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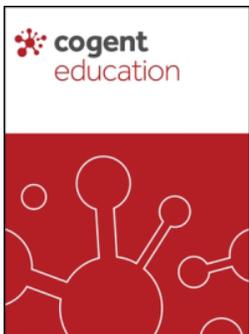
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Interculturally competent teachers: behavioural dimensions and the role of study abroad

G. J. Okken^{1*}, E. P. W. A. Jansen², W. H. A. Hofman² and R. J. Coelen¹

Abstract: Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) is essential for teaching in increasingly diverse primary schools. However, research has not sufficiently addressed the meaning and development of ITC, including whether study abroad during teacher education contributes to the dimensions included. Therefore, this study seeks to determine which dimensions of ITC the respondent teachers report and whether there is a difference in ITC between teachers with or without study abroad experience. Survey data from 155 Dutch primary school teachers measure dimensions of ITC selected from prior literature, of which five can be measured reliably. Furthermore, compared with teachers without study abroad experience, teachers with such experience score significantly higher on the ITC dimensions of openness and storytelling.

Subjects: Educational Research; Teaching & Learning; Multicultural Education; Teaching & Learning; Teachers & Teacher Education

Keywords: Intercultural teaching competence; primary schools; diversity; teacher education; study abroad

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, as the result of global developments, primary school classrooms have become more diverse. Migration is a worldwide issue, with the number of international migrants rising to 258 million in 2018 (United Nations, 2019). It also is changing the characters of national schools, from monocultural to multicultural: In 2019, children represented almost 26 percent of the world's migrant population (United Nations, 2019), though this growth manifests differently across spatial scales (Sleutjes et al., 2018).

Due to such multiculturalism and the recognition that education should contribute to cultural, social, and social-economic integration for all learners (Central Agency for Statistics, 2016; UNESCO, 2015), teachers must be prepared to educate all children properly. Accordingly, cultural awareness, varied teaching strategies, and enhanced intercultural pedagogical approaches should be embedded in primary schools and the teacher's competence profile (McKeown & Kurt, 2012; Miculescu & Bazgan, 2017). These teaching aspects are crucial characteristics of 21st-century teachers (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008), who should be prepared to deal with diversity and "promote and facilitate intercultural exchange and mutual respect" (Biasutti et al., 2019, p. 4). In recent years, more research is focused on the necessary teaching skills for working with intercultural groups of students, as the necessity for intercultural competencies among teachers becomes obvious—not only to be effective in teaching, but also because teachers play a key role in the development of students' intercultural competence development (Miculescu & Bazgan, 2017). An intercultural competent teacher should be able to interpret, evaluate and relate to ambiguous intercultural situations, relativize one's own frame of reference, and use behaviours and skills that fit a specific intercultural context (Pajak-Wazna, 2013). The

development of the Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016) is an example of an important stream in the field of intercultural education as it was developed to “provide a reflective tool for instructors who would like to further develop their own teaching practice [...] in effective teaching across cultures” (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016, p. 438).

A growing body of research shows that study abroad (SA) programmes during teacher education may provide teachers with the theoretical and practical understanding they need for ITC. Through SA, teachers can develop aspects of ITC; they can show enhanced competence in intercultural communication after their return (Clarke et al., 2009; Hauerwas, 2017), become better equipped to differentiate cultural differences via adapted approaches to education and storytelling (Francis, 2015; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Okken et al., 2019), are more culturally conscious and aware (Byker & Putman, 2019; Shiveley & Misco, 2015), and open, tolerant, and appreciative toward those with other cultural backgrounds (Clarke et al., 2009; Horton et al., 2017; Ismail et al., 2006; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Pike, 2002). Personal exposure to critical situations during their SA can help student teachers to develop problem-solving skills (Shadowen et al., 2015), reflect on their own values and educational philosophies, gain a better understanding of other cultures and educational systems, and increase understanding of differences and diversity, which in turn may help them adjust their teaching behaviour to pupils’ needs (Okken et al., 2019; Covert, 2014; Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Garmon, 2004; Walters et al., 2009). Student teachers who have foreign stay experiences, in which they sometimes are part of minority groups, may be more cross-culturally sensitive and culturally responsive in their teaching (Byker & Putman, 2019; Merryfield, 2000).

