

*Paquette & Milligan, 2023*

*Volume 9 Issue 2, pp. 81-92*

*Received: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023*

*Revised: 05<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023*

*Accepted: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023*

*Date of Publication: 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023*

*DOI- <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2023.92.8192>*

*This paper can be cited as: Paquette, P. & Milligan, M. (2023). Global E-Learning and Experiential Opportunities for Programs and Students. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 9(2), 81-92.*

*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.*

## **GLOBAL E-LEARNING AND EXPERIENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS**

**Paige Paquette**

*Associate Professor, Troy University, Phenix City, Alabama, United States of America*  
[ppaquette@troy.edu](mailto:ppaquette@troy.edu)

**Meg Milligan**

*Professor, Troy University, Phenix City, Alabama, United States of America*  
[mmilligan@troy.edu](mailto:mmilligan@troy.edu)

---

### **Abstract**

*Electronic learning (e-learning), pedagogy using online technology without physical proximity among the people involved, accelerated due to the recent pandemic and continues its metamorphosis in our endemic world. This new world creates new opportunities to apply e-learning in global contexts, by itself or blended with traditional methods as conditions warrant. Four iterations of a model are described and discussed in terms of adaptability, student satisfaction variables, development of intercultural competence, and global identity. The newest iteration combines previous iterations' e-learning and experiential learning opportunities with participants' occupational and program-specific experiences. The authors include testable outcomes and future possibilities.*

### **Keywords**

E-Learning, Intercultural Competence, Global Identity, Study Abroad

---

## **1. Introduction**

Electronic learning, e-learning, defies consensual definition, but it denotes pedagogy that uses online technology without physical proximity among the people involved (James, 2021). This general term applies to teaching-learning methods that use electronic delivery while teachers-learners are not in the same physical space.

The use of e-learning accelerated during the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Marinoni et al., 2020) and continued its metamorphosis into our endemic world. The pandemic, an infectious disease that affected the world, is changing to an endemic stage, a regularly occurring disease in a population of people. This endemic classification more accurately describes the current relationship between humans and coronavirus as well as other diseases, such as influenza and malaria. E-learning gains greater importance as these global threats increase.

While e-learning as a pedagogical approach is well-established and growing in popularity, there is fierce competition among education systems as they strive to adapt to changing circumstances and remain relevant and successful. Delineating effective strategies to adapt to changing demands is an ongoing challenge. This paper describes some strategies that can be effective for programs and students.

Effectiveness has a psychological component called perception, which means from the individual's perspective. Recently, Ludden-Schlatter et al. (2022) (n=682) reported that interacting, communicating, and collaborating were rated as most salient for perceived satisfaction and effectiveness of e-learning. The authors incorporate these efforts throughout our model.

We live in an increasingly interconnected global world. Globalization, in which "cultures influence each other and become more alike through trade, immigration, and the exchange of ideas" (Arnett, 2002, p. 774), leads to global identity, "identifying with people around the world" (Zhang & Khare, 2009, p. 524). This need for global connectedness highlights the importance of developing intercultural competence, an aspect of global identity, which means "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). Each of these is central to our model.

## **2. Iterations**

This paper presents three iterations of a model that combines e-learning and experiential learning, as well as a new one planned for 2023. See Milligan and Paquette (2021) for a more detailed description of the original and the pandemic models. This model is flexible, adaptable, and can accommodate the needs of different programs and student populations, broadly defined and unforeseen

events, such as a pandemic, natural disaster, or political instability. An added benefit is this training aligns with non-cognitive attributes, also called soft skills, that employers value, such as "teamwork, collaboration, and oral and written communication" (Deming, 2017).

### **2.1. Original or Pre-Pandemic Model**

An online course with an embedded short-term study abroad component formed the basic structure of our original model. It was a novel design that combined the benefits of cultural preparation before departure, academic credit, and experiential learning in one of two destination nations.

**2.1.1. Online Course:** The instructor divided the online course into nine weekly modules, each focusing on aspects of culture, such as healthcare, education, government, and the arts. The content focused on specific study-abroad destinations and the United States (U.S.).

