

## **To What Extent Do Global Competency Trainings Predict Teaching Methods in a Globalized Classroom Environment?**

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### **Abstract**

*This article addresses the cultural and educational needs of global learners by shedding light on existing literature focused on issues related to globalization and the internationalization of higher education in the United States. International student mobility promotes cultural and economic changes, which are recognized within this article due to intercultural differences and interpersonal interactions within these social spheres. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data concerning the global competencies of faculty (i.e., knowledge of global cultures, entities, organizations, etc.). Forty eight of the 102 faculty members (47%) at a four-year private institution who responded to the survey indicated that they have attended one or more global competency training. Results showed individuals who completed global competency training were consistently more likely to understand world organizations, their own culture, world history, current events, and were more likely to implement globalized classroom strategies than those with limited training. A correlation between global competency training and instructional strategies was conducted at a p level of 0.01. Based on the findings within this study, recommendations for future research concerning the potential relationship between global competency and methods of instruction are discussed. Applicable strategies for*

*promoting inclusion of students of different nationalities, and teaching strategies that promote an inclusive classroom environment are discussed.*

**Keywords:** diversity in education, diversified instruction, global competency, higher education, international classroom, instructional strategies, international student mobility

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The United States recorded a decrease in international student enrollment during the 2020/21 academic year. According to the Institute of International Education, “914,095 international students pursued studies at U.S. colleges and universities, which is a decrease of 15% from the previous academic year” (IIE, 2022). These students represented 4.6% of all students in U.S. higher education and contributed \$38.7 billion to the U.S. economy which is a decrease of 4.4% (a loss of \$1.8 billion) from the prior academic year, but accounted for the creation of more than 455,000 jobs (NAFSA, 2018). However, while academic institutions in the U.S. continue to welcome hundreds of thousands of international students, colleges and universities are not always prepared to address the cultural, educational, and psychological needs of this student population (Buzzelli, 2016; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). Additionally, international students face a myriad of academic and cultural challenges (Tawagi & Mak, 2015). At the same time, host-national students, faculty, and staff may not have the necessary training and exposure to interact with students of other nationalities. An examination of the educational and social experiences of international students focuses primarily on students' perspectives rather than the experiences of faculty and staff in the context of internationalization of higher education (Bierwiazek, Waldzus, & Zee, 2017; Lee, 2016).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the potential link between the instructors' global knowledge, global competencies, and attitudes and the variation in their instructional strategies. Specifically, the researchers sought to examine whether faculty's participation in global competency training, knowledge of global systems and organizations promotes creativity and diversification of instruction in internationalized classrooms. Secondly, the researchers also sought to determine whether there is a relationship between an instructor's global competency skills and the nature of instructional strategies implemented within their classroom.

Findings from this study suggest that faculty with previous exposure to global competency training are more likely to engage effectively in internationalized classrooms. Survey results also suggest that exposure to various cultural and international trends was a statistically significant predictor to the inclusion of a variety of teaching strategies that would promote a positive learning experience for global learners. Although this research was partially based on the assumption that global competency skills correlate to distinctive instructional strategies, future research should be conducted to account for this assumption by incorporating observational data of participants along with survey data. Researchers are not implying this is a cause and effect relationship but wished to examine whether the amount of global competency training correlates with the level of instructional strategies in which an educator implements into their globalized classroom. This study is significant in both scholarly and practical domains, for it captures the implications of globalization on higher education practices and the role of academic institutions and practitioners in meeting the needs of an evolving student demographic. Furthermore, global competency skills promote acceptance of diverse perspectives and experiences within the ecology of higher education and beyond.

