a life teaching internationally, along with gathering information from fellow expatriate teachers to identify any common themes that prospective or future international teachers need to know. Additionally, this information will be able to potentially provide education programs and education students with the resources and relevant information to implement into their programs and international teaching experiences to increase the success rate of integration into a foreign culture when teaching internationally. Once this information is

uncovered, teachers educated in the United States can feel more confident in their decision making of whether to teach internationally, what to expect, and the best ways to adapt and immerse themselves into foreign schools, communities, and cultures different from our own. Chapter Two provides a literature review which highlights the important factors which teachers need to consider before experiencing international teaching for the first time. It highlights aspects of education that may differ cross-culturally and that are essential for first time teachers wanting to have an experience internationally. Literature on the importance of first-hand exposure to cultures different from the United States and having globally minded staff and curriculum is presented as well. Chapter Two also outlines different cultural expectations of teachers and students within different countries around the world and the typical relationships amongst different groups within a school as well as how international experiences can be beneficial or not if ever returning back to the United States to teach.

In chapters three, four, and five, this study will present information regarding the research and how it was conducted, the data collection process, participant information and the results of that research. Additionally, this study will present the major findings from the research, implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The number of individuals leaving the United States for a life of teaching internationally is steadily increasing, while the gap between cultural awareness and understanding is slowly progressing, making it difficult for a successful integration into the new culture. Actions, such as internationalization of US universities are helping to close this gap, as it encourages citizens of the world to learn different cultures and languages (Lin, 2012).

In this chapter, I will examine three essential components which are critical to understanding the question: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through the experience of teaching internationally?* First, I will highlight how teacher preparation programs in the US, which have a more global international focus on campus and programs offered to their students to experience teaching internationally are beneficial for an experience teaching internationally. Then, I will present information about differences in teaching cultures, mainly focusing on collectivist and individualistic cultures, what the cultural differences are within the school environment and why it is important to have an understanding of differences of the host country's ways of life and cultural acceptances in comparison to the United States. Finally, additional studies presented explore the effects of teaching internationally, both positive and negative. Each section of this literature review provides research and studies, as well as support and guidance for any teacher desiring to teach internationally, what they can expect during their coursework and what they need to know before teaching internationally.

Essential Understandings of Being an Educator of International Classrooms

A fundamental aspect of being a successful international teacher is the prior exposure one has had to firsthand cross-cultural experiences. These cross-cultural experiences may be a part of one's personal or professional upbringing before attending university, but certainly should be accessible and provided to university students who desire to teach abroad. This can be done on university campuses if the universities are "internationalized," and help students to live in an increasingly pluralistic society (Braskamp, 2009, p. 2).

Internationalization can mean a multitude of things, such as the curriculum provided to students inside and outside of the classroom, a foreign studies department present on campus, professors who have prior international work experience, or the number of foreign students enrolled. Introducing internationalization within US universities produces and incorporates more of a global focus throughout many university courses and programs (Gopal, 2011). Adopting different strategies to internationalize U.S. university campuses is more important now than ever, since only an estimated 10% of U.S. students travel to study abroad (Osakwe, 2017) and are not receiving that first-hand international experience overseas. Furthermore, many students in American institutions lack global awareness, second language fluency, and international knowledge of their major disciplines, and this may create problems for students in succeeding when crossing borders (Osakwe, 2017).

Importance of International Exposure. As education graduates near the end of their teaching programs, many of them should have little doubt that their universities have set them up for success to teach students from almost all backgrounds, whether it be within the US, a country with a culture similar to the United States or one far different. It is essential to understand the challenges of prior international teachers and the importance of having thorough

and diverse international exposure during teaching courses, in case any teaching graduates want to teach internationally. To provide some background of what potential new ESL/EFL teachers could encounter, Govardhan (1999) held a conference with teachers representing experiences from over one dozen countries. The issues that were discussed in regard to teaching internationally ranged from “large classes (ranging from 50 to 150), lack of teaching aids, un(der)trained local teachers with low English proficiency, lack of appropriate textbooks and teaching resources, unfamiliar educational bureaucracies, antiquated examination systems, and lack of congruence between the educational ideologies and practices of the visitors and hosts” (Govardhan, Nayar and Sheorey, 1999, p. 116). Education graduates intending to spend time teaching internationally would benefit from in-depth study and some kind of cultural first-hand experience, locally or abroad, so the student can have an understanding of what to expect and what their relationship will be to the rest of the world. Many university teacher preparation programs can have many shortcomings.

Exposure Through Teaching Programs. While studying within a K-12 teaching program within the United States, an individual can likely receive a vast array of information and knowledge in pedagogy, theory, English, sciences, or overall general education subjects. This section will present findings on five different areas that need more exposure within teacher preparation programs.

Deeper Focus on Fewer Subjects within Teaching Programs. Additionally, the reason many university courses have more of a broad range of teaching subjects versus a depth of teaching fewer subjects, could be attributed to faculty members who “do not receive sufficient preparation to teach students from diverse populations in international branch campuses, let alone formal intercultural competency training” (Gopal, 2011, p. 1). Many teachers display a

concern for adding a global perspective to their teaching, as they report, “that they are pressured for time and they are uncomfortable teaching when they lack expertise in the subject” (Barker, 2000, p. 4). Global perspective is a fundamental aspect when preparing an individual to teach abroad. Not only does that individual need first-hand cross-cultural experiences that go in depth on the country they would like to teach in (if they know), but also these individuals need to be able to rely on and trust what their instructors or educators are teaching them. According to Byker and Marquardt, (2016), it is crucial that teacher educators provide teacher candidates with the ability to critically examine the relationship between global education, multiculturalism, and social justice so that teacher candidates can effectively adopt and use these pedagogies in their instruction.

Emphasis Placed on Firsthand Learning Over Learning from a Distance. Lastly, there is not enough variety of mandatory experiences or firsthand exposure for students to have, such as studying abroad, volunteer experiences, and student teaching in a diverse community or a community vastly different from their own. This would allow for intercultural competence or for students to interact effectively and appropriately in multicultural situations based on one’s cultural outlook, prior knowledge, experiences and understanding (Gopal, 2011). Currently, amongst universities all over the United States, many students are receiving excellent and diverse trainings on how to teach to students from different backgrounds but learning from a distance opposed to firsthand learning does not engage students in working out their own solutions to real-world problems and this is what will make all of the difference for successful international teaching. The integration and adaptation process are never-ending while overseas, individuals need to continuously engage with unfamiliar environments and cultures. “We must be engaged in

the interpersonal and mass communication processes of the host community and society” (Kim, 2017, p. 14).

Globally Minded Staff. A significant way to increase the international preparedness of future international teachers is to have globally minded university staff. One way to produce globally minded staff is to provide increased opportunities for teachers to travel, become immersed in another society and culture, and bring the world these professors experienced and their classrooms closer together. A suggestion for a way this could be done is through federal support programs with travel stipends for teachers which signals how important having a global education is (Barker, 2000). Providing our higher education instructors with the opportunities to teach in a different culture and environment for a period of time would provide them with the skills, knowledge and understanding to pass on to their university students in the United States. One kind of way instructors could gain this experience is through transnational education initiatives. “One of the main manifestations of transnational education is the branch campus, which is a joint venture between two higher education institutions and involves the transporting of programs and degrees from one country (the home country) to another (the foreign country)” (Gopal, 2011).

Globally Minded Curriculum. Furthermore, to increase a student’s readiness for international teaching is to have a curriculum with more of a global focus. According to Zhao (2010), there is an increased insistence on giving attention to globalization in education and teacher education has recognized this imperative to give more attention to global competence of teachers (Aydarova and Byker, 2016). Incorporating a globally focused curriculum within a teacher’s social studies methods instruction can be a perfect platform, according to Byker and Marquardt (2016). Courses relating to social studies are well-positioned to guide teacher

candidates in their development of global education as well as the interaction of multiculturalism in the schools (Byker and Marquardt, 2016, p.35).

Additional ways in which to put an importance on having more of a global curriculum could be done through highlighting the importance of learning a second language, having specialists in international and global issues come to teach at universities, adding international courses as a graduation requirement, and engaging with diverse communities more often.

Learning Through Experience. Lastly, universities can increase readiness of future international teachers and reduce the challenges prior to teaching internationally by requiring more opportunities for learning through experience. Through the use of a federally supported stipend program which would alleviate the limitations for some without the resources to travel and immerse themselves abroad in different countries, would allow for a higher percentage of future international teachers to obtain firsthand experience of how to solve problems relating to cultural differences in the community as well as in the classroom. Having this experience which increases a student's awareness and understanding of foreign cultures, will also provide students with opportunities to explore why foreign students want to learn English and what their struggles are; what limitations there are for teachers in that country, and what social, cultural, and academic adjustments prospective teachers will have to do to adapt to the cultural expectations and norms (Govardhan, Nayar and Sheorey, 1999). Additionally, for those students who still lack the resources and funding for an experience abroad, universities should be taking full advantage of technology, where students can experience virtual international exchanges.

These firsthand experiences such as studying abroad are invaluable, but it is important to note that although there has been an increase of students studying abroad, still "less than 10 percent of undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities do study in other countries,"

and “two-thirds of the student’s study in Europe and Britain, which poses few language challenges, is the single most popular destination” (Barker, 2000, p. 8). “When teacher candidates participate in student teaching abroad programs they develop and increase their sense of cultural sensitivity by viewing the United States perspective from a different place and a different point of view” (Queszada, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, having an understanding of the lesson’s teachers learn from an experience teaching internationally can greatly assist in many of the areas I have touched on above, such as obtaining first-hand experience and being more of a global educator with a globally focused curriculum.

Culture Differences in Teaching Around the World

This section will focus on culture and the differences of cultures within teaching around the world, mainly comparing the dichotomies of collectivist and individualistic cultures, classroom atmospheres and expectations, including teacher/student relationships, their expected roles and, teaching and methodology practices.

There are many ways to describe and define culture, but for this capstone, Wang’s (2011) definition is used, which is, the “system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with. Their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation throughout learning”; culture is an entire way of life of a society, which includes, “not only visible things as cities, organizations and schools, but also non-material things such as ideas, customs, family patterns, and languages” (p. 2).

Differences in Educational Systems. When looking at the educational systems of countries around the world, there were a couple of predominant differences found. Researchers Rubenstein (2001), Čeněk (2015), and Wang (2011), have identified some key differences in education systems, namely the East/West dimension which either have a collectivist or an

individualistic orientation. Cultural norms within collectivism are noticeable by characteristics of harmony and having equal distribution of rewards amongst peers. Education within a collectivist country tends to be used for strengthening the country as a whole rather than for the improvement of the individual (Rubenstein, 2001). To elaborate on collectivistic values, which are typical for Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Southern Europe, the norm is to usually maintain mutual interdependence. These individuals view themselves as a part of a comprehensive network of social relationships that all rely on one another. Their behavior is shaped by the thoughts, feelings and motives of people they have close relationships with. According to Wang (2011), another predominant difference between individualistic and collectivist cultures within education is a characteristic in Chinese culture known as hierarchy. In the Chinese culture, individuals must acknowledge and accept their social position, and by doing so brings forth social harmony within communities. Ultimately this means that many collectivist cultures hold high regard for seniority, rank, age, and hierarchy in the family.

Contrastingly, independence is typical for North American and Western European cultures, according to Čeněk (2015). The cultural norm in these cultures tends to be individuals being independent of others, which promotes the development of oneself in such a way that behaviors and ways of thinking are directed by one's thoughts, feelings and motives that are independent of the thoughts, feelings motives of other people.

When teaching internationally, it is important to develop cultural competence, where one is able to understand, communicate and effectively interact with people across cultures. Having an understanding that there will be differences from one's home country vs one's host country will assist in an easier transition to the host country's culture.

Student and Teacher Roles. There are many different cultural differences, and they can be seen through the interactions between students and their teachers. Looking at data taken from a survey of students and teachers from various cultures and backgrounds, one of the results that identified cultural differences was that of teacher and student roles and expectations. Students and teachers from countries such as Indonesia, China, Korea, Japan, Hispanic countries, America, and Persian and Arab countries were surveyed. “Nearly half of the significant contrasts involved one of five role sets: Set Attitude Toward Error, Student-Teacher Relationship, Teacher Response to Student Error, Teacher Knowledge of Subject or Teacher-Student Relationship” (McCargar, 1993, p. 7). This data provides some insight into the culture within school environments around the world for future international teachers and is detailed below.

Error Correction. There was an overall consensus and all teachers, “clearly disagreed that they should correct every student error. Except for the Japanese, who agreed mildly” (McCargar, 1993, p. 9). On the other hand, “students, as did those in other studies, wanted error correction. Such differences could cause classroom tension or dissatisfaction” (McCargar, 1993, p. 10). An overarching theme taken from this survey, was that “students wanted more error correction than the teachers wanted to give, and much disagreement existed on whether students should make mistakes, how students should feel about making errors, and whether teachers should criticize errors” (McCargar, 1993, p. 10). Furthermore, if a future teacher is ever going to be teaching in a Japanese or Indonesian culture, it will be important to remember that “the teachers, the Japanese, and the Indonesians clearly disagreed” (McCargar, 1993, p. 9), that students should feel embarrassed about giving a wrong answer. In this culture, students do not need to feel the embarrassment of giving an incorrect answer.

Group Work. Another difference amongst cultures as well as amongst students and teachers was that of whether teachers should work with small groups during class. “The Arabs and Persians disagreed with this idea; the Indonesians mildly agreed, and the Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, and Hispanics clearly agreed” (McCargar. 1993, p. 8). It is also important to note that the “Persians and Arabs said teachers should ask questions having mechanical answers” (McCargar. 1993, p. 8). In the United States, “we are used to splitting the class into pairs, or small groups to work on a particular task or discuss an identified topic” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 7). “In a Chinese classroom, one would be more likely to witness sequential pupil talk: two students at a time standing to engage in a (spontaneous or prepared) dialogue while the others listen and think about what their peers are saying” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 7).