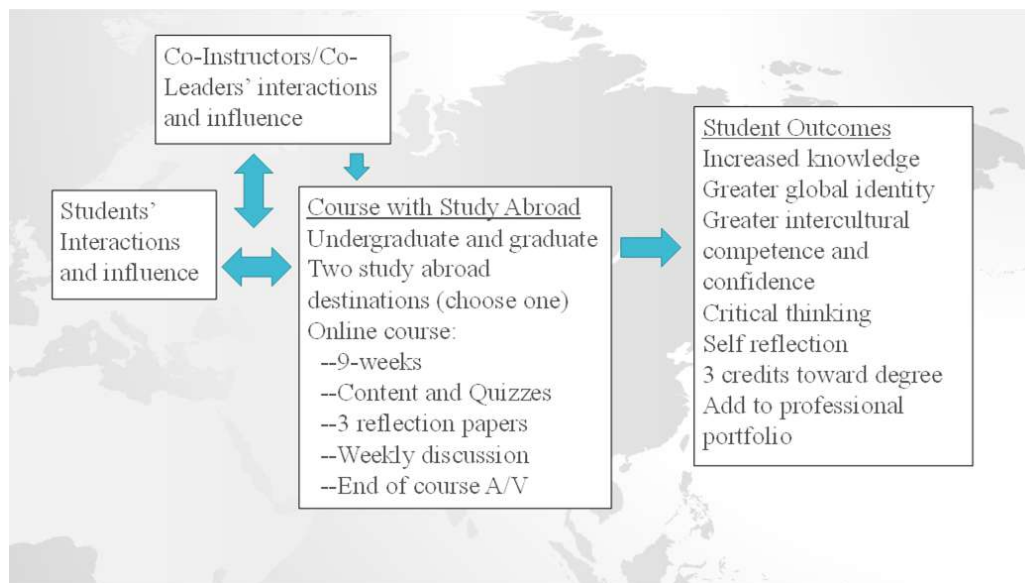
Another important aspect of this course is its use of Open Educational Resources (OER). These are available online, free to use, and have obvious benefits (Seaman & Seaman, 2019). In addition, since this course is not textbook based, it is easy to immediately update materials to reflect current information and perspectives while deleting antiquated content and language.

Assignments include three reflection papers, one submitted pre-departure, another upon return from the study abroad program, and the final one at the end of the course. The first asks students about their positive and negative expectations regarding their anticipated experience abroad, which helps students think about their attitudes, hopes, and concerns, while helping faculty leaders understand their group members. The second paper is a compare-contrast of an element of culture across locations, and the final assignment is a wrap-up reflection. The other major components are weekly discussions and a student-produced audio-video (A/V) presentation. Students who qualify for the Chancellor's Award (a financial incentive to study abroad) are required to give a talk to a university or community group about their experiences. The online course has a built-in student presentation component, so it is ready to use. Of course, students are encouraged to share their learning and experiences widely and to recruit others to join future study abroad programs!

**2.1.2. Embedded Study Abroad Program:** Studying abroad has well-documented advantages for personal and professional growth and is used increasingly in higher education (Xiaoxing, 2020). There are many ways to categorize study abroad. We use the term to mean a semi-structured experience outside a person's accustomed culture. This experience reserves week four or five of the online course for an eight-day to twelve-day experience in a country outside of the U.S. Since the program embeds the study abroad in the middle of the course, students have opportunities to share these experiences in the online

classroom setting to complete the course.

In 2018, the study-abroad destinations were Uganda and Costa Rica; in 2019, they were the United Kingdom and Costa Rica. In 2020, the destinations were Greece and Costa Rica, but the course and study abroad programs were canceled due to COVID-19.