## **Literature Review**

Recent scholars have noted the impacts of globalization on higher education (Bergh et al. 2016; Kacowicz & Mitrani, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education (2018) defines their global strategy in education as "advancing educational achievement and increasing economic viability both domestically and internationally are worthy pursuits" (para. 6). On a global scale, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2012) emphasizes the importance of global citizenship education in its strategic vision. Global citizenship education (GCE) takes a multifaceted methodology for "peace education, education for sustainable development and education for international understanding" (UNESCO, 2012, p. 46). While there is little agreement on the exact definition of globalization and the theoretical structures of its rise and development, there are varied perspectives concerning the impacts it has on interconnected world economies (Bergh et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017). Bergh et al. (2016), has concluded that globalization has the potential of reducing poverty in countries with low institutional quality. As to higher

education, globalization has accounted for the increase in international student mobility from the East and near East to the Western hemisphere. To this end, global competency becomes an evident necessity for academic and career readiness in a complex and interconnected global economy. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2018), aims at measuring the extent to which students from various parts of the world apply their knowledge and skills in solving problems in science, reading, science literacy, and financial literacy. PISA's mission aligns closely with a consistent global education. International organizations for assessment of learning such as PISA recognize this need and require a global competency skill as a section of their assessment for learning. According to PISA (2018), global competence is defined as “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate perspectives and world views of others, engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (para 3). PISA's focus reflects its intentional strategy in recognizing and promoting a globalized competency in its mission.

PISA's (2018) definition of global competency becomes evident in international partnerships between academic institutions and private entities which require future students, educators, and industry leaders to be globally competent. One important framework of higher education, which highlights the importance of cultural competency and intergroup contact, is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which aims at ensuring educational equity and quality for all children and young adults around the world (UNESCO, 2015). The UNESCO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and other non-government organizations, constitute the driving force behind the promotion and development of educational programs and policies (Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). The GPE also seeks to improve gender equality and the eradication of extreme poverty and gender discrimination, particularly in remote and fragile areas of the world (UNESCO, 2015). These commendable goals in education are credited to the collaboration among these global entities and are due to the emergence of private, religious, and non-formal forms of education (Akaranga & Simiyu, 2016). These GPE entities provide regional and circumstantial educational needs to poor and minority

groups (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2017). Another aspect of the impacts of globalization on higher education is exhibited in the practice of university-industry partnerships which aim at promoting social and economic development (Fernández-Esquinas et al., 2016; Govender & Taylor, 2015). For example, Zha et al. (2016) argue that while a partnership has existed for decades, the rise of the knowledge-based economy has made accessible the form of cooperative and entrepreneurship education accessible in China”.

### ***International Branch Campuses and the Relevance of Global Competency***

International branch campuses connect faculty, staff, and students from varying cultural backgrounds and national origins resulting in inter-group interactions (Healey, 2015; Tierney & Lanford, 2015). For this type of cross-cultural interaction, Healey (2015) and Robinson (2008) have hypothesized that the theory of space, place, and globalization offers a logical explanation for the changing nature of relationships between territory, institutions, and social structures. This form of social contact, which is driven by globalization, influences educational practices and policies through the establishment of education cities and command centers for production and innovation (Healey, 2015; Tierney & Lanford, 2015). International branch campuses can contribute to the transformation of economic systems from being dependent on natural resources to a knowledge-based economy (El-Awaisi et al., 2017; Tierney & Lanford, 2015). However, there is much discussion surrounding the cultural and operational processes of the branch campuses vis-à-vis those of the home-nation schools. A significant finding is that education cities, such as those in the state of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are echoing the concept of place, space, and globalization, and that research and innovation may co-exist independently of political and geographical barriers (Healey, 2015; Tierney & Lanford, 2015). Nonetheless, some of the international branch campuses end up closing due to the absence of logistical and pedagogical research on these forms of international joint ventures (Healey, 2015). For example, colleges and universities could embrace cross-cultural training for faculty on how to work in cross-cultural environments (Healey, 2015). The success of such institutional partnerships is strongly dependent on the stakeholders' capacities to identify enrollment trends in the host nation, and the ability of the

expatriate staff to work across cultural and instructional differences (Healey, 2015).

