

**The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers:**

**A Qualitative Approach**

by

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### **Abstract**

Many teachers perceive international teaching experiences as opportunities for personal and professional growth (Mikulec, 2019). Teachers leave native countries to take advantage of teaching opportunities in the United States but face educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. Challenges international teachers encounter upon entering the United States classrooms often go undocumented, resulting in literature gaps. Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Jerome Bruner's (1961) discovery learning theories served as the theoretical framework. The study focused on exploring educational and behavioral challenges international teachers encountered within United States classrooms and comparing the U. S. cultural challenges to cultural challenges of international teachers. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year within the United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. The target population was 40 non-native teachers within one small, rural school district in South Carolina. The purposeful sampling technique elicited 17 international teachers from the target population. Data collection included semi-structured interviews and field notes. NVivo software used code and coding techniques to transcribe, organize, and analyze data for emerging themes which included educational challenges, behavioral challenges, cultural disparity, and eliminating challenges. Findings revealed international teacher participants had negative experiences in U. S. classrooms which negatively influenced participants' views of the education system. Recommendations for tentative teachers, education officials and policymakers, and international recruiting agencies emerged from findings. Implications for leaders included collaborating globally, developing international programs, offering internal and external professional development opportunities, and designing mentorship programs.

*Keywords:* abroad, international teachers, native, native teachers, non-native lands, non-native teachers, native language

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Teaching is a profession of immense responsibility (Ivanova, 2019). The duties include teachers developing an advanced, in-depth, and broad knowledge base to understand how individuals learn and how to target learners' individual needs (Gore et al., 2019). The profession transcends geographical limitations in an effort to impart knowledge among individuals. During and at the end of students' pedagogical journey, a teacher's effectiveness is most evident when students are able to apply learned concepts to actual life.

With the evolution of technology in the 21st century, the teaching profession has naturally evolved as well as adapted to the changes within the canon of learning. Teachers are finding different ways and means to adjust to ever-changing educational tools for pedagogical success (Raba, 2017). The new realm of education sees tablets replacing notebooks and textbooks, smartboards replacing whiteboards, and teachers of diverse ethnicities replacing native teachers. School leaders perceive the changes as advantageous for students in preparation for college and career opportunities and the move towards a more global society (Molbaek, 2018).

### **International Teacher Recruitment**

Sutcher et al. (2016), in an investigation of the teacher crisis in the United States, noted an influx of international teachers into the American classroom. Data gathered attributed the influx to both a) a decrease in the number of pre-service teachers graduating from education programs and b) an increase in the attrition rate of in-service teachers. School leaders, becoming more culturally aware and more diverse due to increasing global changes, sought to address the needs of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Paksoy & Çelik, 2019). One way to resolve

the issue was for school leaders to employ teachers from countries around the globe, non-native to the environment where job offerings were available.

School leaders have recognized the increasing acceptance of different cultures and opposing views within society and the education system (Chuang et al., 2020). Recognition has led educational officials to employ teachers from different cultures to match the increase in students of varying backgrounds and ethnicities (Nulhakim et al., 2020). Students of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities have been growing in number annually within classrooms in the United States. The growth in numbers necessitated the deliberate facilitation of learning and skill development, which, in turn, has contributed to more effective communication and collaboration. Growth also led to a strong global community (Aragon, 2018). Many schools have searched beyond the country's borders to recruit teachers from varying backgrounds. The result was an educational system reflective of the diversity which characterizes a global community. International recruitment was necessary as countries, both developed and underdeveloped, faced the reality of teacher shortages (Paksoy & Çelik, 2019).

The need for international teacher recruitment grew from just wanting to fill vacant positions within education systems to a need to connect societies through diversification, beliefs, culture, and perspectives (Aslan, 2019). The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement [CERRA] (2019) documented the need for recruiting and retaining teachers within the United States. School officials, now aware of the advantages associated with recruiting internationally, widened the teaching pool to accommodate teachers from countries around the globe (Dos Santos, 2019).

**Advantages of International Teacher Recruitment**

International teachers offered numerous benefits to the United States education system. Hardworking and dedicated international teachers' contributions added to the ongoing process of improving education, research, and development (Nulhakim et al., 2020). International teachers added to the rich cultural diversity perpetuated by several schools. Enriched interaction and dialogue across cultures and among intellectual communities helped to build society and allowed societies to connect on many levels (Aslan, 2019). Cultural contributions were more noticeable when international teachers entered the classroom.

Teachers around the globe perceived recruitment as advantageous, providing a means of elevating socioeconomic status, a way of improving pedagogical practices, and an avenue for broadening perspectives relating to cultures and diversities within society (Karacabey et al., 2019). Specific benefits teachers gained included exposure to unconventional teaching and learning styles, educational materials, innovative technology, and curricula (Serin, 2017). Teachers became more culturally aware and gained insights into the skills and knowledge necessary for content delivery within a new educational environment. Skills gained from teaching abroad became assets when teachers returned to native countries (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

**International Teacher Challenges**

Despite positive contributions, international teachers do not undertake tasks without challenges. An analysis of existing research has revealed challenges international educators encounter in unfamiliar settings, including the lack of support needed to adjust to specific contexts (Arshavskaya, 2018). Native teachers encountered classroom challenges daily. Challenges ranged from meeting students' diverse needs to dealing with inappropriate classroom

behaviors. Such challenges added to the difficulties international teachers experienced in adopting and adapting to unfamiliar cultures. Unfamiliar cultures had unspoken rules and cues, which may interfere with interactions between students and international teachers (Karacabey et al., 2019).

### **Background of the Problem**

Leithwood et al. (2019) highlighted the need for students to have 3 years of continuous teaching in a particular subject area, supporting students in meeting school targets and overcoming achievement deficits. Despite student needs, schools across the United States face severe teacher shortages, interfering with students' continuous access to specific courses of study. Teacher attrition is unavoidable, but continuous shortages can negatively impact school finances, teacher quality, and student outcomes, as well as school culture and climate (Gallo & Beckman, 2016).

The severity of the teacher shortage has varied by state, district, school, and subject. The issue has been prominent among urban, rural, impoverished, high-minority, and low-achieving schools located primarily in the southern United States (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Efforts to address shortages in affected areas and increase recruitment and retention of effective teachers for core subjects and schools should be a priority of governments. Several states have enacted targeted teacher recruitment legislation as a means of attracting teachers to high-need schools and to teach subjects in high demand (Aragon, 2018).

The need to recruit internationally is on the rise and has become the main source for teacher employment within low socioeconomical rural areas of the United States (Sutcher et al., 2016). South Carolina, predominantly rural, is one example of a state which gives credence to the need for the recruitment of international teachers. Statistics have shown the extent to which



the teacher supply in South Carolina is diminishing (Tran et al., 2018). During the 2017–2018 school year, the increase in the number of teachers leaving the school system in South Carolina reached a high of 6,700 teachers. As many as 4,900 of the 6,700 teachers left the teaching profession altogether. The remaining 1,800 left South Carolina in favor of teaching in other states (CERRA, 2019).

According to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA, 2019), 621 teaching vacancies in South Carolina became available at the beginning of the 2018 – 2019 school year. CERRA predicted the vacancies may rise to more than 1,800 in 2021–2022 and 2,500 within 10 years if the current trend were to continue. South Carolina has had a significant challenge in attracting local teachers and has had to turn to internationally certified educators (Sutcher et al., 2016). CERRA reports 822 international teachers working in South Carolina under the cultural exchange program which was an increase from the 430 international teachers employed 2 years ago (CERRA, 2019).

Education within the United States is becoming progressively more multicultural, which leads to new experiences for international teachers (Ketko, 2017). International teachers are at a disadvantage upon entering the American classroom because of the need to learn how to teach and facilitate learners of different cultures, beliefs, perspectives, and languages. The responsibility lies with teachers to overcome difficulties to ensure students' success (Zhu, 2018). International teachers are required to understand disparities between cultures and work to build positive cultural relationships, while simultaneously pairing culture with education (Jenkins, 2018). Synchronizing cultures, according to Keane and Provident (2017), is essential for the education process to occur.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem was international teachers entering classrooms in the United States face multiple educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. The experiences of non-native teachers within schools of assignment often affect many teachers' perceptions about teaching. The shift in teachers' perceptions has resulted in pursuit of other professions (Ivanova, 2019). Many experts have studied the experiences of American educators teaching locally and internationally, but few have studied the experiences of non-native American teachers' first-time teaching in the American classroom (Arshavskaya, 2018). Studies documented challenges including, but not limited to, linguistic, cultural, and social challenges, as well as management and instructional challenges (Ospina & Medina, 2020). New teachers entered the American classroom in similar unfamiliar contexts, which provided a variety of undocumented experiences for the teachers.

Some schools within the United States are working hard to sustain teacher employment and are experiencing difficulties. Teachers are leaving institutions for better teaching opportunities or are leaving the profession completely (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). School districts have to face the reality of high teacher turnover and liaise with recruitment agencies and certified teachers outside of the United States for employment purposes with the added benefit of cultural exchange opportunities for students (Budrow & Tarc, 2018). A need for mitigation against teacher attrition is necessary. Often, in the first year of teaching in the United States education context, international teachers experience emotions of hopelessness and frustration. As time progresses, teachers develop a desire to leave the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

One focus was on the experiences of teachers who taught in countries outside of native territories. Many prior studies focused on and documented experiences of American teachers

teaching in other countries outside the United States (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Few studies have documented international teaching assistants and pre-service teachers' experiences in the American classroom. This knowledge gap exists because researchers have yet to capture the lived experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms. Exploring international teachers' perspectives and experiences in the United States classrooms may add needed information to existing literature and may inform relevant authorities concerning potential improvements in the situation. Schools may benefit from the study and provide better support to international teachers upon analyzing the identified challenges (Serin, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year within United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. The study focused on immigrant teachers who have taught for at least 1 year in the United States classroom. Martin and Mulvihill (2019) contended the voices of international teachers needed an outlet, as experiences were extensive but undocumented. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943) and Bruner's discovery learning theory (Bruner, 1961) guided the study.

Understanding international teachers' authentic experiences within the American classroom setting was critical and provided insight into the phenomenon using semi-structured interviews and field notes. Semi-structured interviews encouraged international teachers to open up and disclose issues which provide more in-depth information regarding experiences (Pathak & Intratat, 2016). Field notes provided added information through observation of participants' actions, behaviors, speech, and other features. The overall goal of the study was to explore the

lived teaching experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges.

### **Significance of the Study**

Challenges international teachers face upon entering American classrooms may remain unknown and continue to happen at the research site and other locations where international teachers work in the United States (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The study contributed to existing literature by putting forth crucial information. Information allowed revision of existing international teachers' recruitment programs and of the induction process at institutions where international teachers were employed (Tran et al., 2018). Information gathered added to the field, which may, in turn, stimulate and encourage future educational empirical studies applicable to teachers within international settings and contexts. Little or no investigation into international teachers' experiences resulted in the phenomenon remaining unexplored (Switzer & Perdue, 2017).

Information gathered from data collected during the study may add to ongoing improvement in education in the United States. International teachers voiced concerns with expectations of receiving support from stakeholders (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). School leaders may be able to meet the needs of international teachers and help the teachers to improve teaching practices geared toward meeting the goals of the institution. Results may allow stakeholders to gain new perspectives, improve understanding, and increase appreciation for others of different cultures, as well as promote the role played by others of different cultures in advancing education in the United States (Karacabey et al., 2019).

This study can promote positive social change, as the experiences expressed by international teachers may enable Americans to see American culture through the eyes of others

(Ketko, 2017). Both local and international teachers may gain valuable friendships. Friendships may lead to dialogues, interactions, and lasting relationships, which further promote understanding and acceptance of the diversities within institutions and society (Karacabey et al., 2019).

### **Research Questions**

Procedures for the exploration of a study began with an interest in a topic followed by the generation of research questions. Research questions are essential to any research. The questions identify what needs answering and gives the research a clear focus and purpose (Switzer & Perdue, 2017). In qualitative case studies, the continuing process of questioning is a fundamental aspect of unfolding and understanding the lives and perspectives of others (FitzPatrick, 2019).

Research Question One: What are the educational challenges faced by international teachers within classrooms in the United States?

Research Question Two: What are some behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in United States classrooms?

Research Question Three: How do the United States cultural challenges compare to the cultural challenges of international teachers' home countries'?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Jerome Bruner's (1961) discovery learning theories were the concepts guiding the study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is the most commonly used theory when referring to human motivation, drive, or need (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory proposed individuals' needs as motivation to move from one level of satisfaction to another. The theorist postulated individuals' needs are universal, and the lower-level needs require satisfaction before the higher-level needs. Satisfying the needs at different

levels motivates individuals' behaviors to move toward personal goals (Shaughnessy et al., 2018). Accomplishing self-actualization, which is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is when individuals meet all needs and reach the point of fulfillment (Maslow, 1943).

International teachers had individual motives based on needs and expectations. The desires energized teachers to achieve the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017). International teachers perceived migration as an opportunity to excel holistically, gain international exposure and experience, and achieve financial stability (Shaughnessy et al., 2018). The teachers' perceptions acted as driving forces, or motivations to migrate to the United States for the benefits.

Teachers motivated to migrate greatly impact students and themselves. Effective teachers added to the academic achievement of students, which increased school performance (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Educators' professional and personal growth and development indicated increased cultural awareness and a stronger sense of self-efficacy and confidence (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). Some teachers considered the need to migrate and the experience gained after migration as a defining moment in a teacher's life. The advantages of such an experience equated to personal growth, cultural and educational development, and career advancement (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Such achievements led to what Maslow (1943) described as self-actualization.

Jerome Bruner's (1961) theory delved into the concept of discovery learning, highlighting the need for individuals to learn through experiences, which became useful when faced with similar situations. Bruner (1961) believed the most effective strategy for learning or acquiring knowledge was to discover for one's self. Individuals built on experiences and knowledge, using intuition, insight, imagination, and creativity to search for new information, discover facts, make connections, and solve problems (Bruner, 1965). Learning is about

discovery and not the absorption of others' thoughts, ideas, or speech (Kusumawardhani et al., 2019).

Bruner's ideology is what international teachers may use to achieve self-fulfillment upon introduction to the American education system. As teachers go through the experiences and solve problems, new knowledge is formulated (Sharma & Bansal, 2017). Teachers may then mentally store the experiences in categories for use in similar future situations (Stapleton & Stefaniak, 2019). The experiences of teachers serve as building blocks, helping teachers to achieve self-actualization as described by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The literature review provided further description and details relating to Maslow and Bruner's theories.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Defining terms in research is essential to understanding concepts used in the study (Pringle-Barnes & Cheng, 2019). The definitions present a common understanding of key concepts and terminology. Smaldone et al. (2019) described excellent definitions as grounded in sound peer-reviewed sources, which support the definitions. Sound peer-reviewed articles help with rationalizing concepts. Definition of the following terms may help readers to understand the context of each term in the study.

*Abroad* is defined as a country outside of one's country of birth (Niehaus & Wegener, 2019).

*International teachers* are defined as individuals born in another country outside the United States who legally live and teach in the United States (Arshavskaya, 2018).

*Native* is defined as an individual's country of birth (Niehaus & Wegener, 2019).

*Native teachers* are defined as teachers residing and teaching in the country of birth (Alam, 2019).

*Non-native lands* are defined as countries outside of the country of birth (Niehaus & Wegener, 2019).

*Non-native teachers* are defined as teachers residing and teaching in a country outside the country of birth (Alam, 2019).

*Native language* is defined as the dialect of a specific region or country acquired in early childhood due to the language as a prominent language of the family and/or where the child lives (Chen, 2020).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are the building blocks of any research. A study built on assumptions is necessary, as assumptions lend validity and credibility to the work (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Assumptions directly encourage the type of inferences drawn from the study. Researchers have to make correct and reasonable assumptions, which may result in drawing authentic, feasible conclusions (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). An excellent assumption is verifiable or justifiable.

An assumption is derived from conjectures based on existing literature related to the topic (Hays & McKibben, 2021). In the study, the first assumption was the expectation of honest and complete responses of participants during interviews. Throughout the collection of data, participants remained anonymous and confidential (Abdalla et al., 2018). A second assumption held the chosen data collection tool as most effective in collecting information required for the study.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) explained delimitations as limiting the scope and defining the boundaries of the study. Delimitations include the problem, purpose, participants, research questions, and theoretical underpinnings. Amidst the vast array of issues international



teachers faced, the study sought to focus on international teachers' lived experiences in United States classrooms, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges.

The study's purpose statement explained the study's intent and set out the intended accomplishments, including any underlying understanding of what the study may or may not cover (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). All participants were volunteers and international teachers. The three research questions focused on cultural, behavioral, and educational challenges. The research adopted two theories as the theoretical framework, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Bruner's discovery learning theory, from a variety of other possible theories.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in the research study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Limitations are beyond the researcher's control and may influence the interpretation of the research results. Constraint was on generalizability, application in practice, and usefulness of findings when limitations arise (Smith, 2018). The process used to establish internal and external validity or unexpected challenges arising during the study caused constraint. Limitations point to the need for further studies on the topic (Greener, 2018). Quantitative research design may be limited in gaining information on the lived experiences of international teachers in American classrooms (Queirós et al., 2017). The use of the qualitative case study design employing semi-structured interviews uncovered more insights, layers, and dimensions of international teachers' experiences (Pathak & Intratat, 2016).

Having worked as an international teacher for 3 years, the researcher could have experienced some unconscious and conscious biases from experience. The risk of withholding information or putting in self-reported information has the potential to increase, which regrettably could result in the loss of objectivity throughout the analysis stage of the data

(Morgado et al., 2018). Interpretation of responses from the participants presented an added limitation, as knowledge of the stresses, strains, and pressures teachers face in classrooms are general information. Suppressing personal thoughts and moods concerning the phenomenon under study and documenting the information collected from the participants as reported helped to mitigate the limitations (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

### **Summary**

Teachers choose to migrate to the United States to contribute positively to the education system while evolving personally and professionally (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The move is one teachers believe may satisfy long-nurtured needs and open channels for continued discoveries. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. Previous studies have documented the experiences of American teachers teaching in non-native countries. Other studies have focused on international teaching assistants and pre-service teachers teaching in the United States and other countries beyond the United States (Arshavskaya, 2018). Few studies have explored the lived experiences of international teachers teaching in United States classrooms, presenting a knowledge gap in the literature.

The study's assumptions were plausible and accepted as true (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Delimitations described the boundaries of the study, and limitations outlined possible ramifications to prevent restrictions on the methodology and conclusions (Greener, 2018). Results of the study may serve to improve practices of teacher recruitment agencies, inform the decisions of school officials, and advise teachers seeking employment in schools in the United

States. The following Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature including how the study may fill the gap in the literature.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The United States recruits and employs international teachers from across the globe annually to teach and perform educational duties in the classroom (Çakmak et al., 2019). Many teachers consider the experience an opportunity for personal and professional growth, enhanced teaching and learning benefits, increased cultural awareness, and unexpected challenges. Langdon et al. (2019) posited teachers who gain such opportunities are usually more culturally aware and technologically savvy; plus, teachers understand the need to enhance students' awareness of cultural diversity. Armed with such skills, international teachers entering the United States for employment purposes view challenges as a part of the experience. The problem was international teachers entering classrooms in the United States face multiple challenges, including educational, behavioral, and cultural. The challenges result in changes to international teachers' perceptions of the U. S. teaching and learning process and cause many teachers to consider changing professions (Dos Santos, 2019). The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges.

International teachers inducted into America's education system are unfamiliar with the environment and the context of the environment (Chen, 2019). Some struggle unsuccessfully to adapt and, ultimately, return to native lands, while others use the opportunity to enhance professional skills (Camacho & Parham, 2019). International teachers in American classrooms face challenges daily, which are frustrating and cause many teachers to abandon the profession prematurely. Lindqvist (2019) explained teachers are very human and, regardless of innate or learned patience, may display occasional frustration, especially when stressed. International

teachers rarely get the opportunity to express frustration, confusion, or helplessness associated with in-class challenges (Hodgson, 2019).

