AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Alexa P. Schmid for the degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership, Learning, and Curriculum

Presented on July 18, 2020

Title: An Exploration of Cultural Competence in School Leadership in International Schools

Abstract approved:

Annette M. Holba, Ph.D., Dissertation Committee Chair

The purpose of this study was to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership experience when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population. While international schools often boast diverse student populations and mission statements that promote global citizenship, there are often underlying assumptions of a culturally competent community without providing training or establishing intentional infrastructure that can examine a culturally competent curriculum, culturally relevant pedagogy, and programming that supports a diverse population. The specific problem of practice is that not all international school leaders prioritize or support devoting time and energy to diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

This case study included interviews and document review. Documents included values statements, strategic goals, and school policies related to anti-harassment, non-discrimination, scholarship programs, and admissions guidelines. Findings identified support in the areas of the mission, vision, anchor documents, school policy, and culturally competent-related programming for students, such as inclusion programs, service learning, and student clubs related to social justice. However, several areas were illuminated that identified a need further development and

growth. These include a need to expand diverse staffing, the creation of specific intentional structures for culturally relevant pedagogy and curricular practices, the provision of ongoing, targeted support and professional development for educators related to cultural competence, and more explicitly developing strategic goals related to diversity, social justice, and cultural competence.

Consequently, the development of a framework for international school leaders to guide them in culturally competent leadership in international schools is offered.

Keywords: cultural competence, culturally competent leadership, culturally relevant pedagogy, international schools

An Exploration of Cultural Competence in School Leadership in International Schools

by

Alexa P. Schmid

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Dissertation of Alexa P. Schmid

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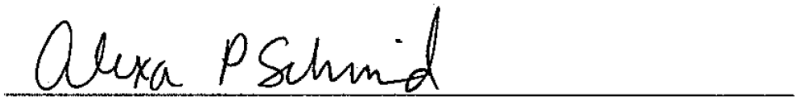
I understand that my dissertation **will** become part of the permanent collection of Plymouth State University, Lamson Learning Commons. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.



Alexa P. Schmid, Author

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I would also like to acknowledge David Henry and the International School of Kenya community. This is where my problem of practice began, and I am grateful to be a part of important work to grow and nurture our cultural competence. While not easy work, I have been honored to co-chair the Diversity Committee for the last two years, as we explore and act to

grow our cultural competence, reflect on our curricular choices, review the ways we are supporting our diverse students, and intentionally expand the diversity in our staffing. It has provided an incredible growth opportunity for me to apply research to our specific context. I am proud of our work, and look forward to continued growth and work as a school community.

It is important to also acknowledge that this study was conducted at a critical and historic time, with the COVID pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests happening in the US and globally. First, to the heads of school who volunteered to participate amidst a time of a global crisis, thank you! I am grateful for the wisdom and experiences that you shared to support the international school community related to culturally competent leadership. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge and share my strong support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and efforts in the US, in Kenya and globally to fight for racial justice. I have much to learn, and the international school community has significant room for growth and change to examine racist and white supremacy practices. I am committed to do my part to continue learning and fight injustices.

Finally, I am grateful for a supportive family. Thank you to my parents, who have always encouraged me that I can achieve anything that I dream of. I am grateful that you instilled in me a drive and work ethic, as well as the confidence to work hard to follow my dreams. This dissertation wouldn't be possible without the continued support of my husband Stewart, and my daughters Sophie and Bella. You have all been patient when I needed to write, cheered me on when I hit roadblocks or tears, and supported this goal. I believe in and am proud of this work, and I couldn't have done it without you. Asante sana for your love and belief in me!

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Title An Exploration of Cultural Competence in School Leadership in International Schools

Introduction

This study included interviews with 14 Heads of School in international schools, to explore the ways in which they are engaging in culturally competent leadership, including diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice work. The purpose of this study was to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population.

Problem of Practice

International schools bring together students and staff from different cultures, countries, and belief systems, with the objective to provide an international education and nurture global citizenship. However, not all international school leaders prioritize or support devoting time and energy to diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence.

Research Method

This case study included interviews with 14 heads of school from countries around the world, as well as a document review of materials submitted by some of the participants. Participants self-selected to be a part of the study, and were also invited to submit documents that support and triangulate their work as a culturally competent leader.

Summary of Findings

The findings reveal that many school heads are finding success in the areas of the mission, vision, and anchor documents, school policy, and related programming for students,

such as inclusion programs, service learning, and student clubs related to social justice. However, there were also several areas that need further development and growth. These include a need to expand diverse staffing, the creation of more intentional structures for culturally relevant pedagogy and curricular practices, providing ongoing and targeted support and professional development for educators related to cultural competence, and more explicitly developing strategic goals related to diversity, social justice, and cultural competence.

Limitations of Study

A limitation in this study is that only heads of school were included, and not all geographic global regions had representation. Another limiting factor is that the criteria for being a participant in this study involved heads of school self-selecting and sharing their willingness to participate. This meant that there were potentially highly culturally competent school heads that did not participate, or that some of the participants were not as culturally competent as they might have perceived.

Implications/Significance of Study

The head of school is essential in providing strong, culturally competent leadership in international schools. This leadership influences the ability to expand diverse staffing, support teachers with professional learning related to culturally relevant pedagogy training, and influence the conversations related to policy, strategic planning and the hiring practices of the school as related to cultural competence, equity, inclusion and social justice.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Sophia and Isabella. You are true miracles and fighters, and give me hope for the future. You will achieve anything your heart desires, and I know that you will use your conviction, purpose, and heart to be lifelong learners, and to make the world a better place. Your passion, love, empathy, and desire to right injustices inspire me as a mom, person, and educator!

CHAPTER 1: Moving from a Problem to a Problem of Practice

Social, Cultural and Historical Perspectives on the Problem

Education is essential to support young people on their journey to become responsible adults and community members, prepared for engagement in a free and democratic society (Banks et al., 2001). Appiah (2008) stresses the importance of education in preparing our youth for the responsibilities of adulthood in local communities, as well as the greater global community. He stresses the importance of educating young people to be a part of the "global tribe" (p. 88). Part of this global education is to impress upon young people the importance of understanding and interacting with people of different races, beliefs, and cultural values. When people interact with those who are different, it can expand their tolerance and empathy for others, and leads to less hostility and prejudice as we increasingly desegregate.

In addition to supporting students in being globally competent in a diverse and globalized world, it is also essential for educators and school leaders to lead the charge in examining issues of equity, inclusion, social justice, and cultural competency to best meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations (Dee, 2004; Padamsee et al., 2017; "Position Statement: Educator Diversity," 2018; Rock & Grant, 2016). Educators must employ strategies related to culturally relevant pedagogy to connect with their students in meaningful ways, provide relevant instructional approaches, maintain high expectations for all students to achieve at high levels, and empower students to fight injustices (Gay, 2002, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

There is considerable research and resources in the United States of America to support culturally relevant education. However, culturally relevant education looks different in an international school community than a domestic school for several reasons. First, many students in international schools are English language learners. The diversity of nationality and languages

present in an international school setting means that jargon and context are important aspects to consider when communicating with sensitivity and considering the larger cultural framework (Savva, 2017a). Much of the culturally relevant instruction research is based on mainstream students with one minority group, and also based in North America or Europe. However, this work looks different in international schools, with the student population comprised of many diverse racial and ethnic groups, and most living outside their home country. The challenge is that international educators cannot simply use a North American context and definitions for this work, as it is not simply a smooth transfer between these different contexts (Shaklee et al., 2019). Consequently, it is essential for school leadership in international schools to establish and nurture an environment that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion practices to support their diverse populations, as well as fulfillment of the school's mission (*Association for the Advancement of International Education*, n.d.; Shaklee et al., 2019).

In 2019, the Diversity Collaborative conducted research to establish baseline data about the state of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work in international schools, as well as the diversity of current international school leadership (Shaklee et al., 2019). The Diversity Collaborative partnered with George Mason University's Center for International Education and ISC Research to gather baseline data about the status of diversity in school leadership. In 2019, the Diversity Collaborative Survey was distributed by ISC to 2,676 accredited international schools who belong to at least one of the twenty associations that was included in the study. The survey was sent to up to six school leaders in each of the schools who have a role in recruitment and leadership development, and the survey was closed once they received 500 responses (Shaklee et al., 2019).

The respondents to the survey are representative of international schools globally regarding the geographic location of international schools, with Asia having the largest percentage of respondents. 56% of participants identified as male and 42% identified as female. Participants in the survey had considerable experience, with an average of nearly 32 years of education experience and nearly 13 years as an international school leader (Shaklee et al., 2019).

As there is not necessarily a shared definition of certain terms, the Diversity Collaborative used the following definitions for this survey: "Diversity is the presence of difference. Equity is ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities. Inclusion is valuing that difference" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 5). The researchers found that context played a major role in the responses as a result of the "different cultural norms, laws, regulations, policies, and even understandings of the definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 5).

The findings of the survey revealed that some schools are well on their way to intentionally and strategically focus on the topics of diversity, equity and inclusion. These included having a comprehensive strategic focus and moving beyond passport diversity, as well as mentoring and leadership development efforts to nurture strong diverse candidates in the pipeline. The key to success in these areas was identified as intentionality and a strategic commitment. Alternatively, there are many challenges identified in the survey, including the "definitions, perceptions, pathways, Board/governance, local culture, and what is known in the literature as 'minimization bias'" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 6), or a tendency to minimize the need for diverse staffing, and a perception that this isn't of value. Some schools shared a perceived cost of diversity, and that a more diverse leadership team might be equated with lower quality. Another challenge identified was the lack of qualified diverse candidates in the pipeline, and

perceptions that diverse candidates represent lower quality educators. Other barriers spoke to resistance from the Board or the local context as not supporting diverse leadership, and a desire for males with lighter skin. A tension was also found between many international schools celebrating diverse student populations, but employing a monocultural faculty. Additionally, there were a number of responses that also shared a monocultural mindset, or had a minimization approach, meaning that there wasn't a perceived value in diverse staffing (Shaklee et al., 2019).

Specific Problem of Practice

Much of the culturally responsive instruction research is based in North America or Europe. However, cultural competence and culturally responsive instruction will look different in international schools, with the student population comprised of many diverse racial and ethnic groups, most of whom are living outside of their home country. Consequently, it is essential for school leadership in international schools to establish and nurture an environment that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion practices to support their diverse populations, as well as cultural competence (*Association for the Advancement of International Education*, n.d.; Shaklee et al., 2019). The specific problem of practice is that not all international school leaders prioritize or support devoting time and energy to diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence. The purpose of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population.

The following research questions will guide this inquiry:

1. How are school leaders engaging in and promoting cultural competence in international schools?

2. What are the common successes and challenges of engaging in work related to cultural competence in international schools?

Global Competence and Cosmopolitanism

In a globally connected world, it is essential that education efforts embrace global competence, cosmopolitanism, and cultural competence, which includes celebrating human diversity, and the belief that every human matters. In addition to the sentiment that all humans matter, cosmopolitanism values cultural and human diversity; there is not one right way to live (Appiah, 2008). Without a single, universal way to interact with the world, different perspectives, values, religions, and cultural beliefs are accepted and celebrated. Global competence requires people to be open minded and willing to engage with others who might have different languages, cultural norms and practices (Appiah, 2008). An important component of global competence is cross-cultural awareness, understanding globalization, recognizing cultural differences, and the ability to collaborate and communicate across different cultures (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006; Riehl, 2000).

One way to expand as a cosmopolitan and global citizen is for young people to travel abroad and meet people from different cultures and countries as a part of their cosmopolitan education (Appiah, 2008). When people prioritize international travel and interaction with those who are different, people can be forced out of their echo chamber, or their bubble of homogeneity and likeness that reinforces their own viewpoints. Living overseas and meeting people from different religions, beliefs and cultural backgrounds provides an opportunity for people to humanize and personalize nations and groups of people that might at first seem completely foreign and different.

Culturally Relevant Education

There are a number of different terms that are used when referring to Culturally Relevant Education. For the purposes of this study, the terms culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive education, and culturally relevant pedagogy will all be used interchangeably. Coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in her seminal research (Ladson-Billings, 1995), where she studied expert teachers and observed an ethic of caring and personal accountability for the pedagogical choices being made to improve educational outcomes of students. Building off of Ladson-Billings' work, Geneva Gay has been a significant contributor to this field of research, expanding the view of culture beyond race and ethnicity, to include all aspects of a student's culture.

As communities around the world become increasingly interconnected, and globalization expands, it is essential for schools to consider the ways in which they are providing a rich, culturally relevant curriculum that prepares students to engage cross culturally. Culturally responsive teaching honors the cultural background and experiences of diverse students to provide meaningful and effective learning opportunities. "It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges and affirms students' cultural identity, while advancing academic achievement through effective pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy nurtures cultural competency, and seeks to consider alternative perspectives to address inequities in schools and elsewhere (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Culturally relevant educators promote ways to connect cultural background with academic skills and content, engages students in critical reflection, builds students' cultural competence, and work toward social justice and promotion of a critique of discourses of power (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Cultural Competence in the United States

As schools become more diverse, it is a challenge for school leaders to find ways to successfully support education efforts to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Hunter et al., 2006; Riehl, 2000). However, there is significant research that supports practices around diversity, equity and inclusion in education in the United States (Dee, 2004; Padamsee et al., 2017; "Position Statement: Educator Diversity," 2018; Rock & Grant, 2016). This includes integrating culturally relevant pedagogy theories, as well as supporting cultural competence, which refers to the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to communicate and interact with culturally diverse populations. These skills encompass "humility, empathy, curiosity, respect, sensitivity, and awareness" (Betancourt, 2003, p. 561), as well as having a strong knowledge of one's own culture and understanding possible hidden biases (Betancourt, 2003). These knowledge, attitudes, and skills are needed for educators to successfully engage in culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom.

Role of Leadership in Promoting Cultural Competence

The role of leadership is essential in promoting the focus and priorities of a school. School leadership plays an essential role in supporting culturally relevant experiences for students (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). School leadership plays a major role in influencing academic achievement and equitable practices to support marginalized groups. Additionally, school leadership inspires and supports the staff in implementing a shared interpretation of the school's mission, and how it relates to the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence (Rebecca M. Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Riehl, 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). As teachers buy-in to the shared mission and are encouraged to consider choices

related to culturally relevant teaching and pedagogy, they engage more in conversations about social justice and values, as well as make shifts in curricular choices, which in turn can support increased achievement for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ross & Berger, 2009). It is essential for school leadership to embrace cultural competence and culturally relevant education practices in their schools, to support the development of global citizenship among students.

Local Contextual Perspectives on the Problem

International schools exist around the world, serving diverse populations and cultures, balancing host country culture and students representing many nationalities, religions, cultures, political beliefs and ways of life (*Association for the Advancement of International Education*, n.d.; Keller, 2015; Savva, 2017b; Wechsler, 2017). Bunnell (2016) defines international schools as those that offer a curriculum taught in English, and are located outside of an English speaking country. Over the last two decades there has been a boon in international schools, resulting in diverse types of international schools catering to a variety of interests and populations (Bunnell et al., 2016; Gaskell, 2018; Wechsler, 2017). There are diverse and even conflicting perspectives among families who send their children to international schools. Some families are specifically seeking a 'western-style' education from foreign educators, while others are seeking a 'globally minded' education for their children while the parents are employed in countries outside their home country. This study will consider the schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South

Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA).

There is a wide range of types of international schools, and many have missions that promote global mindedness and ambition for students in making the world a better place (Bunnell et al., 2016; Wechsler, 2017). However, teachers in international schools do not always have a background or training in cultural competency and multicultural education (Savva, 2017b). Some international associations, such as Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS), Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) and Council of International Schools (CIS), are now considering ways to address this, through trainings on cultural competency and associated pedagogy (*Association for the Advancement of International Education*, n.d.; *Council of International Schools | International Education Organisation*, n.d.; *Education Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS)*, n.d.; Bunnell, 2016). Additionally, International Schools Services has launched a Diversity Collaborative, consisting of educational leaders around the world, who are seeking opportunities to explore and deepen diversity practices (*Diversity Collaborative*, n.d.).

International School of Kenya

The International School of Kenya (ISK) has been exploring the topics of diversity and cultural competence for the last couple of years. In the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, our school community started to grapple with some questions around diversity: diversity in the curriculum, diversity in our staffing, how we support our diverse student population, and how we support professional learning related to cultural proficiency. ISK is a North American-curriculum school catering to diplomats and other expatriates located in Nairobi, Kenya. Our students comprise 65+ nationalities, including Kenyans, and all the other facets that encompass a diverse

community: gender, religion, political views, race, cultural practices, sexual orientation, and more. As we began conversations around diversity, we realized that we had more questions than answers, and so we formed an ad-hoc Diversity Working Group (DWG) led by our Communications Manager, Pamela Pappas and myself for the 2018-19 school year consisting of faculty, administrative staff, parents, and students. As a school administration, we defined that the purpose of the group was to explore and examine diversity at ISK, with expected outcomes to learn, reflect, explore and propose how ISK can deepen and strengthen our practices related to diversity.

We took a strengths-based approach, using *The Appreciative Inquiry Approach* (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) to explore and examine diversity at ISK through four areas of focus:

1. **Global Citizenship and Curriculum:** Ensure an evolving curriculum that deepens our understandings of cultures around the world while dispelling some of the myths associated with them.
2. **Expand Cultural Proficiency / Sensitivity:** Continue to build community through professional learning opportunities that expand our cultural proficiency.
3. **Diverse Community:** Reflect on how best to support our diverse student body.
4. **Diverse Staffing:** Continue to seek opportunities to diversify staff while maintaining our standards for exceptional educators who embrace our mission, vision and educational aims.

Diversity in International Schools

Now in our second year of exploring diversity at ISK, it is clear that these topics are in the infancy stage of exploration in international schools (Shaklee et al., 2019). Some schools are

beginning to explore their curriculum, by considering examples such as the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Framework (*Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework*, 2016), which is one curricular framework that can fit into school curriculum development. Similarly, some international schools are examining school policies related to LGBTQ rights in countries where homosexuality is illegal, and starting to find opportunities to increase staff diversity, in a world that has traditionally had primarily white European and North American educators. However, this work is in the early beginnings, and many leaders are grappling with defining what diversity and cultural competency work should look like in an international school context (Shaklee et al., 2019).

International schools were originally created for diplomats and other expatriates to provide a western-style education and the ability for students to easily move back to their home country for university and beyond. At the time, these schools were not necessarily grounded in the concept of offering an international education, or concerned with the concept of supporting a diverse student population. However, over the decades, new international schools have continued to be developed and market themselves as offering a global education (Bunnell, 2016; Hayden & Thompson, 1998; Wechsler, 2017). However, as international schools strive to offer a more globalized and international education, it is uncertain if international educators and leaders have been trained related to cultural competence and culturally relevant education in an international school setting (Bunnell, 2016; Shaklee et al., 2019).

Leadership Perspectives on the Problem

Global Leadership

Global leaders navigate among diverse cultures, religions, countries, and political and organizational systems to inspire, influence and guide groups of people, while demonstrating and

nurturing empathy, innovation and action to build a better and more harmonious world. Mendenhall (2013) states that global leadership requires "individuals to perform their job outside their own national as well as organizational culture, no matter what their educational or ethnic background is, what functional area their job description is, or what organization they come from" (p. 114). Successful global leaders must master certain competencies, from managing self, to managing people and relationships, to thinking broadly at the business and organization level. Effective global leaders generally possess the following characteristics: emotional intelligence, value relationships, empower others, strong communication skills, inquisitive, innovative, visionaries, systems thinkers, flexible, global mindset, and self-awareness. Similarly, effective global leaders need to value all human lives, appreciate diversity, and embrace the theory of cosmopolitanism, in line with Appiah's (2008) message. These leaders need to believe that all lives matter, whether local or global, that they can learn through listening to those with diverse values and opinions, and learn to navigate diverse cultures and backgrounds (Mendenhall, 2013).

To be a successful global leader, people must have an open mind, be a strong listener, and be willing and able to navigate a world of diverse backgrounds and ways of life (Appiah, 2008; Mendenhall, 2013). Embracing the values of cosmopolitanism will support this quest, including the belief that all people matter, and that diversity enriches us.

Culturally Competent Leadership

School leadership plays a major role in influencing academic achievement and equitable practices to support marginalized groups. When school leaders are culturally competent and prepared to support the professional growth of their staff, they can promote increased schoolwide cultural competence. There are many areas where educators can support equitable practices: curriculum interpretation, instructional practices, assessment and evaluation, and community

involvement (Bustamante et al., 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Keller, 2015; McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000b; Ross & Berger, 2009).

As educational leaders grow and develop in their commitment to social justice, inclusion and equity education, they will need specific strategies to support how to transfer and develop this critical consciousness in their staff (McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). To be an educational leader of social justice, there are three primary goals: they must consider the high academic achievement for all students in the school, they must support student development to challenge social injustices and become globally engaged citizens, and students must learn in an inclusive, heterogeneous environment with a rich and engaging curriculum (McKenzie et al., 2008). Leaders of social justice look for and promote particular strengths in their teaching staff. This means that school leaders must understand what strong instruction looks like to support minority races and cultures in settings where white and privileged culture is dominant, how to support language learners in an inclusive manner, and how to reach students whose learning is outside the norm (McKenzie et al., 2008; Ross & Berger, 2009).

International School Leadership

The Diversity Collaborative through ISS is attempting to determine baseline data regarding diversity practices and diverse leadership in international schools (Shaklee et al., 2019). An initial survey of international school leaders in 2019 found that they have extensive education experience, with an average of 31.9 years. In 2018-19, the membership of the Academy for International School Heads was 67% male and 33% female, representing current and retired heads of school (Shaklee et al., 2019).

