

Academic Voices: Continuing Professional Development for Teaching in Internationalized Classrooms

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This article was not written with the assistance of any Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology

Abstract

Contemporary higher education institutions are marked by diverse, internationalized classrooms that bring together various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, realizing the full potential of this diversity poses challenges, as academics, key players in maximizing the benefits of international classrooms, often lack the necessary competence, resources, and tools. Despite universities offering continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives, these suffer from low enrollment and high drop-out rates. Past research highlights the oversight of academics' input in the design of CPD initiatives. In our study, conducted at a medium-sized university in Sweden, we surveyed the perceptions and CPD needs of academics. The findings emphasize the importance of immersive international experiences of staff over disciplinary affiliation, reveal a disconnect between perceived challenges for teaching in the international classroom and academics' interest in CPD, and underscore the importance of adopting an andragogical adult learning centered approach in the design and delivery of CPD.

Keywords: continuing professional development, internationalized classroom, academic staff engagement, andragogy, higher education

Introduction

Globalization and internationalization of higher education (HE), coupled with heightened migration, bring about greater linguistic, cultural, and educational diversity on campuses worldwide. This phenomenon is evident not only in the diverse composition of learners in the classrooms but also in universities' efforts to internationalize their curriculum, aiming

to equip all students for the globalized job market and society (Clarke & Kirby, 2022). Whether by choice or circumstance, academic staff frequently find themselves thrust into a new reality of teaching in internationalized classrooms. Lauridsen and Gregersen-Hermans (2023) characterized an internationalized classroom as a dynamic learning environment, encompassing diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, both in physical and virtual settings. This description transcends mere demographic factors, highlighting the integration of global perspectives into the curriculum and the cultivation of intercultural competencies to facilitate impactful collaboration among students.

One could argue that diversity has been a constant presence, suggesting no imperative for adjustments to the current learning environment (Elmgren & Henriksson, 2015). Nevertheless, documented common challenges faced by academics teaching in internationalized classrooms attest to a different reality (Lauridsen & Lillemose, 2015). Numerous authors agree that unlocking the potential of diversity in the classroom and creating learning experiences that enhance students' global competencies require specific teaching skills (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016; Cozart & Gregersen-Hermans, 2021). Understanding and developing these teaching competencies is crucial for academics to navigate the complexities of an internationalized classroom successfully.

Recognizing the necessity of preparing academics for teaching in internationalized classrooms, several higher education institutions (HEIs) have implemented a range of continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives (Gregersen-Hermans & Lauridsen, 2021). However, these opportunities often remain limited and lack a systematic approach (Lauridsen & Gregersen-Hermans, 2022). There is a pressing need for greater support and the sharing of effective practices to help academics foster inclusivity in increasingly internationalized classrooms (Fakunle, 2020). In response to these challenges, Swedish HEIs have made strides in increasing CPD provision in the past five years (Weissova, forthcoming 2025). A persistent challenge lies in the limited engagement of academics in CPD and internationalization efforts. While several reasons contribute to this challenge, we refrain from an in-depth exploration in this paper, recognizing that it merits dedicated attention separately. A notable observation we made is the neglect of involving academics in the stages of planning and designing, which is a critical step in CPD (Siddiqui, 2006). Frequently, academic voices are not included in the conversation, and their needs and learning preferences are overlooked when HEIs invest in planning and delivering new professional development.

Acknowledging this gap, the overarching research question driving this study is: What are the academics' needs and preferences for CPD in the context of teaching in internationalized classrooms? Several related questions naturally arise: What challenges do academics encounter when teaching in internationalized classrooms? What competencies do they find important to foster? Do they perceive adequate support from their institutions for teaching in internationalized settings? Are they interested in participating in CPD? What motivates their engagement in such activities? What factors hinder or enable their participation? Additionally, what learning modes do they prefer for CPD? By addressing these research questions, the paper aims to offer practical implications for HEIs seeking to develop CPD activities that align with the specific needs of academics, promoting increased engagement and uptake.

Literature Review

Academics' Perception of Teaching in Internationalized Classrooms

Understanding academics' perspectives on teaching in internationalized classrooms is essential for developing effective professional development learning initiatives that cater to their needs and enhance the overall quality of education in multicultural settings. However, several factors can significantly influence their perception, e.g. the level of preparation and support received by academics (Zadravec & Kocar, 2023), their prior international experience (Lauridsen & Gregersen-Hermans, 2022), institutional approach toward professional learning (Kennedy, 2014), and even the specific disciplinary context (Zou et al., 2023) in which they operate.

Research indicates a strong awareness of intercultural issues and a positive attitude towards diversity in the classroom among academics (Ohajonu, 2021). Nonetheless, challenges such as lack of knowledge, time constraints, insufficient incentives, fear of failure, and negative course evaluations often deter academics from fully engaging with diversity (Inamorato et al., 2019). A Finnish study further highlights the gap between recognition of the necessity of internationalization and the lack of necessary competencies, resources, and tools among academics to adapt their teaching styles to diverse learning environments (Renfors, 2019, p. 77).