### ***Institutional Challenges and Initiatives***

Colleges and universities are challenged with providing positive experiences to students of different nationalities (Lee, 2016). However, some institutions have taken creative actions in promoting cross-cultural dialogue through events inside and outside of the classroom. Tawagi and Mak (2015) used Pettigrew's Contact Theory (2006) to suggest that negative attitudes and conflicts between minority and majority groups can be reduced with increased meaningful interactions between students. They also found that quality intercultural contact fosters positive interactions between groups. Echoing their study, Buzelli (2016) used a soccer tournament to examine the concept of cross-cultural involvement as a strategy for facilitating acculturation and friendship formation. Results from this study revealed a positive correlation between the participants' levels of seeking interaction with people from different nationalities and their level of satisfaction in the soccer event with nearly 68% of the respondents being very satisfied with the pairing initiative.

Ultimately, faculty members need to identify similar initiatives to promote cross-cultural interactions inside the classroom as findings from these studies show the significant effects cultural inclusiveness can have on student perceptions and experiences (Tawagi & Mak, 2015). The issues of cross-cultural challenges within institutions of higher education are not unique to the United States. International students who attended colleges and universities in Germany were reported to have been mostly concerned with social exclusions due to language inefficiency and intercultural differences (Huhn et al., 2016). The findings and recommendations of these studies suggest the cultural integration of international students depends significantly on the supporting mechanisms which are put in place by institutions and the global competency skills of their faculty and staff.

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to examine instructors' global knowledge, competencies, and attitudes to determine if they relate to their instructional strategies. Firstly, the researchers wanted to understand whether college instructors teaching in internationalized classrooms, and those who have a broader knowledge of global

systems, organizations, and cultures have a higher level of participation in global competency trainings. Secondly, the researchers sought to determine whether there is a relationship between an instructor's global competency skills and the nature of instructional strategies implemented within their classroom. To answer the research questions of this study, an online survey was sent to all full- and part-time faculty members at a private university in the United States. Participants in this survey included current faculty members, as well as adjunct faculty members who had taught at a four-year private University within the past two academic years. The survey was initially distributed by email and used Qualtrics survey software.

### **Participants**

Of the total 507 participants who were contacted, 102 responses were recorded; thus, providing a response rate of 20.11%. Response data was then analyzed in Qualtrics to produce the findings discussed in this report. Of the 102 responses, 96 answered the question concerning faculty status within the survey. Of these 96, 18 were adjunct male, 35 were adjunct female, 22 were full-time male, and 16 were full-time female. There were 94 total responses to the survey questions; 64 respondents were from the Midwest, 20 from the South, six from the Northeast, and four from outside of the United States prior to teaching in Northeast Ohio. There were 49 respondents from the discipline of Arts & Sciences, 17 from Criminal Justice and Social Sciences, and 31 from Business.

### **Data Sources**

Data was gathered using a Likert scale survey questionnaire, see Appendix A. This survey was based upon the 2018 PISA assessment which was adapted by 79 countries and is managed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with an established validity and reliability. The PISA assessment was chosen as it is a comprehensive tool which assesses global competency which builds on specific cognitive and social emotional intelligence including the values, knowledge, attitudes, and skills across a variety of cultures. The validity and reliability of the 2018 PISA Global Competency Test contains two components: a cognitive test and a set of questionnaire items both of which have been validated through multiple field trials across many countries (OECD, 2018). The PISA

questionnaire assesses student's knowledge about their background, attitudes towards learning strategies, and experiences, while the cognitive test assesses students on their academic skills in science, reading, math literacy and problem solving. For this study, the cognitive tests assessed participants (college instructors) on their knowledge of global competencies based upon prior experiences and trainings that they had attended. The questionnaire items focused more on actions and instructional strategies implemented within the classroom that reflect global knowledge in the context of teaching and learning. The questionnaire for this study included 36 questions on global competency skills and knowledge and one question concerning instructional strategies. The questionnaire consisted of four tiers: demographics and background, global competency training and experience, global competency beliefs, and global competency practices within the classroom. Overall, the survey questions assessed faculty within several domains: their global cognitive knowledge, global experiential knowledge, cultural awareness, and global motivation. Within this survey, global competency training is defined as any formal workshop, conference, or continuing education unit that is related to global cultural awareness in and outside of the classroom setting.

