



Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

A collection of shared experiences - 1st. Edition

Una colección de experiencias compartidas - 1er. Edición

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
La Salle
UNIVERSITIES

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

A collection of shared
experiences - 1st. Edition

*Una colección de experiencias
compartidas - 1er. Edición*

IALU

International Association of Lasallian Universities
Asociación Internacional de Universidades Lasalianas

Mission Committee

Frances Sweeney

Comité de Misión

Frances Sweeney

Research Committee

Regina Helena Giannotti

Comité de Investigación

Regina Helena Giannotti

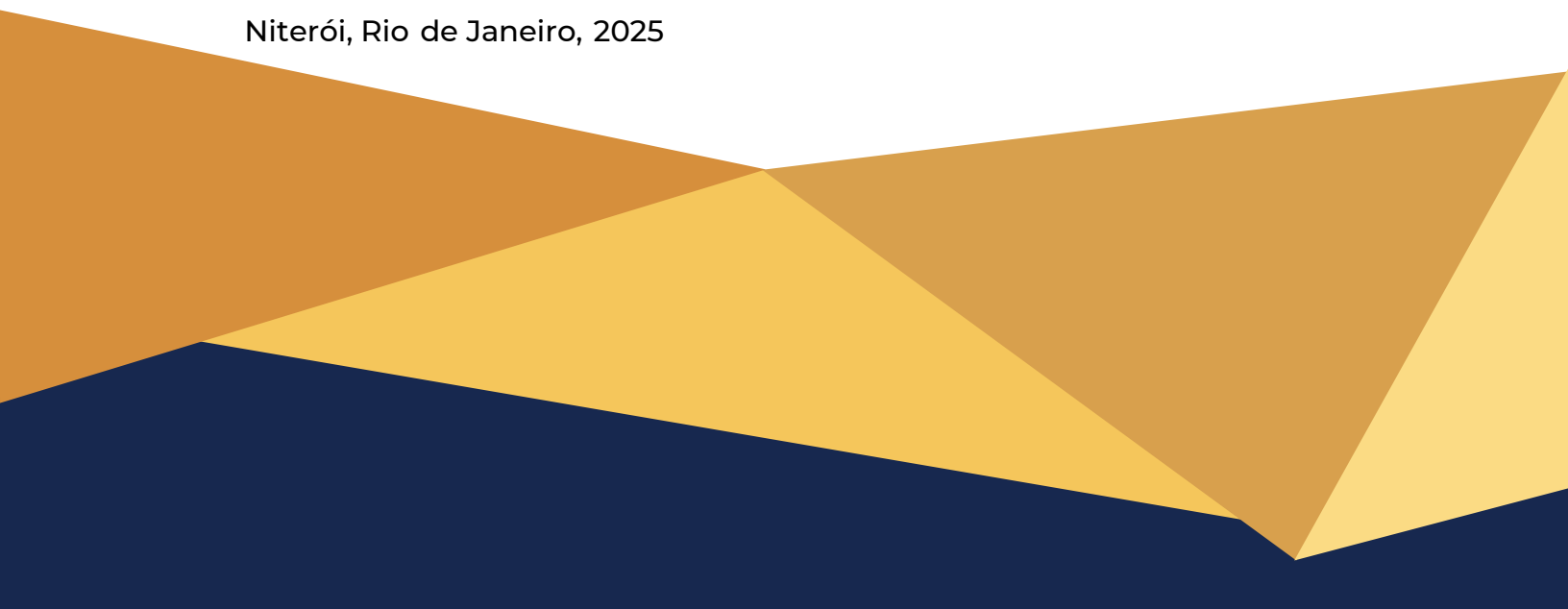
Internationalization Committee

Joan Landeros

Comité de Intenacionalización

Joan Landeros

Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, 2025



ISBN: 978-65-01-66623-5



Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)
(Câmara Brasileira do Livro, SP, Brasil)

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation :
a collection of shared experiences [livro
eletrônico] = Lasallian Universities
International Cooperation : una colección de
experiencias compartidas / research committee
Regina Helena Giannotti. -- 1. ed. --
Niterói, RJ : Ed. dos Autores, 2025.
-- (Lasallian Universities International
Cooperation)
PDF

Edição bilíngue: inglês/espanhol.
Vários autores.
Bibliografia.
ISBN 978-65-01-66623-5

1. Artigos - Coletâneas 2. Cooperação
internacional 3. Educação 4. Educação superior
5. Pesquisas I. Giannotti, Regina Helena.
II. Título: Lasallian Universities International
Cooperation : una colección de experiencias
compartidas III. Série.

25-297852.0

CDD-370

Índices para catálogo sistemático:

1. Educação : Coletâneas 370

Editorial Staff

Lasallian Universities International
Cooperation: a collection of shared
Experiences – 1st. Edition

Board IALU

President - Br. Andrés Govela Gutierrez
(Universidad La Salle Nezahualcóyotl)

Vice President - Dr. David J. Livingston
(Lewis University)

Treasurer - Phillipe Choquet (France UniLaSalle)

Executive Director - Carlos Federico Coelho

Associate Director - Diana P. Loera Rodríguez

Europe and French-Speaking Africa - Josep M.
Santos (La Salle Barcelona, Ramon Llul
University)

Chair of Internationalization Committee - Joan
Landeros

Chair of Research Committee - Dra. Regina
Helena Giannotti (Unilasalle - Rio de Janeiro)

Chair of Mission Committee - Dra. Frances
Sweeney (Saint Mary's College of California)

Collection Organizers - Internationalization,
Research and Mission Committees

Scientific Committee - Dr. Eduardo Gomez (La
Salle University of Mexico - Email:
eduardo.gomez@lasalle.mx); Dr. Michael Hahn
(Saint Mary's University of Minnesota -
Email: mhahn.smumn.edu); Dr. José Alberto
Antunes de Miranda (La Salle University Canoas
- Email: jose.miranda@unilasalle.edu.br); Dr. Jose
Vicente Leon (La Salle University of Barcelona -
Email: jv.leon@lasallecampus.es); Dr. Romeo
Teruel (St. La Salle University (USLS) - Email:
r.teruel@usls.edu.ph); Dr. Regina Helena
Giannotti (Unilasalle-Rio de Janeiro - Email:
regina.giannotti@lasalle.org.br); Dr. Feorillo
Demeterio | La Salle University, Manila (observer
member) Email: feorillo.demeterio@dlsu.edu.ph)

Editing and proofreading - Dra. Daniele Castro
Alves

Layout and Graphic Design - Dra. Amanda
Antunes, João Victor Marques y João Victor
Monteiro

IALU - International Association of Lasallian
Universities

Publication information:
Publisher - IALU; Niterói, Brasil y 2025;
ISBN 978-65-01-66623-5

Personal Editorial

Lasallian Universities International
Cooperation: *Una colección de experiencias
compartidas* – 1ª Edición

Junta IALU

Presidente - Br. Andrés Govela Gutierrez
(Universidad La Salle Nezahualcóyotl)

Vice presidente - Dr. David J. Livingston
(Universidad Lewis)

Tesorero - Phillipe Choquet (UniLaSalle Francia)

Director Ejecutivo - Carlos Federico Coelho

Directora Asociada - Diana P. Loera Rodríguez

Europa y África francófona - Josep M. Santos
(La Salle Barcelona Universidad Ramon Llul)

Presidente del Comité de Internacionalización - Joan
Landeros

Presidente del Comité de Investigación - Dra. Regina
Helena Giannotti (Unilasalle – Rio de Janeiro)

Presidente del Comité de Misión - Dra. Frances
Sweeney (Saint Mary's College of California)

Organizadores de la Colección – Comités de
Internacionalización, Investigación y Misión

Comité Científico - Dr. Eduardo Gomez (La Salle
University of Mexico - Email:
eduardo.gomez@lasalle.mx); Dr. Michael Hahn
(Saint Mary's University of Minnesota -
Email: mhahn.smumn.edu); Dr. José Alberto
Antunes de Miranda (La Salle University Canoas
- Email: jose.miranda@unilasalle.edu.br); Dr. Jose
Vicente Leon (La Salle University of Barcelona -
Email: jv.leon@lasallecampus.es); Dr. Romeo
Teruel (St. La Salle University (USLS) - Email:
r.teruel@usls.edu.ph); Dr. Regina Helena
Giannotti (Unilasalle-Rio de Janeiro - Email:
regina.giannotti@lasalle.org.br); Dr. Feorillo
Demeterio | La Salle University, Manila (observer
member) Email: feorillo.demeterio@dlsu.edu.ph)

Edición y corrección - Dra. Daniele
Castro Alves

Maquetación y Diseño Gráfico - Dra. Amanda
Antunes, João Victor Marques y João Victor
Monteiro

IALU - Asociación Internacional de Universidades
Lasalianas

Dados de Publicación:
Editorial - IALU; Niterói, Brasil y 2025;
ISBN 978-65-01-66623-5



PREFACE

It is with great joy and profound gratitude that I introduce the first ebook publication of the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU). This volume marks an important milestone in our ongoing journey as a global network committed to the advancement of knowledge, the promotion of human dignity, and the transformation of society through education.

This initiative has come from the Research Committee, and it is the result of the collaboration of the other two committees of IALU, Internationalization and Mission. It has the purpose of showing the activity of our association.

This collection of chapters—written by Lasallian scholars from every region of the world—reflects the richness, diversity, and unity of our shared mission. Rooted in the values and vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, each contribution offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing higher education today, while reaffirming our collective commitment to faith, service, and community.

The authors who have contributed to this work represent not only the academic excellence present within our network but also the spirit of collaboration that defines our Lasallian identity. They write from different cultures, contexts, and disciplines, yet are united by a common purpose: to inspire, to engage, and to transform.

This ebook is more than an academic publication—it is a testament to the global Lasallian community's dedication to fostering dialogue, promoting research grounded in values, and addressing the urgent needs of our world with compassion and clarity.



PREFACE

It is with great joy and profound gratitude that I introduce the first ebook publication of the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU). This volume marks an important milestone in our ongoing journey as a global network committed to the advancement of knowledge, the promotion of human dignity, and the transformation of society through education.

This initiative has come from the Research Committee, and it is the result of the collaboration of the other two committees of IALU, Internationalization and Mission. It has the purpose of showing the activity of our association.

This collection of chapters—written by Lasallian scholars from every region of the world—reflects the richness, diversity, and unity of our shared mission. Rooted in the values and vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, each contribution offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing higher education today, while reaffirming our collective commitment to faith, service, and community.

The authors who have contributed to this work represent not only the academic excellence present within our network but also the spirit of collaboration that defines our Lasallian identity. They write from different cultures, contexts, and disciplines, yet are united by a common purpose: to inspire, to engage, and to transform.

This ebook is more than an academic publication—it is a testament to the global Lasallian community's dedication to fostering dialogue, promoting research grounded in values, and addressing the urgent needs of our world with compassion and clarity.

I thank all those who made this publication possible—our contributors, editors, coordinators, and the many colleagues who supported this initiative. May this work serve as a catalyst for continued collaboration and a source of insight and inspiration for educators, students, and leaders across the globe.

Together, let us continue to build bridges of knowledge, hope, and solidarity.

In faith and fraternity,

Andrés Goveia
President, International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU)



Br. Andrés Goveia Gutiérrez
IALU President / Presidente IALU

The inaugural publication of the first e-book of the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU) is not only a source of great satisfaction but also poses important challenges for our global Lasallian higher education family. We must continue our worldwide collaborative efforts inspired by our Lasallian values to contribute to knowledge and understanding for the common good and the dignity of every individual.

In these times of historic uncertainty and transformation, the wealth of human talent and cultural diversity of the Lasallian network can contribute unique perspectives and solutions for a just society, a sustainable common home, and a transcendent human spirit. It is incumbent upon IALU university communities and their partners in the social, political, and productive sectors to continue to work together for these shared goals.

Congratulations to the IALU Research Committee for creating this initiative and inviting the IALU Mission and Internationalization Committees to create a collaborative synergy. This first publication is a significant motivation to continue to build stronger and more productive global ties among our institutions to contribute to our primary goal, the formation of future agents of change.

Joan Landeros
Internationalization Committee



Joan Landeros
Internationalization Committee
Comité de Internacionalización

On behalf of the Mission Committee of IALU, we want to express our appreciation to the IALU Research Committee and to Dr. Regina Giannotti, chair of the committee and editor of this e-book. What began as an intriguing idea has led to a beautiful reality. How wonderful to share and showcase the work being done across our global network.

We also express gratitude to the many colleagues who submitted their work for review and publication. The individual and collective effort demonstrate the importance of our colleges and universities in pursuing new information and contributing to disciplinary conversations, especially those that touch hearts and transform the lives of our students and their communities. With this kind of collaboration and commitment to justice, our global Lasallian network has a rich potential for providing deep impact. The articles also demonstrate our unique educational approach and our shared mission and commitment that transcend our multiple disciplines, diverse educational settings, and global locations. Heartfelt gratitude and warm congratulations! *Indivisa Manent*. We are indeed One Lasalle.

Frances M. Sweeney, Ph.D.
Mission Committee



Frances Sweeney
Mission Committee
Comité de Misión



Dear readers,

The first edition of the collection “International Cooperation of Lasallian Universities” reflects the efforts of faculty members from our institutions around the world, driven by the commitment to create unique and meaningful experiences for their students. The COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) projects, the Virtual Exchange (VE) initiatives, combined with the use of technology and innovative pedagogical approaches presented here, are just a small sample of what can be achieved globally and through cooperation among our institutions.

When the three IALU committees conceived this project, the goal was to inspire professors and institutions in their process of internationalization - promoting inter-institutional partnerships, and strengthening research cooperation agreements. A central aspect of this initiative is the compilation of best practices in a digital publication accessible to all Lasallian institutions.

Belonging to an international network of higher education institutions represents tremendous potential for transformation. It is essential to take advantage of this characteristic and provide our students, faculty, and staff with opportunities to benefit from the academic excellence of our programs, academic mobility initiatives, and cutting-edge research.

In the following sections, readers will find articles that illustrate experiences of international cooperation among Lasallian institutions, including details on the planning and analyses of outcomes achieved. Another section presents an overview of all Lasallian institutions worldwide, highlighting their undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs they offer, as well as direct links to their websites. Information can be consulted by IALU regions, by countries, or programs. If your institution is not represented, we kindly ask that you send information or updated data to ialu.research@lasalle.org . This section will be updated in every new edition.

The growing competition in higher education is not new; however, recent changes in research evaluation criteria – particularly the emphasis on social impact – have become central to academic discussions. In this context, one article, written by an observer member of the IALU Research Committee and his team analyzes the scientific productivity of the five leading Lasallian universities over the past decade: De La Salle University,

Manila (DLSUM); Manhattan College, Bronx (MCB); Universidade Católica de Brasília, Brasil (UCB); La Salle University, Philadelphia (LSUP); and La Salle, Barcelona (LSB).

Another initiative of the Research Committee is to gather information on researchers from our institutions, their areas of expertise, and the types of collaboration they wish to pursue. This resource aims to support faculty and researchers in finding partnerships and expanding their academic network. If you would like to update your institution's research information, please contact us at ialu.research@lasalle.org . Updates will be published in the next edition.

Finally, we hereby present RIILSA – the La Salle International Research Network, a science and technology network established in 2000, which has been continuously refined over the years by the participating institutions. This initiative provides institutions not only with opportunities to develop collaborative projects and research in areas and topics of interest but also evidences the significant impact that coordinated and networked efforts can exert on societies.

Together, we go further. I wish you an enriching reading experience and valuable reflections inspired by the thought-provoking articles presented in this volume. I look forward to our next edition.

With my best regards,

Prof. Dra. Regina Helena Giannotti
Editor in Chief and Chair of the Research Committee
Unilasalle-RJ
ialu.research@lasalle.org



Dra. Regina Helena Giannotti
Research Committee
Comité de Investigación

Table of Contents

Preface by President of the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU).....	4
Message from the Internationalization Committee.....	6
Message from the Mission Committee.....	7
Message from the Editor-in-Chief and Chair of the Research Committee.....	8
1. Articles.....	14
1.1. Experience of online religious education among students of the La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute: a phenomenological inquiry.....	15
1.2. X-Culture: a global virtual exchange collaboration rooted in experiential learning....	33
1.3. Collaborative learning in higher education using innovative technologies: across borders, across disciplines.....	55
1.4. Enhancing literature teaching through virtual exchange.....	80
1.5. Diploma in Educational Research and Innovation: a blended learning experience to improve teaching quality among faculty at La Salle Urubamba.....	90
1.6. The International Consortium MIEX Master in International Business - Triple Degree: an example of collaboration across regions of the world.....	103
1.7. Lasallian Values and their influence in job performance and intercultural awareness: experiences of Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca Graduates.....	127
1.8. Inclusive UX design for virtual exchange: enhancing accessibility for neurodiverse learners.....	151
1.9. International cooperation and collaboration: reflections on collaborative online learning (COIL) at La Salle University Brazil.....	176
1.10. Developing global competence among pre-service teachers in a binational class through the collaborative online international learning (coil) program.....	193



2. IALU Network Research Departments.....	204
2.1. Presentation.....	205
2.2. A Decade of Research Productivity: A Bibliometric Comparison of the Five Most Research Productive Institutional Members of the Association of La Salle Universities (IALU).....	206
2.3. IALU Researchers.....	224
2.4. Invitation to Participate in the "Research Department"	225
 3. Get to Know RIILSA – La Salle International Research Network.....	226
3.1. Presentation.....	227
3.2. Master plan for the La Salle International Research Network (RIILSA) 2025-2032.....	228
 4. Lasallian higher education around the world	261
4.1. Presentation.....	262
4.2. IALU Region.....	263

Tabla de Contenidos

Prólogo del Presidente de la Asociación Internacional de Universidades La Salle (IALU).....	4
Mensaje del Comité del Internacionalización.....	6
Mensaje del Comité de Misión.....	7
Mensaje del Editor en Jefe y Presidente del Comité de Investigación.....	8
1. Artículos.....	14
1.1. Experiencia de la educación religiosa en línea entre estudiantes del Instituto de Ciencias Médicas y de la Salud La Salle: un estudio fenomenológico.....	15
1.2. X-Culture: una colaboración global de intercambio virtual basada en el aprendizaje experiencial.....	33
1.3. Aprendizaje colaborativo en la educación superior usando tecnologías innovadoras: fronteras y disciplinas.....	55
1.4. Mejorando la enseñanza de la literatura mediante el intercambio virtual	80
1.5. Diploma en Investigación e Innovación Educativa: una experiencia de aprendizaje combinado para mejorar la calidad docente en La Salle Urubamba.....	90
1.6. El Consorcio Internacional MIEX Maestría en Negocios Internacionales – Doble Título: un ejemplo de colaboración entre regiones del mundo.....	103
1.7. Valores Lasallistas y su influencia en el desempeño laboral y la conciencia intercultural: experiencias de egresados de la Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca.....	127
1.8. Diseño inclusivo de UX para intercambio virtual: mejorando la accesibilidad para estudiantes neurodiversos.....	151
1.9. Cooperación y colaboración internacional: reflexiones sobre el aprendizaje colaborativo en línea (COIL) en la Universidad La Salle Brasil.....	176

1.10. Desarrollo de competencia global en profesores en formación en una clase binacional mediante el programa de aprendizaje colaborativo internacional en línea (COIL)).....	193
2. 2. Departamentos de Investigación de la Red IALU.....	204
2.1. Presentación.....	205
2.2. Una Década de Productividad en Investigación: Comparación Bibliométrica de los Cinco Miembros Institucionales Más Productivos en Investigación de la Asociación de Universidades La Salle (IALU).....	206
2.3. Investigadores.....	224
2.4. Invitación a participar en el "Departamento de Investigación"	225
3. 3. Conozca RIILSA – Red Internacional de Investigación La Salle.....	226
3.1. Presentación.....	227
3.2. Plan maestro para la Red Internacional de Investigación La Salle (RIILSA) 2025-2032.....	228
4. 4. Educación superior Lasallista alrededor del mundo.....	261
4.1. Presentación.....	262
4.2. Región IALU.....	263



Articles

Artículos

EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AMONG STUDENTS OF THE LA SALLE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES INSTITUTE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Myra A. Patambang¹

De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences institute, Cavite, Philippines

Abstract

This dissertation is a pioneering study about Filipino Generation Z cohort who have undergone online Religious Education in one of the schools of De La Salle Philippines. The paper utilized the existential-phenomenological method. It was an exploration of ideas, perceptions and motivations behind conscious behaviors and responses to situations that comprise human experience. Existential because the study dwelt on the concrete situations and experiences of the students who have attended pure online Religious Education classes. The lived experiences of the nine co-researchers are the facts on which rigorous analysis and reflection are based. As a research method in Social Science, existential-phenomenology puts premium on human experience as a wellspring of meanings and insights. It realizes the significance of one story in connection with the entirety of human experiences. Existential-phenomenology analyzes and brings about layers of meaning from narratives and therefrom, contributes not only knowledge, but most profound understanding of human thoughts, feelings, aspirations, dreams and broad sense of spirituality. In the long run, these snippets of wisdom would pierce through persons and families and communities – thereby affecting transformation no matter how subtle or insignificant. Likewise, the study contains a characterization, description and discernment about the dreams and aspirations, hopes and fears of Generation Z as they survived and thrived through the global pandemic. The Global Compact on Education, the Declaration on Christian Education, Lasallian Spirituality, Creation Spirituality and spirituality in general were some of the references upon which the reflective narratives, textual themes, structural themes and eidetic insight were drawn. The narratives revealed how online Religious Education can cut across the world of the present-day digital natives. The eidetic insight from the dissertation is that the experience of online Religious Education has been a personal and communal journey, filled with amazement and adversities of varying levels and manifestations that stimulated a collective sense of defying the odds through creativity, inner metamorphosis, and an ardent resolve to live out the Lasallian core values of faith, zeal for service and communion in mission. This journey through online Religious Education was capped by the creation of a retreat module (MANY WELLS, ONE RIVER) designed to provide an integrative Lasallian experience for the Allied Health Sciences' graduating students of DLSMHSI..

Keywords: Values, higher education, intercultural awareness, job performance.

¹ Myra A. Patambang is a graduate of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Cosmic Anthropology. She has completed the academic requirements for a doctorate in Religious and Values Education and holds a Master's degree in Educational Administration. She has obtained diplomas and certificates in Philosophy, Psychology, Sacred Scriptures and COIL (The Collaborative Online International Learning Model), courtesy of IALU-La Salle Mexico. Currently, she is a professor of Religious Education in De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute, where she is the Chair of the Integrated Humanities and Social Sciences. Her training include Lasallian Studies and Spirituality, Lasallian Formation, Pastoral Care for the sick, Facilitating retreats and recollections, and Leadership in Evangelization among others. Email Address: mapatambang@dlsmhsi.edu.ph.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a pioneering study about second year college Filipino students who have undergone online Religious Education in one of the schools of De La Salle Philippines. The paper attempted at engaging nine students in an in-depth sharing about their experiences while attending online religion classes. Through their revelations, it was hoped that their stories could be a source of knowledge and wisdom for other students and teachers alike.

The focus of this study was to present and examine the experiences of De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute's students, who have finished the 9-unit Religious Education program through online platforms. The main objectives of the study were: (1) to describe and analyze the lived experiences of DLSMHSI students relative to attending purely online Religious Education during the onslaught of Covid-19 pandemic; (2) to articulate meanings and insights that could be gleaned from the students' lived experiences and (3) to determine the potential implications of this study on the virtual exchange that transpire in the digital classrooms of religious education.

METHODOLOGY

The paper utilized the existential-phenomenological method. It was an exploration of ideas, perceptions and motivations behind conscious behaviors and responses to situations that comprise human experience. Existential because the study dwelt on the concrete situations and experiences of the students who have attended pure online Religious Education classes. Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl (1859-1938), acclaimed as one of the most prominent philosophers of the 20th century, likewise recognized as the principal founder of phenomenology, defined phenomenology as the "science of the essence of consciousness." Husserl expounded in a descriptive-reflective manner the underpinnings and composition of knowledge in human consciousness. Phenomenology became the study of human meanings as established by the stream of consciousness. (Valle, 1998)

We can reflect on the content and process of our experiences and derive meanings that flow from acts of consciousness. The phenomenological approach is geared towards meaning-making about that certain experienced fact.

Phenomenology offers the opportunity to listen from the stories of the heart. The narratives become the object of thorough reflection and analysis. Spoken and unspoken words could reveal the hidden recesses of one's desires, hopes, anxieties, dreams, faith and sense of spirituality. Careful, discerning and empathetic attitude are paramount in doing phenomenology. The process of doing phenomenology, after a rigorous reflective analysis of a phenomenon, must lead to the formulation of the most essential insight which is called the eidetic insight. This insight must find resonance with other realms of experiences in order to achieve fruitfulness. The depth and breadth of an insight must be far-reaching insofar as it is an outcome of continued introspection and discernment. When this is reached, the insight is considered that of a methodic idea.

Participants in this study are referred to as co-researchers. Through random invitation and referrals, co-researchers from the different undergraduate colleges (Nursing, Medical Imaging and Therapy, Rehabilitation Sciences, and Medical Laboratory Sciences) got invited. There were nine (9) who accepted the invitation and engaged in an online in-depth interview. The basic criterion to become a co-researcher was that they must have finished all the 3 Religion subjects through online platform. Validity of "data" in phenomenological research could be obtained by interviewing 6-10 participants according to Creswell (2007), Patton (1990) and Leedy (1997).

The main strategy in gathering the lived experiences was an online interview via Webex platform, the official Learning Management System of DLSMHSI. The recording facility was utilized systematically. Approved guide questions with vernacular translations were prepared beforehand in order to facilitate the story-telling process. Compliance with protocols was ascertained in the course of data gathering.

The Process of Doing Phenomenology

The following steps were taken into account:

1. Through an in-depth interview, the lived experiences were gathered conscientiously. the recorded proceedings were transcribed verbatim. Repetitive parts and inputs that were not relevant to the narratives being sought, were edited accordingly.

2. First reflection: emerging themes were coded, summarized in tabular form and characterized. These were **textual themes** or **meaning-units**. A title was assigned to each of the stories. Each title is reflective of what was perceived to have been the most dominant disposition and characteristic of each of the co-researchers.

3. Second reflection: clustering of themes or identifying common characteristics of the textual themes above. Likewise described as horizontalization, the group of sentences in the first reflection were aligned according to meaning, content and structures. The output of this level of reflection was the **structural themes**.

4. Third reflection: a deeper exploration of the **structural themes** by referencing to Michael Fox's (1983) four paths of inner journey. Fox describes the first path as that of recognizing what is good and beautiful around us, being filled with awe and wonder – the *Via Positiva*. The second path recognizes pains and sufferings that befall us – the *Via Negativa*. The third path happens when we find ourselves wanting to rise from downfalls, choosing to trust, and creating something new out of the restrictions brought by life's challenges - the *Via Creativa*. The next path leads to living out the values that have been caught along the way and realizing the dreams that have been woven in the process. In the long run, people wish to become witnesses of social justice, love and peace at home, in school, in the immediate community and, in the universe, where we all breathe and co-exist with the rest of created reality – the *Via Transformativa*.

5. Based on the foregoing, five postulates were derived. These essential insights were summarized in one sentence, referred herein as **the Eidetic Insight**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Theme I: The Joys of Online Religious Education – *VIA POSITIVA*

The co-researchers have narrated experiences that reveal appreciation and advantages of having online classes in general. They expressed affirmation of people, circumstances, lessons, activities, and outputs of virtual classes. The following are some of the actual online lessons and activities that the students were affirmative about: Life of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Lasallian Mission and core values, Lasallian Stories and Lasallian Guiding Principles, Gospel readings,

reflection sessions, prayer services or liturgy, dedication segment, meditation, nature walk and breathing exercises, role playing, song adaptations and integration of music in class, group sharing, praying with and for one another, sharing of talents, creative self-introductions, Council of Beings, and the RED 102 Final Output: A Day of Service.

Excerpts from the Narratives Depicting the Joys of Online Religious Education

"This is the only subject that connects us with God. Religious Education is like our rest in order to be with God. Even for just once a week, I really like the Gospel readings and prayers. And then there was music! (giggles) (Chard Ivan)

*"This is the only subject that brings peace of mind to the students; one can reflect and connect with God. The only subject that provides space for the self. Religious Education has really become the **bridge that connected** me to God. The subject helped and formed me to become better." (Isabella)*

"I found Religious Education to be very important, we are molded as a person and the discussions really helped us not to lose hope because God is always with us. So our perspectives change and we grow in the course of the study. I really learned a lot." (Crizel Joy)

"Religion classes, since it's all about faith....I remind myself that God is my biggest support. I want to help, cure, care. I really dream of becoming a physician someday. I think Religious Education keeps me grounded... I am humbled by RED subjects. We are taught to be human, to act like children of God, we are all equal." (Ashley)

Structural Theme 2: The Challenges of Online Religious Education – VIA NEGATIVA

The following section is a presentation of the challenges and hardships that the co-researchers have gone through during the pandemic and are intrinsically connected to their experiences of online classes, particularly Religious Education. Examples include academic difficulties, distractions at home, technical and financial problems, geographical factors and time zones, sickness and death in the families, temptations, frustrations when sensitive topics were not given ample time to digest and discuss further (e.g. moral issues).

Excerpts from the Narratives Depicting the Challenges Encountered in the course of Online Religious Education

"During the height of the pandemic, my father got infected twice by the virus, then my grandfather also tested positive and eventually he died. It was really terrible to have somebody in the family to die so unexpectedly. I could not believe it right away. And I had no one to turn to or to hold on to because of the pandemic. I suffered from depression then. I lost weight, I could not eat, I was crying and crying, felt so alone... Then I also lost two mentors, my two pastors also got victimized by Covid." (Crizel Joy)

"Can you imagine how it feels to be in front of the screen the whole day? No communication at all with other people, no contact and interaction. There has been terrible social isolation, leading to loneliness and lack of motivation. My entire family and I got infected by Covid. Just like my classmate, I was left behind... I had an uncle who had to undergo blood transfusion, it was then that I felt deeply saddened and stressed out (voice quivering), after two weeks, my family got better, but not my uncle. He did not make it. And because of my online classes, I had to catch up with many requirements, school work was piling up and I missed so many quizzes already, (long pause) there was no time to grieve (crying)." (Isabella)

"The pandemic did not only affect my studies. My mother tested positive of Covid-19. We were all scared, we isolated ourselves and we were crying a lot. As if somebody had already died, especially my younger siblings. Then my grandmother died. She was cremated. No wakes, no gatherings. It was really painful since we love her dearly." (crying) (Janus)

Structural Theme 3: Taking the Visionary Path - *VIA CREATIVA*

The following section is about the experiences of the co-researchers in regard to taking the visionary path – where they choose to create something new out of the present circumstances and realities they are in; they have chosen symbols and images that depict their visions about the life they hope to create alongside with their families, communities, the environment, and beloved country.

The Grateful Artist: She symbolized her journey through Religious Education using the image of a woman in yoga position. Through the lessons and activities in Religious Education, she had experienced *flourishing*, growing in self-knowledge, and deepening her faith in God. The woman in a sitting position suggest *grounding*. Angela believes that Religious Education made her value

silence, meditation, reflection, and openness to the present moment. Being grounded means calmness and gratefulness.

Into Light Conversations: Blessie's narrative evolved around her appreciation of online Religious Education classes as moments of light conversations. The tree symbolizes Blessie's outlook in life. She could see herself as a giving tree, ready to serve her family and the future patients she will encounter. The path she is taking is that of openness to changing seasons, where the cycle of winter, spring, summer, and fall is respected, and the beauty of every season is celebrated.

The Joyful and Dedicated Lasallian: Chard Ivan was full of glee during the entire interview. He was genuinely proud of his Lasallian education since high school. He chose a **solar lamp** to symbolize his journey through online Religious Education. He believes that God is the source of its power and energy. Ivan takes his inspiration from St. John Baptist de la Salle whom he wants to emulate. As a solar lamp that sheds light, Ivan's greatest dream is to be of service to the community.

The Optimistic Child: Crizel Joy had been through anxiety attacks and suffered deeply from several deaths of loved ones during the pandemic. Yet she remained positive all along. She chose a **circle** to symbolize her journey. She had long accepted the realities of life as that of a cycle, a continuous movement of highs and lows, ups and downs. Even she did find herself many times at the bottom, in her heart she held on to the promises of God, that He would constantly raise everyone up. Crizel never faltered even she had to go through painful encounters with death and sickness.

The Community Leader: Isabella had chosen a visionary path when she decided to rise from discouraging events of her life. She believed that the challenging situation called for creative and radical response. She chose a **lighted candle** to represent her journey. A half-burning candle seemed so fitting to describe the very person of this Lasallian leader. She was quietly working and coordinating miracles that must have helped thousands of people, yet everything was done in sheer goodness. No publicity at all. Simply allowing her light to illuminate where it could reach.

The Generous Neighbor: She mentioned several times how much she got inspired by the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle. Janus is indeed a generous neighbor. Her symbol is the **RED Virus**. On a positive note, she acclaimed that it was in online Religious Education that she got the inspiration to do something good for the needy. She said that she got "infected" by the lessons and activities in

Religious Education. And that the “virus” of Religious Education and St. La Salle was so compelling that she decided to become a “host” to the said virus. She wishes to “infect” people with acts of love, genuine service, compassion, and faith in God.

The Guiding Light: Ashley was very grateful about her online Religious Education. She cherished all the lessons, activities, and experiences in her online Religion Classes. She felt proud that she has gained enough confidence to stand her ground as a Catholic. Her symbol is **piercing light**, referring to what she needed and what she discovered in Religious Education. She is grateful that God had sent her to a Lasallian school where she felt growth in her spiritual life. A piercing light through the darkness.

Keep Soaring in Hope: Nick has been one of those who enumerated quite numerous numbers of challenges and difficulties encountered in the course of online Religious Education. These seemingly discouraging experiences did not stop Nick from looking beyond and choosing to remain hopeful, empowered by his desire to serve and his faith in God the Almighty. Nick’s symbol is a **dove**. He believes that no matter how bad the circumstances would seem, he maintains optimism.

Breathe and Bloom: The **gladiolus flower** speaks about the disposition of Paul Yrneh. The symbol depicts beauty, exuberance, and wonder. Despite the many troubles and fears brought about by the pandemic, Paul chose to breathe and bloom. He has his lovely family, his relationship with God is ever deepening, he is committed to becoming a doctor someday and desires to serve those in dire need.

Excerpts from the Narratives Depicting their Choices of Creating Something New Amidst the Challenges of Online Religious Education

*“My symbol for Religious Education journey is that of **SUNSHINE**. Optimism. A pathway, a shine from God to me when I was praying for some guidance and He did.” (Ashley)*

“Through Religious Education, I became more hopeful. The dove symbolizes the hope to move forward despite anything. Just like Noah who sent out a dove and find out if there is life out there. Dove tells me to pray and continue with life.” (Nick)

"I choose gladiolus flower to symbolize my journey through online Religious Education on me. The flower signifies strength of character, remembrance, faithfulness, and moral integrity. Through the help of the subject, I have changed and become a better person." (Paul Yrneh)

"I like it when our teachers relate the lessons in real life, reminding us to be kind in every situation, we must think of other people always, we must care about others especially during this pandemic. While we have our own lives and problems, we are taught to remain understanding, considerate and be there for those who might need us." (Blessie)

Structural Theme 4: The Path of Inner Transformation - *VIA TRANSFORMATIVA*

The grateful artist had reached out to her church community by way of sharing her blessings. The joyful and dedicated Lasallian had been joining volunteer activities that reach out to the last, the lost and the least. He even became very active member of **Youth for Leni** as he believed in peace and justice. The generous neighbor did concrete acts of service by way of teaching and feeding the children in the vicinity. The founder and leader of the NGO **KAHAYAG PH** had been working wonders out of faith, zeal for service and certainly practicing communion in mission as she continues up to the present – managing the community pantries in Cavite and the community kitchen that had already reached Mindanao. The guiding light had been actively involved in school organizations, reaching out to fellow Lasallians. Her involvement with Red Cross cannot be underrated just the same. Back home, she continues to guide her siblings in matters of faith and religion. The optimistic child continues to teach and lead her fellow young members of the Born-Again Christian church. I remain deeply inspired by how she managed to face sickness and successive deaths in her circle. Her faith in God is simply unflappable.

The co-researchers have likewise evolved in their prayer lives. They said that before the pandemic, they did not seem to give importance to trivial things in the family. But the pandemic and online Religious Education motivated them to pray even more. When asked about their intentions, **thanksgiving** was the prominent theme of their prayers. They really have become more conscious of God's blessings: health, family, friends, love, sustenance, education. They realized that if there are 10 painful things to cry about, they had a hundred reasons to thank God for.

Excerpts from the Narratives Depicting Experiences of Inner Transformation While Attending Online Religious Education

"I could say that I owe a lot to Religious Education. Because of this subject, I got inspired to establish this organization. (KAHAYAG PH) It was really RED that molded me. It was this subject and the pandemic that I started this NGO. This is the only subject that makes us look into ourselves. Actually this is not just a subject for me.... In Religious Education, there is this dimension of morals. The spiritual dimension of RED is one thing that I find the most important element." (Isabella)

"... there were a bunch of young children near our house. I invited them inside and I started teaching them how to count and do basic writing. I could see that they are all into computer games. It has become a regular thing now. They would come to our house every now and then for some tutorials in basic education." (Janus)

"Because of all these experiences, I could say that online Religious Education had really been effective to me. I have joined a lot of organizations in school. (MHSI Peer Facilitators, LINGAP, Red Cross, campus Ministry among others). Religious Education has become the catalyst for me in joining all these organizations. Most of the activities are about helping people." (Ashley)

"I believe that to become a true Lasallian is to show it in action. We should really live out what St. La Salle taught about service to the community. It cannot just be empty words but practice. I also learned about justice. (Sigh)" (Chard Ivan)

"As Lasallians, we were taught the core values that we need to live out. Especially REVERENCE FOR LIFE, this is very important in helping the community. Religious Education taught me to become the voice of other people." (Nick)

POSTULATES/ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND THE EIDETIC INSIGHT

The structural themes above are encapsulated in the following essential insights:

a. Online Religious Education is a personal and communal journey.

From the narratives, it is imperative that initiation, adjustment and coping with the demands of online education entails a lot of personal discipline and adaptation. In the long run, each of them realized that the challenges became bearable upon discovering the beauty of support system that often had reached the depths of friendship. A sense of community evolved as days went by, as they

began to trust one another and naturally depended on each other. Most of the fears and uneasiness at the start of online education was due to lack of interaction and feelings of isolation. As soon as they began working in small groups and acquaintance happened, the classes became vibrant.

Sianipar, Desi et al (2022) recognizes the salient role of the teacher in online Religious Education. In his study on Classroom Management of Christian Religious Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic, he established that online classroom management can be realized through the leadership of teachers who are servant-hearted; planning of learning activities in shaping Christian character; setting the learning process and learning materials; teacher skills in implementing learning; and teachers who always guarantee the quality of their learning through evaluation activities.

b. Amazement and adversities are inevitable realities.

Based on the narratives, there had been a hundred reasons to be happy about online Religious Education. Likewise, they shared another hundred instances of feeling down and troubled due to academics, family problems, financial difficulties, deaths, and sickness. Again, they learned that they were never alone, there were always people around who share in their joys and sorrows.