Expectations and Behavior. Expectations and behaviors of students and teachers vary greatly throughout the world and within different classrooms. In Japanese cultures, students agree that teachers should encourage students to disagree with them. The Chinese and the Indonesians disagreed with this idea, while other groups only mildly agreed with it. The diversity of student expectation on this issue could be a barrier in classes where teachers wish to encourage the open exchange of ideas” (McCargar. 1993, p. 7). In cultures such as Korea and Persian nations, students should accept the authority of teachers, while only the “Japanese, Indonesians, and Chinese mildly agreed” (McCargar. 1993, p. 9). For most of the cultures, the role of the student having to raise their hand to speak, was largely agreed upon. In regard to the student role of note taking, “Japanese students and teachers seem to expect students to have a more internal locus of control” (McCargar. 1993, p. 9), compared to others, not placing such an emphasis on note taking. Overall, “Western teachers expect questions to be asked by students during the process of learning to fill gaps in their knowledge, or to aid in understanding. Chinese

students ask questions after they have studied on their own. They believe that questions should be based on knowledge and may consider Western classmates rude for asking questions based on their ignorance” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 6). Communication styles and how to communicate also exist. “In the United States, direct eye contact is interpreted as a sign of forthrightness. A lack of direct eye contact is often seen as a sign that a person is hiding something. However, in other cultures, direct eye contact is considered intrusive, inappropriate, and even shameful. In Asian countries, looking a teacher in the eye would be considered the height of disrespect” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 6).

Student and Teacher Relationship. An area we see greater differences in is that of student and teacher relationships. In many countries considered to be a Westernized culture, the typical role of a teacher tends to be the transmitter of knowledge and/or skills. Oppositely, in the Chinese culture, the teacher is seen as a supervisor and friend or parent figure with valuable knowledge that is a student’s responsibility to learn (Rubenstein, 2006). According to Bryan (2007), there is a common difference between the teachers from Mainland China and Hong Kong, and teachers from Australia and the US. Typically, teachers from Mainland China and Hong Kong place emphasis on the teacher having the ability to provide explanations and stimulate thinking, while teaching and learning in Australia and the US are more inquiry based and student-centered where teachers are seen as guides in teaching skills, content, and concepts. Students are expected to be interactive and part of the learning process and not just passive receptors of knowledge. In regard to knowing and caring for the students, teachers from all four locations agreed that this was important, but overall, “teachers from Australia and the US had more to say about building this positive rapport with the students than teachers from Mainland China did” (Bryan, 2007, p. 7). “In Norway, this modeling and bonding between teacher and

student has even more opportunity to take hold and flourish since primary school teachers typically stay with the same group of students for their first 5 or 6 years” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 6). Russian students have a similar experience and teachers in Lebanon are “revered with a status nearing that of a prophet. Students are expected to memorize everything that is presented to them. Practical or creative applications of this knowledge or expressions of personal reactions to it are not encouraged” (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 5).

Knowledge of a culture and its cultural acceptances are crucial for the success of one’s international teaching career. Teachers can easily become frustrated by students or expectations imposed on them, if they are unaware that it is a cultural normality. Through education, research and exposure of a different culture, future international teachers can set themselves up for success and an easier time adapting and assimilating into that environment.

Effects of Teaching Internationally and Teacher Practice

Does teaching internationally bring new positive perspectives for our educators? Are there more positive or negative effects? As schools are trying to become more “internationalized,” and bring more cultural sensitivity, this section is aimed at identifying personal growth and positive experiences as well as challenges encountered while teaching internationally, how these experiences can and will be implemented back into U.S. classrooms and curriculum, and does an international teaching experience impact the overall outlook on teaching and applied teaching methods prior to one’s experience abroad? Additionally, this section will take a deeper look into the beneficial attributes acquired from teaching internationally, and whether or not these experiences, attributes and skills are transferable into U.S. classrooms.

Experiences of Teaching Internationally. To get a deeper understanding of the impacts of teaching internationally, this subsection will highlight the experiences of various individuals, who have spent time teaching internationally. The positive experiences, challenges and lessons learned which allowed for personal growth will be presented. Any international experience that an individual has had, has allowed them a unique and insightful experience of intercultural development and growth both physically and mentally. This growth and development not only occurs when entering into a new culture and environment, but also once more when returning back to the individual's home culture. Individuals who have had an international and cultural experience notice changes in their tolerance of others, have a greater understanding of others as well as great understanding of others viewpoints. Lastly, it has been shown that individuals who have had an international experience have an increase in self-confidence, are more flexible and adaptable, as well as confidence in gathering information in new and unfamiliar environments (Cusher, 2007).

Positive Impacts. The impacts and effects on an individual's personal and professional self are shown to be interrelated. "Of particular interest when trying to understand the nature of this impact is the fact that when these pre-service teachers reflect on this experience, the line between the personal and the professional is completely blurred. In other words, it seems as if this course, and very specifically the visit to Bolivian schools and communities, provided the participants with experiences that inspired both their personal conception of the world and their professional understanding of education" (Rodriquez, 2011, p. 7). The positive impacts are immense and have shown positive effects not only on personal characteristics, but also on intercultural competence. As cited in Hauerwas (2017), Deardorff defines intercultural competence as "the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible

behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions.” Hauerwas (1997), highlights that intercultural development such as building relationships with others who hold different world views in regard to communicating helps individuals develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for intercultural competence (p. 203).

Personal. Evidence for positive impacts on personal characteristics, as cited in Garii (2009) “suggests that participation in teaching abroad opportunities is associated with greater cultural awareness and sensitivity, increased “global mindedness,” and an expanded worldview” (p. 85). There has also been recent work which documented positive results regarding the forming of teacher identities from professional teaching experiences both overseas and culturally diverse experiences in North America, including working with Navajo students and working in diverse, inner-city low-income neighborhoods (Garii, 2009). “These facets of teacher identity include increased self-reliance and flexibility as well as enhanced awareness about and appreciation for other cultures, global mindedness, and self-understanding” (Garii, 2009, p. 3). It has been shown, after spending time in an environment unfamiliar to one’s own background or culture, characteristics such as empathy, adaptability, ethnorelative perspective and understanding of diverse perspectives are acquired. “Those with ethnorelative worldviews accept cultural differences, adapt and integrate them into their identities and consider their own perspectives as well as those of other cultures” (Hauerwas, 2017, p. 3).

As cited in Pence and Macgillivray, (2008), Andrea, a teacher who spent time working in a classroom in Italy states, “Rome changed me for the better. It helped me to appreciate and better understand the different types of students that will be in my future classroom.” Katherine, another preservice teacher states, “I now have respect for those who don’t speak English and come to the states because I know what it feels like not to be able to understand what is going

on” (Pence and Macgillivray, 2008, p. 10). This experience allowed for preservice teachers to develop the skills of empathy, compassion and a deeper understanding and tolerance for others.

Professional. Research on positive professional impacts, “recognize that overseas experiences positively impact curricular expectations, pedagogical perspectives, and classroom practices of early career teachers” (Garii, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, “overseas teaching experiences support preservice teachers as they expand their understanding of their own teaching as they deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge of curricular integration, pedagogical decision-making and classroom practices” (Garii, 2009, p. 3). After having spent time teaching internationally, no matter the location, a commonality amongst most teachers has arisen. These are such as “professional growth, wider understanding of the “teaching community,” and learning from unexpected challenges” (Garii, 2009, p. 9). For example, “the host country itself becomes part of the “teaching community,” because it informs and impacts teachers’ abilities to understand their students, their new communities, and their decision-making” (Garii, 2009, p. 11). As experienced directly from Barb, a US citizen, who has taught in Colombia and Burkina Faso, and now resides in the United States, states:

“My main goal when I worked with new international teachers was to help them recognize and become comfortable with the shaky ground—not only does teaching require an ability to work within the unknown (issues with students, etc.) but teaching internationally required that we suspend judgement because no matter what, we don’t have all the information (we can’t make value judgements because we are not part of the local culture—we don’t necessarily understand local decision making protocols, reasons, etc.)” (Garii, 2009, p. 11).

Many teachers initially struggle when encountering unforeseen circumstances or unfamiliar environments, but after all is said and done, tend to view these experiences in a positive light and realize it helped shape them personally and professionally. For example, Bill, a US citizen, who taught in Kuwait, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Ukraine, stated, “learning how to teach while learning how to live in a new culture made both more challenging” (Garii, 2009, p. 12). To sum up what the teachers took away from their experiences, Garii (2009) states, “these challenges allowed all the participants to reconsider what it means to be an outsider in a familiar-seeming environment. In order to be successful in their overseas classroom and in their professions, the seven White teachers were forced to grapple with unexpected uncertainty, due to the diverse cultural and educational expectations of their students, fellow teachers, and school administrators” (p. 13). Many times, students who are not considered to be a part of the majority demographic, can feel like outsiders even in their own community or school environments. Teachers who have experience teaching internationally, especially in a country vastly different from the United States, where the native language is not English, are able to identify with minority students, and assume the role as a language “other.” This led “to a greater awareness of the challenges of learning language; this awareness also was apparent in profile responses where they indicated sensitivity to the cultural nature of communication and demonstrated a growing understanding of how their outsider status created challenges and miscommunication. Additionally, they consistently reported being comfortable in cross-cultural communication and able to adjust their language style depending on their audience” (Hauerwas, 2017, p. 6).

Another major theme that was common among international teachers according to Garii (2009), was that they realized how important the trait of flexibility was when teaching internationally. Having this flexibility helped with a deeper understanding that the subtle

differences in culture and the differing priorities impact teaching practices. Additionally, it was essential to be flexible as this gave teachers the opportunities to explore their own classroom strengths and teaching interests. Overall, this flexibility was an opportunity to grow as professionals. Having the characteristic of flexibility or adaptability is crucial in the teaching profession, especially when teaching in a multicultural or diverse classroom. As cited in Hauerwas (2017), Chris states, “every week, I encountered a new challenge whether it was an additional activity that (my teacher) wanted to include last minute or an unforeseen language/cultural barrier. I learned how to deal with these issues calmly and turn them into effective parts of my lesson” (p. 6).

Limitations and Negative Impacts. Although the number of positive impacts far outweighs the limitations and negative impacts taken from an experience teaching internationally, still some do exist. For example, the duration of time, especially that of a short international immersion trip does not create much opportunity to have deeper, more authentic cultural experiences. “By their own account, none of the participants has pursued any kind of professional or personal connection with Bolivia.” Additionally, “their responses illustrate that they did not engage in other professional activities promoted by this course” (Rodriguez, 2011, p. 8). Another negative impact of teaching internationally can be due to the cultural differences or what one “deems appropriate.” For example, “one student, placed in a preschool classroom, experienced what she perceived to be a developmentally inappropriate curriculum that was unlike any she had learned about in her preservice courses, or observed in the US” (Pence and Macgillivray, 2008, p. 9). Another source where negative experiences can stem from is that of parental pressure. As cited in Pence and Macgillivray (2008), “parents come into the school when they want to complain about the teachers, not when they want to offer the instructors help.

In fact, I had to alter my unit on [measuring] time because of a parent complaint that her daughter didn't bring home a clock the same day as a neighbor's child did. I don't think I could work in an unsupportive environment like this. (Lisa)" (p. 9).

Overall, findings have shown that individuals benefit positively, both personally and professionally, as a result of an international experience. It provides individuals with "specific conceptual and methodological tools to pursue this understanding, such as new theoretical models of teaching to guide their practice or the ability to articulate broader educational goals for the students they service" (Rodriguez, 2011, p. 12). Also, teachers expressed an overall increase in self-awareness, development of empathy, increased global mindedness, confidence in teaching students from differing backgrounds, solving problems and communication.

International Experiences Transferable to U.S. Classrooms

Although there can be many challenges of transferring and integrating the practices and skills learned while teaching internationally, there are many professional and personal skills that can be applied. The skills listed have shown to be useful and effective when applied in a U.S. classroom after returning from a time spent teaching internationally. Skills such as incorporating flexible pedagogies and culturally relevant curriculum into professional practices has been a skill teacher acquired from teaching internationally (Garii, 2009). Teachers who have taught internationally also can more easily, than those who have not, move into the role of "marginalized outsiders" who must identify the source of their discomfort in the professional setting and internalize a new set of rules and expectations" (Garii, 2009, p. 98). This can be transferable into a U.S. classroom, because "the ability to articulate one's own marginalization may point to a strengthened rapport with similar challenges faced by all students in diverse, multicultural classrooms" (Garii, 2009, p. 98). Widening perspectives of teaching due living

internationally has also been a skill shown by international teachers and from their experiences working with students from a variety of backgrounds, international teachers have acquired the skill of empathy and acquired the ability to connect to their own students' cultural struggles (Garii, 2009).

The primary skills above acquired by international teachers have been shown to be transferable into U.S. classrooms. The skill of viewing education from multiple perspectives and increased understanding has been demonstrated that teachers can “recognize themselves as “other” and bring home an enhanced understanding of what it means to be different” (Garii, 2009, p. 99). When teaching in diverse environments, due to their experiences, “these teachers are both more sensitive to and more comfortable with linguistic, cultural, and other “differences” in classroom attitudes, participation, and expectation” (Garii, 2009, p. 99). Participating teachers in an intercultural experience have been shown to transfer their cultural understanding into culturally responsive and relevant practices in their U.S. classrooms. They are also able to understand and respond more effectively to the needs of the students they teach. These needs can include: understanding the relationship of language use, cultural background, and culturally-influenced behaviors to learning (DeVillar and Jiang, 2012).

As United States classrooms continue to have a growing population of non-native English speakers with varying cultural backgrounds, the need for teachers with global mindedness is growing every year. Personal values, experiences and morals are going to determine the way someone interacts and works with others and this directly coincides with a person’s professional identity at the workplace, and specifically in a school environment. There will more times than not, be heterogeneous groups of individuals that teachers will need to understand and work with.

The ideals and values of diversity need to be promoted to ensure the learning environment is a safe and accepting place. There is an indicated need for having a more international focus within teacher education programs within the United States, which stems from changing demographics in the country and schools, the increase in global opportunities, and ultimately a more globalized world (Doppen and Diki, 2017). International experience needs to be transferable into the United States curriculum for a few major reasons. According to Doppen and Diki (2017), one major reason is that the population of the United States continues to diversify ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically due to the increasing numbers of immigrants arriving since the 1970s. Secondly, American jobs are becoming more international in nature, as global trade continues to expand and finally the United States, like most countries, face global issues that require understanding and cooperation with one another. Overall, American schools and teachers will undoubtedly expect changes that are global in nature, requiring schools and teachers to teach with a more globalized focus and in a way that will enable students to understand various cultural differences and create global connections.

Applied Skills in the Classroom. Although most of the research found have been in regard to international student teaching experiences and how they can be applied within US classrooms, the findings and commonalities can also be consistent with that of professional educators who've spent time teaching internationally as well. Furthermore, to show the importance of an immersion experience teaching internationally, Martin (2012) found, as cited in Doppen and Diki, (2017), that "students had grown both personally and professionally, exhibited an increased intercultural sensitivity, and were able to better meet the needs of a diverse student body as well as infuse their instruction with culturally relevant practices (p. 5)." Jiang (2019) also presented a salient finding, that teachers who participated in student teaching experiences

abroad adapted, and integrated skills, as well as techniques and knowledge, to their U.S. classrooms.