**Figure 1: Pre-Pandemic Model of the Global Identity Course**  
(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)

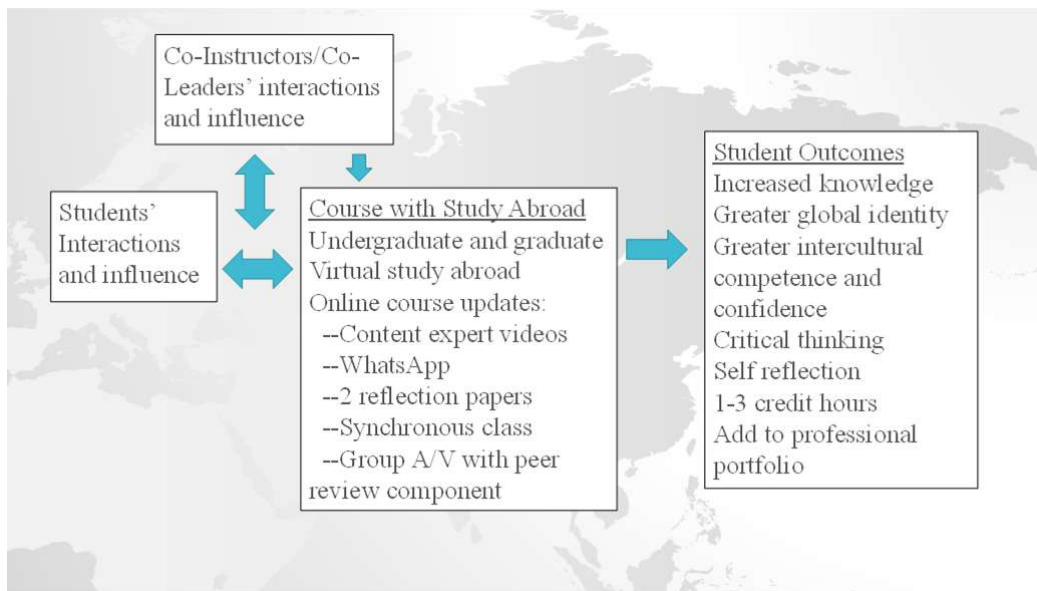
## 2.2. Pandemic Iteration

COVID-19 forced widespread travel restrictions and study-abroad cancellations. This experience prompted us to modify our model to include more virtual components to compensate for this loss and to prevent course cancellations. Our ultimate goal is to give all our students an international experience, even if they cannot leave their homes.

**2.2.1. Modifications:** While the course retained many of the design features of the original model, namely, OER content, discussions, and an A/V end-of-course assignment, there was a need to implement many significant modifications. We dropped the second reflection paper since that relied on the in-person study abroad experience and added short quizzes on the OER content to monitor understanding.

We added videos by experts from our university, which expanded interdisciplinary and cross-college collaborations and highlighted internal in addition to external expertise. We decided to set up a WhatsApp group for our students in the United States, students in Malaysia (enrolled in our university's American Degree Program there), and Costa Rica (from our study abroad partner university) to foster interaction and greater cultural competence. Two experts on two continents conducted a synchronous

class on women's global leadership. We changed the individual A/V assignment to a group project to enhance remote interaction and added a peer review component, consistent with current best practices (Zong et al., 2021).



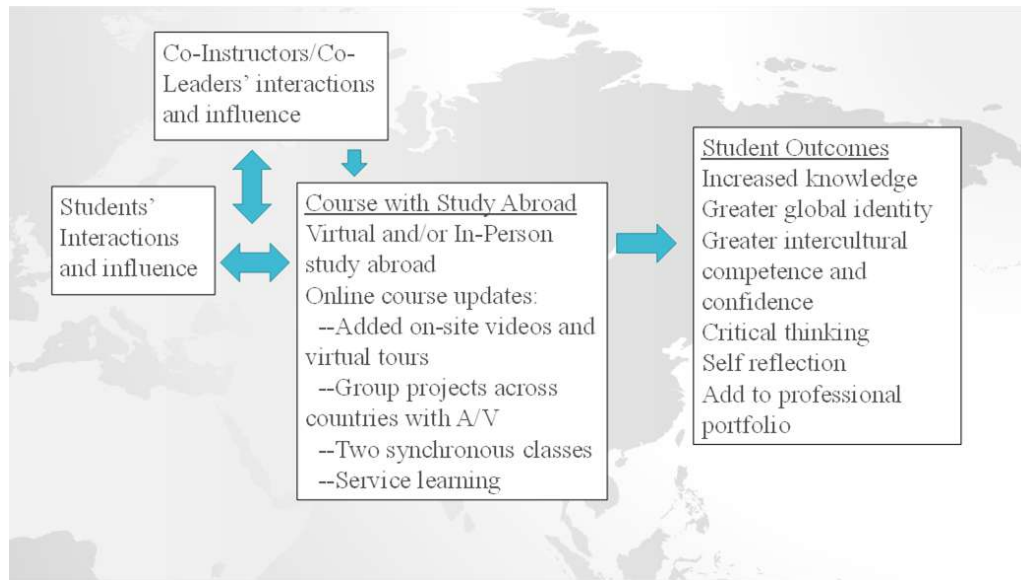
**Figure 2:** *Pandemic Model of Global Identity Course*

*(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)*

### 2.3. Endemic Iteration

As the world reopened, travel became an option again, but new pandemics or other calamities were real possibilities that necessitated contingency planning. This iteration can be a stand-alone course or a course with travel to a destination location, either within the U.S. or outside. Our definition of study abroad stipulates experience outside a person's accustomed culture, which does not limit travel to locations outside one's national borders.