There had been varying levels and manifestations of the good and not so good experiences. From the simple joy of getting to know somebody to the most ecstatic experience of intimacy with God. Somebody got frustrated because a teacher did not believe that she was sick, yet another one had to grieve profusely because of successive deaths in the family. All of life indeed is always a combination of ups and downs.

c. Collective sense of defying the odds is apparent.

How wonderful it is to realize that based on the symbols each of the co-researchers have chosen, it could be surmised that nobody got stuck in the path of darkness. At the end of the day, they knew what images to believe in, they were determined to face adversities head on and come out triumphant. Given the opportunity to reflect on their lives, they cannot but choose to dream of a better tomorrow. They chose to remain generous, grateful, dedicated, jolly, hopeful, compassionate, and engaged in life-giving activities.

Buchta, Cichosz and Zelima (2021) established that parents and teachers have an important role in the online education of students. Their study of Religious Education in Poland during the Covid-19 pandemic posits that the pandemic itself contributed to the development of modern information and communication competencies of all religious education teachers who participated in the study. The situation encouraged the parents to become more involved in the religious education of younger school-age children. With the help of the parents, the children were able to carry out tasks and participated well in religion classes without major problems. However, the teachers concluded that the virtual world makes it impossible to form authentic interpersonal relationships. The researchers maintained that online religious education limits the complete implementation of the objectives of religious education since growing in faith necessitates actual interaction between pupil and teacher.

d. Creativity and inner metamorphosis have taken a natural course in their lives.

The virtual exchange between and among students in the entire course of Religious Education did portray creativity, innovation and collaboration. The individual and group activities challenged them to come up with out of the box outputs and projects. They did utilize digital and technical know-how in the execution of tasks assigned, and exercised teamwork and collaboration when necessary. The faculty members themselves had their share in this meaningful virtual exchange with every class – as shown in the design and presentation of lessons and relevant activities that engaged those present in the digital classroom.

Benjamin Fryar (2015) did a dissertation on Describing Spiritual Growth in an Online Religious Education Course. His findings established that the participants took a great deal of ownership of their spiritual journeys. It was made possible by a flexible curriculum that provided enough room for liberty and at the same time maintained a certain structure that ensured that guidance was provided. The participants revealed that reflection writing was most effective in helping them experience spiritual development. Fryar observed that the online instructors as well as interaction among students were deemed less influential in the participants' spiritual journey, confirming that the latter took personal responsibility of their spiritual development.

In the process of having gone through the online Religious Education program, it could be deduced that the co-researchers have discovered within themselves, a way out of derailing routes. They were the ones who initiated creative strategies to handle the distractions and other problems relative to online classes. It was astounding to have discovered how much inner transformation had taken place. Some of them have literally gone out into the society and exercised their prophetic roles by engaging in social action and community service, way beyond the requirements of Religious Education.

e. Living out the Lasallian Core Values of Faith, Zeal for Service and Communion in Mission

The co-researchers have made it apparent that they have gained a full grasp of Lasallian core values. With their constant recognition of God's presence in their lives, their profound appreciation of spiritual activities held during classes, and their stance to keep trusting God's protection and providence – these are vivid manifestations of the **spirit of faith**.

When asked about the most meaningful activity they had in any of the Religion classes, the unanimous response was the final output in RED 102. This was about actualizing Christian Character and Citizenship Education through a day of service. They were all ecstatic and proud when they recalled about their individual and group projects. Their joy was emanating from the fact that they experienced reaching out to other people and that the latter's reactions and expressions of gratitude were beyond heartwarming. All of them had expressed desire to render service as future health care professionals, dreaming about offering free consultations for the marginalized sector of the society and all their efforts at becoming better each day are geared towards their ultimate goal of bringing God's compassion to the most vulnerable. This is exactly how **zeal for service** is fostered.

Communion in mission was evident in the conduct of activities and projects in class. In fact, they have reached this stage of college life because they have established a community among themselves. They had different symbols, yet all leading to the service of the community. No one among the co-researchers insinuated just a personal goal. Each of them had already been thinking about making a difference in the society, preparing to carry out their professions with a definitive **sense of mission**.

f. The EIDETIC INSIGHT:

The experience of online Religious Education has been a personal and communal journey, filled with amazement and adversities of varying levels and manifestations that stimulated a collective sense of defying the odds through creativity, inner metamorphosis, and an ardent resolve to live out the Lasallian core values of faith, zeal for service and communion in mission.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE REALM OF ONLINE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

During the course of online Religious Education, the co-researchers have experienced moments of “feeling separated” from God; others mentioned spiritual growth and encounters through the lessons and activities in online Religious Education. These experiences echo the elements of spirituality presented by Barbara Leonard and David Carlson (2017) in their Introduction to Spirituality. The authors identified the 6 key elements of spirituality, namely: (1) Self, Others and God, (2) Meaning and Purpose, (3) Hope, (4) Relatedness/Connectedness (5) Beliefs and Belief Systems, and (6) Expressions of Spirituality. These key elements have repeatedly surfaced in the conversations. The co-researchers claimed that they have been helped deepen their relationships; they had been finding their meaning and purpose in life; despite the trials, they remain steadfast in hope; they give utmost importance to relatedness and connectedness; they affirmed that the lessons have laid greater foundations for their beliefs and belief systems and lastly, they have expressed their spirituality through their prayers, savoring moments of silence and reflection, and the symbolic representations of their collective journey speak about the depth of their sense of spirituality.

Robert Solomon (2007) likewise affirms the experiences of my co-researchers in regard to spiritual ruminations. Solomon adheres to the idea of naturalized spirituality as opposed to referring to the supernatural. He believes that spirituality could be found in music, in nature, in the grandest of passions, love in particular. The co-researchers have expressed how much they value friendship and family, a confirmation that it is deeply spiritual to embrace one’s sense of humanity and camaraderie, to nurture one’s sense of family and savor the best of friendships. Spirituality is coming to grips with the big picture and with it, the need for a larger sense of life. The co-researchers have categorically opened their hearts to the greater scheme of things.

LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY AND THE LASALLIAN CORE VALUES IN ONLINE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Seeping through the foregoing structural themes, a very strong manifestation of Lasallian Spirituality could be sensed, specifically how the Lasallian Core Values were consistently emergent. The following is a succinct elaboration of said themes.

ON FAITH: All the co-researchers mentioned about the prayers, reflection and Gospel readings that helped them deepen their sense of faith. At the onset of online classes, small groups of students were assigned to lead the weekly prayer service. The students were instructed that the common element must be the Gospel reading for the day and some worship songs. It was heartwarming that every group would seriously prepare meaningful prayers and worship songs. They would add personal prayers and intentions along with creative ideas. There was the constant call for silence and solitude wherein we get to pause and simply savor the moment of prayer. Somehow these activities nurture the spirit of faith and offer opportunities to deepen one's relationship with the God that they believe in.

Those coming from other faith traditions were encouraged to lead and share their own prayer structures and materials. Those times became opportunities to getting exposed to other faith traditions.

ON ZEAL FOR SERVICE: As evident in the projects accomplished by the students in RED 102, it could be deduced that the new normal did not inhibit the students from engaging in simple acts of service. In fact, technology had become very useful in aiding their efforts towards efficient completion. When asked about the most meaningful activity in online Religious Education, they were unanimous in identifying the community outreach done in RED 102. They have shared about the moving experiences and the great lessons they learned from a short interaction with the beneficiaries of their community service. They reiterated that all the more, they would like to become healthcare professionals so that they could be of genuine service to the most vulnerable members of the society. This is certainly a manifestation of zeal for service.

ON COMMUNION IN MISSION: This value of creating a sense of community was one of the biggest issues at the start. Through the small group activities especially the prayer services, the

students were able to get to know one another up to a certain degree. They support each other especially when someone is unable to join the class for one reason or another. They did take care of each other and were able to reach out to those in need. They knew who got sick, on errands or having some connectivity issues. The project that they accomplished was all about other people in their immediate or bigger community. The social awareness and the willingness to serve those in dire need are connected to one's sense of belonging to a larger community. Their initiatives brought them to a bigger family where many children, parents and elderly await for some gestures that inspire hope and resilience. Therefore, it is apparent that Religious Education 102 in particular gave them an opportunity to embrace this particular value.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit of God did a tremendous work of speaking through the shared narratives of my co-researchers. It is amazing to realize the Spirit's active presence in the process of reminiscing experiences while we engaged in the online religious education activities. Those encounters that brought laughter and tears were actually spiritual moments; life-affirming stories; manifestations of God's immense graciousness. Such a beautiful spiritual journey through online religious education! During those conversations, we discovered that somehow, we have grown in the process and have become better persons, joyfully conscious of God's revelation in our lives, igniting the passion and affirming in stronger terms, the compassion to care for the poor and show gratitude for blessings from the heavens, unfolding through the generosity of people around us, our friends, and families from near and far. We dare to say that we strive to emulate the holy life of our dear Founder, St. John Baptist De La Salle.

Religious Education will never be the same again. Education in the faith must continue via online platforms. This challenging task is an opportunity to make good use of available technology. Students more than ever must be reminded of their dignified humanity and that the core values are intrinsic to their total human development. The schools all over the world must take to heart the evangelical mission, that education is not and could never just be about academics. Students must be formed accordingly as human beings and citizens of this planet. They must be formed in the spirit of justice, peace and integrity of creation. All students entrusted to our care must be given the same

quality of Lasallian education, a kind of education that teaches the mind, touches the heart and transforms lives.

LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS, FOREVER!

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. 2nd Edition (2nd ed.). Sage.
- De La Salle Philippines. (2008). *The Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family*. Second Edition. De La Salle Philippines.
- Edwards, M. J. (2006). *Religion on our Campuses*. Macmillan: Palgrave.
- Fox, M. (1983). *Original Blessing*. New Mexico Bear & Company Inc. Publishing.
- Han Sam, N.; Mohamed, K. (2016). *Digital Culture and Religion in Asia*. New York: Routledge.
- Leedy, P. (1997). *Practical Research Planning and Design*. Prentice Hall.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Ramirez, M. (1983). *The Phenomenological Method*. In Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD, Ed. (1983), *Research Methods in Philippine Context*. Divine Word University, pp. 145-176.
- Solomon, R. C. (2006). *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Valle, R. (1998). *Phenomenological Inquiry in Psychology: Existential and Transpersonal Dimensions* (1998th ed.). Springer.

WEBPAGE

- Barbara, L. (n.d.). *Introduction to Spirituality*. <http://Www.Touroinstitute.Com>. Retrieved July 17, 2021, from <http://www.touroinstitute.com>.
- Buchta, R. et. al (2021) *Religious Education in Poland during the COVID-19 Pandemic from the Perspective of Religion Teachers of the Silesian Voivodeship*. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/8/650/htm>.

Fryar, B. et. al (2015) *Describing Spiritual Growth in an Online Religious Education Course*.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10656219.2018.1446851>.

Sianipar, D. et al (2022) Classroom Management of Christian Religious Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic <http://repository.uki.ac.id/8601/>.

X-CULTURE: A GLOBAL VIRTUAL EXCHANGE COLLABORATION ROOTED IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Grishma Shah²

Manhattan University

Vasyl Taras³

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Abstract

X-Culture is a large-scale, virtual exchange international collaboration project that brings together approximately 5,000 students from 150 universities across 40 countries on six continents each semester. Students participating in X-Culture are placed into Global Virtual Teams (GVTs) of about seven members, each representing different countries and cultural backgrounds. These teams collaborate with multinational corporations, solving real-world business challenges provided by X-Culture's corporate partners. Throughout the semester, participants engage in international business consulting, experiencing firsthand the complexities of cross-cultural collaboration while developing critical teamwork, problem-solving, and business planning skills. Most students participate in X-Culture as part of their International Business, Cross-Cultural Management, International Marketing, and Global Entrepreneurship courses. Extensive research confirms that participation in the program enhances student satisfaction, improves academic performance, and significantly boosts Cultural Intelligence and teamwork skills. Graduates of X-Culture demonstrate greater leadership potential in future team projects, leading to better team outcomes. The program's impact extends beyond the classroom, with many participants reporting that their X-Culture experience and certificate helped them secure job opportunities. Some students even receive internships, or full-time job offers from the multinational companies they collaborated with during the project. Beyond its educational value, X-Culture serves as an unparalleled research platform. With over 1,000 Global Virtual Teams participating in X-Culture each semester, it provides a unique opportunity for studying teamwork, organizational behavior, and cross-cultural dynamics and advancing research in experiential learning. To date, more than 100 research papers and over a dozen dissertations have been published using X-Culture data, making it a vital contributor to the academic study of global virtual exchange/collaboration.

Keywords: Global Virtual Collaboration, Teamwork, Cross-Cultural Dynamic.

² Grishma Shah, PhD, is the Director of Global Business Studies at Manhattan University in New York City. She holds a PhD in International Development/Business from Rutgers University. Her research focuses on economic globalization, gender equity, and cultural change in emerging economies. Her work has appeared in many prestigious outlets, including Harvard Business Review. A lifelong volunteer with Operation Smile, she has participated in service trips to Honduras, the Philippines, India, Russia, and, most recently, Ecuador. After decades as an academic—publishing, researching, teaching, and traveling—she believes that nothing educates, enlightens, informs, or propels us forward like a good story. Inspired by this belief, her debut novel, *Anagram Destiny*, draws not only on her expertise in globalization and culture but is also deeply influenced by her upbringing as the daughter of Indian immigrants. Email Address: grishma.shah@manhattan.edu.

³ Vasyl Taras is a Professor of International Business and a Department Chair at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is the Vice President-Administration of the Academy of International Business and the founder of the X-Culture Project. He received his Ph.D. in International HR and International Business from the University of Calgary, Canada. His research and work revolve around cross-cultural and global virtual teams and experiential approaches to international business education and development. He is an Associate Editor of the *International Journal of HRM*, *Journal of International Management*, the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, the *European Journal of International Management*, and *Cross-Cultural Strategic Management*, and an Editorial Board Member of the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Journal of World Business*. His publications have appeared in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Management*, *Organizational Dynamics*, and other respected outlets. Email Address: v_taras@uncg.edu.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, the ability to collaborate across geographic, cultural, and institutional boundaries has become a core competency for success in both education and the global workforce (Taras et al., 2020). Virtual Exchange (VE) has emerged as a powerful educational tool that enables such collaboration. By leveraging digital communication technologies, VE connects students worldwide in structured learning experiences, fostering intercultural understanding, global citizenship, and collaborative problem-solving skills. It offers a scalable and inclusive alternative to traditional study-abroad programs, providing meaningful international engagement without the financial and logistical barriers often limiting physical mobility (Zheng et al., 2024).

In parallel with the growth of VE, the modern workplace has undergone a dramatic transformation. Cross-border teams, often dispersed across time zones and cultures, have become commonplace in global organizations (CultureWizard, 2018). As a result, educational institutions are increasingly expected to prepare students not only with domain-specific knowledge but also with the interpersonal, digital, and intercultural skills needed to succeed in global virtual environments. Despite this shift, many students graduate without adequate training or experience in navigating such complex and diverse team settings. This gap highlights an urgent need for pedagogical innovations that bridge theory and practice and provide real-world exposure to global collaboration (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006).

The X-Culture Project offers one such innovative solution. Founded in 2010, X-Culture is a large-scale virtual exchange and experiential learning initiative that engages thousands of university students every semester in a cross-cultural business collaboration. Participating students, grouped into diverse Global Virtual Teams (GVTs), work together to develop business solutions for real multinational companies (Taras et al., 2012).

X-Culture is distinguished not only by its scale and global reach, but also by its dual value as both an educational platform and a research laboratory (Taras, Muth, & Gitlin, 2013). In addition to its pedagogical aims, the project generates rich longitudinal data on teamwork, leadership, and intercultural dynamics, enabling hundreds of academic studies and dissertations. The project is built

on the principles of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), social learning (Bandura & Walters, 1963), and intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), all of which emphasize the importance of direct engagement and social interaction in building competencies.

This paper presents the X-Culture project as a compelling case study in virtual exchange, with particular attention to its design, pedagogical foundations, outcomes, and challenges. By examining how X-Culture operationalizes key principles of global education and experiential learning, we aim to provide educators, administrators, and policymakers with a model that demonstrates the potential and practical implementation of VE at scale (Taras, Caprar, Rottig, Sarala, Zakaria, Jimenez, et al., 2013). The paper also considers the broader institutional and research implications of such programs, offering insights into how virtual exchange can be leveraged not just to enhance learning, but also to build inclusive and collaborative educational ecosystems with global impact.

THE X-CULTURE MODEL: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Origins and Evolution of the Project

Launched in 2010, X-Culture was born out of a simple yet powerful idea: immerse students in the realities of international collaboration by having them work on real business challenges with peers from around the world. The project began with an email to the Academy of International Business members, proposing a cross-border student collaboration initiative. The response was overwhelming. Within days, instructors from seven countries agreed to join, and over 400 students participated in the pilot run. Since then, the initiative has grown exponentially. As of 2024, over 120,000 students completed the X-Culture project. A new cohort of about 5,000 students from over 150 universities in more than 70 countries completes the project every semester.

Originally conceived as a supplement to International Business courses, X-Culture has expanded across disciplines and academic levels. It now includes undergraduate and graduate students, as well as professionals and pre-college youths through the X-Culture Academy and X-Culture for Kids tracks. Despite its growth, the core idea remains the same: experiential learning through global virtual teamwork.

Structure of the Program

At its heart, X-Culture is a semester-long experiential learning program in which students are placed into GVTs of 5–7 members, each representing a different country. These teams are tasked with solving a real business challenge presented by a multinational corporate partner. The project runs in two tracks, “Early” and “Late” to accommodate global academic calendar differences. The teams work together for approximately eight weeks, engaging in a series of structured assignments that culminate in submitting a comprehensive business report. These reports typically address market entry strategy, marketing and branding, financing, HR strategy, and product adaptation for new international markets. The project design mimics real-world consulting, and its complexity mirrors the challenges that global business professionals routinely face.

To ensure student readiness and equity in participation, the program includes a mandatory Pre-Project Training Module and a Readiness Test. Only students scoring at least 80% can proceed to team formation. Once the project begins, students complete weekly progress surveys to monitor task completion, team dynamics, and individual engagement. These surveys also provide early warnings for issues like free-riding, allowing timely interventions.

Weekly peer evaluations serve as both a motivational mechanism and a data collection tool. Students rate each other on contributions, leadership, collaboration, and other factors. These ratings not only influence grades but are also used to identify team leaders, coaching needs, and potential dropouts. X-Culture administrators use this data to track team health and support both students and instructors.

Integration into Academic Curricula

X-Culture is embedded in various courses, including International Business, Cross-Cultural Management, International Marketing, Global Entrepreneurship, and Strategy. For most courses, participation in X-Culture accounts for 20% to 50% of the final course grade. Peer evaluations typically contribute at least 30% of the X-Culture grade, with final report quality and weekly progress accounting for the rest.

This integration not only supports learning objectives but also improves teaching evaluations and student engagement, while the project's flexibility has made it suitable for various institutional types, from large research universities to small liberal arts colleges. Faculty benefit not only from improved course outcomes but also from access to a rich research platform. Instructors are encouraged to participate in collaborative studies, using the vast multi-source, multi-level data collected through X-Culture each semester.

Collaboration with Corporate Partners

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of X-Culture is its close collaboration with real-world businesses. Since 2013, the project has partnered each semester with 5 to 10 multinational companies that present actual international business challenges. Past partners include Mercedes-Benz, Hard Rock International, Home Depot, Louis Vuitton, and many others.

These companies benefit from fresh, innovative ideas from thousands of bright, globally distributed students. In turn, students gain consulting experience and exposure to the inner workings of international business. They often attend live webinars with company executives, ask questions, and sometimes even see their recommendations implemented.

Top-performing students are invited to X-Culture Global Symposia, in-person events co-hosted by partner companies and universities. Held in locations such as Macerata, Italy; Miami, USA; Istanbul, Turkey; Lublin, Poland; Calgary, Canada; and aboard Royal Caribbean cruise ships, these symposia allow students to meet teammates face-to-face, present their ideas, and network with industry professionals.

In recent years, X-Culture has also introduced specialized tracks for non-traditional learners. These include the X-Culture Coaching Program, where alums guide new participants, and X-Culture Kids, which adapts the model for younger learners aged 9–17. These expansions not only diversify the program's reach but also reflect its deep commitment to scalable, inclusive, and transformative global education.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE: PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATION

The X-Culture project is rooted in the conviction that cross-cultural competence, teamwork, and leadership skills cannot be developed through lecture-based instruction alone. Instead, these competencies emerge most effectively when students are immersed in authentic, high-stakes environments that mirror the complexities of real-world global collaboration. To this end, the X-Culture program leverages a robust pedagogical foundation, drawing on three interrelated theoretical frameworks: experiential learning theory, social learning theory, and intergroup contact theory (Taras, Caprar, Rottig, Sarala, Zakaria, Zhao, et al., 2013). Each framework informs the project's design and helps explain why the program generates such consistent and meaningful learning outcomes.

Theoretical Foundations

Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) posits that meaningful learning occurs through a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. X-Culture operationalizes this cycle by embedding students in GVTs, where they directly confront the challenges of international collaboration, language barriers, time zone differences, unfamiliar cultural norms, uneven work contributions, and more. Students reflect on these challenges weekly, both individually and as a team, while gradually adjusting their behaviors and strategies. The resulting learning is durable and transferable to future workplace settings.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasizes the importance of learning through observation and interaction. In the X-Culture context, students observe how peers from different backgrounds communicate, manage conflict, and lead. They adapt their behaviors accordingly, influenced by successful and unsuccessful examples. Furthermore, peer evaluations, discussed below, reinforce behavioral modeling by providing ongoing performance feedback from teammates.

Finally, intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) holds that structured, sustained interactions between members of different social groups can reduce prejudice and foster mutual understanding, particularly when the interaction involves cooperation toward a shared goal. X-Culture teams are deliberately diverse, typically composed of 5–7 members from different countries, representing at

least three continents and cultural backgrounds. Students must collaborate to complete a complex business challenge for a real client. This shared purpose and continuous interaction and institutional support create optimal conditions for intercultural learning. Research confirms that X-Culture participants consistently demonstrate increased cultural intelligence and positive attitudes toward other cultures after completing the program.

Progress Monitoring and Peer Evaluations

Before students are placed on teams, they undergo structured pre-project training to ensure a baseline level of preparedness. This training introduces students to key concepts in international collaboration, cross-cultural communication, and business consulting. Topics include the importance of time management, managing expectations in multicultural teams, avoiding plagiarism, and writing business reports.

After this training, students must pass the X-Culture Readiness Test, which assesses their understanding of the core concepts and expectations. The test includes questions on ethical teamwork, virtual communication tools, and how to handle common challenges in GVTs. A minimum score of 80% is required to be eligible for team placement. This gatekeeping mechanism improves team performance and reduces early attrition by ensuring all participants enter the collaboration with foundational knowledge and motivation.

Once the project begins, weekly progress-tracking mechanisms reinforce experiential learning and accountability. Students complete a Weekly Progress Survey reporting on their contributions and team dynamics. These surveys help the X-Culture administrative team detect early warning signs, such as lack of engagement, communication breakdowns, or conflict, so that timely interventions can be made. The data is also used for research purposes and for selecting the top-performing teams.

Weekly peer evaluations complement progress surveys by allowing team members to assess one another on effort, contribution, leadership, collaboration, and communication. These scores influence grades, provide individual feedback, and help identify students who may need intervention or reassignment. Pedagogically, peer evaluations reinforce accountability, build feedback skills, and

promote self-reflection by encouraging students to view their performance through the eyes of their teammates.

Feedback and Iteration in the Learning Cycle

The X-Culture model centers on continuous feedback at both individual and team levels, provided through surveys, peer reviews, instructor input, and support from trained alumni coaches. This iterative process mirrors experiential learning, encouraging weekly reflection and adaptation. Students respond to challenges by adjusting communication and coordination strategies, while collaboratively developing a report over time – an approach that reinforces learning through reflection, revision, and real-world practice.

Moreover, the final deliverable, the team's business report, is not just graded but externally evaluated by business professionals and academics. High-quality reports are recognized publicly, and the best-performing students are invited to participate in the X-Culture Global Symposium, where they present their work and engage directly with corporate partners and faculty worldwide.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Since its inception, the X-Culture project has demonstrated significant educational value, offering participants not only exposure to intercultural collaboration but also measurable gains in critical skills, personal development, and academic engagement. Its impact is evident at multiple levels, individual, team, and institutional, and is backed by both robust empirical research and qualitative feedback from students and educators.

Empirical Results from Academic Research

A comprehensive assessment of X-Culture's effectiveness was published in the Academy of Management Learning & Education (Taras, Caprar, Rottig, Sarala, Zakaria, Jimenez, et al., 2013), evaluating over 6,000 students from nearly 80 universities in 43 countries. Using a multi-method approach guided by Kirkpatrick's (1975) four-level evaluation framework, reaction, learning, behavior, and results, the study revealed that participation in X-Culture consistently led to positive outcomes across all dimensions.

Students who participated in the program reported higher satisfaction with their courses (reaction) and significantly improved knowledge about international business practices, cross-cultural communication, and global teamwork (learning). Compared to control groups, these students scored higher on end-of-course exams and exhibited a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts (Taras, Caprar, Rottig, Sarala, Zakaria, Zhao, et al., 2013). In terms of behavior, repeat participants were found to communicate more frequently, engage more proactively with teammates, and take on leadership roles more readily. Finally, the quality of final team submissions and peer evaluations confirmed that project participants not only learned more but also performed better.

One of the most compelling findings was a measurable increase in Cultural Intelligence (CQ). Participants exhibited statistically significant growth in their ability to function effectively across cultural contexts. These gains were especially strong in CQ's metacognitive and behavioral dimensions, which relate to reflective thinking about cultural interactions and the ability to adapt communication and behavior across cultures.

Additionally, assessments of leadership, teamwork, and communication skills indicate that students demonstrate better conflict management, more inclusive decision-making practices, and increased ability to work with culturally diverse team members following the program. In one survey, most participants stated that they had learned to better navigate cultural misunderstandings, and most reported improved teamwork skills, particularly in virtual collaboration environments (Taras et al, 2013).

These empirical outcomes underscore the pedagogical value of experiential, team-based learning in international education. The X-Culture model serves as a scalable, cost-effective supplement or alternative to physical study-abroad programs, while addressing critical gaps in global competence development within traditional curricula.

Gains in Leadership, Teamwork, and Collaboration Skills

Beyond cultural competence, students also developed critical soft skills, particularly in leadership and team collaboration. In the X-Culture environment, leadership is emergent rather than assigned. Students must organically coordinate tasks, motivate team members, mediate conflict, and keep the project on track, often without ever meeting their teammates face-to-face.

This unstructured, real-world setting fosters the development of both task-oriented and relational leadership skills. According to the Professor's Handbook, peer evaluations often identify informal leaders who helped organize work, ensured timely communication, and supported team morale. Many students later reported that their leadership experiences in X-Culture gave them the confidence to take on management roles in other settings, including internships and employment.

The teamwork element is equally vital. Students quickly learn the importance of establishing trust, setting shared goals, and adapting to different communication styles and work rhythms. Through weekly progress surveys and continuous reflection, they gain insight into effective collaboration practices and the consequences of poor coordination or disengagement.

Personal Growth and Professional Opportunities

X-Culture's impact often extends beyond the classroom and into students' personal and professional lives. Testimonials collected from former participants reflect deep personal transformation. Many students describe the project as "eye-opening" or "life-changing," citing the program as the first time they truly worked in a team where every member came from a different cultural background.

Former participants frequently credit X-Culture with helping them secure internships and job offers, sometimes even from the companies they worked with during the project. Others report that the X-Culture certificate helped strengthen their graduate school applications or served as a key talking point in job interviews. A number of high-performing students are invited to X-Culture Global Symposia, exclusive networking and professional development events where they present their work, meet with business executives, and forge connections with peers and faculty from around the world.

The program has also inspired many students to shift their academic and career paths. As shared in the handbooks, instructors often receive messages from students who decided to major in international business, pursue careers in global consulting, or study abroad, decisions directly influenced by their participation in X-Culture.

Similar patterns have emerged for younger participants in X-Culture Kids and non-traditional learners in the Coaching Program (Taras, 2019). These students report increased confidence, stronger presentation skills, and a new awareness of global perspectives at an early age.

Institutional Impact: Course Quality and Faculty Development

The benefits of X-Culture extend to instructors and their institutions as well. Courses that incorporate X-Culture tend to receive higher student evaluations. This is likely due to both the novelty of the experience and the sense of relevance and engagement it provides. Students value learning that feels authentic and applied, and X-Culture delivers on this expectation.

Faculty also benefit from enhanced professional development and research opportunities. X-Culture provides a ready-made research infrastructure, including multi-source, multi-level data sets, ethical oversight protocols, and a global network of collaborators. Dozens of publications and doctoral dissertations have emerged from X-Culture data, enabling instructors to contribute to scholarly discourse while improving their teaching.

Moreover, participating instructors receive formal recognition for their contributions. Each receives an X-Culture Educator Certificate, and letters of recommendation can be sent to department chairs or deans, which can support tenure and promotion cases. These recognitions, combined with improved course outcomes and student feedback, help solidify faculty members' reputations as innovative and effective educators.

CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

While X-Culture has proven to be a powerful and transformative educational tool, it is not without its challenges (Taras & Ordeñana, 2015). The project's scale, diversity, and reliance on virtual collaboration inevitably bring logistical, interpersonal, and pedagogical difficulties. Yet, these very challenges are what make X-Culture a meaningful learning experience (Taras, 2025)d. As students navigate the obstacles of working in GVTs, they not only learn international business principles but also develop adaptability, resilience, and a deeper understanding of what true intercultural collaboration entails.

Technological and Scheduling Barriers

One of the most persistent challenges in X-Culture is coordination across time zones and academic calendars. With students participating from over 70 countries on six continents, aligning schedules for team meetings is often difficult or impossible. Students may find that the only mutually available time for a live discussion is late at night for some and early morning for others. Asynchronous communication, while useful, cannot fully replicate the richness of real-time dialogue.

These difficulties are compounded by discrepancies in academic calendars. Universities in different hemispheres and educational systems start and end their semesters at different times, sometimes weeks apart. To accommodate this, X-Culture operates on two synchronized “tracks” (Early and Late), but even this solution cannot eliminate all timing issues. Some teams have members who begin or end the project later than others, leading to unequal workloads and frustration.

Technological disparities further complicate collaboration. Although the project recommends using free, commonly available tools like Google Docs, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Slack, not all students have equal access to high-speed internet or reliable hardware (Taras, Tullar, Liu, & Pierce, 2018). Additionally, students vary widely in their digital literacy and comfort with online collaboration tools, which can slow down team progress and increase miscommunication.

Language Proficiency and Communication Styles

English is the working language of X-Culture, and while all students are expected to possess basic English communication skills, proficiency levels vary significantly. For some participants, it is their third or even fourth language. Language barriers can lead to misunderstandings, reduced participation, or feelings of exclusion, especially when more fluent team members dominate conversations.

Beyond linguistic proficiency, differences in communication styles, such as directness, tone, use of humor, and norms around disagreement, frequently cause misinterpretations. For example, a student from a high-context culture may avoid direct confrontation, while a teammate from a low-context culture may interpret this as apathy or lack of engagement (Song, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Taras,

2023). Likewise, written messages lacking visual cues may come across as blunt or even rude when no offense was intended.

These miscommunications can be particularly pronounced during feedback exchanges or when conflicts arise. Without the benefit of nonverbal cues or shared cultural context, small issues can escalate quickly unless addressed thoughtfully. The X-Culture training module addresses these concerns, offering guidance on culturally sensitive communication, but applying these lessons in real time remains challenging for many students.

Managing Diversity and Free-Riders

Diversity is both X-Culture's greatest strength and one of its most difficult challenges to manage. Each team is composed to maximize national and cultural diversity, with the goal of exposing students to a variety of perspectives. However, this diversity brings with it differences in educational background, work habits, cultural norms, and expectations.

One major issue that arises in diverse teams is inconsistent commitment and performance. While most students are engaged and responsible, every semester sees a minority of participants who fail to contribute adequately, commonly referred to as free-riders. These individuals may miss deadlines, ignore messages, or submit subpar work, placing additional burdens on their teammates.

To mitigate this, X-Culture incorporates weekly peer evaluations, which make individual contributions visible and influence final grades. Students who receive consistently low ratings may be removed from their teams and required to complete the project independently. Despite these mechanisms, team morale can still suffer when work is unequally distributed.

Another diversity-related challenge is the lack of shared norms for decision-making, leadership, and conflict resolution. In some cultures, consensus is highly valued, while others prioritize efficiency and individual initiative. These mismatches can lead to frustration or perceived disrespect if not carefully navigated.

Managing Methodological Challenges

Conducting research on global virtual collaboration across hundreds of institutions presents significant methodological hurdles. Among the most persistent challenges is the misalignment of academic calendars. Students at different universities and in different countries may begin and end their semesters at different times, creating coordination difficulties and potential data inconsistencies. To address this, X-Culture implemented a two-track system: one track is aligned with the Northern Hemisphere academic calendar (August–December and January–May), while the other follows the Southern Hemisphere or alternate institutional schedules. This flexible design ensures that students can participate during active academic terms, improving engagement and data reliability.

Another major challenge is ensuring data comparability across diverse academic environments, where grading standards, teaching styles, and institutional cultures vary widely. To mitigate this, X-Culture uses standardized surveys, peer evaluations, and milestone-based progress tracking. These tools provide a common framework for evaluating team performance and individual contributions. For example, weekly progress surveys help monitor participation and team dynamics, while peer evaluations offer consistent metrics of each student's effort, collaboration, and impact on the project. As a result, the program is able to generate a unified dataset for research and evaluation that transcends institutional differences.

To address the methodological challenge of varying grading standards across institutions, the program relies on standardized peer evaluations and progress surveys that create a unified dataset irrespective of instructor differences. This methodological rigor not only supports empirical research on global virtual teams, but also reinforces transparency and fairness in the educational process.

Lessons Learned: Adaptive Strategies and Innovations

Over the years, X-Culture has developed a number of adaptive strategies to address these recurring challenges. First, the program's Pre-Project Training and Readiness Test ensures that all participants enter the project with a minimum level of competence in cross-cultural teamwork and online collaboration. This upfront preparation reduces misunderstandings and sets realistic expectations.

Second, the weekly progress surveys serve not only as a monitoring tool but also as a source of valuable data. The X-Culture administrative team uses this information to provide targeted support and early intervention for struggling teams. These interventions can include personalized coaching, conflict mediation, or the reassignment of team members in extreme cases.

Third, the X-Culture Coaching Program has emerged as a highly effective support mechanism. Alumni of the program who demonstrated strong leadership and communication skills are invited to return as Coaches, helping current students navigate the social and logistical challenges of the project. Coaches provide feedback, mediate disputes, and offer encouragement, functioning as near-peer mentors.

Finally, the program has refined its team formation algorithms to balance diversity with compatibility. While cultural variation remains a priority, the system attempts to minimize time zone overlaps and language proficiency gaps that could hinder collaboration. Flexibility is also built into the structure; instructors are encouraged to tailor deadlines, grading schemes, and local support to their students' unique needs.

These innovations underscore a central insight: the challenges of global virtual exchange are not a flaw in the system, they are the system. By encountering and overcoming these challenges, students learn lessons that no textbook or lecture could teach. X-Culture does not shield students from the difficulties of cross-border collaboration; it equips them to navigate those difficulties with empathy, resilience, and professionalism.

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition to its value as a pedagogical innovation, X-Culture stands out as a robust research platform, offering a unique opportunity to study global virtual collaboration, cross-cultural communication, leadership, team dynamics, and experiential learning on a large scale. The project generates rich, longitudinal, and multi-level data from thousands of participants every semester, making it one of the most comprehensive and accessible databases of global virtual teamwork in the academic world.

Data Types, Scope, and Access

Every iteration of X-Culture yields large-scale, multi-source, multi-level data. These include:

- Pre- and post-project surveys measuring cultural intelligence, attitudes toward teamwork, conflict styles, and learning outcomes.
- Weekly progress surveys capturing real-time insights into team functioning, individual engagement, task completion, and emotional tone.
- Peer evaluations, collected weekly and at project completion, measuring perceived contributions, leadership, collaboration, and collegiality.
- Final team reports, which are assessed for quality, creativity, structure, and originality.
- Behavioral and performance metrics, such as email response rates, adherence to deadlines, frequency of communication, and deliverable quality.

Data are collected from both students and instructors and can be matched across multiple semesters, countries, and institutional contexts. The scale of the data is unparalleled in international business education, with over 100,000 participants from more than 400 universities across 70+ countries since the program's launch in 2010. The project collects data from roughly 6,000 new participants every semester, creating an ever-expanding longitudinal dataset.

Importantly, X-Culture maintains a strong commitment to research ethics and transparency. All data collection protocols are approved by institutional review boards, and data sharing agreements ensure privacy and compliance with research standards. Qualified researchers may apply for access to anonymized datasets through a formal proposal process on the X-Culture website.

Publications and Dissertations

The scholarly output generated from X-Culture data is extensive and growing. To date, over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations, and book chapters have been published using X-Culture data. Topics range from intercultural competence and virtual leadership to trust development, communication dynamics, and the effectiveness of peer evaluation systems.

Many of these studies have appeared in top-tier journals such as the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Management*, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Organizational Dynamics*. These publications have helped advance theory in international management, global HRM, and cross-cultural psychology, while also influencing practice in areas such as global team leadership and online education.

Additionally, over a dozen doctoral dissertations and master's theses have been completed using X-Culture data. Graduate students benefit from access to a ready-made dataset of global relevance, as well as mentorship from the broader X-Culture research community. The data's longitudinal structure and global scope provide excellent opportunities for testing complex models and conducting multi-level analyses.

Interdisciplinary Research Opportunities

While X-Culture is rooted in the domain of international business, its applications extend across multiple disciplines. Researchers in psychology, communication studies, education, computer science, and data analytics have all found the dataset fertile ground for inquiry.

For example, psychologists have used the data to study the development of empathy, intercultural sensitivity, and identity negotiation in diverse teams. Communication scholars have examined media richness theory, tone adaptation, and conflict resolution strategies in computer-mediated environments. Education researchers have explored experiential learning frameworks and compared X-Culture outcomes with those of traditional instruction. Meanwhile, scholars in computer science and AI have used the data to build models for team behavior prediction, automated conflict detection, and sentiment analysis in multilingual texts.

The dataset also supports comparative cross-country research, offering insights into how cultural norms and national institutional contexts shape collaboration. It allows researchers to explore how country-level variables, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, GDP per capita, or educational systems, influence behavior at the team and individual levels.

X-Culture's adaptability to different research paradigms makes it an ideal model for interdisciplinary collaboration. It exemplifies the potential of virtual exchange not only as a

pedagogical tool, but also as a generator of knowledge that informs broader debates about globalization, digital education, and the future of work.

ALIGNMENT WITH LASALLIAN AND GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The X-Culture project strongly supports the Lasallian and broader educational vision of preparing students to thrive in, and contribute to, a globally interconnected world. Through its immersive, project-based model, X-Culture helps students develop not only academic and professional skills, but also the intercultural agility and collaborative mindset essential for success in today's global economy.