Extensive research on international teachers' lived experiences exists, yet studies have failed to document international teachers' lived experiences in United States classrooms (Sharma et al., 2018). The majority of studies conducted and published have focused on American teachers working in institutions outside of the United States, termed international teachers (Çakmak et al., 2019). While the studies offered valuable insights regarding teachers' experiences, the lack of real, true-to-life experiences of international teachers teaching in American classrooms required exploration.

Randolph (2018) contended literature reviews provide a synthesis of publications to identify applicable theories, methods, and gaps in current research. Literature has sought to explain teachers' motivation for migration, educational culture based on teaching and learning, teachers' classroom experiences, and challenges teachers face. The literature review explained various circumstances leading to teacher migration for job offerings globally (Garcia & Soremi, 2019). Research findings documented general trends in the teaching and learning process and teachers' classroom experiences. Included was empirical information positing challenges teachers face within classrooms. The literature summarized the studies conducted and synthesized the information gathered. The upcoming sections of the literature review included the literature search strategy, theoretical framework, a comprehensive research literature review, summary, and conclusions.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature search strategy began with identifying key terms based on the research title followed by a breakdown of each research question. Primary databases used in the research

process were Google Scholar, ACE Library, ERIC, ProQuest, JSTOR, SAGE, and EBSCOHOST. Peer-reviewed journal articles, government statistics, and dissertations, interpreted and synthesized, were the primary sources of information. The dates for the majority of the publications were within the last 5 years. The articles retrieved informed the literature review and provided a foundation for the findings. Keywords guided the search and included but were not limited to *international, local, migration, teachers, experiences, classroom, challenges, educational, cultural, behavioral, native, and non-native*.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Jerome Bruner's (1961) discovery learning theories formed the theoretical framework of the study. Existing literature has documented the experiences of international teachers to capture authentic data of time spent teaching in schools outside of the United States (Poole, 2019). Many studies captured teachers' roles in the teaching and learning process and the challenges encountered. Few studies, if any, documented the experiences of teachers who travel from other countries outside of the United States to teach. Many migrations were due to teachers yearning for growth through new experiences (Miller, 2018). Teachers often sought avenues to promote professional growth and look for new, innovative ways to develop skills (Ulla, 2018).

Teachers were consistently seeking new ideas, strategies, ways to improve skills, and new information (Mikulec, 2019). When meeting the need to grow, teachers fulfill self-actualization needs as theorized by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow (1943), self-actualization or self-fulfillment is indicative of the growth of an individual toward the fulfillment of the highest needs. Maslow's theory posited individuals' actions directed toward a target or goal and any behavior could satisfy several functions

simultaneously. Teachers are trained professionals whose activities extend throughout different regions across the globe to fulfill a need or multiple needs, whether for self or others (Cook et al., 2016). Deficiencies do not propel teachers' behaviors; instead, the desire for personal and professional growth motivates teachers to excel (Sivakumar, 2019). The experiences international teachers gained within United States classrooms should provide a wide range of experiences to reach the summit of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943).

Discovery learning theory, as posited by Jerome Bruner (1961), extended Maslow's (1943) theory and applied theory to the study. Through Bruner's discovery learning theory, international teachers may gain self-fulfillment upon entering the American classroom. Bruner (1965) proposed learners formulate knowledge by organizing and categorizing information as experiences take place. For Bruner (1961), the purpose of knowledge and education is to facilitate thinking and problem solving, which are applicable to a range of situations.

Adaptation to new environments facilitates teachers to self-actualize (Maslow, 1943). Teachers become active participants in the learning process by formulating knowledge based on new experiences gained through suppositions about the environment and interactions with others (Bruner, 1965). Teachers' interactions with others enable a) a variety of interpretations, b) construction of knowledge processes, and c) learning about the culture of others (Sharma & Bansal, 2017).

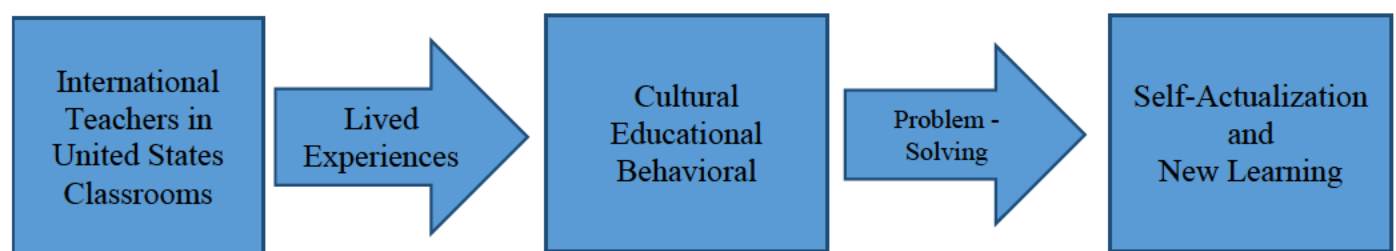
Figure 1 outlines how the theories may work together throughout the study. Heale and Noble (2019) proposed constructing theoretical frameworks elucidates and connects theories with phenomena. Describing the theories explained the problem. Teachers yearn for a better way of life, for personal and professional growth. Trevathan and Willis (2019) emphasized teachers

are on the path to a better self and take on new challenges to accomplish goals. The needs of teachers are usually the driving force towards success, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Unmet needs may result in failure and discontentment for individuals, but once needs are met, individuals may experience peaks of contentment and fulfillment (Maslow, 1943).

Figure 1 also demonstrates the lived experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms. The need to achieve (Maslow, 1943) and the need to discover new learning (Bruner, 1961) were the main components, and taken together, described international teachers' drive to continue in United States classrooms (Lama & Shrestha, 2020). Throughout the time in United States classrooms, international teachers may face cultural, educational, and behavioral challenges. Challenging experiences may help international teachers to discover new learning through problem-solving (Bruner, 1961). International teachers can draw on prior experiences and existing knowledge to discover facts, relationships, and new concepts to help to solve problems (Kusumawardhani et al., 2019).

**Figure 1**

*Lived Experiences of International Teachers in the American Classroom*



### **Research Literature Review**

Personal and professional growth is one of the most documented changes teachers experience in the journeys abroad (Salleh & Woollard, 2019). Teachers use the opportunity to teach in unfamiliar environments to gain experiences of the world on a global level. Trevathan



and Willis (2019) contended teachers who teach abroad are more self-aware and culturally in tune as well as confident in the delivery of content and enhanced teaching skills. While teaching in unfamiliar territories is beneficial, challenges are equally present. Many teachers use the difficult situations encountered as a motivational strategy to accomplish self-fulfillment (Shaughnessy et al., 2018).

### **Teacher Migration**

Ingersoll et al. (2019) asserted migrant teachers move from one teaching job to another between schools and districts or move in and out of the state or country. A few studies have analyzed the reasons teachers seek to migrate and concluded the need for growth and development may be a major driver. Over the years, teachers all over the globe leave native lands to take on teaching jobs in other countries beyond national borders (Podolsky et al., 2019b). Teachers from Jamaica are teaching in schools in the southeastern United States (Lambert & Lambert, 2019). Teachers from Eastern Europe, India, and the Philippines are teaching in schools within the United States (Saloviita, 2020). South African teachers are in schools in the United Kingdom (Robinson, 2017), and countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have teachers from English-speaking countries (Hillman et al., 2019).

Migration for many teachers is an opportunity to broaden knowledge, improve skills, and enjoy better pay (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016). Native teachers believe education systems in native lands do not adequately cater to a teacher's need to achieve self-actualization and social stability (Shaughnessy et al., 2018) and opt to pursue employment in other countries abroad (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teachers perceive countries abroad as having more resources geared towards self-accomplishment (Sivakumar, 2019).

Countries recruit teachers from around the globe to ease the issue of teacher shortage, which has become a major concern for the countries experiencing such a loss (Tran et al., 2018). Countries like South Africa welcome the presence of migrant teachers who help to ease the pressures associated with the gap in native teachers within South Africa's education system. De Villiers and Weda (2017) found many Zimbabwean teachers migrated to South Africa due to political and economic uncertainty in Zimbabwe. Although other factors contributed to the migration of the teachers, political and economic factors were the main push factors (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). The teacher participants' plans included a) improving academic qualifications; b) seeking employment at the tertiary level in order to migrate to other countries where the remuneration would be better; and, simultaneously, c) filling the teacher shortage gap.

Teacher shortages are harsh realities in several states in the United States and have become an imminent concern for officials in school districts. According to Darling-Hammond and Podolsky (2019), the problem of recruiting and retaining teachers was more evident in high poverty, low socioeconomic communities, and racially segregated schools. The real impact was on students, since the loss of one teacher equates to a decrease in learning opportunities for students. McVey and Trinidad's (2019) analysis of the national data retrieved from the United States Department of Education focused on trends in teacher shortages by subject area throughout the country. Subject areas such as mathematics, science, English as a second language, foreign language, and special education are areas lacking teachers across the states. The framework used to categorize the data revealed subject areas in dire need of teachers to fill the gaps. Garcia and Weiss (2019) indicated teacher shortages continue to disrupt the goals and objectives of providing a sound, equitable education for students in the United States education system.

The teacher shortage was even more serious because schools had to employ uncertified and unqualified individuals or approach recruiting agencies to recruit teachers from around the globe to fill these gaps (McVey & Trinidad, 2019). Highly competent teaching staff created educational foundations for learners and provided guidance along the journey to success. Podolsky et al. (2019b) identified effective strategies to influence teachers to take on teaching jobs and stay in the profession. The most effective strategies, according to district, state, and federal policy statements, demonstrated over the years to address factors motivating teachers' professional decisions. Increasing compensation, improving preparation, work environments, management practices, and supporting teachers professionally were the factors which led teachers to take on jobs and to remain employed in education. Many teachers around the world pursue employment opportunities abroad and hope the factors outlined by Podolsky et al. (2019b) are present upon induction.

### **Trends in Teaching and Learning**

Society continues to evolve due to the advent of technology, plus the influx and intermingling of individuals from all over the world (Wells, 2019). The impact on the educational sphere has led to several trends in education. Educators continually create more effective lessons and environments for learners to remain cognizant of changes in education (Pang & Runesson, 2019). A major trend has been the introduction of multicultural education in schools due to the growing number of students from diverse ethnicities. Implementing multicultural education in schools, especially in the United States, has changed the education platform and has ensured students are accepting of diversity in the classroom (Hymel & Katz, 2019).

Villegas' (2019) study examined the significance of implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools. The participants were 22 first-grade students. After listening to the reading of a picture book, which focused students on understanding multiculturalism, participants recorded interpretations of the world through art, which revealed each student's diversity. The conclusion was implementing multicultural education strategically could engage students and generate interest. Individuals from different cultures and ethnicities were in schools throughout America and the world. School officials are now ensuring faculty represent diversity and are hiring international teachers to fill the shortages, while at the same time representing the world beyond the borders (Aslan, 2019).

White (2017) highlighted the growing number of students of diverse ethnicities in the United States in comparison to the teacher workforce, which has been predominantly white. Many studies have indicated a link between student achievement and teacher diversity, specifically among minority students. The purpose of the research was to determine the factors influencing the educational careers of teachers of color. The qualitative analysis revealed the impact on student success in high-minority schools drew several teachers to the profession. Another factor was recruitment practices developed to employ and retain teachers of color. Participants revealed the lack of acknowledgment and commitment to diversity in ensuring all stakeholders are aware of the diversity in schools as another factor affecting teachers' educational careers. The growth in the number of diverse students called for more diverse teaching staff (Hymel & Katz, 2019).

Transforming teaching and learning over the years has led to the connection between individuals of different cultures, races, and ethnicities (Chang et al., 2018). Schools have hired teachers from around the globe in order to give students opportunities to make connections with

individuals from other countries (Cherng & Davis, 2019), which has become the current trend in education. Students may be able to understand and embrace cultural differences and similarities across borders (Bunnell et al., 2020). Many schools are shifting from the usual method of teaching and learning toward one which embraces all cultures (Alanay & Aydin, 2016). Aslan (2019) examined the perspectives of elementary school teachers and instructional methods operative in moving toward a more culturally inclusive education. Based on the findings, Aslan (2019) recommended mitigating issues associated with cultural differences in the classroom. Schools may consider organizing curricula to include multicultural education. Moving toward incorporating aspects of diverse cultures from around the globe could better sensitize students to the influx of international teachers in classrooms throughout the United States, which has been on the increase (Banks, 2015).

Upon entering a new education system and classroom, international teachers offer many benefits to students (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018). International teachers add to the cultural diversity within a society and help to make connections between societies through interactions and dialogue with others from different ethnicities (Sleeter, 2018). Shiveley and Misco (2015) studied students' experiences due to teachings from and interaction with international teachers. Students' growth and development were indicative of a strong sense of cultural value about self and others due to interactions experienced with teachers of various ethnicities. As a corollary, students became more confident and culturally aware and gained a better understanding of self and purpose in society (Sleeter, 2018).

Doppen and Diki's (2017) research sought to explore the experiences of pre-service teachers teaching abroad. Pre-service teachers benefited positively, as the experiences encountered had a personal and professional effect on teachers' lives and ability to see beyond

the immediate borders. Teacher participants even expressed continued impact years after the experiences. Diversifying the education platform through the continued trend of employing international teachers is beneficial, according to Nevarez et al. (2019). Using six themes, researchers posited the benefits of teacher diversity. The themes included a) developing an inclusive culture, b) culturally relevant instruction, c) developing cultural changers and interpreters, d) benefits accumulated by white students, e) role models, and f) promoting social justice through public engagement. Schools with several diverse teachers served students of similar demographics. Leaders were instrumental in the process of strengthening recruitment and retaining of a diverse staff. School officials needed to consider the benefits of having students and teachers of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities in efforts to increase teacher diversity in schools.

### **Classroom Experiences and Challenges**

Teachers all over the globe face many challenging situations which often go unnoticed due to the lack of sufficient formal documentation (McFarland et al., 2019). Podolsky et al. (2019a) emphasized experiences teachers gain helping to improve and sharpen teaching skills. The study investigated the effect of teaching experience on student achievement in public schools in America. The findings revealed teaching experiences throughout a teacher's career impacted students positively. Noted in the research was the more experience a teacher gained, the more the students learned, and the higher the scores on standardized tests and other measures of success.

As teachers mature professionally, development of abilities to deal with issues which may arise in the classroom increases (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017). Each experience teachers have in the classroom impacts the interpretation of events and strategies to alleviate current and future

issues (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). Wolff et al. (2017) explored the interpretations of problematic situations both novice and expert teachers experience in the classroom. After coding and analyzing the teachers' verbalized interpretations, Wolff et al. (2017) found novice teachers focused on issues of discipline and behavior, while expert teachers focused more on student learning. The challenges teachers face may vary, especially if teachers are new to the classroom and lack experience (Martin et al., 2016).

Many international teachers have experienced similar challenges in the American classroom. A synthesis of several studies indicated challenges instructors experience. The challenges included differences in instructional methods and approaches, sociocultural shock, language, cultural barriers, assessment beliefs, attitudes, and expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Instructional approaches employed by teachers are usually culturally representative (Ateşkan, 2016). Some school officials may require international teachers to adapt to pre-existing methodologies, which may take teachers some time (Shiveley & Misco, 2015).

A growing range of studies has explored the experiences of international teaching assistants (ITAs) in United States classrooms. A collation of the results indicates ITAs face multiple obstacles, such as classroom management, plus economic, linguistic, cultural, and social obstacles (Agostinelli, 2019). The studies offered a valuable glimpse into the fields in which international teaching staff typically struggle. By successfully solving these issues, schools can help potential teachers develop expertise more efficiently, stay in the profession, and guide students to success (Czop Assaf et al., 2019).

After researching the experiences of ITAs in the American classrooms, Arshavskaya (2018) concluded teachers face many challenges due to the lack of sufficient experience as in-service teachers. Arshavskaya's (2018) interview-based research focused on ITAs' experiences

during the first semester in an American classroom. ITAs reported issues related to instruction, linguistics, and classroom management, plus social and cultural challenges. A survey conducted by Hutchison et al. (2018) explored the challenges international professors faced before arriving in the United States, as opposed to challenges encountered after teaching for the first time.

Common problems were similar to challenges identified in the study carried out by Arshavskaya (2018), which were cultural differences, educator-student communication, use of proficient spoken American English, and unpreparedness related to instruction in the United States classroom.

A comprehensive case study documented the motivations of American pre-service teaching graduates returning to teach at the site of a pre-service teaching placement in Spain. Williams and Abramenska (2018) found in addition to the struggles already noted, teachers have many benefits to gain from teaching abroad. The study indicated acquisition of another language and building strong, lasting relationships are two main benefits of teaching in another country. The most spectacular thing about teaching overseas, as documented, is meeting new people and making new friends. Many teachers consider the option of becoming residents in non-native lands and continue to teach for a prolonged period (Egeland, 2016). Ateşkan's (2016) examination of the cultural and teaching experiences of Turkish pre-service teachers in the United States classroom revealed teachers developed both professionally and personally from interactions and involvements with students, as well as with colleagues and others. Teachers were able to gain much needed knowledge about the cultures of students and communities and were able to work comfortably within a new cultural environment.



**Classroom Management Challenges**

Many issues confront foreign teachers concerning schooling in the United States. Several surveys have shown transitioning to a new system and encountering a combination of students with specific learning experiences, new cultural backgrounds, and relationships with local parents are among the challenges novice teachers encounter (Abedini, et al., 2019). Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) analyzed issues of first-year teachers using a grounded theory qualitative approach. The outcomes of the analysis indicated first-year teachers endured stress, lack of support, and unpreparedness to address behavioral and academic issues among students.

The largest hurdle teachers encountered is management of classrooms (Gaias et al., 2019). Studies have documented veteran teachers, both local and international, described foreign teachers' inability to cope with behavioral issues in the classroom. Researchers concluded foreign teachers lack the necessary training to cope with pupils' behavior issues, which results in poor classroom management (Abrahams et al., 2019). Classroom management is one of the most challenging issues many teachers face, especially as a result of students' poor behaviors. Examples of student misbehaviors teachers encountered include the following: a) tardiness to class, b) early departure without being formally dismissed, c) eating and drinking during class, d) playing and listening to music, e) using profanity in the presence of peers and teachers, and f) disregarding teachers' requests for assignments (Adebayo & Allen, 2020).

Teachers in other classrooms may experience unique challenges. Weizheng's (2019) qualitative study explored challenges English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers face and the strategies used to combat the challenges. The research site was a private language institute in Shiraz, Iran. Thirty EFL teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. Three major themes emerged from the collected data: 1) instructional and contextual challenges, 2) behavioral

challenges, and 3) psychological challenges. Instructional challenges included incomplete homework tasks, inconsistency in students' ability, and persistence in speaking in the student's native language. Behavioral and psychological challenges included learners' reluctance to speak, tardiness, demotivation, and disobedience, as well as inappropriate use of cell phones and phone apps. EFL teachers suggested corrective strategies such as teacher-student or parent conferences, verbal warnings, eye contact, and other similar strategies to combat challenges.

Students frequently disclosed unpleasant encounters with superiors, which varied from benign negligence of supervisors to lack of participation or even animosity from experienced instructors (Senol, 2017). Adebayo and Allen (2020) postulated students generally ignore ITAs with deep foreign accents. Irrespective of the format of course presentation, students did not respect ITAs. The study found ITAs still experience significant challenges in communication skills, including choosing correct words to represent content. Students mimicked ITAs' accents and mispronunciation of words as excuses for not carrying out specific tasks (Arshavskaya, 2018).

International teaching staff tended to crave, but never offer, additional positive input about teaching in American settings (Costandi et al., 2019). Teacher mentors assigned to provide support have sometimes been part of the issue by giving little advice to mentees due to communication barriers (Richmond, et al., 2020). Some teachers agreed pre-service services received did not adequately provide necessary training to deal with classroom challenges. Increased training in classroom management techniques provided in training sessions would benefit teachers (Costandi et al., 2019).

**Educational Challenges**

Nationally, the structure of educational institutions is different. Immigrant teachers may not have the same standing as teachers or assistants in American classrooms (Stevens et al., 2019). Restructuring school schedules and curricula to attend to learners' needs was an issue (Steinberg & Cox, 2017). Over the past years, the United States developed a new way of teaching, which was a conventional approach to the teaching-learning process. Structuring the class hour as a lecture session during which the teacher assumes more authority by lecturing and directing discussion, rather than honoring learners' expectations of engagement, was reflective of past practice (Pornphol & Tongkeo, 2018). Teachers required a working understanding of state, national, and international standards which were consistent and systematic for instruction. Standards equipped learners with knowledge and skills needed for success in multiple disciplines to transition successfully to the next grade level (Davis & McDonald, 2019).