**2.3.1. Modifications:** This model can accommodate a variety of modifications. For example, we added on-site videos and virtual tours recorded, with permission, by a co-leader during an in-person study abroad program in 2022. We expanded group projects across countries and included an A/V presentation. Due to the popularity of the initial synchronous class, we added another one. Service-Learning components were developed collaboratively and conducted in the destination location. We targeted networking opportunities toward developing future mutually beneficial joint projects, such as teacher exchanges between countries, research collaborations, and internship opportunities for students.



**Figure 3: Endemic Model of Global Identity Course**  
*(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)*

#### **2.4. Occupational/Program-Specific Iteration**

As e-learning provides more opportunities for experiential learning, we expect to launch a new iteration in 2023. This iteration demonstrates the program's flexibility by offering organizations and academic programs opportunities to participate in both the e-learning course and the study abroad experience. The flexibility of this course iteration creates a rich learning environment as professionals and students from various educational programs come together to learn from each other and share a global experience. This summer, educators from a public school system will join students from academic programs, such as social work and psychology, to complete a 1-3 credit hour version of the EDU 4490 (undergraduate) and EDU-5590 (graduate) Global Identity course. They will complete their experience with a study abroad experience in Costa Rica.

As we considered the organization for piloting this new iteration, we determined that the field of education would be an excellent place to start. While there is limited literature available about providing educators currently in the field with opportunities to study abroad, there are studies about preservice teachers, those still in college, and the effects of international experiences on teacher preparation. In their research, Byker and Putman (2018) found that "the study abroad experience was a catalyst for enhancing preservice teachers' global competencies, intercultural awareness, and cultural responsiveness" (p. 84). We believe this new iteration will provide more positive experiences for current

educators as they not only gain a new awareness but also determine how to translate it into their teaching and, ultimately, develop a new global awareness in their students.

**2.4.1. Modifications:** The fourth iteration, the Occupation/Program Specific Model, of the Global Identity course, allows for adapting the course to fit the specific occupational or program's needs. The changes from the previous models fall within the area Course with Study Abroad Updates, seen in Figure 4. One will notice that there are Occupation/Program-specific participants and co-leaders. Rather than two study-abroad destinations, there is only one. Also, this new iteration incorporates an occupation/program-specific presentation with everyone involved in the experience. This assignment provides interaction between university travelers and their international counterparts.

In addition to the learning outcomes that have been products of the previous models, this fourth iteration provides ancillary outcomes. In the example of the educators, they will experience ancillary outcomes while abroad and back at home. Participants will have opportunities to present information and collaborate with their international counterparts. They will develop global connections, which could remain and grow as the participants return home. This new iteration also will demonstrate ancillary outcomes as the participants return home. They will have professional development and educational opportunities as they return. The relationships and connections developed in the international country could also provide e-learning international collaborations and exchanges for the participants and others in their occupational and programmatic circles.

The Occupation/Program-Specific Model provides flexibility that may not have been available in the previous iterations. This summer, the Occupation/Program-specific model will unite two opportunities: an occupational experience for educators and an academic experience for undergraduate and graduate students from several academic programs. This meld of students and working professionals in the same class and study abroad group helps bridge the gap between academics and "real-life" outside academia. This opportunity is invaluable and fits current thinking on the role of higher education (Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities, n.d.).

**2.4.1.1. Occupational Example:** In a pilot program for the occupational aspect, a rural, Southeastern public school system is providing the financial means for seven educators and administrators, ranging from superintendent to elementary education teacher, to complete the EDU 5590, Global Identity, course and travel to Costa Rica for ten days as the study abroad component. The educators will participate in a 9-week, one-credit-hour version of the e-learning course before their in-country experience. They will interact with other students in the course, learn pertinent information about the country they will visit,