However, despite the clear need for ITC, teachers often enter the classroom unprepared to teach diverse pupil populations (Alvarado-Caushi et al., 2020; Acquah et al., 2016; Echarfy, 2019; Mayer et al., 2017; OECD, 2017; Paige & Goode, 2009; Spinthourakis & Katsillis, 2003). There is also only little knowledge of how SA contributes to the development of such competencies for teaching in primary education in specific. More research is needed to explore the teacher skills required for teaching in diverse classrooms in a particular setting and determine whether there is any variance in behaviour between teachers with SA experience and teachers without it. Kumar and Parveen (2013) suggest that to reform educational policies, practices, curricula, and teaching materials, more research is needed to understand what happens in multicultural schools and the conditions in which intercultural learning occurs. We therefore need to know which dimensions of intercultural teaching are important in the Dutch educational field, in order to provide (student) teachers with the necessary training to become interculturally competent, which is “a precondition of rising to constantly changing new challenges of the contemporary world” (Pajak-Wazna, 2013, p. 318). Our study is designed to contribute to this scientific understanding regarding ITC in the Dutch context and how SA may influence this by answering the research question:

- (1) Which dimensions of ITC do Dutch primary school teachers report?

After having established an overview of the ITC dimensions Dutch primary school teacher report, we are interested in how this might be related to ng study abroad experiences, as literature suggests a positive relationship between international experiences and teacher behaviour (see theoretical background in next section). The follow-up question will therefore be:

- (2) Are there differences between teachers with SA experience and teachers without SA experience in the extent to which they apply dimensions of ITC?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Intercultural teaching competence (ITC)

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) includes the standard of “diversity,” which states that current teachers should be “educators who can help all students learn and who can teach from multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences,

and representations of students from diverse cultural backgrounds” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008, p. 36). This standard could be recognised in the theory on ITC, which is described as the teacher’s ability to “support the learning of students who are linguistically, culturally, socially, or in other ways different from the instructor or from each other” and “the ability to engage students effectively in global learning” (Dimitrov et al., 2014, p. 89). Dimitrov and Haque (2016) argue that interculturally competent teachers are able to bridge differences and foster meaningful relationships with and among their students. Their ITC model consists of key competencies and teaching strategies which are grouped into 1) foundational competencies, 2) facilitation competencies, and 3) curriculum design competencies. In this research, we use ITC as a foundational concept as required for nowadays teaching and turn to literature pertaining to the range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to ITC for primary school teachers.

2.2. Personality traits

The first aspect of the ITC model, the foundational competencies, are focused on attitudinal components and include aspects of personality. This stage relates to the attitudinal stage of Deardorff’s process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006) and shows how behaviour is the result of rather invisible teacher dimensions. Higher scores on certain personality traits correspond to higher scores on intercultural teacher behaviour too (e.g., Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) conclude that the five traits cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility are essential for intercultural success. Their multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) provides an instrument to measure these traits, which they selected from an extensive literature analysis of cross-cultural adaptability and intercultural relations. Han and Pistole (2017) argue that other traits are predictors of the five traits of the MPQ. They refer to elements of the “Big Five” factors (conscientiousness, achievement striving, and competence) as predictors of openness to diversity, which is an essential aspect of ITC. The ITC model even assumes that openness to diversity already exist, as a base for applying the foundational competencies (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Similarly, Ang et al. (2007) maintain that conscientiousness is the second-most significant predictor of cultural intelligence (CQ), because it affects choices of behaviour. Although not all traits are fully trainable, primary school teachers perceive their SA experiences as influential in their development of these traits (Okken et al., 2019). Okken et al. (2019) also show how SA contributes to the foundational stage of the ITC model, as it appears to help develop awareness of own cultural and professional identities. An intercultural competent teacher should next be able to transfer their attitudes to modelling appropriate behaviour to their students and should help pupils deal with uncertainty involved in exploring difference and perspective taking (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016).

2.3. Intercultural competence (IC) and cultural intelligence (CQ)

After the foundational competencies, the ITC model builds on various models of intercultural competence (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016) for the facilitation competencies. Teachers need intercultural competence (IC) to move from an ethnocentric perspective of teaching—in which they deny or avoid differences in the classroom (Cushner & Chang, 2015)—to an ethno-relative approach in which they effectively recognise and work with differences. In the past, IC has been related to the cultural aspect of interaction (e.g., Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), communicative competence (Byram, 1997), and cultural intelligence (CQ; Ang et al., 2015). Ang et al.’s (2007) CQ scale aims to measure “a person’s capability to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts” (p. 433). However, the increasing range of diversity in societies has stimulated researchers to look beyond the cultural aspect of diversity. A recent definition of IC notes this shift and describes it as “effective human interactions across difference, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion . . .) or across borders” (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5). For teachers, IC and CQ seem to be crucial elements of professional behaviour that differentiates between pupils’ learning styles, levels of understanding, and cultural backgrounds and are therefore strongly incorporated in the intercultural teaching competence. Both IC and CQ also form the base of pedagogy and creating a positive classroom culture, as IC and CQ include behavioural aspects such as having awareness of own identity, evaluating diversity in teaching materials, using storytelling to enter dialogues, and promoting equal opportunities for all students.