The increased diversity in the classroom has sparked discussions among academic staff on the best approaches to address it. Sawir's (2011) study of 80 academics at an Australian HEI revealed differences in willingness to adapt teaching for diverse learners across disciplines, with humanities and social science academics showing more openness compared to those in science and technology fields. However, Zou et al. (2023) suggested that a critical view on internationalization exists across disciplines, indicating that disciplinary affiliation may not fully explain individual approaches. Subsequent studies confirmed that disciplinary belonging influences how the internationalization of teaching is approached by

academics (Bulnes & de Louw, 2022; Zadavec & Kočar, 2023) and perceived by students (Alexidaou et al., 2023). Multiple studies have led to the conclusion that there is a need for tailored CPD development that would support academics in managing the challenges and opportunities presented by internationalized classrooms (Ryan et al., 2021; Zou et al., 2020). Other studies prescribed the competencies academics teaching in internationalized classrooms should possess (Ambagts-van Rooijen, Beelen, & Coelen, 2024; Cozart & Gregersen-Hermans, 2021; Dimitrov & Haque, 2016; Teekens, 2003).

One notable model aiding academics in enhancing their teaching across diverse cultures is Dimitrov and Haque's (2016) 'Intercultural Teaching Competence' (ITC). This model encompasses foundational, facilitation, and curriculum design competencies, totaling 20 specific competencies. ITC is described as "the ability of instructors to interact with students in a way that supports the learning of students who are linguistically, culturally, socially, or in other ways different from the instructor or from each other" (Dimitrov et al., 2014, p. 89). This study employs the ITC model to gauge the perceived importance of various competencies among academics, selected for its alignment with research on the experiences of international students in university classrooms (Arkoudis et al., 2013).

Continuing Professional Development

In recent years, there has been a heightened focus on improving the quality of education in the European Higher Education Area. This emphasis is evident in the 2018 Paris Communiqué, where European ministers committed to promoting pedagogical training, CPD, and enhanced recognition of innovative teaching (EHEA, 2018). Building on this commitment, the 2020 Rome Communiqué suggested specific measures to enhance the CPD of academics, including cross-border exchanges and the creation of collaborative national structures (EHEA, 2020).

While the LOTUS (Leadership and Organization for Teaching and Learning at European Universities) project reported that pedagogical CPD is prevalent in 93% of HE systems across 28/30 countries (Zhang, 2022), initiatives specifically addressing internationalization are sparse (Lauridsen & Lillemose, 2015). In Sweden, HEIs generally mandate ten weeks of full-time studies in HE pedagogy, but the acquisition of this requirement is flexible. The Association of Swedish HEIs outlined seven goals for qualifying university pedagogical education, with internationalization emphasized in goal number 6 together with other significant concepts such as democracy, gender equality, equal treatment, and sustainability (Karlsson et al., 2017, p. 5). While the importance of integrating internationalization into mandatory HE pedagogical courses has been recognized, the degree to which this integration occurs, as well as the specific topics covered, varies considerably (Weissova, forthcoming 2025). Despite this variation, in recent years, several Swedish HEIs have made significant progress in developing specialized CPD courses designed to facilitate the internationalization of teaching. However, these initiatives have seen limited uptake despite these efforts (Weissova, forthcoming 2025).

Most studies on CPD for the internationalization of teaching for academics have been published within the last decade, underscoring the recognition of this area as an emerging research field. Most of them have been conducted in English-speaking countries and focus on individual interventions in specific educational contexts without paying attention to the conceptual framework (Lauridsen & Gregersen-Hermans, 2023), decades of research and recommendations on internationalization (Hoare, 2013) or the complexity of academics' engagement in CPD and the institutional context in which CPD is embedded (McKinnon et al., 2019).

The disciplinary differences can be seen not only in the way academics respond to internationalization but also in how they perceive CPD. Some professions prefer non-formal learning over the formal one (Becher, 1999). It is claimed that academics prioritize development opportunities within their own discipline (Clegg, 2003). This argument is supported by the claim that it is within the discipline where knowledge and professional identity are formed (Henkel, 2005). However, as Roxå and Mårtensson (2012) pinpointed, disciplines are constantly developing entities with no clear boundaries and categorizing them blindly into hard/soft and pure/applied categories can be misleading. Some research also confirms that it is the context of the disciplines, rather than an institution, that has a prevailing influence on the everyday life of academics (Klein, 1996). Havnes and Stensaker (2006) argued that CPD has a higher status in disciplines such as health and business than, for instance, engineering.

In their article, Lauridsen and Gregersen-Hermans (2022) underscored the importance of constructive alignment, emphasizing the incorporation of intercultural and global competencies throughout learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment. Taking this a step further, when designing CPD initiatives, HEIs should prioritize understanding the unique characteristics of adult learners. Educational developers and CPD facilitators often engage with adult learners, each bringing diverse professional and life experiences that can be leveraged to enhance the learning experience for all participants.

Theoretical Framework

According to Ioannou (2023), academics are considered adult learners and are a crucial factor in improving educational quality, which leads us to the concept of andragogy. Andragogy, as defined by Savicevic (2008, p. 361), refers to the study of the learning and education of adults.

Upon revisiting the history of andragogy, numerous scholars, including Terehoff (2002), Tezcan (2022), and Tsuda et al. (2019), have advocated for the andragogical approach to CPD. Its effectiveness has been affirmed, particularly in the CPD of academics, as evidenced by studies such as those conducted by Chaipidech et al. (2021) and Kelly (2017). We can argue that effectiveness is anchored in understanding the needs of learners, which according to Savicevic (1992), is one of the key requirements of an andragogical approach. According to Knowles et al. (2020) the adult learner is defined by goals and purpose for learning, as well as individual and situational circumstances that need to be acknowledged.