### **Data Analysis**

Survey results were collected and analyzed using Qualtrics and SPSS. The results were analyzed based on the purpose of the study, which included: examining instructors' global knowledge and attitudes to determine whether they relate to their instructional strategies and to further understand whether college instructors in an internationalized classroom have a broader knowledge of global systems, organizations, and cultures depending on prior level of training and exposure. Also, the researchers sought to determine whether a relationship exists between an instructor's global competency skills and the nature of instructional strategies implemented within their classroom.

The first research question focused on the attitudes and overall global knowledge of faculty. To address this question, 15 survey responses related to culture were used to assess the attitudes of teaching faculty toward global initiatives, international organizations, and other cultural belief systems. The researchers used Qualtrics to generate frequency tables for each Likert scale item within the survey.



These frequencies were used to compare global competencies based on the total number of trainings and date when the training was completed. This analysis of frequencies provided evidence regarding the relationship between global training attendance and faculty member attitudes toward teaching students of different nationalities.

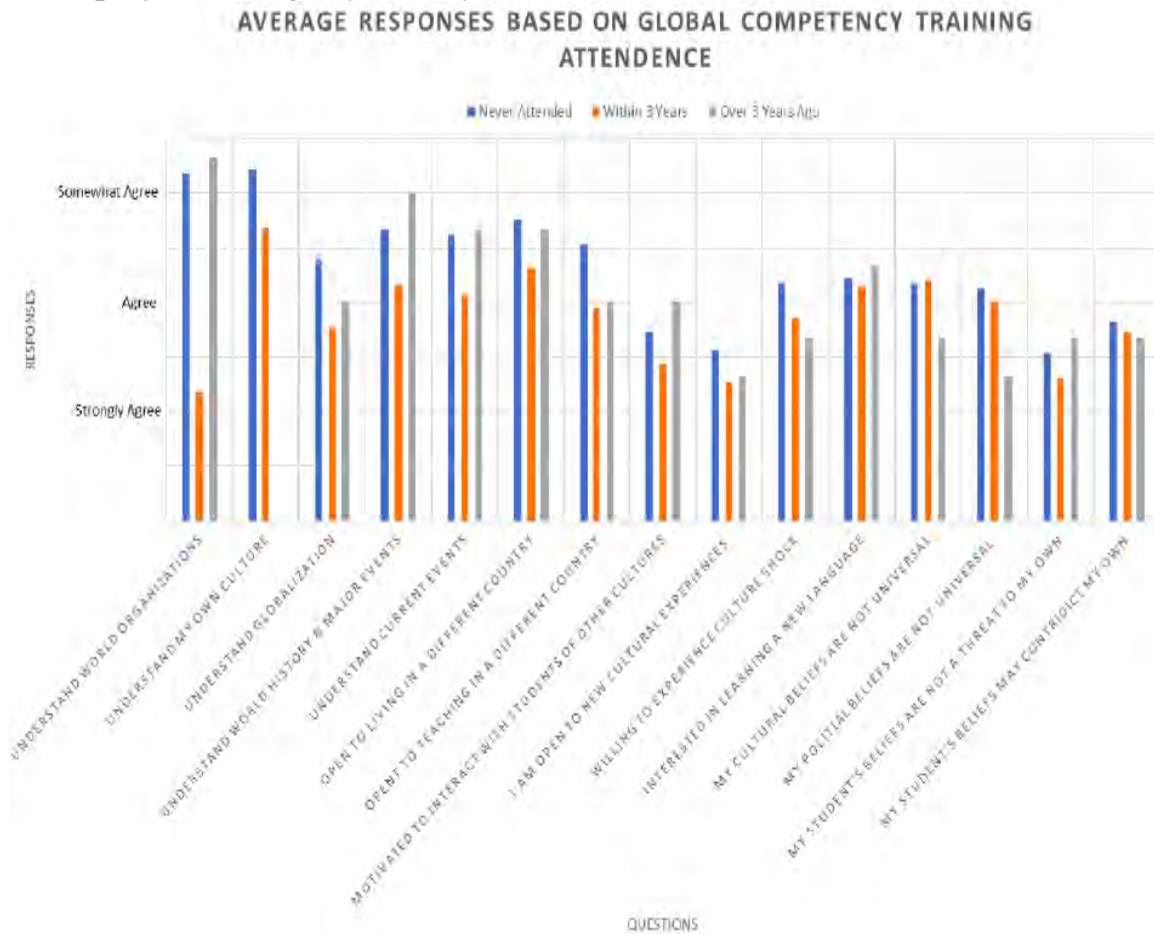
To answer the second research question, the researchers compared the faculty's responses to questions 10-16 with question 37 using a correlation test to determine whether there was a relationship between a faculty member's global competency skills gained through training and the instructional strategies they implemented in the classroom. Given that question 37 allowed faculty to select more than one item as well as an open-ended response, the score for this category ranged from 0-10. This score reflected the number of teaching strategies the individual selected or typed into the blank boxes. For example, the selected answer of "translating work in class" was assigned 1 point as one strategy was selected and "using multiple modes of representation" & "scaffolding work" was assigned 2 points. A significance level of  $p < 0.01$  was used for this correlation. As such, participation in global competency training constitutes the independent/predictor variable, while the number of instructional strategies used in the classroom represents the dependent/criterion variable in this study.