2.4. Classroom management

The ITC model further incorporates elements of classroom management in the facilitation competencies, as it considers, among others, sharing academic expectations, facilitating active learning, recognising barriers, and creating opportunities for peer learning. Classroom management strategies are indispensable for interculturally competent teachers, which starts with creating cultural safety and trust as a foundational competency (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Also Borgmeier et al. (2016) use evidence-based classroom practices to describe and measure more general classroom management aspects, including rules, room arrangements, and instructions. Their classroom practice self-assessment scale consists of 25 items, 19 of which focus on classroom management practices, with 6 pertaining to effective instructional practices. Items in this instrument match Morina and Orozco's (2019) suggestions with regard to the use of active teaching strategies for diverse classrooms and the facilitation competencies as described by Dimitrov and Haque (2016).

2.5. Differentiation, communication, and student-centered learning

Other aspects of the facilitation competencies of the ITC model include strategies related to differentiation, communication, and student-centered learning. These dimensions of teacher behaviour then continue within the curriculum design competencies and help teachers to work effectively with diversity in the classroom, because they focus on the learning styles and needs of pupils to create alignment across the curriculum to help students develop further. Aspects of these competencies show overlap with inclusive pedagogy: "The use of a student-centred learning approach, considering the affective and emotional aspects of learning, and basing teaching on active methodologies" (Morina & Orozco, 2019, p. 1). According to Clarke and Drudy (2006), the classroom strategies that are most appropriate for managing diverse classrooms are active and experimental ones. Teachers therefore need such competencies to identify relevant resources for their teaching that recognize and validate cultural differences (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016) and use them to differentiate students' needs. However, this approach is more than general differentiation; it signifies a profound change in education (Morina & Orozco, 2019) that responds to the needs of diverse youth (Warren, 2018) through differentiation and language. The theory of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), on which the ITC model is partly inspired, also recognises the use of differentiation and communication strategies in "building upon, appreciating, and sustaining students' cultural difference in one's teaching practice" (Warren, 2018, p. 170); it refers to teacher behaviours that adapt to the needs of pupils, encourage cohesion, and avoid the creation of outsiders (Parekh, 2000). This behaviour translates into practice of the three principles of intercultural education: (1) actively caring for all students, (2) communicating with all children, regardless of cultural differences, and (3) adapting the curriculum and instruction to respond to differences in pupil populations (Cunningham, 2019; Osa'dan et al., 2016). The use of storytelling as a method of instruction seems effective to connect to the diverse student population as it ensures space to acknowledge and share various perspectives and to counterbalance otherness (Luwisch, 2001). According to Okken et al. (2019), SA contributes to teacher qualities that support intercultural education by encouraging teachers to be more adaptive and creative in instruction—for example, with the help of storytelling and the use of varied teaching materials, which connect to the facilitating and curriculum design competencies of ITC.

In summary, our literature analysis illustrates a wide range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to ITC (see Table 1 for a summary). It describes the three stages of the ITC model and illustrates the various teaching dimensions required for teaching in intercultural settings. The key conclusions indicate that ITC (1) embodies various dimensions of teacher behaviour from a wide range of concepts and theories, related to three levels of competencies and (2) includes more than merely recognising diversity in education, such that it achieves cultural responding (Cunningham, 2019) by means of applying facilitation competencies and curriculum design competencies.

3. Design and methods

In the ITC framework, many aspects of teacher behaviour are related to indicated learning outcomes of study abroad experiences among (student) teachers. Therefore, it will not only be valuable from a research perspective to investigate which ITC dimensions are used by teachers, but also to see if this differs amongst teachers with and without SA experience. We thus embraced the theoretical framework