Following the idea of academics as adult learners, we argue that a potential route for improvement of CPD practices can come with changing the assumption about learners from pedagogy to andragogy. Without participating in a debate (Forrest & Peterson, 2006) about the delineation of pedagogy (as art, science, or practice of teaching children) and andragogy (teaching adults) – we find andragogical postulates to better reflect circumstances and needs of academics in HE, as well as respond to identified obstacles. According to Forrest and Peterson (2006, p. 114), andragogy does not necessarily reflect the age of the learner but rather the fact that an adult is an “individual who has taken on adult roles in society”, particularly performing the professional role, hence the connection between professional development and andragogy. In the following section, we will discuss the fitness of andragogical postulates (Knowles, 2005) in the context of CPD for teaching in internationalized classrooms.

Adult learners *need to know why they need to learn something*. The value of learning is associated with the improvements in work performance and/or quality of life of the learner (academic in our case). Therefore, learners’ needs take central place in designing CPD. This justifies the approach of investigating learning needs - in our context CPD needs of academics. As mentioned earlier, the research shows strong awareness and positive attitude towards intercultural issues and diversity among academics – at the same time, obstacles are identified that generate anxiety or stress that could be addressed by providing appropriate learning opportunities.

The adult learners’ self-concept is strongly favoring *independence*, making their own choices about how they will learn. Educational formats that deny them this (like a rigid curriculum, teacher-centred, non-flexible formal courses) are not desirable. The psychological tension if treated like dependent (children), according to Knowles (2005, p. 65), results in a desire to “flee from the situation”. This could eventually explain the high rate of absenteeism or drop-out rate from CPD activities. Adult learners, according to Jones et al. (2019, p. 1172), “assume greater responsibility and autonomy for learning outcomes vis-à-vis traditional pedagogical approaches”. This means that academics will prefer a more active approach to learning (hands-on, problem-solving, learning by doing, experiential learning). The nature of managing an internationalized classroom fits well with this approach – given that academics expect to receive useful and applicable knowledge. Within this context, CPD facilitators are not assumed to have a monopoly on knowledge. They serve as “mentors and guides who help students develop” and facilitate individual and collaborative learning through discussion (Forrest Peterson, 2006, p. 116). This leads to the next point – mobilizing experience in the learning process.

The role of the learners’ experiences – “the richest resources for learning reside in the adult learners themselves” (Knowles, 2005, p. 66). In the context of the internationalized classroom, participants’ experiences with the learning opportunity serve a dual purpose. On one hand, they provide cases, stories, issues, and a living laboratory of examples of how culture and diversity manifest in an educational setting, turning these experiences into valuable learning material. On the other hand, it also represents alternative solutions, ideas, and approaches to be shared among learners living/working in similar contexts. Jones et al. (2019) consider adult learning to be participatory, experiential (Jarvis, 2012; Kolb & Kolb, 2018), and collaborative (Helle et al., 2006). Leveraging learners’ experiences fosters engagement, making learning more meaningful and relevant (Terehoff, 2002). This relevance is closely connected to the learners’ readiness to learn.

The readiness to learn is conditioned by the requirement that the learning opportunity is designed to deliver an instrumental benefit. The outcome is an academic equipped with answers or strategies applicable to own daily routines. Henschke (2013, p. 70) asserts that “readiness to learn is tied closely with their needing to know or do something new in their life situation,” particularly in the context of academics as adult learners, where readiness is driven by the aim “to improve classroom practices” (Ajani, 2021, p. 297).

Orientation to learning is an andragogical postulate that argues the immediacy of need. Learning is not for future use; learning addresses present issues directly. We can argue that the extent of the diversity in the classroom and the (pressing) need to address it would be essential for both the recruitment of academics for learning opportunities and for reducing the drop-out rate. Forrest and Peterson (2006) bring out one of the most important points in arguing for the pedagogical approach to be quintessential for preparing academics for internationalized classrooms. In the pedagogical

approach, problem-based, real-life anchored, context-driven learning does not necessarily have a solution, especially not a single correct one. The process of addressing problems is a learning experience of its own, “the unresolvable issue becomes the foundation for learning rather than an obstacle” (Forrest & Peterson, 2006, p. 120). The learners’ interest is not in the subject but in using the learned insights to address a problem or improve performance.

Finally, learners’ *motivation is intrinsic*. Pursuing educational opportunities in CPD will be driven by internal motives to improve rather than extrinsic awards. Several authors claimed that intrinsically motivated academics are more likely to participate in CPD (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Academics’ autonomous motivation is enhanced by meeting their basic psychological needs, which are comprised of the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness (De Wal et al., (2020).

It is worth noting that while the concept of andragogy is well established in practice, it still faces criticism for its lack of empirical evidence and theoretical development (St. Clair & Käpplinger 2021). We are aware of existing criticism of andragogical postulates (Sandlin, 2005) and various interpretations of andragogy, yet in this paper we interpret andragogy as the teaching of adult human beings. Early works on andragogy by Rosenstock-Hussey define andragogy from a strong social perspective, describing it as “aimed at solving social problems and moving toward a better future” (Loeng, 2018, p. 2). In our context, dealing with culturally diverse classrooms and benefiting from them aligns well with this perspective.

Methodology

The literature review highlights a significant gap in addressing academics' needs and preferences for CPD. In order to comprehensively explore this gap, we employed a mixed-method methodology. Our approach involved the development of an exploratory survey comprising 21 closed-ended and one open-ended question, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory surveys are particularly valuable for gaining initial insights into a phenomenon, context, or population, especially in areas with limited prior research (Anderson & Lightwood, 2022). This methodological choice aligns well with the objectives of our paper, as it enables us to gather data that elucidates academics' needs and preferences. Ultimately, this research aims to support higher education institutions (HEIs) in crafting targeted CPD initiatives that cater closely to the individual requirements and preferences of academics.