Educator Qualities. Many educators return home from an experience teaching internationally with an immense amount of professional growth that can be applied within their classrooms. This section will look at the qualities and characteristics that teachers bring into their U.S. classrooms after teaching abroad.

Viewing Education from Multiple Perspectives. According to Madeleine, an individual who participated in an intercultural immersion program, and more specifically a case study of 13 preservice teachers through the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST) program, states that “a teacher candidate who completed their student teaching experience at home would have missed out on so many of the challenges I faced. Working in a culture where I am the minority has allowed me to view teaching from another angle” (Doppen and Diki, 2017, p. 7). Additionally, Kaleigh, another participant of the COST program agrees that this experience has helped her view education from another perspective, “I think I am different from teacher candidates who have not had the COST experience because I have had the opportunity to go out and see how a different country handles education. I have the knowledge of what has worked well in a different country and what does not work well. I can bring this knowledge with me to another school and help better the education system in ways that other teacher candidates may not think of without the experience” (Doppen and Diki, 2017, p. 7). “In many ways pre-service teachers who teach abroad are able to consider multiple viewpoints and perspectives as they plan, instruct, and assess. Their worldview increases as a result of their experiences and they are able to shift their thinking from “here’s how we view it” to “here’s how others view it” (Jiang et al., 2019, p. 12).

Flexibility and Adaptability. Unfamiliar environments, unforeseen situations and cultural differences will inevitably force a visiting teacher to acquire the trait of flexibility. “Teachers report that, due to the general lack of resources, technology, and instructional materials available at their student teaching abroad sites, they developed: (a) a practical sense of creativity and flexibility that enabled them to identify, gather and use materials in low-cost and innovative ways; and, at the same time, (b) an appreciation of the quality and quantity of instructional materials available within the U.S. classrooms and the value of using them” (DeVillar and Jiang, 2012, p. 13). Teachers who spent time abroad recognized a need for more flexibility that included, “a deeper, less theoretical, understanding that nuances of culture and differing priorities impact teaching practice. Additionally, the necessity to be flexible offered the teachers opportunities to explore their own classroom strengths and teaching interests. This flexibility became an opportunity to grow as professionals” (Garii, 2009, p. 96). Not only is this skill of adapting and being flexible in their teaching practices valuable internationally, but it is also invaluable locally in the United States as well, when working in a low-income area, where funding is low or in a very multicultural, diverse school environment. This flexibility and the ability to adapt, usually comes with ambiguity or unfamiliarity, where individuals are forced to reassess their standing routines and procedures. According to Garri (2009), although international teachers are in a familiar setting such as an educational environment, the school itself is located in an unfamiliar place. Therefore, the teachers’ cultural understanding has been replaced and they are burdened with learning to cope with and incorporate this uncertainty into their teaching practices. This uncertainty ultimately created the room for the teachers to explore different practices, different teaching styles, and different personal practices, which they wouldn’t have otherwise tried within their own familiar education environment. This uncertainty

which contributed to the skill of flexibility ultimately translated into an increased self of self-confidence in teachers (Garii, 2009).

Gained Confidence and Increased Understanding. Another major quality that has been shown to come out of an experience of teaching internationally is that of gaining confidence and empathy or the ability to further understand others. Phoebe, a participant in the COST program shared how she became more confident in her teaching abilities and states that by “being completely alone in a foreign country” has made a big difference. She further expresses that she has taught herself “how to learn on my feet and quickly adapt to new situations” and “was pushed to my limits, and it was tough at some points, but I got through it, and it gave me confidence to be an educator” (Doppen and Diki, 2017, p. 84).

Increased Ability to Differentiate. Another quality that many international teachers state to have obtained through their experience abroad is their increased ability to differentiate. Jiang et al., (2019), found that teacher candidates who studied abroad and then returned to teach in the US realized “the American approach to teaching and learning is not universal” and “they began to consider that what they saw in another country did not need to stay in that country” (p. 50). This directly correlates with the ability to differentiate, as many students learn from different perspectives and relate the information they are receiving to a personal experience or put it in context to relate to their cultural background. Additionally, a large percentage of students within the United States are not raised with an “American approach” to learning. A direct experience that Marvin, a participant in the COST program, states that it has given me the confidence to take on any classroom in the United States. I also think I am more aware of differences among students, and how to differentiate my instruction to a variety of learners” (Doppen and Diki, 2017, p. 85).

Development of Greater Awareness of Students' Needs. Another skill that has been shown to be commonly developed is that of a greater awareness of students' needs. "Through their intercultural experiences while student teaching abroad, teachers developed heightened awareness of the diverse needs of their students and their backgrounds and provided necessary caring and support that informed their daily learning based on their student teaching experiences abroad" (DeVillar and Jiang, 2012, p. 20). For example, "one of the teachers who student taught in Costa Rica now implements various culturally-responsive strategies, such as having students prepare posters to share their cultures and recognizes the importance of seating arrangements for students from different ethnic and racial groups to regularly sit and work together in class—a practice he appreciated seeing and experiencing in Costa Rica as a student teacher" (DeVillar and Jiang, 2012, p. 17).

Integration of Students' Cultures into Curriculum. When moving to a new country, and teaching in a new school environment, teachers from the United States feel the direct effect of being the minority in a different culture. Returning to the United States after teaching internationally, allows these educators to have a deeper understanding of how important the integration of one's own culture is into curriculum and learning, to make the process of learning more engaging and relevant for learners. For example, "one teacher describes her experience in making connections with her students in the following way:

"It [that is, the student teaching experience] affects so many different things in so many ways. It could be content...and there's something so beautiful about being able to say, 'I was there. Let me, take you on a journey,' instead of just, 'I hear that this place is having trouble with this and that.' You can tell them a story." [Teacher 3] Being able to

implement relevant curriculum, such as books during reading time, associated with a student's culture increases their interest and allows them to become more engaged as they can identify more closely with the idea or topic that is being taught. (DeVillar and Jiang, 2012, p. 16).

Summary

The research above has shown that there still are many ways that individuals can be better prepared for an international teaching experience. Furthermore, teacher education programs can integrate experiences and feedback taken from experienced international teachers into their programming. The research also showed that there are many cultural differences that one should know about their future international location before teaching there as well as the many positive and a few negative effects from an experience teaching internationally. Finally, the research showed how these experiences from teaching internationally can be implemented for a reentry into the US school system. Next, Chapter Three outlines the methods in which I gathered and obtained my data. The chapter delves more deeply into the methods used, participant information, data collection techniques, data analysis and ethics during this process.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

This chapter will focus on the methods that were used for exploring the research question: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through the experience of teaching internationally?* This will include the research paradigm, data collection tools, data analysis, and ethics considered in the process.

Research Paradigm

To gather data to answer the question: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through an experience of teaching internationally?* I used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods for this study. These methods were suitable, as they investigate a large number of people by submitting questionnaires based on multiple numeric answers and open-ended questions. It also begins by gathering detailed information from participants, which I will do, and then forms the information into categories or themes and the “findings are likely to be generalized to a whole population or a sub-population because it involves the larger sample which is randomly selected” (Rahman, 2017, p. 106). This theory helps quantify or use numeric data to measure behavior, opinions, and attitudes of the participants. The theoretical basis I will use, will be that of drawing comparisons and summarizing my findings taken from individuals who have taught all over the world through direct surveys and existing information about what the effects are for teachers moving overseas and returning back to the US.

Using the quantitative research approach will be the most beneficial as it emphasizes measurement of variables existing in the social world (Rahman, 2017). Quantitative methods usually obtain regularities in human lives, by separating the social world into practical sections called variables and it also focuses on parts of social behavior which can be measured and turned into patterns.

Additionally, using both the qualitative and quantitative theories alongside a social constructivist approach will highlight the important aspects of my research topic. Social constructivism puts an importance of culture and the context in which it is occurring into a better understanding of what happens within society and therefore constructs an understanding based on this information (Kim, 2001). My research design relates to the social constructivist theory, as the research participants will be provided with the opportunity to answer short answer questions, where they will be able to provide their perspectives constructed while living abroad. This combination should prove beneficial, as I will be receiving data from participants worldwide who have formed their own social constructions which have been formed through their own personal activity, and through this method, those social constructs will be taken into consideration.

Participants

To obtain the information required to answer my research question, I applied the theories stated above and collected data through the use of a survey for which participants were selected through the Facebook social media platform. This survey was conducted using TypeForm and focused on international experiences of U.S. citizens who have both taught domestically and abroad. The participant group consisted of 61 individuals, with U.S. K-12 teaching licenses, above the age of 18, who are originally from and educated within the United States. Data

collected from the survey showed that there were 36 countries represented in the sample size. The countries represented were: Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Hong Kong, India, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, UAE, UK, US, Ukraine, and Vietnam.

The participant's grade levels taught range from lower elementary up to secondary. The grade-level did not limit them from answering the survey, as all participants, no matter the grade level they teach or have taught internationally and within the United States, experienced some cultural differences while teaching internationally which was beneficial for my data collection. All participants are U.S. citizens and completed their teacher education program in the United States. There were no restrictions on ethnic background or socioeconomic class. I gathered information pertaining to whether or not the participants had prior experiences living or traveling abroad prior to their international teaching experience or if they came from a multicultural family or have family members which reside outside of the United States. This information was beneficial as it allowed me to gauge whether or not having these experiences provided additional support, preparation and/or understanding for the participants who are or have taught internationally.

Data Collection

The techniques I used to collect data will be through a questionnaire. I conducted this survey by asking individuals to participate in taking my survey online. I used a survey as they are able to represent a large population. Surveys are also shown to extract data that are near to the exact attributes of the larger population. Another benefit of using surveys, is that they are low or

no cost and convenient. Lastly, online surveys are more convenient and produce a large response rate than other forms of surveys (Fricker and Schonlau, 2002).

The recruitment process was conducted completely online. I recruited participants through online platforms, like Facebook, using specific groups which focus on international teachers. I sent out the survey asking the relevant teachers, who met the requirements of what I was looking for, to participate. The 38 questions in the survey were categorized into the following groups: participant information, school and degree programs, teaching information, country(ies) taught in, teacher background information, school information, parent information, student information, SPED services, quantity of professional development offered, differences between international schools vs. US schools, disciplinary measures at international schools vs. U.S. schools, the lessons learned from teaching internationally to share with a new teacher wanting an international experience and lastly, the biggest challenges one might face if ever returning back to the U.S. to teach.

The answers obtained from the 61 participants, were from 36 different regions around the globe, such as Europe, Asia, South America, Africa and Australia. The teachers were either currently working within a local public school overseas, or international school and or had already returned to the U.S.

There were some problems with this method of obtaining participants, as individuals didn't want to participate, didn't have the time to complete the entire survey, leaving half of the questions unanswered and the Facebook group pages became flooded with other people's posts, therefore pushing my survey down on the page, there not having as great of visibility.

Data Analysis

After receiving data from my 61 participants, I processed and converted the responses into graphs which were then interpreted. I identified patterns and outliers, which helped me compile my data into certain categories. With open-ended responses, I identified the response categories, recorded individual responses, organized any common categories and then represented that data visually. The commonalities, as well as irregularities, among the gathered responses, were used to answer the question: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through an experience of teaching internationally?*

Ethics

Lastly, I ensured an ethical questionnaire was given to all participants. The individuals participating in the study gave informed consent, as they were provided with documentation proving their information would be protected, that they had a right to privacy, no data was shown in a dishonest way and personal information such as the individuals name was not required or disclosed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a multitude of skills personally and professionally have been shown to be acquired from individuals who have spent time teaching internationally. Professionally, educators who spent time teaching internationally have shown to be able to have a deeper understanding and ability to identify with those from another background or culture and have a greater ability to appropriately differentiate and make learning more relevant and engaging for students from different backgrounds. An overall increase in cultural sensitivity has been shown and educators are better able to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Personally,

findings have shown that international educators had an overall increase in self-awareness, empathy, global-mindedness, problem-solving and communication.

In chapter four, I will be highlighting the results and findings obtained from my research. The data will be focused on any trends, patterns, commonalities or irregularities that have emerged and the interpretation of the data collected in relation to the research question.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The previous chapter highlighted the methodology of this study and outlined the data collection techniques that were used. Within chapter four, the results of the data collection will be presented. The data collected are used to answer the guiding question for this research: *What are the lessons teachers trained in the US learn through the experience of teaching internationally?*

Data Collection Process

In order to help answer this research question, a survey with both quantitative and qualitative questions was conducted. The survey questions were aimed at determining: 1) the background and upbringing of the participant; 2) previous or current international teaching experiences; 3) satisfaction with their overall international teaching experience; 4) satisfaction in regards to relationships at the school, such as: with administration, students, and parents; 5) resources available at the school, such as: SPED programs, behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals, reading specialists and psychologists; 6) the amount professional development opportunities offered; 7) the differences of international schools from US schools; 8) differences in international school cultures vs. schools cultures in the US; 9) and lastly, disciplinary measures in place in international schools vs. in US schools.

The survey also included a series of qualitative open-ended questions which focused on what teachers have learned from their time teaching internationally that will impact them if returning to teach back in the US. These questions gathered information on the lessons they have

learned from teaching internationally that they can share with a new teacher who is preparing to teach internationally and lastly, what the biggest challenge would be if returning back to the United States to teach.

Survey Results

The 38 questions in the survey were categorized into the following groups: participant information, school and degree programs, teaching information, country(ies) taught in, teacher background information, school information, parent information, student information, SPED services, quantity of professional development offered, differences between international schools vs. US schools, disciplinary measures at international schools vs. U.S. schools, the lessons learned from teaching internationally to share with a new teacher wanting an international experience and lastly, the biggest challenges one might face if ever returning back to the U.S. to teach.

Participant Information. The first section of the survey focused on gathering participant information. The survey results in Figure 1, below, show the average age of the participants to be between 35-45 years old. 37.00% of the 61 participants marked they were between the ages of 35-45 years old, with a second majority, 29.00%, stating they were between the ages of 45-55. Figure 2 tells us that 90.00% were women and 10.00% were male. Figure 3, below, shows the average amount of time the participants have been teaching internationally and 44.00% of the 61 participants stated they have been teaching internationally for 10 years or more. It is important to note that nearly half (45.00%) of the respondents who have been teaching for 7-10 years and 10 or more years internationally stated they do not intend to ever return to teach in the United States, which may influence their answers within the survey.