Table 1. Dimensions of ITC selected from literature included in survey

Components of the ITC Model	Behavioural dimension	Rationale
Foundational competencies	Openness	Effective intercultural behavior relates to higher scores on openness (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000)
	Conscientiousness—achievement striving	Predictor of openness to diversity (Han & Pistole, 2017) and cultural intelligence; traits affect choices of behavior (Ang et al., 2007)
	Conscientiousness—self-confidence	Predictor of better regulation of diversity-related situations (Han & Pistole, 2017) and influential factor for cultural intelligence; trait affects choices of behavior (Ang et al., 2007)
	Social initiative	Effective intercultural behavior relates to higher scores on social initiative (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000)
	Conscientiousness—achievement striving	Predictor of openness to diversity (Han & Pistole, 2017) and cultural intelligence; traits affect choices of behavior (Ang et al., 2007)
Facilitation competencies & Curriculum design competencies	Differentiation	To work with differences among pupils effectively (Cushner & Chang, 2015)
	Communication skills	To communicate with all children, regardless of cultural difference (Osa'dan et al., 2016)
	Student-centered learning	To use active methodologies (Morina & Orozco, 2019) and experimental classroom strategies for managing diverse classrooms (Clarke & Drudy, 2006)
	Storytelling	To adapt curriculum and instruction to respond to differences in pupil populations (Osa'dan et al., 2016), as outcome of SA (Okken et al., 2019)
	Creativity	To adapt curriculum and instruction to respond to differences in pupil populations (Osa'dan et al., 2016), as outcome of SA (Okken et al., 2019)
	Classroom management	To use evidence-based classroom management and instructional practices, to work effectively with diverse groups of pupils (Borgmeier et al., 2016)

regarding dimensions of ITC and designed a cross-sectional survey to measure aspects of all levels of competencies of the ITC model among Dutch primary school teachers. With the survey, we investigated two questions: Which dimensions of ITC do Dutch teachers report? and Are there differences between teachers with SA experience and teachers without SA experience in the extent to which they apply dimensions of ITC?

3.1. Measurements

We created a survey instrument in which various behaviour dimensions of the three levels of competencies of the ITC model were included (Table 1), based on existing research instruments selected from

literature (Appendix). As the existing instruments for the different ITC competencies do not cover all behavioural dimensions that we would like to measure, we created a new instrument for measuring dimensions of ITC, to ensure the greater specificity and detail that survey researchers recommend (Ball & Rowan, 2004; Muijs, 2006). Of some of the existing surveys, various items were taken to include in the new survey instrument. Teachers responded using a 6-point Likert scale to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements in the survey (1 = “totally disagree” and 6 = “totally agree”), related to dimensions of ITC. Notably, aspects of internal outcomes of IC (Deardorff, 2006), which are assumed to be the base of ITC (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016) are categorised within the foundational competencies.

3.2. Participation and sample

Our sample consisted of 155 Dutch primary school teachers (89% female). We used multi-stage cluster sampling to select groups of known clusters (Bryman, 2016; which in this case were the 12 Dutch provinces) to avoid regional agglomeration. We sent participation invitations via email to principals of 45 schools per province, taken from a list of schools per region in the Netherlands, in conjunction with snowball sampling, to gather a convenience sample. We asked the school principals to forward the survey information to the team with the request to participate. To ensure the voluntary nature of the study, we informed all participants of the design and nature of the research by including relevant information on the first page of the survey, using Qualtrics software. Respondents could only complete the survey if they digitally signed the consent form. The age of the teachers in our sample varied: The largest group (28%) was aged 20–29 and the second largest group (22%) was 50–59. Mostly, respondents indicated they worked in a particularly homogeneous school. However, 20% of the teachers responded that they worked in a school with great to extreme ethnic diversity. All respondents of this study completed their Teacher Education (TE) in the Netherlands, yet, the graduation year varied significantly (e.g., some respondents graduated 5 years ago, whereas another respondent completed their TE programme 40 years ago). Therefore, the content of the TE programme and the level of training on the intercultural teaching competency among respondents also varied. Although the current educator’s competency profile includes some behavioural indicators linked to intercultural aspects of the teaching profession (e.g., being able to differentiate based on a diverse pupil population), until today, there are no explicit references to intercultural teaching competencies. Yet, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science did discuss more recent developments in terms of internationalisation with teachers, but concluded that the prerogative of how to implement these topics are made at the school level. This might lead to additional, but potentially varied, competency requirements for teachers. Also, TE programmes differ in how, and to what extent, they cover topics such as intercultural competencies and other learning outcomes of internationalisation in their programmes. Some TE programmes explicitly discuss topics such as superdiversity and identity while others describe this more broadly in terms of being aware of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of pupils (HBO Bachelors, forthcoming). This might be the result of the location of the TE programme and the context in which graduates eventually work, as, for instance, Fukkink and Oostdam (2016) argued that teachers who end up working in larger cities—the urban professionals—need adapted teacher training with enhanced focus on diversity.