Survey Design and Implementation

The survey design was guided by the research questions outlined in the introduction, which pertained to academics' CPD needs and preferences. Following andragogical principles, the structure prioritized participant engagement, relevance, and autonomy in the learning process. This approach ensured that the survey effectively addressed the study's objectives while promoting active involvement and meaningful responses from participants.

The first section of the survey focused on demographic information of the participants, including their academic roles, disciplines, seniority, teaching and international experiences, and pedagogical qualifications. This section is aligned with the andragogical principle of leveraging academics’ prior experiences, as understanding participants' backgrounds helps tailor CPD initiatives to their specific contexts and needs. The second section delved into academics' perceptions of the importance of intercultural teaching competencies (ITC; Haque & Dimitrov, 2016), rated on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (= not at all) to 5 (=very much). Furthermore, participants were encouraged to articulate their specific challenges when teaching in internationalized classrooms via an open-ended question. This approach recognizes that it might be easier for individuals to express the difficulties they encounter rather than explicitly state the competencies they require. This section addressed the andragogical principle of immediacy of need, recognizing the importance of participants' current challenges. In the third section, academics assessed their perceived level of support from the university and school/faculties (Likert 5-point scale), expressed their interest and preferences for CPD, and outlined potential obstacles to CPD participation, as well as motivating factors. This section reflects the andragogical principle of readiness to learn by identifying specific needs and preferences that will help shape more effective CPD programs. The survey’s emphasis on understanding the support available and barriers to participation aligns with the need to create CPD opportunities that meet the autonomy and practical needs of adult learners.

The survey was developed in English and distributed using esMaker software. It underwent a pilot phase, during which it was reviewed by two academics. Based on their feedback, adjustments were made to refine and finalize the survey before its distribution. Subsequently, the survey was sent to academics via email from the heads of academic departments.

Participants

Academics with teaching responsibilities at a mid-sized Swedish HEI were invited to participate in this study. The study acquires additional complexity within the Swedish context, given the nation's notable diversity. With 19% of the population born in foreign countries (SCB, 2022), Swedish classrooms reflect this multicultural landscape, serving as microcosms of the broader society. This participating HEI is a university college distinguished by its international profile, encompassing four distinct schools or faculties: Education and Communication, Business, Engineering, and Health and Welfare. The institution has a student body of approximately 7,850 registered full-time equivalent students, with 2,400 among them being international students. It is supported by a teaching staff of around 470 individuals, with an even distribution across the four schools.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Survey Participants

Sample Characteristics	Actual sample	
	n	% (of the total sample)
School affiliation		
School of Business	39	32.2
School of Education and Communication	24	19.8
School of Engineering	7	5.8
School of Health and Welfare	51	42.1
Gender		
Male	46	38
Female	67	55.4
Non-binary	1	0.8
Prefer not to disclose	5	5.8
Native language		
Swedish	75	67.6
English	9	8.1
Spanish	5	4.6
German	4	3.6
Other	15	13.5
Bilingual	3	2.7
How young are you		
30 years or younger	4	3.3
31- 40 years	30	24.8
41-50 years	31	25.6
51-60 years	43	35.5
61-70 years	10	8.3
Older than 70 years	2	1.7
I wish not to share	1	0.8
Employment profile		
Permanent or tenured	108	90.8
Temporary, contract-based	1	0.8
PhD student	13	10.9
Academic title		
Adjunct instructor	21	18.6
PhD candidate	13	11.5
Research assistant	0	0
Lecturer	20	17.7
Assistant professor	42	37.2
Professor	17	15

Table 2*Demographic and Teaching Profile of Survey Participants*

Sample Characteristics	Actual sample	
	<i>n</i>	%
Formal Swedish HE pedagogical Qualification (15 ECTS)		
Yes	81	66.9
No	23	19
In progress	17	14
Years of teaching experience		
I have not yet been teaching	0	0
Less than 2 years	14	11.61
2- 5 years	19	15.7
5 - 10 years	33	27.3
10 - 20 years	31	25.6
More than 20 years	24	19.8
Time devoted to teaching duties		
Less than 25%	32	26.92
25%-50%	27	22.7
51%-75%	32	26.9
Greater than 75%	28	23.5
Attained international experience		
I lived (or I am currently living) abroad	77	63.6
I studied abroad as a student (degree or credit mobility; undergraduate, master or phd)	61	50.4
I completed a postdoc abroad	19	15.7
I have taught abroad	70	57.9
I have taught courses in a language(s) other than my native language	84	69.4
I have conducted research abroad	62	51.2
I have attended a conference(s) abroad	95	78.5
None of the above	6	5

In total, 121 academics participated in the survey (confidence level 95%, margin of error 6,7%) with 63 also completing the open-ended question. The schools are of equal size, yet the response rate was unevenly distributed. Health disciplines (51) and business (39) had the highest participation levels, while education and communication (24) and engineering staff (7) showed lower participation. The higher response rate at the School of Health and Business may be attributed to two authors of this paper having affiliations there. The majority of the respondents were in their 50s (36%), female (55%), native Swedish speakers (68%), held permanent positions (91%), and assistant professors were the largest respondent group (37%). Almost 70% possessed a formal higher education pedagogical qualification. Teaching duties were evenly distributed across the categories of less than 25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, and more than 75%. A large portion of participants had extensive teaching experience, with 45% having over 10 years of experience and 72% having some kind of experience with working or studying abroad with varying levels of immersion. More information on the participants' demographic and teaching profile is included in Table 1 and 2.