While several international schools are investing in diverse leadership and staffing, many international school leaders do not know that they should be addressing diversity, equity,

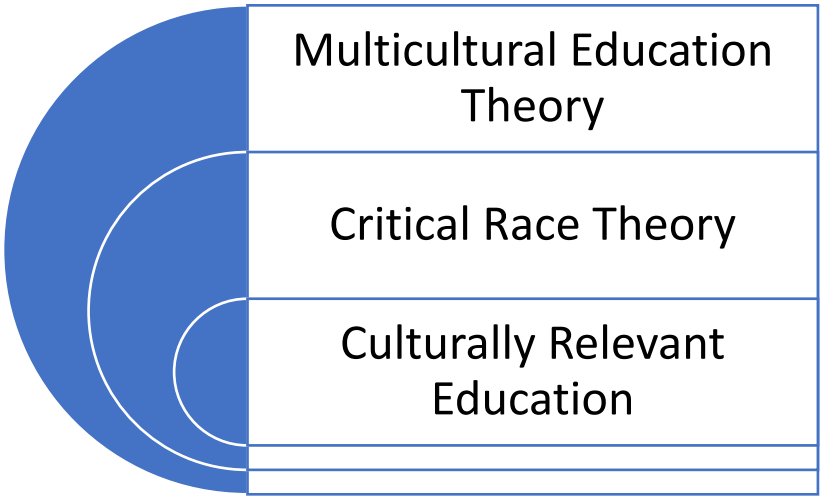
inclusion and justice work. In international schools, there are questions about the value of diverse leadership, including some examples of minimization. In some cases, schools promote and support inclusive practices among a diverse student population, but have a more homogenous and monocultural faculty. Additionally, there are many that believe that white, Western males provide the needed leadership for international schools. The continued challenge in international schools is to consider what leading for equity, inclusion, global citizenship, and cultural competence looks like in an international school setting (Shaklee et al., 2019). The aim of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leaders are experiencing when engaging in culturally competent leadership in international schools.

CHAPTER 2: Review of Knowledge for Action

This chapter develops a conceptual framework for reviewing the literature that will support the research questions. The chapter begins by reviewing the theoretical sources, including the constructs that provide a conceptual foundation for the problem of practice. This portion examines Multicultural Education Theory, and how Critical Race Theory of Education and the construct of Culturally Relevant Teaching fit into Multicultural Education Theory. Figure 1 further expands to demonstrate the theories that undergird culturally relevant education. In order for educators to be successful in a diverse, pluralist society, they engage in culturally relevant education. This is connected to a larger body of research, called Multicultural Education Theory, largely developed through the research of James Banks. Critical Race Theory is an important aspect of Multicultural Education, which focuses on the role of race and racial injustices as essential considerations for schools to successfully meet the needs of their student population. Critical Race Theory is included in this study as a sample of the layers of complexity that fold into Multicultural Education Theory.

Figure 1

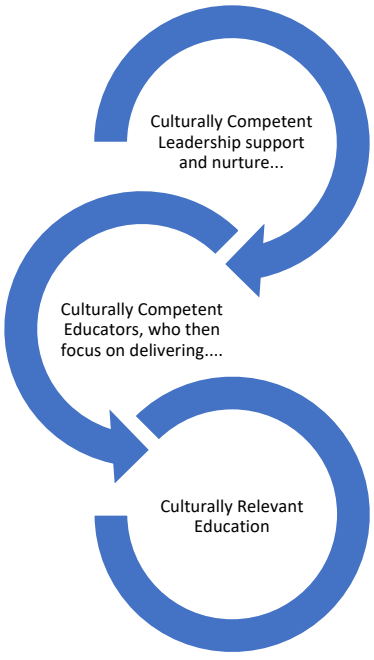
Culturally Relevant Education and Its Connection to Multicultural Education Theory



Note. Culturally Relevant Education is connected to the larger umbrella of Multicultural Education Theory. Critical Race Theory is also an important component connected to Multicultural Education Theory, which must be considered in a Culturally Relevant classroom. The next section reviews several empirical studies, connecting research findings to Multicultural Education and Culturally Relevant Teaching. These empirical studies fall under the major constructs of Cultural Competence and Culturally Competent Leadership, with the belief that successful educators of culturally relevant teaching must first be culturally competent. Figure 2 supports the overarching framework that guides this study. The goal in a culturally diverse society is to provide a supportive culturally relevant education for students. In order to do this, it requires that there are culturally competent school leaders who will support, nurture and train culturally competent educators. Finally, the chapter concludes with sharing the data from the stakeholders, and identifying the gaps in the literature which justify this study.

Figure 2

The role of Culturally Competent Leadership in Schools



Note. Schools require culturally competent leadership, who can support, train and nurture culturally competent educators, who can then provide a rich, culturally relevant education.

Theoretical Sources: Multicultural Education

As part of living in an interconnected world and developing meaningful relationships, it is essential to appreciate diversity and aim for inclusion (Banks, 2016; Banks et al., 2001; Cherkowski, 2010; Riehl, 2000). To live in a pluralistic society requires that educators purposefully teach the value of living in a diverse society, and also take time to acknowledge and connect with students' cultures and teach about other cultures. Additionally, educators must help students to understand inequities and find ways to redesign social systems and structures that promote unearned privilege in society. This includes understanding white privilege, overturning the systems and structures that continue white dominance and suppress marginalized groups, such as people of color, those who identify with the LGBTQ community, and others (Freire, 2000; Kumagai & Lypson, 2009; Peggy Mcintosh, 1998).

The United States is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Half the children below age five belong to minority groups. As diversity increases, it is imperative for school leaders to find strategies to support student success across diverse religions, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds. A goal for democratic societies is to ensure that every citizen has an adequate education, which provides opportunities to engage in the democratic process and to live an engaging, successful and fulfilling life (Banks, 2004, 2016; Barakat et al., 2018).

Diversity, equity and inclusion are all necessary in education systems, as well as in democratic and productive societies, and they support each other. These three concepts are mutually reinforcing, since "increased inclusion is associated with increased equity, and the majority of organizations with higher inclusion and equity also have greater demographic

diversity" (Padamsee et al., 2017, p. 4). In the 21st century the world is increasing its cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, as more people are mobilized, whether through globalization or immigration. As the world becomes an increasingly diverse society, it is imperative that education policy-makers and institutions consider what this means for an education system (Banks, 2004; Banks et al., 2001; Barakat et al., 2018; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Riehl, 2000b).

Multicultural Education Theory

The world is becoming increasingly diverse, with cultural, racial, religious and language diversity. Countries now have the challenge to maintain unity and a shared national culture, but also honor the diverse aspects of the different groups that make up their citizens. Only focusing on unity, means that a cultural majority will lead to others feeling repressed. Diversity without unity could lead to a fractured country (Banks, 2004, 2016).

There are five major dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture (Banks, 2016; Banks et al., 2001). In order to achieve these dimensions, there are several design principles needed. Professional development centered on Multicultural Education Theory can support teachers in understanding different ethnic groups, and how various factors influence student behaviors (race, ethnicity, language, social class). All students need equitable opportunities to learn. Knowledge is socially constructed, and how we provide opportunities for students is important. An example of providing multicultural education is to tend to all aspects of student growth and development, such as supporting all students in after school activities, as there is significant research that supports participation in order to reduce dropout rates, decrease discipline problems, and increase social skills. There are five dimensions of multicultural

education, including content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering students across diverse cultural groups (Banks et al., 2001).

Content integration. This concept encourages educators to make meaningful connections to integrate the cultural backgrounds of their students into the content being taught. The research of Geneva Gay and Culturally Relevant Teaching is connected to this concept. "Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2018, p. 36). Content integration is easiest to conceptualize with some subjects, such as language arts, social studies, and music. However, even when teaching subjects like science and mathematics, educators should consider the ethnic and cultural background of their students when considering how they frame the curricular content (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2018).

This approach counters assimilationist thinking, as racial, religious and cultural diversity increases globally with immigration. Diverse cultural groups are demanding cultural recognition, and the line between diversity and unity must be carefully balanced. Citizenship education used to consist of assimilationist concepts, creating a dominant mainstream culture, where immigrants were encouraged to shed their cultural identity to blend in. However, the Civil Rights Movement sparked shifts globally, where marginalized groups expressed their needs to maintain their culture and language. This included indigenous people in the United States, as well as other countries (Banks, 2004, 2016).

Knowledge Construction. Students learn best when they are challenged, able to consider multiple perspectives, and provided opportunities to build their understanding, while considering cultural differences and assumptions. When students are taught how knowledge is constructed

and that there are biases and social constructions, they are able to then understand context and issues from diverse, cultural perspectives (Banks, 2016).

Prejudice Reduction. In schools, it is important to nurture cultural, national and global identities, with a goal of maintaining individual cultural identity, but also a sense of commitment to a global community of human beings (Banks, 2004). In developing a strong sense of cultural appreciation and identity development, it is important to recognize that those students from traditionally marginalized groups might face challenges accepting and valuing their own cultural heritage. However, it is difficult to grow national or global appreciation without first expanding self-acceptance. Appreciation and self-acceptance of cultural identity is an important foundation needed before appreciation and understanding of other cultures. In this way, individuals can develop a positive view of their own cultural identity, as well as expand to a collective cultural identity (Banks, 2004).

Prejudice reduction intends to acknowledge and tackle the attitudes and values that students often come to school with related to racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, and more. Injustices are often intersectional in nature, crossing the lines of race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability. Seeking opportunities for students to develop more positive racial and gender attitudes can also support the development of more democratic attitudes and values. As students develop more positive racial and gender attitudes, they are more likely to see injustices and develop an interest in combatting those injustices. Incorporating prejudice reduction into education connects with a social justice approach to education, which aims to right injustices, create inclusive communities, and find solutions for inequities and human rights issues. It is rooted in relationship-building and a solid moral grounding (Banks, 2016; DeMatthews, 2018).

Equity Pedagogy. Another important aspect of multicultural education is equity pedagogy, which supports teachers in modifying their approach to students in such a way that facilitates increasing the academic achievement for all students, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Equity pedagogy exists when educators deliver high quality instruction to marginalized groups of students, including students of color, those with different language backgrounds, and immigrant students (Banks, 2016). This approach requires that teachers have knowledge of their students' cultural background, values, language, and learning styles (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Ladson-Billings' seminal work related to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy further develops the importance of supporting students "to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). She seeks to empower students academically, socially, and emotionally to think critically and develop their skills and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Empowering Students. The final aspect of multicultural education includes examining and restructuring the organizational systems in the school setting to provide greater equality for culturally diverse students. This requires schools to review the hidden messages that come from educators, the grouping and tracking practices, student access to athletics and activities, and other aspects that influence the student experience and achievement in the school setting. The ultimate goal is to provide equal opportunities for all students to feel empowered and able to achieve at high levels (Banks, 2016).

Critical Race Theory of Education

In order for educators to be successful in implementing the tenets of multicultural education, it is essential to consider the Critical Race Theory (CRT). This is a critical aspect of

Multicultural Education Theory, that specifically considers the role of race and power in education. In their seminal piece, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) ground their theory of education by connecting to CRT, which was developed in the 1970s through legal scholarship. The premise of Critical Race Theory was to study race, racism and power, and to bring to the forefront that racism still exists in the United States. The difference between racism today and racism of the past is that today it is less overt, masked in direct person to person interactions, rather than structural or institutional. Today, racism claims require a clear perpetrator and a tangible act, such as hate crimes, hate speech or other visible actions. However, CRT contends that racism is alive today through our systems, assumptions, structures, and institutions, including the institution of schooling. Critical Race Theory has as a premise that racism is a pervasive part of our social fabric, and it is so embedded in our structures and practices that it is difficult for most to recognize. By taking this stance, CRT has the goal to highlight White privilege. Another important aspect of CRT is that of Interest Convergence, or the idea that the interests of people of color are only advanced when it aligns with or benefits the interests of Whites. A third aspect of CRT is the concept of whose story is being told, and what is filtered out for not conforming to socially acceptable notions of truth. By highlighting counter-perspectives, Critical Race Theorists aim to raise awareness about the racialized systems and practices that serve the self-interests of White people (Bell, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; López, 2003).

Ladson-Billings and Tate build on that work to connect CRT to the field of education, claiming that as long as discussions of race and racism are silenced, there will continue to be gross inequities between the education of white children and children of color. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) make two major propositions: that race is a major factor of inequity in the

United States, and that race issues are related to property rights, which is a defining feature of society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The concept of race is problematic, in that it is a social construct, and humans identify and group themselves in a variety of ways. However, race must be considered when explaining social inequity and its relationships to educational inequality. This builds off of the work of Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois, and also aligns with other theories around class- and gender-based theories related to education experience and outcomes (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical race theory in education claims that race and poverty combine together to result in institutional and structural racism, with poor conditions of schools and dismal school performance. In spite of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision in 1954, schools are more racially segregated today than ever before. African-American children are more highly concentrated in urban school districts, and there has been white flight from urban areas to suburban areas (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Rather than think about individual racism, it is important to consider the larger societal concerns related to structural and systemic racism. CRT has a goal to highlight that educational policy and practices actually maintain racism in our systems and structures (López, 2003; Zorn, 2018).

In a literature analysis of CRT in education, Capper (2015) devised six tenets from the literature of CRT with the social justice goal of leading to eliminate racism: racism is a permanent fixture in the United States; racism is rooted in property interests; it is important to counter and question majority narratives and storytelling; there is a needed convergence of the goals of Blacks with the needs of Whites; it is important to critique liberal ideology that includes color blindness, meritocracy and neutrality of the law; and there must be consideration of intersectionality (the intersection of race with other identities and differences).

As educators consider aspects of Multicultural Education in their schools, the tenets of Critical Race Theory of Education must be considered. Multicultural Education has a goal to expand educational opportunities and equality to students from diverse racial, ethnic and other groups. While Multicultural Education initially focused on race, it has expanded to include gender, ability, and sexual orientation. There continues to be a push to reduce prejudice and take a social justice approach (Banks, 2016). However, this approach can be criticized when it is reduced to superficial celebrations with trivial examples of cultures such as food, singing songs, or learning only about famous and significant contributors throughout history. Educators must ensure that they move beyond simplified celebrations of difference in a way that superficially implies unity, and ensure they take an approach for social justice, tolerance, and addressing the tensions regarding race and prejudice in society. It is essential that critical race theory in education and multicultural education efforts align in a way that work to dismantle prejudice, seek justice for the oppressed, and work to shift the status quo (Jay, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Culturally Relevant Education

An important dimension of Multicultural Education and Critical Race Theory in Education is Culturally Relevant Education. There are a number of different terms that are used when referring to Culturally Relevant Education. For the purposes of this study, the terms culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive education, and culturally relevant pedagogy will all be used interchangeably. Coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in her seminal research (Ladson-Billings, 1995), where she studied expert teachers and observed an ethic of caring and personal accountability for the pedagogical choices being made to improve educational outcomes of students. Building on Ladson-Billings' work, Geneva Gay has been a significant contributor

to this field of research, expanding the view of culture beyond race and ethnicity, to include all aspects of a student's culture. "Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2018, p. 36). Culturally relevant teaching acknowledges and affirms the student's cultural identity, while advancing academic achievement through effective pedagogy. Educators focus on personal relationships, high expectations, accountability, and incorporate elements of students' culture into the content and instruction. Additionally, culturally relevant teaching seeks to consider alternative perspectives and address inequities in schools and elsewhere (Gay, 2018; Harmon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Culturally relevant education focuses on teaching practice and competency, as well as the attitudes and dispositions a teacher should adopt. Culturally relevant teaching promotes ways to connect cultural background with academic skills and content, engages students in critical reflection, builds students' cultural competence, and work toward social justice and promotion of a critique of discourses of power (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Harmon, 2012).

Culturally responsive instruction has at its core the value of a pluralist society. Whereas it is not uncommon for a majority or dominant cultural story to be taught in schools, culturally responsive teaching promotes culturally diverse backgrounds and stories as valuable and worthy of learning (Au, 2009; Gay, 2002, 2018). Teachers provide opportunities for students to consider diverse perspectives, as well as whose version of history is being shared. Without intentionality and questioning, schools will continue to teach through a dominant western cultural view, ignoring marginalized and minority groups. Culturally relevant instruction urges teachers to consider hidden biases, culturally biased resources, and consider representation of diverse groups

in instructional resources and practices (Au, 2009; Banks et al., 2001; Cherkowski, 2010; Gay, 2002, 2018).

In addition to content and instructional practices, culturally relevant pedagogy also focuses more on the behaviors and actions of the teacher. It aims to promote cultural competency, high academic achievement, as well as address inequities. Teachers aim to develop sociopolitical consciousness, in particular related to race, class, and gender, so that students can recognize social inequalities and become empowered to critique and take action to address those inequities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). In Ladson-Billings' seminal research in this area (1994), she observed an ethic of caring and personal accountability for the pedagogical choices being made among the expert teachers in her study. This included tending to the emotional, social, intellectual and other needs of their students.

It is essential for teachers to promote cultural competency and also motivate and encourage high academic standards and high academic achievement. Additionally, teachers need to understand societal inequities and in turn teach students to recognize and take action to correct these inequities. Teachers of culturally relevant pedagogy promote academic success, and also to be culturally competent and socially aware (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). CRP has three major themes:

- Conception of self and others: Teachers view themselves as important members of the community, and the teaching profession as an important way to contribute to the community. Educators also believe that all students can be successful, and they encourage and persist with students who need additional support, and draw knowledge out of their students. These educators also promote and instill a sense of

pride in the community and using the community as a place to learn (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

- Social relations: Culturally relevant teachers develop relationships with students both in and outside the classroom. They show students that they care about them and believe in them, ensuring that there is connectedness and also equity. They take time to build a community of learners, rather than a competitive space, where students collaborate and feel a sense of responsibility to support all students learning in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).
- Conceptions of knowledge: Teachers provide scaffolds to support students in gaining new knowledge. The teachers view knowledge as evolving and multi-directional, where knowledge is not static or only shared from teachers to students. Knowledge is viewed critically and should be challenged, and the curriculum should be critically analyzed. Culturally relevant teachers support that there are multiple ways to demonstrate mastery and excellence (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

Relationship to Problem of Practice

When educators take a deficit model approach to teaching traditionally marginalized or minority students, student achievement can be adversely affected. If a goal of schools is the education and achievement of all students, then educators must take a culturally relevant, social justice approach to instruction in their classrooms. Social justice educators take an asset approach to education through promoting race, gender, class, disability, sexuality or other traditionally marginalized conditions as central to their advocacy, vision and decision-making (DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). It is important for educators and school leaders engage all members of the community and promote culturally relevant teaching and

pedagogy. School leaders who take a social justice approach are in a position of influence, where they can shape school culture, determine how funding is spent, advocate for marginalized students, make decisions on programming and hiring, and increase family engagement. School leaders have an important role in creating more equitable schools, increasing parent engagement, honoring the cultural diversity of the community, and increasing student achievement. School leaders have the ability to make decisions regarding policies and programs, and their attitudes and perceptions make a significant difference in developing quality opportunities for all students. Leadership training is essential in order to support the needs of educators to create more culturally responsive schools, that support equitable and socially just education practices (DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). School leaders set the direction and initiatives of a schools, so it is imperative school leaders are prepared to support teachers to do this work.

Review of the Educational Research Literature: Empirical Sources

This study will specifically examine how school leaders engage in and promote cultural competence in their international school communities. In order to support culturally relevant teaching and multicultural education theory in international schools, educators and leaders must be culturally competent. The constructs related to the research questions are cultural competence and culturally competent leadership.

Cultural Competence

Culture can be defined as the "shared beliefs, values, norms, symbols, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a group use to make sense of their world and foster a sense of identity and community" (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p. 796). In an increasingly diverse world, where different cultures and people with various world experiences

are brought together, it is important for people to learn to understand, communicate, and empathize with diverse populations. Nurturing cultural competence allows for the ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with individuals and groups across different cultures (Ang et al., 2006; Bustamante et al., 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012; Kumagai & Lypson, 2009).

Culturally competent schools. Bustamante, R. M., Nelson, J. A., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2009) conducted a study that examined assessing schoolwide cultural competence. Their work started with defining culture, as shared in the previous section. They studied more than 150 school leaders in two western US states, many of whom were also graduate students in programs related to educational leadership or school counseling. Bustamente et al. found that cultures are not homogenous, and people might belong to more than one culture. Additionally, the researchers argue that school culture often depends on the broader culture in which the school exists. Schools can unknowingly participate in discrimination, oppression and inequitable practices. Therefore, it is important to periodically assess and reflect on the state of the school's culture. In order to evolve, schools must be sure that their policies, practices and structures support a social justice approach, and do not disadvantage any possibly marginalized group of students on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or other characteristic.

Organizations can range from cultural destructiveness to cultural competence; there is no 'one size fits all' approach to be a multicultural and culturally proficient organization, therefore Bustamente et al. recommend conducting a culture audit, which can allow for schools to take into consideration the unique context and culture of the school. A component of a culture audit could be an equity audit, but a culture audit is more all-encompassing, and focuses "on the inclusiveness of espoused values, rituals, norms, traditions, basic assumptions, and behaviors as

manifested by school policies, programs, practices, artifacts, rituals, and group behaviors, and other indicators of school culture" (Bustamante et al., 2009, p. 801).

In their research, four themes emerged.

- Missions and policies that support equitable practices and protect against discrimination help to promote a school that is more culturally competent. However, there is also a policy paradox, which allows for leaders to interpret policies differently, and that may even reinforce exclusive practices, for example with gifted and talented programs and special education programs.
- Programs are needed in place in order to take action and lead to increased culturally competent practices. School leaders should develop and implement "a series of programs designed to enhance student achievement and promote intercultural integration" (Bustamante et al., 2009, p. 808).
- Cultural competence is influenced by and influences school culture and climate.
- There are barriers to schoolwide cultural competence. For example, there was confusion and disagreement about who was responsible for the development of schoolwide cultural competence. There are resource constraints, including time and energy, to shift culture to meet the needs of diverse students. There is a lack of reference to research-based and culturally responsive instructional strategies, as well as a lack of awareness of cultural competence indicators, including lack of familiarity with terminology such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Bustamante et al., 2009).