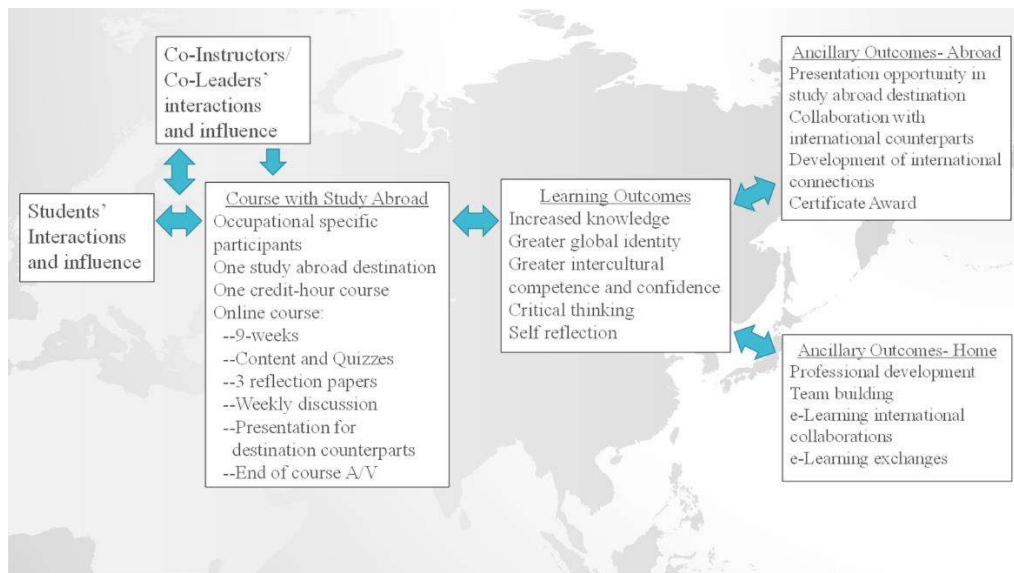
and prepare videos, presentations, projects, and additional information to exchange with educators in the partnering country. In her article about developing educational courses that help students become global citizens, Lutz (2010) includes a valuable statement with which we agree. She states, "Promoting global citizenship requires more than rubrics of learning outcomes; it requires institutional commitment to support faculty committed to shaping global learners" (p. 716). The new Occupational/Program Specific Model not only requires commitment on the university level, but, as it is in our situation, it also requires a commitment on the organizational side, which in this instance is a school system.

As mentioned previously, participants will demonstrate both learning and ancillary outcomes. The educators will be presenting, collaborating, and connecting internationally and will also experience occasions for team building and professional development. In addition to providing the educators with a variety of learning engagements, this opportunity will serve dual purposes as they will provide instruction to their international counterparts, reflect on their international experiences, and demonstrate their discoveries through professional development sessions and speaking engagements with their colleagues, administrators, and the community after they return home.

An exciting enhancement in this iteration will be the promotion and explanation of post-course e-learning opportunities for the educators and those with whom they interact during the experiential learning experience. The educators' in-person and virtual interactions, both during the class and abroad, should provide international connections they can introduce into their classrooms and schools. Within this new aspect of the fourth iteration, e-learning will enhance the online course and magnify the learning engagements as educators can connect their students with those in another country, thereby introducing global awareness and intercultural competence into their rural school system, schools, and classrooms. In her research about students' international e-learning collaborations, Chadha (2022) posits that "online collaborations shrink our global community in the virtual world by providing for effective online academic collaborations and practitioner collaborations" (p.47). We believe this iteration promotes e-learning collaborations among colleagues and students that can encourage and enrich global competency on both a professional and academic level.



**2.4.1.2. Program-specific Example:** We developed a separate study abroad program in conjunction with a social work program, and this program offers supervised practicum credit hours for qualifying activities abroad. One of the co-leaders is a licensed social worker who is qualified to supervise graduate students. Undergraduate students are welcome to join this group and will gain valuable experience without creditable practicum hours. The opportunity welcomes students from other departments and colleges, but the focus is on service learning and learning about allied sectors. A mix of perspectives and varied backgrounds strengthens study abroad programs, and everyone benefits from a more significant global identity and more effective intercultural skills. In their research using technology and e-learning opportunities to connect two international social work programs, Rautenbach and Black-Hughes (2012) concluded that their "communication facilitated the forging of a mutually beneficial academic relationship between two social work departments, which has enhanced the students' knowledge base to include information gained from social work in a different country" (p. 812). While technology and e-learning have developed over the years, the value of the connection has not changed. We propose that the Occupational/Program Specific Model will provide similar enriching experiences for participants.