Data Analysis

The data obtained through the survey were analyzed in two ways. For the open-ended question we applied a thematic analysis approach to identify the perceived challenges to teaching in the internationalized classroom. Initially, the plan was to code responses on the challenges according to the ITC model (Dimitrov & Haque, 2016), but this proved unfeasible as the data did not align with the model's framework. Following instead an inductive thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2021), the first author initially assigned codes to qualitative data based on emerging patterns. The second author independently reviewed and revised the codes, leading to a collaborative third round where consensus was reached, enhancing the reliability and rigor of the identified themes. The coding table is presented in Table 3. While thematic analysis primarily focuses on identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data, we also tracked frequencies of emerging themes to understand their prevalence within the dataset. Then a Fisher Exact Probability test was used to

identify differences in perceived challenges between the participating academic schools. A Fisher Exact probability test allows for statistical testing of small samples with frequencies of categorical data. Despite the small number of respondents from the Engineering School, their responses to the open question were included in the qualitative analysis. As indicated in the section on the limitations of this study, the responses to the open question provide an impression of the experiences of the participating academics and as such are worthwhile to consider.

Table 3

Coding Table

Categories	Subcategories & sub-elements				
Teaching in a multilingual and multicultural environment	Language issues	Implementing intercultural competence (IC) - Awareness (cognitive) - Empathic understanding (attitude) - Collaborative engagement (behavior/ skills)			
Designing and delivering a suitable learning environment	Motivating students	Challenges in inclusivity Understanding students' educational backgrounds			Facilitating intercultural learning
Group work	Motivating students to work together	Facilitating intercultural learning	IC cognitive	IC attitude	IC behavior/skills
Institutional Commitment	Time	Resources	Institutional priorities	Staff attitudes	Practical constrains

For the closed questions descriptive statistics were applied. This analysis offered a view on the respondents of the survey and their demographic and teaching profile. Next, we identified possible relationships between the demographic and teaching variables of the respondents and their CPD interests, the extent to which they perceived challenges when teaching in an international classroom and their training needs. Applying a Spearman Rank Correlation test, the correlation coefficients were calculated for the questions with a Lickert scale format to determine the direction and strength of the relationships (if any) between the variables/questions in the survey and tested for significance using SPSS 29. Unless otherwise indicated, all significance levels reported in the section on the findings are two-tailed.

Limitations

Potential limitations of the study include sampling bias due to uneven response rates among different academic schools, potentially impacting the generalizability of findings. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases such as social desirability or recall bias. Moreover, the English language used in the survey may exclude academics not proficient in English, affecting the diversity of perspectives. The standardized survey instrument may have limitations in capturing nuanced challenges. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and may guide future research to address the shortcomings mentioned.

Findings

In this section, we present the outcomes relevant to our research inquiries. We delve into the findings regarding the challenges academics face in internationalized classrooms, the competencies they prioritize for development, their inclination towards participating in CPD activities, perceptions of institutional support in internationalized teaching contexts, preferred modes of CPD learning, factors hindering or enabling their participation and the factors shaping their participation decisions.

Perceptions of Teaching Challenges in Internationalized Classrooms

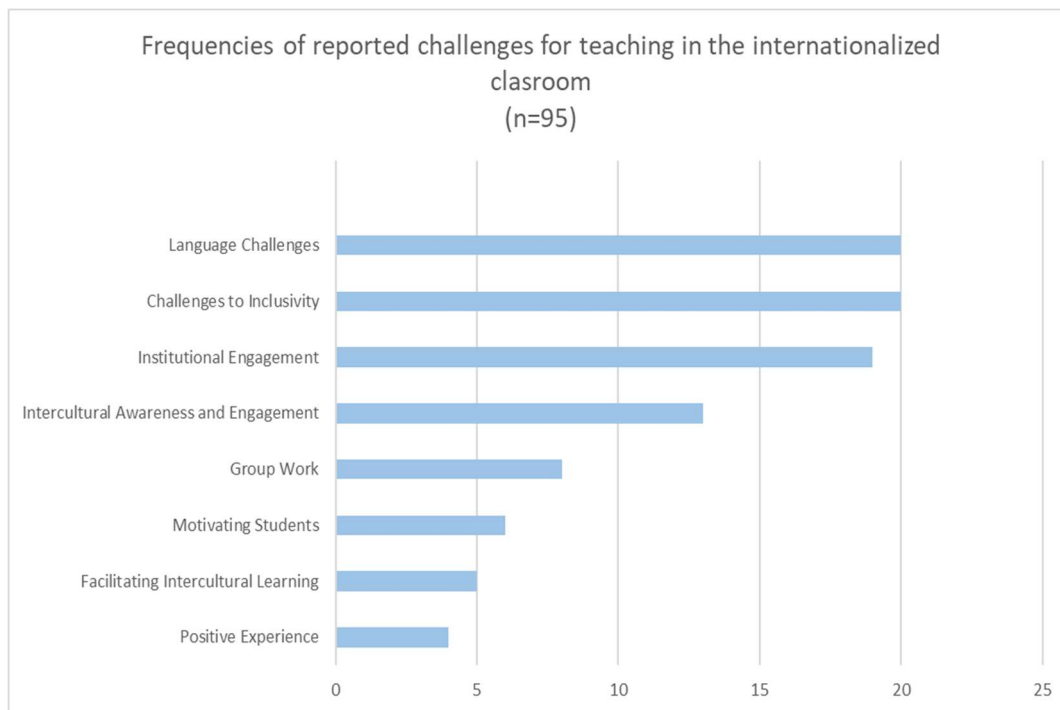
We asked academics to what extent they find teaching in an internationalized classroom challenging. The overall findings revealed that over 60% of academics considered teaching in such a setting challenging (n=73). No statistically significant differences were identified in the reported challenges in relation to age, gender, years of teaching, formal pedagogical qualification, or whether English is their native language. However, we did find that respondents with higher academic titles reported significantly fewer challenges ($\rho = 0.34$; $p=0.01$). For example, professors experienced fewer