3.3. Participants with SA experience

In our sample, 41 teachers indicated they had SA experiences during their teacher education. We asked them to describe concisely their SA experiences in the first part of their self-evaluations. Their foreign experiences varied from short-term ($n = 14$), or less than four weeks, to medium and long-term ($n = 27$). The locations also varied; they included many European countries, as well as countries in Asia, Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean islands. The teachers described their SA locations variously as developing, poor, rich, western, innovative, disadvantaged, traditional, urban, or rural. The most common purpose (35.4%) of respondents’ SAs was to conduct research projects related to primary schools, followed by internships, courses at a foreign university, or combinations of activities.

4. Results

4.1. Exploring dimensions of ITC

Our first research question (i.e., which dimensions of ITC for teaching in diverse classrooms do Dutch primary school teachers report?) is answered by using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in SPSS Version 26, for exploring the dimensions of ITC in our sample. The EFA seemed required as the underlying factor structure of the newly created survey was not identified yet. Therefore, this analysis illustrated the factor structure of the survey and examined the internal reliability of the factors. Inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the seventh factor¹; because the seventh factor was difficult to interpret, we excluded it from further analysis (Table 2). Accordingly, we determined that the answer to our first research question is that the Dutch primary school teachers in our sample identify six dimensions of ITC: communication, social initiative, openness, storytelling, enriched lesson design, and classroom management.

4.2. Reliability analysis

We calculated the Cronbach’s alpha for each of the six dimensions of ITC that we retained after EFA. With the exception of the communication dimension, all dimensions of ITC were represented reliably among the answers of the respondent teachers (Cronbach’s alpha > .7), indicating good reliability (Table 2; Pallant, 2010). We therefore removed the communication dimension from the set of ITC dimensions, which resulted in a final list of five dimensions of ITC. This procedure provided information on the inquiry if and which dimensions were reported by our respondents. The results showed that five of the six retained dimensions of ITC reported by the Dutch teachers can be measured reliably. However, we must acknowledge that the newly composed scales in this survey are not further tested in terms of content. Therewith, the answer to this research question must be taken with caution.

4.3. Difference between teachers with and without study abroad experience

We answered our second research question (i.e., are there differences between teachers with SA experience and without SA experience with regard to the extent to which they apply ITC dimensions?) by conducting an independent sample t-test. Specifically, we investigated whether teachers with SA experience scored significantly higher on the five ITC dimensions. The distribution of scores was normal for the purpose of conducting an independent t-test (i.e., skewness < 2.0, kurtosis < 9.0; Pallant, 2010). The differences between teachers with and without SA experience ($p < .07$) is moderate when we consider openness ($p = .043$, Cohen’s $d = .47$) and small for storytelling ($p = .095$, Cohen’s $d = .33$). Accordingly, the results suggest a significant difference between teachers with and without SA experience on two of the five dimensions of ITC (Table 3). Notably, conducting the test with p -values used of $< .05$, only the factor of openness appeared to be moderate. Yet, considering the relatively small sample group and its extreme relevance for ITC, we further explored the relevance of storytelling and therefore highlight the importance of the dimension storytelling as the Cohen’s d also indicates a medium effect for this factor.

Table 2. Factors of ITC

Components of the ITC model	Behavioural dimension	Nr. of items	Cronbach’s alpha
Foundational competencies	Openness	6	.88
	Social initiative	5	.72
Facilitation competencies & Curriculum design competencies	Communication skills	4	.68
	Storytelling	3	.88
	Enriched lesson design	4	.80
	Classroom management	4	.74

Table 3. Differences between teachers with and without study abroad experience

ITC dimension	Means		Std. Deviation		Sig. (2-tailed)
	With SA	Without SA	With SA	Without SA	
Openness	5.04	4.69	.59	.85	.043
Enriched lesson design	5.03	4.88	.49	.79	.347
Classroom management	5.16	5.22	.50	.61	.631
Social initiative	4.81	4.82	.61	.64	.939
Storytelling	3.99	3.74	.74	.66	.095

5. Discussion

Our study was designed to investigate which dimensions of ITC Dutch teachers report and whether there is a difference between teachers with SA experience and teachers without SA experience in the extent to which they apply ITC dimensions. As we detail further in the following sections, our findings indicate:

- (1) Respondent teachers apply 6 ITC dimensions in their teaching of which five dimensions can be measured reliably.
- (2) There are differences between teachers with SA experience and teachers without SA experience with regard to the ITC dimensions of openness and, although to a small degree, storytelling.

6. ITC dimensions reported by Dutch primary school teachers

Teachers in our study apply six of the ITC dimensions that we found in the literature and prior research. These dimensions are especially in the categories of facilitation and curriculum design competencies (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). The dimensions intercultural competencies, differentiation, student-centered learning, achievement striving, and self-confidence did not emerge in our data. Perhaps these are not relevant to the teaching contexts of the respondents, or maybe the teachers simply do not recognise the dimensions in their classroom, even though there may be a need for them to be used.