Global Interconnectedness and International Bridges

One of the most important educational imperatives of the 21st century is preparing students to engage effectively with people from other countries and cultures. X-Culture does precisely that: by placing students in GVTs where each member represents a different country, the program replicates the collaborative dynamics of modern multinational work environments. Students who work through real business challenges must learn to navigate differences in time zones, communication styles, problem-solving approaches, and work habits.

This deep, hands-on exposure to cross-cultural collaboration goes beyond theoretical understanding. It builds what can only be acquired through practice: the ability to collaborate, negotiate, and co-create with culturally diverse peers. These are the same skills expected of employees in international organizations, NGOs, and global startups.

Scalability and Practicality for a Global Audience

Unlike traditional international experiences such as study abroad, which are often available only to a limited number of students, X-Culture is inherently scalable and accessible. It operates entirely online and is offered at no additional cost beyond normal tuition, allowing institutions around the world, including those in emerging economies, to participate.

The project uses free digital tools and is supported by a global administrative infrastructure that provides training, monitoring, and technical support. These elements make X-Culture a plug-

and-play model that can be integrated into a wide variety of course types and academic calendars without heavy institutional investment. As a result, faculty can offer their students a meaningful global collaboration experience, regardless of their location or budget.

This approach not only equips students with vital cross-border collaboration skills, but also reflects a broader pedagogical shift: internationalization at home. X-Culture enables institutions to fulfill their global learning goals without relying on physical mobility, offering a sustainable and future-ready model for global education.

Preparing Students for a Globalized Workforce

At its core, X-Culture trains students to work across borders, not just to understand cultural differences, but to productively engage with them in the context of real work. The collaborative experience enhances key competencies such as:

- Managing distributed teams
- Communicating across cultural and linguistic boundaries
- Resolving conflict and negotiating across perspectives
- Leading without formal authority
- Adapting quickly to unfamiliar work norms

These are not soft skills—they are survival skills in today's interconnected economy, where organizations span time zones and cultures. X-Culture offers students authentic, real-world experience in global collaboration, reinforcing course relevance through hands-on problem-solving with international business partners. Students gain practical insight into global markets, strategy development, and cross-cultural teamwork, transforming cultural complexity into a source of innovation. More than a classroom exercise, X-Culture is a training ground for adaptable, globally competent professionals.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

X-Culture stands as a distinctive and impactful model of virtual exchange, offering students a rare opportunity to experience the realities of global teamwork while still in the classroom. Unlike traditional international programs that often rely on physical mobility, X-Culture provides a scalable, accessible, and immersive alternative, connecting thousands of students across continents each semester in meaningful, task-oriented collaboration. The program's integration of real business challenges, diverse GVTs, and structured support systems has made it one of the most widely adopted and empirically validated experiential learning platforms in international business education.

What sets X-Culture apart is its dual function as both a pedagogical tool and a research engine. Students benefit from hands-on engagement with cross-cultural collaboration, while researchers and educators gain access to rich longitudinal data on team dynamics, learning outcomes, and intercultural interaction. The project embodies the principles of experiential, social, and intercultural learning, helping students acquire the skills and mindsets needed to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

Looking ahead, X-Culture continues to evolve. Ongoing innovations include improvements to team formation algorithms, expanded coaching and mentoring programs, integration of AI-assisted learning tools, and the development of tracks for younger students and professionals outside academia. The infrastructure is designed to support further scale, with the potential to reach tens of thousands more learners annually without compromising educational quality.

As global challenges increasingly require cross-border cooperation, the demand for educational models like X-Culture has never been greater. Virtual exchange is now a cornerstone of global education, offering students not just cultural exposure but practical preparation for international collaboration. Institutions are encouraged to adopt or adapt such models—whether through X-Culture or similar programs—to equip students with essential global skills and inspire the next generation of competent, connected professionals.

REFERENCESⁱ

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bandura, A.; Walters, R. H. (1963). *Social learning and personality development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Culturewizard. (2018). *2018 Trends in High-Performing Global Virtual Teams*. By RW3. Retrieved from: <https://content.ebulletins.com/hubfs/C1/Culture%20Wizard/LL-2018%20Trends%20in%20Global%20VTs%20Draft%2012%20and%20a%20half.pdf>.
- Hunter, B.; White, G. P.; Godbey, G. C. (2006). *What does it mean to be globally competent?* Journal of Studies in International Education, 10(3), 267-285.
- Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1975). *Evaluating training programs*. San Francisco: Tata McGraw-Hill Education, 1975.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Vol. 1): Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Song, Y.; Zellmer-Bruhn, M.; Taras, V. (2023). *The Effects of Language Boundaries on Teamwork Contribution and Team Performance in Multilingual Teams*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.
- Taras, V. (2019). *X-Culture Academy: Kids Learning International Business Through Experience*. In M. A. Gonzalez-Perez, K. Lynden, & V. Taras (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning and Teaching International Business and Management*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Taras, V. (2025). *The Barriers to Global Virtual Team Effectiveness: Expectations vs. Reality*. Organizational Dynamics.
- Taras, V.; Baak, D.; Caprar, D.; Dowd, D.; Froese, F.; Jiménez, A.; Magnusson, P. (2020). *Diverse effects of diversity: Disaggregating effects of diversity*. in global virtual teams. Journal of International Management, 25(4), 100689.
- Taras, V.; Bryla, P.; Gupta, S.; Jiménez, A.; Minor, M.; et al. (2012). *Changing the face of international business education: the X-Culture project*. In AIB Insights, vol. 12, n. 4, 10-17, 2012, [libres.uncg.edu; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236131259_Changing_the_face_of_International_Business_education_the_X-Culture_Project](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236131259_Changing_the_face_of_International_Business_education_the_X-Culture_Project).

- Taras, V.; Caprar, D.; Rottig, D.; Sarala, R. M.; Zakaria, N.; Zhao, F.; Jiménez, A.; ... Huang, V. Z. (2013). *A global classroom? A multi-method evaluation of effectiveness of international collaboration exercises in international management education*. Academy of Management Learning & Education.
- Taras, V.; Caprar, D. V.; Rottig, D.; Sarala, R. M.; Zakaria, N.; Zhao, F.; ... Minor, M. S. (2013). *A global classroom? Evaluating the effectiveness of global virtual collaboration as a teaching tool in management education*. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 12(3), 414-435.
- Taras, V.; Muth, T.; Gitlin, B. (2013). *International Collaboration Experience: Using Multi-Country Student Collaboration Projects to Enhance Learning and Faculty Research*. In R. Griffith & L. F. Thompson (Eds.), *The Age of Internationalization: Developing an International Organizational Psychology Curriculum*: Springer Publishing.
- Taras, V.; Ordeñana, X. (2015). *X-Culture: Challenges and Best Practices of Large-Scale Experiential Collaborative Projects*. In V. Taras & M. A. Gonzalez-Perez (Eds.), *The Handbook of Experiential Learning in International Business* (pp. 131-149). Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Taras, V.; Tullar, W.; Liu, T.; Pierce, J. (2018). *Straight from the Horse's Mouth: Justifications and Prevention Strategies Provided by Free Riders on Global Virtual Teams*. Journal for Management and Training for Industries 5(3), 51-67.
- Zheng, F.; Alon, I.; Taras, V.; Jiménez, A.; Richter, N. F.; Ott, U. (2024). *Global Virtual Teams: Reflections on the current and future research landscape*. European Journal of International Management.

ⁱ Please note one of the Author's of this paper is the Founder of X-Culture. In places where citations may be lacking, especially descriptive sections, the thoughts/ideas are attributed to the Founder's experience running the program since it's inception.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION USING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES: ACROSS BORDERS, ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Julie Basu Ray⁴

Christian Brothers University, Memphis, TN, USA

Clarence Witty H. Mendoza-Fenol⁵

De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute

Maria Teresa Tiburcio Basilides⁶

De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute

Abstract

Collaborative teaching today has become one of the best practices globally that foster active learning, allowing the successful integration of multiple viewpoints. As a multitude of teaching styles connect with more student learning preferences, collaboration across disciplines and borders, fosters global engagement, allowing a healthy exchange of ideas, cultural and academic, in a setting defined by mutual respect and a shared interest in a topic, on both sides of teaching and learning. IALU-COIL served as a platform for two institutions to collaborate on three projects, promoting educational innovation and intercultural competence, in a virtual environment, thereby upholding Lasallian educational philosophy. First, students from Christian Brothers University (CBU), USA, and De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute (DLSMHSI), Philippines, collaborated to build and administer a survey to assess the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding COVID-19 among students of Health sciences and related fields. Second, faculty members from CBU and DLSMHSI utilized a mirror class framework to exchange lectures on “Hematopoiesis” in the other teacher’s class through synchronous video conferencing tools, allowing the students to gain real-time international experience. Third, students from both campuses collaborated on a research project aimed at evaluating caffeine’s effects on medication efficacy, identifying potential drug interactions, and improving proficiency in study design, data collection, and analysis. The third project was divided into three phases: (1) an introductory cultural exchange, (2) a journal review on caffeine consumption trends, and (3) research on caffeine’s interactions with prescription drugs. The projects were a rewarding experience focusing on four core learning objectives: critical and creative thinking; interdisciplinary research and inquiry; writing and communication; collaboration and shared leadership. This chapter chronicles our overall experience, challenges faced, and solutions implemented in the pilot collaborative and interdisciplinary studies across borders.

Keywords: Virtual exchange, Collaboration, Interdisciplinary research, Intercultural competence, Teamwork.

⁴ Ph.D. Associate Professor of Health Sciences. Email Address: jbasuray@cbu.edu.

⁵ Graduate of Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology (BSMT), Registered Medical Technologist (RMT), MS in Medical Technology (MSMT). Affiliation De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute (DLSMHSI). Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines 4114. Email address: chmendoza@dlsmhsi.edu.ph/ clarence_rmt@gmail.com

⁶ licensed pharmacist and academic leader with over two decades of experience in pharmacy practice and education. She holds a Master of Science in Pharmacy, specializing in Pharmacy Administration and Management, from the Philippine Women’s University and a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the University of Santo Tomas. Vice Dean, Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy. Affiliation De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute. Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. Email Address: mtbasilides@dlsmhsi.edu.ph.

INTRODUCTION

“Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.” This proverb aptly reflects our current education system, which often becomes distracted by feeding students with fish for only a day, rather than teaching them how to fish. Education today primarily emphasizes achieving goals, passing tests, and obtaining the “right” answers. Globally, educators agree that a shift in teaching and learning pedagogy is necessary. Learning skills, through various active learning strategies, help the students remember the content lifelong [1]. Collaborative or group learning is a valuable instructional method that students will often apply professionally. It is an active learning method in which students team together on an assignment, produce individual parts of a more extensive assignment, and then “assemble” to reach a joint product. A collaborative learning environment encourages students to listen to others, think critically, exchange views on various issues, and explain their thinking processes through written or oral presentations [2, 3]. In addition, collaboration that integrates interdisciplinary learning across borders encourages students to interact and complete assignments through online platforms, allowing for flexible learning schedules, developing intercultural competence, and fostering an appreciation of ethical concerns. Students overcome a tendency to maintain preconceived notions by identifying insights from a range of disciplines that contribute to a thorough understanding of the issue under consideration, and helping students develop the ability to integrate concepts and ideas from multiple disciplines into a broader conceptual framework of analysis. The students consequently position themselves to learn facts more readily and thoroughly, acquiring the capacity to grasp multiple viewpoints and develop an appreciation of the differences among disciplines. Different disciplines attempt to understand similar or related problems, but they adopt different analytical mechanisms. Obtaining a clear understanding of problems with roots in multiple disciplines requires the capacity to integrate ideas, a skill that is advanced through interdisciplinary learning [4-6].

The International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU) is a platform that enables Lasallian institutions of higher education to collaborate, promoting cross-cultural learning in a virtual environment and upholding the Lasallian educational philosophy. The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is an active teaching strategy in which students from various La Salle higher educational institutions worldwide work together on common projects and programs virtually.

The COIL program is grounded in the Lasallian commitment to forming globally competent and socially responsible leaders. The program fosters openness, adaptability, and mutual respect through guided academic and cultural activities.

The objectives of this paper are to detail the three IALU-COIL projects collaboratively undertaken by the faculty members and students using virtual tools such as web conferencing and various digital communication platforms. These initiatives involved two Lasallian institutions: the Department of Health Sciences at Christian Brothers University (CBU) in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, and two academic units from De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute (DLSMHSI) in Cavite, Philippines. The first and second projects were developed in partnership between CBU's Department of Health Sciences and the Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy (DMQCP), DLSMHSI. The third project was a collaboration between the same CBU department and the College of Medical Laboratory Science (CMLS) of DLSMHSI.

The Collaborating Institutes

Christian Brothers University, Memphis, TN, USA - founded in 1871 and one of the four schools in the United States based on the heritage of Lasallian education, this Catholic faith-based institution offers bachelor's degrees in more than 60 academic majors and concentrations in arts, business, education, engineering, and sciences. Over the years, several master's programs have also been established. Ranked among the top ten educational institutions in Tennessee, the university welcomes students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute, Cavite, Philippines - established in 1979, DLSMHSI is a premier higher education Lasallian institution managed by the De La Salle Brothers. Through its nine colleges, it is committed to teaching future medical and health sciences professionals. DLSMHSI offers several undergraduate degree programs in Doctor of Dental Medicine (Dentistry), Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Medical Laboratory Science, Molecular Diagnostics, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Radiologic Technology, Nuclear Medicine Technology, and Speech and Language Pathology. Post-graduate programs, ex.

Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy in Health Sciences by Research, Master of Arts in Nursing, and Master's in Public Health are also offered.

PROJECT 1

The COIL workshop, conducted by the IALU-COIL-LA SALLE MX project (referring to the La Salle University campuses located in Mexico and a part of the IALU network), virtually paired two faculty members from CBU, USA, and DLSMHSI, Philippines. The COVID-19 pandemic had just ended, and the academic world was returning to face-to-face teaching and learning. Over the past century, no other disease has had as significant an impact on the human population as the COVID-19 pandemic. Several studies have assessed the epidemiology, pathogenesis, and treatment of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. However, there are few studies to evaluate the perception, attitude, and awareness of COVID-19 among the student community in higher academia. Students in health science-related disciplines (ex., pre-nursing, pharmacy, physiology, medicine, and public health) are emerging healthcare professionals; hence, assessing their perception of COVID-19 will raise awareness and engage them in future research prospects. The significance of this study lies in (i) a comparative study based on the survey responses from university students in two different parts of the world, (ii) analyzing gender differences in responses, if any, (iii) health education and raising awareness about the disease among university students and thereby the community at large and (iv) findings from this KABP study can help policy-makers in the future, in their decision making towards prevention of such outbreaks and in devising social strategies keeping the population in mind.

Faculty Training

The COIL collaborating faculty from the Department of Health Sciences at CBU, USA, and Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy, DLSMHSI, Philippines, engaged in a six-week course on a virtual platform to jointly design a course to be disseminated in the following semester. The first week started with a general introduction to the COIL model and the competencies the participating faculty need to develop. The second week focused on partnership challenges and key factors for successful partnering, including cultural differences, time zone discrepancies between the two nations, differences in institutional structure, and variations in teaching and evaluation standards. In weeks 3

and 4, we communicated to define our learning outcomes and plan the syllabus of our COIL course, following the model. In week 5, we explored learning technologies suitable for our learning outcomes, and in the final week, we defined the assessment details and expectations for this collaboration. Upon completion, a COIL certificate was awarded to the faculty.

Module Design

The pilot COIL course designed above was disseminated in Spring 2023 as part of Human Anatomy and Physiology II (a course taken by Health Sciences majors in the second semester of their freshman year) at CBU, USA, and Human Anatomy and Physiology students at DLSMHSI, Philippines.

Pre-instructional planning: The faculty communicated over institutional email and held multiple virtual meetings to finalize the module's week-by-week layout. Regular feedback from the Center of Digital Instruction at CBU was also obtained. Both institutions used Canvas as their Learning Management System (LMS) platform.

Introduction of Methodology: The module was introduced once the students had settled well into the course. At their respective institutions, the faculty taught the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system, the mechanism of action of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 disease, its treatment modalities, and management. They explained the collaborative module and student expectations in detail to the learners in both cities.

Survey Design - The module began with students from both campuses exchanging introductory emails describing their institutions and cities, serving as a good icebreaker activity where both groups of students learned about the food and culture of the two places. Over the next few weeks, the students, in separate groups, designed a 30-question KABP survey and finalized it in collaboration with the faculty.

The survey questionnaire, in English, for both campuses in this study included the following four sections, comprising several questions: demographics, COVID-19 risk and awareness, self-experience, preparedness, and prevention. Demographic questions addressed the responder's gender, race/ethnicity, academic classification, and major subject of study. COVID-19 risk and

awareness included questions about the symptoms of the disease, its incubation period, mode of transmission, available diagnostic tests, susceptible population groups, understanding of the consequences of infection, and awareness of the COVID-19 vaccine. The survey questions included infection severity, future risk of infection, source of information, policies, and social stigma, to assess one's own experience. The final section on preparedness and prevention included questions on vaccine availability, vaccine readiness and timeline, choice of vaccine taken, prevention measures adopted to avoid infection, and the effect of COVID-19 on the selected Health Sciences career path. The survey was distributed and administered online to participants via Google Forms on both campuses.

Data Collection

The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at CBU. Through the link, participants viewed the survey questions by simply clicking on them and answering the questions. The cover section of the questionnaire included a brief introduction outlining the objectives, procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality declarations, and the maintenance of anonymity. One hundred seventy-two students from both campuses answered the questionnaire anonymously. Demographic information and other factors related to the student's knowledge, attitude, practice, and risk assessment regarding COVID-19 were recorded. The survey took an average of 10 minutes to complete. The survey results are currently being analyzed and prepared for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Overall, the KABP data indicated gender differences significantly correlating with behavioral intentions to prevent infection.

Challenges faced

Manila, Philippines, is fourteen hours ahead of Memphis, USA. The major challenge the students faced in this collaborative study was deciding on a convenient time to converse live over a virtual platform at least once a week. Additionally, students on both campuses had to work around the holidays and breaks in their respective school calendars. Most of their conversations were limited to sharing group chat messages rather than live video chats. In international collaborative projects involving diverse cultures, the language of communication becomes a key hurdle. However, this issue was easily resolved as English was a common language on both sides. Additionally, the

students on both sides selected team leaders who created an environment where members could comfortably express their ideas and concerns, regardless of their ethnicity.

The KABP survey, designed by the students, has several limitations that should be acknowledged in future studies. Firstly, the changing student population over time may introduce variability in the data, which could potentially affect the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the lack of a longitudinal follow-up limits the ability to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and practices (KABP) over time. It may also contribute to selection bias, as students who chose to participate could differ systematically from those who did not. The relatively small sample size, mainly due to the discipline-specific context and the constraints of working within smaller academic institutions, may limit the statistical power and broader applicability of the results. To address these concerns, future studies should aim to replicate and validate the KABP findings, including any observed gender differences, in a larger and more diverse student population with a longitudinal design. Another significant limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data, which can be affected by social desirability bias or inaccurate recall, thus potentially misrepresenting actual behaviors or attitudes. Future studies should consider incorporating objective measures to improve reliability.

Overall impact

Students and faculty from two campuses worldwide interacted virtually and collaborated on this project. Collaboration is essential in higher education today, as it fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together diverse viewpoints, improving problem-solving and decision-making, and helps build strong interpersonal connections. In this pilot project, students were given an introductory experience interacting with peers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Language is a key component in educational strategies designed to promote interaction among people from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. English has become the most commonly spoken and dominant global language in nearly every field, from science to entertainment. [7]. Our student groups conversed in English, without having to break the language barrier. In the future, it would be interesting to develop similar collaborative projects with non-English speaking Lasallian institutes.

Most students had a first-time experience interacting with peers from another country. Although they had limited interaction at the beginning, exchanging introductory letters, and in the end, while exchanging survey questions, the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves. One student mentioned, “I was a little hesitant in the beginning, thinking whether they would be as welcoming, but I was quite surprised by their warmth. We learned about their academic programs, food, culture, etc. It was enjoyable to discover that we students think in similar ways, share some concerns about our future, and, most importantly, how science unites us all. Wish we could interact more and do more such projects together.” Based on the insights gained during the study and constructive feedback from participating students, we recognized the need for stronger engagement and interaction among students across both campuses. As a result, in the follow-up initiative (Project 2), we aimed to engage our students from both campuses more, moving beyond the exchange of introductory letters, and developing more interactive, meaningful activities that could enhance inter-campus communication and learning outcomes.

PROJECT 2

The second COIL project, between the Department of Health Sciences, CBU, USA, and the Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy, DLSMHSI, Cavite, Philippines, was designed to provide students with a hands-on, research-based learning experience while developing intercultural communication skills. The central theme revolved around the effects of caffeine consumption among teenagers and young adults in the USA and the Philippines and its interaction with prescription medications. Students engaged in structured activities that required research, data analysis, and collaborative presentations, enabling them to explore public health concerns within a global academic framework. Students gained valuable insights through this initiative into Innovative Pedagogies for Virtual Exchange, Global and Intercultural Competence Development, and Research and Assessment in virtual exchange —three key themes that shaped the learning experience [8-13]. While challenges such as time zone differences, language barriers, and initial shyness arose, participants successfully navigated these difficulties, making the project meaningful and memorable [14-15].

This COIL project followed a predetermined timeline to ensure that tasks were completed in an organized manner. Phase One took place from late August to early September, with the submission of introductory materials in mid-September. Phase Two and Phase Three, which included the journal review, spanned several weeks, allowing students ample time to conduct thorough research and prepare their summaries. The final deliverables, in Phase Four, included research presentations, which were submitted by mid-October. The project concluded with a virtual meeting between students from DLSMHSI and CBU, where they discussed findings, shared insights, and reflected on the collaborative experience.

Phase One: Introduction and Cultural Exchange

The project's first phase focused on building connections among students from both campuses through cultural exchange. Following the approach used in Project 1, each class was required to create an introductory letter or a video presentation that showcased their country, city, and institution. This step enabled students to become familiar with one another's backgrounds, thereby fostering a sense of community before engaging in research activities. Students highlighted key aspects of their respective locations, including history, geographical features, language, cuisine, and notable figures. Additionally, they introduced their class by detailing their academic programs, future aspirations, and shared interests. This phase helped students develop their intercultural competence, as they had to actively listen, appreciate differences, and adapt their communication styles accordingly. Many students appreciated the opportunity to engage with international peers, noting that “meeting them is a great experience, not just for academic purposes but also for friendship.”

A crucial part of this phase was selecting preferred communication platforms and scheduling collaborative sessions. Email, WhatsApp, and Google Meet were limited in terms of engagement. Hence, students opted for more interactive platforms, such as Discord or Microsoft Teams, which enabled better organization of discussions, file sharing, and real-time collaboration.

Despite their initial nervousness, students expressed enthusiasm about learning from their international peers. Many noted that stepping out of their comfort zones and communicating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds was valuable for building confidence and developing

leadership skills. As one student shared, “I was nervous in the beginning... however, when we exchanged each other’s social media accounts, that served as an ice breaker.”

Phase Two: Literature Review on Caffeine Intake

The second phase shifted the focus to academic research. Student groups conducted a literature review on caffeine intake among teenagers and young adults in the Philippines. This task required them to gather relevant journal articles, critically analyze key findings, and summarize the data.

One of the key learning outcomes of this phase was the development of research skills, particularly in sourcing and evaluating scientific literature. Many students reported that this step challenged them to think critically and synthesize complex information concisely. One participant remarked, “We were able to collect, analyze, and summarize research data on caffeine among young adults in the Philippines,” while another emphasized that the experience helped them “demonstrate an understanding of study design and data collection by conducting our own survey.” Additionally, working in cross-cultural teams encouraged them to engage in collaborative problem-solving, as they had to coordinate their efforts despite time zone differences. Participants utilized various digital tools to compile their findings into structured presentations, ensuring that their presentations were clear and concise. Some students noted that the literature review helped them appreciate the importance of evidence-based healthcare practices, reinforcing the need for pharmacists and medical professionals to consider global health trends.

Student feedback indicated that time constraints were a significant challenge. Students cited difficulties with “time interval or semester [that] did not match.” Given the rigorous nature of the research, students suggested that an extension of the timeline would enable a more in-depth exploration of the topic. Future implementations of COIL could benefit from adjusting the schedule to allow more flexibility, ensuring students have sufficient time to engage meaningfully with their research.

Phase Three: Investigating Caffeine and Prescription Drug Interactions

The project's third phase focused on the pharmacological effects of caffeine when taken in conjunction with prescription medications. Students researched potential drug interactions and summarized their findings in a presentation. This phase required students to apply scientific reasoning and critical analysis. They needed to interpret complex medical data and relate it to real-world healthcare implications. Many students found this task engaging and relevant, as it connected their coursework to practical applications in patient care. Some students initially found the topic challenging, as it required understanding pharmacokinetics and drug metabolism. However, they successfully navigated the material through teamwork and guidance, gaining a deeper appreciation for how caffeine can influence medication efficacy. This phase also underscored the importance of interdisciplinary learning, as students had to integrate knowledge from pharmacy, medicine, and public health, which could not be covered extensively within the Nutrition course at CBU, USA.

Phase Four: Virtual student meeting and reflections

The final step involved a virtual meeting between DLSMHSI and CBU students, during which they shared their findings, reflected on their experiences, and discussed the lessons learned. During this meeting, students presented their work, received feedback, and engaged in discussions with their international peers. Many students described this session as the highlight of the program, as it allowed them to connect on a deeper level and celebrate their achievements together.

In general, the students described the COIL experience as “fun,” “memorable,” and “a new experience to remember,” highlighting its value in fostering global connections and academic collaboration. In their feedback, students expressed interest in more interactive activities, such as case studies or role-playing scenarios, which could allow them to apply their knowledge in simulated real-world settings. This recommendation highlights the potential for enhancing engagement through experiential learning techniques in future COIL projects. Suggestions included “breakout rooms by pair,” “icebreakers,” and platforms like “Discord or Microsoft Teams... to stay organized and keep updated.” Encouraging active participation was also highlighted, such as “requiring everyone to open their cameras” and “assigning specific topics to maintain interaction.” Academically, students affirmed that the COIL project achieved its learning objectives.

The COIL implementation served as a case study in research and assessment for virtual exchange. By conducting a structured literature review and analyzing the effects of caffeine on medication interactions, students applied evidence-based research methods within an international context. Their findings contributed to a broader academic discussion on public health while also demonstrating the tangible outcomes of virtual exchange programs. In their reflections, students emphasized that the COIL experience helped them develop essential soft skills, such as communication, adaptability, and teamwork. Despite the initial challenges, they appreciated the opportunity to expand their global perspectives, network with future healthcare professionals from another country, and build confidence in their academic abilities. However, they also identified areas for improvement. In addition to scheduling adjustments and using better communication platforms, students suggested incorporating more synchronous activities, such as live discussions or interactive workshops, to facilitate greater engagement. These insights provide valuable guidance for refining future virtual exchange programs.

PROJECT 3

The third collaborative project between students in the Human Anatomy and Physiology Part II course, the Department of Health Sciences at CBU, USA, and Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science program students at DLSMHSI, Philippines, was a Mirror class. Unlike the COIL program, which typically runs for six weeks or more, the mirror class presents an inter-institutional team approach between educators and students, with a much shorter exposure. In this model, educators in participating institutions deliver a parallel course on a similar topic within their existing courses to the class of their partner institution. Hence, the term "mirror".

The Mirror class provides benefits to both educators and students without requiring an extensive and long-term commitment. Educators are allowed to be exposed to another setting and gain insights into the pedagogical approach of another international partner institution. This serves as a potential platform for sparking new ideas and teaching perspectives that may be brought to their home institutions. Students, on the other hand, through the mirror class, are exposed to alternative viewpoints and encouraged to engage in comparative analysis of their learning experiences, as well as the perspectives, materials, and modes of delivery [16-17].

Pre-implementation Planning

This project involved students enrolled in two different courses across the two institutions. Hence, the educators from both campuses conducted a series of pre-implementation meetings to (a) identify congruent curricular content amenable to a mirrored pedagogical approach, and (b) address logistical considerations, such as the scheduling of any synchronous activities or shared resources, accounting for the significant time difference between the Philippines and Memphis, USA. This careful alignment of content and scheduling was crucial to ensure the efficacy and accessibility of the mirrored learning experience for all participating students, since the teaching and learning in both institutions would be “live” in real time and not through recorded lectures.

Mirror Class Implementation

Following a comparative analysis of the respective program syllabi, hematopoiesis (the production of blood cellular components) was selected as the focal topic for the mirror class. The module would include a comprehensive overview of hematopoiesis, its regulation, and the details of erythropoiesis, leukopoiesis, and thrombopoiesis, which involve the formation of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, respectively, from hematopoietic stem cells. The dengue virus has a significant impact on bone marrow function, leading to bone marrow suppression and decreased hematopoiesis. We used dengue fever, specifically its epidemiology, diagnostic approaches, and management protocols within the Philippines and the USA, as a point of salient contrast. To facilitate knowledge transfer, the educator from DLSMHSI delivered a synchronous lecture to CBU students via the Microsoft Teams platform. Conversely, the educator from CBU prepared an asynchronous lecture recording, which was subsequently uploaded to the online learning management system of the DLSMHSI students. Supplementary instructional materials, in the form of a PDF lecture document, were also provided to both cohorts to augment the learning experience.

Challenges Encountered and Points for Improvement

The educator from DLSMHSI experienced some technical difficulty connecting with the online platform chosen by BCU. Productivity could have been improved if a dry run had been conducted by both educators before the actual implementation of the mirror class. On the other hand, the CBU educator delivered an asynchronous lecture recording due to time limitations and weather-related

disturbances, which caused issues with internet connectivity. While this approach was still practical, students might have had a more engaging experience if the lecture had been delivered synchronously. Therefore, it is recommended that virtual internationalization activities, such as mirror classes, be incorporated into the syllabus planning phase, unless the intent is to involve only a representative group of students rather than the entire class.

Evaluation

The evaluation instrument, administered via Google Form, commenced with a section for Informed Consent and Data Privacy, followed by the collection of learner identifiers, specifically name and email address, to facilitate data management and potential follow-up. The subsequent sections comprised structured evaluations of key pedagogical and curricular dimensions:

- (i) **Quality of the Discussion:** This section assessed the pedagogical effectiveness of the instructor, encompassing the clarity and coherence of the material presentation, the efficacy of lecture delivery, the instructor's responsiveness to student inquiries, and their overall teaching acumen.
- (ii) **Contribution to Learning:** This focused on the perceived impact of the course on the learner's knowledge and skill acquisition. Evaluative metrics included self-assessments of skill and knowledge levels both before and after the completion of the course, as well as an appraisal of the course's overall contribution to their professional development.
- (iii) **Skills of the Instructor:** The instructor's pedagogical competencies were specifically targeted in this section. Evaluative criteria included their effectiveness as a lecturer and demonstrator, their ability to stimulate student interest, demonstrated subject matter mastery, the clarity and logical organization of presentations, and their overall effectiveness in managing and facilitating class periods.
- (iv) **Course Content:** the structural and substantive aspects of the curriculum were evaluated, including the clarity of stated learning objectives, the logical organization and planning of the course content, and the extent to which the course design facilitated active student participation.

Following the evaluation of core course components, a dedicated section addressed the Mirror Class Experience. This encompassed two key areas:

(i) Mirror Class as a Teaching-Learning Strategy: This segment aimed to elicit feedback on the perceived effectiveness and value of the mirror class approach as a pedagogical tool.

(ii) Impressions and Recommendations: This section provided learners with an opportunity to share their overall impressions of the mirror class experience and to offer specific recommendations for future iterations.

The evaluation concluded with two open-ended qualitative prompts designed to gather rich, descriptive feedback- (i) Identification of the most useful or valuable aspects of the course, and (ii) Suggestions for specific areas of improvement for the course. This comprehensive evaluation framework aimed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic assessment of the course's effectiveness and the impact of the mirror class modality on student learning.

CONCLUSION

The COIL collaborative projects between DLSMHSI, Philippines and CBU, USA exemplified the transformative potential of **Innovative Pedagogies for Virtual Exchange, Global and Intercultural Competence Development, and Research and Assessment in Virtual Exchange**. Through structured collaborative learning, students engaged in a meaningful academic exchange in all three projects, which enhanced their research and critical thinking skills while fostering a deeper understanding of global healthcare issues.

By incorporating **innovative pedagogies**, such as collaborative research and virtual presentations, the projects demonstrated best practices in integrating international learning into curricula. The use of digital tools, including video conferencing and messaging platforms, has enabled seamless communication and knowledge sharing despite geographical barriers. However, student feedback suggested that future implementations could benefit from **more interactive digital tools** to enhance engagement further.

The projects also played a crucial role in **developing global and intercultural competence** by encouraging students to engage in cultural exchange and cross-border collaboration. Through their introductory presentations, students not only introduced their country and institution but also gained

insight into different perspectives and practices in healthcare education. The challenges of working across different time zones and cultural contexts helped them develop **resilience, teamwork, and adaptability**—key competencies in an increasingly interconnected world.

Ultimately, the COIL projects reinforced the value of global collaboration in higher education. By integrating technology-driven learning strategies, fostering intercultural engagement, and applying research-based assessments, it provided students with a **holistic educational experience** that prepared them for the complexities of the modern healthcare landscape. The lessons learned from this initiative serve as a model for future virtual exchange programs, highlighting the importance of continual refinement and adaptation to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to Ms. Marie Esthel Familiar, Instructor at DLSMHSI, Philippines, who collaborated with us on Project 1, provided valuable insights, and assisted with data collection.

REFERENCES

- Çalikoğlu, A.; Bulut-Sahin, B.; Aşık, A. (2024). *Virtual exchange as a mode of internationalization at a distance: Experiences from Türkiye*. British Journal of Educational Technology. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13546>.
- Davey, A. K. (2023) *Internationalization of the curriculum in health programs*. BMC Medical Education, 23(1), 285. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-023-04271-8>.
- Franco-Tantuico, M. A. (2022). *Active Learning: A Concept Analysis with Implications for Nursing Education*. Nursing education perspectives, 43(4), 233–237. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000895>.
- Garcia, T. S.; Arias, M. I.; Burgos, B. A.; Alvarez, L. E.; Paredes, F. d. R. C. (2023). *The Mirror Class as a Didactic Methodology and the Perception of the Students of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos and the Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo, Ecuador*. Migration Letters, 20(S8), 1247–1251. <https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v20iS8.5089>.
- Levites Strekalova, Y. A. (2022). *Culture of Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Nursing Research Training*. Nursing research, 71(3), 250–254. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NNR.0000000000000553>.

- Msomphora, M. R. (2024). *Bridging borders: Global insights and challenges in internationalising higher education using a decade-long case study*. International Journal of Educational Research Open, 8, 100402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100402>.
- Ockerman, M.; Milani, M.; Salvadori, E. M. F; Portera, A. (2023). Global Learning Experience: Developing intercultural competence through virtual exchange. Education Sciences and Society, 2, 288–309. <https://doi.org/10.3280/ess2-2023oa16402>; <https://journals.francoangeli.it/index.php/ess/article/view/16402/2619>.
- O'Dowd, R. (2017) *Virtual exchange and internationalising the classroom*. Training Language and Culture, 1(4), 8-24. <https://doi.org/10.29366/2017tlc.1.4.1>.
- O'Dowd, R. (2018). *From telecollaboration to virtual exchange: state-of-the-art and the role of UNICollaboration in moving forward*. Journal of Virtual Exchange, 1, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2018.jve.1>.
- Rao, Parupalli. (2019). *The Role of English as a Global Language*. Research Journal of English (RJOE), 4(1), 65–79. [https://www.rjoe.org.in/Files/vol4issue1/new/OK%20RJOE-Srinu%20sir\(65-79\)%20rv.pdf](https://www.rjoe.org.in/Files/vol4issue1/new/OK%20RJOE-Srinu%20sir(65-79)%20rv.pdf).
- Sauro, S.; Spector-Cohen, E. (2020). *The Role of Pedagogical Mentoring in Virtual Exchange*. TESOL Quarterly, 54(1), 146-172. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.543>.
- Swart, R. (2017). *Critical thinking instruction and technology enhanced learning from the student perspective: A mixed methods research study*. Nurse education in practice, 23, 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2017.02.003>.
- Uribe, J. D.; Cañas, M. I. C.; Navas, M. A. I. (2022). *Mirror classes. Internationalization and inclusion in the classroom*. Encuentro Internacional de Educación en Ingeniería. <https://doi.org/10.26507/paper.2338>.
- Ward L. A. (2022). *Engaging nurses through active and experiential learning*. Nursing, 52(8), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NURSE.0000839856.54243.ce>.
- Weaver, G. C.; McDonald, P. L.; Louie, G. S.; Woodman, T. C. (2024). *Future Potentials for International Virtual Exchange in Higher Education Post COVID-19: A Scoping Review*. Education Sciences, 14(3), 232. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14030232>.
- Xu, C.; Wu, C.-F.; Xu, D.-D.; Lu, W.-Q.; Wang, K.-Y. (2022). *Challenges to Student Interdisciplinary Learning Effectiveness: An Empirical Case Study*. Journal of Intelligence, 10(4), 88. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence10040088>.

Yang, B. H.; Lo, K. W.; Li, Y. S.; Chao, K. Y. (2024). *Effects of integrating interdisciplinary learning on student learning outcomes and healthcare-giving competence: a mixed methods study*. BMC nursing, 23(1), 583. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02260-w>.

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

Supplemental documents:

1. Introductory Letter from DLSMHSI students

DLSMHSI DMQCP COIL Participants

Governor D. Mangubat Avenue,
City of Dasmariñas Cavite, Philippines, 4114
DMQPCOIL@gmail.com

9th September 2022

Students of HSCI 116, Fall 2022

School of Science

Christian Brothers University

Greetings in St. La Salle!

We are the **3rd Year-Section 3 Students of Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy** at De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute or commonly known as DLSMHSI. It is situated at Dasmariñas Cavite, Philippines.

The **Philippines** is a sovereign archipelago country located between the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia. The Philippines is an archipelago or string of more than 7,100 islands. The quantity of inhabited islands is only approximately one-third. The country is divided into three geographical divisions: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The province of **Cavite** abounds with significant objects and subjects of culture and history. It is home to many Filipino heroes and features a unique collection of locations connected to the Philippine Revolution of 1896. Cavite has two pronounced seasons – the dry season, which usually begins in November and ends in April, and the rainy season, which starts in May and ends in October. Cavite's cool periods are from December to February, while summer months are from April to May.

The City of **Dasmariñas** is often shortened to Dasma. It is a 1st class component city in the province of Cavite, Philippines, and also the largest city in terms of area and population in the region of Cavite. It is classified as the most competitive city in the country for its peace-loving, hospitable, hardworking people.

The City of Dasmariñas is known as the **Industrial Giant of CALABARZON** due to its rapid development as one of Cavite's provinces. It started as a barrio of Imus before becoming an independent municipality. The City of Dasmariñas Cavite has a wide variety of commercial establishments, including retail malls, fast food chains, groceries, convenience stores, restaurants, etc. Since it has the most universities in the province, including Technological University of the Philippines - Cavite Campus (TUP), De La Salle University - Dasmariñas, De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute,

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

and many more, the City of Dasmarinas has also been named as the "University Capital of Cavite.