In another study, Bustamente (2005) studied the essential features of cultural proficiency in American international schools in Latin America. She used a Delphi technique exploring cultural proficiency in American international schools in Latin America, with participants in

fourteen countries. The process included three rounds of open-ended questionnaires. Bustamente's research found that schoolwide cultural proficiency requires a shared vision that include culturally diverse perspectives, a global curriculum, ongoing trainings to raise awareness about cultural diversity, cultural celebrations, democratic decision-making processes, diverse staffing and leadership, and culturally proficient leadership. There are also several obstacles and challenges in nurturing a schoolwide culture of cultural proficiency, including elite attitudes of the community, the cultural makeup of the community, resistance to change, and staff turnover (Bustamante, 2005).

School leaders can strongly influence cultural proficiency in schools. This can happen through modeling culturally proficient values and practices, valuing the host-country, seeking opportunities to implement new programming that supports cultural proficiency, ensuring that the mission and vision supports intercultural learning and embedding community partnerships through service (Bustamante, 2005).

Cherkowski (2010) stresses that leadership must be distributed to teachers, to increase cultural competence across a school. Educational leadership plays an essential role in creating a positive school culture and promoting inclusive practices. It is important for school leadership to model inclusive practices of bringing diverse voices to the table. Additionally, school leadership must ensure that the celebrations and practices go beyond the dominant cultural view, and expand to honor multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion.

We live in an interconnected world. In order to develop relationships and make connections, it is important to value diversity and look for opportunities for inclusion. Some critical questions to ask include:

> Do school traditions, events celebrations, practices, activities support multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion, or do these perpetuate a dominant cultural view? Are all voices brought to the table during discussions? In short, is the leadership modelling an inclusive culture and ensuring that comfort with diversity and acceptance of differences remains an important component of assessing the culture of the school? (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 29)

Discussion of similarities and differences between cited studies related to the sub-construct. Culturally competent schools carefully consider the policies, programs, structures, rituals, traditions and practices that support the diversity needs of their community. This includes taking a social justice approach as a community, and ensuring that policies and practices do not disadvantage any possibly marginalized group of students on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or other cultural identifiers (Bustamante et al., 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012).

Cultural competence in a school is evidenced with the ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with individuals and groups across various cultures. It is important for organizations to check in regarding their schoolwide cultural competence, or "how well a school's policies, programs, practices, artifacts, and rituals reflect the needs and experiences of diverse groups in the school and outer school community" (Bustamante et al., 2009, p. 798).

Cultural competence in the curriculum. Aronson and Laughter (2016) examine the importance of culturally relevant education in the classroom and connect it to positive student outcomes. In their synthesis of the literature, they have three major findings. Culturally relevant pedagogues are more concerned with the long-term academic achievement, and not just end of year assessments. These educators provide high quality educational opportunities that result in strong standardized assessment scores, but seek to nurture life-long learners. Culturally relevant

educators also focus on critical reflection and cultural competence, with the hope of supporting students in better understanding their own culture, and also other cultures. This can help marginalized students learn to better navigate school and other systems that often are oppressive. Culturally relevant pedagogy also looks to develop sociopolitical consciousness, in particular related to race, class and gender, so that students might critique social inequalities (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Savva (2017a) uncovered changes in practice for international educators in the areas of language, religion and gender considerations, as well as communication and cultural practices. She conducted interviews with thirty anglophone (English-speaking) educators working in international schools to explore the impact that teaching in an international school leads to change in the world views of English-speaking educators, and in what ways does this change transfer to the classroom. Savva defines an international school as an independent English-medium school in non-English speaking country that hires at least some of its faculty from anglophone countries, teaching a curriculum not from the host country. Additionally, the population of students consists of expatriate students and also local non-native English speakers (Savva, 2017a).

International educators benefit from a prolonged cross-cultural experience with culture-specific and culture-expansive knowledge and skills. This often happened in the areas of language, communication skills and gender/religious considerations. International educators also demonstrate a desire to learn and understand about the differences that diverse student populations present, and an ability to suspend judgment during this process. They then use this new knowledge to inform changes and shifts in their instructional approach. Prolonged cross-

cultural experiences have the positive impact to increase and expand cultural knowledge and awareness and to make shifts in professional practice (Savva, 2017a).

Discussion of similarities and differences between cited studies related to the sub-construct. Cultural competence is the "knowledge of characteristics, cultural beliefs, and practices of nonmajority groups, and skills and attitudes of empathy and compassion" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 783) and involves continual reflection and consciousness of self, others and the world. As individuals nurture their own cultural competency, they must also consider the development of critical consciousness, and raising awareness of privilege and power and social relationships to develop a commitment toward social justice. This involves regular reflection and consideration of one's assumptions, biases and values, while also considering the injustices that exist in the world. This will avoid individuals imposing their own values and opinions on others (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009; Peggy Mcintosh, 1998; Ross & Berger, 2009).

In an international context, the importance of culturally relevant teaching is essential. However, culturally responsive education looks different in an international school community than a domestic school for several reasons. First, many students in international schools are English language learners. The diversity of nationalities and languages in an international school setting means that jargon and context are important aspects to consider when communicating with sensitivity and considering the larger cultural framework of the community (Savva, 2017a). Additionally, understanding the complexity of identity, nationality, religion, language and other diverse qualities is an essential part of making connections to students. For this reason, it is essential to have school leaders who are culturally competent and support the faculty in developing in this area.

Culturally Competent Leadership

The ideal in schools is to have leaders who will challenge and question policies, programs and practices in such a way that promotes social justice, inclusion, equitable practices, and culturally sensitive practices (Rebecca M. Bustamante et al., 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Hernandez & Kose, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). Culturally competent school leaders model beliefs around equity and social justice, and create safe spaces for minority and marginalized groups, where inclusive practices become a way of life. These school leaders support equitable practices through ensuring that teachers have regular professional learning opportunities around instructional practices that promote giving voice to all students, as well as avoiding cultural, linguistic or gender bias in learning experiences and assessments. All of these practices enable members in the school community to more fully embrace diversity and multiculturalism. In a rapidly changing world, if schools cling to outdated systems and traditional curricula that perpetuate dominant cultural values at the expense of underserved and marginalized groups, not only are those minority populations disadvantaged, but all students in this new globalized world are missing important information (Cherkowski, 2010; Hernandez & Kose, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008; Ross & Berger, 2009). Therefore, leaders who are culturally competent and place an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion practices can create school communities that will properly prepare students to live and work in diverse, multicultural, pluralistic societies (Bustamante et al., 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Keller, 2015; Lind, 2017).

Leading for social justice. Hansuvadha and Slater (2012) explore two case studies to examine effectiveness of school leaders who are culturally competent. They describe cultural competence as when the organization or individual possesses the skills and dispositions to

successfully interact with diverse cultural groups. Their findings reveal that being an effective administrator not only requires culturally competent leadership, but a system that supports those efforts (Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012).

Principals have a special role to influence multicultural programs that will support diverse students and have the potential for increased student achievement. The researchers studied two administrators for this study: Antonio was a vice principal and Sara was a principal. The researchers conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the two administrators, as well as collected and analyzed other documents that were provided by the administrators. There were three main themes that emerged in Antonio's work: concern for the disenfranchised, respect for students, and the need to find a balance between work and life to support happy and healthy decision-making. The three main themes that emerged in Sara's work were: high expectations, raising teacher leaders, and political action on behalf of immigrants. Both administrators demonstrated high levels of functioning according to theories of cultural competence. However, both administrators still faced challenges in their work, and the researchers suggestion moving forward is to provide new administrators with mentors for support and encouragement (Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012).

McKenzie et al (2008) conducted a study and propose a model to support preparing principals for social justice work. To be an educational leader of social justice, there are three primary goals: they must consider the high academic achievement for all students in the school, they must support student development to challenge social injustices and globally engaged citizens, and students must learn in an inclusive, heterogeneous environment with a rich and engaging curriculum. Leaders of social justice also look for and promote particular strengths in their teaching staff. This means that educational leaders must understand what strong instruction

looks like to support minority races/cultures in settings where white and privileged culture is dominant, how to support language learners in an inclusive manner, and how to reach students whose learning is outside the norm (McKenzie et al., 2008).

DeMatthews (2018) examines the work of three principals taking a social justice approach. He conducted a secondary analysis of three cases of social justice leadership in challenging school-community contexts, with principals who are committed to social justice, and encounter various successes and challenges in their communities. This study had a focus on the principal perceptions and focus on social justice, while understanding the school community's context, and then reviewing the limitations and outcomes they are able to achieve (DeMatthews, 2018).

Social justice leadership includes distributive, cultural, and associational justice. Distributive justice refers to the ways fundamental rights and privileges are redistributed in an equitable way in order to create a more just society. It is also includes looking for opportunities to fully recognize marginalized groups and put an end to the various aspects of oppression, including exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness and violence. Cultural justice seeks to address exploitation of citizens, including lack of political power and representation. Associational justice seeks to promote the ability for all people to participate, make decisions and govern (DeMatthews, 2018).

This study also sought to recognize some of the out-of-school factors that contribute to success and challenges. DeMatthews coded the data as associational, distributed, or cultural justice and looked at how principals identified injustices, determined responses and actions, and their later reflections on the successes and failures. Their study found that oftentimes principals who take a social justice approach to leadership will have a dominant justice issue, which they

prioritize over other justice issues. Social justice leaders must consider their context, use problem solving strategies, seek opportunities to engage the community, and also find opportunities for associational, distributed and cultural justice. When studying social justice leaders, it is important to consider the local context, and also to recognize the aspects of the political, economic, social and other realities in the local context (DeMatthews, 2018).

During the 2013-14 academic year, Moral, García-Garníca and Martínez-Valdivia (2018) conducted a case study analyzing two successful principalships for social justice in challenging contexts. Their study chose two towns in Spain that have socio-economically disadvantaged contexts, and vast cultural diversity but strong academic success. Their goal was to identify the characteristics, attributes, qualities, skills and strategies of school principals who are able to successfully navigate a variety of contexts to find success in advocacy for social justice. Their study found that not only is the school leader instrumental in the school's capacity for improvement, but shared and collaborative leadership is essential for a school's success. This includes distributed leadership, and it is important to have a shared vision and a commitment to improvement (Moral et al., 2018).

The schools in these case studies had a positive school climate and safe learning environment. The traits of these school leaders were empathetic, devoted to the school, committed to school improvement, embrace the cultural diversity, build trust, and are of service to the greater good of the community. These leaders had a clear vision for success for all students, they were aware of the local context, they empowered others through distributed leadership, they remained positive and optimistic, they looked to develop curriculum in powerful and culturally relevant ways, and they nurtured strong partnerships with the community (Moral et al., 2018).

Principals must partner and share the perspectives and viewpoints of all members in the community, in order to support marginalized cultures as they deliver a multicultural education sensitive to social justice. Leading for social justice requires a personal commitment from the principal, partnering with the school community, and ongoing efforts to ensure that staff are committed to continuous improvement with a sense of social responsibility. Multicultural leaders ensure that all students have access to resources and strategies that will support their academic and personal growth (Moral et al., 2018).

Discussion of similarities and differences between cited studies related to the sub-construct. Social justice leadership is based on the belief that all students can achieve success, and it is in the power of the educators to implement and create changes where there is a collective responsibility to create opportunities of success for all students. For principals to successfully lead for social justice, there must be trust, openness and strong communication within the community. Social justice leaders value success and equity in educational opportunities for all students, including those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. When developing curriculum in a school, educators must consider the cultural diversity of a school and be sensitive to the reality of the students. For students to reach their full potential, there must be a safe environment (Moral et al., 2018).

Socially just leaders actively address and seek solutions to issues related to race, socio-economics, sexuality, gender, ability or otherwise. Social justice leadership includes distributive, cultural and associational aspects. Distributive relates to how resources and opportunities are distributed among the population in an equitable manner. Cultural justice refers to the extent to which minority or marginalized cultures are valued. Associational justice refers to the ability for all members of the community to participate, make informed choices, be respected as equal

members of the community, and be included in various opportunities (DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018). While a leader might take a social justice approach, others in the community might have conflicting views and actually oppress particular groups when provided the opportunity to engage in democratic decision-making (associational justice). Sometimes, there may even be laws or school policies that come into conflict with a social justice approach, leaving the principal/school leader in a position where they cannot publicly speak out (DeMatthews, 2018).

Leading for equity and inclusion. Riehl (2000b) examines the imperative that principals must create equitable and inclusive school cultures with the increasing diversity of student populations. Riehl conducts an integrative review of the literature related to inclusive leadership to support diverse student populations. With increasing cultural diversity in schools, society can no longer expect students to be acculturated into a singular way of knowing or behaving. The principal plays a critical role in contributing to effectively support diverse student populations. School leaders support faculty in developing a shared new meaning and understanding through a change process. This concept must be applied as principals foster new meanings about diversity and creating inclusive communities. This includes creating opportunities for teachers to participate in discourse and meaning making. Once teachers have a new conception around supporting diverse students, the principal has a role to create the conditions and practices that will increase inclusion for diverse students. The principal will need to support faculty in embracing cultural diversity, including inclusive teaching and learning practices and an inclusive school culture. Finally, principals must also create community partnerships to support diverse student populations (Riehl, 2000b).

Ross and Berger (2009) study the importance of equity in schools through the lens of the principal's role. The principal has an important role in influencing academic achievement and equitable practices to help marginalized groups. There are four major areas where principals support equity work: curriculum interpretation, instructional practices, assessment and evaluation, and community involvement. Principals who create inclusive communities can influence academic achievement for marginalized groups through their work promoting improved teaching and learning strategies. They do this through inspiring and including all staff members to be a part of the leadership work for equity efforts (Ross & Berger, 2009).

Principals need to inspire and support the staff in implementing a shared interpretation of the school's mission, and how it relates to the topics of diversity, equity and inclusion. As teachers buy in to the shared mission, they will start to talk more about social justice and values, as well as to make shifts in curricular choices. What principals model is important, and modeling beliefs around equity and social justice are essential, including addressing racial and other stereotypes (Ross & Berger, 2009).

There is also a moral component to equity and inclusive education that needs to be shared by leaders. Principals play a key role in creating safe spaces and support networks for minority or marginalized groups, such as students of color, gay or transgender students, and Muslim students. They encourage culturally relevant teaching practices that support diverse student populations, including understanding the diverse cultures, making connections with students' home culture experiences, ensuring that instruction meets a variety of learning styles, and working to examine the role of social hierarchies and advocate for students of diverse backgrounds. Principals support equitable practices by ensuring that teachers have regular professional learning opportunities around instructional practices that promote giving voice to all

students, as well as avoiding cultural, linguistic or gender bias in learning experiences and assessments. Finally, principals can also support partnerships and collaboration between different stakeholders in the school to support inclusive practices. Principals can tap into the parent community and enhance community partnerships to expand the understanding of the diverse needs of students (Ross & Berger, 2009).

In Tim Goddard's (2007) study, he explored how principals facilitate access for all children. His research included qualitative methodology, involving eighteen public schools across seven countries. The schools were located in urban environments with ethnoculturally diverse student populations. Across all countries in this study, indigenous and immigrant groups were not experiencing success in schools. Tim Goddard's claims that as the world becomes more diverse and multiethnic, it is important to reflect on the traditional systems and leadership, often representing the majority culture. Additionally, curriculum is often designed with the majority culture in mind. However, principal leadership has the power to consider students from marginalized groups in supporting curricular and programmatic development. Overall, school systems and structures represent the dominant culture (Tim Goddard, 2007).

Discussion of similarities and differences between cited studies related to the sub-construct. As the diversity in communities continues to expand, it is essential for principals to take a proactive and advocacy approach to address marginalization and inequities (Wang, 2018). It is important for policy-makers and educators to understand the needs of minority and marginalized students. With this information, educators can shift practices away from pedagogy and practices generally being grounded in the dominant culture, which can expand access and outcomes (Tim Goddard, 2007).

Leaders who adopt inclusive practices consider ways to nurture dialogue, raise awareness, focus on student learning, and look for whole-school approaches to inclusion. This approach also is collaborative and engages the stakeholders in decision-making processes. Some challenges and barriers to social justice and inclusive leadership include comfort with the status quo, those with privilege using their influence, obstructive beliefs and values, and the burden for the leader doing this work (Wang, 2018).

An important aspect of social justice leadership is that principals view education as an opportunity to empower students, and look for opportunities to elevate student voice. It is important to support student development of critical thinking skills and the ability to look critically at policies, laws and practices, in particular related to dominant culture. Additionally, students need to take ownership of their learning. Another aspect of social justice leadership is hiring teachers who adhere to a social justice approach. The principal then has the essential responsibility to build capacity in teachers through ongoing professional development opportunities. Ultimately, inclusive and equity leaders look beyond individuals, and consider the larger system (Ross & Berger, 2009; Wang, 2018).

Leadership preparation. Barakat, Reames and Kensler (2018) study the importance of preparing culturally competent leaders to support a changing world where the student population is becoming increasingly diverse. The researchers conducted a quantitative, cross-sectional, causal-comparative study to examine if those graduating from an educational leadership program have increased cultural competence compared to those just beginning an educational leadership program. Their research question focused on finding if there is a difference between the cultural knowledge, cultural beliefs and motivation, and cultural skills for students at the beginning and end of their educational leadership programs (Barakat et al., 2018).

There were 251 participants from 16 different institutions in the study conducted by Barakat, Reames, and Kensler (2018), with 139 in the starting cohort and 112 in the graduating cohort. The researchers developed a Cultural Competence of Educational Leaders (CCEL) questionnaire, which was sent out to 77 UCEA member institutions. UCEA members are schools with a commitment to diversity, equity and social justice. The study found that participating in these educational leadership programs contributed to a positive and statistically significant effect on cultural competence, including the subconstructs of cultural knowledge and cultural beliefs and motivation. It is through access to diverse faculty, opportunities for travel in foreign cultures, and encouragement to consider alternative perspectives that participants in UCEA Educational Leadership Preparation Programs expand and grow their cultural competence from the time of starting the program until graduating (Barakat et al., 2018).

School leadership is of the utmost importance, second only to classroom instruction regarding impact on student learning. Therefore, educational leadership programs play an important role in preparing principals to effectively navigate and support students from diverse cultural backgrounds in an inclusive and equitable manner. Hierarchical leadership is problematic, as it maintains the status quo, including inequitable practices and tends to be biased. Collaborative leadership and advocacy for cultural diversity is essential to promote justice, equity and inclusive school communities that will provide opportunities for all students to succeed (Barakat et al., 2018).

Hernandez and Koze (2012) analyze how the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) tool can support understanding the cultural competence of principals, as well as provide suggestions for leader preparation. The DMIS is a research-based tool that has been developed over the last couple of decades. It also includes an Intercultural Development

Inventory, that provides a quick assessment of intercultural sensitivity and awareness. The DMIS and the IDI are used by organizations and educators in the United States and globally as a tool to support ongoing growth and development in the area of intercultural awareness. The DMIS has five levels of intercultural sensitivity. It starts with denial, and the idea of monocultural socialization. The next phase is defense, where principals would perhaps use simplistic explanations to describe the reasons for achievement differences based on cultural diversity. At this stage, principals might blame a host of factors for the decreased achievement of diverse students, and also will hold diverse students to lower expectations. The minimization stage of the DMIS often has principals looking to promote colorblind practices, and focusing on how all students are similar and embracing a common humanity. It is in the acceptance and adaptation phase that principals start to acknowledge how differences in cultural backgrounds and systemic practices and policies influence student achievement. This includes structures and institutionalized beliefs and practices that promote discrimination of marginalized and minority groups. An important concept in leadership development programs is to understand that the different levels of intercultural sensitivity will require differentiated needs for continued growth and development. In order to nurture school leaders who promote equitable practices and social justice in schools, it is important to consider the growth and development of leaders through leadership development programs (Hernandez & Kose, 2012).

Williams (2018) conducted a qualitative study with document analysis of what students study to support raising awareness and opportunities provided for historically marginalized students. What should be the desired knowledge base for culturally competent leaders? In her study, Williams claims that there is a need to redesign leadership training programs to better build leader capacity around cultural competence, equity and social justice work. Her study

found that we need shifts in how we prepare culturally competent leaders to engage in equity and social justice work. Her study included a thoughtful process of faculty coming together to ground in the goal of redesigning the curriculum to enhance cultural competence and the reasons for doing so. They engaged with community members to understand the unique context of their area, and collaboratively came up with a definition and indicators of cultural competence. The goal was to create a more culturally relevant and proactive curriculum to support the development of culturally competent leaders. The work to develop culturally competent leaders is ongoing, and efforts need to continue to nurture leaders who advocate for equity and social justice (Williams, 2018).

Discussion of similarities and differences between cited studies related to the sub-construct. Cultural competence is having the skills and knowledge to communicate and collaborate in diverse, cross-cultural settings. Cultural competence also includes knowledge of and appreciation of cultural diversity, and a commitment to fighting oppression, discrimination, and racism. Culturally competent educational leaders possess cultural knowledge, cultural beliefs and motivation, and cultural skills (Barakat et al., 2018). Culturally competent school leaders create conditions where teachers and other members of the school community feel empowered, and they find ways to distribute leadership to inspire all teachers to create inclusive spaces where diversity and multiculturalism is accepted and explored (Cherkowski, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2008; Riehl, 2000). Culturally competent school leaders nurture rich opportunities for teachers to reflect on their privilege, to explore ways to support students' diverse backgrounds, and to apply a social justice and equity lens to their curricular choices (Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Riehl, 2000).

We will need new models for professional development programming to support leaders and schools as they continue to evolve and promote cultural competency and an accepting culture around diversity, equity and multiculturalism (Cherkowski, 2010).

Data from Stakeholders and the Organization

International Schools

International schools exist in cities around the world, serving students of expatriates and host-country nationals. While not a widely agreed upon definition, Bunnell (2016) defines international schools as those that offer a curriculum taught in English, and are located outside of an English speaking country. International schools were originally established to serve the needs of globally mobile parents, including diplomats, aid workers, employees of transnational companies, and other expatriates (Bunnell et al., 2016; Hayden & Thompson, 1998; Wechsler, 2017). In recent years, there has been massive growth in the number of international schools globally. In the1960s there were around 400 traditional international schools, and in the 1990s there were estimated to be about 500 international schools (Bunnell et al., 2016). Today there are more than 8,000 international schools, serving 4.5 million students and employing 420,000 teachers (Wechsler, 2017).