First, a reason of the lack of validity for all ITC dimensions in our sample may be related to the teaching and school contexts of our respondents. Overall, the dimensions of ITC that we identify as not valid for responding to diversity may be irrelevant to the research participants because of a lack of emphasis on diversity in their schools' visions, missions, or pupil populations. For example, teachers' reports of the need to use intercultural competencies and (intercultural) differentiation in their professional behaviour imply that they identify intercultural situations in their school environments. However, as highlighted in our theoretical framework, changes in the character of national schools from monocultural to multicultural differ across spatial scales (Sleutjes et al., 2018). Perhaps for our respondent teachers, their school environments do not require many intercultural interactions, because they remain largely monocultural. However, according to Deardorff's (2020) definition, teachers in our study may have focused on cultural differences rather than on diversity in general, because intercultural competencies go beyond the cultural aspect of interaction to include interactions across differences. This possibility shows the need for further investigation of how teachers view diversity in their classrooms.

Second, the teachers might not have fully recognised or concentrated on levels of diversity in their classrooms, despite their presence in actuality. This reason could reflect a positive indication; the teachers may view children as equals and therefore treat them the same way. However, some ITC dimensions still should be used to address the needs of diverse youth (Warren, 2018). Instead of ignoring differences, teachers should pay attention to the diversity levels in their classrooms and make use of differences effectively, to support pupils' development through interaction with diverse others. Lack of attention to these intercultural and diversity aspects of teaching may be related to the rather

monocultural character of the teacher population in the Netherlands; 88% of our respondents identified themselves as solely Dutch, whereas 47% described the level of diversity of their pupils as moderate to strong, affirming the conclusions of Sleutjes et al. (2018) that the levels of diversity among the pupil and teacher populations differ notably. This finding raises intriguing questions about the effect of ethnic matching between teachers and pupils. A review by Driessen (2015) offers weak evidence that stronger ethnic matches lead to mainly positive results in students' learning. Therefore, in addition to investigating the possibility of having more multicultural teaching teams in schools, the development of intercultural awareness among monocultural teaching teams could better connect multicultural groups of children. Our research shows that teachers with SA experience feel more capable of managing diverse groups of pupils; therefore, mobility among teachers and students within teacher education programmes may encourage more multicultural experiences that foster better connections with multicultural pupils. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the differences in the levels of diversity in various schools in the Netherlands.

6.1. Difference in teacher behaviour: possible influence of SA

The second part of our study explored the differences between teachers with SA experience and teachers without SA experience in terms of ITC dimensions. Our findings reveal a significant difference between the groups regarding the dimensions of openness and storytelling. High means on these two dimensions indicate all teachers apply openness and storytelling in their teaching. However, teachers with SA experience apply these two dimensions of ITC to a greater extent (Table 3).

6.1.1. Openness

In line with prior literature (e.g., Clarke et al., 2009; Ismail et al., 2006; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Martin et al., 2015; Pike, 2002), we affirm that SA can contribute to higher scores on openness, an ITC dimension related to adaptability and flexibility (Bakalis & Joiner, 2004; Deardorff & Edwards, 2013). This is an important finding as prior research (e.g., Kiel et al., 2017) also indicates this to be the largest factor for an intercultural school. Teachers with higher scores on openness may be able to respond better to diversity in their classrooms; this ability implies the development of ITC through cultural recognition (by being more open to diversity) and cultural responding (with the help of diversity management), because awareness is a prerequisite of adaptive behaviour (Cunningham, 2019). In the ITC model, the dimension openness is not explicitly mentioned in one of the levels, as the model presupposes that users of ITC already demonstrate openness as an internal outcome of Deardorff's process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). This includes being open towards students from other cultures. It might thus be that teachers with international experience are more prepared to apply the foundational, facilitation, and curriculum design competencies of the ITC model in practice.

The finding that teachers with SA score higher on openness also supports the conclusions of Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000), who claim that effective intercultural behaviour relates to higher scores on openness (among other traits). With 47% of our respondents describing their schools as moderately to strongly diverse, openness to diversity is fundamental. Teachers in our sample who had SA experience reported that they value exploring new things, are interested in various cultures and personal backgrounds, are open to and tolerant of second-language learners, and are able to respond to the needs of these learners. During SA, being more open to diversity also relates to the development of other SA outcomes. Several studies (e.g., Goel et al., 2010; Leung et al., 2008) find that student teachers who score high on the openness dimension benefit more from multicultural experiences than student teachers who score low on openness. Therefore, student teachers with higher scores on openness prior to departure are likely to indicate greater SA learning outcomes upon their return. However, according to Goel et al. (2010, p. 250), personality traits are also a factor:

A student who is not conscientious but open to new experiences may be more likely to participate in a study abroad experience if s/he thinks the course is relatively easy, while a conscientious student open to new experiences may be more concerned about the academic components of the programme.