In the Philippines, there are more than a dozen different regional languages. Tagalog's many regional dialects are referred to as Filipino. **Filipino** is the language used for Filipino communication due to a large number of regional languages and dialects, while Spanish is sometimes spoken in isolated or remote areas. In addition to that, English is typically the language in the business precinct and is expressed as a second language. It is also completely normal for Filipinos to be fluent in two or more languages.

The most famous Filipino food, **adobo**, is recognized as the country's unofficial national dish. Usually made with chicken or pork, is a close second favorite; it is cooked in a blending of vinegar, garlic, black peppercorns, soy sauce, and bay leaves. Although traditionally prepared in clay pots, adobo is now produced in more typical metal pots or woks. The Spanish observed this traditional Filipino cooking technique during their invasion and colonization of the Philippines in the sixteenth century. They called it "adobo," the Spanish word for the marinade.

Museo De Lasalle is one good thing to look for in Dasmarinas. It is located in De La Salle University of Dasmarinas. Museo De La Salle is a significant contributor to the university museum movement in the Philippines. It aims to build a productive partnership that serves the community most creatively. Museo De La Salle is committed to supporting school members in critical areas of education, research, public outreach, and administration. They also collaborate with other museums in the country to increase their interest in museology. This idea supports the appreciation of the history, art, and culture of the Philippines.

The Philippines is known to have different religions like **Islam and Catholicism**. Filipinos are known to be religious; therefore, the first built church was Immaculate Conception Parish Church for Catholic people in Dasmarinas, Cavite. It is also known as Dasmarinas Church. It was built in 1886, shortly after Dasmarinas was founded as a separate parish. Churches and monasteries were the scenes of Bloodshed at the Battle of Perez Dasmarinas in the Philippine Revolution against Spain. In 1986, the National Historical Institute-designated it as an Important Historic Architectural Build with a Historic mark.

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

About 32 kilometers south of Manila, near Dasmarinas City, Cavite, the De La Salle Health Sciences Institute is located on an eight-hectare parcel of land. Being close to city conveniences and surrounded by the verdant, peaceful countryside surroundings, the campus location in the City of Dasmarinas is very beneficial to learning. The DLSU-Dasmarinas, other institutions, eateries, commercial malls, and student towns are all located within a kilometer of each other. The De La Salle University Medical Center (DLSUMC) complex of four buildings, the College of Medicine building, the seven-story Academic Center for Health Allied Sciences, the Dr. Romeo P. Ariniego, MD Library, the four-story De La Salle University Angelo King Medical Research Center, and the De La Salle Animo Center make up the campus.

The DLSMHSI offers **seven major programs**, which include the College of Medicine, College of Humanities & Sciences, College of Medical Imaging and Therapy, College of Medical Laboratory Science, College of Nursing, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, and last but not least, our College of Pharmacy. According to a 2017 survey, out of 56 colleges and universities, the DLSMHSI College of Medicine ranked as the 4th best medical school in the Philippines.

We are currently enrolled in the **Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy program of the Dr. Mariano Que College of Pharmacy**. We have subjects like Pharmacology, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Dispensing, and other pharmaceutical sciences courses. It is a challenging 4-year program, but it helps us learn many theoretical and practical skills that will eventually be useful to us in the future.

The outcomes-based program is at least a **four (4) year degree program** with a total of **201 credit units** with **1415 hours** of professional courses. It also includes internship programs in the last year of study that involve assigning students to different CHED-accredited affiliation establishments covering a minimum of 1,200 hours. The intern/student, during the internship or supervised pharmacy practice experience, will be exposed to a variety of opportunities in practice areas that will prepare them for the different roles expected of them upon graduation. The students will acquire 15 units of institutional courses in religious education and inter-professional education and will also be expected to have finished and successfully defended undergraduate research.

With such a great opportunity, we look forward to nurturing talents, creativity, and knowledge with you. As aspiring Lasallian Health Care Professionals, we are in the hope of collaborating and apply both nursing and pharmaceutical knowledge in the attainment of better output in our study.

One of the most common things that the majority of us like to do is to spend our free time **watching movies or series** or staying active on **social**

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

media platforms. On rare occasions, if we don't have a lot of school work, we enjoy **relaxing**, listening to **music**, and **sleeping**. Some of us are into **baking** and **cooking**, and some are into **working out**. One of our classmates is into literature, so she likes **reading books**.

We are excited to be with you virtually as we journey through our online learning. If you would like to discuss anything with us, please don't hesitate to contact us via email. We can be reached at DMQCPCOIL@gmail.com. If possible, we can have a zoom meeting to converse and plan.

We are available to meet every Wednesday at 10:00 pm (Philippine Time). If this time slot doesn't work for you, please let us know your availability so we can find a convenient time.

Best reagrds,

DMQCP COIL Participants



2. Example of introductory assignments on Canvas LMS for CBU, USA students

Ice-breaker activity 1- Introductory Letter

✓ Published Edit ⋮

This is a group assignment. The entire class joins to write an introductory letter to the students of the partnering campus, addressing the following (and any other facts you want to include):

- (i) Introduce Memphis, TN, USA
- (ii) History, geography, culture, language, cuisine, places of interest, any *internationally* celebrated personality in/from your city
- (iii) Introduce your University and campus
- (iv) About your group
 - What is your Major, which Course
 - Future goals of your co-students
 - Any special hobbies or interesting information that your group member/s has/have which you would like to include
- (v) Suggest the following: (a) what modes of communication (ex. WhatsApp, Email, Google Meet, etc.) and, (b) a few days and times during the week, which would work best for you to collaborate with the partnering group. *Note: Manila, Philippines is 14 hours ahead of Memphis, USA.*

Each one of you will submit the same letter for grading.

Points 10
Submitting a file upload
File Types doc and pdf

Due	For	Available from	Until
→ Feb 7	Everyone	-	-

Ice-breaker activity 2- Video message

✓ Published Edit ⋮

Submit a 1- 1.5 minute video/ media file introducing your class to the partnering University. The link below describes how you can upload a media file on Canvas.

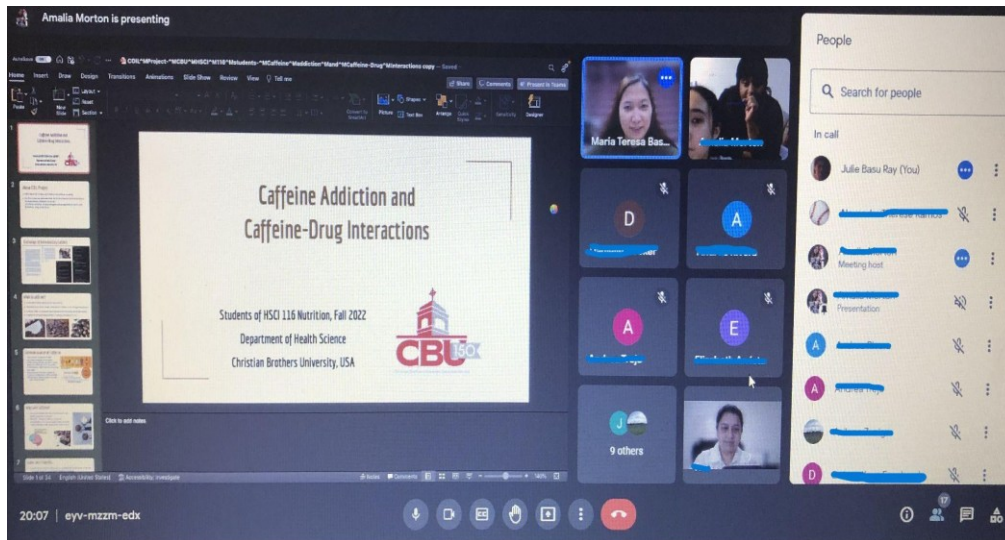
<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-submit-a-media-file-as-an-assignment-submission/ta-p/279>

Points 10
Submitting a website url, a media recording, or a file upload

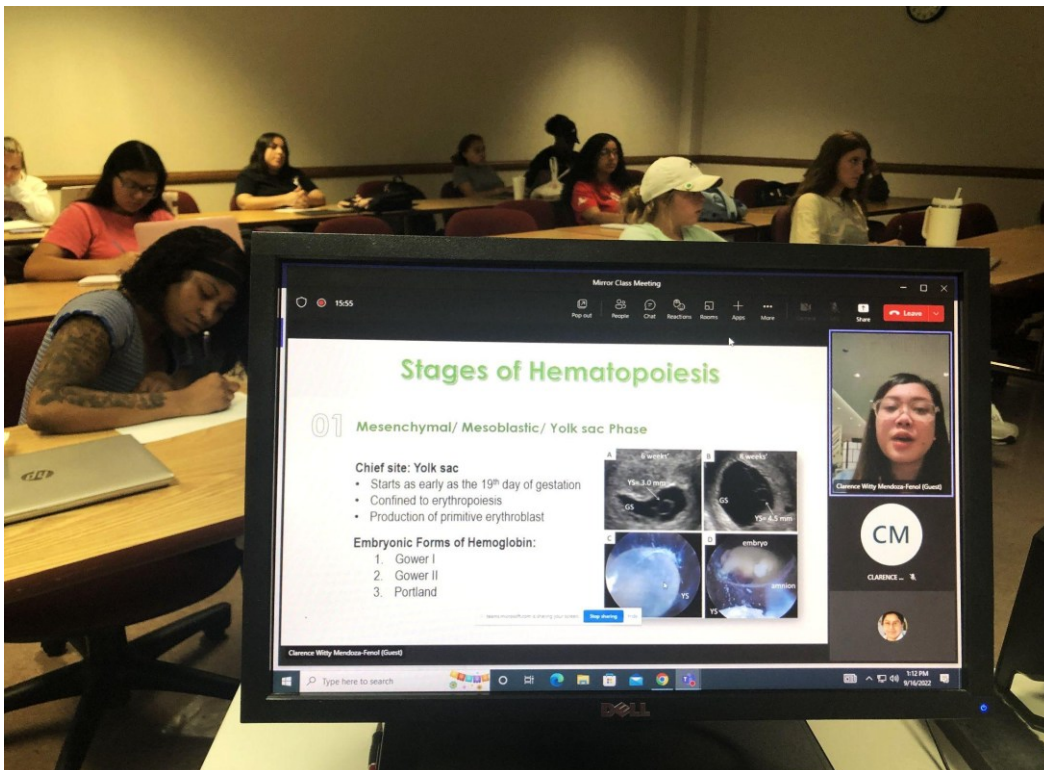
Due	For	Available from	Until
→ Feb 7	Everyone	-	-

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

5. Project 2 MS Teams Video Conference screenshot



6. Project 3 Mirror Class meeting- DLSMHSI faculty lecturing CBU students



ENHANCING LITERATURE TEACHING THROUGH VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

Jose C. Macatangay⁷
De La Salle Lipa, Philippines

Abstract

As a mimetic art form that reflects and addresses social and global issues, literature plays a crucial role in revealing human conditions and stimulating readers to engage in social transformation. This chapter illustrates how the DLSL-U pedagogical model can be mapped with the See-Judge-Act process through a lesson exemplar using N.V.M. Gonzalez's short story "Bread of Salt." The exemplar integrates Virtual Exchange (VE) activities to develop intercultural competencies further, to promote global awareness and collaborative problem-solving among students. The article recommends using a lesson exemplar tailored to the learning contexts based on the classroom setting, students' needs, and the literary text to be used. It concludes by emphasizing the significant potential of the See-Judge-Act framework in literature teaching, within both Lasallian and broader educational contexts, to form critically engaged readers who become agents of social change for a more just and sustainable world.

Keywords: DLSL-U pedagogical model, See-Judge-Act, Bread of Salt, Virtual Exchange.

⁷ Dr. Jose Macatangay is a Research Faculty at De La Salle Lipa, where he focuses primarily on research while continuing to teach Professional Education and Literature courses. He advocates for critical pedagogies in English teaching and literary criticism of Philippine literature. A seasoned academic leader, Dr. Macatangay has served as Dean of the College of Education, Arts, and Sciences, Chair of the Education Department, Area Chair for Languages and Literature, adviser to Lavoxa student publication, and research officer for publication. His research has been published in 3L: Language, Linguistics, and Literature, a Quartile 1 Scopus-indexed journal. Once recognized as DLSL's Most Productive Lasallian Partner, Dr. Joe also received the IDOL Award for publication. His scholarly interests span literary theory, discourse analysis, and the development of models and scales for language and literature instruction, including his current work on academic language proficiency for Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners. Email Address: jose.macatangay@dls.edu.ph.

Literature, as a mimetic art form, mirrors social and global issues, by offering familiar stories, relatable characters, and realistic settings. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1949) contends with his concept of *littérature engagée*, authors play an important role in revealing human conditions and challenging the status quo, thereby stimulating readers to engage in social transformation. The power of literature to bring about social change begins in school. Paulo Freire's "conscientization concept" posits that education as a powerful tool for questioning repressive structures by "becoming aware of one's oppression and working towards social change." By revealing social reality through literary works, literature plays a crucial role in 'conscientization,' making learning a critical process of discovering real-world problems (MyEnglishPages, n.d.).

As a Lasallian school in the Philippines, De La Salle Lipa expresses in its mission-vision statement its commitment to providing "quality and human Christian education rooted in equity, justice, sustainable and inclusive development" (De La Salle Lipa, n.d.). Indeed, the realization of the school's mission is at the heart of the classroom, wherein the teacher provides the context of learning and facilitates the convergence of literary education, faith, and social justice guided by the DLSL-U pedagogical model, derived from the 5Es (Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Extension, and Evaluation) of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL). The 5Es of the IBL Approach are translated into the DLSL-U pedagogical model through these stages: In the Engagement phase, draw out students' attention by engaging them with a challenging situation, activating their prior knowledge, stimulating their curiosity, and identifying possible misconceptions. In Exploration, level up students' learning by helping them make sense of a concept through collaboration and applying process skills, such as observing, inquiring and questioning, conducting research, hypothesizing, testing predictions, and communicating with peers to generate new ideas. In the Explanation stage, strengthen students' explanations of their conceptual understanding by allowing them to provide justification and evidence and by confirming, agreeing with, or disagreeing with the explanations of others. In the Extension part, learn from one another by sharing information and ideas on applying new knowledge, concepts, and skills to diverse situations or other disciplines. Finally, in the Evaluation stage, unify the lesson by encouraging students to assess their understanding through self-assessments, key takeaways, and reflections on their learning.

This chapter illustrates how the DLSL-U pedagogical model can be mapped with the See-Judge-Act process, employing a Philippine short story in English as a case study. Most importantly, it then presents a lesson exemplar that incorporates Virtual Exchange (VE) activities and develops intercultural competencies, grounded in both the DLSL-U pedagogical model and the See-Judge-Act approach.

The See-Judge-Act process, developed by Belgian Catholic priest Joseph Cardijn, involves observing social situations, evaluating them based on principles, and taking action to address injustices. Cardijn, who established the Young Christian Workers (YCW) in 1924, applied this process to link faith with social action among young working-class Catholic youths. The method emphasizes the common responsibility of all, both lay and clergy, in social analysis and action (Brigham, 2018). Seeing entails understanding a situation more profoundly, referred to as social analysis by Henriot and Holland (as quoted in Brigham, 2018). Social analysis involves a close examination of its historical and structural relationships. Historical analysis examines how a situation evolves, while structural analysis examines how factors such as economy, politics, and social norms impact a situation (Brigham, 2018). Judging, the second of the three stages, seeks to address a "problematic situation by evaluating it based on guiding principles derived from various sources like religious teachings, scriptures, cultural mores, philosophical views, and the teachings of inspirational leaders" (Brigham, 2018), serving as the ethical guide for analyzing social justice issues. The initial two processes, Seeing and Judging, result in the third step, which is Acting, grounded on the principles of justice and charity. Brigham (2018) asserts that charity and justice are related actions in response to a situation. Charity provides relief immediately by meeting basic needs such as food and shelter, whereas justice delves deeper into questioning the reasons why these basic needs are lacking.

The See-Judge-Act process is "Lasallianized" in the Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF). The See component is a "conscious experiencing" of a social situation, such as experiencing the reality of low-income people. Such experience should lead to reflections and realizations on the "differences, similarities, and oneness of people." The Judge process parallels the Analysis-Reflection or Critical Reflection, which analyzes the root causes of problems and situates them within the context of Christian faith and Lasallian values. The Act component aligns with the "committed

action work,” which inspires students to translate their understanding of social justice issues into a concrete plan of action that is “context-sensitive, life-affirming, mutually empowering.” The plan may be implemented individually, collectively, globally, or locally and should be evaluated in terms of its quality and consistency (De La Salle University, n.d.).

While the direct application of See-Judge-Act is most overt in service-learning contexts-where the ‘community outside the classroom functions something like a required text’ (Brigham, 2018), its integration into cognitive and affective academic courses, such as literature, remains viable. In literature, the See-Judge-Act can be seamlessly incorporated at the levels of See and Judge through classroom-based activities and reflections facilitated by the teacher, leading students to ‘conscious experiencing’ and ‘critical reflection’ after evaluating a social issue found in a literary text. In a literature class, the Act phase may not be as concrete as a service-learning outcome, such as a capstone project that directly addresses a community-related problem, but it may involve simple advocacies. In a Virtual Exchange (VE) setting, advocacy can be in the form of creating public awareness or campaigns on microplastics, developing policy recommendations on political dynasties, or engaging in virtual dialogues with relevant organizations to promote Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

When integrated with Lasallian values, the See component in a literature class may not provide students with a firsthand experience of social reality. Yet, it may draw them to specific social issues by exploring the text’s literary elements. The Judge phase involves investigating the causes of the identified social issues in the See section. Here, the Lasallian values of faith, service, and communion will be applied to check if the identified social issues align or conflict with the Lasallian tradition of commitment to the “least, the last, and the lost.” To analyze action and its impact, highlighting the Lasallian value of service, the following questions may be asked: How does the text present the consequences of inaction regarding a social issue? What actions does the text imply about the importance of the shared responsibility of individuals and communities to engage in service? Since the Lasallian principle of communion focuses on examining relationships and shared community, a question to analyze a literary text may include: How does the text portray the breakdown or strengthening of a community in relation to the social issue explored? Through teacher-led discussions, students will interrogate the text, enabling them to ‘see’ the social realities

portrayed in literature and 'judge' them based on Lasallian principles of faith, service, and communion. Finally, in the Act phase, students will propose real-world solutions to real-world problems unpacked from a literary text. The solutions can be a program, project, advocacy, intervention, action plan, or community service initiative addressing the root causes of social issues explored in a literary work.

Drawing from these principles, in a research study I conducted, I proposed the Awareness, Understanding, and Acting (AUA) model, a See-Judge-Act adaptation, specifically for literature teaching with social protest themes in the plays of Alberto S. Florentino, a Filipino author. The Awareness phase involves closely reading the text to identify the situations, characters, outcomes, and contributing factors. In this phase, the students should read the text closely to answer the following questions: What is happening in the text? Who are the characters involved in the situation? Who wins or loses in the situation? What factors contributed to the situation? The Understanding phase encourages reflection through a Lasallian lens, focusing on evoked emotions, ideal scenarios, and alignment with Lasallian faith. The following guide questions may be used in this phase: What emotions are evoked in you based on the situations? What is ideal to be happening? How can the situation be treated in the Lasallian faith?" Since the Acting stage is a call to action after the students have immersed themselves in a literary work and understand its social realities, this stage prompts students to propose solutions to the problems caused by the social issue and identify those involved in the action: What can be done to reconcile the reality and the ideal? What course of action could be taken? Who should be involved in the action? (Macatangay, 2023).

To demonstrate the See-Judge-Act application in the Lasallian context, this part now turns to a sample text, "Bread of Salt," written by Nestor Vicente Madali Gonzalez, better known as N.V.M. Gonzalez, a Filipino National Artist for Literature. The story, taught in our Philippine Literature (PHILLIT) course, is a rich text for social analysis. It is about a young boy who is infatuated with a rich girl named Aida, but their social status hinders him from pursuing his young love, like a bread of salt (pandesal) that is not yet cooked at 5 am: "It was not quite five, and the bread was not yet ready."

In teaching the short story "Bread of Salt," I guide the students in exploring the story's central themes, such as aspiration, love, and social barriers, as they develop the skills to question

assumptions, express creativity, and relate literature to real-life contexts. Through this scaffold, students can examine the situations, evaluate them from a faith-based perspective, and propose solutions to the social issues presented in the text. To deepen the teaching of the story, I prepared a Lesson Exemplar to demonstrate how the See-Judge-Act (SJA) process is adapted to the Lasallian

Figure 1: Lesson Exemplar

context through the DLSL-U pedagogical model and how it is operationalized in Virtual Exchange (VE) environments and its related aspects, innovation, collaboration, and global impact, targeting intercultural competencies.

DLSL-U Pedagogical Model	Activities	See-Judge-Act (SJA)	Virtual Exchange Activities	Intercultural Competencies
Draw out students' attention by engaging them with a challenging situation, activating their prior knowledge, stimulating their curiosity, and identifying possible misconceptions.	<u>Activity 1:</u> <u>Agree/Disagree Statements:</u> Some common assumptions will be listed. The students will agree or disagree with the following statements: 1. Love conquers all. 2. Talent and hard work lead to success. 3. People from different social classes can easily connect. After reading the story, students will determine (through textual evidence) whether the statements support or refute the given assumptions.	See: Conscious experiencing	Online discussion forum Live session (Zoom, Teams) Short videos or digital posters	Intercultural empathy Global self-awareness

Level-up students' learning by helping them make sense of a concept through collaboration, applying process skills such as observing, inquiring/questioning, conducting research, hypothesizing, testing predictions, and communicating with peers to generate new ideas.	<u>Activity 2: Creative Presentation</u> Small groups will be formed. Each group has an assigned topic area: Group 1: The boy's aspirations (dreams, ambitions, love) Group 2: Social obstacles (class, wealth, opportunities) Group 3: The story's ending (disappointment, realization, maturity) Each group will read their assigned topic to create a short, creative, and collaborative presentation through digital outputs.	See: Conscious experiencing Judge: Analysis/Critical Reflection	Collaborative digital outputs: Group 1: Character analysis as digital storyboards or infographics Group 2: Scene dramatizations via Flipgrid or Padlet videos Group 3: Alternative endings as audio dramas or podcasts	Teamwork across cultures Inclusivity (diverse perspectives)
Strengthen students' explanation of their conceptual understanding by letting them provide justification and evidence and by confirming, agreeing/disagreeing with the explanation of others.	<u>Activity 3: Deepening</u> After presentations, guide a whole-class discussion: How do dreams and reality conflict in the story? What does the story say about ambition in a society with social class barriers? Does the story present instances	Judge: Analysis/Critical Reflection	Virtual Roundtable Collaborative document (e.g., Google Docs or Jamboard)	Awareness of social inequality as a global issue

	when characters question their faith in the face of social injustice?			
Learn from each other by sharing information and ideas on applying new knowledge, concepts, and skills to new situations or other disciplines.	<u>Activity 4: Contextual research</u> Encourage quick contextual research: Social hierarchy in 1950s Philippines Role of musicians in Filipino culture Common aspirations of youth during the 1950s.	See: Conscious experiencing Judge: Analysis/Critical Reflection	Collaborative timelines Digital collage Canva presentations	Global awareness (<i>examine socio-cultural parallels beyond their context</i>)
Unify the lesson by encouraging students to assess their understanding through self-assessments, key takeaways, and reflections on their learning.	<u>Activity 5: Reflection</u> Compose a one-paragraph reflection: Explain the 21 st -century social issue that is depicted in the text, and how you think such an issue could be addressed.	Act: Committed Action	A shared reflective blog with comments from VE partners.	Deeper intercultural learning Reflective citizenship

The lesson exemplar outlines a lesson flow based on the short story Bread of Salt by N.V. M. Gonzalez. As shown in the matrix, the phase of instruction in Column 1 corresponds to the DLSL-U pedagogical model used at De La Salle Lipa with learning activities (story-based) aligned to the See-Judge-Act framework, a method of reflection rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. In the See phase, students begin by identifying common assumptions and exploring the story's key elements through collaborative group tasks and creative outputs. In the Judge phase, students analyze the story's deeper messages about ambition, social class, and personal growth and maturity through class

discussions and contextual research. Finally, in the Act phase, students reflect on a present-day social issue related to the text and propose ways to address it, encouraging social awareness and moral responsibility. Through the See-Judge-Act integration, students not only understand and analyze literature but also apply it to real-life situations with creative, critical, and compassionate thinking. The integration of Virtual Exchange (VE) into the lesson promotes innovation, collaboration, and global awareness to enhance student learning. Innovation is facilitated through digital means and multimedia tools, where students can offer creative reinterpretations of the story. Collaboration is enhanced when students participate in cross-cultural group activities, exchange feedback with peers, and engage in virtual forums or roundtables. The interactive format encourages meaningful discussion and reciprocal learning processes. Finally, the lesson has a global impact, leading students to reflect on universal themes such as ambition, love, and social inequality through diverse cultural perspectives, developing not only intercultural understanding but also an awareness of larger global issues and social realities.

The following objectives are set to implement the lesson exemplar: (1). Interpret the narrative elements (themes, plot-ending, character) of "Bread of Salt" through collaborative digital outputs with virtual exchange partners; (2). Compare and contrast cultural assumptions related to the story's themes through online discussions or digital outputs with virtual exchange partners; (3). Evaluate the social realities presented in "Bread of Salt" by participating in virtual roundtables or collaborative documents with international peers; (4). Compose a reflective blog post, with comments from virtual exchange partners, that identifies a 21st-century social issue depicted in the short story, and (5). Utilize various digital tools and platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Flipgrid, Padlet, Google Docs, Jamboard, Canva) to facilitate collaboration.

The lesson exemplar that integrates the See-Judge-Act (SJA) framework with Virtual Exchange (VE) presented in this write-up serves as a flexible blueprint for literature instruction. The proposed digital tools and collaborative tasks can be adapted based on the classroom setting, students' needs, and the literary text to be used. By carefully adapting the lesson exemplar to their learning environment, teachers can create engaging literature lessons that empower students to become agents of social change within their contexts.

In conclusion, the See-Judge-Act framework has a significant potential for literature teaching, both within the Lasallian community and across diverse educational settings. The provided lesson exemplar illustrates how students can become critically engaged readers and agents of change by exposing them to social realities in a literary text, particularly in a short story.

Through collaborative Virtual Exchange (VE), Lasallian students are developed as not only academically competent learners but also as individuals deeply committed to creating a more just and sustainable world for all.

REFERENCES

- Brigham, E. (2018). *See, judge, act: Catholic social teaching and service learning*. Anselm Academic.
- De La Salle Lipa. (n.d.). *Mission-Vision*. Retrieved from <https://www.dlsl.edu.ph/page/about-dlsl/mission-vision>.
- De La Salle University. (n.d.). *Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF)*. Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA). Retrieved April 23, 2025, from <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/lasallianmission/cosca/about-us/lrf/>.
- Macatangay, J. (2023, August). *An analysis of social issues in Alberto Florentino's selected plays: Input to a proposed literature teaching model based on See-Judge-Act Hermeneutic Cycle*. Scholarum: Journal of Education, 3(1), 1–14. <https://scholarum.dlsl.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Macatangay-V2.pdf>.
- Myenglishpages. (n.d.). *Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy: Principles, definition, and impact*. <https://www.myenglishpages.com/paulo-freires-critical-pedagogy/>.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1949). *What is literature*. Philosophical Library. <https://archive.org/details/whatisliterature030271mbp/page/n154/mode/1up>.

**DIPLOMA IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:
A BLENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCE TO IMPROVE TEACHING
QUALITY AMONG FACULTY AT LA SALLE URUBAMBA**

Xavi Canaleta⁸

La Salle Campus Barcelona, Ramon Llull University

Mari Romero⁹

La Salle Barceloneta

Abstract

La Salle Campus Barcelona (Universitat Ramon Llull) has developed a training program aimed at enhancing the skills of teachers in educational centers within the Lasallian network. The program's objective is to keep teachers up to date in an educational landscape that evolves not only through curriculum but also through pedagogy, technology, and innovation. This article presents the experience of designing and implementing a blended learning training program with the participation of faculty from the Instituto Superior Público La Salle Urubamba (Cusco, Peru). The program is delivered in a blended format, where the online component follows the Self-Directed Based Learning (SDBL) methodology and includes a one-week in- person session held on-site in Peru. Furthermore, this training initiative is an international cooperation effort resulting from the existing partnership between La Salle Campus Barcelona (Spain) and La Salle Urubamba (Peru).

Keywords: Innovation, Technology and pedagogy as tools to enhance the skills of teachers; Blended learning training program; Self-directed based learning methodology (SDBL).

⁸ Computer Engineering Degree from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and a PhD in Information Technologies and their application in management, architecture and geophysics from the Ramon Llull University. He is currently Director of Educational Innovation at La Salle Campus Barcelona, coordinator of the master's degree in Teacher Training (specialising in Technology) and Coordinator of the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Research Line within the Human Environment Research Group (HER). Email Address: xavier.canaleta@salle.url.edu.

⁹ Computer Engineer from La Salle Campus Barcelona (Ramon Llull University) and Master's Degree in Teacher Training from Blanquerna (Ramon Llull University). Currently, vocational training teacher at La Salle Barceloneta, coordinator of Erasmus+ program and is a conductor of NLC (New Learning Context), actively contributing to educational innovation and cultural exchange. Email Address: mromeroc@lasalle.cat.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2013, La Salle Campus Barcelona (Ramon Llull University) has been carrying out an international cooperation project in Peru known as the Urubamba Project (Canaleta et al., 2019). The primary aim of international university cooperation is the transfer of knowledge. It does not seek to undertake activities already effectively carried out by other organizations.

The Urubamba Project is developed through PROIDE Campus, the delegation of PROIDE at La Salle Campus Barcelona, Ramon Llull University. PROIDE is a non-governmental organization for development (NGO).

The Urubamba Project emerged from the relationship between La Salle Campus Barcelona and the Instituto de Educación Superior Público La Salle Urubamba (Cusco, Peru). La Salle Urubamba is the local counterpart of this initiative, with whom a cooperation agreement has been in place since 2013. Following the completion of the initial phase (2013–2017), the agreement was renewed for two additional periods: 2018–2022 and the current one, 2023–2027.

The Urubamba Project is rooted in a strong commitment to inclusive and transformative education. As part of its mission, it has launched several initiatives aimed at improving access, equity, and quality in education for high-Andean communities. This work is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals - especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) - by providing teacher training and educational support adapted to local needs and social realities (UNESCO, 2015).

Over the 12 years of the Urubamba Project's existence, a variety of initiatives have been developed:

- Haku Wiñay (learning together): improvement in the quality of education for both teachers and students (aligned with the 4th Sustainable Development Goal).
- e-Yachay (e-learning): technology to foster inclusive socio-educational environments in high-Andean communities (10th Sustainable Development Goal).
- Kurku Kallpanchay (physical education): sports and play as tools for promoting gender-

inclusive improvement in high-Andean educational institutions (5th Sustainable Development Goal).

- Ñawi (eye): visual education for high-Andean educational communities (10th Sustainable Development Goal).
- Willachikuy (communication): ionospheric communication to establish an emergency system for isolated high-Andean educational communities (10th Sustainable Development Goal).

This article focuses on the **Haku Wiñay** project (“learning together” in Quechua), specifically on how this initiative seeks to improve teaching quality by designing and implementing a training program titled Diploma in Educational Research and Innovation.

Haku Wiñay Project

The 2007 McKinsey report titled “How the World’s Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) states in its first section that “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers,” and in its second section that “the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction.”

The Haku Wiñay Project clearly identified the improvement of teaching quality as one of its main goals, specifically by enhancing teachers’ professional competencies. Since 2013, conferences and workshops have been organized during each project campaign in Urubamba to support local educators. However, after several years of implementation, it became evident that these training efforts were not sufficient. As a result, the team decided to design a more ambitious training program.

Given that in-person activities of the Urubamba Project are limited to the final two weeks of July, this timeframe was deemed inadequate for sustained professional development. Therefore, a blended learning program was created, allowing part of the training to be completed online over several months of the academic year, complemented by an intensive, one-week in-person session during the project’s implementation in the town of Urubamba (Cusco).

The Training Program

The design, development, and implementation of the training program were guided by several reference frameworks, with the primary one being the TPACK model — Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge — proposed by Mishra & Koehler (2006). The three core components of the TPACK model (Figure 1) include Technology Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical

Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK). To achieve effective integration of technology with pedagogy in a specific subject area, it is essential to develop a deep understanding of the interrelationship among these domains.

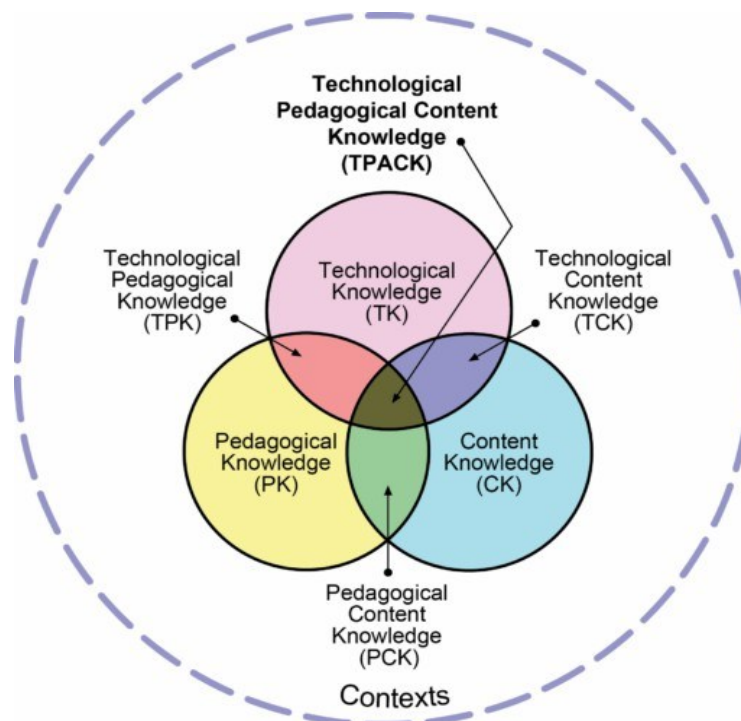


Figure 1. TPACK framework.

The TPACK framework illustrates the dynamic intersection of three core domains of teacher knowledge: Content Knowledge (CK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Technological Knowledge (TK). At the center of the diagram lies TPACK, an integrative knowledge base that enables educators to effectively teach content using appropriate pedagogical strategies supported by relevant technologies. The model emphasizes that meaningful technology integration in education requires

more than the mere use of tools; it demands an understanding of how technology intersects with pedagogy and content in a specific educational context.

The main objective of the training program is to keep in-service teachers up to date in the areas of technology, pedagogy, and innovation. Additional learning objectives defined for the program include the following:

- Enhance and improve educational processes to facilitate student learning.
- Understand and manage learning management systems (LMS).
- Design innovative activities, tasks, and educational sessions to support comprehensive lifelong learning.
- Become familiar with new learning methodologies - both group-based and individual - adapting tasks to classroom diversity.
- Support students in achieving their educational goals.
- Understand the educational research process and be able to produce content aligned with this field.

The training program consists of three independent modules, each with a workload of 125 hours (equivalent to 5 ECTS¹⁰ credits under the European system). Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide a concise overview of the main contents of these three modules.

To ensure the effective development of teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), the program's contents were carefully aligned with the three key components of the model.

The Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) dimension is addressed primarily through Module I (Technology Enhanced Learning), where teachers are introduced to digital tools, social networks, mobile learning applications, and the implications of artificial intelligence in education. This

¹⁰ ECTS: European Credit Transfer System

module aims to equip participants with a broad technological foundation that enhances their confidence and fluency in using technology in educational settings.

The TPK dimension is reinforced in Module II (Learning Management Systems), where participants engage with the pedagogical use of online platforms such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and Blackboard. The module emphasizes designing effective learning environments, creating courses, and innovating teaching practices through technology-supported methodologies.

Module III not only deepens content knowledge but also serves as a real integration space for the three components of the TPACK model. Through the design and development of educational research projects, teachers are required to apply disciplinary knowledge (CK), select and use technologies for information search, reference management, and academic writing (TK), and structure their work following appropriate pedagogical principles (PK). This combination enables participants not only to generate new, relevant knowledge for their fields but also to acquire competencies for critically and effectively integrating technology into their teaching practices. In this way, the module fosters a holistic approach to professional teacher learning, fully aligned with the core foundations of the TPACK model.

By structuring the program across these three domains, the training ensures a holistic development of participants' TPACK, promoting not only technological proficiency but also pedagogical innovation and disciplinary expertise.

Technology Enhanced Learning
125 hours (5 ECTS Credits)
Presentation Tools
Social networks and their educational use
Educational tools on mobile devices
Artificial Intelligence and its impact on Education

Table 1. Description of Module I of the Training Program.

Learning Management Systems
125 hours (5 ECTS Credits)
LMS and its use in teaching Types of LMS (Moodle, Google Classroom, Blackboard, etc.) Elements of an LMS Create courses in an LMS Innovations in the use of LMS

Table 2. Description of Module II of the Training Program.

Digital Research
125 hours (5 ECTS Credits)
Educational Research and Research Selection of information sources Bibliographic search and citations Writing scientific articles Innovations in information search

Table 3. Description of Module III of the Training Program.

The program is delivered primarily online, but it includes a set of mandatory synchronous virtual sessions. To support this, the Moodle learning management system (eStudy from La Salle Barcelona) is used to share materials and assignments.

During July, coinciding with the visit of the international cooperation team to the La Salle Urubamba educational center, various in-person sessions are held. These sessions aim to introduce the learning methodology, which will be detailed later, as well as the virtual platform and to complete the more practical tasks associated with the modules.

According to Garrison and Vaughan (2008), blended learning offers an effective framework for combining face-to-face and online instruction.

Learning Methodology

In addition, a learning methodology was necessary for the design of the program. In this case, the Self-Directed Based Learning (SDBL) methodology was chosen (Alsina et al., 2019; 2023b). Knowles (1980) emphasizes that adults learn more effectively when they actively manage their own learning process.

The Self-Directed Based Learning (SDBL) methodology is a pedagogical approach developed by La Salle Campus Barcelona (Ramon Llull University) since 2013 for its online postgraduate programs (Alsina et al., 2023a). This methodology combines situational learning with self-directed learning, adapting to the profile of the adult learner, characterized by autonomy, prior experience, and goal orientation. The instructional design of SDBL is structured around three

key components: the student's learning pathway, learning assessment, and mentoring support. Each instructional unit includes a learning guide that directs the student through activities focused on knowledge acquisition and consolidation, as well as self-assessment exercises that reinforce content assimilation.

Each module of the program is offered in a blended-learning format. This structure involves three different types of learning dynamics for students:

1. In-person immersion sessions: These sessions aim to ensure that students fully understand the dynamics of a blended-learning program. Four blocks of four hours each are scheduled to immerse students in the program's structure, working methods, and to familiarize them with the virtual learning platform—an essential tool for successfully completing the program.
2. Online sessions: The modules are designed in an online format following the SDBL methodology, which provides guides while allowing students to set their own learning pace and program development. Each module is composed of three thematic units, and each unit consists of three sessions, with two to three tasks per session. Some of these tasks are formative, while others are graded (see Table 4).
3. Synchronous virtual sessions: These sessions serve as the virtual equivalent of face-to-

face classes. Throughout each module, a series of mandatory synchronous virtual sessions are scheduled on the calendar. Additionally, optional sessions will be offered in the same format for activities such as doubt resolution, mentoring, assignment correction, feedback, and more.