challenges teaching in an internationalized classroom compared to lecturers. Further, a significant difference was observed based on deeply immersive international experiences, namely living abroad ($p = 0.18$; $p=0.05$) or doing a postdoc abroad ($p = 0.27$; $p=0.01$). Academics with these experiences found teaching in an internationalized classroom less challenging. Moreover, academics in health-related disciplines experienced challenges to a greater extent than their counterparts in other disciplines ($p = 0.24$; $p=0.01$). The data further suggest that respondents from health disciplines encountered significantly more language challenges than their counterparts in other disciplines ($p=0.007$), whereas academics from the business and engineering disciplines reported significantly more challenges with group work ($p = 0.009$).

Of the 63 responses to the open-ended question 95 distinct challenges were identified. Figure 1 presents the reported challenges that emerged during the coding process and their frequencies.

Figure 1

Frequencies of reported challenges for teaching in the internationalized classroom



Upon closer examination of these challenges, we found that English language issues ($n=20$) and challenges in providing inclusive learning experience for all students ($n=20$) were the most prevalent, along with a lack of institutional commitment ($n=19$).

Concerning language issues, academics frequently expressed difficulties such as a lack of vocabulary, language barriers affecting comprehension and expression, and insufficient English language proficiency among students. As one academic noted, *“It is difficult to get the same depth in the discussions with the students. It sometimes falls a little flat.”* (Resp. 8). Regarding challenges related to creating an inclusive learning experience, academics highlighted several issues. These included fostering equal participation, preventing discrimination, avoiding situations where students do not contribute their fair share to group work (i.e., students' free riding), incorporating diverse perspectives, ensuring students feel comfortable sharing their experiences, and acknowledging the inherent variations in how inclusive academics are in their teaching practices. Additional difficulties involved understanding students' diverse educational backgrounds, guiding them in independent learning, setting common expectations, and managing varied knowledge backgrounds and learning styles. The following example illustrates this issue: *“I have good knowledge of the Swedish students' previous knowledge in my subject since they all attended Swedish schools. In a class with students from many different countries it's always a challenge to get them on the same page, because their previous knowledge tends to differ quite a lot.”* (Resp. 51).

Lack of institutional commitment emerged as the third most frequent challenge. This includes issues such as low organizational priority, resistance to curriculum internationalization, resource limitations, institutional pressure for homogenization, limited tools and time constrains. One of the comments highlighted this issue: *“not enough hours [are] allocated to properly engage with the students, understand their different needs and provide for them.”* (Resp. 51).

Another academic questioned the responsibility for preparing students for a new learning environment: *“Also, teaching is done with few resources, and I do not fully believe that it is me as a lecturer who has to ‘teach’ students how to navigate in the Swedish teaching and learning culture.”* (Resp. 40).

Further issues related to navigating intercultural awareness and engagement (n=13) included managing cultural diversity and addressing intercultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Academics also faced challenges with varying power relations, gender-based resistance, title-centric biases, the often-overlooked value of diverse perspectives, and the need to address sensitive global topics, all of which added complexity to the teaching landscape. For instance, one academic remarked: *“It depends on the topic - if the topic is religion, gender, cultural studies - it can be sensitive, and various sources of knowledge, and emotions, are coming into play.”* (Resp. 47).

Challenges in facilitation of multicultural group work (n=8) involved motivating diverse students to collaborate effectively, managing cultural conflicts, addressing gender-related collaboration issues, handling conflicts arising from diverse working styles, and dealing with marginalized students including free-riders and those lacking ambition to learn. Issues related to the assessment of group work were also mentioned as the following quote illustrates: *“In some groups if you have students from the same country in the same group it can be difficult as a teacher to identify who is doing the work, since some cultures have an internal hierarchy and if the group consists of different hierarchy levels from the home country, it is easy for the students to not adopt to the Swedish system.”* (Resp. 68). Some academics (n=6) mentioned difficulties in motivating students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including challenges in promoting collaboration, dealing with absenteeism, fostering engagement, and addressing varying levels of ambition and disinterest in cultural learning. As one academic noted: *“Students are not interested in learning difference in cultures.”* (Resp. 6).

Challenges in intercultural learning facilitation (n=5) involved encouraging international students to avoid national clustering, systematically incorporating pluricultural and international dimensions into teaching and moving beyond a Western academic mindset. One respondent highlighted this issue: *“Usually, when given the freedom to do so, international students cluster together according to their nationality. Then it is difficult to promote intercultural learning.”* (Resp. 34). Even though, the question focused on challenges, academics (n=4) also highlighted positive experiences in an international classroom in their comments, such as embracing a non-Western academic mindset as a strength, fostering collaboration with international universities, and viewing teaching in an international setting as an enjoyable and rewarding experience. As one academic wrote: *“Nothing [is challenging], it is the best experience ever.”* (Resp. 87).