Schools establish themselves as international when they offer instruction in English, but reside in a non-English speaking country. The increase in the number of new international schools being developed is largely to serve local, wealthy students. In the review by Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016), which looked at the legitimacy of international schools, the authors designated three classifications of international schools:

- Type A Traditional – These schools serve the children of globally mobile parents and a diverse cultural mix of students. They are usually privately funded and not-

for-profit, typically serving expatriate children who are transient in nature, where the parents have relocated to that particular city/country for work purposes. These schools have created membership associations, such as ECIS, NESA, EARCOS, AISA, and others.

- Type B Ideological – These schools are committed to education for global peace and other philosophical ideas. These schools are unique and few in number, and have a focus on international mindedness.
- Type C Non-traditional - These are newer schools that are being established, typically privately-owned and established to make a profit. By 2013, most international schools are for-profit.

To legitimately call oneself an international school, it should have a diverse student population. There is rapid growth of international schools, largely among Type C Non-traditional schools. However, most of these schools recruit their students from the local, indigenous population, and thus will struggle with legitimacy in calling themselves international (Bunnell et al., 2016).

Relationship to Problem of Practice

Depending on the charter and mission, these international schools generally hire teachers from countries around the world, who serve in a transient manner. By their nature, international schools serve diverse populations of students, many of whom are outside their home country, and employ teachers from different countries, backgrounds, and experiences to work in their schools (Hayden et al., 2000; Heyward, 2002; *International Job Guide*, n.d.; Keller, 2015; Wechsler, 2017). With their richly diverse populations, international schools have the potential to maximize opportunities for students to learn social responsibility and global citizenship on a daily basis. As

international schools continue to expand and increase in number, there is a need to explore and deepen the cultural competence of the leadership, faculty and organization, which includes increasing awareness of one's culture, and the ability to understand and appreciate the differences and cultural backgrounds of students and families in the school. The goal is to understand what makes each person unique, while also building a community of learners (Lind, 2017).

When an international school student is asked where they are from, it is complex. Their nationality, where they were born, and where they grew up might all be different. As the world becomes increasingly mobile, where someone is from is often complicated. At the heart of the complexity is the concept of identity and what experiences have shaped that identity. Only focusing on nationality misses the richness and complexity of the experiences that shape a person's identity and sense of belonging to multiple global localities (Glass, 2018).

Current trends in international schools. Over the last thirty years, student demographics in international schools has shifted from majority expatriates to majority local students. Since 2000, the market for international schools has expanded from 2,584 international schools serving less than a million students with 90,000 staff to 10,282 international schools in 2019 serving 5.36 million students with 503,000 staff. There are now 70 different school associations, of which 3,104 schools belong. International schools adopt a variety of curricula, including UK, US, International Baccalaureate, and others. Driving much of the growth for international school development is the increasing numbers of higher education student mobility and number of students studying outside of their home country. Asia is host to the greatest number of international schools, and also is home to the greatest growth and increase in number

of new international schools being developed. China, the United Arab Emirates, India and Pakistan have the most international schools (Gaskell, 2018).

In 2019, the Diversity Collaborative conducted research to establish baseline data about the state of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work in international schools, as well as the diversity of current international school leadership (Shaklee et al., 2019). The Diversity Collaborative partnered with George Mason University's Center for International Education and ISC Research to gather baseline data about the status of diversity in school leadership. In 2019, the Diversity Collaborative Survey was distributed by ISC to 2,676 accredited international schools who belong to at least one of the twenty associations that was included in the study. The survey was sent to up to six school leaders in each of the schools who have a role in recruitment and leadership development, and the survey was closed once they received 500 responses (Shaklee et al., 2019).

The respondents to the survey are representative of international schools globally regarding the geographic location of international schools, with Asia having the largest percentage of respondents. 56% of participants identified as male and 42% identified as female. Participants in the survey had considerable experience, with an average of nearly 32 years of education experience and nearly 13 years as an international school leader (Shaklee et al., 2019).

As there is not necessarily a shared definition of certain terms, the Diversity Collaborative used the following definitions for this survey: "Diversity is the presence of difference. Equity is ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities. Inclusion is valuing that difference" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 5). The researchers found that context played a major role in the responses as a result of the "different cultural norms, laws, regulations, policies,

and even understandings of the definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 5).

The findings of the survey revealed that some schools are well on their way to intentionally and strategically focus on the topics of diversity, equity and inclusion. These included having a comprehensive strategic focus and moving beyond passport diversity, as well as mentoring and leadership development efforts to nurture strong diverse candidates in the pipeline. The key to success in these areas was identified as intentionality and a strategic commitment. Alternatively, there are many challenges identified in the survey, including the "definitions, perceptions, pathways, Board/governance, local culture, and what is known in the literature as 'minimization bias'" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 6), or a tendency to minimize the need for diverse staffing, and a perception that this isn't of value. Some schools shared a perceived cost of diversity, and that a more diverse leadership team might be equated with lower quality. Another challenge identified was the lack of qualified diverse candidates in the pipeline, and perceptions that diverse candidates represent lower quality educators. Other barriers spoke to resistance from the Board or the local context as not supporting diverse leadership, and a desire for males with lighter skin. A tension was also found between many international schools celebrating diverse student populations, but employing a monocultural faculty. Additionally, there were a number of responses that also shared a monocultural mindset, or had a minimization approach, meaning that there wasn't a perceived value in diverse staffing (Shaklee et al., 2019).

As a result of the findings, the Diversity Collaborative developed an "*Integrated Organizational Framework* to help international schools and organizations serving international schools become more multicultural, equitable and just" (Shaklee et al., 2019, p. 11). The goal is to shift from monocultural mindsets to a more intercultural mindset that values and seeks to

develop diverse leadership teams. The framework shifts from resistance to commitment to strategic focus to persistence to sustainability/leadership. The recommendations within this framework include encouraging ongoing trainings related to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, creating definitions for these terms related to the school's context, incorporating these concepts into the strategic plan or accreditation process, connect with other schools and organizations engaging in this work, and to continue to keep a focus on diverse leadership and faculty in international schools (Shaklee et al., 2019).

Summary

Existence of the Problem of Practice

As the world becomes increasingly mobile, it is essential to address the diversity of student populations in international schools and to find ways to nurture a sense of belonging, as well as teach a culturally relevant curriculum. As found in their research in 2019, Shaklee, Daly, Duffy and Watts determined that there are varied definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as varied value of these attributes. Schools tend to focus more strongly on student diversity, but not on faculty or leadership diversity, and having a diverse leadership team is not necessarily valued by many of the respondents (Shaklee et al., 2019). While student populations are becoming increasingly diverse with respect to race, nationality, LGBTQ status, language development, religion, and gender, among other identities, teachers continue to be predominantly white and from Western backgrounds, which can present barriers to social justice education (Savva, 2017a).

Need for the Study

The challenge in international schools is twofold:

1. International schools have diverse and complex populations of students, representing the array of diverse attributes. However, diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence have not been studied significantly in these settings.
2. The strategic vision and improvements efforts of schools are directly related to the priorities and vision of the school leadership. However, not all international school leaders value or believe that diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence are needed. There seems to be an assumption amongst international school leaders that diverse staffing is not necessary, and celebrating the diversity of the student population is sufficient when considering inclusion and global minded efforts.

The overall hope is to "enhance school leaders' ability to lead diverse schools that prepare all students to navigate, critique, and succeed in a complex, multicultural world" (Hernandez & Kose, 2012, p. 526). The purpose of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population.

Chapter 3: Methods and Design for Action

Study Purpose and Design

The purpose of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population. In particular, it is through the school's leadership that these topics are elevated and given attention in a school setting to support equitable and culturally relevant practices that promote achievement for all students (Barakat, Reames, & Kensler, 2018; Riehl, 2000).

Methodology Rationale. There have been other dissertations over the last decade that have explored cultural competence and international-mindedness in international schools and among international school administrators (Bustamante, 2005; Hirsch, 2016; Jubert, 2016; Muller, 2012). These studies have all been qualitative or mixed methods studies. Jubert's study (2016) was a mixed methods study and had a similar line of inquiry to this proposed study. In Jubert's study, he studied international school leaders in the EARCOS region, specifically assessing intercultural competence and comparing against demographic and background experiences. In Jubert's recommendations for future research, he suggested that further study should examine international school administrators' behaviors, knowledge and skills related to intercultural learning, as well as to explore what intercultural competence work these administrators promote in their schools. This study will attempt to consider exactly these suggestions.

The methodology for this inquiry is a qualitative case study, considering Heads of School from schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools,

the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA). Case studies are conducted in order to explore a particular phenomenon and discover the themes that emerge (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Mertens, 2010; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1981, 2018). Case studies provide an in-depth analysis of a particular case, which is bounded by time and activity, and researchers use a variety of data collection procedures to get to the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Mertens, 2010; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This study is a case study, and will explore emerging themes related to cultural competence and culturally competent leadership among Heads of School from international schools globally.

This method allows the researcher to capture the essence of how school leaders are engaging in and promoting cultural competence in their international schools. This study contributes to the profession as trends and themes emerge that could help future practitioners learn from the successes and challenges that school leaders face engaging in this work in an international school context.

Participants and Data Sources

Population. The population for this study is Heads of School in international schools. Heads of School are called different names in different schools, including Director, Superintendent, or Head of School. This study considered only the schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the

Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: AASSA, AISA, MAIS, EARCOS, NESA, and CEESA. These schools are English-speaking, and only schools that offer a North American or International Baccalaureate curriculum and diploma will be considered. The majority of these Heads of School come from North America, but also from other countries globally. All participants are over 21 years old, fluent English speakers, and with a minimum of a Bachelor degree, but in most cases a Master degree or higher. There are no known disabilities among the participants.

Purposeful selection. Following IRB approval, the researcher used the ISC Research database to get the names and contact details for the directors of schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: AASSA, AISA, MAIS, EARCOS, NESA, and CEESA.

The researcher emailed the recruitment letter to the Heads of School, inviting them to participate in this study. The recruitment letter was also distributed through the Diversity Collaborative, which is part of International Schools Services, and includes international educators and school leaders globally. The Diversity Collaborative is a group of international educators and school leaders who have chosen to become individual members. The group is exploring diversity in staffing and leadership, as well as the promotion of cultural competence, equity, inclusion, and social justice in international schools. The facilitators of this group also supported disseminating the recruitment letter to potential participants who can best help the researcher understand the case.

The initial email did not yield enough participants, and the researcher resent the recruitment letter to the Heads of School, as well as through the Diversity Collaborative. The

researcher hoped to recruit a sample of at least 15 participants, and a maximum of 20 participants.

Depending on who self-selected to participate following the recruitment email, the researcher was flexible, while trying to ensure representation from each region. The goal was to include at least one Head of School from each region, therefore the researcher planned to hold interest from participants on a waitlist until each of the six regions is represented. Then the researcher will go back to the list to fill in the remaining participants based on the order that potential participants expressed interest. However, the study was conducted as the COVID-19 global pandemic began, and schools around the world transitioned to virtual learning. Due to the global crisis and limited responses for participants, the researcher accepted whoever communicated a willingness to participate, without necessarily ensuring representation from the six regions.

Convenience sample. Participants were selected through a convenience sample, including those who agreed to be interviewed. While using a convenience sample limits the ability to generalize beyond the population pool, a strength of the study will be the representation of school leaders from regional associations around the world (Mertens, 2010; Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The objective was to have at least one Head of School from each regional association, to ensure global representation.

When considering the ethical implications of the work, the author was sure to have clear and transparent communication about the details of being a participant in the study. This included obtaining consent from the participants to be a part of the study, and providing them with information about the amount of time and effort involved by being a participant in the study, that participation is strictly voluntary, details of the format of the data collection, the

confidentiality of the information that is collected, that the author will maintain anonymity, that participants will be able to critique and provide feedback regarding their answers/transcript, and also the benefit to the participants and experts in the field (Miles et al., 2014).

Exclusion criteria. In order to have a narrow focus on leadership that influences a school's work related to cultural competence, this study excludes principals and other administrators working in international schools. Additionally, in order to avoid a conflict of interest, and due to the fact that he is the author's supervisor, this study also excludes the director at the International School of Kenya. The study will also exclude Dr. Alan Knobloch, the director of the International School of Dakar, as he is on the researcher's committee.

Data Collection and Specific Practices

Qualitative data. Prior to collecting data, the researcher applied for IRB approval to conduct research with human subjects. Following approval, the researcher recruited the sample for the study, as indicated in the previous section. When participants were confirmed, this qualitative case study collected data from participants through semistructured interviews using Zoom audio conferencing software.

The interviews consisted of ten open-ended questions. These were scheduled at a time that was convenient for both the researcher and the participant, given the potential time differences based on location globally. Questions on the interview survey are grounded in the conceptual framework, arising from the review of literature that is relevant to the constructs of cultural competency and cultural competency leadership. A final question provided an opportunity for participants to share up to two documents that provide examples of the policies or initiatives that were discussed in the interview. Supplying documents was optional, and not a

requirement of participating in the study. Including document review in the case study allows for supporting evidence and triangulation to make a stronger study (Yin, 2018).

All interviews were audio recorded. Once the interviews were transcribed and member check was complete, the audio recording were discarded, and all transcript data was stored on a password protected, encrypted thumb drive that was securely locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Interviews were transcribed with Nvivo software, and reviewed for accuracy against the researcher's notes. Following transcription of interviews, the researcher did a member check and participants were asked to verify their responses, and edit as needed, to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2010; Stake, 1995). The transcripts and documents will be stored in the researcher's home office for three years. The hard drive will then be wiped clean and any hard copies of documents will be shredded.

Data collection steps.

1. Following IRB approval, the researcher used the ISC Research database to get the names and contact details for the directors of schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA).

2. The researcher emailed the recruitment letter to the Heads of School, inviting them to participate in this study. The recruitment letter was also be distributed through the

Diversity Collaborative, which is part of International Schools Services, and includes international educators and school leaders globally. The Diversity Collaborative is a group of international educators and school leaders who have chosen to become individual members. The group is exploring diversity in staffing and leadership, as well as the promotion of cultural competence, equity, inclusion, and social justice in international schools. The facilitators of this group also supported disseminating the recruitment letter to potential participants who can best help the researcher understand the case (see Appendix A & D).

3. As the initial email did not yield enough participants, the researcher resent the recruitment letter to the Heads of School, as well as through the Diversity Collaborative. The researcher hoped to recruit a sample of at least 15 participants, and a maximum of 20 participants.

4. Participants were selected through a convenience sample, including those who agreed to be interviewed. While using a convenience sample limits the ability to generalize beyond the population pool, a strength of the study is the representation of school leaders from regional associations having membership of international schools around the world (Mertens, 2010; Miles et al., 2014). Depending on who self-selects to participate following the recruitment email, the researcher was flexible, while trying to ensure representation from each region. The goal was to include at least one Head of School from each region, therefore the researcher had planned to hold interest from participants on a waitlist until each of the six regions is represented. Then the researcher planned to go back to the list to fill in the remaining participants based on the order that potential participants expressed interest. However, the study was conducted as the COVID-19

global pandemic began, and schools around the world transitioned to virtual learning. Due to the global crisis and limited responses for participants, the researcher accepted whoever communicated a willingness to participate, without necessarily ensuring representation from the six regions.

5. Following responses from potential participants, the researcher obtained consent from the participants to be a part of the study, and provided them with information about the amount of time and effort involved by being a participant in the study. After signing the consent form, participants were sent the interview questions ahead of the interview.

6. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants using Zoom audio software.

7. Interviews were audio recorded using Zoom, and transcribed using Nvivo software.

8. Participants were able to critique and provide feedback regarding their answers/transcript (Miles et al., 2014). Participants clarified, edited or in some cases asked to delete some identifying information in the transcript.

9. Audio recordings were erased after participants review the transcript.

10. Participants had the opportunity to supply up to two documents that they have created that provide examples of policies and initiatives related to their culturally competent leadership. These could include school policies, guidelines or practices, initiatives or other documents the participant has authored or had a role in creating.

11. All data is stored on a password protected, encrypted thumb drive that is securely locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home office. During this period, the IRB will also have access to this data, upon request.

12. Participants had the opportunity to withdraw consent at any time before the dissertation is completed. In this scenario, the researcher would destroy relevant transcripts and notes.

Design Alignment Tool (Kanyongo, 2017). Table 1 outlines how the data collection and analysis align with each of the research questions in the study.

Table 1

Design Alignment Tool

Study Problem and Purpose	Research Questions	Data Collection Tools	Data Points Yielded	Data Source	Data Analysis
Not all international school leaders prioritize or support devoting time and energy to diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence. The purpose of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence	RQ 1: How are school leaders engaging in and promoting cultural competence in international schools?	This qualitative study will collect data from participants through semi-structured interviews using Zoom audio software.	Interview questions (see appendix).	Participants in this study will be Heads of School in international schools. The population will be limited to international schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of	The interviews will be transcribed and then coded using NVivo software to uncover themes related to culturally competent leadership.

in the international school population.				Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA).	
	RQ 2: What are the common successes and challenges of engaging in work related to cultural competence in international schools?	This qualitative study will collect data from participants through semi-structured interviews using Zoom audio software.	Interview questions (see appendix).	Participants in this study will be Heads of School in international schools. The population will be limited to international schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern	The interviews will be transcribed and then coded using NVivo software to uncover themes related to culturally competent leadership.

				European Schools Association (CEESA).	

Data Analysis and Evaluation

Processing the data is an essential and ongoing process to make sense of the themes that emerge and capture the essence of cultural competence in international school leaders. The researcher maintained a research notebook, and as the data was analyzed the researcher documented what analyses have been done in a research notebook (Mertens, 2010; Miles et al., 2014).

The first step in the analysis process was to thoroughly read all of the transcripts, with the goal of getting a holistic view of the data that was collected, as recommended by Tesch (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used NVivo software to support analyzing the interview transcripts. This software enabled the researcher to highlight and code the data in an organized manner. The researcher also analyzed the documents provided by the participants using a similar process.

There are multiple rounds of coding, in order to refine and apply different lenses when reviewing the themes that emerge. The first round of coding involved reading the transcripts and marking them up. Analysis included looking for words or phrases that the researcher believes to be important based on the review of literature related to cultural competency and culturally competent leadership (Miles et al., 2014). This phase requires the researcher to remain open, to stay close to data, to keep the codes simple, to compare data with data, and to move quickly (Mertens, 2010).

The codes used are labels that give meaning to the different layers of information that emerge in the study. These include single words and short phrases that capture the essence for various portions of the data. These codes provide the impetus for deeper reflection, data condensation, and discovering patterns and themes (Miles et al., 2014).

After the first round of coding, the researcher used the NVivo software to review the codes that emerged from the data, and identify trends and themes among the codes. The researcher looked for patterns, identified any similarities and differences, grouped together some of the themes that emerged, and tried to synthesize the data. Then the researcher engaged in several rounds of coding, including focused coding to test the initial codes against the data to see if they stand strong with the emerging themes (Mertens, 2010; Miles et al., 2014).

In some cases, the researcher might determine to follow up with a participant to expand on an idea from the interview transcript. This data will then also be incorporated into future rounds of coding.

The researcher interspersed the rounds of coding with jottings in the research notebook. These consisted of the researcher's comments and annotations, to capture emerging reflections while analyzing the data. These jottings provided an opportunity to make deeper connections and uncover areas for further analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Ultimately, the researcher made an interpretation of the findings from the data and coding (Creswell, 2014). Following analysis of the data, the researcher developed a summary of the findings related to how school leaders are engaging in and promoting cultural competence in international schools. The researcher plans to publish the findings in relevant journals and also to present at various international conferences, such as CIS or ECIS.

Targets and Timeline

All interviews were conducted in April 2020. Data analysis, including reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, as well as document review, was ongoing throughout the process of data collection, as well as beyond that timeframe.

Limitations

Limitations include the research's personal bias. Additionally, participants self-selected their inclusion in the study based on their self-perceptions of culturally competent leadership. Data is based on self-reporting by participants. Results will not be generalizable beyond the heads of schools for the international school community.

Summary

It is through the school's leadership that the topics of cultural competence, diversity, equity and inclusion are elevated and given attention in a school setting to support equitable and culturally relevant practices that promote achievement for all students (Barakat, Reames, & Kensler, 2018; Riehl, 2000). This qualitative case study allows the researcher to capture the essence of how school leaders are engaging in and promoting cultural competence in their international schools.

This study will contribute to the profession as trends and themes emerge that could help future practitioners learn from the successes and challenges that school leaders face engaging in this work in an international school context.

Chapter 4: Description of Findings and Recommended Actions

This chapter will share the findings from this study, including the interpretation, themes that emerged, implications, and recommendations for international school leadership related to leading for cultural competency. This chapter addresses each of the research questions, as well as the limitations and future research recommendations.

The purpose of this study is to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population.

This study endeavors to address the following research questions:

1. How are school leaders engaging in and promoting cultural competence in international schools?
2. What are the common successes and challenges of engaging in work related to cultural competence in international schools?

In addition to answering the research questions, this chapter reviews the demographics of the heads of school who participated in the study, the unique leadership observed, the pieces of advice they offered, recommendations and implications for educational leadership in cultural competence, limitations, and future research recommendations.

Discussion of the Findings

This section outlines the findings from the study, as well as provides discussion, interpretation, and implications of this study. The findings are organized around the research questions, and the impact of the findings on international school leaders are also discussed.

School Leader Sample Demographics

Fourteen heads of school volunteered to be a part of this study. Of the fourteen, ten are male and four are female. They provide representation from four different regional associations, with three from the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), nine from the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), one from the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), and one from the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA). The heads of school range in experience from two to 23 years as a Head of School, with the average length of 7.9 years as a Head of School.