These three types of sessions are designed to provide a balanced and flexible learning experience that supports students' autonomy while ensuring ongoing guidance and support. Table 4 outlines the structure and distribution of the tasks across the different sessions within each module.

Unit	Unit Title	Description	Session title	Session	Tasks	Workload	Evaluable
1	Introduction to Digital Research Methods	Understand the concept of educational research, its phases, and the role of ICT. Dig deeper into the early stages of the research process (state of the art)	Introduction to Research	1	Task 1	3	
					Task 2	2	
					Task 3	3	
			The bibliographic search in research	2	Task 1	3	
					Task 2	3	
					Task 3	4	5%
			Digitizing citations and bibliographic references	3	Task 1	2	
					Task 2	4	
					Task 3	4	20%
2	Research, Experimentation, and Writing Methodology	Work on the experimentation and data collection phases and how to write an article	Educational Research Methodologies and Data Collection	4	Task 1	4	
					Task 2	3	
					Task 3	3	
			Data collection instruments	5	Task 1	4	10%
					Task 2	4	5%
			Writing scientific articles	6	Task 1	3	
Task 2	5	10%					
3	The Publishing Process	Work on the results analysis and writing phases	Building a scientific paper	7	Task 1	2	
					Task 2	5	
					Task 3	3	
			Crafting the article	8	Task 1	15	
					Task 2	6	
					Task 3	15	50%
						100	

Table 4. SDBL structure of Module III of the training program

Table 4. SDBL structure of Module III of the training program

Table 4 presents the detailed structure of Module III of the training program, which focuses on developing competencies in digital educational research. This module is organized into three thematic units, each composed of several sessions and specific tasks.

The first unit, *Introduction to Digital Research Methods*, aims to help students understand the conceptual foundations of educational research, the initial stages of the research process, and the use of information technologies for bibliographic search and reference management.

The second unit, *Research, Experimentation, and Writing Methodology*, focuses on data collection and educational research methodologies, addressing key aspects such as the development of data collection instruments and the initial drafting of scientific articles.

Finally, the third unit, *The Publishing Process*, is dedicated to the final stages of research, guiding students through the construction, writing, and finalization of a scientific paper for potential publication.

Each session includes two to three tasks, some of which are formative, and others graded, allowing students to progressively consolidate their research skills throughout the module. The workload is evenly distributed to ensure sustained autonomous learning, in line with the principles of the Self-Directed Based Learning (SDBL) methodology.

Results

This training program was implemented during the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 at La Salle Urubamba (Cusco, Peru). Given the high workload involved, it was decided to deploy one training module per year (see Table 5).

Year	Module	Enrolled teachers	Attendance	Certified teachers
2022	Module III	38	32	5
2023	Module II	15	12	5
2024	Module I	22	22	7

Table 5. Implementation of the 2022–2024 training program.

The data from the implementation of the training program between 2022 and 2024 reveals several noteworthy trends regarding teacher participation and certification. Firstly, although Module III (2022) had the highest number of enrolled teachers (38), only a small proportion (13.2%) obtained certification, suggesting a potential gap between participation and completion. In contrast, Module I (2024) achieved full attendance (100%) and showed an improved certification rate (31.8%), indicating a possible enhancement in engagement or support mechanisms in the more recent phase of the program.

Moreover, Module II (2023) recorded the lowest overall participation (15 enrolled), but maintained a similar certification count (5) compared to 2022, resulting in the highest relative success rate (33.3%). This suggests that a smaller cohort may be associated with more effective monitoring or individualized support. Overall, the gradual increase in certification percentages over time could reflect an improvement in the program's instructional design, participant motivation, or alignment with professional needs.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE LINES

The development of the Diploma in Educational Research and Innovation program at La Salle Urubamba has represented a significant international cooperation experience focused on improving teaching quality. Based on the Self-Directed Based Learning (SDBL) methodology and framed within the TPACK model, the program successfully offered continuous training that combines autonomous learning with mentoring support, tailored to the needs of in-service teachers.

The results reveal a positive trend in teacher participation and certification over the three years of implementation (2022–2024), with a progressive increase in certification rates. This suggests improvements in both the instructional design of the program and participant engagement. The flexibility of the blended learning format, the use of accessible educational technologies, and the sustained support throughout the learning process were key elements contributing to the program's success.

This experience highlights the importance of designing training programs that consider the specific characteristics of adult educators and local contexts, as well as the need to integrate

autonomous learning strategies that promote the long-term sustainability of teacher professional development processes.

As highlighted by Barber and Mourshed (2007), the quality of an education system is ultimately limited by the quality of its teachers. The progressive improvement in certification rates observed throughout the implementation of the program confirms the central role that well-prepared and continuously trained educators play in enhancing overall educational outcomes.

Based on the experience gained from the implementation of the training program, several future lines of action are proposed. First, it is recommended to expand the range of training modules by incorporating new topics related to digital transformation, educational inclusion, and the development of socio-emotional competencies in the classroom. Romero (2022) proposes a training program designed for in-service teachers; however, the development of the remaining six training modules is still pending.

Additionally, it is considered necessary to strengthen monitoring systems and personalized mentoring to further improve certification rates and support teachers in the practical application of the knowledge acquired. It is also suggested to explore models for medium and long-term impact evaluation to assess how the training influences the actual improvement of educational practices within schools.

Finally, there is the possibility of replicating this training experience in other educational centers within the Lasallian network, adapting it to the specific characteristics and needs of each local context.

The experience of the Diploma in Educational Research and Innovation demonstrates that it is possible to design and implement high-quality training programs in diverse educational contexts, provided that methodological flexibility, personalized support, and respect for local particularities are appropriately combined. The international collaboration between La Salle Campus Barcelona and La Salle Urubamba stands as an example of how knowledge transfer can strengthen teacher training and contribute to the continuous improvement of educational systems in vulnerable contexts. Consolidating this initiative and exploring its expansion to other settings represents a strong commitment to a more equitable, innovative, and sustainable education.

REFERENCES

- Alsina, M.; Canaleta, X.; Torres-Kompen, R.; De-Torres-Gómez, E.; Fonseca-Escudero, D. (2023). *Influencia de la trayectoria de aprendizaje de la metodología Self Directed Based Learning en el éxito académico*. Education in the Knowledge Society (EKS), 24, e31494. <https://doi.org/10.14201/eks.31494>.
- Alsina, M.; Canaleta, X.; Torres, R. (2023). *Students' Performance and Academic Success Study Using Self Directed Based Learning Methodology*. In: García-Peñalvo, F.J., García-Holgado, A. (eds) Proceedings TEEM 2022: Tenth International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality. TEEM 2022. Lecture Notes in Educational Technology. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0942-1_70.
- Alsina, M.; Canaleta, X.; Cubeles, A.; Torres, R. (2019). *Self Directed Based Learning, una metodología de aprendizaje para programas no presenciales* (No. COMPON-2019-CINAIC-0070).
- Barber, M.; Mourshed, M. (2007). *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*. McKinsey & Company.
- Canaleta, X.; Badia, D.; Vadillo, J.L.; Maguiña, M. (2019). *Proyecto Urubamba. Lasallistas sin fronteras en un proyecto socioeducativo inclusive*. Vanguard Gràfic, ISBN: 978-84-697-4132-0.
- Garrison, D. R.; Vaughan, N. D. (2008). *Blended learning in higher education: Framework, principles, and guidelines*. Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*. Cambridge Adult Education.
- Mishra, P.; Koehler, M. J. (2006). *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge: A Framework for Teacher Knowledge*. Teachers College Record, 108(6), 1017-1054. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00684.x> (Original work published 2006).
- Romero, M. (2022). *Propuesta de programa formativo para docentes en activo* [Trabajo final de máster, Universitat Ramon Llull]. La Salle Campus Barcelona.
- Unesco. (2015). *Education 2030: Incheon declaration and framework for action towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM MIEX MASTER IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS - TRIPLE DEGREE: AN EXAMPLE OF COLLABORATION ACROSS REGIONS OF THE WORLD

John Derick Lucien Gonzalez Aldape¹¹
ULSA Mexico City, Mexico

Abstract

The MIEX (Master for International Executives) program was designed in 2003 to unite students worldwide to participate in a triple international Master's degree. The program started by selecting six universities for the initial years: ICN Business School Nancy, France; UNIBO Forli-Bologna, Italy; ECUST Shanghai, China; ULSA México City; Uppsala University, Sweden and MGIMO Moscow, Russia. Recently, due to geopolitical dynamics, the Russian university separated from the consortium while UFRGS Porto Alegre, Brazil and ICN Germany were added as options. Each university would recruit students from their region. All students would begin their first semester in ICN France. The students would then move for their second semester to UNIBO, Italy. For the second year, the students could choose a specialization region: Mexico, China or Russia. The first semester of the second year would have local courses and then do an internship in a business for their second semester. During this last semester, students would prepare a thesis or a case study report to be examined by a board of second year university professors. Upon passing the course material and their thesis or case study examination, the student would receive a Master in Science degree from France a Master I Livello from Italy and a Master in International Business from the university chosen for the second year. During the years that the consortium has been operating, students from all over the world have participated, including from India, Holland, Ecuador, United States, Great Britain, Spain, Mexico, China, Russia, France, Italy, Brazil, Germany, Senegal, Venezuela and others. During the Pandemic of 2019-2020 the MIEX program went online. Some of the principal learnings were: • Students could be participating from different time zones which made it a challenge to undertake live class exercises; • The live classes required to have all students participate in assigned roles to maintain their interest; • Platforms to communicate worldwide needed to be connection trustworthy, and provide material share possibilities for everybody to see. A possible guide for distance programs that courses need to be rescheduled by regions with professors from each participating university completing the requisites for the Master degree. This last point and its complexity is developed in the article.

Keywords: Multiple, Degrees, Program, Revenue, Regional.

¹¹ John began his professional life as the General Coordinator for the Young Entrepreneurs program sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico. He continued to gain industrial experience as a Product Manager for Firestone and then as the Media Manager for Procter & Gamble. He completed his multinational experience in J Walter Thompson as Latin American Media Regional Director. He has a Master's Degree in International Direction (Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico) and has taught business for over 30 years. He is the author of the book "Leaders of the World and the New World Economy". gonzalezjohnderick@gmail.com.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this article is threefold:

1. Describe the multinational operation and global intercultural experience of the Triple Country Master's degree in International Business offered by the MIEX International Consortium;
2. Identify the principal learnings that worked to promote a truly intercultural in-country experience for students, and the learnings that provide insight into a non-presence, distance transformation of the program;
3. Offer an operational alternative to be solely on line, sharing a broad distance intercultural experience between students and academia from different countries.

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in the growing trend of globalization, the MIEX (Master for International Executives) program was designed in 2003 for students worldwide to participate in a triple international Master's degree.

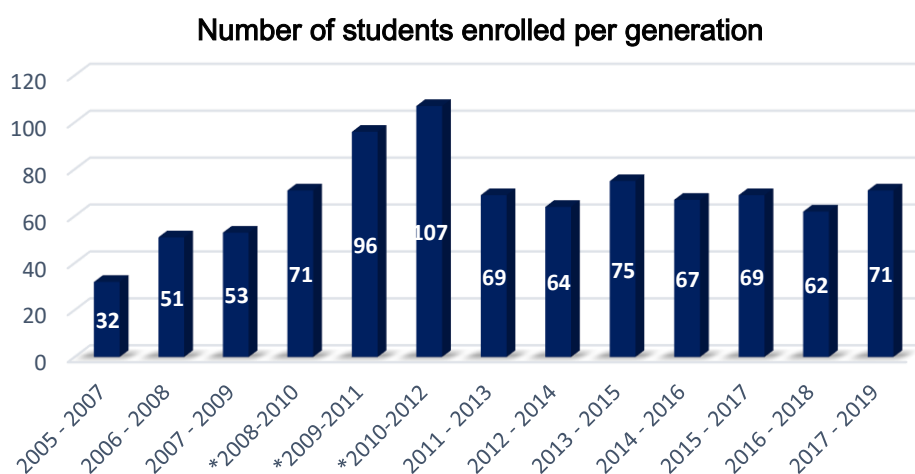
The program started by selecting six universities for the initial years: ICN Business School Nancy, France; UNIBO Forli-Bologna, Italy; ECUST Shanghai, China; ULSA México City; Uppsala University, Sweden and MGIMO Moscow, Russia. Recently, due to geopolitical dynamics, the Russian university separated from the consortium while UFRGS Porto Alegre, Brazil and ICN Germany were added as options.

The management of the program achieved top ranking world accreditations: AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), AMBA (Association of MBA's), EQUIS (European Foundation for Management Development Quality Improvement System), which placed the program in the top 1% of business programs in the world. GEDU adds ICN Business School to portfolio - StudyTravel Network

The program started for students with their first semester in ICN France. The students then moved for their second semester to UNIBO, Italy. For the second year, the students could choose a

specialization region: Europe, Mexico, China or Brazil. During the first semester of the second year, students took local courses and then did a hands-on practice internship in a business for their second semester. During this last semester, students prepared a thesis or a case study report to be examined by a board of second year university professors. Upon passing the course material and their thesis or case study examination, the students then received a Master in Science degree from France, a Master I Livello from Italy and a Master in International Business from the university chosen for the second year.

Following is a graph showing the entry level number of students per two-year generation:



The total number of students that have participated in the program (close to 900) have become part of a rich, dynamic and supportive alumni with contacts all over the world. The following list describes the countries of origin of the students that have participated in the MIEX Master's program:

Germany	Albania	Algeria	United States	Argentina	Armenia
Austria	Bangladesh	Belgium	Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada
Chile	China	Colombia	Ivory Coast	Croatia	Ecuador
Slovakia	Estonia	Finland	France	Greece	Holland
Hungary	India	England	Italy	Iran	Lithuania
Luxembourg	Macedonia	Morocco	Mexico	Moldova	Montenegro
New Zealand	Pakistan	Peru	Poland	Portugal	Romania
Russia	Senegal	Serbia	Sweden	Switzerland	Taiwan

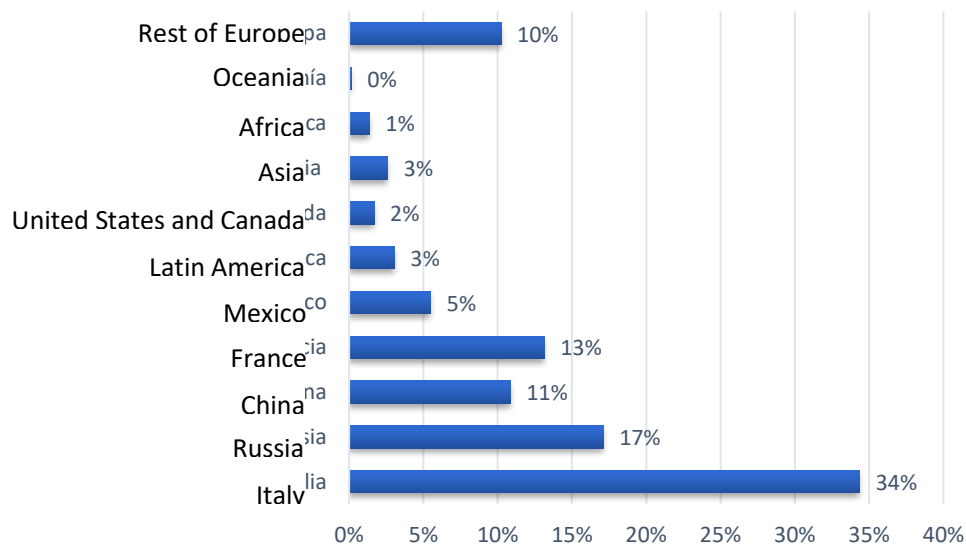
Turkey

Ukraine

Uruguay

Vietnam

The following graph groups the countries of origin by percentage:



Source: 2018 Executive Report prepared at University La Salle Mexico City

During the Pandemic of 2019-2020 the MIEX program went online. Some of the principal learnings were:

- Students could be participating from different time zones which made it a challenge to undertake live class sessions
- The live classes caught professors mostly unprepared to adjust their typical class delivery to an online class, which required to have students participating more actively to maintain their interest.
- Platforms to communicate worldwide needed to be connection trustworthy, and provide share possibilities for the material needed by the professor for everybody to see. This was in a rudimentary stage for online classes.

We will look into the program more in detail in the following review.

Original Strategy: a consequence of globalization

Globalization has been the evolutionary result of a basic impulse of humanity: to spread its habitable domain throughout the planet. This impulse has received different names: “exploration”, “migration”, “colonization”, “internationalization”, “transnationalism”, “multinationalism” and more recently, “globalization”. The actual word “globalization” began to be more commonly used in academic circles in the 1970’s. Reference: **Robertson, R. (1992).** *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. Sage Publications.

By the 1990’s the term was being fully used popularly, especially through the advancing technology of the internet. Reference: **Friedman, T. L. (2005).** *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. **Hirst, P., & Thompson, G. (1996).** *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*. Polity Press

With an unstoppable progression, globalization became recognized as a worldwide phenomenon that needed to be addressed in a practical way within academic offerings of mastery in international business. This brought together Florence Ramillon from ICN, in France, and Alessandro Baroncelli from the University of Bologna, Italy. Between them they launched a joint triple degree Master’s International Executives (MIEX). The strategy aimed at satisfying the need of multinational enterprises for qualified personnel with a practical global experience. The idea was for students to have an experience studying and living in three different countries during the two years that the degree’s courses lasted. The founders chose France to be the starting point for all students for the first semester of the program and Italy to be the second semester of the first year. The students could then disperse by choosing from among other universities representative of other regions around the planet. They negotiated alliances with the University of La Salle in Mexico City for the Americas region, the East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai, China, for Asia, and MGIMO in Moscow, Russia, for Eastern Europe. For an additional European experience, they also had an ally in Uppsala University in Sweden. Students that successfully completed the program would obtain the three business degrees, from France, Italy and the university chosen for their second year.

Choice of Universities

The original choice of universities needed to change because of the dynamics of geopolitical evolution and other factors. Sweden left the consortium due to a different valuation system for students that did not match the structure of the MIEX program. Russia was paused when the war with Ukraine erupted. ICN Berlin was added to substitute, in a way, for Sweden. The Brazilian UFRGS Porto Alegre was added to represent the region of South America.

Student Recruitment

Each university was responsible for recruiting students from their region. Basic requirements were English language proficiency, measured by a recognized examination (TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge English Qualifications), conclusion of their undergraduate studies, preferably with work experience and a desire to have an international experience. Each university was responsible for financing their promotion budget. France and Italy had the widest reaching promotion activity attracting students from all over the world. The second-year universities mostly only contributed students from within their own country.

Student Selection

The selection process consisted of several steps:

1. Application format filled by the interested student in which the basic qualifications could be identified: English proficiency, finished undergraduate studies, work experience and reason for wanting an international experience
2. Individual interview by a professor of the MIEX program to ratify and deepen areas of the application form, as well as to identify general attitude and financial sources of the student, either self-supported, company subsidized, family support, government or private loan
3. Panel interview in which a group of professors and staff would interview individual candidates, singly or in groups, and form a final criterion from different perspectives

4. Advise the student of admittance and the following steps: visa obtention, starting date of the program, travel and housing guidance, general rules of the program

Revenue distribution

From the student's tuition cost, established in Euros, France and Italy would receive 44% each and the second-year universities would receive the remaining 11% in proportion to the students choosing each second-year university. This distribution naturally depressed the resources for the second-year universities to provide for promotion. This was reflected in that most students from all over the world were recruited by France and Italy. Additional revenue came from the costs for students of the certification examination for some countries, which required students to budget this extra cost in addition to the tuition. (Each student would also need to cover travel, lodging and meals expenses).

Courses offered: recognized and validated for accreditation

The universities would have to obtain the necessary country official validation for the courses the students took in the other universities in order to achieve the official certified Master's Degree of the country. This could be a complicated and time-consuming activity because the courses had to be matched with those that each university already had authorized in their respective programs, and additional courses taken by the students in France and Italy had to be submitted for approval.

Professors needed to give their lectures in English, the official language for the program. In the beginning, this was also a challenge, because the professors that gave the local courses in the local language were not adept in giving the course in English. Universities did not have all the professors required locally to give their local classes in English. Over time, this has been mostly solved. Still, some locations required that the students in their second year should have a good foundation in the local language. Students should be aware of the need to take extra classes in the language. There was the case of a Chinese student without any knowledge of Spanish who chose Mexico as her second year and within six months she was writing her thesis in Spanish. This highlighted an additional challenge. The program's official language is English; however, some

universities permitted/required the oral examination with a copy of the official English version translated into the local language. This worked when the examining local professors were not comfortable in English and the student had acquired a good level of the corresponding language. This way the third degree could be achieved locally and the degrees of France and Italy were obtained through the English version.

Promotion

The promotion efforts, especially from France and Italy, brought different results in the number of applicants and acceptance of students to the program. This was a cause of friction since the number of accepted students was not always in proportion to the investment in promotion. Adjustments had to be made and renegotiated between the founding partners.

Promotional materials were the responsibility of each university. This mostly took the form of digital promotion through search engines. Another strategy was to connect with alumni and send them invitations to consider furthering their international careers by adding the MIEX degree to their CV's.

Staffing

The management of the MIEX program was incorporated into the existing administrative positions within each university. Usually, the program was handled by the International Department or directly by the Business School or Faculty, or by the Postgraduate department, if it was separate from the Schools or Faculties. Each university assigned tasks to the staff in their departments. This meant student attention and administrative requirements of the university, and usually - by another person, the promotion of the program.

Student attention required having the students arrange their travelling visas in the embassies of the countries of their choice. For French, Italian and other European students it would not be necessary to have the visas for Europe, but for students from other countries, they would need to apply for the European visas, in accordance with the international agreements with their countries. They would also need to apply for the visa of their second-year country of choice. The staff at the

universities could give guidance as to the process. Other areas of support given by the university staff were providing university id's, welcoming and introducing students to the services available within the premises, incorporation into the classes with the corresponding professors, lodging assistance, travel within the country, requirements for the degree process and general assistance that may be required by the students.

Staff also handled the universities' identification of English-speaking professors for the offered courses, the selection and hiring, if necessary, of those professors. They also handled relations with the other partner universities.

Pinnacle

The pinnacle of the Program was reached before the Pandemia of 2019. There were several years in which the average enrollment to the program was around 65 students. The generation of 2017-2019 achieved an initial cohort of 71 students coming from about 12 countries in the world, including Slovakia, Russia, New Zealand, Mexico, Morrocco, Macedonia, Ivory Coast, Italy, India, France, China, and Brazil.

Pandemic

The world was caught by surprise with the coronavirus pandemic that started in 2019 and by 2020 most public activities had been shut down and needed to continue from home. Travel came to almost a complete standstill. Movie houses, theatres, concerts, sports events were cancelled and only supermarkets with limited access were allowed, and hospitals and funeral business were saturated. Home delivery also became a major supply channel. Education had to depend on families having proper internet connections and computers or electronic devices capable to participate with professors in a distance class. Internet platforms for group meetings were created and sophisticated. Professors were mainly unprepared for distance classes and many students lost interest in the classes preferring to undertake other computer activities that were more engaging. The MIEX program, whose strength was travelling to different areas in the world was suddenly confined to the student's homes. This made the problem of different time zones acutely visible and difficult to handle.

The loss of the personal experience of travelling and living in another culture made subsequent enrollment drop drastically to half of the pinnacle average.

MIEX Current Status

The current status of the MIEX program is largely diminished from the pinnacle years before the Pandemia. The last several years total recruited cohorts have been around 30 students, with a steep decline in 2024.

2024 18 students

2023 32 students

2022 32 students

2021 36 students

Source: Operational information provided by ICN

The program has not been able to transition to a virtual class capacity, due to its intrinsic offer of a live personal experience in different cultures. The most that has been achieved is to be able to hold the final examination at distance, from wherever the student may be working or living, doing the internship or preparing the thesis. This requires that the country where the examination will take place, to have the panel of examiners and the official degree validation staff present on the distance platform, together with the student to see and evaluate the final presentation.

Competition

Although the MIEX program was quite unique when it got started, as time went by more universities started offering similar programs with multiple degrees or international experiences in different countries in the world. Nowadays students can choose from a large array of programs, and this naturally dilutes the number of students thinking of joining the original MIEX.

Some examples of universities with competing programs are:

ESCP Business School

Students joining their MBA in International Management can study different periods in each of their six European campuses located in Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, Turin and Warsaw. Additionally, they have a branch campus in Dubai. Students can choose to study on campus, online or hybrid. <https://escp.eu/programmes/mba-international-management>

Hult International Business School

The offering is a One-Year Global MBA with the option of rotating among their different campuses located in London, San Francisco, Boston, Dubai with elective university sites in New York and Singapore. <https://www.hult.edu/en/programs/mba/one-year-mba/>

INSEAD

The INSEAD has several offerings that include exposure through campuses in China, France, Singapore and Abu Dhabi. Dual Degrees are offered together with Tsinghua University in China. <https://www.insead.edu/master-programmes>

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS (UK) / UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY (USA) [Study Abroad](#) [Berkeley-LSE Research Fellowship | Institute of European Studies](#)

This alliance offers a double degree in Global Studies, one from each university. The program includes courses in global politics, economics and international development.

The complications of government regulations of different countries in order to award dual or triple degrees is avoided by some of these competing programs by having their own campuses in different countries, where students can have the international experience but only receive one degree (NYU with campuses in New York (USA), Abu Dhabi (UAE) and NYU Shanghai (China) - students can spend semesters at any of NYU's global campuses, which provide academic parity. Degrees are awarded by NYU in the U.S. [Global University - NYU Abu Dhabi](#)

Comparison MIEX with TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY (CHINA) - MIT (USA)

The following example discusses in more detail the operation of the program provided by the alliance between Tsinghua University in China and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in The USA, to compare with the MIEX program.

Sources:

- Tsinghua University Global MBA Program: goglobal.tsinghua.edu.cn
- MIT Sloan MSMS Program: mitsloan.mit.edu
- Tsinghua-MIT Collaboration Details: gmba.sem.tsinghua.edu.cn
- UNIBO MIEX [Professional Master details - International Management – MIEX — University of Bologna](#)

Degrees Offered

Tsinghua's School of Economics and Management offers an MBA degree, while MIT offers an MS in Management degree.

The MIEX program offers the Master of Science from France, the Level 1 degree of Italy and the corresponding Master's degree of the third country that a student attends, which normally is the MBA or the International Business Master degree.

Duration

Students must stay at Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, for 2 years, full time

Students must complete the International MBA Chinese program to apply for the MIT degree, which entails an additional 9 months in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and is contingent upon academic performance, leadership potential, and career goals.

Students in the MIEX program stay 6 months in Nancy, France, 6 months in Forlì, Italy, 6 months in the third country of choice (Shanghai, China; Mexico City, Mexico; Berlin, Germany; Porto

Alegre, Brazil), and the final 6 months doing a thesis research or case study together with an internship in an enterprise.

Language

All institutions use English as the language for the program's courses.

Curriculum

Tsinghua covers finance, strategy, marketing, operations and leadership, with electives in Chinese economy, innovation and entrepreneurship.

MIT offers students the possibility of designing their own personalized curriculum plus the Sloan School's full range of electives. A thesis developed through independent research or a consultancy project is required.

The MEX program covers the following subject matters:

- ICN international banking, marketing, human resources, business law, negotiation for sustainable growth
- UNIBO international business strategy and entrepreneurship, global industrial economics, finance, management accounting, global supply chains
- PLUS courses given by the third party universities that may focus on local market aspects

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

Both programs have a strong emphasis on case-based learning and real-world consulting projects, as well as connections with business networks and government institutions

Graduates of both programs are highly sought-after for leadership roles in:

- Multinational corporations
- Technology firms
- Consulting and finance

The Tsinghua/MIT program also emphasizes government and policy institutions, and innovation labs for startups and entrepreneurship, particularly in the US-China business corridor.

MIEX Program's Impact

The results and the impact of the program can best be evaluated by a sample of the thesis and projects that the students have developed over the years, touching on a wide breadth of topics and issues of impact in different countries and regions of the world, as can be seen in the following list:

GENERATION	NAME	TYPE OF WORK	AREA	TITLE
2008-2010	BACONN ET Marine Alexandra Clémence	Case Study	Sales and Marketing	Mexican Launch of an aspirin for the treatment of Secondary Chronic Hepatocerebral Sickness.
2008-2010	CURRELI Diego	Thesis	Business Strategies	Business Guide: successful strategies of selected businesses in some countries of the Americas: Mexico, USA, Costa Rica, Brazil and Chile.
2008-2010	DENAI Clément Charles Alain	Thesis	Economy and Finance	Consequences and Solutions of the Banking Bonuses System in the Financial and Economic Crisis of the XXI century.
2008-2010	OROFINO Verónica	Thesis	International Trade	Analysis of customs operations in Mexico. A study of the incidents and problems linked to the customs process to improve the admission of merchandise into Mexico
2009-2011	IACOI Enrico	Case Study	Business Strategies	Introduction of Security and Centralization Systems into the Mexican Market
2009-2011	MESSER OTI Ricardo	Final Report	Internationalization of enterprises	Beyond the Atlantic Ocean: Developing business opportunities for Italian firms in Mexico
2010-2012	Daniele Canu	Thesis	Economy and Finance	The Financial Strategies of the Bank of Galicia in the last Financial and Economic Crisis in Argentina
2010-2012	Li Huanbo	Thesis	International Trade	Exporting Mexican Avocado to China

2010-2012	Diana Carolina Cedeño Sarango	Thesis	Economy and Finance	Dollarization of Ecuador's economy. Analysis of the financial collapse as the cause. 1999-2000
2010-2012	Yang Zi	Thesis	International Trade	Feasibility of importing office and promotional items from China to Mexico
2011-2013	Morvarid Fallahsohy	Thesis	International Trade	Identification of the barriers to exporting Iranian Azafrin to Mexico, based on Porter's Diamond Model: a business plan
2011-2013	Alejandra López Castañeda	Thesis	Business Development	Evaluation of the Development of a Touristic complex for the elderly population in the Riviera Maya
2011-2013	Iacopo Mattia Perozzi	Thesis	Economy and Finance	"Mexican Art Fund": the Study and Creation of a financial vehicle where art creates investment
2012-2014	DELBECQ Charlotte	Case Study	Retirement Plans	The role of Financial Advisors in the Promotion of Retirement Plans for Mexicans
2012-2014	GIRAUD Marina	Thesis	Business Strategy	Internationalization Strategy of the Large Distribution Sector: a comparison between Wal-Mart and Carrefour in Mexico
2012-2014	WELLNIT Z Nina	Thesis	International Trade	The Impact of the Agreement of the Trans-Pacific Association on Mexico's International Trade
2012-2014	BRIGHEN TI Julia	Case Study	Internationalization of enterprises	"Green Action" in South Africa
2012-2014	POLISHC HUK Inessa	Thesis	Business Strategy	Sponsors of the Olympic Games, Coca-Cola and McDonald's: encouraging sport or promoting obesity?
2013-2015	EGIDI Matteo	Thesis	Organizational Culture	How Culture Defines the Balance of Power in Multinational Companies: the case of the EADS Group.
2013-2015	XOCHIPA GUTIERREZ Brenda	Thesis	Leadership and Innovation	Leadership, Innovation and Multicultural Environments in Mexico: innovative strategies for international leaders
2013-2015	NAZARIA Mariana	Thesis	Internationalization of enterprises	Importing and Promoting high Italian crafts in Mexico: the sale of leather bags through a commercial web site.

2013-2015	MAGNIN Lucas	Case Study	Social Entrepreneurship	Perspective of Social Entrepreneurship in Mexico and how social entrepreneurs trace their road to success.
2014-2016	ZHOU Jie Giulia	Thesis	Organizational Culture	Intelligent Disobedience within Organizations
2014-2016	VAN HAGEN Koen Johannes Bernardus	Thesis	Strategic Innovation	Strategic Innovation in the Airline Industry: full-service airlines endeavors to recover their competitiveness.
2014-2016	NUTI Rebecca	Thesis	Economic Models	An Economic Theoretical Model of the optimum policies to avoid the drain of capital through economic growth: the Italian case
2014-2016	FAN Yiting	Thesis	Localization of Small and Medium Enterprises	The Localization of Small and Medium European Service Enterprises in the Chinese Market
2015-2017	VIRIN Emeline	Thesis	Social Responsibility	¿Why is the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility failing in Multinational Companies?
2015-2017	FALL Oumar Joe	Thesis	Supply Chain	Logistics and Supply Chain: ¿Is the distance between México and Africa an important barrier to commerce between both regions?
2016-2018	SASSMAN Sandra	Case Study	International Trade	The effects of an increase in the required percentage of local content in the automotive industry sector of the Free Trade Agreement of North America
2016-2018	BANSE Tristan	Case Study	Marketing	Develop and increase the knowledge of the Rossomoro Security brand through an integral marketing communication strategy

Source: 2018 Executive Report prepared at University La Salle Mexico City

Future outlook

How can the learnings of the MIEX program be applied to the internationalization of courses offered by the network of IALU Universities?

Following is a tentative outline:

Internet Platform

The Internet provides many platforms to have distance classes. It is a matter of choosing the one that is most accessible for the students and professors that will be participating. Teams, Google Meet, Zoom are some with a worldwide reach and easily accessible.

Degree Offered

There are several alternatives for international participation. The simplest is a mirror class about a specific topic, which may or not have some kind of recognition. The next step would be a certificate accrediting participation in a particular course (for example, the COIL program). A more complex program would be an undergraduate degree. At this stage of complexity there are international differences that need to be contemplated and adjusted. For example, in Mexico the undergraduate degree is an officially recognized specialized practitioner degree called a Licenciatura. In other countries it may be a Bachelor's degree with more general studies. The next step, which would be the graduate degrees, has seen an explosion of different specialized degrees. The common denominator, which used to be an MBA for business, has evolved into Master's in Finance, Marketing, Logistics, Luxury, and many more. So long as there is official recognition, the flexibility is very large. Therefore, in the case of dual or multiple degrees, a working team of professors needs to be formed in order to standardize an international degree that can then be submitted for recognition by the governments of the different countries participating. An alternative is to follow the line of universities that have campuses in different countries. The students can have an international experience, but only receive one degree.

The Degree offered can vary for different Faculties. In the case of the Business schools, the most common degree could be an International Business degree, either at an undergraduate level or as a Master's Degree. For other schools, for example Sociology or Political Sciences, other international appropriate degrees can be designed/or offered.

Students

Students would need to have some requisites for participating in distance international courses. The necessary previous academic level would need to be accredited. Additionally, the language used for the international programs would need to be required. For many, it probably would be English, but in some cases another language could be acceptable for universities in countries with shared languages different from English, for example, in Latin America. Finally, the students would need to have access to the resources required to undertake an international program: appropriate computer equipment and installations at home or at schools, internet accessibility, time and financial capability – either personal, private or public, by loans or by grants.

Regionality and participating universities

Due to time zones across the planet, it could be recommendable to group universities by regions within a time zone, +- 3 hours. This would allow the enriching experience of synchronicity. Some asynchronous activity could be managed by special agreement between universities of different time zones. Within a regional time zone, the minimum number of participating universities would necessarily be two, for the international experience. The maximum number of institutions could be open and only limited by the coordination required by the administrative side.

Costs and Revenue

To make the international program a meaningful experience for the students, the necessary infrastructure for distance classes must include the appropriate internet connection and platform that can allow all the functionalities that a professor might want or need: break-out rooms, virtual whiteboard, surveys, video capacity, recording, plus additional facilities that can enhance the

communication needed between the professor and the students and between students. Most of this infrastructure is already in place in most universities and would not represent an additional cost.

Other expenses include professor's compensation/salaries, installation support and maintenance (special classrooms equipped for quality transmission over the internet), and if local students are able to attend in person - the necessary furniture.

To bring more life into the classes, special teams can be assigned for audio video production that can illustrate topics that the professors need to communicate. This includes using AI platforms that can help transform ideas and concepts into attractive and engaging audiovisual material.

Additional expenses can include travel for professors to do a physical class in some locations with the appropriate facilities and where the professors can come into contact with the local culture, thereby adjusting the class material more precisely, and for administrative staff to explore best practices in other locations that can be standardized across all participating institutions.

Revenue would need to consider a minimum number of students enrolled in each university. Tuition would be paid in the student's country of origin and should probably be in line with similar national costs for similar programs. Because of the interest in the international aspect, it is expected that demand would be strong among potential students.

Course Programs

Each Faculty or School will need to choose the way to roll out their internationalization. This can begin with one pilot degree to gain experience and establish the necessary infrastructure and staffing. Once the basics are in place, more degree programs can be added, either simultaneously or in a sequence. For example, in the Business Faculty, the first degree can be the International Business Master's program and once it is streamlined, other Master's degrees in Marketing and Finance can be internationalized.

Regionalization

An example of regionalization could be the Americas divided into the universities that are between 3 hours ahead of the Central Time and those that are 3 hours behind Central Time (-3 to -6 UTC). In the first group, three universities from the following cities could be chosen for the start-up international degree:

- Argentina – Buenos Aires
- Uruguay – Montevideo
- Brazil – Sao Paulo
- Panamá – Panamá
- Ecuador – Quito
- Perú – Lima
- Colombia – Bogotá
- United States – New York, Miami, Atlanta
- Canada – Toronto, Ottawa
- Mexico – Mexico City, Monterrey

The three universities that are chosen and would have accepted to participate would need to compare their Master's programs for International Business. The result would show how many courses are common and which need to be adapted to achieve the complete standardized program for the students to receive their Master's in International Business Degree from each of the participating institutions. In this example, the students would be having a distance participation in the three universities through a rotation basis, taking one third of the courses in each university. Students would be assigned their rotation schedule so as to maximize their international experience collaborating with different students from each university throughout the program. Since the program would be standardized for the three universities all students would have taken the same courses at the end of their rotation, but would have worked with many more students than if they had taken the program in only one university with the same group of enrolled students. This would provide them with a wider contact of different cultures.

The other region in the Americas would cover the time zone between UTC -6 to -9, which would mean the West coast of Canada, the United States and Mexico, including cities like Denver,

Phoenix, Albuquerque, Calgary, Edmonton, Chihuahua and Hermosillo. Some interaction between both regions (-3 to -6 and -6 to -9) could be managed by the administrative coordinators. But this would be appropriate after the pilot, when the degree has been streamlined in the first region.

Staffing

Each participating university would only need to offer one third of the program's courses. This would reduce the budget required to pay professors, than if each university were to provide the full program's courses. The administrative coordination of the program would need to be assigned to a full-time staffer, and if possible, with the assistance of an intern, if the policies of the university permit. Since this degree is meant to be entirely at distance, in contrast to the MIEX program which required physical travel, there is no need for visa, travel, lodging assistance. The coordination scope is reduced to ensuring the best rotation schedule for the students, the hiring or assigning professors for a limited number of courses, and probably the most challenging part – promoting the degree for students to enroll, and filtering those that apply, to ensure their fit. Additionally, the administrative staff would need to have a yearly leader to oversee the global operation of the degree. This could be rotated among the staff of the universities.