Technological devices have become widespread and popular in academic environments. Introduction of such devices brings many learning opportunities and challenges. Neiterman and Zaza (2019) addressed the gap in off-task technology use in academic environments. Teachers face new challenges, especially related to implementation of technology.

Among the challenges teachers face are gaps in technology, poor classroom provisions, and minimal support from administrators. Additional barriers to establishing technology within pedagogical sites to improve instruction and achieve goals exist (Cai et al., 2019). Analysis of information gathered from instructors and students at a Canadian university revealed students considered using technology during off-task times as a matter of personal independence. Alternately, technology caused others to be distracted. Instructors examined the perceptions and beliefs about who was responsible for minimizing technology use in class during off-tasks times.

The instructors developed a multifaceted view, which led to several challenging questions related to 1) connections between technological distractions and engagements, 2) the effect of technology on learning processes, and 3) the responsibility of instructors in higher education.

Several studies have documented teachers' use of various strategies, methods, and approaches addressing educational challenges in the classroom. These methodologies prominent in United States classrooms have helped learners to grasp complex ideas. Findings noted interactions between teachers and students created an equitable, secure, and cooperative environment suitable for student success (Hasan et al., 2020) and helped to curb inappropriate behaviors (Douglas, 2019). International teaching assistants (ITAs) in chemistry in Russia and computer technology in China indicate problems similar to complications ITAs encounter routinely in United States schools (Usak & Masalimova, 2019). While many difficulties posed by early teachers were independent of a national context, ITAs faced the additional duty of gaining cross-cultural competencies in an effort to interact effectively with learners or students in other countries.

A recent analysis of current work has indicated ITAs as new students in foreign educational settings experienced unique educational, cultural, and linguistic difficulties (Kenner, 2020). Objectives of the research were to contribute to the growth of expert knowledge in the existing literature connected to ITAs. Teachers travel overseas, hoping a supportive network is available throughout the tenure. In the field, teacher support is increasingly limited, resulting in a decrease in support for new teachers. Sometimes, expected support instructs ITAs to set expectations, goals, and rules for students which prove futile (Kulikovskaya & Chumicheva, 2019). ITA participants express feeling alone and ineffective (Gorsuch, 2016), resulting in ITAs leaving the profession.

Educational challenges relating to instruction are common for international teachers. Challenges may be due to ignorance of teachers' roles and responsibilities and/or teachers' unfamiliarity with new education systems. Adebayo (2020) highlighted the roles of ITAs may be unique in American education systems, and teachers may lack experience with a similar system. Teachers may have difficulty interpreting curriculum standards, delivery of content, grading, and testing. Transitioning to new teaching methods poses some issues for teachers. Many teachers entering American education settings lack experience with upgraded classrooms and rely on traditional methods to deliver content. According to Richter et al. (2019), classrooms are now equipped with the latest technological devices, tools, software, and gadgets teachers may incorporate into lessons. Teachers who lack exposure to technology are at a serious disadvantage and may have to enroll in professional training to gain the right experiences and skills needed for a 21st-century classroom.

For many teachers, challenging behaviors are actions which interfere with or threaten the safety or learning of students or faculty (Martin et al., 2020). Challenging behaviors, according to Flower et al. (2017), include withdrawn, disruptive, violent, or unsafe, and inappropriate social behaviors. Flower et al. (2017) posited instructors are unprepared for challenging behaviors learners may bring into the classroom. Behaviors upsetting the status quo of a classroom are deterrents and barriers to learning and teaching. The lack of consistency in combating behavior challenges in the classroom is a significant problem for foreign teachers (Alanay & Aydin, 2016). Teachers who struggle with class control lose confidence and power. Behavior issues affect an entire classroom, distract students from learning, and require teachers to waste instruction time on behavior management.

Novice teachers worldwide encounter various types of disruptive behavior and encounter many challenges due to problematic students. A qualitative study by Senol (2017) identified perceptions of 24 novice teachers related to students' disruptive behaviors within classroom settings at public schools in Trabzon city center. Semi-structured interviews revealed novice teachers experienced encounters with disruptive students. The disruptions included excessive chatting, frequent distractions, increased engagement with mobile phones, gum chewing, mistreating classmates, and disorderly conduct in class. Novice teachers experienced a range of reactions, including positive and negative emotions. Reactions ranged from using various methods to handle challenges and ensuring constant monitoring of the classroom to requesting support from experienced instructors. Emotional reactions included feeling nervous and stressed and thinking about quitting (Hara, 2020). Results revealed novice teachers would benefit from introduction to theory, training, and developmental practice in classroom management, as well as mentoring by experienced teachers.

Migrant teachers described overwhelmingly stressful situations caused by the most demanding pupils (Andre et al., 2019). One Australian first-year instructor in a case study carried out by Anixt et al. (2020) noticed distractions affected students within the classroom and other student-teacher relationships. Based on similar experiences, foreign teachers had less experience coping with intense behaviors. Teaching challenges caused new teachers to abandon teaching methods studied during college. Many foreign instructors struggled to teach in cultural and linguistic environments dissimilar from those of the foreign teachers' homeland (Hymel & Katz, 2019). Foreign teachers constantly encountered challenges and sought behavior management assistance from more experienced teachers. Assistance and support were not available in some institutions, and teachers had no choice but to separate from school environment and students.

Services preparing teachers to handle behavior challenges have revised methodologies and have formulated new strategies to teach teachers how to handle inappropriate student actions (Clark et al., 2019). All prospective international teachers may depend on prior expertise fashioned with classroom management techniques, which might not be successful in American classrooms (Hajal et al., 2019). Teachers must recognize foreign pre-service teaching activities and student discipline practice and consider the differences between educational traditions of teachers' home countries compared to traditions in the host country to provide guidance (Halevy et al., 2019). Issues of behavior conflicting with learning and teaching have plagued the education system, according to 62% of educators working at the same institution for 5 or more years (Dos Santos, 2019). Recent studies have indicated increased behavioral issues across several subject areas. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of kindergarten teachers, 64% of middle school teachers, and 53% of high school teachers shared similar sentiments (Rahman, 2019).

Disciplinary situations have become challenging and have led to classroom management problems for foreign instructors. Several instructors complained about the leniency of education systems in such situations pertaining to students (Hara, 2020). International teachers talked about usage of obscene language by undergraduate students in the United States, early exits and late arrivals, and eating and drinking throughout lessons (Landmark et al., 2019). Even though concerns linked to classroom discipline were common among inexperienced teachers, irrespective of country of origin, teachers trained in Asian countries usually dealt competently with issues of behavior and student compatibility. Teachers trained in Asian countries and working in the United States made greater efforts to deal with misbehavior (Martin et al., 2020).

Managing learner discipline in the classroom is a primary responsibility of teachers throughout the school day. Teachers try to instill discipline in everything students do during

school hours, maintaining uninterrupted school operations while providing students with adequate opportunities for education (Wehby & Lane, 2019). Humans need guidelines to direct conduct and perform daily. Teachers, parents, school officials, and other social stakeholders believe student discipline is vital for academic success and provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Musa & Martha, 2020). A reduction in classroom disruptions enhances learners' access to educational opportunities.

Schools have formulated documents governing codes of conduct for students and encourage teachers to formulate rules and regulations for students to follow (Musa & Martha, 2020). Tanzanian teachers and parents have agreed discipline is equivalent to effective instruction, which transforms the entire class (Semali & Vumilia, 2016). Teachers transform an entire class by creating different learning groups, developing students' independence, and taking punitive measures when learners misbehave or are guilty of wrongdoing. Developing incentive-based systems has discouraged unacceptable behaviors and rewarded positive conduct (Singleton, 2019).

Researchers have offered several strategies to school administration and teachers to curb behavior challenges in schools and classrooms (Nagro et al., 2019). Nelson et al. (2018) offered ClassWide Function-Related Intervention Teams (CW-FIT) to art teachers. CW-FIT is an intervention strategy geared at helping with behavior management. Multi-tiered intervention aligned with behavior interventions and found support in schools. Proven effective, CW-FIT focuses on motivation from teachers and instruction concerning social skills, grouping, and positive reinforcement. Researchers' first implementation and examination of effects of CW-FIT were in art classrooms at the elementary level. Students from one classroom used a single-subject design, while two classrooms used a reversal design. CW-FIT proved to be beneficial,



and learners' on-task behaviors significantly improved. The teacher was able to continue CW-FIT as a behavior management strategy.

Researchers are constantly developing strategies to help with behavioral challenges (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). The Color Wheel System is another strategy proposed for teachers to help with behavior management. Proposed by Aspiranti et al. (2018), the system provides clear, specific rules and expectations to decrease unsuitable behaviors. Students exposed to Color Wheel in both classrooms showed immediate signs of improvement and an instant decrease in inappropriate vocalizations and behaviors. After demonstration of the system's effectiveness in a Catholic elementary school environment, teachers recommended the Color Wheel for future classroom use.

Evidence-based strategies to prevent unwanted behaviors within classrooms are numerous (Gilmour et al., 2019). Teachers seldom implement evidence-based strategies with perfect fidelity. Hagermoser Sanetti et al.'s (2018) study focused on evaluating effectiveness of classroom management strategies via consultation, implementation planning, and participant modeling. Adherence to classroom management plans, implementation quality, and learners' disorderly behaviors in classroom were means of assessment for teachers. Results were positive, resulting in an increase in teachers' adherence and quality through implementation planning and participant modeling. Researchers noted improvements in students' disorderly behavior and pinpointed a need for continued support concerning implementation for behavioral interventions in schools.

### **Cultural Challenges**

The lack of qualified teachers in many school systems has led to hiring foreign teachers to fill gaps and meet students' needs. Policymakers and stakeholders have been concerned about

differences between experiences and backgrounds of teachers and students (Çakmak et al., 2019). Pre-service instructors have continued to echo these differences. Scott and Scott (2015) examined a university teacher preparation program to investigate efforts put into providing diversified cultural and linguistic experiences. One main objective of the program was to prepare pre-service teachers to enter classrooms as culturally aware teachers. Findings of the study had several implications for teacher preparation programs, including providing meaningful experiences for preservice teachers with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Another implication was pre-service teachers need to have interactive sessions with culturally and linguistically diverse students to fill difference gaps and increase familiarity with each other's backgrounds and cultures.

Culture shock for many immigrant teachers is a common phenomenon and occurs when a teacher becomes a part of unfamiliar settings and conditions. Culture shock is a difficult phase all throughout the period of a teacher's experience teaching abroad (Abazi, 2019). Many foreign teachers report embarrassment, fear, and depression when the reality of a new location sets in. Teachers' cultural experiences and backgrounds could result in major issues in developing positive teacher-student relationships in cross-cultural environments. Many foreign teachers hired to work in American schools find it challenging to adjust and develop good rapport with Native American students (White, 2017). Students often fail to adjust and, in turn, had to retake courses. Turkish English as a first language (EFL) educators participated in semi-structured interviews sharing perceptions relating to teachers' readiness to face challenges entering diverse cultural and linguistic classrooms (Yıldırım, 2019). Turkish teachers revealed the atmosphere as highly challenging in terms of meeting academic and linguistic needs of a diverse group of learners. Turkish teachers lacked formal training. Recommendation was for teachers to get

training through adequate training programs designed to increase teachers' awareness, knowledge, and skills to work effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse environments.

Foreign teachers in the United States have had to create interactive classroom settings. Active learning increases expectations, particularly in STEM disciplines (Trevathan & Willis, 2019). Many cultures consider certain gestures and actions as inappropriate. For example, interrupting a lecture to ask questions, listening to music through earbuds while completing tasks, or hearing students addressing professors by first names were among the inappropriate behaviors students displayed (Çakmak et al., 2019). Teachers unaccustomed to certain practices may become uncomfortable or offended, as such behaviors are unacceptable in the teachers' home countries (Poole, 2019). Cultural differences may cause misinterpretations of students or teachers' behaviors in classrooms.

Many international teachers face the challenges of being unable to determine students' academic levels, especially in the United States. Agostinelli (2019) suggested international teaching assistants (ITA), having completed K-12 schooling outside the United States, were not aware of requirements for academic preparation and knowledge. Results were devastating for teachers, who felt unprepared to provide sufficient instruction and support to students. Some ITAs reported students of similar level outside the United States advanced more academically when compared to students encountered in the American classroom (Arshavskaya, 2018).

Teachers' relationships with each other are another cultural concern, as social interaction is a major aspect of a school's dynamics (Chau & Truong, 2019). Differing rules govern physical contact between teachers and students, as well as teachers and teachers, in different countries. In certain nations, just a touch between opposite sexes is unacceptable. Cruickshank (2019) postulated some teachers had expressed appropriately touching students and other teachers in

some countries was safe, but not in the United States. Teaching in a male-dominated culture decreased interactions in classrooms because some learners were not able to publicly express views and opinions freely or communicate directly with men who were not relatives (Hayik & Weiner-Levy, 2019). Every culture has undisclosed rules and cues, which determine normal interactions between students and teachers.

Direct correspondence is popular in the United States (Kandler & Powell, 2018), but could be seen as too confrontational or aggressive in other societies. In many Asian countries, indirect contact is the rule, and the governing philosophy is not to embarrass students openly or speak indirectly to avoid personal confrontations. An instructor pointing out students' faults in front of the whole class may cause the child embarrassment, even though the reason for doing so is to help others to correct similar errors. A stronger solution proposed is to advise pupils one-on-one (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2019). Native American stakeholders in education frown upon teachers who openly embarrass students, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Abbas et al., 2020). Foreign teachers face many difficulties teaching in non-native settings due to these cultural differences.

Many researchers have described cultural variations such as differences in values, behaviors, and activities between America and the home countries of non-native teachers (Hirszenberger et al., 2019). Participants in several exploratory studies faced difficulties due to differences in culture encountered with instructors from other nationalities and education systems (Larson, 2019). School officials have generally tried to create an environment for non-native teachers to help them learn, understand, and conform to the predominant culture in schools (Brooks & Brooks, 2019). When authoritative speech standards conflict with teachers' native standards, foreign teachers experience cultural incongruity and misunderstanding. If

teachers adapt to authoritative standards of schools abroad, foreign teachers may face fewer tensions within the workplace (Biebricher et al., 2019). Results have even been remarkable when teachers, parents, and students communicate effectively with foreign teachers (Larson, 2019).

### **Linguistic Challenges**

International teachers have reported difficulties in participating in public speaking tasks and class discussions due to linguistics barriers, which cause teachers to be less actively involved (Yoder & Jaffee, 2019). Asian teachers in particular have expressed educational difficulties encountered in classes. One difficulty is becoming irritated about needing to adjust to teaching styles and having to contend with disruptive students posing questions throughout lectures regarding the language used and the Asian accent (Brown & Knollman-Porter, 2019). In the 21st century, English language as a way of interacting with each other is becoming a global English spoken in various ways while representing native tongues (Banerjee et al., 2018). Although international teachers have faced much discrimination because of foreign-accented English (Bubenhofer et al., 2019), many students worldwide understand as well as respect the different pronunciations and accents of English from outside America (Fatmanissa & Kusnandi, 2017).

International teachers as non-native English speakers have been required to take English proficiency tests to be eligible to teach in many universities in the United States. Pope (2019) argued a high score on an English test does not guarantee a teacher's ability to deliver instructional content in spoken English. Students often complain about the challenges in comprehending speech of international teachers in a variety of courses at the undergraduate level. Students tend to experience misunderstanding and miscommunication if teachers have a prominent accent or a weak grasp of spoken English (Adebayo, 2020). On many occasions, both

teachers and students become frustrated or lose communicative confidence due to language barriers.

Regardless of the increase in globalization, language barriers have been prevalent within school settings, especially at the university level. Studies assessing linguistic challenges experienced by international teachers have reported students communicated quickly, utilizing quick sentences and casual words, which was a linguistic practice unfamiliar to foreign teachers (Jaspers, 2018). Students in American classrooms were extremely vocal and conveyed feelings and thoughts more explicitly than learners from other countries, especially in Asia (Yıldırım, 2019). Students encountered challenges understanding discipline-specific terms, which pushed teachers to improve fluency and broaden discipline-related terminology to resolve confusion attributable to accents and other linguistic challenges (Biasutti et al., 2020).

Linguistic diversity is an advantage, not a burden, and teachers should take advantage of opportunities when students of different ethnicities and languages enter the classroom (Agostinelli, 2019). Adebayo and Allen (2020) noted ITAs articulated feelings of incompetence due to non-native English-speaker status. Feelings were more prevalent when ITAs communicated orally with students and provided feedback in writing assignments. Many ITAs spoke English as a second language, causing difficulties in speaking or writing English which followed the standard form and the appropriate conventions relating to word choice, tense, or word order (Kasztalska, 2019).

Non-English speaking, non-native American students entering the school system have increased in number. Incoming students have not been able to select classes of choice and end up in classrooms with teachers and language differences (Kasztalska, 2019). Communication becomes challenging, and building rapport with students is done through communication. Due to

the lack of effective communication, teachers have had difficulty building relationships with learners and establishing ideal environments for literacy development. Flint et al. (2019) documented three activities as being successful in improving students spoken, written, and digital literacy competence in English and Spanish. Teachers focused on forming relationships with high school students entering a summer literacy institute for the first time. Teachers used heart maps, *all about me* presentations, and creation of graffiti boards. A combination of the three activities created a welcoming environment for learners' culture, language, and lived experiences. Academic institutions could use activities and other strategies focusing on building language and cultural skills to help improve communication with non-English speaking students.

### **Rewards of the Teaching Experience**

While the literature mainly documents various challenges teachers face, the teacher's role can be quite rewarding and productive (Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). Many school officials are working to improve schools' overall environments and to provide incentives to teachers to stay in the profession (Allen & McInerney, 2019). Migrating teachers benefit from encounters while teaching in unfamiliar settings. Teachers experience improved pedagogical skills, cultural and linguistic enrichment, and lasting relationships. Many foreign teachers after first year of teaching in a non-native setting, feel positive and optimistic about future years (Seppala & Smith, 2019). As teachers have been submerged in new educational systems, classrooms have become more interactive, students begin to look past accents, and relationships begin to form. Teacher participants have noted using student-centered strategies, including real-life situations, employing collaborative strategies, engaging students in classroom discussions, and inviting peer feedback, have greatly helped to improve teaching (Flint et al., 2019).

Extensive use of technology has played a role in some classrooms and boosted teachers' professional skills, making teaching easier for ITAs in organizing lessons (Arshavskaya, 2018). Although integrating technology into a foreign language classroom has posed some challenges for teachers when having to design technology-enhanced lessons, teachers have still been able to follow through with careful assistance. Assistance has helped pre-service teachers to pinpoint, integrate, and reflect on suitable technologies to create more learning opportunities for students. Kuru Gönen's (2019) qualitative analyses of pre-service teachers' diaries and data collected from focus group interviews revealed prospective teachers' positive attitudes toward technology integration in an English as Foreign Language (EFL) setting in Turkey. Pre-service teachers articulated the integration was very beneficial.

Benefits of integration include the promotion of language skills, creation of motivating learning environments, increased engagement in lessons, and increased understanding of how to prepare, deliver and adjust lessons to suit learners' needs and interests. ITAs have become more inclusive and culturally aware after exposure to diverse points of view about teaching and learning (Arshavskaya, 2018). Teachers have been better able to interact with students and teachers from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds and engage in debates focused on current issues such as environmental, political, religious, gender inequality, and global concerns (Weizheng, 2019). International teachers have been motivated through experiences and information gained from teaching beyond native boundaries.