The participants indicate various aspects of their experiences or identity that inform and impact them as international school leaders and educators, as can be seen in Table 2. Pseudonyms and general descriptors of their school names are used to protect the identity of participants.

Table 2

International School Head Participants - Experiences and Identity

Head of School	Experiences and Identity
Douglas	Douglas grew up as a first generation American, and noted that he developed grit and tenacity as a result of observing his parents, who had emigrated from Argentina. He has been in this type of role for six years total. He is head at an American School in South East Asia, where he has been in his current role for three years.
Les	Les shared that he grew up in the US, but spent two years at a young age in the Amazon jungles of Peru and then went to high school in Kabul, Afghanistan, and thus started a life of curiosity and adventure. He has been a head of school for a total of 11 years, all at his current school, which is an American School in the non-gulf Middle East.
Jeffrey	Jeffrey grew up with parents in the military, and attended 12 schools in eight US states while growing up, and is very comfortable frequently moving around. He has been the head of school at an American School in South Asia for three years, and head of school for a total of ten years.
Cynthia	Cynthia grew up in Ireland, and then went overseas to East Asia and experienced life as a minority, both in terms of language and educational system, and learned how to adjust culturally. She has lived and worked in Asia for 31 years, and been a head of school for two years at an International School in South East Asia.

Gary	Gary always considered himself culturally American, but in more recent years has come to see himself as multi-cultural, especially since adopting an older child from his current host country and trying to connect and understand his child's world view. He has been a head of school for 17 years, and is currently head at an International School in South East Asia.
Lori	Lori grew up in a less diverse part of the US, with exposure to Native American cultures, and only came to appreciate learning from other cultures and countries as an adult. She has been a head of school for a total of 23 years, and five years at her current school, which is an International School in South East Asia.
Alan	Alan grew up in London, with parents from Australia and Wales, but went overseas at age 23 and feels more comfortable being a minority amongst different cultures. He has been at his current school, an International School in South East Asia for 27 years, and has been the head for the last eight years.
Mark	Mark is an American who has lived for over a decade in his current host-country, and identifies as a well-traveled, international, open-minded, culturally competent person. He has worked in the same American School in the Gulf Middle East for a total of 11 years and been the head of school for the last two years.
Thomas	Thomas is an American, in his first head of school position, and has a background in clinical social work and school counseling, which significantly influences his leadership style. This American International School in East Asia is his first post as a head of school, where he has been a head for three years.
Darren	Darren grew up in the US, and did his doctoral research on cultural competence in international school leaders. The biggest impact on his cultural competence was a study abroad experience in Australia, where he fell in love with travel, new experiences and learning about new cultures. He has been a head of school for a total of eight years, including four at his current American School in Southern Africa.
Mason	When asked, Mason self-described as a white, middle-aged male from the UK, and he is keenly aware of his privilege and identity, especially in his role as Head of School. He has been at his current International School in East Asia for ten years, the last two as the head of school.
Judy	Judy is from the US, and believes that you learn a great deal from each county where you live, and you take bits of those experiences with you to future posts. She has been a head of school for a total of five years, and has been head of her current International School in South East Asia for two years.
Erin	Erin is from Chicago, and because of being raised in the US, she values hearing all voices at the table and multiple perspectives as a part of decision-making processes. She has been at her current American Faith-Based School in East Asia for 13 years, and the last four as head of school.
David	David grew up in Canada, with a Japanese father and Canadian mother, and felt that he had a dual identity. This has continued as he moved to South America and married someone from the host country, where he has lived and worked for two decades. David has been at his current American School in

	South America for nine years, and has been the head of school for the last four years.

Note. This table outlines the diverse experiences and identifiers of the 14 participants in this study.

International School Contexts

The international schools where these heads of school lead are diverse in their composition, population, demographics, curriculum, and mission. In this study, ten schools offer an American curriculum, and four identify as offering an international curriculum. Details about each of the international schools can be seen in Table 3. The schools range in size from 230 students to 2000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 school settings. Some of the schools are extremely diverse and international in terms of student populations, with several having nationality caps in policy to maintain their diverse population, while others are more national or regional in terms of student nationality and identity.

Table 3

International School Demographics and Data

Head of School	School	Student Enrollment	Demographics	Regional Association
Douglas	American School in South East Asia	500	90% of students from two Asian countries, the rest from all over the world	EARCOS
Les	American School in non-gulf Middle East	830	48 different nationalities, 30% host country nationals, 40% USA, the rest from all over the world Conservative, Muslim host country culture/laws	NESA
Jeffrey	American School in South Asia	1100	66 nationalities, 35% USA, 20% Asian country, have nationality cap 25% turnover each year, 5% attend long-term	NESA
Cynthia	International School in South East Asia	1150	65% from three Asian countries, the rest from all over the world, have nationality cap	EARCOS

			Accepting and open host country culture/laws	
Gary	International School in South East Asia	800	52 different nationalities, 30% host country nationals, 30% USA, have nationality cap Strong Buddhist culture in host country	EARCOS
Lori	International School in South East Asia	450	50% Asian students, 50% Western students, proprietary school	EARCOS
Alan	American International School in South East Asia	1100	60 nationalities, 30% USA, 28% host country nationals	EARCOS
Mark	American School in Gulf Middle East	2000	50 different nationalities, 52% host country nationals, 22% USA, proprietary school Conservative, Muslim host country culture/laws	NESA
Thomas	American International School in East Asia	230	45% host country nationals, 55% foreign passports, high percentage ethnically host country Part of host country public school system	EAROS
Darren	American School in Southern Africa	500	60 different nationalities, 30% host country nationals, the rest from all over the world Host country has laws around ethnicity of employees	AISA
Mason	International School in East Asia	550	40 different nationalities, 40% host country nationals 55% of population are company-pay through major industry in area Accepting and open host country culture/laws	EARCOS
Judy	International School in South East Asia	1150	65 different nationalities, have nationality caps	EARCOS
Erin	American Faith-Based School in East Asia	320	30 different nationalities, 25% from an Asian country, 25% from USA, 35% speak host country language at home	EARCOS

			Only allowed to take foreign passports, 70% English Language Learners, faith-based school	
David	American School in South America	700	Mostly host country nationals, 5% foreign students	AASSA

Note. This table outlines the details of each of the international schools represented by the heads of school in this study. It includes the type of school, enrollment, demographics, and the regional association to which it belongs.

How International School Leaders Engage and Promote Cultural Competence

There are significant alignment and commonalities in how the various heads of school defined cultural competence in an international school setting. Participants defined cultural competence as first and foremost understanding, valuing and appreciating one's own culture, beliefs, and values. They further state that cultural competence also includes having an awareness and being sensitive of other cultures, and being respectful of diverse cultural norms, traditions, and value systems. There is an appreciation of other cultures, rather than judging and fearing differences. In general, participants report that cultural competence means having a desire to learn about and appreciate other cultures, and having the knowledge and skills to understand how to interact in various situations. Participants described culturally competent educators as those who exhibit empathy, adaptability, global understanding, perspective taking, and take a social justice approach to education. As Erin describes, it includes "an ability to be comfortable in an environment that is perhaps different than the one that you grew up in." Judy describes cultural competence as "being able to develop a way of working with your families and your students that allows you to engage with them authentically taking into account their approach, their underpinning beliefs and values and how that might impact a situation."

When asked why cultural competence is important in an international school setting, each head of school expresses that it is essential to support diverse student populations and the development of global mindedness, or global advocacy. Several heads mention that for their teachers to be effective and successful, there must be meaningful relationships, which will only happen as a result of cultural competence. David explains that

> the major barrier to teachers being successful in the school is not their skills in the classroom, not how well they teach their curriculum. It is how well they can adapt to a new situation, how well they can understand their students.

Several heads mention the critical nature of cultural competence due to the mission and vision of their schools, and the desire to support the development of empathy, perspective taking, sensitivity, awareness of self and others, and a sense of belonging. There is a desire to support students in appreciating and understanding their own culture and identity, while also learning to collaborate and communicate within diverse settings. Several heads note that cultural competence is among the most important work to be successful in an international school, and that it could be isolating and result in a struggle to find success if teachers lack cultural competence.

In light of this critical need, Cynthia asserts the importance of taking time to support new faculty to become aware of different cultures in the community, and the expectations to help them be successful as they interact and teach. However, the specifics and details of leading with intention around cultural competence varies across heads of schools who participated in the study.

The most common ways that each head of school talked about engaging in leading for cultural competence is through the mission, vision and anchor documents, as well as school

policy and strategic goals or improvement plans. Participants also share the various programming that their schools offer to support cultural competence in their community, as well as professional learning. Another common theme is through modeling of culturally competent and inclusive leadership.

The least common form of engagement is taking a social justice approach in their leadership, or intentionally and systematically supporting culturally relevant pedagogy or global citizenship being intentionally woven into the curriculum. This is particularly interesting, as most heads talk about their schools having a mission and vision that supports diversity, global citizenship, or internationalism, and yet do not connect these anchor document aspirations with social justice education. Some ways that are indicated for addressing cultural competence in the curriculum involved using the Responsive Classroom program in elementary homeroom classes, and through advisory programs at the middle and high school levels. Some heads share some areas of strength related to curriculum work, but most note that this is an area for further growth.

In the next section, I will discuss the findings related to common successes and challenges as Heads of Schools reported as they engaged in work related to cultural competence in their respective schools.

Common Successes

When asked for their successes with cultural competence, seven heads of school mention diverse staffing, seven speak about the various curricular and co-curricular programming that they support, three speak about the mission, vision, and anchor documents, and one talks about how she models and clearly communicates expectations around how to engage as a respectful, empathetic and caring community. In the following sections, I will provide specific examples of successes Heads of School experienced related to these sub-categories.

Diverse staffing. Several heads of school have prioritized the hiring of diverse faculties. When asked why they prioritize this hiring practice, there are a variety of reasons provided.

Rationale for hiring diverse staff. When asked why they have prioritized diverse staffing, the most common response is the desire to have a faculty that represents and matches the diversity of their student population. When asked more specifically what hiring for diversity means, participants described it as finding teachers from different backgrounds and different perspectives, including diversity of languages, cultural identity, nationality, religious identity, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. Cynthia shares that with regards to diverse staffing, "actually, I think that has been one of the most critical things that I have done in both schools." She noted the importance of a community having same-sex couples, and students seeing different family compositions to develop an understanding that there are diverse families. Alan shares that there is also a strong desire amongst the faculty to become more diverse in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity. Darren shares that every year they try to increase the percentage of diverse faculty little by little with who they bring in. Mark references the research that indicates the importance of students having teachers who look like them. Douglas expresses the goal that when a student goes throughout their school day, he wants them to interact with different kinds of people, including those who look different and have different political views. He further elaborates that it is important to visibly have diversity, and to provide the opportunity for students to make strong connections with people who look different from them. However, he warns against tokenism. He also acknowledges that the color of a person's skin matters and it is important in the ways it has impacted a person's experiences. This representation matters, as the experiences people have in life inform their teaching, inform their practice, inform their worldview, inform their relationships, and this contributes to a rich and diverse community that

helps grow empathy and understanding of multiple perspectives. Judy shares a similar sentiment that she looks for how diverse faculty will enrich the community and learning experience for their students. Mason shares that his administrative team is very clear in the recruiting process with candidates. At job fairs, they outline diverse staff as a school priority, and that they value trying to bring in people from different cultures, ethnicities, language groups, and gender orientation. They are very explicit about their goal, and do not hide it from applicants. Cynthia expresses the value of having different cultures and diverse perspectives involved in the dialogue to produce better decision making, which in turn leads to a better shared vision.

Success strategies for diverse staffing. Cynthia expresses that she has had great success in the area of diverse staffing. For example, in their high school counseling department they have one counselor from the USA and another from East Asia to serve as models for their students, as well as support the diverse student population. Cynthia notes that this is intentional and purposeful, and in her perspective, makes a significant difference to students because diverse cultures are represented in the teaching faculty who are seen as models. She shares their process:

> Well, when I come into a school, I look at who is represented in the teaching faculty. And then I say, okay, when we're hiring, we are going to look for, this is going to be our criteria. And then you determine the criteria and then you seek out teachers who represent that criteria. And we do our hiring through a database using Search database, or GRC, or Carney Sandoe, whatever they might be. And we specifically seek out diversity in people that you are actually approaching.

Darren identifies networking and making personal connections as successful strategies when he meets a highly qualified educator of color. He shared:

> I think one is just always keeping that to the forefront. And so as I go around and as I meet people, as I meet administrators or others who are highly competent, I keep them in mind and oftentimes I reach out to them directly.

He then later makes direct contact with those educators when a teaching position opens up, sometimes bypassing Search Associates or ISS, some of the larger recruiting agencies for international schools. Additionally, he is intentional about giving an extra review of applications from candidates of color when they come through. Finally, the administrative team has an internal guideline to have at least one person of color among the finalists for each position that opens. David identifies maintaining independence from board influence in the hiring process as a success, such that the administrative team can hire the best candidates regardless of cultural or racial background. Judy notes that a big success has been engaging her leadership team to intentionally analyze their staffing data at the start of the recruitment period so that they will reflect on who they serve, and consider future teaching candidates with intention, better interview questions, and a rigorous rubric. She notes:

> What we do as at the start of each year is we take a look at all of our staffing before we go out recruiting. So what we try to do is we take a look at where all the different nationalities that we represent. We'd take a look at gender diversity, we take a look at demographic diversity. And so when we then go out recruiting, we take a look at, when we look at a candidate, we have kind of a rubric around the skills and competencies that we're looking for with the teaching perspective. And then we have a category of what would be additional considerations and/or added value.

Mason also shares pride in a more diverse staff and student population over the last ten years. Mark has been at his school for a number of years, and has had a direct role in the hiring of every

administrator. He is proud of the diversity of the school's leadership, including a mostly female administrative team. David indicates a hiring strategy that his school uses to seek out culturally competent teachers:

> We actually put together what we call an international anonymous checklist for hiring. We are actually evaluating candidates based on some of the characteristics or traits that may lead them to be a little bit more culturally competent.

Thomas shares that there are some large challenges in the way that his host country asks for teachers to be classified on separate lists, differentiating between host country and foreign teachers. One of the big shifts that he is proud of is the removal of these segregated lists that differentiate between host country teachers and foreign teachers, in an effort to build community and a sense that they are a single teaching community. In general, participants reported a variety of successful hiring strategies, such as analyzing current staffing to determine needs, intentionally seeking out diverse teacher candidates, making connections with diverse candidates at conferences, and having checklists that guide the hiring process.

Programming. Curricular and co-curricular programs that relate to cultural competence can be an important way to support cultural competence in the school community. The participants share a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular programming related to cultural competence that they are proud of under their leadership, including service learning, inclusion, language programs, student clubs, scholarship programs, and professional development.

Service learning. Service learning supports students as they engage in learning experiences involving community stakeholders, building relationships, and fostering respect and understanding to participate in meaningful civic engagement. Students have respectful interactions with communities as they take action following the research process. Engaging in

service learning also provides an opportunity for students to learn about and understand diverse cultural and socio-economic communities. Gary shares that "service learning is the idea of working with others and looking at how we can learn from others as we engage in service with them." He talks about the development of their service learning program over the last two years as being successful. Darren also talks about the major improvements they made shifting from a community service program to a true service learning model, where students engage in impact projects, which have connections in building cultural competence as students look to positively impact their local community.

Inclusion. International schools are beginning to become more inclusive, accepting students with mild to moderate needs, and in some cases accepting a managed number of students with more intensive learning needs. Mason expresses pride that his school now has a definition of inclusion, and that the community speaks positively about being an inclusive school. Similarly, Alan's school has an intensive needs program with eight students enrolled, and it has been highly successful and well received in the community. Inclusion programs provide an opportunity for students do develop understanding and empathy for neurodiverse students.

Language programs. With diverse populations and multiple languages, international schools typically offer a few languages for students to learn in addition to English. Not all schools offer opportunities to engage in the mother tongue or heritage language. Alan's school made a budgetary and philosophical decision to offer six native language programs as a part of the curriculum, and another 12 more languages offered as a part of the after-school program. Similarly, Gary notes that they developed a Mother Tongue after-school program over the last two years. This has been done in collaboration with different embassy and cultural groups, and is open to both students and the community as a whole, and has been well received and successful.

These language programs provide an important aspect of supporting appreciation and development of the heritage language.

Student clubs. Co-curricular student clubs provide an opportunity for students to use their voice regarding social justice issues, and to provide support and learning related to cultural competence. Cynthia proudly shares that there are a number of student clubs at her school, from LGBTQ and beyond. Mark's school has participated in the Compassion Summit, organized in the NESA region over the last few years, and he has seen this have a significant influence on his school community. The Compassion Summit focuses on developing empathy and contributes to expanding cultural competence.

Scholarship program. International schools typically cost significantly more than other private schools in developing countries. Due to the independent nature and structure of these international schools, they often lack socio-economic diversity. Scholarship programs provide an opportunity for increased diversity and representation with regards to lower socio-economic host-country nationals and students from poorer, under-represented nations. Jeffrey proudly shares the success of developing a scholarship program for students of diplomats where that nationality has less than 2% representation in their school community, in an effort to expand diversity in the student population. He shared that they:

> certainly hope that the scholarship program will enroll more students and bring more kids in and add to the diversity of the community, including people who don't have all the money from their missions and agencies to enroll their kids in the right school that they should be in.

Gary also notes that their scholarship program is a success.

Professional development. In order to support international school faculties in developing greater cultural competence, professional development is essential. Darren shares that he has used his background experience as a counselor and his research on cultural competence to provide a cultural competence training as a part of new teacher orientation. Jeffrey shares success when bringing in an expert from the host country to talk about cultural norms and dynamics working in that country, which was a learning experience for the parent community, faculty and also the administrative team. The participants proudly shared the various curricular and co-curricular programming their schools offer as a meaningful way to support cultural competence across various parts of the school experience.

Mission, vision, and anchor documents. The anchor documents, including the mission, vision, and values documents, can be critical in grounding the school community's identity, and providing a guide for strategic planning and programming. Alan cites the mission, vision and anchor documents, along with school improvement plans, as being an area of success. Douglas shares that they keep the mission alive in their work with students, and the messaging around engaging and empowering students. While it might not be directly measurable in the immediate, his hope is that students absorb and observe the school's consistency in living their values, such that later in life they will recognize the importance of celebrating student voice and success. Jeffrey shares a success around rebranding and marketing their school as an international community. As an American school, he found that there was a widespread perception in the region that only Americans could attend the school. With over 65 nationalities, they made an intentional push to share that they are an international community school. This also paired with the school's first schoolwide International Day celebration, which is a tradition he hopes will

continue. Most participants referenced the mission and vision documents of their school as a noted success as they work to engage in cultural competence.

Culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally competent curriculum. Culturally relevant pedagogy can be an important aspect in supporting cultural competence in the curriculum. While none of the participants share that curriculum or pedagogical approach was an area of strength, there are some successes that are worth noting to this subcategory.

David shares how his school is looking at global citizenship, and diving into their curriculum to support that work. As they reviewed the Common Core State Standards, they noticed that it does not address cultural competencies, and so they have been looking a Global Citizenship document published by UNICEF, which has a framework of standards and outcomes for students from grades kindergarten through grade 12.

Erin shares that a culturally competent teacher will take the US curriculum and make cultural adjustments to fit the needs of the students where they are. She provides a math example, as well as considering how they consider diverse authors and texts for their language arts classes that are relevant to the students' cultural background, the kind of life experiences that they have had or they likely will have in future. She also shares their formal curriculum review process, which includes evaluating the materials they use, and looking at the bigger system. She acknowledges that they want teachers to have their individual personalities, but that there needs to be accountability structures in place so that they have best practices and a guaranteed shared experience for all students based on what the school communicates they will deliver. Lori shares that they have a similar process with regard to the curriculum, where they look at the Canon of literature to ensure that we are using diverse authors and genre. They encourage teachers to reflect about their choices of text and what they teach, and ensure that it is a broad overview of

how different people live. Gary also talks about their curriculum review process, and that multiculturalism is one of the aspects that is a part of that process. He shares that they want their faculty to continue to look for ways to incorporate multiculturalism and inclusive practices and service learning practices within the curriculum, and it is also a part of their strategic themes. There is a high level of intention with this process and how it all links to meaningful teaching and learning.

There are several themes that emerged as common successes related to culturally competent leadership across the participants in this study. These include diverse hiring practices, providing curricular and co-curricular programming that supports cultural competence, and the importance and strength of having solid anchor documents.

Common Challenges

While each participant was able to share successes with engaging in and promoting cultural competence in their schools, challenges abound. Almost every participant speaks of the challenges related to hiring for diverse staffing, whether due to the regulations for acquiring visas in their host country, community perceptions, or challenges with finding diverse teachers in the common international school recruitment agencies. Additionally, most of the participants share challenges with community perceptions and the legal system in their host countries as major barriers to successfully leading for cultural competence. Others discuss their lack of progress in being systematic or intentional in developing a culturally competent curriculum, competing priorities, and high turnover of staff as challenges that inhibit the work. In the following sections, I will summarize how the participants speak about challenges related to diverse staffing, community perceptions related to programming and educational approach, local

context and legal constraints, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally competent curriculum, high turnover of staff, competing priorities, and other challenges.

Diverse staffing. An initial challenge expressed by five of the heads was the lack of diverse candidates in the most popular recruitment agencies and in international schools in general. Alan comments that every time he turns to recruiting agencies, such as Search Associates, it is predominantly the same educators moving around the international schools circuit. Judy similarly shares that it is very difficult to find diverse educators with the agencies her school uses. Cynthia expands by sharing that teachers and administrators of African American or other diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in international schools, and she has to work hard to intentionally seek out diverse educators and build up your faculty over time. Darren shares a similar sentiment by stating that there are not many highly competent and qualified educators from diverse backgrounds in the international school teaching pool. David shares a similar challenge, and that many of the recruiting agencies or job search databases insist on having the teacher's photo attached to the educator profile. When asked to remove the photos, the various agencies share that they can't or won't take the photos down, as they have feedback that the photos are a popular feature.