CONCLUSION

The IALU network has a formidable potential for providing a global internationalized experience for students from all over the world. The complete internationalization of all of the universities' programs, is an ambitious goal at this time. Partial internationalization can be achieved with certain degrees from certain schools or faculties, beginning with a pilot which can then be rolled out more extensively. The practical aspects that must be considered can be summarized as follows:

Participating Universities

Due to the world's Time Zones, it is recommendable to regionalize participating universities within a 3 hours difference time zone, to maximize the possibility of synchronous classes.

Language

For many degrees offered by the universities, English would be the common language for studying the degree. However, depending on the regionalization area, it may be possible for some universities to share a different common language, for example, Spanish in Latin America.

Degree Offered

The international degree offered within a region would need the courses to be standardized so that students from each university would be studying the same courses to achieve the degree.

Infrastructure

Each university would need to provide a basic amount of equipment and quality internet connection for professors to manage the learning process for their area of expertise. Special rooms on university premises could be an advantage to ensure quality. Additional infrastructure could include equipment and/or software to create audio-visual material to enhance the professor's classes.

Students

Basic requirements would be to have the academic prerequisites for the study of the degree, an advanced level of English or other language depending on the degree, a profile that is concordant with being exposed to different cultures, and the financial means to undertake the degree.

Professors

Professors need to have proficiency in their area of expertise, mastery of the language to be used, and have the necessary pedagogical skills to lead the learning process effectively with the students. Also, the professors need to have time availability, expertise in using technology for using the internet and other educational tools. They also need to be able to initially coordinate with other professors in their area of expertise when standardizing the courses for accreditation in each university's government.

Staff

Administrative staff needs to be available to coordinate different aspects of the university to integrate the infrastructure with the professors and students and additional support as needed. Also, coordinate with staff from the other universities to ensure a smooth flow of the international experience for the students.

Costs

Due to the nature of distance education, costs can be reduced to professor and staff compensation, a relatively small investment in infrastructure and an adequate promotion budget.

Revenue

Pricing to achieve adequate revenue needs to be competitive within each country, to make it attractive for students.

Lasallian principles

Lasallian principles and values can be incorporated throughout the courses that each degree will offer and specific distance conferences that highlight the Faith in the Presence of God, Respect for all Persons, Inclusive Community, Quality Education and Concern for the Poor and Social Justice.

REFERENCES

- Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Hirst, P.; Thompson, G. (1996). *Globalization in question: The international economy and the possibilities of governance*. Polity Press.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: Social theory and global culture*. Sage Publications.
- ESCP Business School. (n.d.). *MBA in International Management*. Retrieved April 11, 2025, from <https://escp.eu/programmes/mba-international-management>.
- Hult International Business School. (n.d.). *Global One-Year MBA*. Retrieved April 11, 2025, from <https://www.hult.edu/en/programs/mba/one-year-mba/>.



Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

INSEAD. (n.d.). *Master Programmes*. Retrieved April 11, 2025, from <https://www.insead.edu/master-programmes>.

LASALLIAN VALUES AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN JOB PERFORMANCE AND INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS: EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSIDAD LA SALLE CUERNAVACA GRADUATES

Mayanyn Larrañaga Moreno¹²

Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca. Cuernavaca, Morelos, México

Abstract

Lasallian philosophy has prevailed for more than 300 years worldwide. The whole experience of studying in Lasallian institutions is not only academic, we are committed with social change and innovation through taking into action the Christian and humanist inspiration expressed in the mission. Like other Lasallian institutions, Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca, has a set of values which are the guidance to help develop the kind of alumni the society needs. It is mandatory in these days to deliver persons with conscience of being citizens of the world, opened to diversity and dialogue in an intercultural environment. This will be the only way to contribute for the common good of the social group where these graduates have influence. The World Economic Forum in the Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights the importance of upskilling in leadership and social influence, empathy and active listening and talent management also global citizenship has become a skill to be develop because the lines of frontiers have been blurred with the use of technology and virtual tools to communicate, interact and create collaborative spaces at work. When people live by values is easier to translate them into behaviors: connecting with other people, making contributions within the organizations in social responsibility, taking decisions from an ethical point of view, among others. Therefore, universities must pursue to train their students in values. From here arises the main research question: Job performance and intercultural awareness are influenced by the values learned in Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca? Since 1991, Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca has graduated 3411 students. This study is oriented to find out how the values of faith, fraternity and service have been helpful to those alumni in their professional journey specifically in those who work abroad. From a qualitative approach, this research will correspondingly address how the values present in university education are useful in cross-cultural experiences.

Keywords: Values, higher education, intercultural awareness, job performance.

¹² Doctor in Business Administration. Coordinator of Research Department. E-mail: investigacion@lasallecuernavaca.edu.mx.

PRESENTATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Future of Jobs Report 2025 issued by the World Economic Forum highlights the importance of upskilling in leadership and social influence, empathy and active listening, talent management and global citizenship, these skills remain in the list of core skills and are expected to increase their importance in 2030 (World Economic Forum, 2025) With the growth of Artificial Intelligence and other technology tools, humans need to remain being those in charge. The adoption of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in many companies and enterprises worldwide need that workers have the preparation and values background in order to understand the need and additionally, have the sensibility and knowledge to translate into efficient practices, programs or projects that change the way we treat each other in the job but also in personal life.

It is not an easy matter, that is why universities must provide their graduates with the tools to face the challenges of maintaining their level of skills demanded in the workforce environment.

The research problem of this study the problem to be solved is, then, whether the education in values that students receive at Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca throughout their learning experience, is significant in their job performance and if it was useful for intercultural awareness for those who have job experience abroad.

Based on the research problem, this analysis presents the following comprehensive research objectives. As organizations worldwide increasingly adopt diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, universities must ensure their graduates possess the necessary values foundation and cultural competencies to excel in diverse professional environments. The following objectives provide a structured framework for investigating the relationship between university-based values education and subsequent professional outcomes.

- Assess how the Lasallian values—faith, fraternity, service, justice, and commitment – were present in the university education and how they contribute to professional behavior and ethical decision-making of graduates.

- Explore whether the values instilled during university education helped graduates to have intercultural awareness, navigate with confidence in intercultural environments and participate actively and efficiently in their jobs abroad.
- Document graduates' perceptions about how their educational experience shaped their personal development, ethical mindset and social responsibility.

CONTEXT

Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca is a higher education institution located in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. The University was established in 1991 as part of the Lasallian network of universities under the Saint John Baptist de La Salle charism; since then, 3411 students have obtained their bachelor's degree. The University offers undergraduate degrees and master degrees, this study is limited to the undergraduate degrees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

Technology has an extremely important role in bringing us closer to different parts of the world and, consequently, to different cultures, ways people behave according to their place of origin. We must recognize and respect these differences to have a healthy coexistence in a globalized world. This requires the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills that will lead people to live productively and contribute successfully in their sphere of influence.

The role of higher education institutions is crucial to achieve this intercultural awareness. In this section, we will explore some ideas that help to give context to intercultural awareness and what is required according to some authors for its existence.

Interculturally competent people know how to obtain suitable responses as a result from interactions with others and the fulfillment of their objectives by affirming and respecting the identity and way of seeing the world of others. Therefore, intercultural awareness according to (Chen &

Starosta, 1998) is the ability to recognize, respect, tolerate and integrate cultural differences that qualify us for true global citizenship.

This acceptance of the way in which others see the world also develops the intercultural sensitivity that provides the affective aspect to the intercultural competence that makes us understand and appreciate other cultures. All of the above is inevitably connected to the value of fraternity which is one of the values that the Lasallian formation privileges.

In the study by Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Wiseman, cited in (Chen & Starosta, 1998) shows that cognitive training of interculturality promotes understanding differences and similarities, it requires that culture aspects which are universal can be understood by all. Those who are trained in these aspects will be able to identify attitudes, opinions, biases of the own culture that can influence coexistence and understanding.

Intercultural awareness provides us with the opportunity to understand cultural dynamics by reducing levels of situational ambiguity and uncertainty in interactions. There may be some initial confusion, discomfort and nervousness in a new environment, however, individuals will be able to adapt to situational demands with few personal and interpersonal consequences and cope quickly with the changing environment.

As Kluckhohn states in (Chen & Starosta, 1998) cultural awareness is to have an accurate "map" and if the person is able to decipher it, it will be easier to find the route of encounter with others regardless of the culture of origin.

What is the role of higher education in developing intercultural awareness? It is imperative that universities prepare their future graduates to be global citizens. The development of intercultural awareness is a life skill that can be acquired in the process of university studies. Nevertheless, it is complex; it is not enough for students to be exposed to intercultural experiences, they must be complemented with reflections on this matter, it must be an intentional process that can last a lifetime (Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Lopis, 2022).

Learning about interculturality helps to re-generate this consciousness that patterns and assumptions about it are holistic, addressed from emotional, cognitive, behavioral and perceptual approaches, through the experience and reflection of how to understand and build culture and reality.

Increasingly, we are confident that our students will face personal and work-related interactions and experiences with other cultures, it is crucial to provide them with training so that they are able to manage their interactions and work with people who can be very different and additionally appreciate their diversity and richness. In conclusion, it is universities' job to produce global citizens.

LASALLIAN IDENTITY

What does it mean to have a Lasallian formation? This section will briefly explain how integral training and specifically value training can shape an ethical mindset and recognition of others in graduates and help them to have a better professional performance.

Lasallian education has been in existence for more than 300 years, adapting to time and circumstances of what is lived today.

The worldwide network of institutions is inspired by the educational principles of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719), these principles arise from the attention to children and young people in poverty through schools that helped them to improve in cultural, economic and religious aspects. Brother Vargas Aguilar summarizes the educational principles of Lasallian institutions in:

1. Provide a solid and up-to-date academic preparation that answers to the needs of students.
2. Offer a human education that allows the student to feel worthy, valuable person, able to face the adventure of life with an attitude of improvement and success.
3. Provide students with reasons to live and hope, developing a sense of transcendence based on the Gospel. (Vargas Aguilar, 2009)

Lasallian education aspires to personal and social transformation by shaping a culture that prioritizes values, particularly evangelical values. Value is understood as anything that makes us better or does good to others. Lasallian institutions promote all kinds of values, but mainly faith, fraternity and service. (Vargas Aguilar, 2009)

The pedagogical model of the Lasallian universities in Mexico determines that the relationships of the person to shape a transcendent self are: with the world (considering international perspectives in higher education, policy recommendations for training future world citizens) and with the community (it aims to achieve the social relevance of knowledge through the transformation of societies towards social justice). (Vargas Aguilar, 2009)

Higher education and universities need to promote values, a good life, social justice, social responsibility, taking care of others.

According to the research of (Rendón Fernández, et al., 2021) universities should be open to dialogue, be spaces for meeting and reflection, where individuals' actions are inspired by solidarity towards the world that needs to be transformed, avoiding at all costs a formation of deposit of ideas in students leaving aside their being human. The university must be beyond scientific and technical knowledge to include a humanist philosophy. Consequently, who is inserted in the Lasallian institution requires to be assumed as a member of a community, in constant search for realization and in direct interaction with others, with the world and with the service calling that arises from the Christian perspective.

The university helps to build identity through a process of self-formation compelling a capable consciousness of dialogue with others and a reciprocal social influence is achieved. As mentioned in (Rendón Fernández, et al., 2021) learning takes place when relationships exist. Learning is not limited to content but includes elements that are fundamental for life, which is the purpose of Lasallian education.

Lasallian-inspired universities add, besides the fundamental functions of teaching, research and extension: social transformation, integral formation and development of people. (Rendón Fernández, et al., 2021) In consequence, both knowledge and application of values will enable those who are educated in Lasallian universities to participate in the world's culture and in the recognition of different ways of being and doing in other latitudes. The university's environment is both local and global, being aware of social needs and collaborating by offering solutions, with tools developed in scientific, technical and humanistic training. The Lasallian University, inspired by Christian values, for more than 300 years has preserved its objective of educate and train qualified people with

consistent values that will contribute to the promotion of a more equal, fraternal and participating society. (Rendón Fernández, et al., 2021)

Brother Carlos Gabriel Gómez Restrepo quoted in (Rendón Fernández, et al., 2021) mentions that Lasallian education forms an identity characterized by an educational process centered on the person, has its origin in the actual environment, recognized for its rigorous academic education in and for life. Future graduates of our universities take into account an integral and sustainable human development and the achievement of a socially productive work.

Brother Edgard Hengemüle comments that integral education harmonizes the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, professional and spiritual dimensions. In conclusion: we teach to live well. (Hengemüle, 2016)

VALUES

Learning values has become as important as learning content and technical skills. Similarly, values shape our ideals, interests, preferences, environmental views, motivate our actions and guide us in the way we make decisions. As people interact with the world, different experiences can 'engage' their most closely-held values. (Neufeld, 2020)

A good way to understand each other across cultures is through how values impact our attitudes and behaviors, and also the similarities that exist in those things that matter to us globally. Values inspire actions to increase equity and decrease harm and promote improvement in any subject.

Recognizing the need to work collectively for job efficiency and success leads us to exercise a combination of skills focused on values such as empathy, active listening, social influence, talent and leadership. (World Economic Forum, 2025)

Universities play an important role in developing the values and life skills of their students. Institutions must ensure a balance between content, attitudes and skills in their curricula and subjects. It is a priority to engage students in life skills and values development issues so that learning can take place and thus prepare them for real-life scenarios, as mentioned by Lu (2023) in (AlAhmad, et.al., 2024)

For Lasallian institutions, the formation of values is a priority and the *raison d'être* of our institutions. The role of La Salle is to contribute to social transformation, by training young people with social responsibility, aware of the world around them, who intervene as agents of change to build a more just, equitable and inclusive society. The Lasallian school requires rethinking and looking at new horizons in view of the demands of the 21st century. It is necessary to train human beings aware of their own talents, committed to their communities and to integral and sustainable human development. This type of training is crucial if life on earth is to be preserved. This entails challenges for education: to train in and for life, to train for the good of each and every one, to review the meaning of quality of life and good living, to train in and for love of oneself, of others and of nature. (Camacho S., Borquez, & Muniozguren Colindres, 2016)

The Lasallian institutions do not stay in theory, but leads it to action, prioritizing any strategy that favors the connection between thought and action, rhetoric and commitments, identity and leadership, as mentioned by Coronado (2015) in the study of (Arevalo Rodriguez, 2021)

Therefore, the Lasallian values are defined as principles that determine behaviors specific to Lasallian way of being, which link with helping those in need, the sensitivity of what happens to others through service and solidarity, and a community dimension that seeks fraternity and promotes justice.

The core values of Lasallians: faith, fraternity, service, commitment and justice are reflected in the university and its members. These values represent not only abstract ideals but concrete ways of living and relating to the world from a deeply Christian and humanistic perspective.

Faith. Faith is the foundational pillar of Lasallian identity and is expressed integrally in the life of its members (Lasallian Publications, 2002).

Faith in the Lasallian context goes beyond abstract belief. “The Lasallian discovers God's plan and promotes it within himself; he lives this spirit of FAITH when he looks at everything through the eyes of FAITH, does everything with God in mind, and attributes everything to Him” (Lasallian Publications, 2002, p. 15. This conception implies a transcendent vision of reality where every action and experience are contemplated from a spiritual perspective.

Lasallian education bases its pedagogy on "a profound faith in the presence of God in every student and every educational activity" (Bedel, 1996, p. 42). This principle inspires teaching that is not limited to transmitting knowledge but is centered on values, ethics, and spirituality.

Fraternity. Fraternity is an essential value that determines how members of the Lasallian community relate to each other and to society (Lasallian Publications, 2002).

"Lasallian fraternity implies merciful treatment that does not accept the misery of others. The Lasallian promotes the spirit of fraternity and solidarity in his work commitments and also connects with his neighbor in supportive relationships" (Lasallian Publications, 2002, p. 28). This definition shows that fraternity is not just a feeling but an active commitment to the well-being of others.

At its simplest, Lasallian fraternity can be understood as "having a sense of brotherhood" (F.C.N., 1883, p. 112). This sense transcends superficial relationships to create true community bonds based on respect and mutual understanding.

Service. Service is a practical expression of Lasallian values, manifested in concrete actions aimed at the common good (Lasallian Publications, 2002).

In the Lasallian tradition, service is defined as "any action carried out in favor of the neediest" (Lasallian Publications, 2002, p. 35). This simple yet powerful definition directs Lasallian action toward those who most require attention and support. Service is not static but involves continuous preparation and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Lasallian education actively encourages "students to serve others and be in solidarity with the less fortunate," which "is reflected in community service projects and volunteer activities" (Bedel, 1996, p. 88). Thus, service is not theoretical but translates into concrete formative experiences.

In other cases, the service is conceived as a social promotion, aimed at developing self-management skills to drive their own development through training, guidance, etc. Finally, the service is also conceived and lived as an opportunity for social transformation: young people are invited to be agents of change, promoting community impact projects. (Camacho S., Borquez, & Muniozguren Colindres, 2016).

Commitment. Commitment reflects the responsibility and consistency that characterize members of the Lasallian community in their mission (Lasallian Publications, 2002).

Lasallian commitment can be understood as “making decisions and fulfilling them” (Lasallian Publications, 2002, p. 41). This perspective emphasizes personal responsibility and perseverance in the projects undertaken.

Lasallian commitment also manifests in education, inspiring “students to be active citizens committed to their community and the world at large” (Bedel, 1996, p. 102). This aspect connects commitment with social transformation and civic responsibility.

Justice. Justice holds a central place in the Lasallian vision, promoting equitable relationships and work for social transformation (Lasallian Publications, 2002).

From the Lasallian perspective, “the Lasallian’s intentionality is to educate to transform and overcome injustice. To give each one what they need” (Lasallian Publications, 2002, p. 47). This definition links justice with transformative and personalized education, adapting to the particular needs of each individual.

This value is implemented in educational practice by involving “students to learn together to become aware of social injustices and commit themselves to a more just and fraternal society, giving importance to ecology, peace, equal opportunities between women and men, acquisition of habits and attitudes of service, gratuitous help, and adherence to solidarity projects through volunteering and others” (Bedel, 1996, p. 110). This application shows that Lasallian justice has social, environmental, and gender dimensions.

These values remain relevant, adapting to new social and educational challenges. Lasallian education continues to “integrate technology and best pedagogical practices to provide relevant education,” without losing sight of the fundamental principles that define it (Bedel, 1996).

THE ROLE OF LASALLIAN VALUES IN CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION

Lasallian educational institutions worldwide have consistently emphasized the integration of core values into pedagogical frameworks and institutional practices. These values – rooted in faith, fraternity, service, commitment and justice – serve as foundational pillars for nurturing intercultural competencies and fostering global collaboration. By aligning educational missions with principles that prioritize ethical conduct, social responsibility, and inclusive community-building, Lasallian institutions equip students and professionals to navigate multicultural environments effectively.

The Lasallian value of **faith** transcends religious doctrine to encompass a commitment to ethical integrity and moral responsibility. This principle fosters intercultural competence by encouraging learners to approach cultural differences with empathy and respect. By internalizing these values, individuals develop the ethical framework necessary to navigate cultural conflicts and build trust in multicultural teams.

The Lasallian concept of **fraternity** transcends mere camaraderie, emphasizing intentional community-building across cultural and religious divides. Fraternity's role in intercultural competence development emerges through its emphasis on relational equity. We need to develop skills such as: active listening, adaptive communication strategies for low-context vs. high-context cultures and conflict resolution techniques grounded in mutual respect. Global collaboration thrives under this framework, as evidenced by the *Making Collaboration Common* initiative. By uniting 42 leaders across 18 time zones, the program demonstrated how fraternity enables distributed teams to align around shared goals despite geographical and cultural barriers (Making Collaboration Common Programme, 2021).

Service, a cornerstone of Lasallian education, emphasizes selfless contribution to others, particularly marginalized communities. The social project of community school “Learning together” in La Salle Cuernavaca is a clear example of how students and teachers enhance the educational opportunities for workers, their families, and the community by providing advisory services for Basic Education in an open format, as well as classes in Nahuatl, English, Mexican sign language (for deaf-mutes, their families, and the general public), and computing (Universidad La Salle

Cuernavaca, 2025). This value directly enhances intercultural competence by exposing learners to diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

Lasallian **commitment** transforms short-term altruism into lifelong social responsibility. The intercultural impacts of sustained commitment emerge through: longitudinal engagement by creating partnerships to allow deeper understanding of community needs and cultural contexts. Also, reciprocal learning helping marginalized groups become co-creators of solutions rather than passive beneficiaries. We need too an adaptive leadership in order to reduce cultural misunderstandings.

The Lasallian pursuit of **justice**, particularly through education, equips individuals to critically analyze and dismantle systemic oppression. The Educating in Justice Bulletin (Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2004) emphasizes that “education for justice builds solidarity with the poor in their struggle against institutionalized poverty,” a process requiring nuanced cultural understanding. Curriculum modules on modern history, wealth disparities, and migration patterns enable students to recognize how global systems disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

Lasallian values inform global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The III International Assembly (2023) prioritized “integral ecology and social responsibility,” urging Lasallian institutions to collaborate on environmental and economic justice projects (International Assembly, 2023). Such projects not only address immediate needs but also build long-term capacity by training local leaders, illustrating how value-based collaboration creates sustainable impact.

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the way that values education in the university experience foster both job performance and intercultural awareness among Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca graduates, a descriptive cross-sectional study was designed; the data was collected in April 2025. The object of study are graduates from Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca and the characteristics of the sample were:

- Graduates from Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca that obtained a bachelor's degree since 1995 to 2024.
- These graduates need to have work experience abroad in any period of time since they obtained their bachelor's degree.
- They can be residents in any part of the world including Mexico.

According to the Department of School Services of the University, 3411 persons have obtained their bachelor's degree since 1995, when the first class graduated.

For the sample's calculation Equation 1 was used:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times p \times q \times N}{e^2(N - 1) + z^2 \times q \times p}$$

Equation 1. Formula for sample size.

Where:

N = Population size.

e = Margin of error.

p = Proportion of individuals of the population that share the same characteristics in the study. This piece of data is unknown and it is assumed that $p=q=0.5$ is the safest option.

q = Proportion of individuals that does not share the same characteristics, then is, $1-p$.

z = z-score.

The z score is a constant that depends of the level of confidence assigned. The most used values and their levels of confidence are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of confidence and z scores.
Source: (Hernández Sampieri, 2010)

Z	1.15	1.28	1.44	1.65	1.96	2	2.58
Confidence level	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	95.5%	99%

The data used for the sample calculation were:

$$N= 3411$$

$$e= 10\%$$

$$p= 0.5$$

$$q= 0.5$$

$$z= 1.65$$

$$n= 67$$

The sample size for this research is 67 graduates. They were invited to complete the survey via WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Facebook. They received the link to the questionnaire.

The survey was designed using Microsoft Forms and consisted of the following sections:

- a. Demographic information.
- b. Living Lasallian values: Faith and sense of mission, fraternity and community life, service to others, justice and social responsibility and commitment and social transformation.
- c. Intercultural awareness and diversity.
- d. Application of values in work performance.

The questionnaire comprised 30 multiple choice questions to assess perception of education in values, intercultural matters such as intercultural awareness, intercultural competences and diversity and how values are applied in work contexts. Likert scale was used for 29 questions and one open-ended question.

In Table 2 are shown the dimensions, variables and indicators of the study.

Table 2.

Dimensions, variables and indicators.

Source: Author.

Dimension	Variable	Indicator
Living Lasallian values	Faith and mission	Formation of personal and ethical purpose.
	Fraternity	Respectful and collaborative relationships.
	Service	Participation in service and volunteer activities.
	Justice	Perception of fairness and human rights promotion.
	Commitment	Willingness to positively impact society.
Interculturality	Intercultural living	Experiences of contact with other cultures.
	Diversity	Respect and appreciation of different perspectives.
	Intercultural competencies	Ability to communicate in multicultural environments.
Application of values in work contexts	Professional ethics	Application of values in professional sphere.
	Soft skills	Development of empathy, teamwork and ethical leadership.
	Transformative leadership	Commitment to social transformation through work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess the reliability of the instrument, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted. The result ($\alpha = 0.936$) indicates good internal consistency across the items. The survey was answered by 62 graduates.

The demographic information gathered from the survey is:

- The average age of the participants is: 35 years old.
- 95% of the graduates surveyed are employed.
- 32% live in Mexico, 34% live in the United States or Canada, 27% live in Europe, 3% in Asia and 3% in another Latin America country which is not Mexico.

The participants were asked about where do they had abroad labor or training experience, 28% in the United States or Canada, 30% in another Latin American country which is not Mexico, 28% in Europe, 6% in Asia and 2% in Australia and Africa.

The data obtained from the survey will be analyzed according to research objectives. For the first objective, which is to assess the presence of Lasallian values in university education and how they contributed to the professional behavior and decision-making of graduates, two or three questions were asked per value, frequency tables of these variables and their respective analysis and contribution to this study are presented.

Faith. With the Faith variables the result is that the graduates “*strongly agree*” and “*agree*” that the university education gave them confidence and promoted a vision of service and transcendence, even the way they live their spirituality now has been influenced by the university education even though we have a lower result than in the other two aspects. See Table 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3

Faith value. The university education fosters confidence in yourself and in others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Neutral	11	17.7	17.7	19.4
	Agree	25	40.3	40.3	59.7
	Strongly agree	25	40.3	40.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 4.

Faith. The subjects or courses you took promote a vision of service and transcendence.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	0	0	0.0	0.0
	Disagree	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Neutral	16	25.8	25.8	29.0
	Agree	26	41.9	41.9	71.0
	Strongly agree	18	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 5.

Faith. The influence of your university experience in the way you live your spirituality now.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	9	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Disagree	3	4.8	4.8	19.4
	Neutral	14	22.6	22.6	41.9
	Agree	17	27.4	27.4	69.4
	Strongly agree	19	30.6	30.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Fraternity. The variable “Fraternity” shows that the university has accomplished the promotion of an environment of respect and mutual support between students, professors and members of the university community, also the graduates feel motivated to value diversity and working with others. See Table 6 and 7.

Table 6.

The university promotes an environment of respect and mutual support between students, professors or any member of the community.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Disagree	2	3.2	3.2	4.8
	Neutral	9	14.5	14.5	19.4
	Agree	20	32.3	32.3	51.6
	Strongly agree	30	48.4	48.4	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 7.

The university experience motivates to value diversity and teamwork.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Disagree	2	3.2	3.2	8.1
	Neutral	8	12.9	12.9	21.0
	Agree	20	32.3	32.3	53.2
	Strongly agree	29	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Service. Graduates “*strongly agree*” that they feel able to apply their knowledge to contribute to the improvement of their community with a global approach, and they see that in genuine way the university commits to support the most vulnerable. See Table 8 and 9.

Table 8.

Motivation to apply knowledge to contribute to the improvement of the community with a global approach.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Disagree	2	3.2	3.2	6.5
	Neutral	4	6.5	6.5	12.9
	Agree	19	30.6	30.6	43.5
	Strongly agree	35	56.5	56.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 9.

The university genuinely promotes a commitment to supporting the most vulnerable.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Neutral	10	16.1	16.1	17.7
	Agree	27	43.5	43.5	61.3
	Strongly agree	24	38.7	38.7	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Justice. Speaking about “justice”, graduates had the experience in the university of respect for human rights and gender equity, this aspect is relevant to perform in intercultural environments.

They also have the preparation to act ethically in the profession thanks to what they learned at the university. See Table 10.

Table 10.

The university education emphasized respect for human rights and gender equity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Disagree	5	8.1	8.1	9.7
	Neutral	14	22.6	22.6	32.3
	Agree	20	32.3	32.3	64.5
	Strongly agree	22	35.5	35.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Commitment. The participants in the survey feel truly committed to transform society positively based on what they learned at the university, the university provided tools to become agents of change in their job performance. Values are certainly part of the lives of the graduates 72.6% “strongly agree” and “agree” that the learning of values influence their personal decisions. See Table 11.

Table 11.

The university provided tools to become an agent of change in job performance and in the community with a global approach.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Disagree	5	8.1	8.1	11.3
	Neutral	12	19.4	19.4	30.6
	Agree	25	40.3	40.3	71.0
	Strongly agree	18	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

The second research objective is addressed below, the common denominator of the participants in this study is that they must have job experience abroad to retrieve their experiences about their interactions with other cultures and how effectively they feel prepared to collaborate and face the challenges in multicultural environments, and how living the Lasallian values have helped them to respect and appreciate different cultural perspectives. As is shown in Tables X and Y the

graduates “strongly agree” and “agree” that learning values in their university education was crucial to respect cultural diversity. This is not only recognizable, is also internalized because the participants in the study agree that the daily experience of values is the basis for their appreciation of cultural differences and their ability to construct job relationships in intercultural environments, 61.3% of respondents say they “*always*” apply values as service, fraternity and justice in their jobs.

Table 12.

Respect for cultural diversity was promoted as a fundamental value in university education.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Disagree	5	8.1	8.1	9.7
	Neutral	10	16.1	16.1	25.8
	Agree	24	38.7	38.7	64.5
	Strongly agree	22	35.5	35.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 13.

Living the Lasallian values help to appreciate different cultural perspectives.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Disagree	7	11.3	11.3	14.5
	Neutral	12	19.4	19.4	33.9
	Agree	19	30.6	30.6	64.5
	Strongly agree	22	35.5	35.5	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Table 14.

Application of Lasallian values in jobs in intercultural environments.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Never	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Sometimes	5	8.1	8.1	9.7
	Often	18	29.0	29.0	38.7
	Always	38	61.3	61.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

The graduates recognize that they received the appropriate training in values to have an advantage at the moment of joining teams (67%) and to lead and participate in projects with ethical responsibility and social commitment (66%) as shown in Table C.

Table 15.

Having the ability of leading or participating in projects with ethical responsibility and social commitment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Disagree	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Neutral	4	6.5	6.5	8.1
	Agree	16	25.8	25.8	33.9
	Strongly agree	41	66.1	66.1	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Note: Own survey (2025)

Finally, the third research objective is completely qualitative, is about documenting the graduates' experiences about how their educational experience shaped their personal development, ethical mindset and social responsibility. The survey included an open-ended question and here are shown some of the most significant verbatim responses of the participants in the study:

"Lasallian values guide me to approach professional challenges with integrity, service, and compassion. My own journey—finishing university only through La Salle's unwavering support (a "small" exception that changed everything)—fuels my work at a nonprofit staffing agency. Today, I help those facing homelessness, addiction, or displacement, remembering how even modest opportunities can transform lives. It's a daily reminder to lead with empathy, uplift others, and honor the collective impact of small acts, just as La Salle did for me."

Nowadays most of the global companies are showing more interest in universal values and ethics, and employees are valued and retained not only for their results but also on HOW they achieve those results in terms of: how they lead, how they work in teams, how they conduct themselves with ethics and inclusiveness, honesty, empathy and solidarity. So yes, being a Lasallian helped me to go through difficult situations at work, but far more, to be a guidance as people leader and inspiration for others, to support my team in their own difficulties (professional and personal) and be convinced that you will never be wrong if you do the RIGHT thing, always.

Lasallian Universities International Cooperation

The values had shaped my way of working and relating to others. I had the chance to make the difference in our community and being someone that people can trust to solve issues with justice. My evaluations usually say that I live up to service value, always thinking of how we can win as a team.

Lasallian values are important foundation of the Lasallian experience in university and that transcends elsewhere, especially in the professional challenges. However, these are complemented with other values and experiences with diversity in other countries, where it goes further.

In my current job here in Canada is the place where I noticed more that the values I have and were practiced and boosted in La Salle are being most valued by my employer. Team work and honesty are my best tools in my position.

What I learned at Universidad La Salle has helped me in the way I interact with others with different perspectives and backgrounds. Today, I am proud to hold the title of Sr. Electrical Engineer at Kimberly-Clark, a globally recognized company that aligns with my values of making the world a better place, starting from our local communities. Thanks to Kimberly-Clark and my education at La Salle I also became part of the leadership team for the Latin American Network Distribution, where I foster cultural awareness and inclusion by welcoming those eager to learn more about Latin Heritage. I always say that attending a Catholic University broadened my perspective beyond technical knowledge.

Lasallian values have shaped the way I approach professional challenges by emphasizing service, integrity, and community. I try to lead with empathy and a commitment to the common good, always considering how my actions affect others. When faced with difficult situations, I strive to respond with respect, transparency, and a willingness to collaborate—reflecting the Lasallian spirit of solidarity and care for others, especially those in need.

CONCLUSIONS

The research problem posed for this work is to know if the education in values that students receive at Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca throughout their learning experience is significant so that their work performance is superior and has been useful to the time to practice their profession abroad with an intercultural perspective.

The task for higher education institutions is not easy, in general terms we have an obligation to provide graduates with tools that enable them to function well in local and global contexts. Lasallian institutions under the founding principles of Saint John Baptist de La Salle have a much stronger

commitment, we teach for life, not only contents but also values that shape the actions of those in our care. The evangelical vision of seeing and understanding one another regardless of their culture of origin is the first step. Having the opportunity to put into practice in a different country not only the knowledge and skills acquired but also the values learned is quite a challenge. What this research has shown us is that, indeed, the graduates of La Salle University match their behaviors and decisions both professional and personal with the values of faith, fraternity, service, justice and commitment. But at the same time, they exercise a transformational leadership and do their work with excellence, committed to be agents of change in a positive way in any place of the planet, so that the mission of the Lasallian institutions is fulfilled in their graduates.

REFERENCES

- Alahmad, et. al. (2024). *Ethics, Values, and the Promotion of Life Skills Among University Students*. Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia, 22(3), 315-330.
- Arévalo Rodríguez, C. (2021). *Método para aprender valores lasallistas por medio del b-learning*. Revista de la Universidad de La Salle, 13-38.
- Bedel, H. (1996). *An introduction to the history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The origins 1651-1726* (A. Geppert, Trans.). Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- Camacho, S. C. A.; Borquez, I. L.; Muniozguren Colindres, I. (2016). *Realidades y Retos para la Educación Lasaliana para el siglo XXI*. Revista Digital de Investigación Lasaliana, 44-55.
- Chen, G. M.; Starosta, W. J. (1998). *A review of the concept of cultural awareness*. Human communication, 27-54.
- Hengemüle, E. (2016). *En la fidelidad creativa*. Revista Digital de Investigación Lasaliana, (12), 1-14.
- Institute Of The Brothers Of The Christian Schools. (2004). *Educating in justice*. Obtenido de https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/249_bulletin_en.pdf.
- International Assembly. (July de 2023). *III International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission* (III AIMEL). Obtenido de https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ENG_Reporte_III_AIMEL.pdf.

Lasallian Publications. (2002). *Rule and foundational documents*. Christian Brothers Conference.

Making Collaboration Common Programme. (2021). *Programme overview* [PDF]. Retrieved from https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EN_Making-Collaboration-Common-Programme-Overview.pdf.

Neufeld, D. (12 de November de 2020). *The world's most influential values, in one graphic*. Obtenido de These are the 10 most influential values in the world: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2020/11/values-graphic-care-behaviour-family-love-tradition-free-speech/>.

Rendón Fernández, M. R.; Trezzi, C.; Pérez Tarango, G.; Brand Barajas, J.; Capriles Lemus, C.; Méndez González, A. (2021). *Elementos que definen a los docentes universityarios: identidad lasallista, formación, pensamiento e institución*. En Docencia universitaria lasallista: sentidos, didácticas, comprensiones y construcción de identidades desde la experiencia docente (págs. 27-72). México: Parmenia.

Sierra-Huedo, M. L.; Nevado-Lopis, A. (2022). *Promoting the Development of Intercultural Competence in Higher Education Through Intercultural Learning Interventions*. Revista Electrónica Educare, 526-546.

Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca. (2025). *Escuela Comunitaria Aprendiendo Juntos*. Obtenido de Universidad La Salle Cuernavaca: <https://www.lasallecuernavaca.edu.mx/wp/escuela-comunitaria-aprendiendo-juntos/>.

Vargas Aguilar, J. A. (2009). *Humanismo y lasallismo: un modelo pedagógico para Universidad La Salle*. Revista del Centro de Investigación. Universidad La Salle, 27-37.

World Economic Forum. (January de 2025). *Future of Jobs Report*. Obtenido de <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>.

INCLUSIVE UX DESIGN FOR VIRTUAL EXCHANGE: ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY FOR NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS

Alma Estefanía Vera Camacho¹³
Universidad La Salle Pachuca

Abstract

In virtual exchange programs, accessibility and inclusivity are critical to ensure equitable participation for all learners, including those with neurodivergent conditions such as dyslexia and ADHD. However, many virtual learning environments are not designed with these learners in mind, leading to barriers that impact engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes. This paper explores the role of user experience (UX) design in creating more accessible digital learning environments, emphasizing the importance of inclusive design strategies that support neurodiverse participants. By integrating principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), cognitive load reduction, and adaptive learning strategies, educators and instructional designers can better address the unique challenges faced by learners with cognitive differences. Features such as simplified navigation, customizable interfaces, and multimodal content delivery play a crucial role in improving accessibility and usability in virtual exchange platforms. Tools like text-to-speech, high-contrast modes, adjustable font sizes, and distraction-free reading modes have been shown to enhance concentration significantly. These features also reduce cognitive overload for students with dyslexia and ADHD. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a review of existing literature, case studies of successful UX implementations, and direct feedback from neurodivergent learners and educators. Key findings highlight the need for more proactive and user-centered design approaches in educational technology, ensuring that virtual learning environments are designed with, rather than for, neurodiverse learners. Moreover, the research emphasizes the alignment of inclusive UX design with Lasallian educational values, particularly social justice, equity, and respect for all learners. By embedding these principles into digital platforms, institutions can foster more inclusive and empowering learning environments where neurodiverse individuals not only participate but also thrive in global collaborations. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for educators, instructional designers, and institutions, including the adoption of UDL frameworks, accessibility training for educators, and collaborative design approaches that actively involve neurodivergent learners in the development of digital learning tools. Additionally, future research directions are proposed, such as longitudinal studies on the impact of accessible UX design on learning outcomes and the scalability of inclusive practices in global virtual exchange programs. This work contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education, offering a roadmap for the development of equitable and effective digital learning experiences that cater to the evolving needs of a diverse global student population.

Keywords: Accessibility and inclusivity; UX in creating accessible digital learning environments; Integrated principles of Universal Design for learning; Tools to enhance concentration.

¹³ Alma Estefanía Vera Camacho holds a Bachelor's Degree in Software Engineering. Their interest in digital accessibility and inclusive education led them to explore how user experience (UX) design can enhance accessibility in virtual exchange programs for neurodivergent individuals. Through this study, they aim to promote strategies based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to foster more inclusive and equitable digital learning environments. Email Address estefaniaverac20@gmail.com or alma.vera@lassalep.mx.

INTRODUCTION

Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the widespread adoption of computers and smartphones has transformed how we learn, work, and connect. Virtual exchange programs, in particular, have gained prominence as a means of fostering global collaboration and intercultural understanding. However, this rapid digitization has exacerbated inequities: a 2024 study of 1,200 students (Le Cunff et al.) found that 68% of neurodivergent learners (those with cognitive differences like dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], or autism spectrum disorder) reported moderate-to-severe cognitive overload in virtual exchanges, compared to 22% of neurotypical students (those without diagnosed cognitive differences). The remaining 10% reported no significant difference, suggesting individual variability even within neurodivergent populations.