## **Findings**

Before answering the two research questions, it is worth noting that over half (54%) of all respondents have 10 or more years of teaching experience. Approximately 21% of responding faculty can also speak another language (60% of these were adjuncts and half of which were females). The majority (71%) of respondents were from the Midwest, with no faculty surveyed coming from the Western United States prior to teaching in the Northeast

The following two themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Faculty who attended Global Competency Training were more likely to understand their own culture and be receptive and respectful of others and 2) Faculty who did not participate in global competency trainings were less likely to implement engaging classroom strategies. Figure 1 displays faculty participation in global competency training based on when workshops occurred, faculty status, and gender.

**Figure 1.** Attendance at Global Competency Training. This figure displays trainings by faculty.



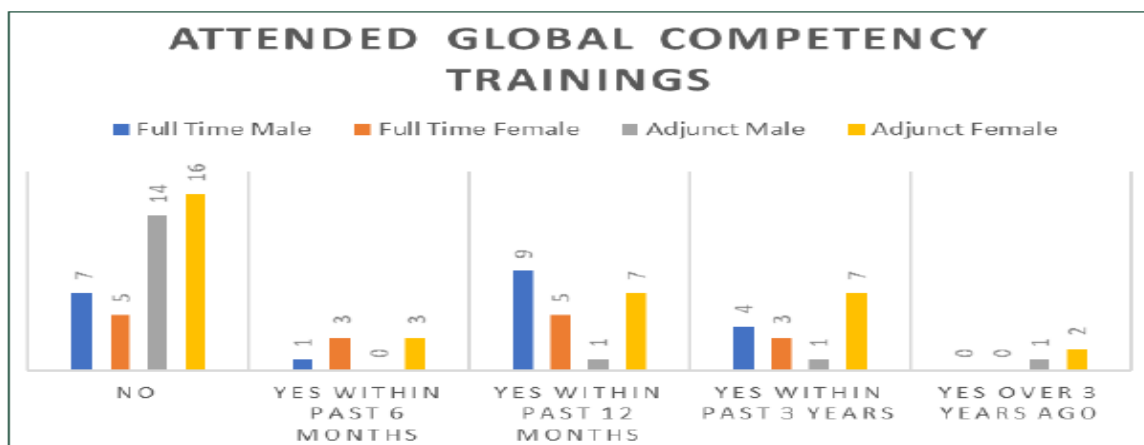
Based on these results, it is evident that full-time faculty were more likely to have attended training for global competencies within the past year. This reflects the university’s commitment to celebrating cultural differences inside and outside the classroom. It might not be the case for adjunct faculty who teach remotely and may be associated with other institutions. Thus, not familiar with the mission and guiding principles of the institution where this study has taken place. These findings correspond to prior research concerning the importance of training and cultural competency for faculty teaching at international branch campuses (Healey, 2015).

Therefore, to increase the awareness of adjunct faculty and their level of inclusion, training and initiatives should be universal and include full, part-time, seated, and remote faculty.