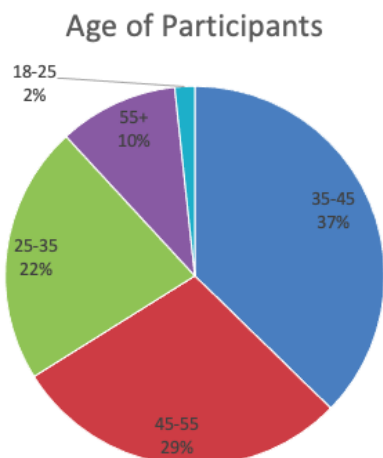


Figure 1. Survey Participant Information Question 1 response.

Gender of Participants

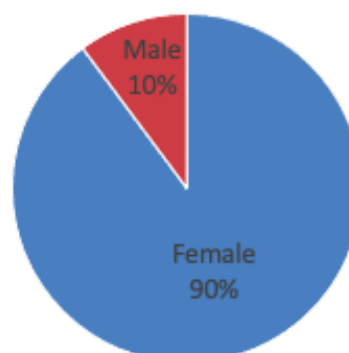


Chart Area

Figure 2. Survey Participant Information Question 2 response.

Years Teaching Internationally

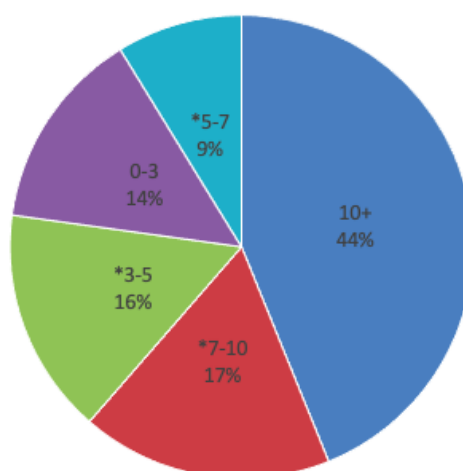


Figure 3. Survey Participant Information Survey Question 3 response.

Types of Schools. The second category gathered information about the participants' schools that they've taught at while abroad. The schools were categorized by type of school such as: public, private, religious or charter and then proceeded to ask exactly what each school

identified themselves as, such as: an American International School, a British International School, an International Baccalaureate (IB) School or a local government school.

The survey data indicated that a large majority of the participants (80.00%) stated they have worked or work at a public school. Additionally, shown in Figure 5, 40.00% of the participants stated they work or worked at an American International School, with IB schools following as a close second (36.00%).

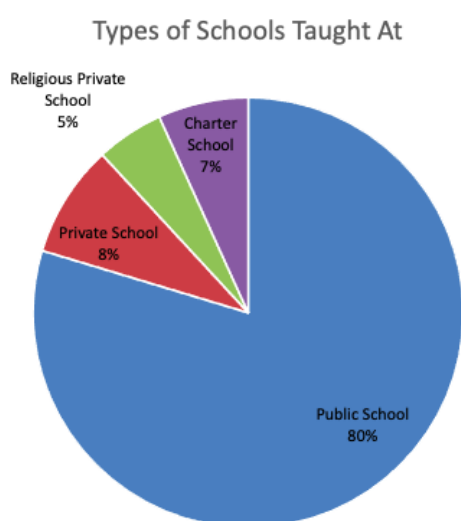


Figure 4. Type of School Question 4 Response.

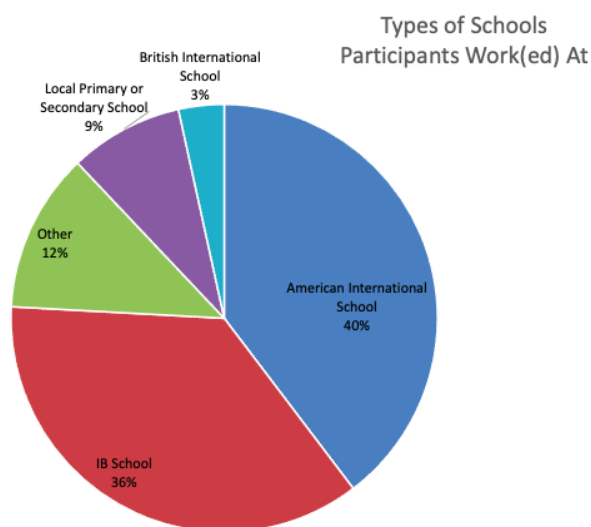


Figure 5. Type of School Question 5 Response.

Education Program. The third section of the survey focused on the educational programs the participants received their teaching degrees in, grade levels and subjects taught. Figure 6, below, shows the survey results that 41.00% of the 61 participants received their teacher's education and licensure in secondary education and 37.00% received their teacher's education and licensure in elementary education. The other areas in which participants received their education were special education (5.00%), TEFL (2.00%) and other (15.00%). For those with a secondary education degree, most often have a specialization area, and as Figure 7 shows

below, English was the highest specialization degree received (31.00%), with history, mathematics and foreign languages following after that (16.00%), then science (12.00%) and finally K-12 ESL, Bilingual Education and Special Education (3.00%).

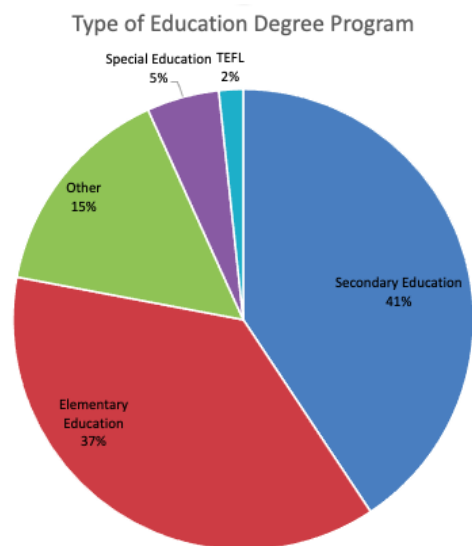


Figure 6. Education Program Question 6 Response.

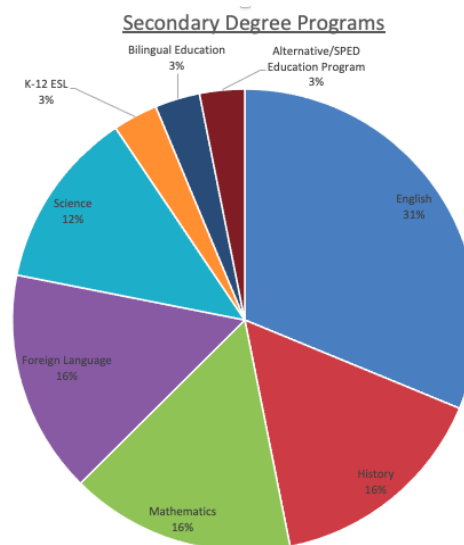


Figure 7. Education Program Question 7 Response.

Continuing with the third section of the survey, the participants were asked which grades they have taught and within those grades, which subjects they taught. As shown in Figure 8, below, a majority of the participants have taught at the secondary grade level (39.00%) with primary coming in as a close second (34.00%). 14.00% of the participants stated they have taught both primary and secondary subjects, 9.00% teaching middle school grade level and 4.00% teaching ESL classes. Figure 9, below, shows the largest majority of the participants have or teach all subjects and are referred to as a “generalist” teacher. Within the primary grade level, teachers are known as “generalists,” teach all subjects and do not have one specialization subject. From the survey, 77.00% of respondents marked themselves as teaching “All/Generalist”

subjects. Also shown in Figure 9, below, there is a wide variety of specialization subjects that have been or are taught by the participants of this survey, such as: Math (11.00%), Science (8.00%), Foreign Languages (8.00%), ESL (6.00%), Special Education (SPED) (5.00%), Drama, AP Classes, Physical Education, Library Services, and History (3.00%), and Visual Arts, Technology, Humanities, Economics, and Business (2.00%).

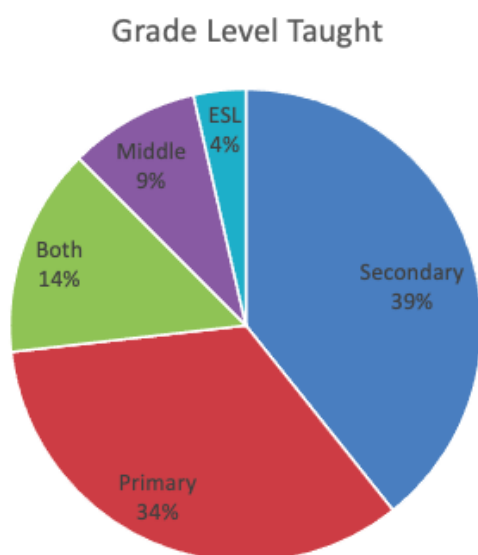


Figure 8. Teaching Information Question 8 Response.

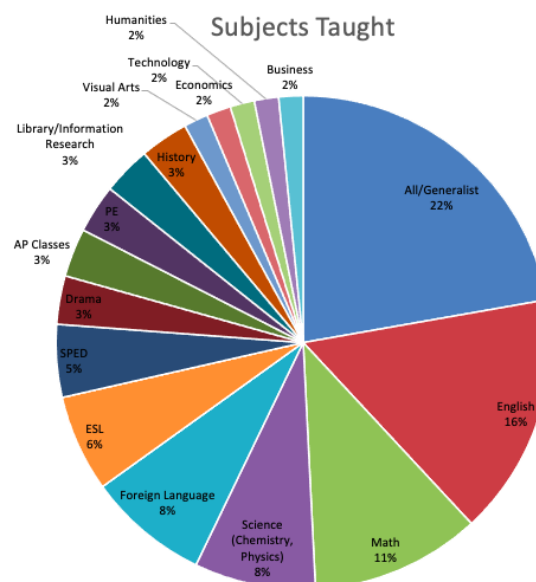


Figure 9. Teaching Information Question 9 Response.

Countries Taught In. The fourth section of the survey gathered information from the participants about which countries they have taught in or are currently teaching in. Figure 10, below, shows the survey results having a great range (36 countries) in which the participants have taught. The important thing to note about having this quantity of different countries in which the teachers have taught, is that many of the multiple choice and open-ended responses were very similar in answer, therefore showing that the country did not determine the answers for sections such as: dynamic of the school, communication methods of the school, relationships

amongst various parties within the school, professional development provided, the school culture compared to US schools and the outlook and lessons learned from teaching internationally.

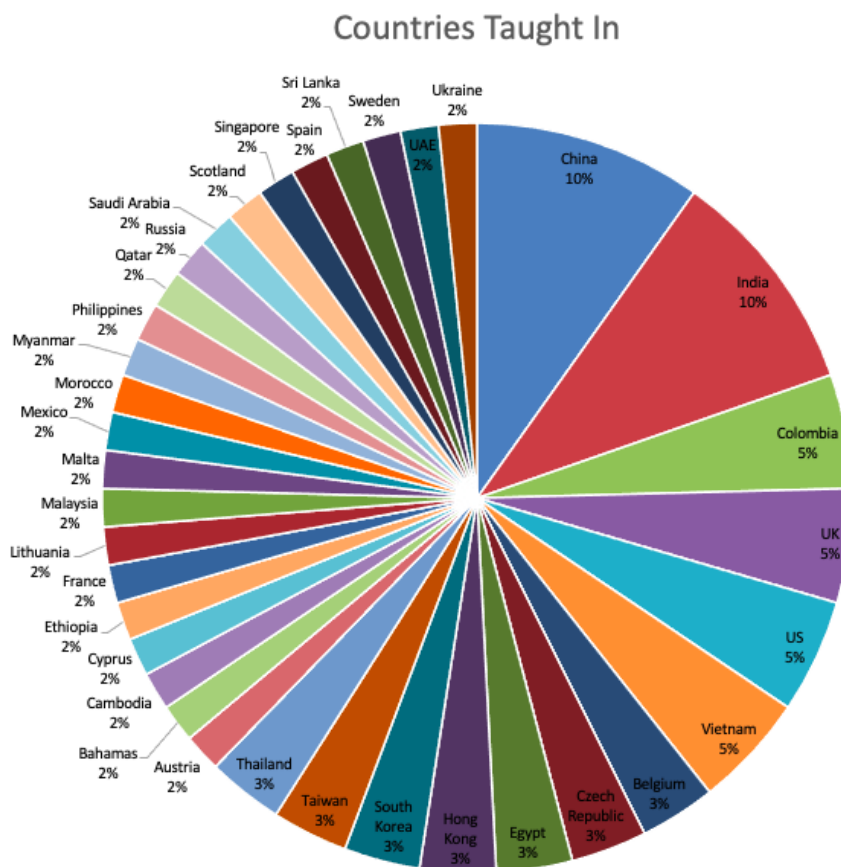


Figure 10. Countries Taught in Question 10 Response.

Teacher Background Information. The fifth section of the survey questions was to gather information about the backgrounds of the participants. It is important to note that gathering data related to this topic from the teachers provides the reader with a better understanding of whether or not each survey participant had previous international experience or exposure to other factors that would support an easier transition into a life of international teaching. These factors included the ability to speak another language, speaking the primary

language in which they reside, study abroad experience, travel abroad experience, being part of a diverse community growing up and having a diverse secondary school experience.

As shown below in Figure 11, most of the participants stated they cannot speak the language of the country in which they teach (54.00%). A handful of respondents from the survey mentioned the importance of getting to know the culture, embrace any cultural differences and of course learn the language. By doing so, this could alleviate any additional, unnecessary struggles of an experience teaching internationally. Figure 12, below, shows a majority of the survey participants do not speak any second language (44.00%), 39.00% saying that they can speak another language and 17.00% are currently learning a second language.

Figure 13 and 14, below, show whether or not the survey participants had a study abroad or traveling abroad experience prior to their experience teaching internationally. This is important to note, because being exposed to other cultures or having an experience traveling outside one's country of residence may provide insight and expectations of what is to come when having experience teaching internationally.

Speak the Primary Language of the Country in Which you Reside?

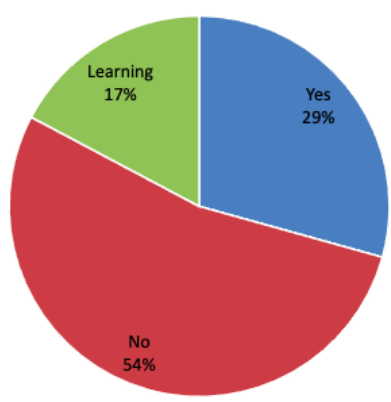


Figure 11. Teacher Background Information Question 11 Response.