The Importance of Intercultural Teaching Competencies

As part 2 of the survey, academics were asked to assess the importance of 20 intercultural teaching competencies (ITC; Haque & Dimitrov, 2016) in their teaching. Most academics unanimously recognized the importance of these competencies, with no significant variations among disciplinary affiliations. Across all four schools, the participants considered each of the 20 teaching competencies as important (with an average range score of 4 out of 5 on a Likert scale). Perceived importance of tolerance for ambiguity exhibited a negative correlation with perceived challenges ($\rho = -0.19$; $p = 0.01$), indicating that as respondents rated this competence higher in importance, they experienced fewer challenges in teaching within the international classroom. Conversely, competencies related to including concrete learning outcomes for intercultural and global competence showed an opposite trend ($\rho = 0.2$; $p = 0.05$); as respondents considered these competencies more important, they reported facing more challenges in the classroom. Surprisingly, no correlation was found between the importance of the 20 intercultural teaching competencies and the extent to which academics felt challenged by teaching in the internationalized classroom. Further, only one academic explicitly referenced the listed intercultural teaching competencies in the open question. This raises questions about whether the competency framework effectively addresses the practical challenges faced by academics. The discrepancy suggests a potential mismatch between the competencies outlined and the real-world experiences of academics, emphasizing the need for user-friendly resources closely aligned with academics' everyday concerns.

Continuing Professional Development: Perceived Support, Interest, Preferences

Only a small percentage of academics felt supported by the institution (5%) or their respective schools (11%). Additionally, 52% of academics were unaware of any CPD opportunities provided by the institution. Notably, there was a positive correlation between feeling supported and being aware of CPD opportunities ($\rho = 0.25$; $p = 0.05$). In disciplinary responses, academics in the business school who felt more challenged also reported feeling more supported by the school ($\rho = 0.25$; $p = 0.01$).

While the discrepancy between perceived importance and practical application highlights the need for user-friendly resources, our findings also shed light on academics' receptivity to professional development. Significantly more

academics (54%) expressed interest in engaging in CPD to enhance their competencies for internationalized classrooms, while 30% were undecided, and 16% were not interested ($p=0.01$; one-tailed). Academics in health-related programs demonstrated higher interest (61%) compared to other disciplines, and among different academic ranks, lecturers expressed the greatest interest, along with female academics. No significant differences were observed based on the language spoken.

We found a positive correlation between interest in CPD and the perceived importance of 16 intercultural teaching competencies (ρ varying between 0.19 and 0.38; p varying between 0.01 and 0.05). This suggests that academics who find ITC important are also more interested in attending CPD opportunities. However, the extent to which academics experience challenges was not correlated with awareness about existing CPD opportunities or interest in participating in such CPD, suggesting that academics may not link their key challenges with the potential solution provided by CPD.

The primary motivation for attending CPD was the hope of improving teaching in an internationalized classroom (69%), followed by a personal interest in the topic (62%), utilizing opportunities arising in internationalized classrooms (38%), and addressing language challenges (34%). Significant differences in reasons for participation in CPD were noted among academics in health-related disciplines ($\rho = 0.32$; $p = 0.01$), where managing language challenges emerged as their main motivation, aligning with qualitative data analysis findings. When asked about factors that would enable their participation, academics mentioned allocated time (61%), a clear institutional strategy for the internationalization of teaching (41%), and collective engagement within a teaching team (41%). Funding held minimal priority among academics. This aligns with the obstacles academics perceive to their participation, with 75% citing a too-high workload as the primary obstacle to their CPD participation. Other recorded obstacles included conflicting priorities (45%), low departmental support (22%), and institutional support (20%).

Concerning CPD preferences, only 11% of academics favored a course format. Those opting for this option preferred cross-disciplinary credit-bearing courses up to 7.5 ECTS (approx. 200 hours) and in hybrid format. Workshops and seminars were the most preferred learning format, chosen by 48% of respondents. Specifically, a series of workshops or seminars was favored by academics across most academic positions and disciplines, with the exception of those in education and communication. The second most preferred option was learning from and with colleagues (23%), with a specific preference for communities of practice, scheduled discussions with colleagues within the same study discipline, peer learning and scheduled discussions with colleagues across different study disciplines. The preference for mentoring (as a part of learning from and with colleagues) was positively correlated with a “no/do not know answer” on interest in CPD, indicating that academics unsure about CPD are more inclined toward mentoring. Self-learning through organized resources (15%) and conferences on related topics (3%) were less frequent choices for academics.

Discussion

Our key findings emphasize the importance of staff composition over disciplinary affiliation, the value of immersive international experience, and the disconnect between perceived challenges and academics' interest in CPD. They also highlight the crucial role of institutional commitment and reveal the misalignment between academics' CPD preferences and current offerings.

While past studies have emphasized differences across disciplines (Bulnes & de Louw, 2022), our findings highlight the pivotal role of staff composition over mere disciplinary affiliation. Initial observations suggested disciplinary disparities between the Business School and the School of Health. However, further analysis revealed that factors such as language proficiency (Swedish/English) and differences in immersive experiences were more significant explanatory variables. It becomes clear that staff composition, rather than disciplinary distinctions, is of greater importance. This conclusion is supported by Aškerc Zadavec and Kočar's (2023) study conducted in Slovenian higher education.