Data gathered in Figure 2 suggests that individuals who completed global competency training were consistently more likely to have a

“strongly agree” or “agree” response which reflects a positive attitude toward other cultures and a lesser degree of ethnocentrism. Findings from this study have shown formal training correlates with a positive faculty attitude towards students of other nationalities. Additionally, results have also shown that a statistically significant correlation between training and a diverse strategy of instruction exists. However, formal training is not the only path to building global competency. For example, travel experiences can broaden the individual’s exposure and acceptance of other populations (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Korzilius et al., 2017; Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016).

**Figure 2.** Average Responses Based on Global Competency Training.



On 11 out of 15 questions (73%), of the responses of faculty who have completed the training within three years tended to reflect a higher level of acceptance of other cultures as compared to faculty who have completed training more than three years ago. Furthermore, those who have never attended a global competency training were consistently more likely to have an “agree” or “somewhat agree” response, with numerous outliers falling below disagree. These individuals were also less likely to understand world organizations, their own culture, world history, and current events than those who have attended global competency training within the past three years. These findings echo those of previous research concerning the importance of frequent and quality intergroup contact in shaping close social distances between people of different cultures (Buzzelli, 2016; Collier et al., 2017; Lee, 2016; Lee et al., 2017).

To address research question 2, a correlation between global competency training and instructional strategies was conducted at a *p*

level of 0.01. Results showed that the relationship was significant ( $r = 0.270$ ,  $P = 0.009$ ) as identified within Table 1.

		Global Competency Training	Instructional Strategies Implemented
Global Competency Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.270**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	93	93
Instructional Strategies Implemented	Pearson Correlation	.270**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	93	93

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From these findings, it is unknown what motivated the faculty to participate in this study or engage in taking a global competency training. However, faculty feel the more they know about their students, the better equipped they will be to teach a diverse group of students. Faculty may have been motivated to engage in trainings to improve their ability to teaching students within an internationalized classroom. The reason faculty engage in global competency training is to help them adapt to a new ecology of teaching and learning as student demographics continue to change. Faculty who have not participated in a global competency training might have missed an opportunity to reshape their understanding of teaching and learning in today's globalized classroom.

Overall, findings from this study suggest that faculty members with previous exposure to global competency training are more likely to engage effectively in internationalized classrooms. Findings also

suggest that exposure is a statistically significant predictor to the inclusion of a variety of teaching strategies that would promote a positive learning experience for global learners. Although this research was partially based on the assumption that global competency skills correlate to distinctive instructional strategies, future research should be conducted to account for this assumption by incorporating a combination of observational and survey data. It is also worth noting that the findings from this study may not suggest that a causal relationship between global competency skills and effective instruction exists. However, global competency skills do correlate with increased awareness about and implementation of diversified teaching strategies in globalized classroom environments.