The question is whether all students in teacher education programmes develop openness to diversity through SA. Martin et al. (2015) find that increased openness during SA is restricted to student teachers who score relatively low on this trait prior to their departures. More research is therefore required to indicate whether the experience itself led to higher scores on openness, or if this difference already existed prior to the experience.

6.1.2. *Storytelling*

Interculturally competent teachers should help all students learn (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008), which could be done through differentiated teaching. Storytelling could be viewed as part of differentiated teaching; teachers adapt their instruction and curriculum to respond to variance in pupil populations (Osa'dan et al., 2016) through sharing stories. This form of transferring knowledge also relates to the facilitation competencies -facilitate discussion among students with a variety of communication styles- and the curriculum design competencies -designing assessments that recognise and validate cultural differences in writing and communication styles- of the ITC model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). It is a way to admit “the other into one’s world and thus of neutralizing otherness and strangeness” (Luwisch, 2001, p. 134). In our study, compared with teachers without SA experience, teachers with SA experience used storytelling more to enrich lesson content, to differentiate in teaching, instruct children about various aspects of life, and make lessons more attractive and meaningful. This finding is in line with conclusions of Hauerwas et al. (2017), who found that students develop skills to adapt teaching practices to the needs of pupils through SA experience. This aspect of teacher behaviour supports the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), which mandates that teachers consider the affective and emotional aspects of learning. This outcome also relates to the previously mentioned findings regarding openness to diversity. Teachers who are open to diverse others and able to adapt to differences tend to select various teaching strategies. Being open towards others then aligns with Klassen et al.’s (2017) adaptability aspect of the resilience and adaptability domain. This domain is focused on flexibility in lesson delivery. Responding to the needs of pupils in creative and flexible manners may include storytelling. Conle (1996) shows that storytelling can be a means of relating to others and being more reflective on personal experiences; therefore, it may benefit teacher–student and student–student relationships. Gudmundsdottir (1991) indicates that teachers who find ways to integrate personal stories into their curricula are more capable of engaging with the concerns of their students. The use of stories in a classroom could also help students and teachers to reduce stigma (Kimball et al., 2016) and to providing a context for broader learning outcomes and to understand human behaviour (Bledsoe & Setterlund, 2020). All these benefits of the use of stories in education seem to be essential aspects of education.

6.2. *Application of SA learning outcomes*

Our findings show an important influence of SA on ITC. However, it may be possible that the dimensions of ITC are significantly stronger among teachers with SA experience immediately following their experiences, whereas when SA outcomes are less applicable in their home contexts, they become weaker over the long term. Author et al. () argue that because of a mismatch in educational philosophies, high workloads, and various professional life phases, many SA learning outcomes cannot be applied in the teaching profession. As teachers need to adapt to the needs of their students in class, aspects of intercultural teaching competence are alternately necessary, depending on the changing needs of the student communities they work with (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016). Moreover, host contexts during SA may be completely different from home contexts, such that SA learning may be too context specific and less applicable at home. Therefore, the influences of SA components (e.g., duration, destination) and school characteristics (e.g., level of diversity, educational philosophy) on the application of SA learning outcomes in the teaching profession should be investigated further, especially as we concluded, in conjunction with findings of Arthur et al. (2020) that SA outcomes are not uniform.

6.3. *Implications, limitations, and research directions*

This study made use of existing tools to create a new instrument for measuring ITC dimensions in the educational field. We tried to measure the dimensions with a limited number of items as we aimed for a high completion rate of the survey. However, the major limitation of this study is that the new

instrument was not fully able to measure all dimensions we aimed for and that the newly composed scales were not further tested in terms of content (e.g., through subsequent qualitative methods like interviews with experts in the field). We acknowledge therefore the limitations of the instrument that was used for this research and urge for a follow up in terms of instrument development. Having less dimensions and more items per dimension may perhaps increase the reliability. Conducting the survey among a larger sample would then give more insights into the possible connections to other external factors impacting ITC (e.g., location and curriculum of school). Despite these limitations, the study adds to our understanding of the use of ITC elements in Dutch primary education. First, following Kumar and Parveen's (2013) suggestions for research, our study provides teachers with insights into the relevant dimensions of ITC for working with diverse classrooms. It illustrates how Dutch teachers report on these dimensions with regard to their own teaching contexts and therefore expands the understanding of theory on intercultural teaching competence. Paying more attention to levels of diversity in classrooms can be positive for pupils' social, emotional, and cognitive development (Benner & Crosnoe, 2011; Gurin et al., 2003; Pagani, 2014) and help minimise behavioural problems (Rucinski et al., 2019). Further research in primary education institutions might consider whether other variables (e.g., location, profile of school, work experience of teachers) influence ITC and how teachers view diversity in the classroom.