Speak Another Language

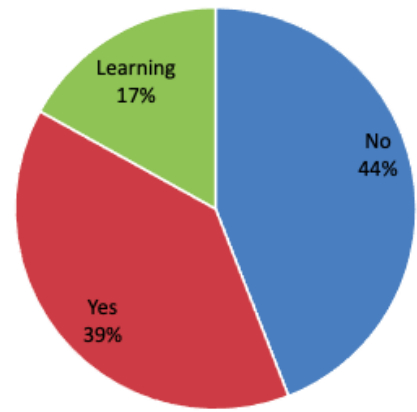


Figure 12. Teacher Background Information Question 12 Response.

Studied Abroad Prior to Teaching Internationally

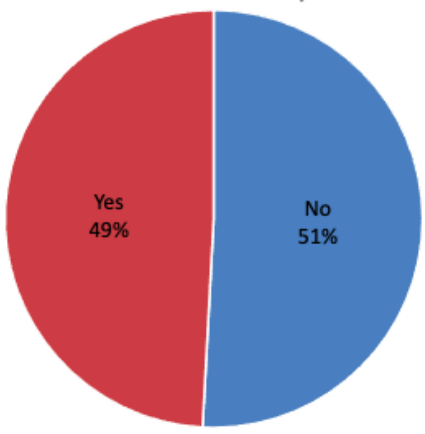


Figure 13. Teacher Background Information Question 13 Response.

Traveled Abroad Prior to Teaching Internationally

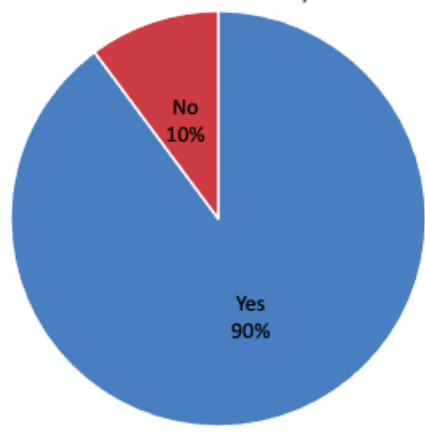


Figure 14. Teacher Background Information Question 14 Response.

Figure 15 and 16, below, indicate whether or not the survey participant was a part of or exposed to a diverse community growing up and within their secondary schooling experience. It shows that 58.00% of the participants stated they had not been a part of a diverse community

growing up and 51.00% had no diversity within their secondary school. This information is important to note, because having a diverse experience can help aid in the preparedness of an individual for an experience of teaching internationally, such as: the exposure to different cultures and customs, working with others from different backgrounds and providing cultural understanding from those different to oneself.

Part of a Diverse Community Growing Up

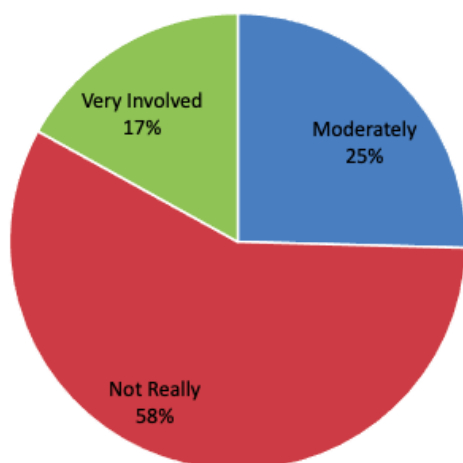


Figure 15. Teacher Background Information Question 15 Response.

Cultural Diversity of Secondary School

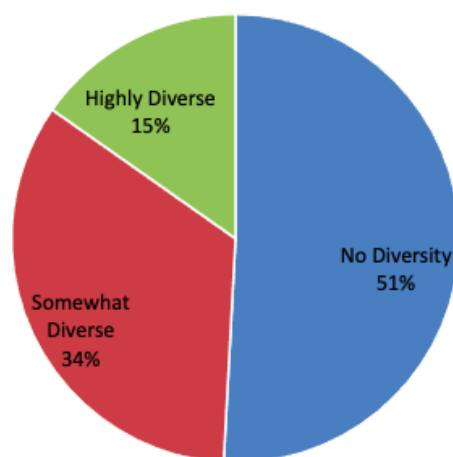


Figure 16. Teacher Background Information Question 16 Response.

Lastly, Figure 17, below shows the university coursework topics that participants said they were provided with during their university teaching program. This is important to note, because these courses listed, such as: International Education Systems, Cultural Acceptances, Cultural Responsiveness, Inclusive Practices, and Cultural Diversity and Classroom Management Practices can help provide support and further preparedness for individuals looking for an international experience teaching internationally. As Figure 17 shows below, a majority of the participants received at least one of these courses throughout the duration of the teaching

degree program in the United States. However, 19% of the participants stated they received none of these courses.

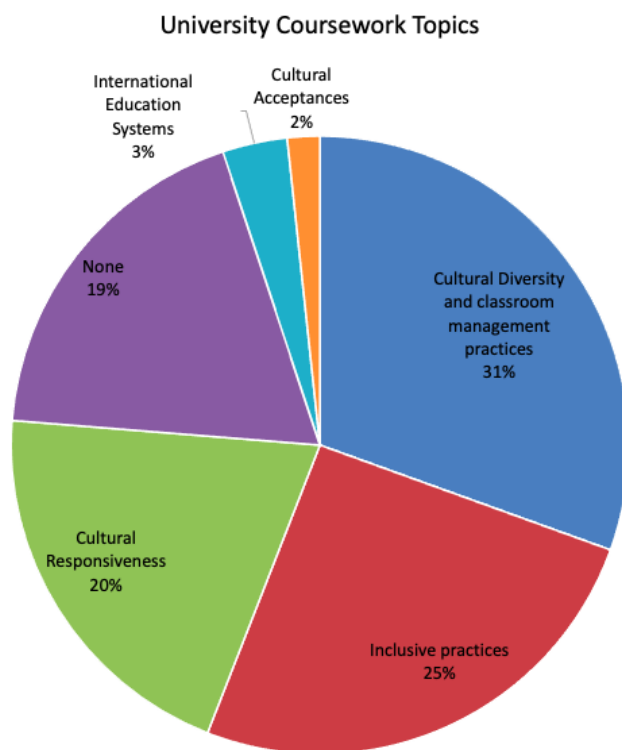


Figure 17. Teacher Background Information Question 17 Response.

School Information. The next section of the survey falls under the category of satisfaction of relationships at the school. The information, as shown below, was broken into categories such as: relationships between school administration and teachers, relationships between teachers and parents, relationships between teachers and students, and teachers and overall satisfaction of the participant's international school experience.

Figure 18 and Figure 19, below, show the ways in which information is provided to the teaching staff from the administration at the school as well as the percentage of English-speaking staff, including administration, at the school. Figure 18, below, shows participants stated that 85.00% of their school staff speaks English, 8.00% speaking 50-75% English, 5.00% speaking

between 25-50% and 2.00% speaking between 0-25% English. Figure 19 shows that 73.00% of the time, information within the international schools is shared non-verbally via email, paper documents, and webinars. Information is shared verbally around 19.00% of the time and a combination of the two ways is shared 8.00% of the time. The last question regarding the relationship between administration and teachers asked was if the participants feel or felt supported by their administration during their time teaching at an international school.

Figure 20, below, shows that 88.00% of the participants stated they do feel supported, 7.00% do not feel supported and 5.00% stated that they sometimes feel supported by the administration at their school. It is important to note that having a supportive administration that speaks English is crucial for a successful and easier transition into an international teaching experience.

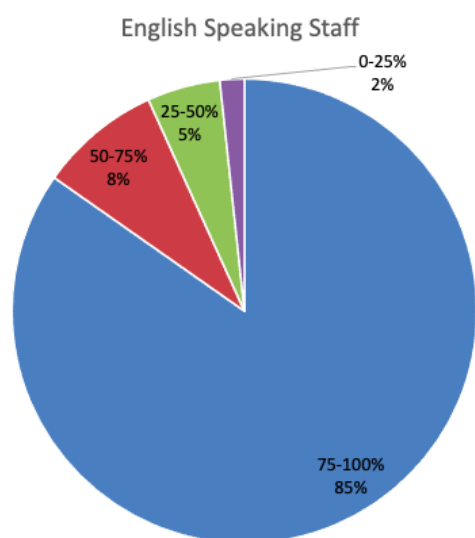


Figure 18. School Information Question 18 Response.

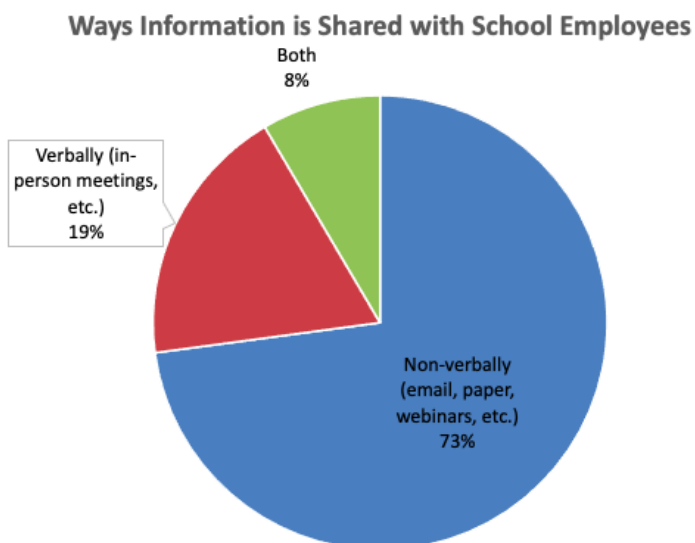


Figure 19. School Information Question 19 Response.

Feel Supported by the Administration

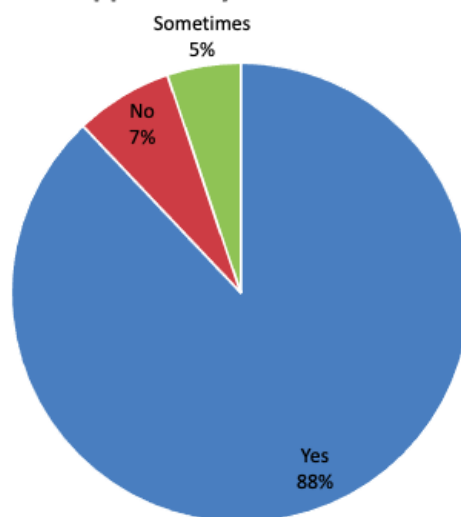


Figure 20. School Information Question 20 Response.

Parent Information. This next section also falls under the category of satisfaction in regard to relationships at the school. It gathered information pertaining to the parent, teacher relationships at the international schools. Figure 21, below, shows that 46.00% of parents at the participant's international school speak 75-100% English, 27.00% speak 50-75% English, 19.00% speak 25-50% English at 8.00% speak 0-25% English. It is important to note that this question was specifically asked, because of the importance of having strong parent, teacher relationships and the positive effects it has on the student. If the parent isn't able to communicate due to their lack of knowledge of the English language, this can create additional struggles during a teacher's experience teaching internationally. According to Loughran, S. B. (2008), it states that, "communication with parents is of paramount importance" and "the function of a good parent-teacher relationship is much more than just a vehicle for status reports from teacher to parents on a child's performance or behavior. It is really a partnership providing two-way

information flow from the teacher to the parents about the child's classroom achievements and persona and from the parent to the teacher about the complementary elements in the home environment" (p. 35).

Furthermore, shown in Figure 22, below, the participants stated how often they communicated with the parents at their school. The results do not reflect a common theme among the participant's answers, therefore showing that each school and individual teacher communicates differently and at different amounts. Figure 22 shows that 31.00% of the teachers communicate with parents 3-5 times per month, 27.00% of teachers communicate with parents 10 or more times per month, 22.00% communicate with parents 0-2 times per month and 20% communicate with parents 5-7 times per month. Figure 23, below, shows the ways in which the teachers communicate with the parents and 71.00% of the participants stated they communicate via email, followed by in-person, all of the above, and others at 7.00%, 5.00% communicate by phone call and 3.00% use SMS or text messaging.

Percentage of Parents Speaking English

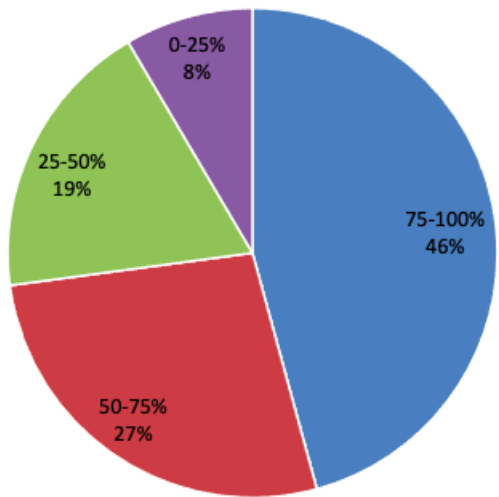


Figure 21. Parent Information Question 21 Response.

Communication with Parents per Month

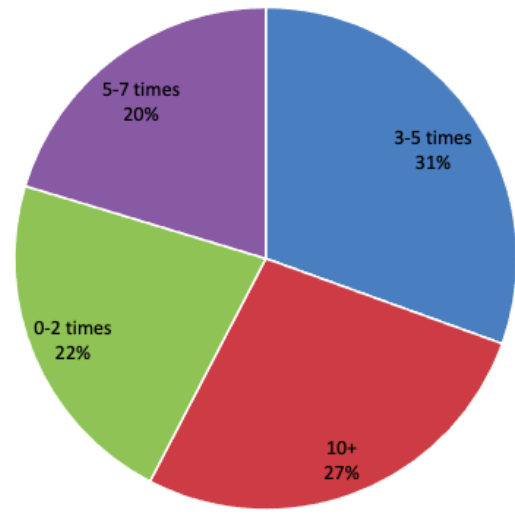


Figure 22. Parent Information Question 22 Response.

Ways of Communication with Parents

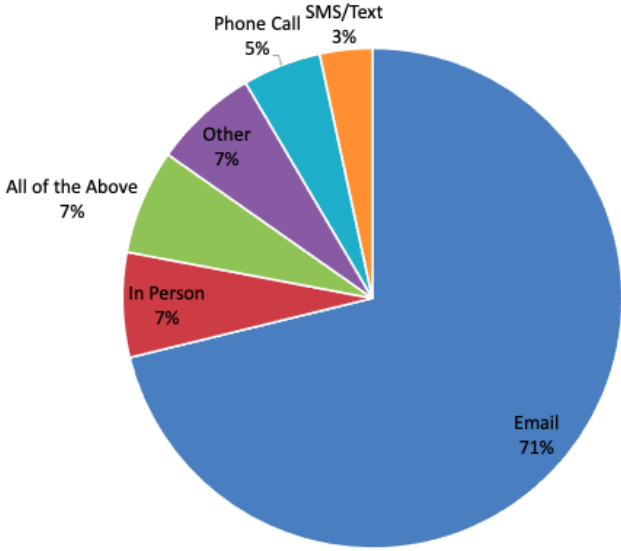


Figure 23. Parent Information Question 23 Response.