### **Implications and Further Research**

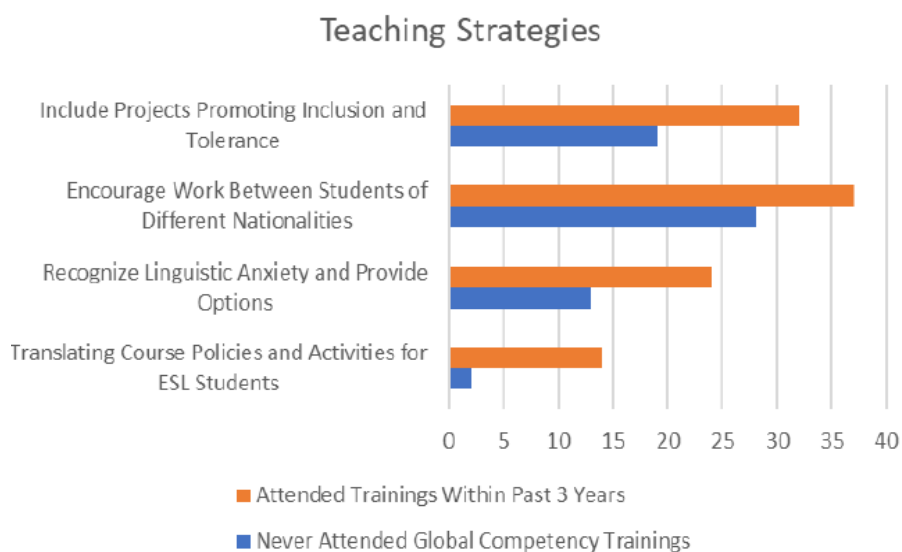
These findings suggest that there is a relationship between an instructor's level of exposure to cultural and global competency training and their level of engagement in the classroom as reflected by the variation in the instructional strategies implemented. Additionally, it also shows that the internationalization of higher education constitutes or represents a disruption that many institutions have yet to address, at least in terms of training and awareness (Healey, 2015; Tawagi & Mak, 2015; Lombard, 2015). Figure 3 also shows that faculty who have completed training were more likely to incorporate teaching strategies that promote a globalized classroom environment as compared to those who have never attended. For example, American born students were asked to mentor their international peers in writing classes and discuss the grammatical and phonetic rules within the English language. International students have also shared stories about their learning experiences and how they anticipated learning a second language based on their native languages. In other instances, international students brought food to the classroom and shared with their native classmates the stories and the history behind these items. In a more formal approach to teaching strategies, faculty have organized a poster session for students to showcase their cultural heritage and learn about the traditions and customs of students with varying nationalities.

From a practical standpoint, students who are taught by faculty with knowledge about global competencies may be exposed to additional learning experiences such as: traveling abroad, working at international organizations such as The World Bank, or learning a

second language; providing them a higher chance to engage with and work for international organizations. Both faculty and student exposure to global competencies may open up opportunities for international employment and global partnerships (Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Butz et al., 2015). Knowledge about global cultures has the tendency to reduce human conflict as they will be more understanding of each other's differences and values by reducing ethnocentrism and increasing sensitivity towards others (Collier, Rosch, & Houston, 2017).

Within the area of STEM, one of the strategies that faculty members have implemented is teaching through storytelling. For example, faculty teaching mathematics could talk about its history of origin such as when teaching Geometry, introducing Rene Descartes, a French Mathematician and sharing the history behind the Cartesian Plane. In teaching Biology, epidemiologists could reference the story of Louis Pasteur, a French Biologist who discovered Penicillin by accident within his lab in the early 1870s, which revolutionized the medical field. Likewise, faculty teaching Chemistry could tell stories about the Periodic Table and Dmitry Mendeleev, a Russian scientist who organized the sequences of the Periodic Table while on a train during the 1800s. This strategy of storytelling can help students visualize the global context of scientific discoveries as many civilizations and cultures have contributed to existing knowledge.

**Figure 3.** Teaching Strategies Selected Based on Attendance in Global Competency Training.



One of the limitations of the study was the sample size, as the survey was only distributed to faculty at a single private University. Therefore, the responses may not accurately represent the global competency levels of all higher-education professors and cannot be generalized. Another limitation was that the survey did not distinguish between online instructors and on-campus instructors. As the level and type of interaction with students are different, the responses to questions could vary, and not accurately represent the global competency levels of all faculty. A third limitation included confirmation bias that may have occurred within the surveys as instructors identified globalized strategies within their own classrooms. To address this limitation in the future, researchers could utilize a checklist of the globalized classroom strategies presented and conduct individual observations of teacher's classrooms to verify that survey responses match the participants' actions.

If further research is conducted, it is recommended that a larger sample size is utilized, the population be expanded, and special considerations be made as to the instructional modality of the faculty. Researchers could also conduct a training and assess the practicality of the global knowledge used in the classroom setting, attitudes and beliefs of faculty, and student perceptions as they interact in the classroom. Given the increased number of international students studying outside of their home countries, researchers may be able to assess whether global competency training correlates with positive student interaction and academic success. Finally, it is recommended that the total number of training attended, the type of training (online, face-to-face, etc.), and its effectiveness in adjusting one's attitude should be analyzed as this study only addressed the time when the training occurred. More research is needed to assess the specific implications regarding global competency training on both faculty members and students.

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