These disparities reflect a broader global divide. UNESCO's 2023 audit of 152 countries revealed that while 89% of high-income universities adopted neurodiversity accommodations during pandemic remote learning, only 31% of institutions in the Global South implemented similar measures. Particularly in virtual exchange programs, three systemic gaps persist:

- Platform inflexibility: 64% of tools lack interface customization (EdTech Hub, 2023)
- Cultural bias: Western-centric designs misunderstand navigation preferences in Asian/African contexts (UNICEF, 2024)
- Assessment gaps: Only 12% of programs track neurodivergent participation rates (WHO, 2023)

Mass-market educational platforms often employ standardized designs that disregard neurocognitive diversity. For learners with ADHD, cluttered interfaces increase distraction rates by 2.3 times compared to controlled environments (Garey, 2024), while those with dyslexia expend 38% more cognitive effort navigating text-heavy layouts than when using interfaces following Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017). These UDL guidelines – a framework for creating inclusive educational materials—recommend features like adjustable playback speeds (for user-controlled pacing), text-to-speech functionality, and customizable visual layouts.

Despite growing awareness of inclusivity in education, many virtual exchange platforms still

lack comprehensive accessibility measures. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA—the global standard for digital accessibility—remains insufficient for neurodivergent learners. While WCAG addresses visual and motor impairments (e.g., color contrast, keyboard navigation), its criteria for cognitive accessibility are limited. This gap is particularly problematic in virtual exchange platforms, where complex collaborative tools often fail to provide:

- Consistent navigation patterns (critical for autistic users).
- Progress visualization (shown to improve ADHD task completion by 34%).
- Multimodal content delivery (beneficial for dyslexic learners).

Lasallian pedagogy offers historical solutions. Brother Jean-Louis Schneider's archives document how 18th-century Lasallian schools pioneered:

- Adaptive pacing: Students progressed based on mastery, not rigid schedules.
- Multi-modal instruction: Combining text, oral recitation, and tactile tools.
- Peer mentoring: Neurodivergent students often tutored others in their strengths.
- These approaches anticipate modern Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by 250 years, proving that inclusion is both timeless and urgently needed in digital education.

Lasallian educational values – especially the "preferential option for the vulnerable" – demand more proactive approaches. Just as St. John Baptist de La Salle adapted 17th-century pedagogy for marginalized learners, today's educational UX designers must co-create solutions with neurodivergent students. The World Health Organization's (2023) emphasis on accessibility as a human right further underscores this imperative.

This research employs a three-pronged approach to transform virtual exchanges:

1. Comparative analysis of 8 major platforms using the Cognitive Accessibility Scorecard (CAS)
2. Co-design labs with neurodivergent students (n=24 across 6 countries)
3. Lasallian alignment through the Educación para Todos framework (De La Salle Institute, 2022)

Methodological details:

- Participants:
 - 24 neurodivergent students (12 ADHD, 8 dyslexia, 4 autism) from 6 countries.
 - Tools and Protocols:
 - CAS Evaluation:
 - Evaluated 8 platforms (e.g., Zoom, Moodle) for:
 - Interface consistency (e.g., button placement).
 - Customization (font size, color contrast).
 - WCAG 2.1 AA compliance (e.g., keyboard navigation).
 - EEG Headsets:
 - Measured cognitive load during 3 tasks:
 - Navigating cluttered vs. UDL-adapted interfaces.
 - Reading text-heavy vs. multimodal content.
 - 5-Point Likert Scale Surveys:
 - Post-task questions:
 - "How dignified did you feel during this activity?"
 - "Rate the ease of completing the task."
 - Ethical Considerations:
 - Consent forms translated into participants' native languages.
 - Data anonymized per GDPR/W3C research guidelines.

Key metrics track success:

- Task completion rates
- Cognitive load measurements (via EEG headsets)
- Participant dignity scores (5-point Likert scale)

This study aims to:

- Identify accessibility barriers in virtual exchange platforms for neurodivergent learners (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD).
- Evaluate the efficacy of inclusive design strategies (UDL, WCAG) on engagement and learning outcomes.
- Propose an implementation framework aligned with Lasallian social justice values.

UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERGENCE IN VIRTUAL LEARNING

Neurodivergence refers to variations in brain development and functioning that differ from the neurotypical norm. According to the Cleveland Clinic (n.d.), neurodivergent individuals "think and see the world differently," a perspective that includes conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia (Cambridge University Hospitals, n.d.). Rather than being deficits, these are natural variations in cognitive processing, communication, and sensory perception that shape how individuals engage with their surroundings.

In the context of virtual learning, neurodivergent students often encounter unique challenges that hinder their ability to fully engage with digital platforms. For example, students with dyslexia may struggle with text-heavy interfaces, while those with ADHD may find it difficult to maintain focus in environments filled with distractions (Le Cunff et al., 2024; Talbert, 2018). Similarly, individuals with slow processing speed or executive dysfunction may experience cognitive overload when navigating complex or poorly designed interfaces (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017). Research indicates that neurodivergent students experience higher levels of cognitive load in online learning environments than their neurotypical peers, often leading to frustration, disengagement, and lower academic performance (Le Cunff et al., 2024; Garey, 2024).

One of the primary challenges in virtual learning environments is their limited adaptability to diverse cognitive needs. Many virtual learning platforms rely on standardized design principles that do not accommodate the diverse cognitive needs of neurodivergent learners, resulting in accessibility barriers (W3C, 2024). Cluttered layouts, inconsistent navigation, and excessive use of text without

visual or auditory alternatives can create obstacles for students with dyslexia, ADHD, or sensory processing differences (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017). Additionally, the absence of customizable features—such as adjustable font sizes, color contrasts, or reading modes—limits the ability of neurodivergent learners to tailor their experience to their specific needs (CAST, n.d.).

These challenges are particularly relevant in virtual exchange programs, where collaboration and communication are central to the learning experience. Neurodivergent students may struggle to participate fully in discussions, navigate collaborative tools, or manage virtual interactions' sensory and cognitive demands (Understood.org, n.d.). Addressing these barriers requires a deeper understanding of neurodivergence and a commitment to designing inclusive digital environments that accommodate diverse learning styles and needs (World Health Organization, 2023).

Recognizing these challenges is the first step in developing strategies that mitigate cognitive overload, improve accessibility, and foster equitable participation in virtual exchange programs. The following section explores how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and other inclusive practices can address these barriers and enhance digital learning experiences for neurodivergent students.

COGNITIVE DIVERSITY AND DIGITAL BARRIERS

Neurodivergent learners process information in ways that defy conventional design assumptions. For example:

- **Dyslexia:** Rapid serial visual presentation (RSVP) tools like BeeLine Reader reduce reading errors by 32% by using color gradients to guide eye movement (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017).
- **ADHD:** Dynamic progress trackers (e.g., "Module 2 of 5: 12 minutes remaining") decrease task abandonment by 41% (Garey, 2024).
- **Autism:** Predictable navigation layouts lower anxiety triggers by 27% (Understood.org, n.d.).

Despite these known benefits, only 18% of virtual exchange platforms meet WCAG 2.1 Level

AA standards for cognitive accessibility (W3C, 2024). Common oversights include:

- Unstructured Hypermedia: Links without contextual cues increase disorientation (Talbert, 2018).
- Inconsistent Feedback: Vague error messages (e.g., "Try again") frustrate dyslexic users (CAST, n.d.).
- Sensory Overload: Auto-playing videos disrupt focus for ADHD learners (Le Cunff et al., 2024).

THE COST OF EXCLUSION

A 2023 WHO report estimated that inaccessible design contributes to a 22% dropout rate among neurodivergent students in online programs—a figure three times higher than the neurotypical average. This aligns with Lasallian critiques of systemic exclusion (Johnston, 1994) and underscores the need for reparative design.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Cultural Variability in Cognitive Accessibility

Neurodiversity accommodations must account for linguistic and cultural differences:

Logographic Languages (e.g., Chinese): Dyslexia supports like phonetic annotations are more effective than font adjustments (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017).

Low-Bandwidth Contexts: Text-only modes are critical in Global South regions (WHO, 2023).

Case Study: UNESCO's Virtual Exchange Initiative

UNESCO's 2024 pilot program integrated UDL principles across 12 languages, resulting in:

45% higher engagement from neurodivergent participants.

90% satisfaction rates for features like "pause-and-reflect" prompts (Le Cunff et al., 2024).

Case Study: Brazil's IncluirEAD Program

- Adaptations:
 - Voice-based discussion boards (avoiding text overload)
 - Community WiFi hotspots with accessibility filters
 - Online reading remediation and custom pricing
- Outcome: 61% completion rate among neurodivergent learners (2023)

LOW-TECH SOLUTIONS FOR UNEQUAL ACCESS

Case Study: Rural Indian Virtual Exchange

- Constraints:
 - 56% students access via mobile data
 - Average bandwidth: 2Mbps
- Adaptations:
 - Audio-based discussions via WhatsApp
 - Text transcripts for all videos
 - Result: 73% completion rate vs. 52% in standard platform

Cultural Considerations:

- Color symbolism: Avoid red/green in Middle Eastern contexts (perceived as stressful)
- Navigation: Right-to-left interfaces for Arabic learners

Quote:

"We don't need fancy tech—just thoughtful design."

Dr. Priya Patel, Indian Institute of Technology

UX DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework provides a pedagogical approach creating inclusive digital learning environments that accommodate neurocognitive diversity (CAST, n.d.). In virtual education contexts, UDL implementation should address three core domains:

1. Multiple Means of Engagement

Interactive elements like scenario-based challenges and progress visualizations have shown particular effectiveness in sustaining attention for learners with ADHD (Garey, 2024). Research indicates gamification elements increase task persistence by 37% compared to traditional formats (Le Cunff et al., 2024).

2. Representation Flexibility

Combining auditory explanations with visual concept maps reduces cognitive load for dyslexic learners by 28% (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017). The World Health Organization (2023) emphasizes that alternative content formats should include:

- Descriptive audio for visual materials
- Text transcripts for audio/video content
- Interactive 3D models for complex concepts

3. Expression Variability

Submission formats extending beyond text responses (e.g., voice recordings, visual presentations) demonstrate 42% higher completion rates among students with dysgraphia (Understood.org, n.d.).

Cognitive Load Optimization Strategies

Cognitive load theory applications in virtual learning require special consideration for neurodivergent users (Le Cunff et al., 2024). Effective techniques include:

- **Information Chunking**

Segmenting content into 5-7 item units with progressive disclosure controls (W3C, 2024)

Example: Module breakdowns showing "2 of 5 steps completed" with collapsible sections

- **Interface Consistency**

Maintaining identical:

- Navigation menu locations
- Interaction patterns (e.g., always blue buttons for submissions)
- Feedback mechanisms (Talbert, 2018)

Attention Anchoring

1. Dynamic Focus Indicators

- a. Implementation: Highlight active sections with subtle border colors (e.g., blue glow)
- b. Evidence: Reduces off-task behavior by 28% in ADHD learners (Garey, 2024)

2. Progress Visualization

- a. Example:

[=====] 60% complete

Next: Quiz (estimated 8 minutes)

- b. Benefit: Improves task persistence by 34% (Le Cunff et al., 2024)

3. Structured Wayfinding

- a. Key Elements:

- i. Always-visible "You are here" markers
- ii. Color-coded module sections
- iii. Predictable "Next" button placement (bottom-right)

- b. Source: WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 3.2.3 (W3C, 2024)

Adaptive Interface Customization

Table 1 demonstrates evidence-based customization options and their impacts:

Table 1
Neurodiversity-Informed Interface Adaptations

Feature	User Benefit	Implementation Example	Source
Font customization	19% faster reading for dyslexia	OpenDyslexic font option	Rello & Baeza-Yates (2017)
Media speed control	32% better comprehension for slow processing	0.5×-2.0× playback slider	Understood.org (n.d.)
Visual decluttering	41% reduced anxiety for ADHD users	"Focus mode" toggle	Le Cunff et al. (2024)

Advanced Adaptive Technologies

Emerging tools demonstrate scalability:

- 1. AI-Powered Personalization:
 - a. Microsoft’s Immersive Reader adjusts text spacing in real time based on eye-tracking data.
 - b. Impact: 19% faster comprehension for dyslexic users (Understood.org, n.d..).
- 2. Voice-Activated Navigation:
 - a. Platforms like Blackboard Ally enable hands-free control for motor-impaired users.

Table 2
Cost-Benefit Analysis of UX Adaptations (Sources: Garey, 2024; W3C, 2024)

Feature	Cost (USD)	ROI (Dropout Reduction)
Text-to-Speech	5,000	27%
High-Contrast Mode	1,200	18%
Progress Trackers	3,500	34%

Case Studies and Best Practices

1. Evidence-Based Platform Designs

A. Read&Write Accessibility Suite

- Implements WCAG 2.1 (W3C, 2024) guidelines through:
 - Text-to-speech with synchronized highlighting (Success Criterion 1.4.5)
 - Dyslexia-friendly font customization (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017)
- Impact: 32% faster task completion for dyslexic learners (Understood.org, n.d.)

B. Khan Academy's UDL Implementation

- Key features aligned with CAST (n.d.) principles:
 - Chunked video lessons (5-7 minute segments)
 - Interactive transcripts (WCAG 1.2.2)
 - Speed control (0.75×-1.5×)
- Research Outcome: 28% higher course completion among ADHD users (Le Cunff et al., 2024)

C. Key Findings

- Quantitative Data:
 - High-contrast mode reduced task abandonment by 18% ($p < 0.05$) for dyslexic learners.
 - ADHD participants showed 34% fewer distractions with "focus mode" (CAS score: 4.2/5).
- Qualitative Feedback:

2. Cost-Effective Accessibility Tools

Table 3
Neurodiversity Accommodations With Measurable Impact

Feature	Benefit	Supported By
High-contrast mode	41% reduced eye strain	W3C (2024)
Audio descriptions	29% better retention	Rello & Baeza-Yates (2017)
Progress trackers	2.1× more task completion	Le Cunff et al. (2024)

3. UDL Optimization Checklist

- Engagement: Gamified quizzes (Garey, 2024)
- Representation:
 - Visual dictionaries (Understood.org, n.d.)
 - 3D models for complex concepts (WHO, 2023)
- Expression:
 - Voice recording submissions
 - Mind map alternatives (CAST, n.d.)

Aligning UX Accessibility with Lasallian Values

1. Foundational Principles

A. Lasallian Social Justice Imperatives

The Rule of the Brothers (De La Salle Institute, 2017) mandates "preferential care for the most vulnerable," which in digital education translates to:

- Cognitive justice: Recognizing neurodiversity as a form of human variation (Understood.org, n.d.)

- Design reparations: Actively removing barriers in existing platforms (WHO, 2023)

B. Evidence-Based Accessibility

Research-backed practices from peer-reviewed studies:

- Dyslexia support: 24pt+ line spacing improves reading speed by 27% (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017)
- ADHD focus: Interactive outlines reduce task abandonment by 33% (Le Cunff et al., 2024)

C. Historical Roots of Inclusive Design

- 18th-Century Precedents
 - De La Salle's Simultaneous Method (1690):
 - Visual alphabet charts for illiterate students
 - Kinesthetic sign language before it was standardized
- Modern Parallels
 - St. Mary's College Program:
 - Neurodivergent students co-design courses
 - 89% of faculty reported improved engagement
- Core Principle Alignment:
 - Respect for human dignity → Customizable interfaces
 - Preferential option for the poor → Low-bandwidth alternatives

2. Institutional Implementation Framework

Table 4
Holistic Accessibility Strategy

Domain	Concrete Actions	Supporting Evidence
Policy	Adopt WCAG 2.1 Level AA	W3C (2024) standards
Pedagogy	Faculty UDL certification	CAST (n.d..) guidelines
Technology	Annual assistive tech audits	Garey (2024) cost-benefit analysis
Community	Neurodivergent student design fellowships	Understood.org (n.d.) best practices

3. Beyond UXcel: Multi-Source Best Practices

A. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Engagement: Gamified progress tracking (e.g., Duolingo-style streaks)
- Representation:
 - Math equations with both symbolic and verbal explanations
 - Historical timelines with visual/textual/audio narration (CAST, n.d.)

B. Cognitive Science Applications

- Chunking: 5-9 information items per screen (Miller's Law)
- Error prevention (Le Cunff et al., 2024):
 - - [Good] "Your answer was 80% correct. Review step 3?"
 - - [Poor] "Wrong. Try again."

C. Assistive Technology Integration

- Speech-to-text: Dragon NaturallySpeaking
- Reading support:
 - Immersive Reader (Microsoft)

- BeeLine Reader color gradients

4. Lasallian Assessment Metrics

Qualitative

- Student testimonials on dignity preservation
- Faculty reports on inclusive teaching growth

Quantitative

Accessibility Scorecard:

- [] 100% captioned media
- 1. [] 90%+ keyboard navigability
- 2. [] <72hr accommodation response time

LASALLIAN PEDAGOGY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE DESIGN

These historical parallels inform the institutional actions outlined in Table 4.

Table 5
Lasallian-Inspired Design Criteria for Neurodivergent Accessibility

18th-Century Practice	Digital Equivalent	UDL Principle
Oral recitation for illiterate students	Text-to-speech tools	Multiple Means of Representation
Tactile alphabet charts	Interactive 3D models	Multiple Means of Engagement
Peer mentoring circles	Collaborative annotation tools	Multiple Means of Expression

- Social Justice Alignment
 - De La Salle's adaptation to students' needs mirrors today's imperative to co-design with neurodivergent learners - both enact the 'preferential option for the vulnerable.'

This alignment justifies the policy recommendations in our conclusion.

PRACTICAL UX STRATEGIES FOR NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS

Text Customization for Dyslexia

Proven Adjustments:

1. Font Typ
 - a. Use: OpenDyslexic, Arial, or Verdana
 - b. Avoid: Times New Roman, cursive fonts
 - c. Why? Increases reading speed by 19% (Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017).
2. Formatting
 - a. Line spacing: 1.5x
 - b. Paragraph width: 60-80 characters
 - c. Example in CSS:

```
body {  
  font-family: "OpenDyslexic", sans-serif; line-height: 1.5;  
  max-width: 70ch;  
}
```

ADHD-FRIENDLY INTERFACE TWEAKS

Attention Anchors:

1. Progress Trackers
 - a. Show: [==== 60% =====] Next: Quiz (8 min)
 - b. Result: 34% fewer abandoned tasks (Le Cunff et al., 2024)
2. Focus Mode
 - a. Toggle to hide: Sidebars/ads/notifications

- b. Code Snippet in javascript:

```
document.getElementById("focus-mode").addEventListener("click",  
( ) => document.body.classList.toggle("focus-mode"));
```

Time Management Scaffolding

For learners with executive function challenges, integrate:

- Visual timers displaying "Discussion: 12 min remaining"
- Auto-save prompts every 3 minutes ("Draft saved at 3:15 PM")
- Task segmentation: Break assignments into micro-steps:
 - 1. Read prompt (2 min)
 - 2. Draft outline (5 min)
 - 3. Record response (7 min)

Implementation cost: <\$100 using existing LMS plugins (Moodle, 2024)

AUTISM SPECTRUM ADAPTATIONS

Predictability Tools:

1. Consistent Navigation

- a. Keep menus in identical locations
- b. Use uniform button styles (e.g., all blue rounded rectangles)

2. Sensory Controls

- a. Auto-play media: OFF by default
- b. Animation toggle with HTML:

```
<label><input type="checkbox" id="reduce-motion"> Reduce  
animations</label>
```

Global Low-Tech Solutions

For Low-Bandwidth Areas:

1. Text-Only Fallback

- a. `<noscript><link rel="stylesheet" href="text-only.css">`

2. SMS Integration

- a. Nigeria case: Quiz questions via SMS (UNICEF, 2023)

Table 6
Recommended implementations

Implementations			
Strategy	Time to implement	Cost	Tools Needed
Dyslexia fonts	<1 hour	Free	CSS update
Focus Mode	2-4 hours	Free	JavaScript
SMS quizzes	1 week	\$500 per year	Twilio API

For Educators:

- Use the free OpenDyslexic font (CSS snippet provided in Table 6).
- Enable "pause-and-reflect" prompts in video content (UNICEF, 2024).

For Developers:

- Prioritize keyboard navigation (WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion 2.1.1).

Lasallian Alignment

These strategies operationalize:

Respect for human dignity (Customizable interfaces)

- Preferential option for the marginalized (Low-tech inclusivity)

INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Roadmap Step-by-Step Adoption for Schools

- Phase 1: Awareness (Weeks 1-4)
 - Conduct faculty workshops using CAST's UDL Implementation Rubric
 - Example: Loyola University's "Accessibility Fridays" reduced resistance by 42%
- Phase 2: Pilot Testing (Months 2-4)
 - Select 3 high-enrollment courses for redesign
 - Neurodivergent Student Panel:
 - Compensate participants (\$15/hour)
 - Focus groups after each module
- Phase 3: Full Rollout (Months 5-12)
 - Scale successful adaptations using WCAG-EM evaluation methodology
 - Budget Template:

Item	Cost
Staff Training	\$2500
Software Licenses	\$1200 per year

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synthesis of Key Findings

This paper has demonstrated that accessible UX design in virtual exchange programs is both a technical necessity and a moral imperative. Neurodivergent learners—whether dyslexic students struggling with text-heavy interfaces or ADHD participants overwhelmed by cluttered layouts—face systemic barriers that undermine their participation (Le Cunff et al., 2024; Rello & Baeza-Yates, 2017). Globally, these challenges are compounded by linguistic diversity and infrastructural inequities, as seen in UNESCO's multilingual initiatives, where adaptive design boosted engagement

by 45% (WHO, 2023). Crucially, solutions like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and cognitive load reduction strategies not only benefit neurodivergent users but enhance usability for all learners, aligning with Lasallian values of "preferential care for the vulnerable" (De La Salle Institute, 2017).

2. Actionable Recommendations

For Educators & Institutions:

- Adopt a "Design Justice" Framework: Partner with neurodivergent students to co-create platforms (e.g., paid UX testing fellowships).
- Prioritize Low-Cost, High-Impact Adjustments:
- Implement text-to-speech tools (27% dropout reduction; Garey, 2024).
- Offer content in ≥ 2 formats (e.g., video + transcript; CAST, n.d.).

For Developers:

- Embed Global Scalability: Ensure interfaces support right-to-left languages and low-bandwidth modes (W3C, 2024).
- Leverage AI Thoughtfully: Use generative AI for real-time captioning but avoid over-reliance on automated accessibility checks.

Policy & Assessment:

- Mandate WCAG 2.1 AA Compliance: Tie funding to accessibility audits.
- Track Neurodivergent Outcomes Separately: Disaggregate data to measure progress (Lasallian Benchmark 5.2, 2015).

3. Lasallian Call to Action

Brother John Johnston's admonition that education must "counter exclusion" (1994) demands proactive measures:

- Curricular Reform: Train faculty in UDL principles (e.g., 3-option assignment submissions).

- Technological Repentance: Retrofit legacy systems through student-led "accessibility hackathons."
- Moral Accountability: Publish annual inclusion metrics alongside traditional academic outcomes.

4. Future Research Directions

- Cross-Cultural Studies: Investigate how dyslexia supports (e.g., phonetic annotations) function in logographic vs. alphabetic languages.
- Longitudinal UX Impact: Track neurodivergent learners' performance over 5+ years in UDL-aligned programs.
- Cost-Benefit Analyses: Quantify ROI of inclusive design (e.g., reduced dropout rates vs. implementation costs).

5. Urgent Call for Systemic Change

A. institutional Accountability Audit

1. Mandatory Accessibility Audits

- Require annual third-party evaluations using:
 - WCAG-EM (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG-EM/>)
 - CAST (<https://www.cast.org/>)

2. Neurodivergent Leadership Roles

- Case Study: University of California's Design Justice Fellows Program
 - Pays neurodivergent students \$25/hour to review EdTech
 - Reduced redesign costs by 38% (UC Berkeley, 2023)

B. Policy Recommendations

Level	Action	Example
National	Tie federal funding to accessibility compliance	ADA Title III updates
University	Include accessibility in tenure criteria	UDL teaching portfolios
Faculty	Adopt accessibility syllabi statements	Temple University template

C. Lasallian Imperatives

- Quotable:

"An inaccessible education is an unjust education."

Brother Ernest Miller, Lasallian Accessibility Guidelines (2022)

- Actionable Steps:

- Establish Lasallian Accessibility Consortia for resource sharing
- Prioritize legacy system retrofits in underfunded schools

Closing Statement

Virtual exchange programs promise borderless collaboration, but only intentional design can make this promise a reality for neurodivergent learners. By centering their experiences – from Kansas to Kuala Lumpur – we honor the Lasallian commitment to social justice while building pedagogically robust, equitable digital spaces. As the UNESCO case study proves, inclusivity is not a constraint but a catalyst for innovation.

REFERENCES

- (n.d.). Understood - For learning and thinking differences. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.understood.org/>
- (n.d.). The UDL Guidelines. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/> (n.d.).
- Accessibility in UX Design: Guidelines and Key Principles.* (2022, May 25). Ramotion. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.ramotion.com/blog/accessibility-in-ux-design/#section-accessibility-ux-design-principles>
- Brazil Dyslexia Resources.* (n.d.). Dynaread. Retrieved April 15, 2025, from <https://www.dynaread.com/Brazil-dyslexia-tests-programs-groups>
- Brown, S. E. (1999). *The Curb Ramps of Kalamazoo: Discovering Our Unrecorded History.*
- Independent Living Institute. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.independentliving.org/docs3/brown99a.html>
- Cheatsheets.* (n.d.). NCDAE. Retrieved April 15, 2025, from <https://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/>
- Disability.* (2023, March 7). World Health Organization (WHO). Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>
- Education and Technology Overview.* (n.d.). World Bank. Retrieved April 8, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/edutech>
- Garey, J. (2024, August 7). *How Schools Can Support Neurodiverse Students.* Child Mind Institute. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://childmind.org/article/how-schools-can-support-neurodiverse-students/>
- Kukulj, L. (n.d.). *Accessibility Foundations.* Uxcel. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://app.uxcel.com/courses/design-accessibility>
- Lafuente, E. (2023, March 24). *Behat.* Moodle Developer Resources. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://moodledev.io/general/development/tools/behat#quick-view-of-the-whole-process>
- The Lasallian school: Characteristics and benchmarks.* (2015). Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from lasalle.org/resources

Le Cunff, A.-L., Giampietro, V., & Dommett, E. (2024, April 16). *Neurodiversity and cognitive load in online learning: A focus group study* (C. Brogna, Ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0301932>

Neurodivergent: What It Is, Symptoms & Types. (n.d.). Cleveland Clinic. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent>

Rello, L., & Baeza-Yates, R. (2015, November 20). How to present more readable text for people with dyslexia. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 16, 29-49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10209-015-0438-8>

Rello, L., & Baeza-Yates, R. (2017). How to present more readable text for people with dyslexia. *Universal Access in the Information*, 16(1), 29-49. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10209-015-0438-8>

The rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. (2017). De La Salle Institute. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.lasalle.org>

Talbert, R. (2018, February 6). *How do students with learning disabilities experience online and blended courses?* Robert Talbert. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://rtalbert.org/adhdld-online-blended/>

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. (2024, December 12). W3C. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

What is neurodiversity? / CUH. (n.d.). Cambridge University Hospitals. Retrieved March 7, 2025, from <https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/our-people/neurodiversity-at-cuh/what-is-neurodiversity/>

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION: REFLECTIONS ON COLLABORATIVE ONLINE LEARNING (COIL) AT LA SALLE UNIVERSITY BRAZIL

José Alberto Antunes de Miranda¹⁴

Universidade La Salle, Canoas, RS, Brasil

Hildegard Susana Jung¹⁵

Universidade La Salle, Canoas, RS, Brasil

Paulo Fossatti¹⁶

Universidade La Salle, Canoas, RS, Brasil

Abstract

We live in an era of disconnection, fracture, and networks. The struggle between connection and disconnection seems to define our times. In this context, education is the driving force behind all advances in society, which is why it cannot be refractory to the movements of the global community. With the acceleration of the globalization process and its impact on higher education, internationalization has become more frequent and also more complex. Factors such as the massification of higher education, the increase in information shared via the Internet, as well as the movement of students and professionals between countries make it essential to improve education at an international level. Based on this context, the objective of this qualitative work and exploratory case study is to analyze the impact of international collaboration and cooperation, based on the Collaborative Online Learning (COIL) experience, on the pedagogical practices of higher education at La Salle University Brazil. The sources of data collection were a questionnaire sent to students participating in COIL, as well as the field diary of the researcher-authors, who were directly involved in the Program. The data were analyzed using content analysis. The results point to the differentiation between collaboration and cooperation; the impact of new technologies on cooperation and collaboration in higher education; and COIL as a pedagogical instrument for learning and social inclusion. It is concluded that COIL practices, as a pedagogical strategy in higher education, help to further promote the implementation of international collaboration and cooperation by encouraging the development of skills and competencies developed within the scope of the internationalization of higher education, such as global and intercultural awareness. On the other hand, it presents itself as an inclusive way of providing meaningful internationalization experiences for students in situations of economic vulnerability, ratifying Lasallian values and principles, such as concern for the poor and social justice, an inclusive and respectful community, as well as quality education within the reach of all.

Keywords: Cooperation; Collaboration; Internationalization; Higher Education; La Salle University Brazil.

¹⁴ Universidade La Salle, Brasil. PhD in International Strategic Studies. He is currently an Advisor for Interinstitutional and International Affairs, Deputy Coordinator of the Postgraduate Program in Law and a member of the faculty of the International Relations Course at La Salle University Brazil. E-mail: jose.miranda@unilasalle.edu.br.

¹⁵ CNPq Productivity Researcher. PhD in Education, Post-Doctorate in Economic Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires. Coordinator and professor of the Postgraduate Program in Education at La Salle University Brazil.

¹⁶ CNPq Productivity Researcher and National Education Advisor of the Ministry of Education. PhD in Education, Post-Doctorate in Educational Sciences and associate researcher at the University of Algarve. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Education at La Salle University Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

As a whole, universities worldwide have responded positively and enthusiastically to the opportunities brought by globalization and technology. This reaction is driven by the desire to ensure additional sources of income, the increase in academic excellence and competitiveness, and also by the concrete desire to promote concern for the culture of international cooperation among professionals, thereby increasing the quality of students, teaching and research.

With the acceleration of globalization and its impact on Brazilian higher education, the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has become more common and more complex. The massification of higher education, the increase in information shared on the internet, international mobility of students and professionals and the arrival of foreigners at Brazilian HEIs make it essential to improve international education.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the impact of international collaboration and cooperation, based on the use of Collaborative onLine Learning (COIL), in higher education pedagogical practices. The methodology was qualitative and bibliographic, following Gil (2008) and Bardin's guidelines (2016). Thus, the research sources included books and articles about this topic. The analysis of the findings was carried out based on the Content Analysis Technique (BARDIN, 2016, p. 96), which includes three main steps: "[...] (a) pre-analysis; (b) exploration of the material; and (c) data processing, inference and interpretation". The first, also known as fluctuating reading, is the one in which the selection of the material takes place. The second step consists of a deeper reading, from which one goes to the third, when the categorization of the findings occurs and, in the light of the theory, the authors' inferences and the final writing of the text emerge.

In the first section, we explore the distinction between international collaboration and cooperation for the development of knowledge, and we intend to point out that both aim to develop the person, which brings the simultaneous need to promote education and training in a system of lifelong learning. This aims to offer all citizens easiness to learn so they adapt to the latest knowledge and demands for new skills. In the second part of this paper, we show the impact of technology on higher education and how it has contributed to international collaboration and cooperation in higher education. The new technologies broaden the intentions and experiences that allow students in

different places worldwide to expand this type of experience in their own study location. In the third part, we analyze COIL as a pedagogical instrument in higher education and its implementation in collaboration practices and international cooperation.

Higher education, internationalization, international collaboration and cooperation: a process that requires attention

Universities are integrative and interdisciplinary places that inherently discuss relations and the social environment. Their internationalization process also goes far beyond the activities commonly known as international exchange and research. It is intrinsic to the university to contribute to international cooperation through integrative social actions within the scope of assimilation of the other.

Internationalization corresponds to the recognition of the positive and negative impact of globalization in education, the emergence of the internet, the need to combine efforts and create partnerships for sustainability and institutional development. It also responds to the increasing demand for study abroad and the prominent need to collaborate and learn with different higher education institutions worldwide.

On the other hand, globalization offers opportunities to enrich the university experience. Internationalization can be seen as a way to help students enter the job market by raising international awareness and it can encourage the university to become more aware of global problems, contributing to the solution of local problems.

The training of higher education students requires awareness that this process of globalization has produced a multiethnic and cross-cultural world. It believes that due to this process, the world increasingly mixes cultures, ways of thinking and heterogeneity. Conversely, we still find that meeting with the other remains something difficult in a world that struggles between the desire to open up to new perspectives and to protect oneself, in a contradiction, where peoples struggle to open their borders, at the same time they wish to immutably preserve what is theirs.

The contradiction continues at this moment of the globalizing process where populist speeches, nationalism, physical symbolic violence extend to social networks, contradicting scientific

and philosophical advances that claim that there are no superior or inferior races or cultures. It is a challenge for the new generations to become aware of an important historical moment to consider alterity as one of the main challenges not only of the present, but of the immediate future (Moron, 2018).

In the last 20 years, universities have highly expanded international exchanges, thereby promoting a new boost to inter-university international cooperation aiming mainly to accompany the great transformations that resulted from internationalization and globalization processes. These initiatives gave rise to the development of a new culture of enhancing international, intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches, thereby allowing the promotion and support of interaction, cooperation and international exchange.

It is important to clarify that collaboration and cooperation are different concepts, although both are important and mean "working together". Collaboration is inequitable and asymmetric, which implies the existence of a main actor, responsible for the project/program and owner of the most interesting results from the viewpoint of strategic, industrial, commercial and university application, while the other members are only supporting actors. In general, this type of joint work is limited to technical-scientific assistance, to training human resources for research, to the use of equipment and laboratories of the main actor in joint experiments of greater interest of the "owners of the study"; to donating used equipment to less developed countries and to the temporary and supervised installation in privileged locations on the participant's country for observation/data collection of the main actor. (Vonortas, 2002)

International university cooperation is the best way or means to achieve common goals in a globalized world. International cooperation opens doors of opportunity for developing countries, universities and their actors. However, cooperation urges the continuation of actions, as all partners try to maximize their interests. Therefore, reaching an agreement and maintaining it until the end of the common project/program is a task that requires attention. The benefits of cooperation are cost sharing, access to expertise, technology and facilities. Cooperation also serves as a political reinforcement for the project/program; it creates or strengthens good relations, exerts influence on partners and works as demonstration of leadership effect.

Collaboration should try to evolve towards a more equitable partnership, giving priority to dialogue, negotiation, joint decision-making and the definition of projects in common agreement. The great difference between the two ways of working together makes the best qualities in each partner available for cooperation, and in a complementary way, but always ensuring the independence of each member. Coordination replaced control, and the exercise of trust became the basic principle in favor of partnership. The results of cooperation belong to the partners and should be proportional to the effort of each, because there is trust between the parties.

Successful collaboration can evolve into cooperation. An essential aspect in cooperation is that it adds functions and acts cross-sectionally, thus it is not limited to sectoral segmentation. It also brings together tacit knowledge, "know-how" and own funds. Each partner is co-responsible for the success of the venture. This procedure facilitates organizational learning. The partnership is a society in which the rules are known, accepted and respected by its members. Multidisciplinary and multisectoral knowledge enriches alliances, making them attractive in terms of competitiveness. (Vonortas, 2002)

We understand that cooperation means joint decision, from planning to execution and final evaluation, as well as route correction for middle and long-term projects. The chances of success of the partnership increase with efforts to absorb previous knowledge from each partner and the ones acquired in the partnership. Successful partnerships prompt the implementation of other partnerships, more daring, which require more knowledge, the production of more elaborate work; more equitable sharing in terms of funding by each part, and, sometimes, assuring market shares which international partnerships promote and facilitate.

In terms of university cooperation, it is possible to add forms that affect the global context such as the cooperation for democratization and for the development and specific forms of cooperation like scientific, cultural, relevance and solidarity. As a project for the 21st century, all these principles for symmetrical cooperation were expressed at the World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 1998. The resolutions concerning the internationalization of higher education highlight the principles of international cooperation based on solidarity, recognition and mutual support. The resolutions promote an internationalization based on cultural dialogue and a

scientific and technological cooperation, respecting the idiosyncrasies and cultural identity of each people. (Gazzola, 2006)

According to the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU), more than 700 professors were trained between March and October 2020 to use COIL teaching method. In addition, the Association highlights that it has already built 352 partnerships, which impacts potentially 14,000 students. So far, this has been the largest internationalization ongoing project in higher education, at zero cost to institutions, becoming a differentiator for La Salle Network of higher education by means of the experience of internationalization at home.

It is important to clarify that in the context of informal collaboration, the basic unit of cooperation in science and technology is the individual researcher. He usually represents the research community, the main developer of the international collaboration activities. Scientific communities are the most experienced actors with international collaborations and have worked together for centuries. Society sees researchers as facilitators who open dialogue channels with other actors.

University students have a substantial role in both the execution of international collaboration and its formulation, implementation and evaluation. The scientific community is the driving force behind international research projects and programs, the main vehicle of communication and integration with scientific communities from other countries and it is also a relevant actor in the political scene alongside decision makers.

In this context, one of the main economic and social trends is the emergence of a knowledge-based society, which brings the concomitant need to develop education and training within a system of lifelong learning to offer all citizens ease of learning to adapt to the latest knowledge and demands for new skills.

For Diana Faraon, Carolina Spinola, Luciane Stallivieri and Joaquin Barros, the analysis of the transformations through which the contemporary university undergoes is linked to the major concept changes, such as those of knowledge and culture. It is possible to focus on the inter-university cooperation process as a particularly new element in the construction of these renewed concepts. The international cooperation between universities mainly deals with the transfer and use

of knowledge as a method capable of creating new knowledge. It is a dynamic process that significantly changes the University's potential. (Faron, Spinola, Stallivieri, Barros, 2019)

According to the authors, the university is the place where knowledge is usually produced, to be later socialized. Currently, there is a fast and significant growth of higher education worldwide, contributing to the improvement of educational, economic, social and human level. However, the increase in the number of students and the increase in the demands and expectations regarding higher education do not correspond to the necessary increase in resources allocated to properly develop their capacities.

The current moment challenges professionals to respond to the demands of their location, their territory, at the same time as they need to keep the eyes open to global issues. They need to understand the effects that external events cause in their reality, to realize which skills and competencies will be necessary to work in this market that is changing all the time. One of the tools that enhance the prominence of professionals is education and it is important to highlight the role of higher education institutions in training global citizens and better qualified professionals, who are more qualified to positively interfere in the fate of their regions, which highlights their importance as a driving force for the growth and development of nations (Faron, Spinola, Stallivieri, Barros, 2019). As a result, it is possible to see that international collaboration and cooperation in higher education broaden knowledge sharing and integrate the academic community throughout the globe. Those processes have to be planned to offer more solidarity and sharing.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

With so many tools to improve education, technology will be a highlight in the 21st century as it can provide skills and competencies to university professors and students by bringing them closer to the world. Since the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW), the impact of technology on education has significantly increased social participation in networks and has brought changes to education as a whole. Now, the daily routine of most higher education students is connected to technology in general and to the internet in particular. Distance learning, hybrid approaches that blend face-to-face

teaching with distance learning, open courses being offered to a broad audience ('massive online open courses' or MOOCs) and the use of mobile devices with digital versions of teaching materials have changed the way we navigate in our experience/academic trajectory. (Porcino, Finardi, 2016).