Several participants also share challenges with visas and other regulations in the hiring process for their host country or school. Lori shares that her school has struggled with hiring practices that prioritize hiring Caucasian candidates from Western countries, which then makes it a challenge to mirror the cultural diversity of their students with the teaching force. She further shares that in Asia, there still tends to be a great deal of racism with regard to nationalities and skin color. This is difficult to overcome when parents may have preconceived notions about a teacher's efficacy based on racial biases they may have. These concerns are also shared by other

heads in Asia, and some countries that specifically regulate and discriminate against which passport countries can get visas. For example, both Thomas and Erin share that they can only hire teachers who are native English speakers or from a native English-speaking country. Erin shared the following:

> they have a specific list, a specific definition of how they define English speaking countries. And so some of that we might say, well, actually this person maybe from someplace on the African continent grew up speaking English, but it doesn't sound like American English or English from the UK or Canada. So they may not be considered from an English speaking country.

Thomas further comments that in advertisements around the country they will see that businesses are seeking a 'white man to teach English' or a 'white woman for a programmer.' A large challenge for these schools is that the host country is heavily invested in appearances over qualifications or competence.

While many heads speak about diversity of race, ethnicity, age, gender, nationality and beyond, Mark speaks very specifically about sexuality. Being in the Middle East, homosexuality is illegal, and Mark shares:

> I can tell you that if I were interviewing a teacher that were homosexual and my board found out that I knew they were homosexual during the interview, I would be directed not to make the offer. But if I offered and a homosexual accepted, as long as they understood that it was illegal here and basically weren't overtly homosexual in the workplace it wouldn't be a problem. We do have staff that are homosexual, but my board would not be happy if they knew that I knowingly offered a job to a teacher that was homosexual.

Douglas and Jeffrey both work in schools that have policies of only hiring American teachers or have a tax advantage for hiring American citizens. However, Jeffrey notes that he has pushed back on that pressure, and shares that the tax advantage is limited. His sense is that after the school has satisfied the financial responsibility and interests with the tax advantage, the school should seek to hire as diversely as possible.

Erin shares an example when she had hired a math teacher from Cameroon, and his instructional approach was not well received by students. These anecdotal observations and challenges then feed into her own perceptions and thoughts when thinking about future hiring. She reflects that administrators all aspire and believe they are not biased. She notes that she is constantly trying to challenge her own assumptions as she looks at resumes, and wondering if she is subconsciously filtering out candidates inappropriately based on previous experiences she has observed in her community with teachers from certain countries or regions. She expresses that hiring an American to teach their American curriculum would be the easiest solution, and yet there is a desire to hire teachers from diverse countries in order to have diverse perspectives in the faculty, as well as teachers who mirror their student population.

Erin further shares her ongoing question about whether a host-country national can or should be an English teacher in her school. On the one hand, the community perception is that the role will be filled by a native English speaker. On the other hand, all teachers who work in the school are fluent and qualified English speakers, and should be equipped to be successful English teachers. Mason shares:

> And ultimately if you get it wrong, it doesn't do the cause of diversity any good because it reinforces the stereotypes that person X is not as effective teacher as person Y, and people start making unfair stereotypes based on that.

Judy expresses that it can be challenging depending on where the school is located. For example, in some countries, the leadership needs to be careful about who is hired because of the overall environment for different cultures to come into or depending on the laws of the host country. She shares the dilemma of knowing that you have someone that would bring diversity to the table and really enrich the program and the lives of the students, but then not being quite sure whether or not the community is ready for it. And further, it is also important to ensure that the existing staff has the cultural competence to welcome and support diverse staff. Hiring is one step, but then supporting and sustaining diverse staff is another altogether. She notes that she feels lucky that her current host country is very open to who they can hire, which makes things much easier when hiring diverse staff.

David shares cost as a challenge. His school is in South America, and so if he was to hire teachers from Africa or Asia, it would generate more costs to support the foreign hire teacher package which includes flights to the home of record. Similarly, their leadership is able to successfully manage the American higher education systems, or the credentialing system. However, hiring teachers from other countries and systems requires learning about and closely analyzing their credentials and ensuring that they would be equivalent to the American teachers.

Mason shares a unique challenge. When he arrived at his school ten years ago, he noticed that the entire administrative team was male, staff used gendered language, and most teachers were from the USA or the UK. However, none of this seemed to bother people, and it wasn't challenged. As the school has shifted their practices and hired a more diverse staff who value diversity and inclusion, a challenge has been to manage community expectations. Although his school is now far more diverse, inclusive, and tolerant than it was ten years ago, he finds they have more pressure and criticism to continue to evolve and progress.

Community perceptions related to diverse staffing. Beyond the recruitment agencies and other hiring challenges, several participants share a challenge with community perception related to diverse staffing. Cynthia shares the challenge and importance around educating parents regarding the value of having a diverse selection of faculty. She expresses that especially parents of a non-Western background often send their children to international schools with the specific goal of learning English and being immersed in a Western culture. This goal often has a preconceived assumption that the teacher will look a certain way, or be from a certain country, and thus requires parent education to clarify those assumptions and misperceptions. Thomas also finds that he needs to reinforce in his messaging to parents that all teachers in their school are qualified. However, he has a sense that there are beliefs that stem beyond his school community that the parents are paying for a foreign, English-medium education. With that is an expectation to have native English speakers who are White. Mark shares a similar challenge, in that the parent community at his school is looking for American teachers, and with that comes a certain image. He shares an example of parents being upset with hiring a teacher with an Arab name. Even though this was someone who grew up in California and identifies as American, there is an expectation from the community for a certain image of American teachers, and assumptions about the quality of teachers based on their names alone. David similarly shares that his parent community also perceives that a foreign teacher means a White, blonde, blue-eyed American. Thomas shares that for many parents who are host country nationals, they assume that if a host country national is teaching a course, that can downgrade the relevance and significance of that class. These challenges were shared from East Asia to the Middle East to South America.

Racism in diverse communities. At the heart of the challenge with community perceptions related to diverse staffing is the racist perceptions globally. Thomas communicates

that he is challenged with the cultural aspect in his host country that the lighter your skin, the more important or significant you are. Lori shares their work to hold assemblies and other programming to talk about issues such as skin color. Although she feels fortunate to work in an international setting where diverse children are playing together, there are underlying issues of racism and a perception that darker skin is inferior. She shares:

> In Asia, there still tends to be a great deal of racism with regard to nationalities and skin color. This is difficult to overcome when parents may have preconceived notions about a teacher's efficacy based on racial bias they may have.

This highlights why cultural competence as a school focus is warranted.

Lori further elaborates that just because an international school has a diverse population does not mean that ongoing education is not important. For example, if something happens in the world political scene, children hear what their parents say about certain cultures or countries and they bring that to school. Lori expressed that children need to continually develop cultural competency, and oftentimes their parents do, as well. Because of this need, Lori indicated that an important task is to educate, raise awareness, and clarify misconceptions about cultures and race.

Community perceptions related to programming and educational approach. A variety of further challenges are shared related to teaching and working in diverse communities. Douglas shares some of the challenges with their Korean population, and the intense focus on academics and grades from that portion of the community. He says that therefore, a

> challenge is addressing this in a way that's thoughtful and encourages them to stay at our school, but also in ways that allows us to push the envelope a little on innovative practices that allow kids to do different things, explore themselves in different ways. And

just to be more well balanced and enjoy their time in childhood because we believe it's a time to be enjoyed, it's not simply a means to an end.

Gary notes that as his school started to promote new programming such as scholarships, and as they tested those boundaries they initially ran into resistance from their local families. There was a feeling that the school shouldn't have different people from other social classes, and the money the school receives for tuition should not be going to others.

Judy relays the challenge when the school's mission, vision and values promote diversity, cultural competency, making the world a better place, and understanding and respecting all cultures and people, and yet the host country does not necessarily hold these in the same regard. Therefore, there are a number of families and children in the school who would have conflict, and the work is to get the whole community aligned with the mission, vision, and values.

Local context and legal constraints. The local laws can restrict some of the ways in which an international school engages in cultural competency work. In particular, this was noted in the Middle East, as well as some specific countries in East Asia. Les and Mark both share that their schools are beholden to the laws of their respective countries, and dictates of the Ministries of Education. In some cases, that means that some practices are not written or published in policy. A significant challenge is around the illegal nature of homosexuality across the Middle East. Mark notes that there are other areas where they can focus, such as gender equity and racial equity. However, there are limitations to actions such as creating Safe Spaces for students who identify as LGBTQ. An added layer of complexity is that the board also does not value diversity in the same manner that much of the American faculty does, and so it is a constant balancing act to navigate those conflicting values. In East Asia, Thomas expresses the challenge that foreigners

and local staff are separate on every document that exists, including government policies and requirements.

Culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally competent curriculum. Intentionally prioritizing the curriculum and culturally relevant pedagogy is repeatedly mentioned as an area for growth and further development. Darren expresses that in order to integrate cultural competence into the curriculum and instruction, there is a lot of training that would need to occur with teachers. Another related challenge is then doing something unique that other schools are not doing, and the need to retrain new teachers every year, which can become quite taxing. Thomas shares that his school's curriculum is not prescribed, and that they use resources and materials that come from a variety of sources, largely American-based. He further reflects that no matter where in the world the school is located, educators have to be aware of where the curriculum materials might contradict or conflict with the local perspective. However, he notes that his school has not made a lot of headway in terms of analyzing their academic program to consider the curricular materials and resources.

High turnover of staff. As noted with curriculum development and training, the high turnover of staff in international schools is noted as a barrier to making significant progress related to cultural competence. In addition to Darren's comments about training new staff with unique initiatives, Les also notes the impact of 30% of their student, staff, and parent population turning over every year. There is a constant need to onboard the community around school culture, practices, values, and what is important. A strategy Les shares to help mitigate this challenge is coming back to the school's mission to ground the community. His mission addresses respect, integrity, intellectual growth, and compassion.

Competing priorities. A top challenge shared by educators around the globe is always time. This is also shared by some of the study participants. Alan acknowledges that even though he is the head of school, there is always a challenge around time and competing priorities. Each year, the school seeks to narrow to only one or two areas of focus as a whole school. Although there are organizations supporting work related to cultural competence, such as the Council of International Schools (CIS), Alan has found it rare for a school to prioritize improving cultural sensitivity as a major focus. He refers to

> competing priorities. So, I know I'm the head, but when you're trying to find one or two, three areas for the school to focus on for a year, typically in the minds of most in the leadership team, there are higher priorities. So it hasn't been like a whole school focus ever.

Darren shares a similar challenge, that this unfortunately gets pushed down in terms of level of importance compared to other more pressing variables. He shared that he highly values cultural competence and would like to see it prioritized, but something else always seems to come up. Following their recent accreditation process, one of the areas for follow up is making sure the school is more purposeful and really focusing on global understanding and global appreciation within their students.

Other challenges. The participants share a myriad of other challenges. Erin expresses that one of the biggest challenges for her is her language skills in the host country language. She has developed basic communication skills to get around. However, when she goes to events, she always works through a translator, which limits the terms of how connected she can be with people in their heart language. It means that others are always adjusting to accommodate her, and this limits her ability to connect more deeply.

Mason shares the challenge of managing the speed of change. As they have hired staff who embrace working at a school that values diversity and inclusion, there are still other challenges that come with any international school. For example, there are still parents primarily preoccupied with IB scores, or a homophobic dad and xenophobic mom. To navigate these complexities, he finds that expectation management is challenging, but important. He shares that if you move too fast, nothing sticks, and if you move too slow, you lose people.

The participants provide rich examples about challenges leading for cultural competency in international schools. These challenges include diverse staffing, community perceptions related to programming and educational approach, local context and legal constraints, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally competent curriculum, high turnover of staff, competing priorities, and other challenges. The results of this study suggest several important recommendations and implications for international school leaders hoping to lead for cultural competence in international schools. In the next section, I will share and elaborate on those recommendations and implications.

Recommendations and Implications for Educational Leadership in Cultural Competence

The international school world has much work to do in order to take appropriate action related to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and cultural competence, and challenges abound depending on the cultural context of various schools. However, there are also many successes from which to learn and emulate. The recommendations of this study follow directly from the findings related to the successes and challenges participants experienced as they engaged in cultural competence leadership in their schools. There are ten sections of recommendations: Awareness of Local Context, Ongoing Personal Learning, Mission, Vision, and Anchor Documents, Strategic Goals, Policy, Professional Learning, Diverse Staffing, Programming for

Social Justice, Inclusion, and Global Citizenship, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Competent Curriculum, and Modeling and Culturally Competent Leadership.

Local Context

Several participants noted the importance of understanding and awareness of the local context to successfully engage in cultural competence work. For example, Mason shares that advice can be dangerous, because what works in one context won't necessarily work in another. He stresses the importance to deeply understand the unique context for each international school and host country.

Recommendation 1. An important factor to consider when seeking to engage in culturally competent leadership, and also when considering any of the recommendations in this section is to be aware of the local context. It is important to understand the local laws, cultural values, traditions, and needs of the school community.

Ongoing Personal Learning

Almost every participant indicated that their own personal learning was an important aspect of successfully leading for cultural competence. In addition, they noted that personal learning needed to be ongoing and directly connected to work in diversity or social justice. In order to lead for cultural competence, participants indicated that ongoing personal learning is an important aspect for success.

Darren shares that when he conducted his own research on cultural competence, a compelling aspect was the huge difference in actual versus perceived level of cultural competence for international school administrators. A few participants cautioned that oftentimes administrators think that students and teachers develop cultural competence simply by rubbing shoulders with others in our diverse schools, which is a dangerous misconception.

Erin further advises that it is essential to be a continual learner. This includes reading, learning specifically about the host country culture, and having a sense of adventure exploring. In addition to actual learning and growth, there is also the incredible value of the leader modeling what it looks like to continue to grow and learn and be vulnerable in this important work. Similarly, Jeffrey recommends reading books, talking to parent leaders in the community who are from different cultures to understand their experiences with the school's institutional culture, as well as the community culture. It is important to be a deep listener, and then reflect on the learning with the leadership team and consider changes, big and small, that can create a more inclusive and open community for all members.

Aligned with deep listening, Douglas advises to ask more questions than give answers. Often leaders believe they need to have all the answers. However, "there is an incredible value to vulnerability and being able to ask questions and wonder." As leaders engage in meaningful questions, part of this process will include "authentic dialogue with people that you work with, engaging in dialogue with those who you serve and who serve you." Similarly, he shared that it is important to "question assumptions at every turn", and to "work tirelessly to assume other's perspectives." Finally, "humility goes a long way to addressing these issues."

Judy shares similar advice about starting out slowly through asking questions, learning and opening up dialogue. And through this dialogue, it can open up space where "people think about words, actions, behaviors and really understanding how your own culture may be driving some of what you're doing almost unintentionally or inadvertently." Mark also elaborates that this includes being vulnerable, being sensitive, and stepping outside one's comfort zone to have conversations about privilege and cultural differences in order to learn.

Recommendation 2. Ultimately, to lead for cultural competence, equity, and social justice, it is essential for school leaders to deepen their understanding and commitment through ongoing reading and learning.

Mission, Vision, Anchor Documents

One of the most frequently noted aspects to support leading for cultural competence is the school's anchor documents. Many international schools have similar themes in their mission and vision documents. Participants noted both challenges and successes related to this category. While the missions and vision of the international schools that were part of this study have similar themes related to global mindedness, the Heads of Schools commonly noted challenges with updating documentation, aligning mission and vision statements, and collaboratively developing strategic goals. For example, Cynthia references that one of their core values is respect for all. Douglas shares that their mission is for students to be engaged, empowered and educated, and they do this by giving them a voice, and celebrating their work and efforts. Les notes that he regularly returns to the mission. He charges his community to consider how they will promote their mission, which talks about respect, integrity, intellectual growth, and compassion.

Alan repeatedly mentions the mission, vision and attributes, and the importance of ensuring they don't only hang on the wall, but get translated into plans. Alan notes that his school has something called a strategic learning plan, which is a deliberate learning plan to have a strong impact on student learning. He provides the following examples where the anchor documents inform the work they are doing related to cultural competence:

1. Globally minded is one of the attributes, and they have defined it. Further, they have put together a series of sort of "I Can" statements for kids that work in an age appropriate

way. These will be examined through their curriculum review cycles, and implemented in social studies courses and advisory, for example.

2. They have also made connections to their mission and vision to support their service learning program and enriching local communities. This also translated into their enhanced language program.

Gary shares that the process of developing the strategic themes came as a result of referencing the school's mission and vision. In this process, his school chose to revise those anchor documents entirely, which allowed them to deepen their understanding of who they are as a school, further define their identity, and clarify the culture of the school. Thomas went through a similar process, where they engaged in a process of reestablishing their identity in anticipation of an accreditation visit. They followed a collaborative process with staff, where everybody had voice, and got onboard, such that they now have a solid vision and mission which was created by the community, and it will be referenced and act as a guide for future decisions.

Most heads reference the mission and vision, and also some form of values or attributes or student profile that guides their work around teaching and learning. In addition to these documents, Jeffrey shares that his school also has a statement of inclusive practices that focuses on being a community of diverse learners, including a "culture of belonging." He shares that most people might initially interpret this as supporting students with diverse learning needs, special challenges, or limited abilities. However, he notes that this document also has supported their work to implement a scholarship program. While there is still work to be done with regards to diverse hiring, this document supports those efforts as well.

Recommendation 3. School heads should ensure that the mission, vision, and anchor documents are current and accurately reflect the community's identity and values. It is valuable

if the process of creating and updating these documents is collaborative and inclusive, such that there is a commitment from the entire community regarding a shared vision and purpose for the school.

From the anchor documents, it is then essential for heads of school to translate those missions, visions and values statements into actionable strategic plans. Alan shares that when schools make their improvement plans, progress can be made based on solid anchor documents.

Strategic Goals

None of the heads of school cited having cultural competence as a part of their strategic goals. However, several mentioned how they translated their anchor documents into actionable plans that support some of the themes of cultural competence, such as global advocacy, global citizenship in the curriculum, multiculturalism, service learning, inclusion, and student impact projects.

Given the literature related to leadership for cultural competence and social justice, the most aligned and powerful strategic goals related to cultural competence and social justice work is shared by Les. He elaborates how his school recently decided to conduct action research for their accreditation process, and they are focusing on how their school can support and promote global advocacy in their community. Moving beyond global awareness, which they believed to be more passive, they settled on the goal of advocacy, including advocacy for the environment, advocacy for other cultures, and advocates for each other.

Another powerful example of purposefully integrating cultural competence into the strategic goals is shared by Gary. He outlines the strategic themes, which have been particularly powerful for growth in his school. They have 18 themes that drive the school's work, and they are in their second year of implementation. Three of their themes are related to cultural

competence: multiculturalism, service learning, and inclusion. With multiculturalism, they are seeking to develop and promote appreciation for all the different cultures that exist at the school. As a result, they have developed a number of different action plans, which has included developing a cultural competency workshop for all faculty. Additionally, multiculturalism is a part of the curriculum review process, and teachers make connections and reflect on how it is being promoted across the curriculum. They are also focusing on service learning, and the distinct difference between that and community service. Their work in this area has catapulted it to be a big part of how they identify as a school, and it supports encouraging more cultural understanding. The third theme related to cultural competence is inclusion, and includes considering how they can meet the diverse learning needs of their community.

Lori discusses how they have worked with intention to weave goals related to cultural competence into their school improvement plan, which includes every grade level supporting student projects related to interconnectedness and making an impact.

Recommendation 4. It is important to ensure that the strategic plan builds from the anchor documents and supports the lofty goals of developing global citizenship, cultural competence, or taking action for social justice. While some schools deprioritize cultural competence by setting minor school goals, a recommended powerful move is for a school to explicitly focus on cultural competence, culturally relevant teaching, and social justice as a part of their primary strategic goals.

Policy

Most of the heads of school speak about policies as being one of the foundational aspects to their work, which guides their operations within the school. School policies provide the guidelines from which schools operate and hold themselves accountable. The most common

policies referenced related to cultural competence are around nationality caps to preserve diversity in the student population, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, a religious neutrality policy, and scholarship programs that have been written into school policy.

Generally, the heads feel strong and proud of their non-discrimination policies. Most of these policies include language around non-discrimination on the "basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or marital status." Interestingly, Les speaks about asking his board on whether or not they would support the policy if it was ever tested with regards to sexual orientation. While they have approved the policy and like that it is in their policy manual, unfortunately the board said they would be unlikely to fully support it if pushed. Les also references the importance of the school's neutrality policy, and the fact that they are not teaching Religious Education with a single religion (Islam), but also include the teaching of Judaism and other religions. Being in a more conservative Muslim country, this is significant policy to support their school's desire to teach about multiple religions, rather than a singular religious education class.

Both Gary and Jeffrey proudly share their schools' scholarship programs, as new policy to increase diversity of nationality, as well as enhance socio-economic diversity by giving greater access to their schools. Other policies referenced include child protection, which has an element of cultural competence in terms of different parent disciplinary styles and the school taking a stand with regards to what is viewed acceptable or not. Another head of school references their work to review and better align the stipend and professional development structure such that local employees and foreign employees would have greater parity.

Recommendation 5. It is recommended that schools consider how their policies will support diverse student populations, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, as well as policies that support diverse staffing to experience a safe and culturally diverse community.

Professional Learning

In order for teachers to be supported in this important work, and especially due to the transient nature of international school faculties, it is essential to provide ongoing professional development related to cultural competence, including culturally relevant pedagogy. Several heads acknowledged that pockets of good work can happen by chance, however meaningful schoolwide alignment and progress toward equity, social justice, cultural competence, and culturally relevant pedagogy will only happen with a commitment to ongoing learning opportunities, through new teacher induction and professional development work.

Darren proposes that "someone who perhaps isn't culturally competent and is trying to launch into a program that could actually potentially do more harm than good, or it may not have the desired impact." Therefore, it is important to build base knowledge, research and read, take classes, and participate in workshops. The first step is to build awareness that cultural competence is important. Then, combine that awareness and knowledge with skills to implement and act.