Second, our findings have significant implications for understanding how SA can support the development of ITC dimensions. Teachers with SA experience score significantly higher on the dimensions of openness and storytelling. A question that remains is whether other school and teacher variables influence the application of these dimensions in teaching. Follow-up studies could explore the ways and extent to which skills related to ITC, taught in different international settings, could be transferred to local contexts; they also could investigate the influence of school contexts and SA components, as, for instance, programme duration seems to have an impact on SA learning outcomes (e.g., DeLoach et al., 2019). Research instruments other than surveys (e.g., observations) also might be helpful; teachers in our sample may have scored lower on survey dimensions than their actual practices would indicate, because of a lack of realistic self-insight (Dunning, 2011; Ehrlinger et al., 2008).

7. Conclusion

One of the strengths of this study was exploring the concept of ITC in a specific teacher context, with a special interest for the effect of study abroad. Our respondents report six dimensions, of which we are able to measure five reliably. We conclude that these five dimensions especially relate to the facilitation and curriculum design competencies of ITC. We also find that teachers with SA experience show greater levels of openness and use of storytelling than teachers without SA experience. With this research, we support the idea of other studies (e.g., Miculescu & Bazgan, 2017) that as primary schools become more multicultural, teacher education programmes should pay more attention to the international character of the teaching profession and integrate aspects of mobility and intercultural learning into their curricula. Such integration can help student teachers become better prepared for their profession. We also conclude that existing teaching teams should explore more opportunities for ITC in their schools and receive training in ITC dimensions. If we are to claim that ITC dimensions are necessary in contemporary education and international learning experiences increase the effectiveness of teachers in primary schools, we must examine these areas of investigation more extensively as we attempt to train interculturally competent teachers.

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Note

1. The terms “factor” and “dimension” both refer to dimensions of ITC.

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Appendix

Table 1. Validated instruments used for creation of survey

Nr.	Dimension	Instrument	Literature connections
1	Intercultural competencies	Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) short form (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002) Miville-Guzman Universality diversity scale—short form(1999) Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008) Intercultural Teaching Competence Model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016)	“Effective human interactions across difference, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion ... or across borders (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5) Open-mindedness (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). Cultural Intelligence: a person’s potential to be effective across a wide range of intercultural contexts (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008)
2	Differentiation	Borgmeier et al. (2016) Intercultural Teaching Competence Model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016)	Contributing to “diversity standard” of NCATE. Working with differences effectively (Cushner & Chang, 2015).
3	Communication skills	Common European Framework Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008)	Communicating with all children, regardless of cultural differences (Osa’dan et al., 2016) Cultural intelligence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008): a person’s potential to be effective across a wide range of intercultural contexts
4	Student-centered learning	Borgmeier et al. (2016)	Uses active methodologies (Morina & Orozco, 2019) Active and experimental classroom strategies for managing diverse classrooms (Clarke & Drudy, 2006)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

5	Conscientiousness—achievement striving	Big Five Inventory MPQ short form (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002) Reflective functioning questionnaire	Effective intercultural behaviour corresponds to higher scores on MPQ traits Big Five personality items correlate with better regulation of diversity-related situations (Han & Pistole, 2017) Emotional stability relates to higher teacher effectiveness (Shiveley & Misco, 2015)
6	Conscientiousness—self-confidence	Big Five Inventory MPQ short form (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002) Reflective functioning questionnaire Self-Efficacy Scale (Sherer & Maddux, 1982)	
7	Social initiative	MPQ short form (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002)	
8	Openness	MPQ short form (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). Miville-Guzman Universality diversity scale—short form. Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).	
9	Storytelling	Research findings (Okken et al., 2019) Intercultural Teaching Competence Model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016)	To adapt curriculum and instruction to respond to the differences in pupil population (Osa'dan et al., 2016), seen as an outcome of study abroad (Author et al.,)
10	Creativity		
11	Classroom management	Borgmeier et al. (2016) Intercultural Teaching Competence Model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016)	Evidence-based classroom practices for effective instructional practices



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