Although we anticipated that prior teaching experience abroad or in a foreign language would reduce perceived challenges in internationalized classrooms, our study found no significant impact of these experiences on academics' perceptions of the difficulties they face in such settings. Surprisingly, immersive international experiences, such as living abroad or completing a postdoc internationally, may be significant for HEIs when recruiting staff for teaching in international environments. This aspect could be considered and potentially integrated into institutional recruitment policies. Sawir's (2011) findings confirmed the positive association between previous international experience and increased cultural awareness among academics, linking together personal and professional practice. Nevertheless, this connection may not be as straightforward, as indicated by studies that have concluded that academics might face challenges in effectively translating their international experience into their teaching practice (Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007). Yet, academics' previous experiences in the internationalized classroom serve as valuable learning material, providing rich examples of cultural diversity and alternative solutions for learners, aligning with the andragogical principle on the role of learners' experiences.

The fact that academics do not link the challenges they experience with possible solutions through CPD is, to some extent, worrying. Following andragogical principles—such as understanding why academics want to learn, allowing them

the independence to choose their learning methods, and clearly articulating the benefits—HEIs should develop strategies to effectively engage academics and promote CPD opportunities. Involving academics early in the CPD planning and design process could be one effective strategy.

Echoing findings in previous research (Czerniawski et al., 2017), our findings reveal a notable interest among academics to participate in CPD activities, with a stronger interest observed among female participants. In line with andragogical principles, academics demonstrated their readiness to learn, with the primary motivation for attending CPD being the aspiration to enhance teaching in an internationalized classroom. Moreover, many academics indicated their interest in the topic as a motivating factor, highlighting the intrinsic motivation. However, this interest may not necessarily translate into future participation, given the known influence of factors such as heavy workload, conflicting priorities, etc. Therefore, the role of institutional commitment to supporting academics' CPD, or the absence thereof, warrants greater attention.

Another contributing factor to the low uptake, as evidenced in Sweden (Weissova, n.d.), is a mismatch between the current offerings and the preferences of academics. Despite being the most frequently offered format by Swedish HEIs, only 11% of respondents favored a course as a form of CPD. The inclination towards collaborative CPD opportunities among academics suggests a connection to the learner's experience in andragogy, emphasizing the importance of sharing experiences and learning from and with colleagues. Given that academics encounter diverse challenges, it is reasonable to infer varying CPD types and solutions, aligned with the principle of independence.

In this context, the significance of institutional commitment to the internationalization of teaching and support of the academics cannot be overstated. Our findings highlight the various challenges academics face in participating in CPD activities, including heavy workloads, conflicting priorities, and limited departmental and institutional support. Despite these obstacles, a clear institutional strategy for internationalizing teaching emerges as a crucial motivating factor for engagement. Additionally, collective engagement within teaching teams proves instrumental in fostering participation. These insights underscore the importance of robust institutional support structures in facilitating CPD engagement and enhancing teaching practices in internationalized classrooms. To increase CPD uptake for teaching in internationalized settings, CPD offerings must align with academics' preferences and address their barriers. Approaching CPD development through andragogical principles, combined with strong institutional commitment, appears to be a promising way forward. CPD offers must align with academics' preferences and address their barriers. Approaching CPD development from the principles of andragogy, coupled with firm institutional commitment, seems to indicate a way forward.

Implications and Conclusion

Our study highlights the complexity of challenges faced by academics in internationalized classrooms and emphasizes the importance of a nuanced understanding of individual experiences and resulting needs and expectations. Between personal interest and the desire to create value for (and from) the internationalized classroom, and the fact that there is a lack of institutional support, there is an additional obstacle that has come to the fore in this study: CPD is not tailored to the needs and preferences of academics. The resources available are spent on content and formats of CPD that do not capture attention or sustain interest. Torn between many priorities, academics do not engage with or do not finish offered CPD initiatives.

Reflecting on our findings, we can conclude that an andragogical approach would be a good fit for CPD design and delivery. There are a couple of significant points that offer a reasonable assumption that teacher-centered pedagogy should be substituted with adult learner-centered andragogy. CPD should prioritize staff composition over disciplinary affiliation and address the unique challenges faced by different staff groups. Success lies not in standardizing content but in understanding the specific contexts of academics. The varying needs of our respondents indicate that CPD formats and content must be tailored to address relevant issues, such as language proficiency in the health school or group work in the business school. This approach argues against rigid curricula and one-size-fits-all solutions. Adult learners want to decide what is to be learned. Formats of collaborative learning and collegial sharing of experiences also suggest that andragogically anchored learning opportunities are better in line with learners' needs and expectations. Despite the factors that are seen as obstacles for CPD, there is intrinsic motivation and personal interest to pursue opportunities in an internationalized classroom. Finally, there is an obvious need for HEIs' management to increase the commitment of resources to further advance the transition towards inclusive internationalization through supporting academic staff in their pursuit of CPD. There is a valuable lesson for designers and deliverers of CPD in academia: listen to the needs of your audience, involve them early in design and delivery, acknowledge their experience, and build a foundation of collaborative learning opportunities.

Future research endeavors could delve into the effectiveness of CPD initiatives in supporting academics in teaching in internationalized classrooms. Specifically, investigating the varying degrees of success among different CPD activities and discern the factors contributing to their efficacy. Understanding why certain CPD initiatives outperform others would

provide valuable insights into designing more impactful CPD. Additionally, exploring the multitude of factors influencing academics' engagement in CPD is crucial, with a particular focus on the intricate dynamics of the role of institutional support within this broader context. A cross-institutional comparison emerges as a promising avenue to deepen our understanding of CPD preferences and needs among academics across diverse higher education settings. Such research could offer a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between institutional frameworks, individual motivations, and the overall landscape of CPD in the context of teaching in internationalized classrooms.

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