Alan shares that he generally runs two workshops a year on topics related to international mindedness and intercultural communication, and seeks to have strands related to these topics for teachers to choose from during most professional learning days. Cynthia also supports workshops for teachers to better understand the life of Third Culture Kids, and how these students have learned to navigate the different cultures, and also the different stressors that they face because they are required to navigate those cultures on a daily basis.

Several of the heads speak of offering a new teacher induction workshop to support the adjustment to a new culture. Cynthia shares that the workshop at her school supports culture adjustment for new teachers, where they talk about the research on cultural adjustment, and the stages of adjustment. Darren also leads a new teacher orientation workshop, where he uses his experience as both a counselor and a researcher of cultural competence to provide introductory cultural competence training. David provides a lengthy new teacher induction, that includes elements of cultural competence, and also aspects that help new faculty to learn about and appreciate their new host country culture. In addition to supporting new foreign teachers at her school, Erin also offers training for the host country teachers who are learning to navigate within an international school setting.

Beyond new faculty orientation, Judy shares that she is working with her leadership team to engage in shared readings, and then reflecting on their environment, behaviors and actions, and the ways that they are supporting professional development for their diverse staff to both interact and support meaningful student learning among the diverse cultures represented. Jeffrey also shares about bringing in an outside speaker/expert to help their community better understand the work culture in the host country, as well as working in mixed teams, which provided a valuable introduction to thinking about some of the cultural differences and how to be more sensitive. Erin took a bold step with her faculty to engage in conversations around scenario planning if a family entered their community that had some element of identifying with the LGBTQ community. As a faith-based school that supports character education, Erin wanted her faculty to explore this concept and start the process of discussing so they would have an aligned and thoughtful approach in how they would care for all of their diverse students.

Recommendation 6. In order to sufficiently support intentional work related to culturally competent programming, integrating culturally relevant practices into the curriculum, and aligning the school's staff around a social justice approach, it is recommended that Heads of School prioritize providing ongoing professional learning opportunities in these areas.

Parent Education. In addition to supporting teachers with meaningful professional learning, it is important to also support the parent community. Almost every participant notes that they experience challenges centered around community expectations, a lack of understanding, or trying to align their diverse community members. Some of the participants are explicit in their work with parents to support greater harmony in the extended school community. Gary shares that his work is trying to get the community to be more aware of the other cultures in the school, and at the same time to feel that their own culture is valued. Douglas holds regular parent teas, where often the topic isn't overtly intended to be about cultural competency, but gathering together a diverse group of parents which pushes them closer to creating a community of empathy, understanding, and respect. Lori intentionally organizes activities for the parents, especially the non-working parents, to ensure that they're exposed to not just the host country culture, but also to all of the cultures in the school, which is a powerful way for them to learn. These range from cooking classes to yoga to meditation sessions and bringing in speakers. Largely, the goal is around developing connections, which enhances respect, empathy, and community. Erin also shares that the programming her school offers for parents is centered around challenging assumptions and continuing to learn as a community when something is culturally different than expected.

Diverse Staffing

Participant interviews reveal that diverse staffing is one of the most important aspects that can truly support international schools on multiple fronts: an attempt to mirror the student population, to provide models and mentors for students, an opportunity to have diverse perspectives in the collaborative process to produce more rigorous, divergent thinking and better decision-making, and to allow for international schools to diversify the bubbles they potentially create in their various settings.

Judy takes a strong stance related to diverse staffing, and has a thoughtful process that she leads her leadership team through at the beginning of each recruiting process. She shares the philosophy that first and foremost she acknowledges that the different perspectives at the table enrich the environment and learning experiences for students. She has led her leadership team through thinking about their beliefs related to a diverse faculty, and then how to translate those beliefs into action in the hiring process. She shares a rubric they use to start the year with reflecting on their current staffing data, including nationalities, gender, demographics, and more. This supports them in then using their rubric for the skills and competencies as teachers, as well as including a category for additional considerations and added value the candidate would bring to the school community. She shares that “you have to be creative if this is really a high priority, then I think that you have to think about moving beyond the regular systems and tools that maybe we're using to do our recruiting.” Some of those creative ideas include reaching out at the university level to identify candidates from a broader background. Additionally, she has been brainstorming what other resources can be used besides the three or four most common recruiting organizations used in international schools. Another important aspect that Judy is reflective about is how to properly communicate that this is a priority to the parent community.

Hiring a diverse staff isn't just about the recruitment stage, but also a willingness to support them to the community at all times.

Cynthia also shares the strong work she has done at her current and previous schools around diverse staffing, and that this effort has been one of the most critical things that she has done. She has a goal to reflect diverse cultures in the teaching faculty, as they are the models for the students. With her leadership team, she sets expectations that they will hire a diverse group of teachers, in terms of cultural background, experience, age, and also where they can have teachers who represent different physical attributes. She shares that they specifically develop strategy around the profiles they desire, and they specifically seek out diversity in the candidates they approach.

Similar to the process Judy and Cynthia lead ahead of recruitment, a few of the participants shared that they create profiles for the various positions that are being hired. This might include seeking gender balance, for example. Mason shares that he is then very transparent with candidates about this additional filter. He also shares the extra attention given to applications from teachers belonging to a marginalized group. Similarly, David shares that his leadership team has an international checklist that they use in the screening and interview process to limit bias in the hiring process. He shares his anecdotal experience at finding greater success when he finds teachers who speak another language, have prior international experiences, or teachers who have grown up as a minority status in their home country. He has observed that those who have lived in two cultures or speak multiple languages will have greater international mindedness and cultural competence.

Alan shares that he developed a committee this past year at his school with teachers, counselors and a few administrators to consider ways to attract a diverse pool of applicants. They

had found that the traditional search tools such as Search Associates, ISS, CIS, and Carnie Sandoe was not turning up as many diverse candidates as they desired. They developed a plan to attend the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) People of Color Conference, both for the professional learning, but also with the hopes of recruiting more diverse teachers.

Further lamenting that sometimes the various recruitment agencies don't have the number or quality of diverse candidates, Darren shares a strategy he uses is to network and track highly competent educators of color he meets at conferences. He also has an unofficial internal rule with his leadership team that at least one finalist in the recruitment process for each position should be a person of color, in an effort to increase the likelihood of staffing diverse faculty.

Some heads shared the strategies they use to confront their biases. Erin and Cynthia, both in East Asia, share their intentionality in hiring a Korean liaison and a Korean counselor, specifically to support those larger populations of students and how the school supports them. Mark and Gary both share their pride with and the importance of gender considerations on their leadership teams. Thomas shares that the current curriculum coordinator at his school is a Black female, and that he takes extra care to support her, even more strongly than other colleagues. He wants her to be successful and supported, and he recognizes how valuable and important it is to have a colleague of color in a leadership position. Mason shares some unique programming, where they have local grants within the diversity and leadership program, which are available for anybody who identifies with a traditionally marginalized group and is on the beginning of their leadership journey. The school has a coach that works with them and the grant goes towards leadership coaching to support the leadership journey.

Recommendation 7. Ultimately, the various strategies shared by the participants all point to a strong belief that diversity of faculty enriches the school community. This also

includes giving up some seats at the leadership table to make space for and prioritize a more diverse leadership force. To be successful, it is important to have transparency and communication within the community that this is an important value. Additionally, it is recommended for leadership teams to engage in a reflection on the current staffing, including leadership positions, to determine the needs, then create candidate profiles, find creative and intentional ways to seek out diverse candidates, and then following up with continual support.

Programming for Social Justice, Inclusion, and Global Citizenship

The participants shared a variety of ways that international schools create an environment for continual learning and development related to social justice, inclusion, language development, service learning, and international mindedness. Examples included opportunities within the school day and curricular program, as well as through special events and after school through student clubs. This programming provides an opportunity to pull together the anchor documents, strategic goals, policies, and diverse staffing, and put into intentional action to support the student experience related to cultural competence, social justice, and global citizenship.

There is a wide range of programming that the participants talk about when considering the opportunities on offer for students to grow their cultural competence, gain an international perspective, and consider their social responsibility around justice issues. These are important opportunities that enrich and support the community's growth and development. Some of the recommended programming is to consider the implementation of an intentional advisory program at the middle and high school levels around social emotional learning and cultural competence. While all international schools offer additional language learning programs, Gary's school invested in developing after school mother tongue programs, and Alan's school provides

extensive native language curricular programming to support the development of home culture and language development and appreciation. Cynthia's school has all elementary students learning the host country language. Languages are an important aspect of cultural competence. Programming to support the development of additional languages, as well as the student's mother tongue language, is essential in supporting home culture identity development and appreciation.

Another aspect that several participants mention is supporting a diverse learning community. This includes developing programs to support students with intensive needs, as well as extensive programming to support students with English language acquisition. The inclusion journey is relatively new territory for most international schools, and offers students exposure to an aspect of cultural competence, as schools are enriched by and students learn about students who learn differently, whether learning with students with autism, down syndrome or other intensive needs. It isn't possible for all schools to open this type of programming, however the heads who had started down this path praised how much it enriched their communities and opened up an inclusive and caring learning environment.

A standard practice at many international schools is to host an International Day festival once per year, to celebrate the diversity of nations represented in their schools. While each of the heads acknowledged that it is important to do more than just these festivals, sometimes referred to as superficial celebrations of "food, flags and fun," most heads also acknowledge that it is a nice opportunity to bring their diverse community together to celebrate.

Several schools have an aspect in their mission and vision about service and making the world a better place, which lends itself well to implement a Service Learning program. These programs move beyond traditional notions of clocking hours for community service, and

integrate meaningful learning into the curriculum. Service Learning programs seek to make an impact on local communities, whether with refugee populations, disadvantaged groups, or residents of slum communities, and take a social justice approach in local communities. Some schools have impact projects or social responsibility projects as a part of their programming, where students engage with the local community to understand economic inequalities, socio-economic differences, and look to take action around social injustices.

Many international schools also provide opportunities for students to raise their voice and advocacy through various student clubs, whether around LGBTQ issues, Social Justice Clubs, Inclusion Clubs, or providing programming through international organizations such as Global Issues Network (GIN) and Model United Nations (MUN). Additionally, some schools offer parallel opportunities for the staff community to come together in support of organizations in the local host country community through community partnerships and a social justice mindset. All of these programs provide meaningful opportunities for the school community to live their values, develop cultural competence, and act for justice.

Recommendation 8. Special curricular and co-curricular programming is recommended to support and pull together the anchor documents, strategic goals, policies, and diverse staffing. These programs are put into intentional action to support the student experience related to cultural competence, social justice, and global citizenship. They include service learning and community connections, impact projects, mother tongue and native language programs, inclusion programs to support diverse student needs, and student clubs aligned with a social justice approach.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Competent Curriculum

Almost every participant in this study shared that they have not prioritized culturally relevant teaching or do not have a systematic way to consider how to integrate cultural competence into the curriculum. Historically, international schools were developed to support the children of diplomats and others who are living outside their home countries. These schools subscribed to a curriculum, for example identifying as an American school, offering an American curriculum education so students can return to the US for university and beyond. However, now many international schools include language in their missions about international education, global citizenship, intercultural learning, and other similar words. In some cases, the schools lean on the IB program, or their service learning programming and co-curricular opportunities. But there are fewer references than expected relating to the research and importance of connecting with students' home culture or host culture as a part of the teaching and learning in the classroom. Based on the review of literature related to culturally relevant pedagogy, a recommendation for schools who want to truly live their mission and vision around global citizenship and meeting the needs of their diverse student populations is to consider training and systematic ways to intentionally considering culturally relevant pedagogy.

Erin, Lori and Gary share information about the curriculum review cycle being an important process to support reviewing the resources used, and also filters for reflecting on the multicultural aspect of the curricular units. Judy shares that her sense is that teachers are considering culturally relevant practices when they review their units, however it is not formalized. As an IB world school, they use those lenses when developing their curriculum and reviewing it from different angles. In the elementary school, almost every unit is connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and so this is how cultural competence is embedded. As she shares that there is still work to do to further grow and develop in this area, Judy further

shares that they take a more Western perspective based on the research that is read. This is an area where they still want to take time to reflect on what it means to go beyond in terms of how they engage their diverse faculty and staff to fully meet the needs of their diverse student population with greater intention. This includes asking questions: "What knowledge, what skills do teachers need to be successful here to work with all students and their families and to do that well, and how are we providing the professional development for them to develop these skills?"

Similar to Judy, Mason is at an IB World School, and so the IB planner leads teachers to consider the ways they are bringing in cultural competence, global perspectives and global issues into their instruction. He acknowledges that the IB isn't the answer to everything, however it is a program that puts global mindedness at the heart of its program. Mason further reflects that the "idea of global citizenship is about having an impact on others, then that impact that you're having should be teaching you something about yourself too, and therefore feedback into the learning."

Alan also reflects on the particular attribute of global mindedness, and shares that he sees it manifest itself in curriculum development and the advisory program. Cynthia also reflects on her school's mission to prepare students to live a purposeful life as a global citizen.

Recommendation 9. Based on research related to culturally relevant pedagogy, and the findings related to curriculum, a recommendation for school leaders is to consider the ways in which cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogical practices are intentionally woven into the written and taught curriculum. International schools have moved beyond their original purpose: bubble communities teaching a strict US-centered curriculum. With this shift, they should more intentionally draw on the research of Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings and other education experts to support thoughtfully curating diverse resources, consider the pedagogical

approaches that will meet the needs of diverse students, and also promote the development of critical consciousness, and a deeper understanding of privilege, power and the importance of social justice.

Modeling Culturally Competent Leadership

A premise to this study is the idea that international schools can be bubble communities where teachers further perpetuate a privileged, often US-centric environment that supports a traditional, Westernized, Anglo, White curriculum and experience. However, in order to fully support our diverse student populations, international schools cannot just take the diversity of their student populations for granted. Judy shares a similar sentiment: “I think that there's probably in our school and many schools similar to ours is we're relying on that diversity to say that we have cultural competence.” She further elaborates that a concerning fallout from that would be that children aren't developing a true sense of identity or appreciation related to their own culture. A goal would be to nurture and support honoring identity, a sense of self, and appreciation of student individual cultures, while also creating a sense of belonging within the larger, diverse community.

Further on this line of thinking, Cynthia shares that international schools have students who come from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and when they walk through the school doors many educators automatically assume they naturally adapt to a new culture. But this process is complex for students, and it is important to consider what is lost, and how schools can better support students as they live between a diverse school culture and their family’s home culture. These students create a third culture, and it is important for schools to support them with intention around the development of cultural competence, how to interact, collaborate, and communicate within diverse cultures.

Les also reflects on the role of the school in supporting students who live in a middle ground between diverse cultural worlds. For example, he shares the importance of having conversations that support students feeling safe at school, particularly when they might be experiencing situations at odds with the host country culture or their personal family's culture. He shares an example where a student used her final project to share that she was transitioning from a female to a male in her twelfth grade project presentation. Being in a conservative Muslim country, this had the potential to be extremely controversial and poorly received. However, the community provided a warm reception, and those who might have disagreed with the student's choices and presentation did not create an uncomfortable or unaccepting response. Creating a safe space for students to understand their own culture, learn about the cultures of others, and develop the skills to navigate, communicate, collaborate, and live in diverse communities is an amazing gift for our youth, as they prepare to be the leaders of a global tomorrow.

Cynthia expresses success with modeling and being explicit in her expectations of the community about how they will interact with each other. For example, during the COVID pandemic, she clearly and proactively communicated, giving specific language and expectations around respect and kindness the community would demonstrate regarding various ethnicities who might face discrimination, and how to treat community members who test positive for COVID. Cynthia also speaks about being intentional when an area for growth has been identified in the community, and the value of a reading or shared experience to open up important conversations and develop empathy. Modeling cultural competence and communicating expectations is an important aspect of leading for cultural competence.

Several of the participants share interesting stories and anecdotes about their leadership for cultural competence, or the way they speak about their leadership seemed compelling and unique. Cynthia shares that one of the things that she has tried to do, though not always successfully, is to learn the language of the local culture. She expresses that even if you are really bad, it is important to try. Part of culture is understanding traditions, various cultural values, and also the language and communication. Learning the language provides an avenue for further embracing the traditions of culture, and especially singing because it brings cultures together. Cynthia notes that one of the first things she does when she goes to a new country is to learn a karaoke song that she can sing with the local staff during school celebrations. She also shares that when she spoke at graduation last year, she did her entire opening in the host country language. And while it was nerve-wracking, she believes it shows respect for the culture and the people of the host country.

Darren shares that as a leader, he sees his role as constantly reframing situations, given his counseling background and his own doctoral research related to cultural competence. He does this especially with his leadership team and teachers when they are put in situations with parents or students to make sure that the situation is considered through an appropriate cultural lens. This includes encouraging colleagues to consider different perspectives, stopping to reflect on any cultural aspects that may be at play, and then use reframing to support deescalating and removing emotion in order to take a solution-focused approach.

Douglas acknowledges that he works hard to challenge his own hidden biases in the hiring process, recognizing that we all tend to prefer particular profiles. Judy reflects that international schools have not been properly addressing or supporting important conversations around diversity, equity and cultural competence, and that schools in the USA are much further

ahead. She shares “it’s almost like we've taken this diversity for granted and then we've actually plunked down kind of a Western perspective on them.” She further wonders how we can start considering our staffing differently and with greater intention related to diversity.

Les similarly charges that in an effort to support a culture of global advocacy, leaders need to have the courage to acknowledge their prejudices, to admit there are inequalities, to reflect on what the school does and does not do well, to uncover the gaps, and then work to improve. Les’ school has taken bold action to tie their accreditation to action research for the next seven years related to their goal for all members of their community to be global advocates.

Thomas has a background in social work and counseling, and takes a social justice lens through all his work and interactions. He talks about nurturing an inclusive community with effective relationships in a collaborative culture. He places a priority on relationships and people, and has a goal to lead people to consider that everybody has value, and everybody is worth investing in and including and considered as important and meaningful regardless of class, gender, color, race, or religion. His sees his role as a leader as largely influential, and his approach is to create an environment that is safe for continued conversations so that the community starts to think and talk differently in a culturally competent manner. An important factor for international school leaders to keep in mind is that one of their greatest powers is that of influence. What they model, how they interact, what they prioritize, conversations they engage in, and the language they use all have the ability to greatly enhance the development of cultural competence in international school communities.

Recommendation 10. School leaders should continually model and grow their own cultural competency. This can happen through challenging hidden biases, reflecting on the student experience, reframing situations for community members, and learning the local

language. Additionally, it is important not to make assumptions about the level of cultural competence of the teachers or community. Schools should not tout the diversity of the student population without considering the diversity of the school's staff, as well as the ways in which the school is actively supporting the diversity of students and how they move between cultures. A goal is to first nurture and support understanding one's own identity, a sense of self, and appreciation of student individual cultures, and then to create a sense of belonging within the larger, diverse community.

Summary of Recommendations

Table 4 provides an overview of the recommendations outlined in the previous section. It includes a summary of recommendations that are based on the findings of this study, as well as the recommendations that were shared by the participants, and an outline of the steps needed to provide culturally competent leadership in an international school.

Table 4

Recommendations for Educational Leadership in Cultural Competence

Local Context	An important factor to consider when seeking to engage in culturally competent leadership, and also when considering any of the recommendations in this section is to be aware of the local context. It is important to understand the local laws, cultural values, traditions, and needs of the school community.
Ongoing Personal Learning	Ultimately, to lead for cultural competence, equity, and social justice, it is essential for school leaders to deepen their understanding and commitment through ongoing reading and learning.
Mission, Vision, Anchor Documents	School heads should ensure that the mission, vision, and anchor documents are current and accurately reflect the community's identity and values. It is valuable if the process of creating and updating these documents is collaborative and inclusive, such that there is a commitment from the entire community regarding a shared vision and purpose for the school.
Strategic Goals	It is important to ensure that the strategic plan builds from the anchor documents and supports the lofty goals of supporting global citizenship, cultural competence, or taking action for social justice. While some

	schools deprioritize cultural competence by setting minor school goals, a recommended powerful move is for a school to explicitly focus on cultural competence, culturally relevant teaching, and social justice as a part of their primary strategic goals.
Policy	It is recommended that schools consider how their policies will support diverse student populations, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, as well as policies that support diverse staffing to experience a safe and culturally diverse community.
Professional Learning	In order to sufficiently support intentional work related to culturally competent programming, integrating culturally relevant practices into the curriculum, and aligning the school's staff around a social justice approach, it is recommended that Heads of School prioritize providing ongoing professional learning opportunities in these areas. In addition to supporting teachers with meaningful professional learning, it is important to also support the parent community.
Diverse Staffing	Ultimately, the various strategies shared all point to a strong belief that diversity of faculty enrich the school community. This also includes giving up some seats at the leadership table to make space for and prioritize a more diverse leadership force. To be successful, it is important to have transparency and communication within the community that this is an important value. Additionally, it is recommended for leadership teams to engage in a reflection on the current staffing, including leadership positions, to determine the needs, then create candidate profiles, find creative and intentional ways to seek out diverse candidates, and then following up with continual support.
Programming for Social Justice, Inclusion, and Global Citizenship	Special curricular and co-curricular programming is recommended to support and pull together the anchor documents, strategic goals, policies, and diverse staffing. These programs are put into intentional action to support the student experience related to cultural competence, social justice, and global citizenship. They include service learning and community connections, impact projects, mother tongue and native language programs, inclusion programs to support diverse student needs, and student clubs aligned with a social justice approach.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Competent Curriculum	A recommendation for school leaders is to consider the ways in which cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogical practices are intentionally woven into the written and taught curriculum. International schools have moved beyond their original purpose: bubble communities teaching a strict US-centered curriculum. With this shift, they should more intentionally draw on the research of Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings and other education experts to support

	thoughtfully curating diverse resources, consider the pedagogical approaches that will meet the needs of diverse students, and also promote the development of critical consciousness, and a deeper understanding of privilege, power and the importance of social justice.
Modeling Culturally Competent Leadership	School leaders should continually model and grow their own cultural competency. This happens through challenging hidden biases, reflecting on the student experience, reframing situations for community members, and learning the local language. Additionally, it is important not to make assumptions about the level of cultural competence of the teachers or community. Schools should not tout the diversity of the student population without considering the diversity of the school's staff, as well as the ways in which the school is actively supporting the diversity of students and how they move between cultures. A goal is to first nurture and support understanding one's own identity, a sense of self, and appreciation of student individual cultures, and then to create a sense of belonging within the larger, diverse community.