Student Information. The last section within the category of satisfaction in regard to relationships at the school looks at student-teacher relationships. Figure 24, below, gathered data on how often teachers meet with their students individually or in small groups each month. 59.00% of the respondents stated they meet 7-10 times per month, 22.00% stated they meet 5-7 times per month, 16.00% stated they meet 2-4 times per month and 3.00% said they meet 0-1 times per month. Additionally, Figure 25 gathered information on the style of communication between teachers and students within the school. An overwhelming majority of the teachers, at 86.00%, stated there is an open and communicative relationship between themselves and the student, 12.00% said that the student-teacher relationship is formal or professional and 2.00% stated it is a mixture of the two. This information is important to highlight, because in order to build a strong rapport with individual students, there needs to be open communication between the teacher and the student.

Individual or Small Group Meetings per Month

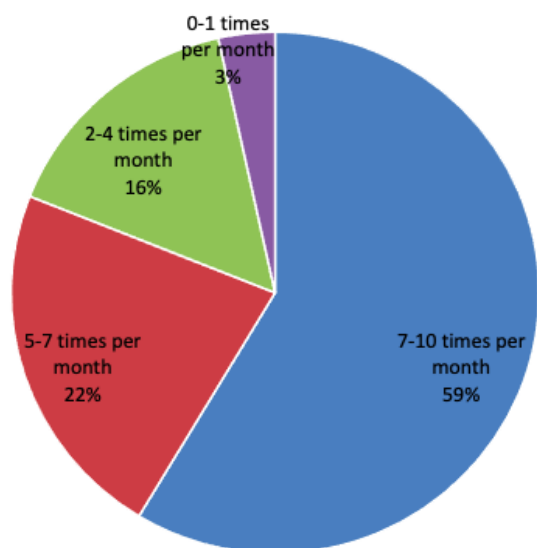


Figure 24. Student Information Question 24 response.

Style of Communication Between Teachers and Students

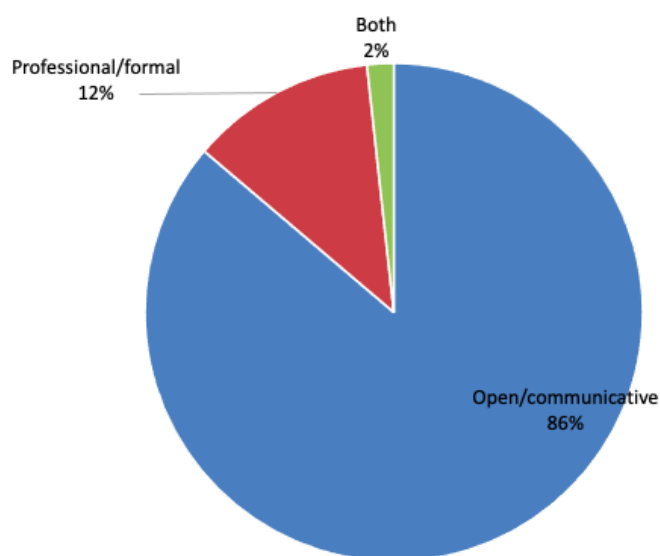


Figure 25. Student Information Question 25 Response.

After gathering all of the data regarding the relationships between the teachers and administration, teachers and students and teachers and parents, the participants were asked to rate on a scale from 0-10 their overall satisfaction with their international teaching experience. Even with the difficulties that these international teachers may have faced or are facing each day, 73.00% marked their satisfaction level as an 8 or above, shown in Figure 26, below. This is important to note, as the relationships at or within school do not outweigh the other additional benefits and positive aspects of teaching internationally, which we will take a closer look at later in the paper.



Figure 26. School Information Question 26 Response.

Services Offered. The next section focused on the services offered at the international schools the participants work or worked at. The two areas that the questions focused on were Special Education Services (SPED services) offered at the school, such as: child psychologists,

behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals or reading specialists and professional development opportunities offered. Figure 27 illustrates the percentage of special education services provided at the participant's school. A majority of the participants, 72.00%, stated their school has a special education program offered, 16.00% stated they do not have a SPED program and 12.00% said they do not have a SPED program, but there are services provided to students. Figure 28, also focused on special education services and asked specifically if the participant's schools offered child psychologists, behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals or reading specialists. 69.00% of the participants stated their schools offer these resources and 31.00% stated these services are not available.

School has Special Education Program

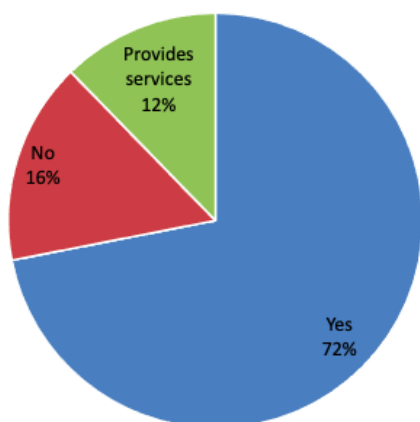


Figure 27. School Information
Information
Question Response 27.

Resources such as: child psychologists, behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals, reading specialists available

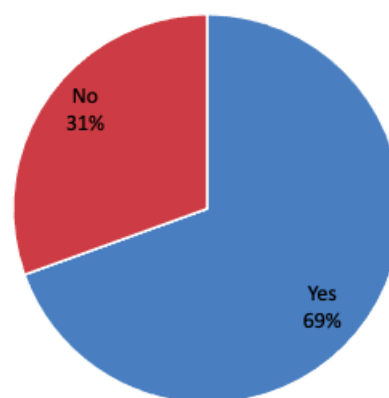


Figure 28. School
Question Response 28.

The second part of the services offered section within the survey, asked the participants about the professional development opportunities offered at their international schools. As shown below in

Figure 29, the 39.00% of participants stated they have professional development (PD) opportunities 2-4 times per year, 24.00% stated they have PD opportunities 4-6 times per year, 18.00% stated they have PD opportunities 10+ times per year, 5.00% stated they have PD opportunities 6-8 times per year and lastly, 2.00% stated they have PD opportunities 8-10 times per year. The next question, shown in Figure 30, asked about the frequency that the participants collaborated with their fellow teaching staff throughout the school year. The results of Figure 30 are notable, because the number of times the participants collaborated with their colleagues greatly varied from person to person. 30.00% of participants stated they meet 2-3 times a week, 19.00% of participants stated they meet 0-1 time a week, 19.00% stated they meet 2-3 per month, 15.00% stated they meet 4-5 times per week, 14.00% stated they meet 4-5 times per month and 3.00% stated they meet 0-1 per month.

Professional Development Opportunities

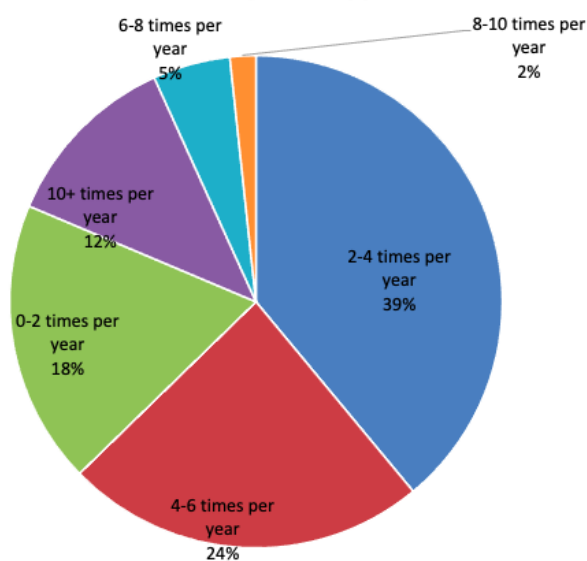


Figure 29. School Information Question Response 29.

Collaboration with Fellow Teaching Staff

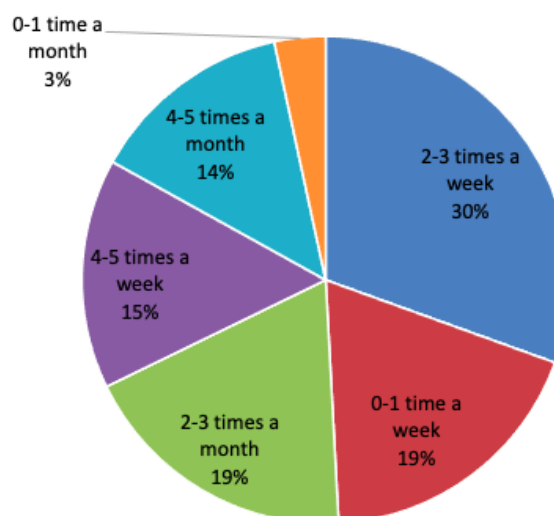


Figure 30. School Information Question Response 30.

Differences of International Schools from US Schools. The next section of the survey conducted with the participants focused on the top differences in approach to teaching at the international schools the participants worked or have worked at in comparison to schools within the United States. This part of the survey had all open-ended, short answer responses which gathered qualitative information. Figure 31 illustrates a lot of similarities among the open-ended responses from the participants. As shown below, the most common response from the participants, with 23.00% of participants stating, there is more flexibility to develop curriculum and lessons at their international school. 19.00% of the participants stated that their school is more inquiry-based/critical thinking and problem solving focused than schools in the US. Fifteen percent of the participants stated that their international school they have worked or are working are not focused on Standardized Tests, like US schools are. Eight percent stated there are fewer behavioral or social issues, 6.00% stated there is more time to collaborate with their colleagues and more support offered at their international schools vs. the US, 5.00% stated there is more trust between teachers and students and a larger budget provided for teachers. Three percent stated there is more time for planning and more parent involvement and lastly 2.00% stated there are more variable assessments at their international schools. Conversely, in comparison to US schools, 3.00% of the participants stated there are more rote learning and memorization tactics used at their international schools and 2.00% stated there is a lack of understanding of SPED programs at the schools.

The next question focused on the overall differences in school culture between international schools and schools in the US. As shown in Figure 32, below, from the short answer responses, 31.00% of the participants stated that there is a more collaborative culture and community feeling at international schools vs US schools, 24.00% stated there is more diversity

at international schools, 14.00% stated that international schools are more student-focused as well as having a better overall support system, 12.00% stated there is higher respect for teachers, 2.00% stated there is a higher socioeconomic status and higher feeling of local culture. Lastly, 1.00% of the participants stated there is more teacher responsibility at their international schools vs. schools in the US.

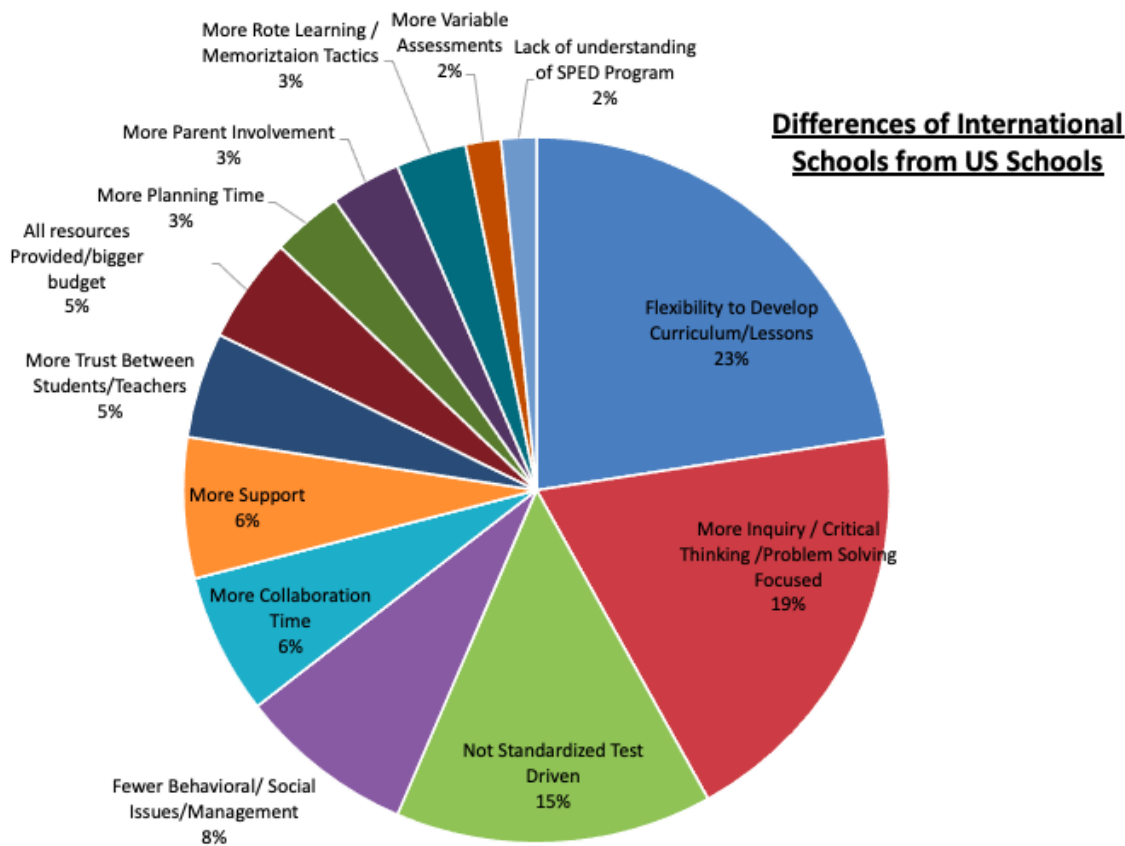


Figure 31. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 31.