**Figure 4: Occupation/Program-Specific Iteration of Global Identity Course**  
(Source: Authors' Own Illustration)

### **3. Future Plans**

Preparations for further expansion and more finely tuned applications continue. For example, we are developing a 10-week professional development/training course with a two-week study abroad experience. This application could provide a certificate paid by a business entity and designed cooperatively with that specific entity to meet a specific training or development need.

The Global Identity course and subsequent study abroad component will continue to focus on recruiting university students, undergraduate and graduate, for experiences that will create and develop more globally competent citizens. It is also possible that the occupational aspect of the fourth iteration will allow for an opportunity to establish an Educators Abroad program that enables educators to become more globally aware and interculturally competent. It will create a ripple effect as educators pass on their experiences and discoveries to their colleagues and students. This opportunity could become part of standard professional development in a particular school system and assist in their recruitment, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

### **4. Conclusion**

Each iteration outlined in this paper is a viable option, depending on the objectives and context. The fourth iteration introduced in this paper is a move toward a flexible model that benefits participants in academic programs and those in occupations outside of the university. Future iterations will feature expanding global awareness and intercultural competence opportunities for university students and the community. A primary recommendation is to network to form strong bonds with universities and businesses that can facilitate your students' experiential learning in person or remotely. Networking could also lead to pathways to internships and employment for graduates. Reciprocate for mutual benefit.

## **REFERENCES**

Arnett, J. J. (2002). The psychology of globalization. *American Psychologist*, 57(10), 774-783.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.57.10.774>

Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU). (n.d.). Scaling Success: Higher education responding to 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce needs. <https://www.aplu.org/library/scaling->

[successhigher-education-responding-to-21st-century-workforce-needs/file#:~:text=SCALING%20SUCCESS%3A%20HIGHER%20EDUCATION%20RESPONDING%20TO%2021st%20CENTURY,formats%20for%20working%20learners%2C%20and%20helping%20workers%20re-skill](#)

- Byker, E. J., & Putman, S. M. (2018). Catalyzing cultural and global competencies: Engaging preservice teachers in study abroad to expand the agency of citizenship. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(1), 84-105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318814559>
- Chadha, A. (2022). Introspective interactions: Implications from an international collaboration. *The Journal of Educators Online*, 19(1), 36-55. <https://doi.org/10.9743/JEO.2022.19.1.1>
- Deming, D. J. (2017). The growing importance of social skills in the labor market. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(4), 1593-1640. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjx022>
- Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-423. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00032-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00032-4)
- James, P. C. (2021). What determines student satisfaction in an e-learning environment? A comprehensive literature review of key success factors. *Higher Education Studies*, 11(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v11n3p1>
- Ludden-Schlatter, A., Clithero-Eridon, A., Myers, O., Kelts, K., Kibria, Z. (June 2022). Predictive factors of positive e-learning experience. *Family Medicine*, 54(6), 443-451. <https://doi.org/10.22454/FamMed.2022.98489>
- Lutz, J. D. (2010). Points of departure: Becoming global citizens without leaving home. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(6), 715-720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2010.522085>
- Marinoni, G., Land, H. V., & Jensen, T. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on higher education around the world. *International Association of Universities, France*. <https://scirp.org/reference/referencepapers.aspx?referenceid=3031524>
- Milligan, M., & Paquette, P. (2021). Global identity development in teacher education with modifications prompted by COVID-19. *The International Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, 28(2), 163-173. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7955/CGP/v28i02/163-173>
- Rautenbach, J. V., & Black-Hughes, C. (2012). Bridging the hemispheres through the use of technology: International collaboration in social work training. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(4), 797-815. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2012.201100114>

- Seaman, J. E., & Seaman, J. (2019). *Inflection point: educational resources in higher education 2019*. Bay View Analytics. <https://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/2019inflectionpoint.pdf>
- Xiaoxing, L. (2020). Fostering global citizens through study abroad—a case study. *Sino-U.S. English teaching*, 17(5), 158-165. <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2020.05.004>
- Zhang, Y., & Khare, A. (2009). The impact of accessible identities on the evaluation of global versus local products. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(3), 524-537. <https://doi.org/10.1086/598794>
- Zong, Z., Schunn, C. D., & Wang, Y. (2021). Learning to improve the quality peer feedback through experience with peer feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(6), 973-992. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1833179>