Note. The table above outlines the recommendations for school leadership to support cultural competence in international schools.

Limitations

While enlightening to learn from 14 heads of school around the world, this research study included limitations. The original intention was to secure 15-20 participants, and global representation with a minimum of two participants from each of six regional associations. Unfortunately, this study commenced at the same time when most schools globally had shifted to distance learning due to the COVID pandemic. This meant that the heads of school were preoccupied in leading through a crisis situation. Additionally, some of the regional heads were supportive and enthusiastic in their promotion of this study, while others either did not forward the recruitment letter onto the school heads in their region, or they only forwarded the letter to select heads of school. This resulted in uneven representation of heads of school globally, and not reaching the goal of 15-20 participants. Additionally, there was no representation from MAIS or CEESA, and only one head from AASSA and one head from AISA.

Another limiting factor is that the criteria for being a participant in this study involved Heads of School self-selecting and sharing their willingness to participate. This meant that there were potentially highly culturally competent school heads that did not participate, or that some of the participants were not as culturally competent as they might have perceived. While the study included some level of triangulation for those participants who shared supporting documents to back up what they communicated, the findings are largely the result of self-reporting by each head of school, and community members might share a different perception of the participants' culturally competent leadership. Therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population of international Heads of School.

The study only included Heads of School, with an assumption that the person in this position sets the vision and agenda for the school's strategic work. However, it is also clear that other school administrators have a huge impact on leading for cultural competence, and it would be interesting to know the ways that other school administrators exercise their influence on the development of cultural competence in international schools.

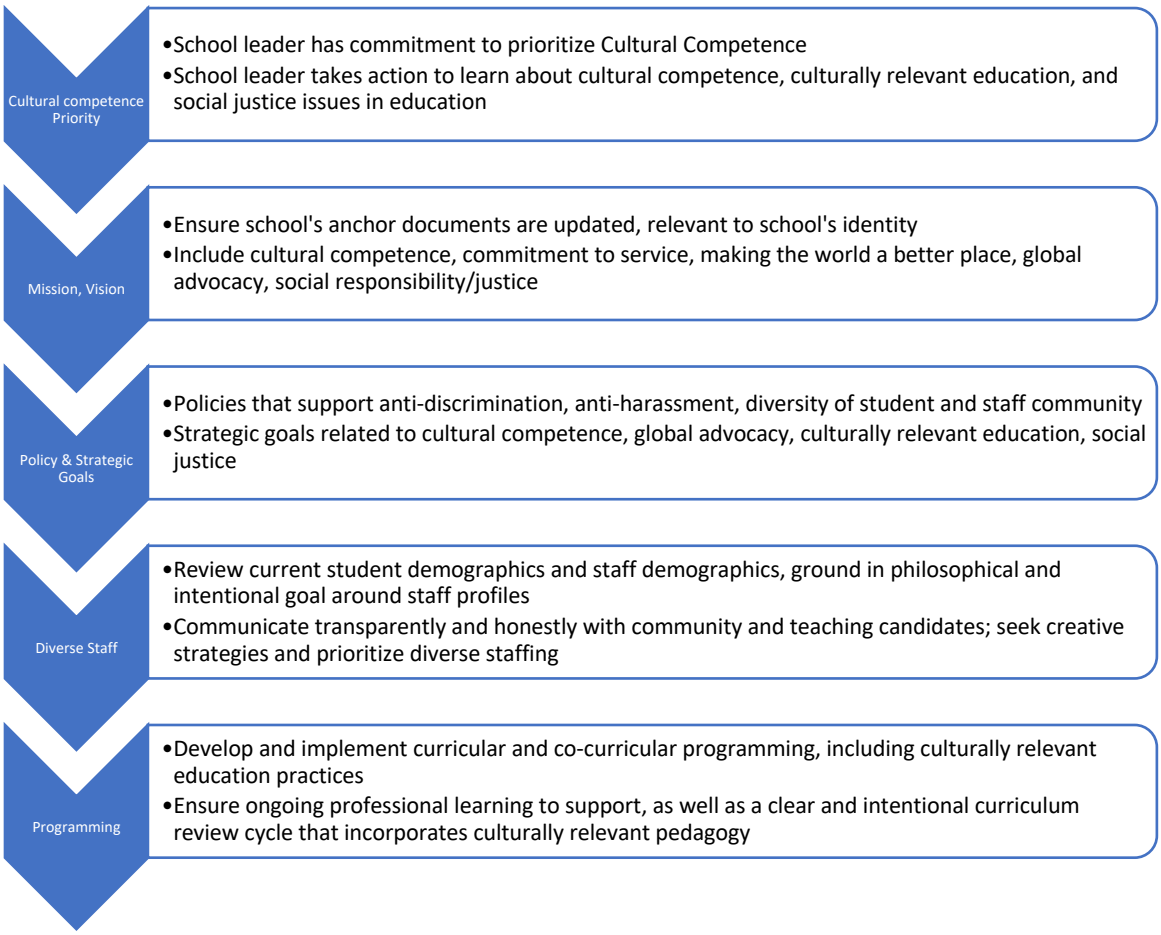
Implications for the Researcher's Growth and Development

Through the findings of the 14 participant interviews and supporting documents, I have created a framework to outline what it means to lead with cultural competence. First and foremost, there must be a desire and awareness on the part of the leader to grow their own personal cultural competence. This includes being vulnerable, reading, researching, and exposing oneself to diverse cultures to learn and grow. It also includes raising awareness around privilege, power, and our purpose as educators to support learning environments and inspire students to create a more inclusive, equitable and just world. After an initial commitment that this is a priority for the school leader, they should start with the school's anchor documents, to ensure

that the mission, vision, and values of the school align to the local context, the school's identity, and the ultimate direction they hope to achieve in their work with students. Ideally these include language around diversity, inclusion, global advocacy and social responsibility or justice. These anchor documents are then translated into strategic goals and school policy. The policies ensure that the school has guidelines to help them operate within an inclusive, equitable, and diverse learning environment. The strategic goals support the school in developing, implementing, and living the mission and vision with intention. Again, some schools translated their anchor documents into strategic goals around multiculturalism, service learning and inclusion. Next, schools need to ensure that they have a diverse staff to support their diverse student populations, and also the implementation of programming related to the strategic goals. Research abounds related to the importance of a diverse teaching faculty that mirrors the student population to the largest extent possible (Boser, 2011; Dee, 2005; Egalite & Kisida, 2018). Research also supports the value of diverse perspectives in collaborative groups to generate better conversations, improved decisions, and a rich experience for student learning (Nathan & Lee, 2013; Page, 2008; Rock & Grant, 2016). The final stage of the framework is building the programming, both curricular and co-curricular, to support cultural competence. There are many rich examples in this study, and several models exist in the international school world from which to learn.

Figure 3

Framework to Lead with Cultural Competence



Note. This figure shares a framework to guide international school leaders when considering how to lead for cultural competence.

As I reflect on my most significant learning from the findings in this study, it is the importance of diverse staffing, and how to approach the hiring process with intention and creativity. I have seen firsthand the positive impact that diverse staffing can have in a school community, from the important relationships with students, to the influence on curriculum work, to the meaningful conversations among colleagues and different perspectives shared, to the support for raising awareness around privilege, power and justice. However, I am also aware that setting a path to intentionally hire for diversity can uncover white fragility in the process (DiAngelo, 2018). It was encouraging to hear some of the participants share that their

communities were supportive, and staff were even pushing for greater change when it was an intentionally communicated message and shared vision of what the staffing could and should be in an international school. I wonder if sometimes communities need to be comfortable with discomfort when initially engaging in these important conversations. The findings also support that professional development will go a long way toward supporting staff growth and commitment to cultural competence and diverse staffing.

Another reflection is on the importance of supporting teachers with professional learning related to culturally relevant pedagogy training. Based on the participant contributions, this seems to be another area where international schools lag behind. There appear to be two factors at play. First, international schools previously intentionally wanted to provide an American or "Western" education around the world. This meant that teaching mathematics to elementary students using US currency or teaching high school English using only texts from White Anglo authors was not questioned. Yet the US or Euro-centric focus within the classroom has not shifted with the international approach. Second, I believe there is another assumption that teachers working in the international schools circuit are culturally competent by the nature of living in foreign countries. However, without intentionally developing cultural competence and without teachers stretching themselves to engage in diverse social groups and experiences, it is not uncommon for teachers to surround themselves with people who look and act similar to them. Thus, it is essential to support faculty with meaningful professional learning related to strategies for considering their curricular resources, thinking critically about why the learning is important in a global context and diverse community, and making connections to support diverse students.

A final important reflection on the findings from this study is the overwhelming importance of culturally competent leadership at the highest levels in the school. School programming, such as service learning, mother tongue language programs, international day festivals, clubs and opportunities such as GIN, MUN, and social justice clubs are all important starting points for schools to begin their journey toward recognizing diversity in culture. However, schools cannot stop there; school leadership must be able to move their faculty and students toward cultural competence through policy, strategic planning, an intentional culturally relevant curriculum, and a diverse staff. These all greatly influence the work that happens in the community and the level of cultural competence, equity, inclusion and social justice.

Future Research Recommendations

There is much to be studied with regards to cultural competence, equity and social justice in the international school world. An area of possible further research would be to investigate the ways that schools intentionally train and support faculty with culturally competent pedagogy. This includes supporting the practices of teachers to help all of their diverse students appreciate their home culture, and feel seen in a diverse community setting. This can also include success that international schools may have found with integrating a social justice approach, such as the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Framework, in an international school setting.

It would be interesting to see if in the coming year international school leaders more fully embrace social justice issues as an important component in culturally competent leadership. Additionally, a further recommendation would be to specifically study hiring practices in international schools that successfully nurture and support diverse teaching faculties, and the development of strong pipelines for diverse teachers and leaders.

In light of recent US and global protests around racial equity, there have been several articles written condemning international schools related to perpetuating White supremacy curriculum and school cultures, as well as calling out the racist practices of some of the large recruitment agencies (Abdelmagid, 2020; Dhlamini-Fisher, 2020). This is an important moment for international schools to reflect on practices and systems that reinforce White supremacy and inequities. My hope is that international schools use the momentum from current global events to engage in professional learning, make shifts, and prioritize social justice, inclusion, equity, and cultural competence. In our conversation, Douglas shares:

> There's an assumption that the color of your skin has had an impact on the experiences you've had in life. Right? And I think it's foolish to not just own that statement, right? The color of your skin matters and it's important and it has impacted your experiences. And taking that a little further, the experiences you've had in life inform your teaching, inform your practice, inform your worldview, inform your relationships. And that's what we're looking for in teachers, right? We're looking for how they interact with others. How they bring their own experiences to bear with children all day, every day.

It is my best hope that leadership in international schools will reflect on hiring practices, hidden biases, and how current research and best practices are being supported and translated into international school communities. Diversity can truly enrich and make our schools better places for learning. However, leaders need to be thoughtful, intentional, and communicate clearly in order to support this work's successful implementation.

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Appendix A *Plymouth State University IRB Approval*

Plymouth State UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Date: March 19, 2020

Dear Alexa P. Schmid

Study: An Exploration of Cultural Competence in School Leadership in International Schools
Approval Date: March 19, 2020

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 1101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol. Be sure to complete the Final Report Form when your research is finished.

If, during the course of your project you intend to make changes that may significantly affect the human subjects involved (particularly methodological changes), you must obtain IRB approval prior to implementing these changes. Any unanticipated problems related to your use of human subjects must be promptly reported to the IRB. The IRB may be contacted through Dr. Clarissa M. Uttley, Vice-Chair of the IRB. This is required so that the IRB can update or revise protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary.

You are expected to maintain as an essential part of your project records, any records pertaining to the use of humans as subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to and received from the subjects as well as any executed forms, data and analysis results. If this is a funded project (federal, state, private, other organization), you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representatives of the University, State of New Hampshire, and/or the federal government.

Please note that IRB approval cannot exceed one year. If you expect your project to continue beyond this approval period, you must submit a request for continuance to the IRB for renewal of IRB approval. IRB approval must be obtained and maintained for the entire term of your project or award.

Please notify the IRB in writing when the project is completed. We may ask that you provide information regarding your experiences with human subjects and with the IRB review process. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your project. Any subsequent reactivation of the project will require a new IRB application. I have attached the Project Completion Form for your convenience.

Please do not hesitate to contact the IRB if you have any questions or require assistance. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can. Thank you for your cooperation and efforts throughout this review process. We wish you success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Clarissa M. Uttley

Clarissa M. Uttley, PhD
Institutional Review Board
psu-irb@plymouth.edu

Appendix B *Participant Recruitment Email*

Recruitment Letter or Email

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Alexa Schmid and I am a doctoral student at Plymouth State University (USA), in the Educational Leadership and Curriculum Doctor of Education program. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study to explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population. You are eligible to be in this study if you are a Head of School working in a school that is associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA).

In addition to being a doctoral student, I am also the Middle School Principal at the International School of Kenya.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will take part in individual interview that will last around 45 minutes. I would like to audio record the interview, so I can transcribe the interview and assign it a pseudonym. When I am done transcribing the interview, I will email you the transcript, so you can verify its accuracy. Following verification by participants, I will delete the audio file. Additionally, participants may supply up to two documents that the participant has created that provide examples of policies and initiatives related to their culturally competent leadership.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, and you can choose to be in the study or not at any time before the study is published. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at appanagoulis@plymouth.edu

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Alexa P Schmid

Appendix C *Informed Consent*

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

VOLUNTARILY IN A RESEARCH INVESTIGATION

PLYMOUTH STATE UNIVERSITY

INVESTIGATOR(S) NAME: Alexa P Schmid, Doctoral candidate

STUDY TITLE: An Exploration of Cultural Competence in School Leadership in International Schools

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to learn how directors are engaging in culturally competent leadership in international schools.

I am being asked to be a participant in the study because I am a Head of School / Director / Superintendent at a school that is associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This case study will consist of 15-20 participants who are Heads of School / Directors at international schools globally. The interviewer will ask questions related to their work engaging in culturally competent practices, including successes and challenges. The interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed and then coded to see what themes might emerge across the range of interviews. The amount of time required to participate in the study is a 45-minute initial interview. The researcher will follow up with participants to do a member check regarding the accuracy of the transcript. There is no known cost associated by participating in this study.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

As a participant in this study, I may experience a risk to my confidentiality and/or privacy. I may withdraw from the study at any time.

.

BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit of participating in this study. However, the findings of this study will generate insights into how international school leaders are engaging in culturally competent leadership. The knowledge received may be of value to schools seeking to enhance and promote their practices related to diversity, culturally relevant teaching and cultural competence. It might offer other international schools ideas on how to incorporate successful practices related to cultural competence in an international school setting. .

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

The alternative to this study is to not participate.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I understand that data generated by the study may be reviewed by Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board, which is the committee responsible for ensuring my welfare and rights as a research participant, to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with university regulations. If any presentations or publication result from this research, I will not be identified by name. The information collected during my participation in this study will be through interview questions and possible documents supplied by participants. These would be documents created by participants related to policies or initiatives referenced in the interview.

My confidentiality will be also protected by:

- Researcher will refer to participants and their schools via a pseudonym
- Audio recordings will be saved on an encrypted thumb drive, stored in a locked drawer in researcher's home. These will be discarded following transcription and confirmation of accuracy by the participant.
- Data will be kept for a minimum of one year. Participant may clarify or ask to delete certain identifying information in transcript.
- Transcripts will be saved on encrypted thumb drive, stored in a locked drawer in researcher's home.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

I may choose to withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason. If I choose to drop out of the study, I will contact the investigator and my research records will be destroyed.

COMPENSATION

I will not receive payment for being in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There will be no cost to me for participating in this research.

INJURY COMPENSATION

Neither Plymouth State University nor any government or other agency funding this research project will provide special services, free care, or compensation for any injuries resulting from this research. I understand that treatment for such injuries will be at my expense and/or paid through my medical plan.

QUESTIONS

All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and if I have further questions about this study, I may contact Alexa P Schmid, at +254 716 779 792 or email at appanagoulis@plymouth.edu. You may also contact my professor, Dr. Annette Holba at aholba@plymouth.edu. If I have any questions about the rights of research participants, I may call the Chairperson of the Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board at 603-535-3114 (Valid until July 1, 2021).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to me. I am free to withdraw or refuse consent, or to discontinue my participation in this study at any time without penalty or consequence.

I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research study and have my interview audio recorded. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signatures:

_____
Participant's Name (Print)

_____ _____
Participant 's Signature Date

I, the undersigned, certify that to the best of my knowledge, the subject signing this consent form has had the study fully and carefully explained by me and have been given an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the nature, risks, and benefits of participation in this research study.

Alexa P Schmid
Investigator's Name (Print)

Investigator's Signature _____ Date

Plymouth State University's IRB has approved the solicitation of participants for the study until May 2, 2020

Appendix D *Interview Protocol*

Demographics

Name of school, current location & regional association:

Years at current school:

Total years as a Head of School:

Interview questions:

1. Describe your school's current cultural reality and any associated complexities.

   This may include a breakdown of nationalities, ethnicities, dominant religion(s), and important cultural or legal issues in your host country.
2. Define cultural competence in an international school context.
3. How important is cultural competence in international school settings?
4. How does your own identity and experiences inform and impact you as an international school educator and leader?
5. Describe the ways you promote cultural competence as a leader?
   a. For example, are there examples of how you have you taken a social justice approach related to race, sexuality, gender, religion or other marginalized groups? In what ways have your promoted equity and inclusion to support diverse student needs?
   b. Have you looked for opportunities to incorporate culturally relevant and responsive teaching, or to integrate cultural competence into the curriculum?
   c. Have you considered diverse staffing in your hiring practices? If so, how?
6. What are some successes related to your leadership for cultural competence?
7. What are some challenges you have faced related to leading for cultural competence?

8. What are some policies, strategies, initiatives, or practices that you have implemented or changed to support cultural competence at your school?
    a. Do you have any documents you would like to share that might provide that you had a role in creating that provide examples of policies and initiatives related to cultural competence? While this is not required, you may provide up to two documents.
9. What are your future goals to further expand your work related to cultural competence?
10. What advice do you have for other leaders hoping to engage in promoting cultural competence?

Closing. There is a slight possibility that participants might experience some psychological discomfort as participants reflect on their practices related to equity, inclusion, social justice and cultural competence. I would like to make you aware of the Truman Group, an organization specializing in psychological care for expatriates. You can learn more at their website https://truman-group.com/, and you can contact them at inquiries@truman-group.com to schedule an initial consultation, should you feel that necessary as a result of this process.

Thanks for your time, and if you want to add anything, please feel free to contact me at appanagoulis@plymouth.edu.

Appendix E *Diversity Collaborative Email*

Dear Diversity Collaborative Facilitators,

My name is Alexa Schmid. I am the Middle School Principal at the International School of Kenya. I am also a doctoral student at Plymouth State University (USA), in the Educational Leadership and Curriculum Doctor of Education program. Additionally, I am a member of the ISS Diversity Collaborative. I am writing to seek your support and assistance in soliciting participants for my research study.

For my study, I will explore the successes and challenges that school leadership are experiencing when engaging in and promoting cultural competence in the international school population. This study will contribute to the profession as trends and themes emerge that could help future practitioners learn from the successes and challenges that school leaders face engaging in this work in an international school context. I hope to interview Heads of School from schools that are associated with the US Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, the Association for the Advancement of International Education, and/or members of one of the following six regional international schools associations: the Association of American Schools in South America (AASSA), the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Near East South Asia Council of Overseas Schools (NESA), and the Central and Eastern European Schools Association (CEESA). I plan to conduct interviews through Zoom software between March and April. I would appreciate if you could forward the attached recruitment letter.

Please let me know if you have questions regarding this study.

Warm regards,

Alexa P Schmid
MS Principal at International School of Kenya
Doctoral Candidate at Plymouth State University

Appendix F *Participant Communication*

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. My name is Alexa Schmid and I am a doctoral student at Plymouth State University in Plymouth, NH in the USA. I am also the Middle School Principal at the International School of Kenya, and this study arose out of a problem of practice through my own work in an international school.

This study aims to learn more about the successes and challenges of international school leaders who are engaging in and promoting cultural competence in their schools. This can include supporting diverse school populations, integrating culturally relevant pedagogy, considering diverse staffing, and promoting a social justice mission amid the complexity of navigating local laws.

I will be interviewing Heads of School from various regional associations globally. The Diversity Collaborative through ISS has also helped with distributing information about this study. These interviews should last around 45 minutes. Additionally, participants may supply up to two documents that the participant has created that provide examples of policies and initiatives related to their culturally competent leadership. This is not required, but an option if there are documents that you have created or influenced through your leadership related to cultural competence work that we discuss during the interview.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits of participating in this study. However, participants might have meaningful reflection on their own cultural competence, and think about the ways to continually enhance and expand that work at their schools.

The findings from the study may be of value to Heads of Schools who are interested in further expanding their culturally competent leadership. The themes that emerge could support future practitioners to learn from the successes and challenges that school leaders face engaging in this work in an international school context.

Consent

What questions might you have about the consent form? I will audio record this conversation and store it on an encrypted thumb drive. I will delete the audio recordings after the interview has been transcribed, and you have checked the transcript for accuracy. Following your check and with permission, I will then proceed to identify themes and write the findings. I will assign a pseudonym to you and your school to protect your privacy. If you withdraw from this study, all transcripts and notes will be destroyed and not used in the study findings. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at +254 716 779 792 or email me at appanagoulis@plymouth.edu, or email my professor, Dr. Annette Holba at aholba@plymouth.edu.

Warm regards,

Alexa P Schmid