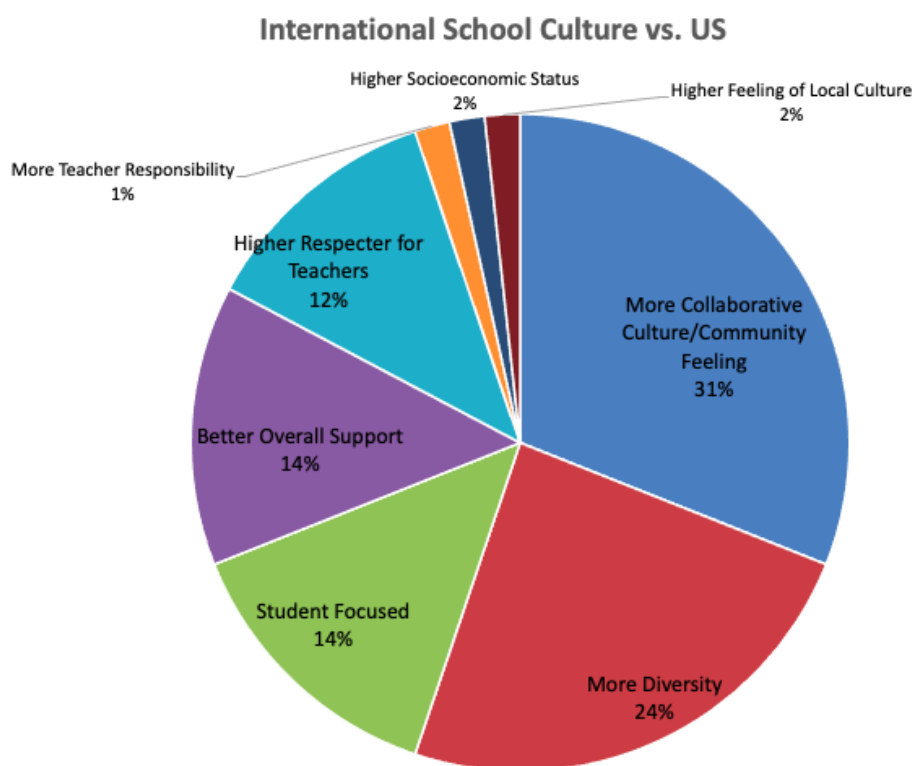


Figure 32. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 32.

Disciplinary Measures at International Schools vs. US Schools. This next section gathered information in regard to the differences in disciplinary measures at the participant's international schools and US schools. As shown below in Figure 33, 36.00% of respondents stated that there are fewer behavior issues internationally, 16.00% stated their international schools have a well-being coordinator and implement restorative practices, 13.00% stated that their international school is similar to schools in the US and that there are fewer disciplinary measures at their international schools. 10.00% of the participants stated that there is not a behavioral specialist at their international school and the principal is in charge of disciplinary measures, 6.00% stated that most teachers handle the discipline at their international schools, 3.00% stated that in comparison to international schools, US school usually have behavioral

specialists and lastly, 3.00% of the participants stated that there is a higher level of respect within US schools. It is important to note that each participant has had his/her own personal experience teaching both internationally and within the US which, therefore, determines his/her response to the open-ended survey questions.

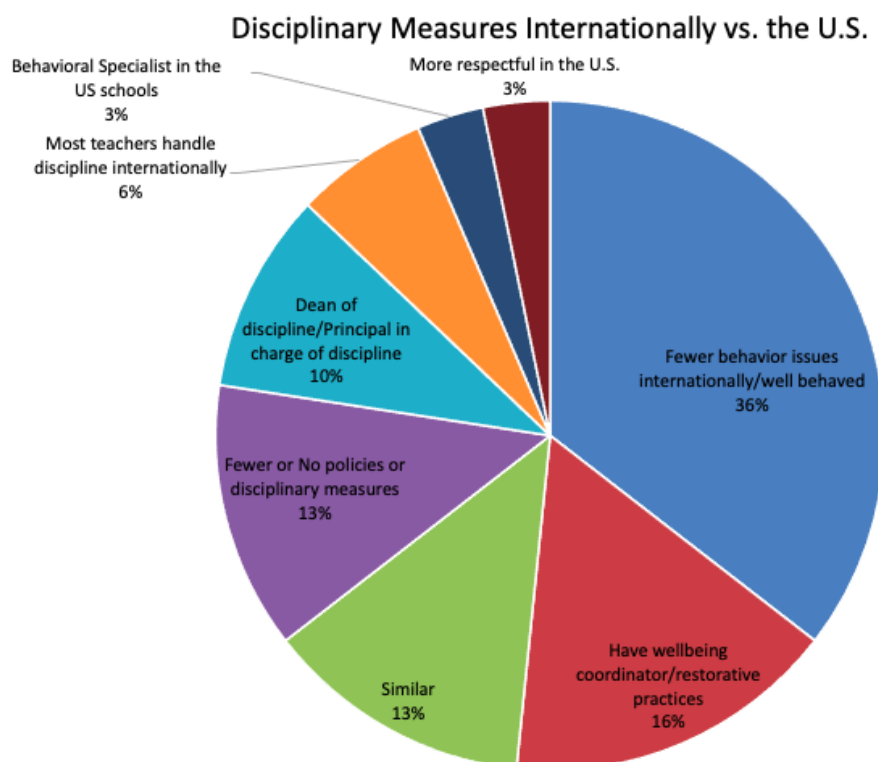


Figure 33. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 33.

Lessons Learned that Will Impact Teaching in the US. This next section which gathered qualitative data with open-ended responses focused on what the lessons US K-12 teachers learned from their experiences teaching internationally and how they believe these experiences would impact their teaching if ever returning to the United States to teach. As shown in Figure 34, below, a surprising number of 56.00% of participants stated that they don't even intend on returning to the US to teach again. Although this response did not answer what lessons

they learned that will impact teaching in the United States, there has been a significant pattern shown from the data that a majority of the participants have such a satisfaction rate from teaching internationally that they intend to not return to the United States. The next most common response, with 17.00% of the respondents stating, is that it is important to be open-minded or globally minded. Eight percent of participants stated they've learned to be more flexible, 6.00% stated they believe children around the world are all the same, meaning they all want the same things, 5.00% stated they are able to understand new ESL students within the United States better, they have more of a diverse outlook on education, and 3.00% stated they learned how to have a better work/life balance while teaching internationally.

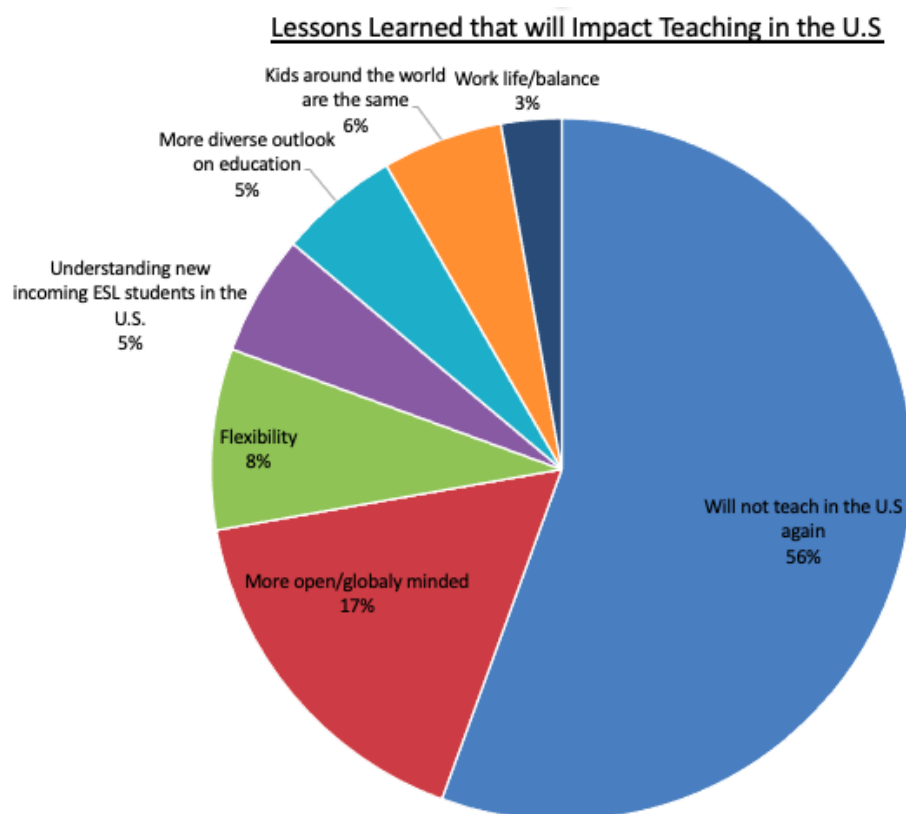


Figure 34. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 34.

Lessons to Share with New International Teachers. The next section that gathered qualitative data from open-ended data, asked about the lessons that the participants have learned and would share with new teachers who are thinking about an international teaching experience. A surprising pattern emerged, with 62.00% of the participants stating that it is important to embrace and accept the cultural differences and be open-minded when teaching internationally. 12.00% of the participants stated that it is important or helpful to learn the local language and learn about the culture. 10.00% of the respondents stated to not let fear be a factor when making the decision to have an international teaching experience, 7.00% stated it is important to be patient, 5.00% stated they would share with a new international teacher that it is important to do research or talk to other teachers before going somewhere, and 2.00% of the participants stated most of the learning will happen with the new international teacher is in the country in which they teach and to ensure the school supports the professional growth of the new international teacher and provides some sort of professional development (PD).

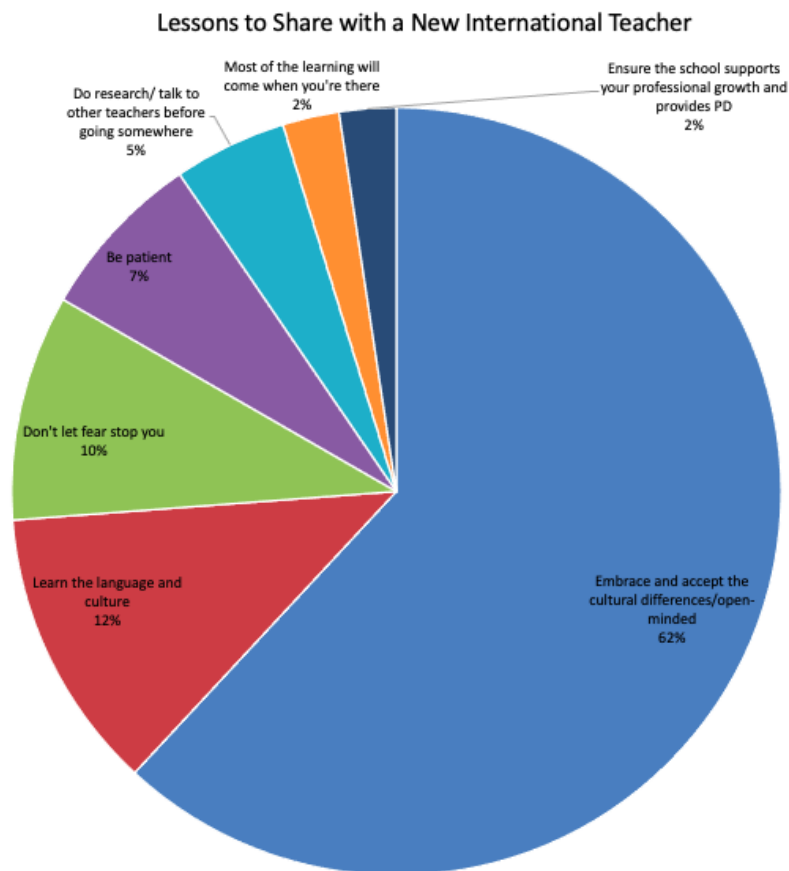


Figure 35. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 37.

Biggest Challenges if Returning to the US to Teach. The last section which gathered qualitative information asked the participants to share what they think the biggest challenges would be for a US teacher if they ever returned to the United States to teach. A common pattern arose again, and the largest percent of participants, at 25.00%, stated that in general they would not return to the US to teach ever again. 21.00% stated the lack of support, respect for teachers and resources would be the biggest challenge if they ever returned to the US to teach, 14.00% stated the increased workload and test based teaching would be a big challenge, 8.00% stated the decrease in quality of life would be a big challenge for them, 6.00% stated reverse culture shock would be a big challenge for them, and 4.00% stated that the difference in pay, the decrease in

holidays throughout the school year and the lower salary would be a big problem for them if ever returning to the United States to teach.

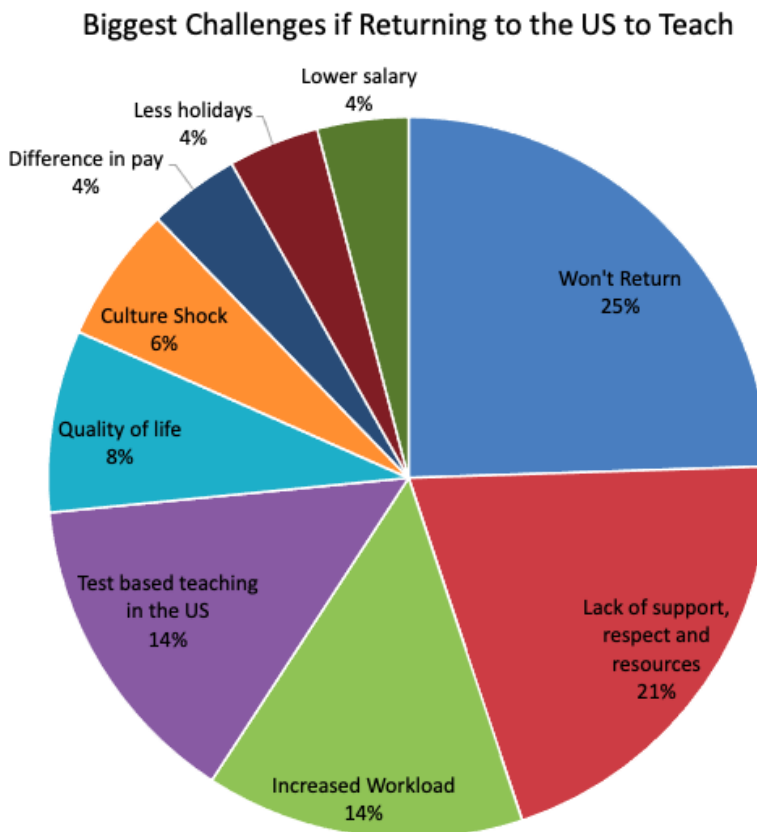


Figure 36. Comparing International Schools vs US Schools Question Response 38.