### **The Gap in Literature**

The literature has revealed teachers encounter many challenges in American classrooms and classrooms beyond United States borders. Investigation of non-native American teachers' experiences teaching in the American classrooms, including educational, behavioral, and



educational challenges, is warranted. Classroom experiences may allow teachers to grow, develop, and hone skills as professionals and become self-actualized (Arslan, 2017). Researchers have largely focused on American teachers teaching in countries outside the United States as documented in the literature (Semali & Vumilia, 2016). Research focusing on the lived experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms is nonexistent. Carrying out the study was worthwhile, as information gathered captured the lived experiences of international teachers coming into United States classrooms to teach. Studying the phenomenon was an opportunity to fill the existing knowledge gap regarding the experiences of international teachers in classrooms in United States.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

As the teacher need grows within the American school system, an increase in international teachers through the induction process may grow as well. The education system in the United States recruits teachers yearly to fill vacant positions in schools (Gallo & Beckman, 2016). Many schools fail to keep a consistent workforce due to issues arising from low socioeconomic communities' effect on schools (Tran, et al., 2018). Schools located in impoverished areas experience many issues with teacher shortages and depend heavily on recruitment agencies to fill quotas every year. Difficulties have arisen due to native teachers' refusal to teach in schools affected by a shortage or lack of teachers (Allen & McInerney, 2019). According to the research, school leaders' only viable choice is to recruit teachers from around the world (Tran, et al., 2018).

Foreign teachers have viewed recruitment as an opportunity to improve professional and personal skills, plus accomplish goals and targets seemingly impossible to achieve by other means (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Experiences gained upon entering American classroom depend on

teachers' interpretation of experiences (Banerjee et al., 2018). Discoveries made through the experiences gained, according to Bruner (1965), are what teachers may be able to draw on and apply to other challenging situations (Stapleton & Stefaniak, 2019). Challenges identified in the literature are evidence of challenges faced when teachers migrate to other countries to teach. Discovering new insights, methodologies, strategies, and approaches to overcome barriers for teachers has been important in supporting teachers' striving toward achieving the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy (Velmurugan & Sankar, 2017). The goal of the study was to explore international teachers' lived experiences in United States classrooms. The subsequent Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Suppression of the tales of teachers is a long-practiced tradition, especially the tales of teachers recruited to instruct within classrooms in the United States (Vitiello et al., 2020). Classroom strategies, clash of cultures, diverse ethnicities, and disciplinary actions have been among the challenges international teachers experience (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in American classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question One: What are the educational challenges faced by international teachers in classrooms in the United States?

Research Question Two: What are some behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in United States classrooms?

Research Question Three: How do the American cultural challenges compare to the cultural challenges in international teachers' home countries?

International teachers from various countries outside of the United States shared personal experiences, and the information was collected and documented. The process of coding provided themes, which emerged via analysis of data collected through interviews and field notes. Coding consisted of labeling and arranging qualitative data to identify different themes and the relationships between themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding aided in understanding how international teachers perceived experiences of teaching in United States classrooms (Podolsky et al., 2019a). The following sections outline and provide details of the study's methodology. The methodology included research design, role of the researcher, research procedures, data analysis, reliability and validity, ethical procedures, and chapter summary.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The study conducted used the case study research design. Polacsek et al. (2018) posited the purpose of a case study as gaining a deeper understanding of particular cases using a systematic process. The research focused on gaining in-depth knowledge on how international teachers perceived experiences of teaching in classrooms within the United States. Since the aim was to understand international teachers' experiences during the first year of teaching in an American classroom, international teachers' experiences became the case for exploration. The research identified specific categories and themes which emerged from the experiences. Comparing the data gathered facilitated development of the case study and answered the research questions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019).

### **Role of the Researcher**

A major role of the researcher was to organize and carry out procedures necessary for the success of the study (Pietilä et al., 2020). Another role was to extend invitations to participate, provide informed consent forms, conduct interviews, analyze the data collected, and record findings. Study procedures required the examiner to interview participants concerning experiences as international teachers. Asking clear questions and extending questions (i.e., probing) based on participants' responses enhanced the interview process (Rosenthal, 2016). Recording accurate responses without bias and ensuring confidentiality of information were among the duties. Included in duties were protection of participants' responses, signed informed consent forms, recordings, transcriptions, and other documents pertaining to the research.

Awareness of ethical challenges while carrying out qualitative studies was a requirement (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Procedures involved in qualitative studies required frequent interactions between researcher and participant (Frasso et al., 2018), with attendant responsibility

to analyze and interpret data and observations to extract reliable information (Abdalla et al., 2018). Ethical challenges may arise through all stages of the procedure due to characteristics shared with participants. Suppression of personal beliefs effectively addressed ethical challenges to avoid data bias. According to *The Belmont Report*, addressing ethical challenges secured participants' anonymity, privacy, and autonomy (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

Having international teacher status and experience teaching at the high school within the school district, researcher and participants shared some characteristics. As the chairperson of the English Department, the researcher ensured duties and roles as chairperson had no influence or power over participants. The role of chairperson and teacher involved collaborating with teachers regularly. Collaborative partnerships shared remained respectful and confidential throughout the course of the study as outlined in *The Belmont Report's* first principle of research (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Establishing mutual trust with participants helped to develop participants' confidence and paved the way for an open-minded conversation necessary to elicit unbiased data during the interview process (Patton, 2017). Participants received the same information about the purpose of the study, the intended use of data obtained, and confidentiality processes. All measures taken ensured information documented reflected participants' lived experiences in United States classrooms.

### **Research Procedures**

Mertens (2018) posited research follows a particular structure based on the type of research, design, instruments, and research questions. This research followed procedures to ensure the answering of the research questions. Using a qualitative case study design, selecting, and interviewing participants, and analyzing and interpreting data were priorities. Throughout

the research, ethical procedures followed the rules and guidelines set out by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Office of Human Research Protection, and *The Belmont Report* to avoid infringing on the rights and integrity of all participants (Mertens, 2018). Exploring and comparing participants' interview responses in qualitative case studies, according to Azungah (2018), ensured an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. Examination of data collected and connections made developed a detailed case (Mertens, 2018). The research procedures section included population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, and preparation.

### **Population and Sample Selection**

The target population consisted of non-native teachers within one of two districts in a prominent school district in a small, rural community in South Carolina. An elementary, middle, and high school within the district served approximately 1145 students. Approximately 40 non-native teachers were on staff among the three schools. The sample came from this population using purposeful sampling technique to ensure participants met the criteria. Using purposeful sampling, according to Etikan and Bala (2017), ensured the research sample was specifically selected based on rich knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study and based on the objectives and criteria of the study (Ames et al., 2019).

Screening of participants supported the selection of participants who fit the parameters of the study (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Selection criteria included South Carolina state-certified, non-native teachers who had completed 2 or more years of total teaching experience with at least 1 year in the school district serving as the research site. Among the target population, 20 international teachers qualified for participation in the study. Of the 20 who were eligible, 18 teachers received invitations to participate. A sample population of 17 international teachers

accepted the invitation and took part in the study.

Initial contact and recruitment of participants were through the participants' district-assigned email addresses. International teachers teaching in schools within the district received invitations via district-assigned email addresses (see Appendix A). Invitation email requested international teacher volunteers and documented the nature, objectives, reason, and rationale of the study, including expectations of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). An emailed welcome letter informed participants of the selections for the study. A thank-you note was sent to participants who had shown interest but did not fit the study criteria. An email informed selected participants of the procedures.

Researchers should never violate the principles guiding and governing research studies (Resnik & Finn, 2018). Throughout every stage of this study, the participants were free from threats, endangerment, and mistreatment. The characteristics, rights, and integrity of participants were protected (Fiesler & Proferes, 2018). Informed consent forms provided details of the research title and type, advantages, overall objectives, and process for participants (see Appendix B). Included in the informed consent form was information outlining the study parameters, data collection procedures, and the protection of participants. International teacher volunteers selected for the study received and returned informed consent forms via district-assigned email addresses. District assigned email addresses were secured and private and are solely assigned to individuals who were permanently employed by the district. Permanent employees had full access to school-based email addresses and were able to send and receive messages privately and securely. Participants signed and returned informed consent forms.

Request for permission to conduct the study ensured the district superintendent and school principals received information about the tentative research and complied with the request

to provide permission (see Appendix C). Nusbaum et al. (2017) emphasized the study should not cause any distress to participants. Participants should never be embarrassed, harmed, or offended in any way or feel uncomfortable participating in the study (Elliott et al., 2017). Oral and written explanations provided information to participants regarding human rights and integrity (Resnik & Finn, 2018). A password-protected flash drive, password-protected file in Google Drive, and a digitally locked, home-based filing cabinet stored all signed agreements, informed consents, specific transcriptions, transcribed interpretations, results, and reports from the research were available to individuals involved in the research upon request (Williams et al., 2017).

### **Instrumentation**

Researchers have described interviews as one of the most common means of data collection used in qualitative studies (Azungah, 2018). Interviews explored and collected stories, giving deep insights into participants' experiences (Pathak & Intratat, 2016). Interviews as data collection tools were unrestrictive and allowed participants to express themselves freely, providing a platform for participants to describe emotional states, viewpoints, and opinions (Kallio et al., 2016). Interviews could be either structured, unstructured, or semi-structured.

Semi-structured interviews provided the data for this research because semi-structured interviews allowed gathering a wealth of in-depth information from participants employing pre-planned, open-ended questions (Pathak & Intratat, 2016). Open-ended questions were highly effective in generating additional questions, which elicited and captured additional information for the study (Kallio et al., 2016). The semi-structured interviews mimicked the characteristics of a semi-formal conversation (Rosenthal, 2016). During semi-structured interviews, interviewers had the freedom to probe for more information until saturation. Interviewers used several open-



ended questions during the interview process to elicit a wealth of experiences, which were later analyzed (Pathak & Intratat, 2016).

For this study, a semi-structured interview guide allowed participants to share a wealth of experiences in detail and to express stories and opinions thoroughly and without fear (see Appendix D). The semi-structured interview guide entailed four categories, including 1) demographics, 2) teaching experiences, 3) effects of teaching in American classrooms, and 4) recommendations. Subject matter experts (SMEs) reviewed questions, submitted feedback, and offered suggestions (see Appendix E). Anderson-Cook et al. (2019) explained SMEs are academic professionals with in-depth understanding and knowledge of a process or concept. Of value to the researcher, SMEs provide information which may contribute to the study (Hartwell et al., 2019). The information provided might offer critical insights which researchers may consider.

Patton's general interview approach guided the interview process (Patton, 2017). Questions covered topics and concerns, arranged, and outlined in an appropriate sequence and geared toward answering the research questions. The outline increased the comprehensiveness of the information, so data collection was systematic for each participant.

The interview guide approach allowed for wording, rewording, and rearrangement of questions throughout the course of the interview and ensured interviews remained active and conversational, so new stories and experiences might emerge (Johnstone, 2017). The interviews focused on background, demographics, classroom experience, educational and behavioral challenges, and culture. The research questions provided the basis for the interview, and a series of questions followed based on the participants' responses.

Field notes served as a complementary data collection instrument. A respected and often employed data collection methodology in qualitative research, field notes documented contextual information (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes recorded activities, behaviors, events, and other features observed. The interviewer documented observations during the interview process. The notes recorded served as the only data collection method for the research or contributed to the data collection process as a supplement to data collected during the interview process (Johnson et al., 2020). With increased use of data sharing, secondary analysis, and metasynthesis, semi-structured interviews and field notes ensured the collection of rich, in-depth information (Antonio et al., 2020).

The process of compiling field notes is not restricted to one method or strategy and may be descriptive and reflective (Chauvette et al., 2019). Descriptive information ensured collection of observed data, including conversations, behaviors, actions, and settings. Reflective information consisted of recording the interviewer's thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns during observations. Both descriptive and reflective information gathered provided details relevant to international teachers' lived experiences in United States classrooms. According to FitzPatrick (2019), field notes should be focused on research problems and theoretical paradigms underpinning the study. As the interviews progressed, the interviewer recorded insights, thoughts, and underlying meanings gained from observations relevant to answering the research questions (Antonio et al., 2020).

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process took place over 2 months. An email invitation invited all teachers who met the requirements to participate in the study. The selection of teachers who responded and met the criteria followed. Participants received thorough information about the

interview process, including the benefits and risks, signing of informed consent forms, and schedule for interviews. Emailed consent forms informed participants of the procedures in the study. Participants signed and returned consent forms before the interviews, and numbers were assigned to individual participants to uphold confidentiality.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted via telephone convenient to participants, gave the information needed to respond to the research questions. None of the research interviews took place at the research site. Throughout the interviews, participants responded to open-ended questions, which, according to researchers, allowed participants to express views and experiences fully (Ames et al., 2019). Interviews conducted via telephone provided audio recordings for transcription and analysis. Parameswaran et al. (2020) described transcription in qualitative research as a written account of individual or group interviews, usually verbatim. Transcription using NVivo software transformed qualitative information to a text-based format, which helped to create a narrative. Preservation of accurate data was important for creating narratives when transcribing information collected from participants.

Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) identified a variety of approaches to collect qualitative data using field notes. The methods included jotted notes, direct observation, inference, analysis, interview notes, and personal journals. The study utilized jotted notes recorded during interviews with participants. Jotted notes were short-term memory prompts in the form of a few words or short sentences. Prompts allowed recollection of observed information, including speech, action, and behavior (FitzPatrick, 2019).

Johnson et al. (2020) cautioned researchers to ensure jottings are solely observations and separated from beliefs. Separation ensured validity and reliability of data and an appropriate interpretation of observations and jottings. Correct interpretation of observations and jottings

revealed underlying meanings and contexts. Translation of jottings to field notes ensued. Field notes provided comprehensive, coherent, and in-depth descriptions based on observation (Antonio et al., 2020).

A crucial step in qualitative studies is to ensure participants receive information about research procedures and agree to such procedures (Salmons, 2017). Participants received informed consent forms before the research and signed forms to show agreement to participate in the study. Informed consent forms outlined in detail all the procedures of the research and participants. A password-protected flash drive, password-protected file in Google Drive, and a home filing cabinet provided a safe place for the storing of informed consent forms, recordings, and all information collected from the participants. A digital lock secured the filing cabinet. Only individuals who were directly involved in the study had access.

Precautionary measures adhered to procedures of the school district to gain approval to carry out the research. School officials received a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study and responded accordingly (see Appendix F). Receiving permission prompted the creation of an interview schedule based on participants' availability. After the data were analyzed, findings determined, and narrative composed, participants engaged in a debriefing process about the overall study in detail to ensure participants understood clearly and accurately information about every aspect of the study (Krogh et al., 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

Harrison et al. (2017) suggested analyzing and interpreting data is a critical step in conducting case studies. Many researchers have used the “codes and coding” technique to analyze case study data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Analysis of data collected for the research was via the code and coding technique.

Analyzing interviews and field notes is a process which takes place over time (Johnson et al., 2020). The process begins when entering the field, continues as interactions take place in the field, and progresses following interactions in the field (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

Descriptive audio and notes recorded during interactions and interviews with participants were converted to detailed analytic information. Analysis included impressions and thoughts about observations and the meaning of observations (Marshall, 2019). Listening to recorded interviews and typing field notes gathered throughout the interview process allowed time for reflection. Reflection was vital for developing in-depth analysis of the data collected (Marshall, 2019).

Data were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using NVivo software. NVivo is a secure software employing a coding technique to code data collected from interviews and field notes to identify themes and patterns answering the research questions (Phillips & Lu, 2018). Codes are identifiers or labels used to add meaning to the data and for the identification of categorical information relating to research questions and themes (Pietilä et al., 2020). Identification of categorical information supported triangulation of data. Triangulation is combining, comparing, and analyzing data from interviews and field notes to present more organized and straightforward information for the research (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Using multiple methods of data collection in qualitative research promoted development of a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2017). Convergence of information collected from different sources ensured reliability and validity of the research (Natow, 2020).

### **Reliability and Validity**

The purpose of any research is to add to existing studies and make an impact on society (FitzPatrick, 2019). Research has to be trusted for it to be acceptable and impactful (Johnson et

al., 2020). Trust in research illustrates reliability and validity, which are determined based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

A research study is credible if it answers the research questions (Azungah, 2018). Researchers use several methods to establish credibility, including triangulation, peer review, identification and explanation of research bias, and robust descriptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Triangulation procedures involved collecting and combining information from different sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Information collected from interviews and field notes went through the triangulation process to ensure reliability and validity (Abdalla et al., 2018). Participants engaged in the interview process until fully saturated. Hennink et al. (2019) emphasized saturation is crucial when conducting qualitative interviews and demonstrates research credibility.

To ensure field notes demonstrated research credibility, analysis of the recorded notes began during the notation and interview process (Johnson et al., 2020). Analysis enabled reflection, and reflection was vital for understanding and making meaning from the information collected (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Themes emerged while observing and guided interviewers to shift focus to develop and explore emerging themes (Johnson et al., 2020). Documenting and accurately presenting the perspectives of international teachers demonstrated research validity.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the ability to transfer study findings to similar contexts (Azungah, 2018). Peterson (2019) described participants' lived experiences and told stories as situations, which may differ, as well as the interpretation and description of participants' experiences. To

address threats and improve the transferability of the findings to similar contexts, the process of data triangulation, debriefing, coding of the data, documentation, and explaining the process of data analysis ensued. Descriptions outlined the research location and site and all steps in the research to facilitate tentative duplications in similar contexts. Thick, in-depth descriptions allowed potential researchers to determine the extent to which the findings apply to other international teachers teaching different classes in different schools in the United States. Creswell and Creswell (2017) highlighted the rich experiences participants share through detailed, robust qualitative case studies may be impactful and cause a need to transfer the study to similar locations, contexts, and participants.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is the need for researchers to account for changes in the research context (Harrison et al., 2017). Thorough descriptions provided explanations for the changes which occurred in the study. Descriptions explained how the changes affected the process of the study.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability allows others to confirm or corroborate research results (Harrison et al., 2017). Researchers' biases decrease when the findings are based solely on the participants' experiences and narratives (FitzPatrick, 2019). Checking the information collected from participants and documenting the data properly helped to confirm the research results. An audit trail ensued. Examination of data collection and analysis procedures and scrutinizing the data for potential bias or distortion of information ensured research confirmability.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Throughout every step of the research, following ethical guidelines and principles provided the foundation for the procedures carried out (Resnik & Finn, 2018). Permission from

the district, as well as from each principal, opened the way for the beginning of the research. One of the main goals in conducting research was to protect the participants (Fiesler & Proferes, 2018). Throughout the research timeframe, the protection of participants' rights and integrity against any threat came first, as stipulated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants read and signed informed consent forms, which outlined the measures put in place to protect participants' integrity. The collection of informed consent forms took place before the semi-structured interviews. Assigned member numbers identified participants instead of names during documentation.

To decrease the risk to participants, every effort ensured the security and welfare of participants as guided by beneficence (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Audio or video and observed recordings were the means of interview and field note collection from participants. Only the interviewer and interviewee interacted at the secured designated location at the time of the interview. NVivo provided transcriptions, coding, comparisons, and analysis of the recordings from interviews and typed field notes. From coding, comparisons, and analysis, themes emerged and findings were documented. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act protects and secures information submitted to NVivo by providing data privacy and security provisions (Wolf et al., 2020).

Respect governed interactions with participants throughout all stages of the study; detailed explanations concerning the study were provided orally and in writing in the form of the informed consent forms, ensuring that participants' rights and integrity were protected (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Privacy and security included informed consent forms and information collected from the participants stored on a password-protected flash drive and in a file in Google Drive. Only individuals who were directly involved in the



study had access to study documents and recordings. Careful collection and storage of recordings, signed informed consents, transcriptions, reports, and other information relevant to interviews and field notes were kept in a file format on a password-protected flash drive and Google Drive and placed in a digitally locked filing cabinet for a minimum of 4 years.

Qualitative researchers are responsible for repositories of sensitive, personal information, which should remain confidential for a mandated 4-year period following completion of the study (Hesse et al., 2019). Destruction of documents pertaining to the study will occur on the day after the end of the 4-year period. Destroying research archived artifacts after the 4-year period will continue to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Methods for destroying or disposing of all archived information pertaining to this research will include pulverizing flash drives, shredding, and then burning paper records, and permanently deleting information collected via email and stored in Google Drive (Brown et al., 2020). Deletion will prevent revealing any information relevant to the research.

Audit trails are excellent for maintaining ethical principles in research (Johnson et al., 2020). Audit trails are rich, in-depth documentation of findings based on participants' accounts of experiences. Using audit trails in research ensures transparency in the data collection and analysis process (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Descriptions of the process of coding the data moved from individual codes to themes and explaining which codes, if clustered, formed a theme. Robust explanations clarified decisions made in the research and showed a logical path from interviews and field notes to the documentation of findings.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in American classrooms in South Carolina, including

educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. This chapter documented methodological procedures, research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, research procedures, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures. Seventeen international teachers formed the sample of participants. Semi-structured interviews and field notes were used to gather the data for analysis and coding. Through coding, themes emerged. Precautions were in place to protect the rights and integrity of participants. The study ensured credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable data and findings to enhance reliability and validity. All ethical procedures ensured the validity and reliability of the research.

The following Chapter 4 discusses in-depth, detailed results of data analysis as presented through coding the transcriptions. The chapter includes quotes from participants, differences and similarities in participants' experiences, themes across cases, and comparison of themes to understand participants' lived experiences. Explanations of how findings connect to the research questions provide a detailed outline of the overall analysis.

### **Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results**

Documentation of international teachers' experiences resulting from teaching in classrooms within the United States is rare. Teachers migrate to countries around the world, including the United States, to fill teaching vacancies and accomplish personal and professional goals. Increases in teacher shortages in the United States are worsening and can have serious consequences if ignored (Mason-Williams et al., 2020). Teacher shortages in the United States are more acute in high-poverty, low socioeconomic schools (Tran & Smith, 2020). Lack of teachers threatens schools' effectiveness and forces school officials to go beyond borders to recruit teachers non-native to the United States (Rey et al., 2020).

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. The problem was international teachers entering classrooms in United States faced multiple challenges, including educational, behavioral, and cultural. The following research questions guided the research:

Research Question One: What are the educational challenges faced by international teachers in classrooms in the United States?

Research Question Two: What are some behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in United States classrooms?

Research Question Three: How do the United States' cultural challenges compare to the cultural challenges in international teachers' home countries?

United States classrooms provide many experiences for international teachers who readily take the opportunity to teach in the United States. Experiences allow teachers to achieve personal and professional goals, which may lead to self-discovery and self-actualization

(Sivakumar, 2019). Self-discovery and self-actualization are dependent on individuals' desire and motivation to succeed (Masterson, 2018). Included in the following sections are data collection, data analysis and results, reliability and validity, and summary.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection in qualitative case studies is crucial to finding answers to research questions (Iyamu, 2018). Semi-structured interviews and field notes were the means of data collection. Eighteen international teachers received invitations to participate in the study. Of the 18 teachers invited to participate, 17 responded positively and agreed to participate. International teachers who agreed to participate received and signed voluntary informed consent forms. Informed consent forms are vital and are prerequisites for each subject's participation in the study (Manti & Licari, 2018). Signing the voluntary agreement confirms participant understanding of the research process, including the risks and benefits involved.

International teacher participants received informed consent forms. Consent forms informed participants about the study's purpose and procedures and potential risks and benefits, as well as protection of rights and integrity of participants (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2020). Risks included sharing and documenting participants' personal and confidential information. Potential benefits aided existing empirical studies by providing in-depth documented narratives and experiences of non-native teachers in United States classrooms.

Information outlined in consent forms provided sufficient detail to assist participants in making informed decisions about enrolling and contributing to the study (Pietrzykowski & Smilowska, 2021). Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants read consent forms, considered participation, and signed and returned consent forms. Collection of signed consent forms took place during week two of the research process. Participants signed

and returned informed consent forms via school-assigned email addresses within an allotted time. Assigning a member number upon receipt of informed consent forms to individual participants preserved anonymity. Participant member numbers ranged from P1 to P17. Table 1 documents pertinent background information about each participant.

**Table 1**

*Background Information*

Participant	Nationality	Years Teaching - Native Country	Years Teaching - United States	Subjects Taught - United States	Grades Taught - United States
P1	Jamaican	17	4	English Language Arts	High School (grades 9-12)
P2	Jamaican	9	4	Variety of Cate subjects (Accounting, Keyboarding, Management Studies, Office Administration)	High School (grades 9-12)
P3	Jamaican	17	5	A variety of subjects	Elementary (grades K–5)
P4	Jamaican	14	4	-Social Studies -History	High School (grades 9-12)
P5	Jamaican	17	6	-Social Studies -History	High School (grades 9-12)

Participant	Nationality	Years Teaching - Native Country	Years Teaching - United States	Subjects Taught - United States	Grades Taught - United States
P6	Indian	13	7	-Physics -Chemistry	High School (grades 9-12)
P7	Indian	15	7	Mathematics	High School (grades 9-12)
P8	Indian	11	9	Biology	High School (grades 9-12)
P9	Indian	14	8	Mathematics	High School (grades 9-12)
P10	Indian	14	8	Mathematics	Middle (grades 6-8)
P11	Jamaican	14	6	Variety of subjects	Elementary (grades K-5)
P12	Jamaican	10	5	Mathematics	Elementary (grades K-5)
P13	Jamaican	12	5	Mathematics	Middle (grades 6-8)
P14	Jamaican	15	5	Mathematics	Middle (grades 6-8)
P15	Indian	17	8	Special Education	Elementary (grades K-5)

Participant	Nationality	Years Teaching - Native Country	Years Teaching - United States	Subjects Taught - United States	Grades Taught - United States
P16	Indian	12	8	Special Education	Middle (grades 6-8)
P17	Jamaican	16	5	Mathematics	Middle (grades 6-8)

According to Natow (2020), semi-structured interviews, observations, and field notes used as data collection instruments yield vast amounts of information needed to draw conclusions regarding participants' experiences. Telephone and online connection were the two methods of data collection offered. Both mediums offered video and voice calls; participants selected voice calls for interviews, which took place over 1 month.

Seventeen interviews served as primary source of data. Throughout interviews, field notes served as complementary data. Interviews included questions on demographics, teaching experience, effects of teaching in United States classrooms, and recommendations to tentative international teachers, school officials, and recruiting agencies (see Appendix D).

### **Data Analysis and Results**

Analytic information included data obtained from interviews and field notes. NVivo software used code and coding technique to analyze data collected during interviews (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Data collected consisted of descriptive audio and notes of participants' experiences, which were converted to detailed analytic information. Using multiple methods of data collection ensured clear understanding of international teacher experiences (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Insertion of audio from interviews and field notes into NVivo software ensured

transcription, organization, and data analysis for emerging themes. Categorization of themes ensued, resulting in in-depth, organized, succinct, and straightforward information to answer research questions.

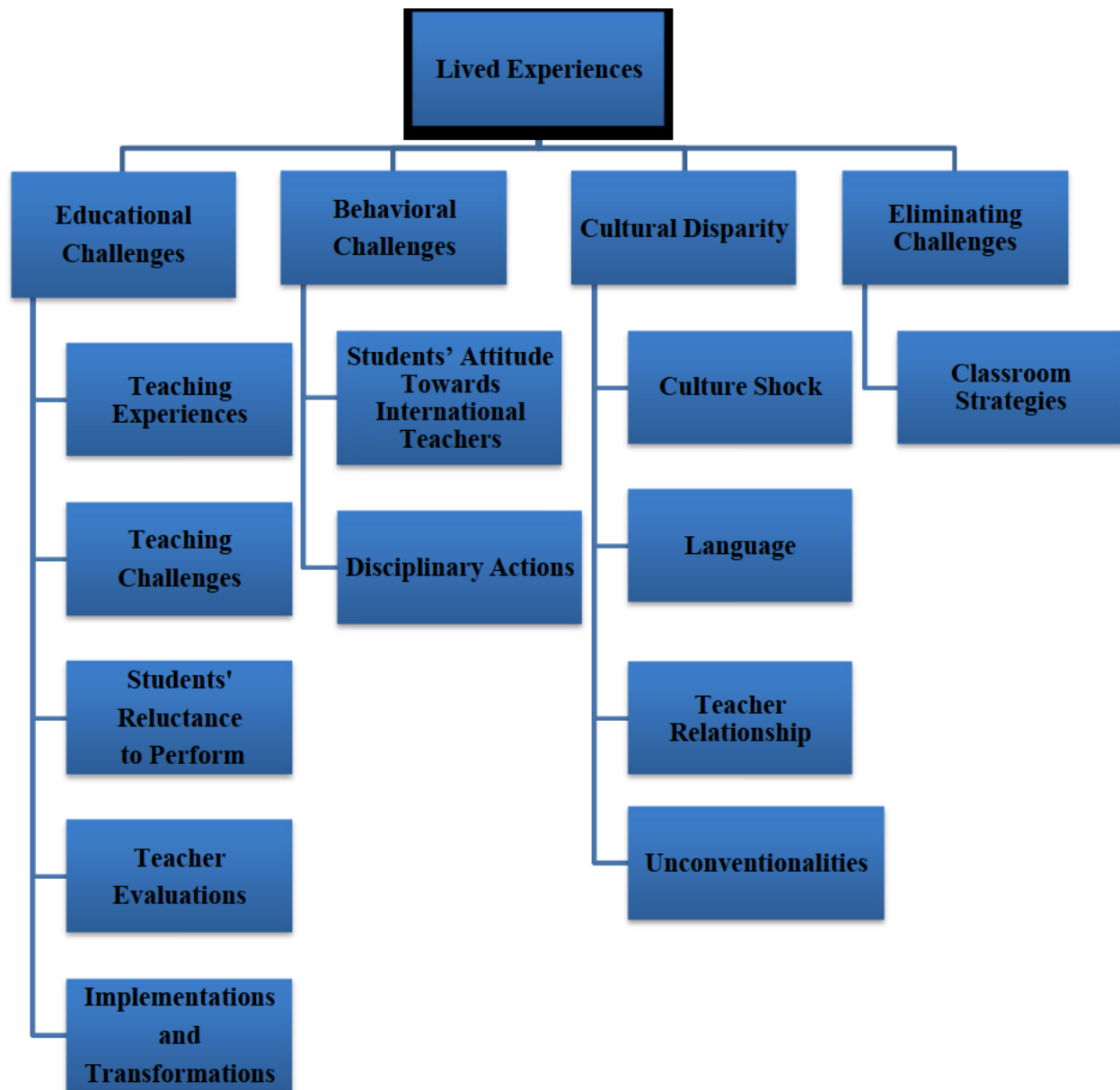
The following four sections outline the results of data analysis as displayed in Figure 2. The first three sections address each research question, while the remaining section provides classroom strategies to combat challenges. Section one discusses educational challenges international teachers face in classrooms in United States. The second section discusses behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in the United States classroom, and section three compares cultural challenges of international teachers' home countries to the United States. The final section discusses some classroom strategies teacher participants used to alleviate challenges encountered.

Data analysis yielded four categories, including educational challenges, behavioral challenges, cultural disparities, and eliminating challenges. Further analysis operationalized the categories, offering more details of teacher participants' lived experiences. Grouping operationalized details allowed categorically similar themes to emerge. Themes which emerged in the category of educational challenges included teaching experiences, teaching challenges, students' reluctance to perform, teacher evaluations, implementations, and transformations. Behavioral challenges included students' attitudes towards international teachers and disciplinary actions. Cultural disparities included culture shock, language, teacher relationships, and unconventionalities. Eliminating challenges included classroom strategies.



**Figure 2**

*Emergent Categories and Themes from In-depth Analysis of Data*



Emergent categories and themes discussed lived experiences of international teachers.

Details included participant direct quotes annotated verbatim from interview transcripts, as well as details from field notes. Direct quotes are reflective of the spoken language of participants and

may not reflect standard academic English. Participants' assigned numbers maintained anonymity.

### **Educational Challenges**

Research question one aimed at understanding educational challenges of international teachers in United States classrooms. In-depth analysis of the data revealed five emergent themes. Themes included 1) teaching experiences, 2) teaching challenges, 3) student reluctance to perform, 4) teacher evaluations, and 5) implementations and transformations.

#### ***Teaching Experiences***

In-depth analysis of data revealed the theme of teaching experiences. Teaching experiences correlate to students' achievements (Dreer, 2020). Researchers believe teachers become more experienced after being in classrooms for years, gaining opportunities to interact with resources, students, and technology (Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020). Interactions allow teachers to gain a wealth of information and knowledge which influence pedagogy. Gaining information and knowledge, meeting students daily, preparing instructional materials, delivering instruction, and evaluating performance are attributes of experienced teachers (Zhu, 2018).

While several participants agreed experience of teaching in United States classrooms had yielded many benefits, limitations far outweighed the benefits. One benefit common among participants was exposure to new and updated technology and resources. Technology employed in United States classrooms was more advantageous to both teachers and students. Participants reflected on technological advancements, various technologically based programs learned, and how the program lightened workloads. Participant P3 shared:

I have come to appreciate the education system here, but I will tell anybody at any point in time that the education system in my native land is better in my opinion than what exists here. From what I have seen here, I can appreciate the fact that there are far more resources here in America. The kids get exposed more, there are so many things that they are exposed to here, and the resources are a lot. When you talk about teacher-student ratio, it is nothing in comparison to what exists back home.

### ***Teaching Challenges***

International teacher participants were highly expressive when relating challenges faced in United States classrooms. All participants agreed international teachers experienced a lack of autonomy in the classroom. P6 expressed:

I have been teaching for thirteen years within my native country and seven years here in the United States and have not gained the privilege to teach the way I believe is suitable for the kind of students I get on a yearly basis.

Lack of professional independence and negotiations led to frustration, anger, and defeat in United States classrooms. Participants expressed having to use classroom strategies, methods, and approaches solely based on decisions and mandates from district personnel or administrators, resulting in a classroom which was “too robotic and lacks flexibility” and autonomy.

International teacher participants do not believe school officials value opinions and suggestions due to the lack of bargaining or consideration when teachers offer alternate pedagogical strategies and approaches. P7 explained:

There is not much autonomy in teaching here. You don't feel as though you're your own person, you're your own teacher, and that you are holding your own as a teacher here. It's like you feel that you are being dictated to and that they require everybody to teach a

particular way which is frustrating and defeats our purpose here. They do not understand that everybody has their own style, and every teacher brings something that is different. Everybody is unique. And, I mean, what you'd use or what you do to get your thing across is not the same as what somebody else would do. So, I don't think that they give the teachers a chance here to be themselves or to be autonomous in their teaching.

Teacher participants noted too many students with mixed ability levels were present in one classroom. Participants made particular reference to students on Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and students documented as needing special education. Classrooms with such diversity presented challenges in the classroom and affected teaching experience. Adopting and implementing a methodology for teaching mixed-ability classes was the most challenging and impactful responsibility for teachers. Challenges included 1) investing more time and energy in designing lesson plans with individualized activities daily, 2) re-teaching topics due to disruptions and lack of or slow understanding, 3) using test scores to determine instruction, and 4) learning management and organizational skills beyond pedagogical skills. Participants repeatedly sighed when describing teaching challenges.

Several participants suggested enrolling students in specific schools, similar to steps taken in native countries. These schools were specially and specifically for students in need of specialized assistance. They hire experts in specialized areas and utilize resources, strategies, and assessments necessary to assist each student. P2 and P16 explained respectively:

Sometimes when they are integrating the ones with the IEPs and other accommodations, it can be challenging when you have to be dealing with all of those different kinds of students. I think they should have somewhere else to go, and then there should be a spesh ed [special education] teacher to specifically deal with them, and we assist. It was more like that before,

but now they are integrating them in the classroom, and it is becoming a challenge for me because I am not a spesh ed [special education] teacher, and sometimes I don't know how to get through to some of the students. (P2)

It is really challenging catering to the different abilities within the class. Many times, the focus is on them and trying to get them to understand and perform. As a matter of fact, I am still struggling to find the best teaching methods that will work for some of these students. The regular student population is usually left to do "independent" work and needs assistance too. I am not at all trained to deal with students who fall into these categories. The special education teacher is supposed to assist. However, having only one special ed teacher with such a magnitude of work and a number of students in need of assistance makes it almost impossible for the teacher to attend the classes and assist. (P16)

### ***Students' Reluctance to Perform***

Several participants noted students' carefree attitude towards learning. According to participants, it is highly frustrating and daunting to get students to take responsibility for learning and success. International teacher participants noted within the United States system, teachers are under immense pressure to ensure all students pass, which always results in students receiving grades for work not done or for incomplete activities. P15 described teachers' pedagogy as the focus of scrutiny if a student failed:

We are the ones who are held responsible for students' failures. Way too much emphasis is placed on teachers' pedagogy. The students are certainly not held accountable. If a student fails a test or exam, that teacher is held responsible and has to re-teach until the student passes. If another student fails a subject, that subject teacher has to show all the routes taken to prove that all channels were exhausted to ensure that the student did not

fail. Teachers have to give additional or "make up" work, call parents, hold conferences, and speak to guidance counselors, among other things, before we can safely say the student has failed the course.

One participant noted Jamaican students are serious about education and take responsibility for successes. When compared to students in United States classrooms, the attitudes and approaches to learning are dissimilar. Participants described having students who do not take exams or classwork seriously and display nonchalant attitudes towards failing grades. P2 shared:

It is too easy for students to get by. They don't put out a lot of effort because what happens is they know that, well let me put it this way, they are not going to be failed if they don't work hard because administrators are going to take up for them to say ok you cannot fail the child because of so and so and so. It has gotten worse. I have to be preaching every day, especially to the juniors and seniors who are busy working.

Sometimes there is nothing to be marked or graded for the students because they have not done any work. They know that people are going to back them because it's like you can't fail them. You must do something to pass them. Give them some work, give them some little easy make-up work, and pass them.

### ***Teacher Evaluations***

Participants shared teacher evaluations as an educational challenge faced within the United States classroom. Based on past knowledge and experience, one participant indicated teacher evaluations should be formal and constructive. Administrators observe and rate teachers' performance and effectiveness within the classroom. These ratings should provide constructive

feedback to teachers and guide professional development. P14 expressed what actually occurs as a teacher in United States classrooms:

In my country, teachers are evaluated less often or none at all as they gain experience and promotions as the years progress. In fact, you know when you are scheduled for evaluation, time, and date. It is certainly not so here in the American classroom. Teachers are evaluated more than five times per year and their qualifications and experiences do not speak for anything. When administrators enter the classroom, I feel intimidated and uneasy because sometimes the team consists of ten or more people. Principals and assistant principals from all schools, elementary, middle, and high, superintendent, instructional leaders at the district and school level, amongst others, barge into the class to "observe". It is just too much, just too much. They don't knock or acknowledge the teacher or students. They just walk in, take seats and that's it. In fact, often, no feedback or professional development based on observations is given. This would never happen back home.

### ***Implementations and Transformations***

International teacher participants had differing views relating to implementing and transforming different programs used in the classroom. One participant at the elementary level noted implementations were too many and were constantly changing. Another participant at the high school level suggested some implementations were not yielding results but remained in use yearly. According to participants, lack of assessment of programs used is one of several factors contributing to discrepancies. P6 at the elementary level relates:

There is no stamina, no stamina at all. I learned that from the first year I came here. For example, they will say we will be using this strategy for reading. For example, we are

using KWL strategy, and they learn a new strategy next week. They want to drop that strategy that they just tell you about and use this new one. Then as soon as you start using the new one, they find something else, "oh, this is research-based, let's drop that." So, this is two now we are dropping. So, it's like that, and it has been like that since I am here. Nothing has changed as it relates to stamina and getting the kids to get used to one strategy or one program.

P10 at the high school level noted:

Some programs used are old and outdated and need to change. Some of them are not even being used. When I came here, there were teachers who were not using an online text bought by the district over some ten years. These teachers were still using the outdated texts with the students in this time of technology.

### **Behavioral Challenges**

The second research question focused on gaining international teachers' lived experiences relating to behavioral challenges experienced in United States classrooms. Asking international teacher participants to reflect on behavioral challenges resulted in the emergence of two themes. Themes included student attitudes toward international teachers and disciplinary actions.

#### ***Students' Attitude Towards International Teachers***

Analysis of the data revealed students' attitudes towards international teachers was the predominant behavioral challenge experienced by international teacher participants. Teachers' expectation is for students to show respect at all times to teachers or any adult. P12 highlighted:

I'm not sure if it is the international status that I have which causes the students to respond to me differently. I hope that is not the case because usually, students show high levels of respect for teachers or leaders within the schools. However, it is different here.



Students show scant regard for teachers, which surprised me. Not to mention the leaders, they [students] don't even acknowledge them at times.