Summary

In Chapter Four, I presented the results of the data collection process. The data collected attempted to answer the question of what the many lessons US teachers have learned from an experience teaching internationally. This question took into consideration all of the many facets that make up a US teacher's overall outlook on international teaching and how it can be compared to their experience teaching in the United States. From the data above, we can see that a majority of the participants have already been living and working internationally for five or

more years, are mainly female and, over 75.00% being 25 years or older. A commonality amongst most of the participants that we can see, is that many of them do not speak a second language, nor do they know the language of the country in which they live. This is important to note, as not understanding the local language of the country in which the participants are living seems to have no negative impact on the participants overall satisfaction of their international experience, however they do say it is important to understand in order to understand the culture.

Another common theme taken from the data was that nearly all participants stated they felt supported by their school and administration, as well as stating that almost all of their administration speaks English. This is important to highlight, as this shows that learning the local language is not connected to a successful international experience as most of the school staff is able to effectively communicate with the participants. Another correlation which attributed to the overall satisfaction of the participants' experiences, was the support services and programs offered within their schools. Eighty-four percent of the participants stated that there was some kind of support offered within their schools such as psychological support, behavioral support, learning support, etc. Additionally, the data showed that participants received, at minimum, two to four professional development opportunities throughout the school year, with some participants having 10 or more a year. Having the opportunity to grow and develop further professionally, can be correlated with higher job satisfaction and linked with the participants overall satisfaction of their international teaching experience.

The data presented above from the open-ended, qualitative questions, show a few commonalities and correlations between the participants' satisfaction level and teaching internationally. What we see overall from the qualitative data is that a majority of participants stated that it is important to keep an open-mind when teaching overseas, as well as stating that

having an open-mind will be helpful for when or if they return back to the United States to teach again. Another commonality shown from the data, was that it is important to be flexible, patient and don't let fear stop you from teaching internationally. Lastly, data was compiled from the question which focused on what the biggest challenges would be if returning to teach in the United States. It showed that if the teachers do return, that the increased workload, lack of respect, support and resources, as well as the heavy focus on test-based teaching and decreased quality of life would be the biggest challenges.

The data collected presented an overall very high satisfaction rate of teaching internationally from the participants. Therefore, I decided to dig deeper into the high satisfaction level responses to see if there were any specific correlations between a participant's satisfaction level and the benefits or services offered to them at their schools. I looked at the 20 participants who responded with a satisfaction rating of 10 out of 10, and the data showed that out of these 20 participants, 100.00% of them stated they feel supported by their administration, 85.00% stated they have a special education or support program for students with disabilities at their school, 90.00% stated that their schools provide resources such as psychologists, behavioral specialist, paraprofessionals or reading specialists, and that 85.00% receive professional development at least two to four times per year. Reversely, I looked at the 19 responses on the lower end of the satisfaction scale, where participants marked a satisfaction level ranging from a 5 to an 8 out of 10. Although an 8 is still a high level of satisfaction overall, I wanted to compare the differences from the participants who marked their satisfaction at a level 10. From these 19 responses, 89.00% stated they feel supported by their administration, 63.00% stated they have a special education or support program for students with disabilities at their school, 63.00% stated that their schools provide resources such as psychologists, behavioral specialist, paraprofessionals or

reading specialists and 73.00% stated they receive professional development at least two to four times per year.

Overall, you can see a slight difference between the respondents who marked a satisfaction level of 10 versus those who marked between a level 5 to an 8. The participants who marked a satisfaction level of 10 had a higher overall percentage of resources and support services offered to them at their schools as well as professional development opportunities. However, the data was not consistent enough overall, and the differences between participants with a satisfaction level of 10 versus those below a level 10 were too narrow, therefore the data is inconclusive to determine an overall conclusion.

In Chapter Five, the final chapter, I present major findings and return to my literature review to present how key findings correlate with the results of my quantitative and qualitative data. I will then discuss how the findings are similar or different with the responses of the study participants. Limitations and areas for further research are presented as well. This final chapter will also reflect on the paper as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The previous chapter looked at the results of the survey responses that were conducted for this study in an attempt to answer the question of this study:

- What are the lessons US trained K-12 teachers learned from an international teaching experience?

This chapter will present the major findings of this study, the limitations, implications, connections to previous research, and further suggestions for research that could be done to get a larger sample size and data from participants who were located or are currently located within the same country.

Major Findings

Being Open and Globally Minded is Essential. Several researchers have demonstrated that it is important to be globally minded and have firsthand cultural experiences before teaching internationally. Researchers have also shown that teachers who have had experiences teaching internationally, have gained confidence in themselves, increased flexibility and adaptability as well as a higher ability to understand their students' needs. As previously stated in Chapter Two, the Literature Review, as cited in Garii (2009) it “suggests that participation in teaching abroad opportunities is associated with greater cultural awareness and sensitivity, increased “global mindedness,” and an expanded worldview” (p. 85). A common theme taken from the qualitative data, asked the participants what lessons they have learned from teaching internationally and

would give to upcoming international teachers. More than half of the participants stated that being open-minded, embracing and accepting cultural differences is important.

Greater Flexibility and Support at International Schools. A common theme that arose from the data was that there is a need to be more flexible when teaching internationally and that teachers also have more flexibility to develop curriculum and lessons at their international schools. This was consistent with findings in Garii's (2009) study. Participants from the survey stated that the international schools they are working at or have worked at are not focused on standardized testing like US schools are and that their schools are more inquiry-based than US schools, which therefore allows for more creativity and student-focused learning. Connecting back to the Literature Review, teachers who spent time abroad realized how important the trait of flexibility was, specifically pertaining to understanding that subtle differences of cultures and the different priorities these cultures have impacted the teaching practice. This flexibility allowed the teachers opportunities to reflect and identify their own classroom strengths and teaching interests, which ultimately led them to grow as professionals (Garii, 2009). Another common theme that arose from the data was that there are more opportunities which support the development of a teacher at international schools, such as paid for or provided professional development training courses. Survey participants stated that there is more time to collaborate with their colleagues and more support offered at their international schools' vs US schools.

Higher Sense of Community at International Schools. Another major theme that was identified from the survey data, was that there is a higher sense of community and collaborative culture at international schools. Participants stated that there is higher respect for teachers, which also contributes to having strong relationships between students and teachers, therefore building a greater sense of belonging and community. Participant responses mirrored those found by Garii

(2009), where teachers build a sense of belonging to a teaching community. For example, “the host country itself becomes part of the “teaching community,” because it informs and impacts teachers’ abilities to understand their students, their new communities, and their decision-making” (Garii, 2009, p. 11).

High Satisfaction Rate of Teaching Internationally. A common theme taken away from the qualitative research, was that most teachers are so satisfied with their international teaching experience, that they do not ever intend on returning to the United States to teach. Data showed that due to the sense of community within international schools, the provided support, resources, better work/life balance, and decreased workload, most participants had a satisfaction level of a 7 or above out of 10. Additionally, when looking at the differences between the participant’s international teaching experiences and schools to those in the United States, there was a commonality that there are less behavioral issues at international schools, more flexibility and autonomy to develop curriculum, and the classes are more focused on students and having an inquiry-based learning approach, instead of a test-based focus. The last major theme taken from the data which supported a high satisfaction rate of international teaching, was that the participant’s stated there is respect overall for teachers, then there is in the United States as well as more trust between students and teachers.

Limitations

The limitations when conducting this research were that although there was a larger than expected sample size obtained, there were uneven responses representative of different countries or parts of the world. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of the survey participants said they would never return to the states to teach. This made me wonder if the participants were more inclined to take the survey as they had strong viewpoints on never returning to the United

States to teach and they felt the need to share their reasons with potential new international teachers and how much better it is to teach internationally than ever return back to the US to teach again. This begs the question, do their replies represent the broader population of international teachers?

Lessons Learned and Advice for New Teachers

As my research question focused on what the lessons were that teachers learned from an experience teaching internationally, I thought it would be only fitting to provide a list of suggestions these specific international teachers have learned over their years of teaching internationally and what they found to be most important for anyone considering an international teaching experience. The answers which reoccurred most often are shown below:

- Don't let fear stop you from teaching internationally
- Be patient and flexible
- Do your research, talk to other teachers before going somewhere
- Most of the learning will come when you're in the country
- Make an effort to learn the language and the culture
- Embrace and accept the cultural differences as well as be open-minded
- Most often, kids around the world are the same

Advice for United States Schools

Another area which I think is important to highlight, are the areas that U.S. schools can improve upon to entice more U.S. teachers to return to the United States to teach after moving abroad. There was such an overwhelming response from the participants stating they wouldn't ever return back to the United States to teach. Therefore, I have compiled a list of suggestions

that U.S. schools as well as The U.S. Education Department can take into consideration for areas of improvement and increased satisfaction for their teaching staff. They are shown below:

- Improved work/life balance (higher salary, more holidays, decreased workload)
- More flexibility to develop curriculum and lesson plans
- Have a more inquiry-based approach to teaching
- Offer more collaboration and planning time
- Provide more support (i.e. services for students and staff, resources, bigger budget)
- Offer more variable assessments and not be so focused on standardized testing

Implications

The findings of this study revealed that most of the international teachers did not have much exposure to a diverse community growing up or had a first-hand immersive or culturally diverse experience, such as studying abroad. This is important to note, because this is where the need for more first-hand cultural experiences within university teaching programs could compensate for that lack of exposure. These individuals could then have a chance of getting some cultural experience during their degree program, which could ultimately provide support and further preparedness for individuals looking for an international teaching experience.

Based on the findings of my data, some concrete steps that can be taken prior to a teacher's international experience would be to provide more first-hand opportunities to work within a diverse community and with those from various backgrounds and increase the international outlook within coursework, faculty and on the university campus. To ensure U.S. teachers have a successful transition into international teaching, universities within the US could:

- Require all teaching degree program students to complete one or more courses which focus on international education systems, cultural diversity, inclusive practices, etc.
- Require all students to complete a first-hand practicum experience within a community that is different from their own community.
- Require all teaching degree program professors to be more globally minded and provide more globally relevant and culturally relevant curriculum.

Additionally, the findings of the study also reveal that international teachers have a very high overall satisfaction level and prefer international teaching to teaching within the United States. There needs to be greater depth in qualitative responses from participants to further understand the reasons why a large percentage never intend to return to the United States to teach. Additionally, there needs to be a more considerable number of responses from individuals who have taught in the same country, to identify if it is the specific school in which they are teaching or the lifestyle of the country in general that makes them want to never return.

Based on the findings of my data some positive things that attract teachers to teaching internationally and things that potential international teachers have to look forward to, are:

- More paid professional development opportunities for teachers
- Increased amount of collaboration time among teachers
- More availability of resources for teachers or provide an allotted amount of money for spending on school supplies so that teachers don't have to use their own money.
- Allowing teachers more flexibility to develop curriculum and lessons

Suggestions for future research

First, further research should be conducted within all United States university teacher education programs on the best ways to prepare preservice teachers for an international teaching experience, or simply how to prepare teachers for experiences with groups of individuals from different backgrounds. For example, preparing the preservice teachers to know how varied cultural expectations of teachers and learners can be when teaching internationally. This research could be used to obtain best practices to increase readiness for an international teaching experience, identify optimal courses to provide to students, hire professors who are globally minded or have direct international experience, and admit a proportionate number of students from a wide variety of ethnicities, backgrounds and cultures. This could ultimately provide a more well-rounded, global experience for teaching degree students before they even leave the United States to teach internationally. As having direct experience to different cultures through study abroad experiences and personal travel experiences shows to be beneficial for increasing global-mindedness and cultural awareness, this also brings forth the concern of exclusion and issue of equity of individuals within teaching programs who do not have the means to participate in a study abroad program or personal travel experience. Therefore, a specific suggestion for further research, would be to identify what kinds of fully funded teaching abroad programs are offered within university teaching programs. For example, more U.S. universities could offer the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program which offers opportunities for educators to learn, observe, and collaborate in schools around the world. The program is available for all K-12 educators and has partnerships with more than 160 countries.

It would also be important to have further research from a large group of international teachers, teaching in the same country. The data I collected consisted of responses from a large

group of teachers, and an even larger group of countries around the world. Having multiple participants who have taught in the same country, could provide more data to compare the participants' responses on a micro-level and identify any patterns from participants who have lived and taught in the same country. My suggestion for further research would be to delve more deeply into specific countries or continents to see if the data amongst a greater population of teachers within the same area create a pattern or common theme.

Another suggestion for further research would be to compare more similar types of schools both within the United States and internationally. The data collected from the survey focused on all types of schools abroad, such as private schools, IB schools, American schools, British schools, etc. When looking at international schools, they tend to have high tuition fees, and therefore are able to be more heavily resourced and provide quality facilities, support services and other opportunities for their teaching staff. If this type of school was being compared to a low-income, publicly funded school in the United States, an adequate comparison would not have been made. Therefore, there is an opportunity to gather more research from participants who have worked at elite schools, which have sufficient resources within the United States, and compare them with the international schools which have similar overall school environment and services offered.

Final Reflection

My work as an international educator has not only allowed me to experience the firsthand challenges of teaching internationally, but to identify with the increased satisfaction that comes with a life of international teaching. Having these experiences, in addition to my passion for learning about other cultures, led me to pursue this study and design the research question. Overall, I wanted to discover what different international teachers have learned from their

experiences teaching abroad and if their experiences were mainly the same or if there were large differences from continent to continent. I also wanted to know if the experiences of teaching internationally would prove beneficial for them if ever returning to the United States to teach and if they could use any skills or lessons learned and apply them within a United States classroom.

After conducting my research, analyzing the data, and identifying patterns or themes from my research findings, I have taken away from the research that while teacher preparation programs could provide preservice teachers additional preparation in cultural awareness, assimilation and adaptation into a new culture, any lack of such training does not seem to affect the overall satisfaction level of an individual's experience teaching internationally. Additionally, I have taken away from the research that the country where one teaches does not affect the satisfaction level of an international teacher, as the research has shown that most international schools provide very similar benefits, resources, sense of community, and belonging. Furthermore, the data suggests that once individuals leave for an international teaching experience, more than likely they are going to be so satisfied with it and are unlikely to return to live and teach back in the United States.

Conclusion

My research details the lessons and experiences that US trained teachers have when teaching internationally and all of the contributing factors which lead to their level of satisfaction and decision to continue teaching internationally or how the experiences abroad can assist them if they ever return to the United States to teach. The teachers face personal and professional challenges in the areas of cultural understanding, language barriers, expectations of teacher and student roles in different cultures, and at times too much flexibility and autonomy. In addition to these lessons the teachers have learned while teaching abroad, the great sense of belonging,

community within the school among students and colleagues, work/life balance, increased quality of life, difference in pay, increased holiday time, overall higher level of respect, and resources available have attributed to an overwhelming number of respondents stating that, “once you have taught abroad, you’ll stay teaching abroad.”

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