In response, P4 explained students with no cultural experiences or exposure to culture are less aware of cultures outside the United States. Students tend to be insensitive to international teachers. Insensitive and unmindful behaviors towards international teachers were cause for concern and may result from limited cultural knowledge. P4 shared:

When I just came here in the middle school, I heard some boys talking about an immigrant teacher. When I pulled a little closer, the remarks I heard was that they [international teachers] don't come from nowhere, and I heard when the student said, "You don't see that they are from India and India don't even have any running water." So, I said, "What where you get that from?" So even some of the kids, in their minds because they hear the word immigrant, they feel and have all kinds of stereotypes in their minds.

P4 continued to describe similar ideas held by leaders who believe international teachers are inadequate, underutilized teachers who lack expertise, qualifications, and passes. P4 seemed angered when describing the ideology held by leaders. Anger was detected in the increased intonation and sternness of P4's voice when responding.

International teacher participants related how students' attitudes tend to be disrespectful towards them. Disrespectful attitudes included not being afraid to talk back, fight, or curse in front of leadership, being unresponsive when spoken to, and not taking responsibility for unwanted behaviors. P15, a native of India, explained:

The level of respect we get from the students is totally different from what we are accustomed to. We are mocked on a daily basis, especially when the students do not want to hear what we have to say. They speak down to us and blatantly disrespect us without

any remorse. Back home, there is a greater respect for teachers, peers, and any other structure that exists in the classroom.

P2 described initial thoughts about the students' behaviors upon entering the system:

Well, initially for me, when I just came here [America], it was so difficult because I just couldn't get why the kids were so out of control. The kids had no respect for anyone.

They talk back to us, and they are easily offended. We have to monitor our tones and what we say to these students instead of them having to monitor their tones and language.

I was even threatened once by a child because I reprimanded her. They just don't have any respect for anyone.

### ***Disciplinary Action***

Disciplinary action is another theme which emerged from data analysis. International teacher participants responded similarly to questions about discipline in the classroom.

According to participants, when compared to native countries, discipline in the United States classroom is a lengthy process which requires multiple steps before issuing consequences for unacceptable behaviors. Discipline is not immediate and often leads to other behavioral challenges. Many times, the unwanted behavior goes unpunished because of the length of disciplinary processes. P17 noted:

Getting students punished is such a lengthy process. Because of that, I don't bother to report some of the issues I have within the classroom. The issues I cannot help but to report are like fights because disruptions of this nature are dealt with immediately. Other not so "major" issues like cursing out the teacher have to go through a step-by-step process. Calling parents, one-on-one conference, parent conference, conference with

guidance counselors, and the list goes on. At the end of all these processes, the student is just spoken to or warned. Sometimes I even forget what the misdemeanor was.

One of the main challenges international teachers face is dealing with students with behavior issues. Behaviors may affect teaching and learning and students' success (Yassine et al., 2020). P13 explained possible reasons students in United States classrooms sometimes display unwanted or inappropriate behaviors:

Students are not held accountable for their actions. Students do not bear any responsibility for their disrespectful behaviors. These behaviors are always excusable. I have had situations where students became so irate because I would not allow the use of cellphones in my class, the playing of music while working, shifting talkative students away from each other, and so on. When they are reported or "referred" the excuses start, "Oh they didn't have any breakfast this morning," "Oh they are having premenstrual syndrome," "Oh they are having boyfriend or girlfriend issues," no excuse of substance for me to reconsider or feel empathetic about. However, students use these excuses all the time as reasons for their insolence to us. The funny thing is that administrators are always allowing them to get away with it by telling them to apologize. Then nothing changes. They go right back to their old behaviors.

### **Cultural Disparity**

Cultural disparity aims to answer the third research question. In-depth analysis grouped international teacher participants' experiences in the category of cultural disparity. Continued analysis allowed for formulation of several themes fitting the category. Participants recounted encounters deemed to be cultural and made comparisons to native countries via emergent

themes. Participants' comparisons related to culture shock, language, teacher relationship, and unconventionalities.

### ***Culture Shock***

Culture shock emerged as in-depth analysis of data progressed. Individuals relocate to different countries and experience feelings of excitement, interest, aggression, frustration, irritation, depression, and anger (Adeniyi & Onyeukwu, 2021). Feelings may be symptoms of culture shock.

Participants described experiencing culture shock upon entering United States classrooms. Although being a non-native did not pose any difficulties in terms of teachers' pedagogical skills, the classroom culture presented some unexpected issues. One such issue all international teacher participants spoke of was becoming voiceless. According to participants, voicelessness referred to participants' inability to voice concerns, suggestions, opinions, and feelings openly. Inability to have a voice has affected participants. Effects included fewer interactions with students and staff, accepting disagreeable suggestions, and becoming silent in meetings. Participants explained voiced concerns, suggestions, opinions, and feelings did not yield favorable outcomes due to lack of acceptance as well as lack of implementation in classrooms. Instead, participants experienced "repercussions and backlashes for speaking out."

P1 explained:

I use to be a vocal person back home and here when I just started. I was someone who was not afraid to express myself in meetings, to colleagues, or on any other platforms. I wanted to share my best practices and know-hows with admin [administrators] and my newfound American colleagues. However, this did not go as intended because I began to experience instances where my practices, approaches, methods, and so on in the

classroom were belittled and dismissed. The suggestions made by other immigrant teachers and myself are yet to materialize. I have witnessed instances when immigrant colleagues disagreed with admin [administrators] and were ostracized and pressured more because of the disagreement. If it is not their way, it is no way. Many of us have resorted to being silent in meetings and so on. When they ask for suggestions, I tell them I don't have any or I'm still in the process of thinking.

Another culturally shocking experience highlighted was the lack of a study culture among students. Traditionally, teachers instruct, and students study in preparation for examinations, tests, and benchmarks, which determine success or failure. International teacher participants found this tradition lacking within United States classrooms. Participants believed students need to develop revision skills to boost independence, confidence, competence, and self-esteem.

Improving students' ability to learn, understand, and retain knowledge were three benefits international teachers suggested. In native countries, participants described the students as consistently preparing and reviewing for tests and exams unlike students within United States classrooms. According to some participants, preparation and review of concepts taught have caused many students to succeed. P5 explained:

One major problem that I have always had is that there is a lack of study culture. I don't see how students can do well without studying. The students do not study. This is not limited to only my classroom, but it is a school-wide issue as well.

P13 recounted another cultural experience seemed culturally perplexing. Perplexity resulted from significant cultural differences observed. Observations, according to P13, revealed differences in culture, which was a notable experience. P13 described:

I could not get use to the fact that you had to be walking around with students twenty-four-seven like you're police. I have to escort students to the lunchroom pretty much every day. When you get to the lunchroom, you have to stand around, watch, and wait until they finish eating to line them up again to take them back to the classroom. I mean I do not know if there are any schools in Jamaica that does that. In Jamaica, the kids are given like one hour, and when that bell rings, everybody go outside, they buy their lunch and move around, and you hardly ever hear about an incident of fight or fuss. Here it is like you are policing children twenty-four-seven and even while you are policing them, as long as you go to the lunchroom for most days, there is a fight.

### *Language*

Language is another theme which emerged from continued analysis of the data. Differences in language between international teacher participants and students situated language in the category of cultural disparity. Accentuation, speech rate, and word variations were three areas of language participants found culturally different. Participants termed accentuation as language unique to native lands and distinct in pronunciation, speech rate as the pace of spoken language, and word variations as differences in word choices which may be different in meaning and unique to the region. P8 explained:

During my first year here in the American classroom, a student asked me, "Where do you stay?" I did not understand what the student was asking until another student explained what he meant. That was unusual for me as an Indian native. They even use the words "y'all," "fenna," "fitten," which I had no clue of their meaning. For instance, I asked a student where she was going at the end of the class time, and she said, "Im fitten to go to the gym." I only understood because of the context in which the word was used.

Some participants found it funny and unusual to understand the uniqueness in language and students' inability to understand native language when participants spoke. P9 noted:

We know that the students are not able to understand our native language, so we often switch from standard English to our mother tongue. When the students hear us speaking, they would roll their tongues or talk some gibberish in an effort to mimic the language.

The students often say that we speak fast even if we speak standard English, but I believe that it is a result of the accent. So, I often have to slow down and enunciate clearly for them to understand when I am teaching.

### ***Teacher Relationship***

Teacher relationship is another cultural disparity international teacher participants experience. Developing and building strong teacher relationships with colleagues can be a rewarding experience. Rewards include 1) creating meaningful friendships; 2) gaining and offering support, trust, and respect; 3) working collaboratively; and 4) promoting and maintaining a conducive work environment.

International teacher participants expressed how difficult it was to build relationships with other teachers. Socialization among teachers was lacking, according to some participants, which was unusual for them. Participants reported having healthy relationships with native colleagues, but socializing and building healthy professional relationships with colleagues in United States classrooms were challenging due to heavy workload and insufficient time. P14 explained:

As it relates to teacher relationship, I realize that it is difficult to create a bond with other teachers not because they are not willing but because time does not allow. There is not sufficient time for teachers to socialize based on how the system is structured. For

instance, back home, everybody has lunchtime together, and so we would get the time to socialize. During lunchtime back home, we didn't have that responsibility of monitoring students, so you were able to socialize with your coworkers and get to know them, and they get to know you. However, here, any free period you have, there is always something to do. It is like there is no downtime at all. You go in to work, and you are working for the whole day. Additionally, back home, we are housed in a large staffroom, not in our individual classes like it is here. So even that allowed us to socialize and spend time with our peers.

### *Unconventionalities*

Participants highlighted several unconventional cultural differences experienced while teaching in the United States classroom. Unconventionalities included unusual customs, extensive hours and workloads, frequent changes in lesson plan structure, high attrition rate, and remuneration. Participants described these factors as perplexing and unimaginable because duties extend beyond the scope of teaching, and norms differ significantly across cultures. Through unfolding experiences, participants revealed the extent and effect of each factor. P14 explained:

In my country, the same hour that the students get to eat, teachers get the same hours as well. However, because of having to constantly watch the students here, some teachers have to be watching and eating. I come here and see teachers walking with their plates or their little lunch bags eating while watching students in the lunchroom for their 25 minutes. I refuse to do it because to me, that is so disrespectful to have an educator coming in to work and can't even get half an hour quiet to sit down and have lunch. You have to be literally walking with your lunch, eating while policing students.



Researchers suggested remuneration affects teacher retention (Hester et al., 2020). High teacher salary increases the possibility of teachers staying in the teaching profession.

Opportunities outside of teaching often encourage individuals to leave the teaching profession because of higher wages. P1 described the experience with attrition and remuneration:

Throughout my first year, so many teachers threatened to leave the American classroom, and the main reason was due to the salary. I have never experienced teachers leaving the institution in the middle of the school year or after one semester as I did here. Teachers in my country spend 20, 30, 40 years in the classroom and even retire at 60. Here I was surprised at how teachers just come and go as they please. I think teacher salary everywhere is poor, but back home, the benefits we got as teachers far supersede what we get here. As a matter of a fact, we don't get anything here as teachers but work, work, and more work. The salary I get here is poor, especially if I have to spend it here.

### **Eliminating Challenges**

Eliminating challenges emerged from continued in-depth analysis of the data. Classroom challenges are problems teachers face, which may impede teaching and learning (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2021). For some teachers, eliminating challenges is quick and immediate, but elimination is more often a time-consuming process (Ayaz & Karacan Özdemir, 2021).

Classroom strategies international teacher participants used to eliminate challenges emerged from analysis. Participants stressed the use of applied strategies was not universal and varied from one student to another and from one level to another. Students' varied behaviors did not allow for the use of structured pre-formulated school and classroom rules governing discipline.

*Classroom Strategies*

Participants employed various strategies to mitigate challenges faced in United States classrooms. Strategies included studying students' behaviors, building relationships, offering tangible rewards, ignoring certain behaviors, and giving stern looks. Calling parents, celebrating students, introducing students to different cultures, learning about students' cultures, and using online resources were common strategies used by participants. P3 noted:

I have to find ways to make on-the-spot combat decisions when it comes to the behaviors because they come in different forms, and you have to find ways to deal with it. I study the behaviors of the children, look how they act, see what they like to do. Once I get to know them, I build a relationship with them. I sometimes treat them, bring them little goodies that I know they like, and when I do stuff like that, they get the impression or feeling that you care. Give them quality things that will show them that you care. Sometimes I would call and check on them just to show that you care and to develop a bond. Sometimes I give them a stern look. When you give them that look and ignore, it work for a moment for some students and sometimes it don't work. But when the behavior confronts you, you just think up a fast one and see how it works because there is no set strategy that you can say yes, this one will work today.

**Reliability and Validity**

Establishing reliability and validity through in-depth data analysis ensures trustworthy research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Trustworthiness determines the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research. Coding of participants' experiences from interviews and field notes identified categories and themes. Identification of categories and themes operationalized credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the

research. Operationalization of each term ensured answering each research question through international teacher participants' verbatim and annotated narratives and experiences.

### **Credibility**

Structuring analyzed data according to each research question ensured answering each question and supporting the credibility of the study. Using several methods, including triangulation, peer review, identification and explanation of research bias, and robust descriptions established research credibility. In triangulating data, international teacher participants engaged in interviews until saturation occurred. Throughout the interview process, jottings for field notes ensued. Information collected from interviews and field notes converged during the coding process to produce categories and themes. Identifying, explaining, and describing each category and theme based solely on participants' experiences ensured the research credibility.

### **Transferability**

Carrying out the process of explicitly explaining data analysis, including data coding, triangulation, debriefing, and documentation, ensured study findings were transferable to similar contexts. Rich, detailed descriptions of the research process support duplication and application of research procedures to other international teachers in similar contexts. Through thick, in-depth descriptions, potential researchers will be able to transfer the study to similar locations, contexts, and participants.

### **Dependability**

Details and procedures outlined are in alignment with the research methodology. Email invitations invited international teacher participants to participate in the study. Respondents to email received information regarding the interview process, signing of informed consent forms,

and schedule for the interviews. Participants who signed and returned consent forms received a member number. Interviews followed. Interviews and field notes converged via analysis of data using code and coding techniques. Categories and themes emerged from the analysis, which documented the lived experiences of international teacher participants.

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability of the research study findings, an audit trail followed the collection and analysis of data. An audit trail ensured research findings are solely those drawn from the participants' responses, narratives, and experiences instead of preconceptions and biases of others. An in-depth audit trail gave transparent, detailed description of data collection and analysis and eliminated biases. Data collected and analyzed for accuracy and precision guaranteed the recording of actual and authentic experiences of international teacher participants.

### **Summary**

Conducting a study on international teachers' experiences in United States classrooms made a significant contribution to the literature and has built on existing knowledge. Three research questions provided the basis for exploring international teachers' lived experiences. Results and analysis connected analysis to each research question. Seventeen international teacher participants participated in this qualitative case study. All participants were international teachers with at least 1 year of teaching in the United States and a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience. Each participant revealed experiences encountered in United States classrooms through semi-structured interviews. Understanding each participant's lived experiences required carrying out interviews until saturation occurred. Field notes collected throughout interview process complemented and enhanced data gathered from interviews.

Secure computerized software NVivo transcribed, organized, and analyzed data from interviews and field notes through code and coding techniques. Through analysis, categories and themes emerged. Categories included educational challenges, behavioral challenges, cultural disparities, and eliminating challenges. Further analysis deconstructed each category into themes. Educational challenges included teaching experiences, teaching challenges, students' reluctance to perform, teacher evaluations, and implementations and transformations. Behavioral challenges included students' attitudes towards international teachers and disciplinary actions. Cultural disparities included culture shock, language, teacher relationships, and unconventionalities. Eliminating challenges were limited to classroom strategies. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability ensured reliability and validity of the research.

Analysis of each category presented critical findings regarding pedagogy, behavior, culture, and strategies. Findings suggested the need to expand understanding the challenges encountered to continue to build on existing knowledge. Experiences captured ensured knowledge and application regarding the phenomenon under study will extend to other areas in similar contexts through added research. Capturing the lived experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms was significantly needed exploration because of the knowledge gap in the literature. Continued exploration of this phenomenon will allow more genuine experiences to emerge. The final Chapter 5 provides discussion and conclusions.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers' first year in United States classrooms in South Carolina, including educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges. Reports and findings from previous chapters shed light on international teacher participants' experiences through robust descriptions and narratives guided by the following research questions:

Research Question One: What are the educational challenges faced by international teachers in classrooms in the United States?

Research Question Two: What are some behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in United States classrooms?

Research Question Three: How do the United States' cultural challenges compare to the cultural challenges in international teachers' home countries'?

Analysis of international teacher participants' experiences resulted in descriptions and narratives in four categories. Further analysis revealed themes within each category. Categories and attendant themes were as follows: a) educational challenges - teaching experiences, teaching challenges, students' reluctance to perform, teacher evaluations, implementations, and transformations; b) behavioral challenges - student attitudes toward international teachers and disciplinary actions; c) cultural disparity - culture shock, language, teacher relationship, and unconventionalities; and d) eliminating challenges - strategies. Headings and subheadings included in the chapter are: a) major findings, interpretations and conclusions – theoretical implications (Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Bruner's discovery learning theory); educational experiences; personal and professional experiences; teaching experience and challenges –

classroom autonomy, classroom diversity and response to classroom diversity; behavioral experiences; disciplinary actions - effects of disciplinary actions; eliminating challenges; cultural experiences – culturally shocking events; language experience; building relationships; unconventional experiences; b) limitations; c) recommendations – tentative international teachers, education officials and policymakers, international recruiting agencies; d) implications for leadership; and e) conclusions.

### **Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions**

The experiences shared by international teacher participants varied. An analysis of experiences resulted in emergent categories and themes. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions emerged from analysis of themes reflective of the historical literature. Analysis of the findings revealed international teacher participants' contributions to existing knowledge through detailed narratives and personal experiences. A theoretical framework addressing self-actualization and discovery learning plus prior research contextualized the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Analysis and interpretation revealed discoveries and participants' experiences in United States classrooms.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Jerome Bruner's (1961) discovery learning theories guided the study. Maslow suggested individuals are motivated by fulfillment of needs. Fulfilling needs meant individuals accomplished all levels of Maslow's hierarchy (Shaughnessy et al., 2018). Accomplishing all levels and fulfilling all needs suggests achievement of Maslow's highest hierarchical level of self-actualization.

***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs***

Maslow's hierarchy followed a rigid pattern and outlined need levels individuals must achieve from lower levels to higher levels. Levels included psychological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-fulfillment needs or self-actualization. Achieving self-actualization meant an individual had to satisfy all previous needs. Moving towards the final level of self-actualization was dependent on the fulfillment of previous levels (Kumar et al., 2020).

Study findings suggested satisfaction of needs motivated individuals to achieve professional and personal goals. Based on international teacher participants' experiences, needs included receiving an excellent salary; an excellent working environment; gaining rewards; voicing suggestions, concerns, opinions, and feelings openly; and gaining classroom autonomy, recognition, and the ability to build meaningful relationships. According to Maslow (1943), fulfilling such needs allowed individuals to grow, develop, and self-actualize. International teacher participants expressed discontentment because of unmet needs, indicating participants had not self-actualized.

Study findings disproved Maslow's hierarchical rigidity. Maslow's hierarchy suggested individuals must achieve a lower level before attaining the next level (Shaughnessy et al., 2018). Alignment of findings to Maslow's hierarchical structure indicated international teachers' experiences did not fall within Maslow's rigid hierarchical structure, which suggested Maslow's hierarchy may be flexible.

Needs suggested by international teacher participants were essential for growth, development, and self-actualization in new educational environments (Kumar et al., 2020). According to the findings, international teacher participants did not need to fulfill Maslow's



levels of physiological and safety needs of the hierarchy before achieving personal and professional needs relating to belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Findings suggested physiological, and safety needs were not prerequisites for international teacher participants' zeal to achieve belongingness, esteem, and, ultimately, self-actualization.

### ***Bruner's Discovery Learning Theory***

International teacher participants seemed to gain much information through observations while carrying out mandated roles and responsibilities. Carrying out roles and responsibilities allowed participants to formulate new knowledge about the United States education system and classrooms. Acquiring new knowledge based on experiences enabled and supported participants in discovery, as posited by Jerome Bruner (1961).

Bruner (1961) defined discovery as gaining new and valuable information, not absorbing others' thoughts, ideas, and speech. Teacher participants described becoming voiceless and having to absorb all directives and suggestions from district personnel and school administrators, irrespective of participants' differences of opinions. Aligning findings to Bruner's theory disproved Bruner's theory because international teacher participants' experiences did not add or provide discoveries of value participants might store for future use in making connections and solving problems (Bruner, 1965). Experiences international teacher participants faced may add to existing knowledge but will not provide discoveries of value or information. Nor will experiences promote self-fulfillment or self-actualization.

### **Educational Experiences**

International teacher participants' educational experiences in United States classrooms raised questions regarding connections among cultural awareness, teaching methods, teacher performance, and student performance. According to current research, students' learning habits

and cultural diversity developed due to interaction with culturally responsive teachers and resources (Sleeter, 2018). Culturally responsive instructors recognized and respected diversity in cultures and worked towards bridging existing pedagogical gaps (Aslan, 2019). Studies revealed teacher qualities (i.e., attributes and cultural responses) as essential to closing existing gaps (Sleeter, 2018).

Participants noted unexpected differences in educational practices adopted in United States classrooms. Differences included sufficient and adequate resources, new and updated technology, and decreased student-teacher ratios as critical for 21st-century classrooms, as corroborated by Richter et al. (2019). Although participants highlighted sufficient and adequate resources, new and updated technology, and student-teacher ratio as beneficial, limitations superseded benefits. Limitations challenged international teacher participants and affected pedagogical skills.

### **Personal and Professional Experience**

International teachers strive to gain personal and professional experience as documented in current research (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Intrinsically motivated, teacher participants migrated for several reasons. Reasons included increasing knowledge, gaining experience, and improving skills (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016). Benefits and limitations described by international teacher participants were increased knowledge, experience, skills, and heightened cultural awareness.

Study results suggested instructors acculturate to new cultural contexts to become teachers and consumers of culture, adding to participants' personal and professional growth and development. The acculturation process broadened teacher participants' perspectives and respect for education in and out of native lands. Learning about students' cultural foundations allowed

teacher participants to appreciate and adapt to the United States educational environment and deliver the content necessary for student success.

### **Teaching Experience and Challenges**

Teacher participants experienced a sense of inequality among international teachers and native teachers. Stevens et al. (2019) confirmed native United States teachers and immigrant teachers had different ideologies and opinions in United States classrooms, which influenced students' responses. Participants reported differences in students' responses to international teachers and native teachers. Differences in students' responses as expressed by international teacher participants differed from students' responses presented in the literature. According to international teacher participants, students' responses indicated a lack of cultural awareness. Teachers perceived the absence of cultural awareness and exposure to different teaching methodologies and approaches contributed to students' poor attitudes and disrespect for participants.

Findings suggested teacher participants gain a wealth of information, knowledge, and skills through experiences in United States classrooms. As interactions occur within the United States educational environment, teacher participants formulated new knowledge from experiences and challenges, leading to several discoveries such as an appreciation for global education and availability of resources within United States classrooms.

### ***Classroom Autonomy***

Lindqvist (2019) asserted challenges teachers encounter in classrooms are global and varied. Lack of classroom autonomy was one major challenge expressed by international teacher participants, which is undocumented in current literature. Challenges in United States classrooms altered international teachers' pedagogical approaches and methodology drastically. Required

adherence to strategies and approaches dictated by district personnel or administrators implied a lack of trust in teachers' expertise in the classroom and a lack of respect for suggestions and opinions offered.

Lack of classroom autonomy characterized international teacher participants' treatment as professionals and affected job satisfaction. International teacher participants' expressions of dissatisfaction included a) being voiceless; b) feeling frustrated, angry, and defeated; and c) completing mandates and non-negotiable requirements without having input. Dissatisfactions were suggestive of teachers' lack of personal and professional growth, development, and fulfilled needs. Maslow theorized teachers fulfill self-actualization needs when conditions are satisfied (Maslow, 1943).

### *Classroom Diversity*

Diverse classrooms are not new in the United States education system. Research on diversity problems in United States education has focused on both public and private schools experiencing an influx of students of diverse backgrounds and abilities (Nulhakim et al., 2020). Enrolling students of diverse backgrounds and abilities prompted the inclusion of international teachers in the United States education system (Hymel & Katz, 2019). Undocumented in current literature, international teacher participants offered varying perspectives on applying and changing various programs utilized in the classroom to accommodate diversity. One participant at the primary level suggested fewer implementations for extended periods, while another high school participant advocated removal of unproductive implementations.

International teacher participants found adopting and executing methods and techniques for instructing mixed-ability students to be complex. According to teacher participants, too many students with varying abilities, skills, or levels were present in each classroom. Participants

referenced students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and students identified as requiring special education, which created difficulties and negatively affected teacher participants' teaching experience.

### ***Response to Classroom Diversity***

Teachers always had to meet students' needs because of an increase in cultural diversity and mixed abilities in United States classrooms. Findings suggested international teacher participants were under immense pressure searching for effective methods to react to cultural diversity and students with mixed abilities. Immense pressure resulted from responsibilities placed on teachers to ensure students succeeded regardless of students' academic abilities, skills, or levels. Responsibilities included differentiated instruction, accountability, knowledge of the relationship between culture and learning, and proper attitudes toward diversity.

Despite limited current research on culture relating to accountability, previous studies have established various models for educators to examine and understand cultural aspects of teaching and learning (Razzaque et al., 2021). One structure arising from findings but unconfirmed in the literature focused on variables at home. Variables affected students' thoughts and behaviors at school. International teacher participants suggested knowledge of students' thoughts and behaviors outside the school environment may foster better relationships and enable improved instruction, behavior, and learning.

### **Behavioral Experiences**

Educators experience behavioral issues worldwide, whether as veterans or first-timers in classrooms (Abrahams et al., 2019). Gaias et al. (2019) suggested one main obstacle teachers encountered was classroom management of students' behaviors. Literature has indicated

behavioral issues are prominent among international teachers due to teachers' lack of training (Weizheng, 2019).

The behaviors international teacher participants encountered in United States classrooms added to undesirable behaviors described and listed in historical literature. International teacher participants described students' attitudes and behaviors as rude, undesirable, and irresponsible. Students' attitudes and behaviors, according to participants, specifically included not being afraid to talk back, fighting, or cursing in front of leadership; being unresponsive when spoken to; and not taking responsibility for undesirable behaviors.

International teacher participants believed students' inappropriate behaviors resulted from minimal to complete lack of cultural experiences or exposure to different cultures. Students with a lack of cultural experience may be less sensitive to teachers' cultural differences, which may be detrimental to teaching and learning. Some students thrived on learning and experiencing culture from others, including international teachers. International teachers may use students' interest in knowing about cultures to develop cultural competencies. Schools may consider cultural competencies as essential components in developing and increasing cultural awareness among staff and students.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

Literature defined discipline as a primary responsibility of teachers to curb or alleviate undesirable behaviors (Wehby & Lane, 2019). Musa and Martha (2020) posited classroom discipline correlated to students' success and educational opportunities. Researchers over the years have developed and offered several strategies to help with classroom discipline (Nagro et al., 2019). Disciplinary strategy, according to the literature, included ClassWide Function-

Related Intervention Teams (CW-FIT), Color Wheel System, and evidence-based strategies (Nelson et al., 2018).

International teacher participants emphasized the length of the process of administering disciplinary actions to students as problematic. Process length resulted from multiple steps taken before issuing consequences for inappropriate behaviors and actions. Inappropriate behaviors and actions went unpunished because of delays in the disciplinary process.

### ***Effects of Disciplinary Actions***

Reasons students provided to justify undesirable behaviors and actions differed from literature. According to international teacher participants, administrators and school leaders were responsible for the continuation of such behaviors. International teacher participants suggested administrators allowed students opportunities to justify undesirable behaviors, which added inconsistencies and delays in curbing and alleviating inappropriate behaviors. Findings indicated student reasons ranged from hunger to premenstrual syndrome and relationship issues.

Administrators or school leaders failed to hold students accountable for displaying insolent and undesirable behavior, so students formulated various reasons and excuses for displaying such behaviors. Undesirable behaviors suggested students were manipulative and abusing existing disciplinary systems in the school. International teacher participants reported when students manipulated administrators or abused existing disciplinary systems, consequences were usually ineffective and addressed merely by students apologizing to teachers.

### **Eliminating Challenges**

Strategies teachers used to eliminate classroom challenges were uncorroborated in current literature. International teacher participants used self-created strategies to eliminate challenges. Self-created strategies allowed participants to address and correct undesired behaviors and

actions within classrooms. Application of strategies was not universal; strategies differed from student to student and level to level. Strategies included a) studying students' behaviors, b) building relationships, c) offering tangible rewards, d) ignoring certain behaviors, e) giving stern looks, f) calling parents, g) celebrating students, h) introducing students to different cultures, i) learning about students' cultures, and j) using online resources. Employing strategies enabled international teacher participants to control students' undesirable classroom behaviors and actions to some degree.

### **Cultural Experiences**

Cultural experiences teacher participants shared suggested a need to understand and accept existing cultural differences in education and in classrooms. Literature indicated understanding and accepting cultural differences increased cultural competence and intelligence (Esfehiani & Albrecht, 2019). Being culturally competent and intelligent enabled educators to determine teaching methods and approaches, as well as students' learning styles (Arshavskaya, 2018). Findings suggested international teacher participants yearned for educational institutions to transform classrooms into culturally acceptable learning environments for students and teachers from different cultures in preparation for a multicultural society.

### ***Culturally Shocking Events***

International teacher participants described experiencing culturally shocking events in United States classrooms. Culturally shocking events, according to literature, posed difficulties for immigrant teachers due to unfamiliar settings and conditions (Abazi, 2019). According to White (2017), immigrant teachers experienced embarrassment, fear, and depression, affecting relationships among staff and students.



For international teacher participants, culturally shocking events were different. Results included becoming voiceless, dealing with students' perceptions about studying, and monitoring students consistently. Becoming voiceless was significant and a concern for participants. Participants described an inability to voice concerns, exhibit best practices, and demonstrate skills due to resulting consequences, including rejections, repercussions, backlashes, belittlement, and increased workload from administrators. Effects of such treatment from administrators led to decreased interactions between students and staff, acceptance of marginal suggestions, and, as noted, a voiceless state.

Teachers are essential in classrooms globally and are active participants in teaching and learning (Adebayo, 2020). Stakeholders and principals gain support and trust by considering teachers' ideas (Kaso et al., 2021). Principals depend heavily on teachers' suggestions and input regarding classroom activities and decisions and student performance (Larson, 2019). Findings do not align with the literature regarding stakeholder and principal benefits such as inputs and opinions from international teacher participants. International teacher participants' lack of opportunity to express opinions, share suggestions and offer inputs significantly hinder professional growth and development, negatively affect teacher motivation, and interfere with achieving self-actualization.

International teacher participants noted cultural differences between students in the United States classrooms and native students, including students' study culture, plus attitudes toward learning and achieving. Another practice international teacher participants found culturally shocking was the lack of study culture. Studying enables students to improve learning abilities, increase understanding, and retain information (Leenknecht et al., 2021). Participants expressed pressures placed on teachers to ensure all students received help with studying and

accomplishing classroom tasks and activities (Ryan et al., 2021). Due to enormous pressures placed on teachers in United States classrooms, participants reported they awarded students undeserved passes.

The practice of consistently monitoring students was another culturally shocking difference participants experienced. Consistent monitoring of students was unusual for participants and not a part of international teacher participants' cultural and experiential background. Monitoring, according to participants, involved policing students consistently throughout the school day. For example, participants accompanied students to the lunchroom daily and observed students during the lunch hour. International teacher participants suggested monitoring students did not alleviate students' interpersonal issues. Participants' presence did not deter students from carrying out undesirable behaviors or activities.

### **Language Experience**

Current research has documented educational difficulties among international teachers as a significant challenge (Bubenhofer et al., 2019). Academic challenges include language barriers. Language barriers affect teachers' classroom performance (Yoder & Jaffee, 2019). Effects include adjusting pedagogical approaches and methodologies, dealing with disruptive students' questions regarding teachers' language and accentuation (Brown & Knollman-Porter, 2019), and discrimination (Bubenhofer et al., 2019).

International teacher participants found accentuation, speech rate, and word variations were culturally different. Participants defined accentuation as language unique to native lands and distinct in pronunciation, speech rate as the pace of language spoken, and word variations as differences in word choices which may be dissimilar in meaning and unique to specific regions.

Some words students used were unusual and unknown to participants and vice versa.

International teacher participants utilized context to help with understanding students' speech.

Uniqueness and difference in language made understanding students' speech difficult for international teacher participants and vice versa. When corresponding with students and delivering classroom content, participants adjusted language to ensure students understood. Participants enunciated and spoke slowly or at a comfortable pace to ensure instructions and directives were clear and audible.

### **Building Relationships**

Relationships international teachers built upon entering the United States classrooms have been undocumented in current research. Building healthy professional relationships in working environments is of paramount importance, according to international teacher participants. International teacher participants' report advantages of developing and building strong, healthy relationships with colleagues. Advantages included 1) creating meaningful friendships; 2) gaining and offering support, trust, and respect; 3) working collaboratively; and 4) promoting and maintaining environments conducive to work.

For international teacher participants, heavy workloads and extensive hours impeded building relationships and socialization. Socialization included communicating and understanding social and behavioral expectations of others. International teacher participants noted differences in how teachers from native countries socialized in contrast with teachers in the United States. Differences resulted from overloaded schedules and numerous responsibilities placed on both native teachers and international teacher participants in United States classrooms.

**Unconventional Experiences**

Current research highlighted practices causing international teachers' discomfort and offense (Poole, 2019). Çakmak et al. (2019) described asking questions during a lecture, listening to music while completing tasks, or addressing teachers by first names as inappropriate behaviors which offended participants and caused discomfort. Practices included uncommon customs, lengthy hours and heavy workloads, recurrent changes in lesson plan structure, and high turnover rates.

**Limitations**

Documenting international teacher participants' experiences adds to existing understanding and knowledge of challenges encountered within United States classrooms. International teacher participants recount events and experiences, highlighting issues faced in United States classrooms. Throughout the study, process, interpretation, and collection of data from participants revealed several limitations in research design relating to site, participant selection, and data collection.

Using a single research site limits the study, and findings may be biased. The research site was one of two districts in a prominent school district in a small, rural community in South Carolina. The school district provided a specific context for collecting data on experiences of international teachers in United States classrooms. International teachers fill vacancies for institutions in the district. More than half of the teaching staff consists of international teachers. Experiences of international teachers may not transfer across districts and contexts. International teachers may encounter different experiences within other institutions and in different or similar contexts.

In mitigating biases resulting from studies focusing on a single institution, future research may focus on international teachers from institutions of various types. Multiple institutions will present researchers with populations of varying sizes, demographics, and locations. Conducting research within institutions of varying sizes, demographics, and locations will present a more complete picture of international teachers' experiences in United States classrooms.

Limitation stems from participant selection relating to race and gender. Using a more extensive and diverse selection of participants would allow perspectives from participants of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. International teacher participants were natives of Jamaica and India. One participant from the Philippines declined to participate in the study.

The ratio of females to males limits the study. More women participated in the study than men. Of the 17 international teacher participants, only one was male. A higher proportion of female to male participants was unavoidable due to the ratio of males to females employed within the district. The school district had only one male international teacher on staff.

Some limitations are inherent in certain data collection methods. Although using qualitative research captures extensive data from international teacher participants through qualitative research tools such as interviews and field notes, the study's credibility would increase if combined with quantitative research tools. Quantitative research tools such as surveys may present more evidence to confirm and strengthen the data captured using interviews and field notes. Surveys would capture data for statistical analysis, which would add to the data collected via qualitative research tools.

### **Recommendations**

Schools globally, including the United States, aim to improve teaching and learning environments and systems (Kaso et al., 2021). Teaching in United States classrooms provides incredible opportunities for teachers to travel globally and have real-life experiences (Adebayo, 2020). Experiences encountered allow teachers to discover and create new understandings of education systems beyond native lands. Based on discoveries and understandings, recommendations should aim to improve education systems and international teachers' experiences in United States classrooms. Recommendations should be specific to tentative international teachers, education officials and policymakers, and international recruiting agencies.

### **Tentative International Teachers**

Teachers continuously search for avenues to gain professional and personal growth and development (Fedorov et al., 2020). One avenue for growth and development is through vacancies offered globally to fill teaching positions in schools in the United States (Kim & Cooc, 2021). Many schools in United States have outlined general requirements necessary for recruiting teachers but lack requirements for recruiting international teachers (Allen & McInerney, 2019). Requirements include moral and ethical protocols and standards developed to protect international recruits. Developing, adopting, and enforcing requirements is necessary for international teacher recruitment. Officials and policymakers at the national level should establish a list of requirements, including moral and ethical standards governing international teacher recruitment based on input from teacher groups at local and state levels.

According to Ingersoll et al. (2019), requirements establishing acceptable and satisfactory practices for recruiting teachers from abroad to public schools in the United States are lacking. Local and state-level recruiters may have difficulty adapting and enforcing requirements without documentation outlining requirements. Formulating viable and legitimate requirements presents recruiters with set standards to follow upon recruiting international teachers globally.

### **Education Officials and Policymakers**

The United States is one of several countries facing teacher shortages, precipitating recruitment of teachers from abroad. To fill shortages and hire teachers suitable for vacancies, access to data is necessary to track, study, and monitor international recruiting and employment trends in education. Unavailability of comprehensive and accurate data documenting teacher migration, hiring, and progress has been a major obstacle in the United States (See et al., 2020). Improvement of the United States government, education officials, and policymaker performance in data collection areas, specifically sorting, categorizing, measuring, and presenting relevant data regarding hiring foreign workers, including teachers, is critical to filling jobs in the United States and determining economic effects (Mahuli & Sianturi, 2021). Accurate, current data would provide practical information regarding current education systems.

### **International Recruiting Agencies**

International recruiters' primary objective is to present incentives to teachers to fill vacancies globally (See et al., 2020). Positive factors presented may be misleading and lead to exaggerated or inaccurate expectations of life in non-native countries, including the United States (Versland et al., 2020). Prospective recruits may learn about comparatively high salaries earned in the international education system but remain ignorant of rates regarding income tax

and cost of living, as well as the challenges of teaching in United States schools. Ignorance may leave teachers vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation and subjugation (Kunz et al., 2020).

Recruiting agencies should ensure recruitment practices are fair and equal (Versland et al., 2020). In demonstrating fairness and equality, recruiting agencies may collaborate with international groups focused on protecting migrants, including international teachers.

Collaborating with international groups should help protect migrant employees such as international teachers and mitigate adverse effects of teacher migration in sending and recruiting countries.

The primary objective of recruiting agencies should be honesty and transparency before, during, and after recruitment. Honesty and transparency could allow international teachers, other academics, and citizens to carefully and thoroughly review procedures and decisions, asking relevant questions. Thoroughly reviewing decisions would potentially decrease suspicion and speculation, encourage objectivity, and discourage nepotism and other unsuitable behaviors throughout recruitment and the induction process (See et al., 2020).

New teachers constantly need assistance, and international teachers are no exception (Kearney, 2021). Many international teachers experience culture shock upon entering school systems, which may be stressful during induction. Formulating and implementing mentorship programs could alleviate or reduce stressors associated with culture shock. Mentorship programs could help international teachers adapt to school procedures, culture, and climate (Murphy et al., 2020). International recruiting agencies should collaborate with school systems in formulating and implementing mentorship programs to ensure proper teacher induction.



### **Implications for Leadership**

In understanding international teacher experiences, findings indicated some implications for international teachers and school systems. International teachers' experiences in United States classrooms are beneficial in terms of increased appreciation for cultural diversity, added knowledge, expertise, and professionalism. Valuing culture, experiences, expertise, and professionalism enables international teachers to support pedagogy and student learning instead of being misled by school system deficits and yielding to United States educational culture.

Data from the study may inform leaders on a global level. Leaders may collaborate and develop international programs to prepare international educators for transition and exchange experiences, including transition to the United States. By designing international programs, United States schools and districts will reach a broader, more comprehensive understanding of intercultural experience involving international recruits. Gaining such understanding may reduce challenges international teachers face upon induction and throughout the school year.

Internal and external professional development opportunities are beneficial for teachers nationally (Daugherty et al., 2021). Offering internal and external professional development opportunities helps alleviate challenges and strengthen professionalism, classroom management skills, and cultural awareness (Brauckmann et al., 2020). Professional development could include strategies to combat classroom challenges, approaches to intercultural differences in United States classrooms, cultural awareness, time management, formulating and maintaining healthy relationships, and leadership qualities.

Leaders need to develop effective, well-designed mentorship programs. Mentorship programs may provide international teachers with suitable mentors and activities to aid induction and acclimatization into education systems, including in the U. S. (Costandi et al., 2019).

Mentors guide success within new settings. Guidance from mentors may bring forth diverse outcomes enriching intercultural experiences for all involved. Various outcomes include collaboration, networking, and reflection (Richmond et al., 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Teaching abroad can be a meaningful professional and personal experience (Garcia & Soremi, 2019). Professional and personal experience allows international teachers to live, explore new cultures, and develop an interest in available opportunities in the United States. While the opportunities satisfied some international teachers, others experienced challenges. Challenging experiences determine teachers' perceptions of existing cultural dynamics, which helps with adjusting to new environments (Çakmak et al., 2019). Experiences gained allow teacher participants to build new knowledge regarding education and school systems internationally. Education officials promoting better education systems must become culturally cognizant of cultural dynamics among teachers and provide vital support for new teachers upon induction and throughout the school year.

Current demographic and economic shifts have forced educators to adjust pedagogy to reflect social changes (Lambert & Lambert, 2019). Advancement in technology is a significant shift, which connects individuals and resources on a global level. Global connections lead to significant social developments which reshape demography. Reshaping demography leads to greater population variety in many nations. The United States has not been resistant to social developments and demographic adjustments. As social and population patterns alter, the United States has grown and become more diversified (Pang & Runesson, 2019).

Researchers predict a continuous increase in students from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities in United States classrooms after examining demographic patterns from previous

censuses (Nevarez et al., 2019). With such a change, schools have gradually moved away from being monocultures toward becoming melting pots of cultures. Such diversity of cultures within schools has increased awareness, inclusion, and acceptance among staff (Fuentes et al., 2021).

Background to the study described demographic changes which affect United States classrooms as teachers who are non-native to the United States have filled vacancies (Larson, 2019). Non-natives include international teacher participants. International teacher participants' expectations of and experiences in United States classrooms have shed light on factors affecting the United States education system.

Cultural differences in United States classrooms significantly affected international teacher participants. International teacher participants described utilizing classroom techniques, methods, and procedures based entirely on choices and directives from district staff or school managers. Participants perceived directives as forcing international teacher participants to adapt to United States classroom cultures instead of combining classroom cultures with participants' native classroom cultures and using those combinations to produce classroom successes.

International teacher participants felt experiences teaching in United States classrooms produce several unexpected advantages and disadvantages. Access to diverse and updated equipment and resources, including updated technology and increased remuneration, are advantages all participants enjoyed. International teacher participants saw benefit from updated technology and resources in United States classrooms. Disadvantages were perceived to exceed advantages. Disadvantages included a) not building meaningful relationships with colleagues, b) unusual practices, c) lengthy hours, d) extensive workloads, e) frequent changes in lesson plan structure, and f) high attrition rates.

As teachers mature professionally, the development of abilities to deal with issues within the classroom increases (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017). Each experience teachers encounter in the classroom affects the interpretation of events and strategies to alleviate current and future issues (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). Developing and implementing classroom strategies enable international teacher participants to adopt and adapt to classroom environments. Using classroom strategies allows international teacher participants to gain students' respect and opens up important communication channels among instructors, students, and parents.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Email Invitation**

Dear International Teachers,

I am Arlian Salmon-Barnett, and I am a doctoral candidate student at the American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Carolyn Price. I am conducting a study to understand the experiences of international teachers teaching in American classrooms. I am extending an invitation to you to request your involvement in the study as a research participant.

#### **Purpose of the Research**

You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers in classrooms in America. This qualitative study will explore educational, cultural, and behavioral challenges that international teachers face throughout their first year of teaching in America.

#### **Research Design and Procedures**

The study will use a qualitative methodology and case study research design. Informed consent forms will be disseminated to specific participants within the school district. The study will comprise 15 to 20 participants, purposefully selected, who will take part in the interview process. The study will involve interviews to be conducted via face-to-face, telephone, Skype, Zoom, or through any other medium most convenient for participants. None of the research interviews will take place at the research site. After the interviews, an optional debrief session will occur. Participants will be purposefully selected to review individual contributions specific to the research questions.

**Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experience as an international teacher with at least one year of teaching in the American classroom. You can contribute much to the already existing knowledge surrounding the topic being studied, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria: non-native, South Carolina-certified teachers who have spent at least one year teaching in an American classroom.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions. If you decide to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating, even if you agreed earlier.

**Procedures**

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an interview via a medium that is convenient to you. The type of question asked will range from demographic data to direct inquiries about the topic of the lived experiences of international teachers in American classrooms.

**Duration**

The interview portion of the research study will require approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you decide to participate in the interview, the time expected will be a maximum of 30 minutes. If you are chosen to be interviewed, the time allotted for interview will be set at a location and time convenient for the participant. An optional follow-up debriefing session will take place after the interviews are completed.

**Risks**

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any one question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

**Benefits**

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us learn more about the experiences of international teachers in American classrooms. The potential benefits of this study will contribute to existing empirical studies by providing in-depth documented narratives of non-native teachers' experiences in the United States.

**Reimbursement**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality**

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, the data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept on a password-protected flash drive and in a password-protected file in Google Drive. Any information about you will be coded and will not have any direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information. All data collected will be kept secured in a digitally locked filing cabinet for a minimum of 4 years. After the 4-year period, all information will be destroyed. Destruction includes pulverizing flash drive, shredding, and then burning paper records and permanently deleting information stored in Google Drive. Deletion will prevent revealing any information relevant to the research.

**Sharing the Results**

At the end of the research study, the results will be available to each participant. It is anticipated the results will be published so other interested people may learn from the research.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

Participation is voluntary. If at any time you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussions.

**Questions About the Study**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Arlian Salmon-Barnett at [REDACTED].salmon-barnett6186@my.ace.edu or (803) 942 - [REDACTED] or Dr. Carolyn Price at [REDACTED].price@ace.edu. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu. Please respond to this email if you are willing to participate in the study. Upon receipt of your email, I will contact you with additional details.

Respectfully,

Arlian Salmon-Barnett

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent

**Prospective Research Participant:** Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

### Project Information

**Project Title:** The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers: A Qualitative Approach

**Researcher:** Arlian Salmon-Barnett

**Organization:** American College of Education

**Email:** [REDACTED]@yahoo.com

**Telephone:** ( [REDACTED] ) 942-4425

**Researcher's Faculty Member:** Dr. Carolyn Price

**Organization and Position:** American College of Education and Dissertation Chair

**Email:** [REDACTED].price@ace.edu

### Introduction

I am Arlian Salmon-Barnett, and I am a doctoral candidate student at American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Carolyn Price. I will give you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

### Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding beliefs and perceptions regarding international teachers' experience in classrooms in America. This qualitative study will explore educational, cultural, and behavioral challenges that international teachers face throughout the first year.

### Research Design and Procedures

The study will use a qualitative methodology and case study research design. Informed consent forms will be disseminated to specific participants within the school district. The study will comprise 15 to 20 participants, purposefully selected, who will participate in the interview process. The study will involve interviews to be conducted via face-to-face, telephone, Skype, Zoom, or through any other medium most convenient for participants. None of the research interviews will take place at the research site. After the interviews, an optional debrief session will occur. Participants will be purposefully selected to review contributions specific to the research questions.



**Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experience as an international teacher with at least one year of teaching in an American classroom. You can contribute much to the already existing knowledge surrounding the topic being studied, which meets the criteria for this study. Participant selection criteria: non-native, South Carolina-certified teachers who have spent at least one year teaching in an American classroom.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions. If you elect to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating, even if you agreed earlier.

**Procedures**

We are inviting you to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an interview via a medium that is convenient to you. The type of questions asked will range from demographic data to direct inquiries about the lived experiences of international teachers in American classrooms. Interviews will be conducted through face-to-face, telephone, Skype, Zoom, or any other medium convenient to participants. Interviews will be audio or video recorded. Interviews will be transcribed, coded, compared and analyzed using NVivo. NVivo is a secure automated technological software which protects the privacy of participants. Themes will emerge from the analysis of data, and findings will be documented.

**Duration**

The interview portion of the research study will require approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you participate in the interview, the time expected will be a maximum of 30 minutes. If you are chosen to be interviewed, the time allotted for the interview will be set at a secure location and time convenient for the participant. An optional follow-up debriefing session will take place after the interviews are completed.

**Risks**

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any one question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

**Benefits**

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us learn more about the experiences of international teachers within American classrooms. The potential benefits of this study will contribute to existing empirical studies by providing in-depth documented narratives of non-native teachers' experiences in the United States.

**Reimbursement**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality**

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, the data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept on a password-protected flash drive and in a password-protected file in Google Drive. Any information about you will be coded and will not have any direct correlation that directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information. All data collected will be kept secure in a digitally locked filing cabinet for a minimum of 4 years. After the 4-year period, all information will be destroyed. Destruction includes pulverizing the flash drive, shredding, and then burning paper records and permanently deleting information stored in Google Drive. Deletion will prevent revealing any information relevant to the research.

**Sharing the Results**

At the end of the research study, the results will be available to each participant. The results will be published so that other interested people may learn from the research.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

Participation is voluntary. If at any time you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussion.

**Questions About the Study**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Arlian Salmon-Barnett or Dr. Carolyn Price. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

**Certificate of Consent**

I have read the information regarding this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print or Type Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, which has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of lead researcher: Arlian Salmon-Barnett

Signature of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm the individual has freely given assent.

Print or type name of lead researcher: Arlan Salmon-Barnett

Signature of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of faculty member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

**Appendix C****Permission Letter**

Date: February 10, 2020

Director of Human Resources

Dear:

My name is Arlian Salmon-Barnett, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE) writing to request permission to interview international teachers who teach in District Two. This information will be used for my dissertation research for The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers: A Qualitative Approach. The purpose of the qualitative case study will be to explore the lived experiences of international teachers who have taught for at least one year in American classrooms. Fifteen to twenty international teachers across the schools within the district will be participating in the study.

The study will be conducted outside of contract hours. School resources will not be used in the completion of the study. Important contacts for this study include:

Principal Investigator: Arlian Salmon-Barnett

E-mail: [REDACTED]@yahoo.com

Phone: (803) [REDACTED]-4425

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Carolyn Price

E-mail: [REDACTED].price@ace.edu

Phone: ([REDACTED]) 243-6780

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,

Arlian Salmon-Barnett

## **Appendix D**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

**Questions can be changed, added, or modified as appropriate throughout the interview.**

The interview focused on demographics, teaching experiences, educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges, and recommendations. The questions are as follows:

#### **Demographics**

1. What is your nationality?
2. Of which country are you a native?
3. How long did you teach in your country of origin before moving to the United States to teach?
4. What subject(s) did you teach in your native country?
5. What grade levels were you teaching in your native country?
6. Why did you move to the United States?
7. How long have you been teaching in the United States?
8. What subject(s) do (did) you teach in the United States?
9. What grade levels do (did) you teach in the United States?

#### **Teaching Experiences**

10. Please describe in general your teaching experiences in the United States classroom.
11. What are the major challenges that you encounter as an international teacher teaching in an American classroom?
12. What are some of the educational challenges you encountered as an international teacher in an American classroom?

13. What are some behavioral challenges you encountered as an international teacher in an American classroom?
14. What are some cultural challenges you encountered as an international teacher in an American classroom?
15. How do the American educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges compare to your home country's educational, behavioral, and cultural challenges?
16. Describe the feelings or emotions during and after you have had a challenging experience as an international teacher.
17. What are some strategies that you use to eliminate the challenges?

**Effects of teaching in the American classroom**

18. How do you feel after you have eliminated the challenges?
19. How have these challenges impacted you professionally?
20. How have these challenges impacted you personally?
21. Do you have any regrets about leaving your native country to teach in the United States?  
Why/why not?
22. Do you have any regrets about leaving the education system in your native country to teach in the education system in the United States? Why/why not?

**Recommendations**

23. What advice would you give to teachers who decide to migrate to the United States to teach?
24. What advice would you give to school officials who recruit teachers from countries beyond American borders?

25. What advice would you give to recruiting agencies that recruit teachers from countries beyond American borders?

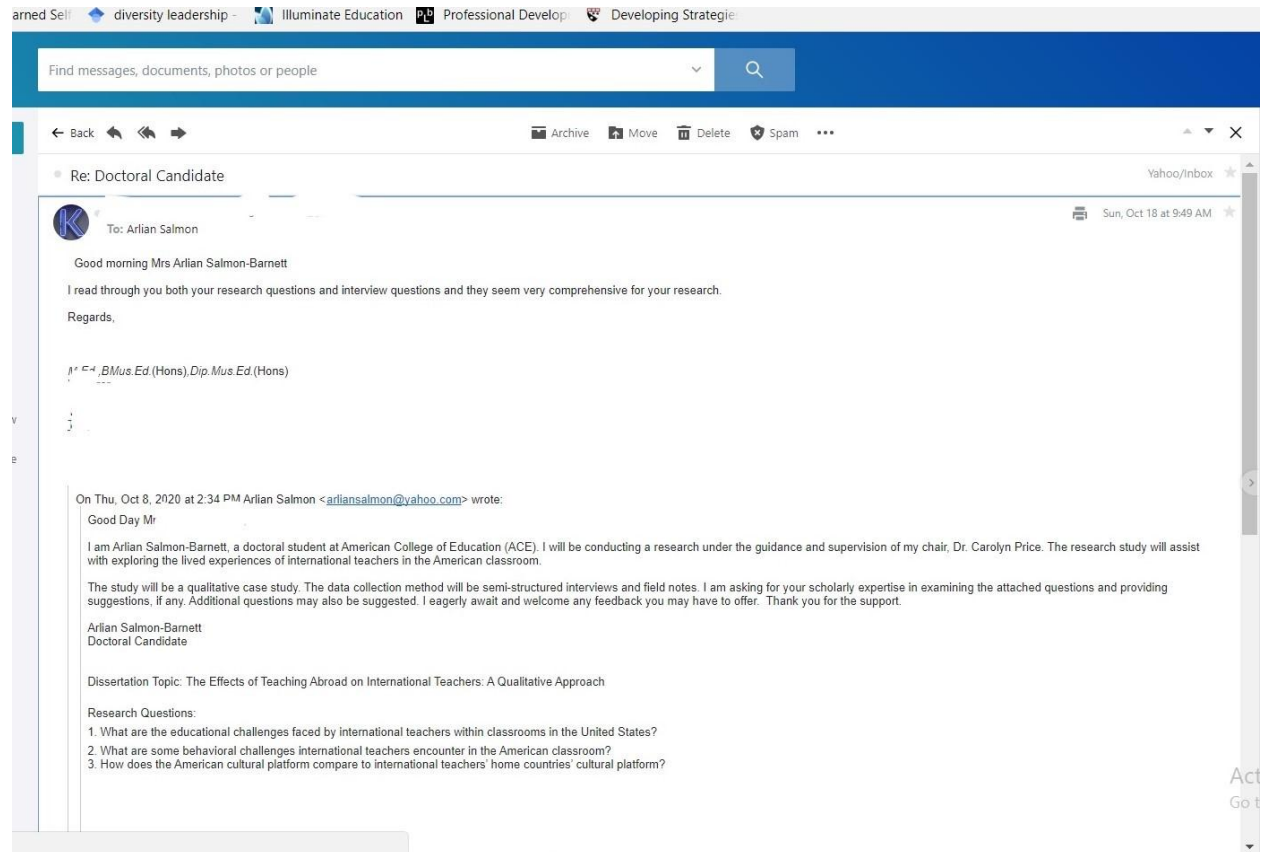
26. Is there anything you would like to add about your teaching experiences?

Participants were thanked for the information provided and informed about revising and reviewing content.



## Appendix E

### Subject Matter Expert Review, Feedback, and Suggestion



Find messages, documents, photos or people

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Re: Doctoral Candidate Yahoo/Inbox

To: Arlian Salmon Tue, Oct 6 at 8:42 PM

Good afternoon Ms. Salmon,

I am so happy that you have chosen a topic that I believe is very under researched but very relevant to our times. Today, the world is seeing a spike in several teachers who are moving across the world to fill the gaps in American classrooms. These teachers are often understudied, yet they contribute significantly to development of all Americans. How these teachers feel, how they are perceived and how much training and resources they are offered, can significantly affect American students. More research should be done to find out the positive and negative impacts of having international teachers in the American classroom. The questions that are in this research are quite imperative and will shed light on a cross section on the changing landscape of American classroom.

My one suggestion or question - would it be possible to have students (past or present) share their experience on having us as international teachers. How have we positively or negatively impacted their lives?

BA., Dip ed, MSc.

---

From: Arlian Salmon [mailto:arlian.salmon@ace.edu]

Subject: Doctoral Candidate

Good Day

I am Arlian Salmon-Barnett, a doctoral student at the American College of Education (ACE). I will be conducting a research under the guidance and supervision of my chair, Dr. Carolyn Price. The research study will assist with exploring the lived experiences of international teachers in the American classroom.

The study will be a qualitative case study. The data collection method will be semi-structured interview and field notes. I am asking for your scholarly expertise in examining the attached questions and providing suggestions, if any. Additional questions may also be suggested. I eagerly await and welcome any feedback you may have to offer. Thank you for the support.

Arlian Salmon-Barnett  
Doctoral Candidate

Dissertation Topic: The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers: A Qualitative Approach

**Research Questions:**

1. What are the educational challenges faced by international teachers within classrooms in the United States?
2. What are some behavioral challenges international teachers encounter in the American classrooms?
3. How does the American cultural platform compare to international teachers' home countries' cultural platform?

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● Re: Doctoral Candidate

Yahoo/Inbox

★



To: Arlian Salmon

Fri, Oct 9 at 10:55 PM

★

Hello, Doctoral Candidate Arlian Salmon-Barnett:

I am delighted to lend my expertise to your doctoral pursuit. Your topic is one not in the least exhausted and scholars educational stakeholders may one day lean on its credit.

I find the questions you have designed adequately captures demographic, professional and personal experiences of your target interviewees which will inform your study profoundly.

Feel at liberty to reach out if I may be of further assistance.

On Tue, Oct 6, 2020 at 9:45 AM Arlian Salmon <[arliansalmon@yahoo.com](mailto:arliansalmon@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Good Day

I am Arlian Salmon-Barnett, a doctoral student at the Americam College of Education (ACE). I will be conducting a research under the guidance and supervision of my chair, Dr. Carolyn Price. The research study will assist with exploring the lived experiences of international teachers in the American classroom.

The study will be a qualitative case study. The data collection method will be semi-structured interview and field notes. I am asking for your scholarly expertise in examining the attached questions and providing suggestions, if any. Additional questions may also be suggested. I eagerly await and welcome any feedback you may have to offer. Thank you for the support.

Arlian Salmon-Barnett  
Doctoral Candidate

Dissertation Topic: The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers: A Qualitative Approach

**Appendix F****Permission Letter of Approval**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT 2**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson  
Secretary  
Member

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**  
ID.1.

To: American College of Education  
From: Dr. [redacted] Director of Instruction  
Date: September 29, 2020  
Re: Research by Arian Salmon-Barnett

This letter is to verify that Arian Salmon-Barnett submitted a letter to School District 2 requesting permission to conduct research with employees of [redacted]. While [redacted] is aware of the research study, The Effects of Teaching Abroad on International Teachers: A Qualitative Approach, the research will be limited to interviews with international teachers who teach within [redacted] School District 2. None of the research interviews conducted by Ms. Salmon-Barnett will take place on any of the campuses of [redacted]. No additional research information such as school or district data or observations will be used as part of her research study.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT 2**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**