MOOCs, hybrid teaching approaches such as the flipped classroom and university partnerships, by means of international collaborative online learning, have created new teaching and learning experiences. Technology has increased access to information and education, despite the limitations on access to technology, a recurring problem in a country with inequalities such as Brazil, and also the opportunities for virtual international mobility programs, which are provided at a lower cost. (Finardi, 2015)

In this sense, globalization. defined as "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas [...] across borders, affects each country in a different way due to the individual history of each nation, traditions, culture and priorities" (Knight; De Wit, 1997, p. 6). According to Jane Knight, globalization focuses on the global flow of ideas, resources, people, economy, values, culture, knowledge, goods, services and technology (KNIGHT, 2017). In the context of higher education, Philip Altbach and Jane Knight state that globalization is the result "[...] of the economic, political and social forces that drive higher education in the 21st century towards greater international involvement [...]". (Altbach, Knight, 2007, p. 290)

It is worth pointing out that few students in the world have the opportunity for international academic mobility, which reflects the differences in economic power of many nations and populations. Therefore, there have been proposals for the development of several activities within the concept called 'Internationalization at Home'. The focus of the internationalization of the academic community has now expanded to the institutions of origin and not to the institutions of destination. As a result, universities expand the possibility of meeting the demands of those who have no chance to witness a physical academic mobility.

Consequently, as universities recognize that physical mobility is not an academic reality for everyone, they offer an inclusive and comprehensive definition of Internationalization at Home as something that provides the international and intercultural dimension in the formal and informal

curriculum for all students in the home learning environment of universities. This experience provides international perspectives in local educational environments. (Knight, 2017)

For Robert O'Dowd, the emergence of several telecollaboration actions in different academic areas, using different terminologies, has positive and negative consequences. The author states that the basic methodology of online collaborative learning, pedagogically structured between groups of learners in different cultural contexts or geographical locations, has been applied in a multitude of practices and has proven to be adaptable to different pedagogical objectives and learning contexts (O'Dowd, 2018).

The acronym COIL has been used to describe virtual international exchanges between two universities located in different countries. In this study, we adopted the acronym "COIL" to refer to any activity and/or bilateral course, carried out between two universities located in different countries, collaboratively and technology-mediated, clearly highlighting the virtual and intercultural aspects of collaboration activity between higher education institutions.

The term COIL does not refer to one type of technology (Rubin, Guth, 2015; Ceo- Difrancesco, Bender-Slack, 2016), but to a teaching-learning proposal developed by the State University of New York (SUNY) as a possibility of communication and collaboration with international partners through the use of technology and the internet to develop intercultural awareness in shared multicultural learning environments (Rubin, Guth, 2015).

Digital technologies amplify the intentions and experiences that allow geographically separated students to expand this type of experience in their own study locations. Experiences with technology provide online collaboration and cooperation and provide the student with opportunities to develop several skills. The internet is part of almost everyone's daily lives. Access to knowledge has expanded with these experiences. Virtual learning spaces are available through several digital technologies. (Kampff, 2019)

The insertion of the individual in different social circles through digital technology provides a pluralization of the person, once there is the connection with multiple identifications. Thus, universes with previously different and separate social roles, such as family, work and school, are now

interconnected, composing the heterogeneity that permeates the world of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001).

The development of digital technologies in recent decades has expanded human ability to communicate and connect. The currently installed infrastructure consists of enormous complexity, as a result of the rapid technological expansion, although at the expense of access which is not always well distributed.

COIL AS A PEDAGOGICAL INSTRUMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLABORATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Higher Education pedagogical practice goes through a moment of reinvention, either by the need to present an attractive curriculum, focused on practice and overcoming content-based classes, or by the urgency of incorporating technology in teaching practice (Christensen; Horn; Johnson, 2012). In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic demanded the consequent social isolation and many weaknesses came to light, especially regarding handling new technologies and training for the virtual and digital world.

In this context, academic mobility, international collaboration and cooperation and the internationalization of Higher Education itself also had to adapt to the new online modality. With this reality, COIL program has emerged as a pedagogical tool for the implementation of international collaboration and cooperation. Therefore, it is a form of international collaborative practice, in which two or more professors from different countries, together with their groups, work on a joint project, related to their disciplines, which engages students through digital media towards a learning outcome. The program can last four weeks to one semester. (Morón, 2018).

Regarding the challenges to develop the COIL program, literature has shown (Rubin, Guth, 2015; Marcillo-Gómez, Desilus, 2016; Kayumova, Sadykova, 2016; Morón, 2018), four main axes, namely a) the role of the professor as a mediator in international collaboration and cooperation; b) encouraging the student to collaborate with other people; c) the issue of managing a group within the framework of collaboration and cooperation; d) intercultural competence which is necessary in international collaboration.

The first axis refers to the teaching practice in Higher Education, which ends up being somewhat complex for several reasons, among which we can mention, mainly, the content-based culture inherited from the university model that began in Brazil with the arrival of the Royal family in 1808 (Masetto, 2015). Thus, the university professor who has traditionally had knowledge related only to his area of expertise, also needs to develop pedagogical knowledge. The new scenario no longer admits a bulimic professor (Acaso, 2018). Professors must act as mediators between the student and the content, by using strategies that transcend transmission and reproduction, moving towards construction, authorship and production. Therefore, digital training and the use of active methodologies are fundamental (Morán, 2007).

The second axis concerns the development of relational skills among students. According to Christensen, Horn and Johnson (2012), the learning system, which is student-centered, and not teacher-centered, demands the mobilization of disruptive skills, that is, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and emotions that, when triggered for the resolution of a problem related to real life, allow efficiency in its achievement. Therefore, for the success of a COIL program, it is essential to overcome barriers such as communication, since students and professors speak different languages, are in different time zones and also need to overcome shyness when using digital technologies.

The third axis, in turn, concerns the visible and invisible pedagogies that professors use to lead groups. Visible pedagogies relate to mediation and the rupture of crystallized content-based practices at university. Invisible pedagogies, in turn, are placed by Acaso (2018) in the arms of the teaching episteme, that is, they are evident not only from what the teacher says, but also from what the teacher does not say, since they are linked to their beliefs and (pre-)concepts, to their ability to listen, understand, delegate, and accept what is different. More than that, it is about cooperating and collaborating with the diversity that is present in the classroom.

The fourth axis relates to the intercultural issue and the openness, both the professor's and the student's, to collaborate and cooperate with a new culture, with no judgements or preconceived ideas. It is about the awareness that we are citizens of the world, as they know the impact of this attitude on the interconnection between different regions in terms of social, economic, political and professional levels. They are people who take the responsibility to be true members of humanity and

of the wealth that can comprise the diversity of cultures offered by the globalized world (MORÓN, 2018).

Empirical data around the world (Rubin, Guth, 2015; Marcillo-Gómez, Desilus, 2016; Kayumova, Sadykova, 2016; Morón, 2018) regarding the COIL project have shown the following benefits: valuing others, a better understanding of their own identity; the development of global awareness, the production of an authentic intercultural dialogue, the strengthening of adaptive capacity, the construction of intercultural bonds and cultural humility, which combines respect for other people's culture, with self-awareness of their own culture, their weaknesses and limitations.

On the other hand, the difficulties found are mainly related to the communication process and the clash of very different cultures (Kayumova, Sadykova, 2016) and the students' persistence (or lack thereof) in carrying out and finishing tasks, especially in the context of individualism versus collectivism (MORÓN, 2018). In that regard, the teacher's ability to lead the group management within the scope of collaboration and cooperation becomes fundamental to overcome the challenges that may arise throughout the project. That is what Bates (2017, p. 332) calls 'mobilizing for learning': through his role as a mediator, the teacher looks for "strategies for students to move gradually from concrete learning, based on personal experience, to abstract and reflective learning, which can then be applied to new contexts and situations".

Therefore, as a pedagogical strategy to conduct COIL, mediation can be understood as the interaction between humans, trying to understand themselves as part of the universe, in a dialectic that encourages the pursuit of learning. Its main objective is to lead the student to autonomy, as Zabala explains (1998, p.163): "[...] the students' personal growth implies that their ultimate goal is to be autonomous". As a consequence, we have personal growth as an ingredient that, providing autonomy, also corroborates with international collaboration and cooperation, because as Jung (2018, p. 137) explains, autonomy consists in a "form of human growth, development of people and group's strengths, which lead to social sustainability, in a process of being and acting in the world in harmony with the universe".

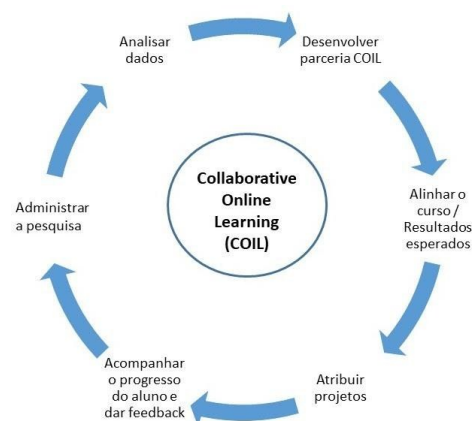
As points to be overcome to be successful when carrying out a COIL project, we can especially mention the following: planning, communication and time. Planning, which must address all aspects,

has to be developed together with professors from both countries, who cannot fail to think about the specificities of their group on the one hand, without losing sight of the whole, in a systemic perception about what will generate meaning for all students involved (Fossatti, 2013).

Communication is entangled by both linguistic and cultural aspects. Not all students who participate in the COIL program will necessarily be bilingual which can become an obstacle to be overcome. On the other hand, in different cultures it is crucial to be careful with different ways of expressing oneself and with habits, which can be very different. As recommended by Morón (2018), a necessary competence is empathy, and trying to understand other people's contexts, considering other people's knowledge.

Finally, the period to carry out the COIL Project cannot be too short, so as to avoid that the planned activities are overrun, or too long, to prevent the activities from becoming boring and tiring. Morón (2018) explains that the proposed activities should be challenging, but simple, having a final product in mind, which will help create good memories, such as a joint seminar, the production of some digital or physical material, etc.

SUNY University, already cited as the cradle of the COIL Program, launched in 2014 a network of global partners, which consists of universities around the world with which it collaborates, both in teacher training to participate in COIL and in the development of new projects with qualified professors. Currently, this network has 39 partner universities from all continents. According to Appiah-Kubi and Annan (2020), COIL methodology involves some steps that must be strictly followed, as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Appiah-Kubi and Annan (2020, p. 116).

Universities promote practical and concrete results in order to intensify internationalization practices and intercultural exchange among them. Nowadays, institutions encourage ways to facilitate the promotion of international cooperation and collaboration, such as the promotion of academic mobility of students and professors with scholarships, encouraging joint research and promoting study trips to other institutions, offering joint strategic communication and, more recently, online collaboration through collaborative teaching methods such as COIL.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The call for higher education internationalization corresponds to motivations that are often not explicit and have gradually changed, reflecting the international competitive environment of knowledge society and the role of higher education in the knowledge industry. Internationalization is part of the answer and consists of different strategies, policies and activities developed by governments and institutions such as universities.

Both international collaboration and cooperation have become essential in the dynamics of universities with the advance of globalization. International collaborative practices bring much to universities by adding new experiences, which contributes to enhance innovation and increase problem solving as actors share experiences and exchanges.

New technologies facilitate international collaborative exchanges. Working with partners in other international institutions using technology presents a significant challenge to the traditional role of students and institutions. By bringing partners together with emerging technology, most of the work takes place virtually and is based on external structures and cultures. Technology, as a part of the strength of collaborative learning, lies in filling the gap between student and professor. The collaborative process based on the use of technological tools allows students to work with their international partners often in unexpected ways. Therefore, genuinely innovative ways of working together are brought to light by the actors as active participants in the relationship and in the process.

As a pedagogical and social inclusion tool in higher education, COIL practices help to further promote the effectiveness of collaboration and international cooperation. The skills within the set of competencies developed by intercultural pedagogical practice can be grouped into three dimensions:

a cognitive dimension, related to awareness and knowledge of a variety of cultural perspectives; an interpersonal dimension, related to the ability to translate them into effective performance in different contexts; and an intrapersonal dimension, related to an inclusive identity and *ethos*. These three dimensions are directly related to the three key dimensions sought by the curriculum design: knowing, understanding and acting and are integrated into the four axes of development of the COIL pedagogical proposal, bringing universities close together around the world.

REFERENCES

- Acaso, M. (2018). *Pedagogías invisibles: el espacio del aula como discurso*. Madrid: Los libros de la Catarata.
- Appiah, P.; Annan, E. (2020). *A Review of a Collaborative Online International Learning*. In: International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy, 4(1). Available on: <http://www.i.jep.org>.
- Bardin, L. (2016). *Análise de conteúdo*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Bates, T. (2017). *Educar na era digital: design, ensino e aprendizagem*. Translated by João Mattar. 1. ed. São Paulo: Artesanato Educacional.
- Baud, I. (2001). *North-South Partnerships in Development Research: An Institutions Approach*. Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences International Conference, Amsterdam, vol. 1, Dezembro.
- Ceo-Difrancesco, D.; Bender-Slack, D. (2016). *Collaborative Online International Learning: Students and professors making global connections*. In: MOELLER, A. J. (Ed.). (2016). *Fostering connections, empowering communities, celebrating the world*. Egg Harbor: Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, pp. 147-174.
- Christensen, C. M.; Horn, M. B.; Johnson, C. W. (2012). *Inovação na sala de aula: como a inovação disruptiva muda a forma de aprender*. Porto Alegre: Bookmann.
- Faraon, D. F.; Spínola, C.; Stallivieri, L.; Barros, M. F. A. (2019). *Contribuição das Instituições de Ensino Superior para Internacionalização da Educação*. Repositório UFSC, 2019. <https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/204074>
- Finardi, K. R. (2017). *Abordagens híbridas e inclusivas e formação de professores de línguas do e para o século XXI*. Atas de Pesquisa em Educação (FURB), 12(1), pp. 78-90.

- Fossatti, P. (2013). *Perfil docente e produção de sentido*. Canoas, RS: Editora Unilasalle.
- Gazzola, A. L.; Sandra, R. G. A. (2006). *Universidade: cooperação internacional e diversidade*. Belo Horizonte. Ed. EFMG.
- Gil, A. Carlos. (2008). *Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social*. 6. ed. São Paulo: Atlas.
- Held, D. McGrew, A. (2000). *Prós e Contras a Globalização*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Jung, H. S. (2018). *Educação básica e autonomia do educando: aproximações e distanciamentos entre Brasil e Chile*. 247f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação). Universidade La Salle, Canoas. <http://repositorio.unilasalle.edu.br/bitstream/11690/923/1/hsjung.pdf>.
- Kampff, A. J. C. (2019). *Interfaces da educação à distância na internacionalização em casa*. Guia para a internacionalização universitária.
- Kayumova, A. R.; Sadykova, G. V. (2016). *Online Collaborative Cross-cultural Learning: Students Perspectives*. Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict, 20, pp. 248, 2016.
- Knight, J. (2017). *Global: Five truths about internationalization*. In: MIHUT, G.; ALTBACH, P. G.; DE WIT, H. (Eds.). (2017). *Understanding higher education internationalization: Insights from key global publications*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 13-15.
- Knight, J. (1997). *Internationalisation of higher education: A conceptual framework*. In: KNIGHT, J.; DE WIT, H. (Eds.). (1997). *Internationalisation of higher education in Asia pacific countries*. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education, pp. 5-19.
- Marcillo-Gómez, M.; Desilus, B. (2016). *Collaborative online international learning experience in practice opportunities and challenges*. Journal of technology management & innovation, 11 (1), pp. 30-35. <https://bit.ly/3kffoGo>.
- Masetto, M. T. (2015). *Competência pedagógica do professor universitário*. São Paulo: Summus.
- Morán, J. M. (2007). *A educação que desejamos: novos desafios e como chegar lá*. Campinas: Papirus Editora. <https://goo.gl/HrfEB5>.
- Morón, O.P. (2018). *Análisis sobre la implementación del modelo de docência colaborativa basada en el modelo COIL en la Universidad La Salle*. Ciudad de México, DF: Editora de ULSA, 2018. <https://bit.ly/3ht9C1Q>.

Morosini, M. (2019). *Guia para a Internacionalização Universitária*. Porto Alegre. EdUPUCRS.

O'Dowd, R. (2018). *From telecollaboration to virtual exchange: state-of-the-art and the role of UNICollaboration in moving forward*. Journal of Virtual Exchange, v. 1, p. 1-23. <https://journal.unicollaboration.org/article/download/877/183>.

Porcino, M. C.; Finardi, K. R. (2016). *Construção de cidadania por meio do ensino de língua estrangeira e do letramento digital*. Uma Proposta de WebQuest. Antares: Letras e Humanidades, 8(15), pp. 144-166.

Rubin, J.; Guth, S. (2015). *Collaborative Online International Learning an Emerging Format for Internationalizing Curricula*. In: MOORE, A. S.; SIMON, S. (Eds.). (2015). Globally Networked Teaching in the Humanities: Theories and Practice. Nova York/Londres: Routledge, pp. 15-27.

Vonortas, N. S. (1998). *Cooperation in Research and Development*. Kluwer Academic Publishers. *Global Cooperation*. In Research, Research Policy, 27, pp. 611-626.

Wachter, B. (2003). *An introduction: Internationalization at Home in Context*. Journal of Studies in International Education, 7(1), pp. 41-51.

Zabala, A. (1998). *A prática educativa: Como ensinar*. Porto Alegre: Artmed.

DEVELOPING GLOBAL COMPETENCE AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN A BINATIONAL CLASS THROUGH THE COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING (COIL) PROGRAM¹⁷

Dennis Magbanua¹⁸

De La Salle University Philippines

Leonor Cremayer

Universidad La Salle, Mexico

Rogelio dela Cruz Jr.

De La Salle College of Saint Benilde, Philippines

Abstract

This study sought to determine the perceptions of seventeen pre-service teachers from two universities who participated in the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Program regarding the development of their collaborative learning skills or telecollaboration, skills in using online technology or digital literacy, skills in cross-cultural learning and global competence. The COIL Program is an in-country international short-term study program that harnesses the online environment for students to experience cross-cultural education. The phenomenon was looked into utilizing a combination of two lenses. One was through the lens of the COIL Program learning and teaching paradigm and through the lens of ASCD's Globally Competent Learning Continuum. A sequential mixed-method approach was adopted using an online questionnaire followed by a focus group discussion. Analysis of the mean was performed on collected data from the online questionnaire, while qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to extract themes. The study confirmed that the COIL Program is an effective structure for enhancing the global competence of PSTs, primarily because of the skills acquired through collaborative learning, online learning, and cross-cultural learning. It highlighted the best aspect of the COIL Program, which is the development of cross-cultural learning without the need for travel, as well as the fact that it is a viable alternative to international student exposure in the event of pandemic-like crises in the future.

Keywords: Collaborative online international learning, Internationalization through virtual exchange, Digital literacy, global competence, Pandemic

¹⁷ This article was originally published in DLSU Research Congress 2023; LLI Proceedings 2023. Manila, Philippines, July 5-7, 2023.

¹⁸ Corresponding Author: dennis.magbanua@dlsu.edu.ph.

INTRODUCTION

Internationalization has become a necessary response of higher educational institutions to globalization. Almost all institutions of higher education, public and private, are fast becoming global players, a trend that has been seen in a wide variety of other businesses (Naidoo, 2006). With the coming of the pandemic, all across the globe, higher education institutions were forced to switch from traditional classrooms to virtual classes almost overnight. The pandemic also abruptly halted student international mobility, which prompted universities to explore internationalization through virtual exchange. Nevertheless, the need for the internationalization of universities continues as the more robust the international character of a higher education institution, the more opportunities for students to develop their intercultural competency skills (Strotmann & Kunschak, 2022) or, interchangeably, their global competence (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019).

The COIL Program is an in-country international short-term study program that harnesses the online environment for students to experience cross-cultural education. It can also be described similarly as “internationalization at home”, a phenomenon Crowther et al. (2001) put forward in a position paper to the European Association for International Education. In general, the collaborative feature of COIL is based on the notion of equal participation by all professors involved in COIL, with each partner taking into account the viewpoint of the other (Gray et al., 2021). In this case, my co-author and I, attended an IALU-sponsored COIL Program training workshop to create an online collaborative program for our future students. The COIL Program encapsulates the four constitutive aspects of a proper virtual exchange, and these are: it is a joint effort between professors and students, it is an online engagement, it has potential for global reach, and it is incorporated into the educational process (de Wit, 2013).

The binational class was composed of six graduate school students from a Lasallian university in the Philippines enrolled in an Educational Technology course and 14 undergraduate students from a Lasallian university in Mexico enrolled in a Media for Educational Communication course. The students from Manila, Philippines joined the Zoom meeting at 8:00 PM in the Philippines, which was 7:00 AM on the same day in their counterparts in Mexico City. In summary, all the participants in the

COIL Program were Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs). These PSTs attended one-hour weekly classes for eight times from March 5, 2021, until May 25, 2021.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Did the Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) perceive that they have achieved the COIL Program objectives on the development of skills in:
 - a. collaborative learning or telecollaboration,
 - b. use of online technology or digital literacy c. and, cross-cultural learning brought about by a virtual exchange?
2. What was the perceived impact of the COIL Program on developing the skills necessary for global competence?
3. What were the commonly experienced difficulties by the participants during the COIL Program?
4. What structures or resources helped the participant in achieving the COIL Program objectives?

It is significant to note that no research has been conducted on any IALU's version of the implementation of the COIL Program. (O.P. Meza, personal communication, November 17, 2021). This study therefore represents a pioneering attempt to evaluate the Program's implementation among members of the IALU.

METHODOLOGY

Using the mixed-methods explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), we evaluated whether the PSTs have achieved the COIL Program objectives on the development of skills in collaborative learning or telecollaboration, use of online technology or digital literacy and cross-cultural learning brought about by a virtual exchange. Furthermore, we investigated the quality of global competence of the PSTs through the COIL Program. The research process collected and

analyzed data generated from a post-course survey questionnaire. This survey determined the participants' perceptions concerning their achievement of the COIL Program objectives and global competence skills. The initial results of the survey were used to guide the subsequent qualitative data collecting process in the form of focus group discussion (FGD). The FGD collected data to explain further and explore how participants perceived whether the COIL Program has helped them develop collaborative learning or telecollaboration skills, use of online technology and digital literacy skills, and cross-cultural learning increase their global competence. The interaction in the FGD was recorded, transcribed and analyzed to confirm earlier quantitative findings. Recurring themes and meanings were then extracted and interpreted from the two phases of data collection using a combination of two lens as seen in the following conceptual framework. The first lens was the lens

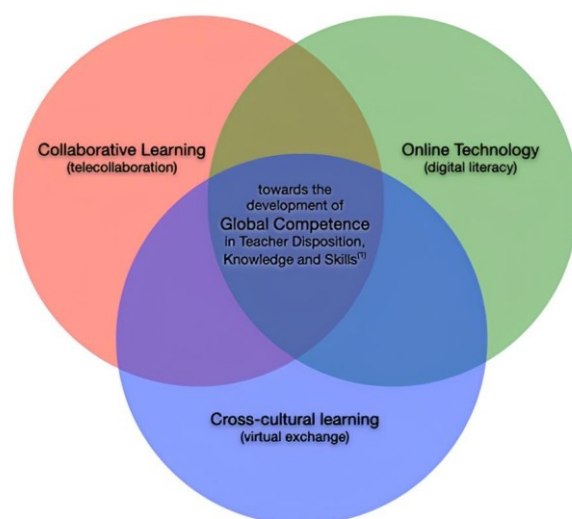


Fig. 1: The COIL Program as a Way of Developing Global Competence in Teacher Disposition, Knowledge and Skills

of the COIL Program learning and teaching paradigm and the second was through the lens of ASCD's Globally Competent Learning Continuum.

To measure the level of success of the COIL Program objectives in the areas of collaborative learning, digital literacy and cross-cultural learning, we utilized a significant part of the questionnaire developed by the WILLIAM team that is used to assess the COIL Program implementation in Israel (WILLIAM, 2022). This first part of the questionnaire contained five questions to determine demographics, 26 questions requiring responses using the 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) not

at all to (5) to a great extent or (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. This part of the questionnaire also has nine open-ended questions. To determine the effect of the COIL Program on the development of global competence among the students, this research utilized a significant part of ASCD's Globally Competent Learning Continuum (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019). Since the participants in this research are PSTs, most have not formally taught in a classroom as they were still in the process of being certified or licensed as a teacher. Therefore, in this particular treatment of the Globally Competent Learning Continuum, only parts of significant relevance to the participants was considered, namely: the two Teacher Dispositions, the four Teacher Knowledge, and one Teacher Skill (communicate in multiple languages). Based on the detailed descriptions of the Continuum, the remaining skills can only be best measured when these students are already teaching. In this second part of the questionnaire, there were seven 5-point rubric questions. Before implementing the data collection, we subjected the questionnaire to inter-rater reliability and face validity tests.

Data were collected from May 2022 to June 2022. The questionnaire was sent to the students using the web-based survey Google Forms, and the students were asked to complete the questionnaire once they had agreed to participate in the research. The data collected from the questionnaire were used to inform the qualitative questions to be asked in the FGD. There were two students from the Philippines and three from Mexico respectively, attended the one-hour FGD on June 14, 2022. The FGD was conducted online via Zoom by our third co-author, a researcher who was not part of the COIL Program implementation. The first phase of the FGD consisted of participants updating each other about themselves and engaging in light chat. In the next phase, the group was instructed to respond to a wide range of questions, such as "What helped you in collaborating with one another? What difficulties did you encounter in collaborating with one another? Elaborate on what technological aspects of online learning did you appreciate the most or you found troublesome?" The group was encouraged to speak freely about their experiences. A tool for captioning and transcribing (Microsoft Stream) was utilized to capture the conversations in the FGD. All of the 20 COIL Program students were invited to participate in the research. Seventeen students answered the online questionnaire and 5 students voluntarily joined the FGD.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the quantitative side, the demographics of the participants, the achievement of the COIL Program objectives on the students' skills development in collaborative learning or telecollaboration, use of online technology or digital literacy and cross-cultural learning brought about by a virtual exchange and the achievement of global competence were all represented by percentages or mean. Of the 17 students, four (24%) were from the Philippine university and the rest were from the Mexican university. Most of the students were females – only two (11%) out of 17 were males. Most students were aged between 16-25, with only two (11%) of them at 26 years old or beyond. Three students (18%) said it was their first time attending a collaborative online international course of this nature. One student (6%) has experienced a similar course once while two (11%) others said twice. Eleven (65%) students said they experienced a similar course at least three times. All four Philippine students (24%) were conversant in English, while five Mexican students (30%) claimed to be English proficient. The remaining eight (47%) Spanish students indicated that they did not speak English fluently.

The findings of this study show that the general perception of the participants is that they have increased their collaborative learning or telecollaboration skills through the COIL Program, as evidenced by the mean of 3.80 (to a large extent) in the areas of interdisciplinary skills, interdependence skills, problem-solving skills, leadership skills and self-confidence. The result shows that the participants tended to remain neutral (mean = 3.00) when asked if they were concerned about their ability to collaborate with students from another country before they joined this course.

Another set of findings indicates that the participants have increased their skills in using online technology and digital as evidenced by the mean of 3.88 (to a large extent) for the following areas: skills in using apps for online communication, skills in online research, skills in creating content or media, skills in presenting online, and skills in working virtually. The results also indicate that participants were unconcerned about their ability to use technology to collaborate with international students prior to taking this course (mean = 3.06).

Furthermore, another set of findings demonstrates the general perception of the participants that they have increased their skills in cross-cultural learning thru a virtual exchange as evidenced by the mean of 4.40 (to a large extent). The participants agreed (mean = 4.25) that the coursework in this COIL Program is aligned with the objectives of the original course that they enrolled in their university. They would also like to experience similar cross-national collaborations in the future (mean = 4.41)

Lastly, the general perception of the participants is that they have developed their global competence skills as evidenced by the mean of 3.66 (Proficient). As per the improvement of the global competence skills among the participants, they indicated that the COIL Program has helped them develop in them to the point of being proficient in the following teacher dispositions, knowledge and skills: (1) empathy and valuing multiple perspectives (mean = 4.00), (2) commitment to promoting equity worldwide (mean = 3.71), (3) understanding of global conditions and current events (mean = 3.53), (4) understanding of the ways that the world is interconnected (mean = 3.88), (5) experiential understanding of multiple cultures (mean = 3.65) and (6) understanding of intercultural communication (mean = 3.65). The participants felt that they were only on the level of progressing when communicating in multiple languages (mean = 3.18).

Several themes from the transcription, such as collaborative learning, online learning, cross-cultural competence, and global competencies, were used to categorize the participants' replies. These themes were also derived from the original questionnaire categories of questions.

The FGD participants appreciated social media and related services such as chats and Facebook Messenger; thus, they created Groups on Facebook. The teacher's detailed explanations were also considered beneficial. Participants utilized Google tools such as Google Docs and Google Slides. The participants reported feeling more at ease with one another after realizing they have more similarities than differences with their international counterparts. The group's efforts were supported by effective communication, a great deal of respect, and enthusiasm. They were quite satisfied with these aspects of their work and their interactions with one another.

However, the participants also faced challenges in the online course. Internet access issues were the most common complaint among both Mexicans and Filipinos. The dependability of their

connections affected some of their interactions, particularly the synchronous ones. The participants from Mexico experienced difficulties with the language barrier, as some found it challenging to comprehend and speak English. Some participants from Mexico still needed to translate for their other Mexican classmates, thereby adding another layer of interaction. They felt that coordination was more difficult because Mexico and the Philippines are in different time zones.

The participants enumerated several technologies, like Zoom, Google applications, and Facebook messaging, which enabled them to be more productive, and thus, class requirements were completed more swiftly than usual. The participants valued that they were not required to relocate or travel to take this course. They are now more aware of people from different nations, which was previously impossible given the existing technologies. For them, the course widened their perspectives and horizons. They also realized that synchronous communication in class is not required. Since they are in different time zones, it is occasionally acceptable to reply to messages at a later time.

However, the participants believed that the time allotted for introducing the COIL Program and the duration of the interactions were insufficient. Time zone variations further complicated collaboration. This led the participants to agree with the remark that cautious scheduling is essential. To make the course more significant, the participants shared their desire for the course to take on a longer duration. They also remarked that the class would have been more enjoyable if a face-to-face conversation had been made part of the class. They believed informal, unstructured interactions, such as an "online hangout," would have made the experience more enjoyable.

As for the course requirement, the participants wished they had been given the option to select the issues they would like to work on to be more engaged. When the participants recalled that when they realized that Mexicans and Filipinos shared significant similarities, they felt more at ease and were able to break down previously-held barriers. They also observed that there was outstanding communication and a great deal of respect between the nationalities because of the careful course planning and preparation. They acknowledge cultural diversity and the welcoming environment of the course. It was also mentioned that the participants bonded even before class started because of their shared Lasallian heritage and their careers in education.

The participants also reiterated that it would have been preferable if they had had more time and space to themselves, away from teachers, so they could have engaged in non-school-related conversations. Another student encountered trouble interpreting portions of the course for non-native English-speaking classmates and indicated that assistance or preparation could have been provided earlier. The participants also advised that a better mix of nationalities can be used for groups next time. When asked what they would change about the COIL Program if they had the opportunity, they said to maintain everything and add more time for informal interactions. The participants believed they could interpret one another's perspectives and benefit from one another's insights due to their knowledge of cross-cultural communication and individual exposure to diverse cultures. Moreover, they claim to have understood non-English cultures and languages. In addition, they learned to comprehend the interconnectivity of the world, current events, and global conditions, such as educational systems and country difficulties, better. They stated that their shared interest in education helped them develop different viewpoints since it gave them a sense of how the world is interconnected and gave them direct experience with various cultures.

CONCLUSION

The study confirmed that the COIL Program is an effective structure for enhancing PSTs' global competence, mainly through the skills they acquired through collaborative learning, online learning, and cross-cultural learning. A more globalized world necessitates an increase in global competence. It highlighted the best feature of the COIL Program, which is the development of cross-cultural learning without the need for travel and the fact that it is a viable alternative to international student exposure should another pandemic-like crisis occur.

This investigation has limitations. It was initiated nearly a year after the conclusion of the COIL Program, and the original sample size was small ($n=19$), with 17 students responding to the online questionnaire. Because of English language difficulties for some of them, the Mexican students were gathered in a room where a staff helped them to understand the English questions orally. Moreover, fewer people ($n=5$) agreed to attend the subsequent FGD. There were significantly more female respondents and Mexican students in the sample population. Consequently, this study cannot be generalized. Notably, neither the Mexican students in Media for Educational Communication nor the

Filipino students in Educational Technology were aware that the course they were enrolled in included an 8-week COIL Program component.

This investigation has also revealed areas that can be improved for future COIL Program implementation. Before implementing the Program, it is suggested that professors consider the possibility of administering a pre-test and a post-test to determine much more accurately the development of students' skills in the areas of collaborative learning, online learning, cross-cultural learning, and global competence. As to how the COIL Program will be implemented in the future, the participants provided several suggestions, including adding more weeks to the total timeframe of the Program, carefully planning the class schedule of activities due to time zones, considering more free-flowing synchronous activities to allow more students to "hangout online," giving the students more freedom to choose the topics that they would like to research, and creating the right mix of students. Finally, as an IALU project, the deepening of the connection between the two sets of Lasallian university.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the two Lasallian universities and especially our former students in this course for allowing us to conduct the survey and the FGD.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Crowther, P., Joris, M., Otten, M., Nilsson, B., Teekens, H., & Wächter, B. (2000). Internationalisation at home a position paper. European Association for International Education. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.univ-catholille.fr/sites/default/files/Internationalisation-at-Home-A-Position-Paper.pdf>.
- de Wit, H. (2013). COIL – Virtual mobility without commercialisation. University World News. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20130528175741647>.

- Gray, M. I., Asojo, A., Lindgren, J., Nolan, D., & Nowak, A. V. (2021). COIL: A global experience for everyone. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 21, 64–79.
- Naidoo, V. (2006). International education: A tertiary-level industry update. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(3) 323–345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906069455>.
- Strotmann, B., & Kunschak, C. (2022). Toward the internationalization of higher education: developing university students' intercultural communicative competence in Spain. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2021.2018450>.
- Rubin, J. (2017). Embedding collaborative online international learning (COIL) at higher education institutions: An evolutionary overview with exemplars. *Internationalisation of Higher Education*, 2, 27–44. Retrieved February 17, 2022, from <https://tinyurl.com/y69eashm>.
- SUNY COIL Center. (n.d.). Welcome. Retrieved February 1, 2022, from <https://coil.suny.edu>.
- Tichnor-Wagner, A., Parkhouse, H., Glazier, J., & Cain, J. M. (2019). *Becoming a Globally Competent Teacher*. ASCD.
- William: Internationalization at Home. (2022). Questionnaire for students participating in collaborative online international courses. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://william-erasmus.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Student-Questionnaire-about-participating-in-Virtual-International-Classroom-Google-Forms.pdf>.



Academic Excellence And Scientific Output: An Overview Of Data From The Last Decade

Get to know some researchers from
Lassalian Universities

Excelencia Académica y Producción Científica: Una Visión General de los Datos de la Última Década

*Conozca a algunos investigadores de las
Universidades Lasalianas*



In this section, readers are invited to reflect on the various opportunities available to institutions that are part of IALU — an international association of Lasallian universities. The global presence of the network strengthens joint actions, fostering greater synergy among the associated universities. This collaborative environment enhances the implementation of academic projects, including teaching, research, and service learning, developed in partnership among the institutions and the network. The article authored by Dr. Feorillo Demeterio, an observer member of the IALU Research Committee, along with his team, encourages reflections on the influence and impact that collective action can bring to societies, as well as providing guidance for the development of institutional strategies aligned with this global collaboration.

Additionally, this section introduces preliminary findings from data collection efforts regarding researchers affiliated with Lasallian institutions, detailing their areas of expertise and collaborative interests. This resource will be continually updated in subsequent editions, and contributions or supplementary information are welcomed via ialu.research@lasalle.org.



A Decade of Research Productivity: A Bibliometric Comparison of the Five Most Research Productive Institutional Members of the Association of La Salle Universities (IALU)

Dr. Christian P. Gopez,
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
Dr. Henry Leen A. Magahis,
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
Dr. Analiza D. Resurreccion,
De La Salle Lipa, Lipa City, Philippines
Dr. Leslie Anne L. Liwanag,
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
Dr. Feorillo A. Demeterio III,
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU) is a global network of Lasallian institutions committed to academic excellence, social responsibility, and cross-border collaboration. While university rankings and bibliometric analyses are frequently conducted at national and global levels, systematic assessments of research productivity within mission-driven university networks such as IALU remain limited. Yet, in an increasingly competitive research environment, understanding the research productivity, impact, and global engagement of member universities is vital for strengthening collective influence and informing institutional strategies. This chapter addresses this gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of IALU institutions using Scopus and SciVal data over the past decade. It is worth noting that of the 64 member institutions, the majority produced little or no indexed research output, and the overall average of 456 Scopus-indexed publications per institution is largely attributable to a small subset of highly productive universities. This analysis, therefore, focuses on the five institutions with the highest volume of Scopus-indexed publications: De La Salle University, Manila (DLSUM); Manhattan College, Bronx (MCB); Universidade Católica de Brasília, Brasília (UCDBB); La Salle University, Philadelphia (LSUP); and La Salle, Barcelona

(LSB). These institutions span four continents, with one each in Asia, Europe, and South America, and two in North America, providing a comparative perspective on the network's most research-productive members.

By examining patterns of research output, citation impact, collaboration networks, thematic specializations, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study aims to contribute to institutional benchmarking, strategic planning, and the strengthening of research visibility and societal impact within IALU. More broadly, it advances understanding of how mission-driven university networks leverage collective strengths to enhance global research influence. The insights generated will assist IALU policymakers, academic leaders, and research managers in identifying research strengths, addressing collaboration gaps, and aligning institutional priorities with emerging academic and societal trends.

Methodologically, this study employs bibliometric analysis of research outputs from the five most productive IALU institutions. Data were retrieved from Scopus and SciVal (Elsevier) between August 5 and 10, 2025, and restricted to journal articles published in English from 2015 to 2024; articles in press were excluded. Quantitative analyses were applied to identify research performance trends, strengths, and gaps, providing actionable insights for institutional benchmarking and strategic planning within IALU. Key indicators included publication volume, citations per paper, international and corporate collaboration rates, thematic specializations, and SDG categorizations. A comprehensive analytic procedure was adopted to examine both categorical and numerical variables. Categorical variables were summarized through frequencies and percentages, while numerical variables were described using averages, measures of central tendency, and confidence intervals. Relationships between variables were assessed using Chi-Square Tests of Independence. Normality of distributions was examined with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests.

RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

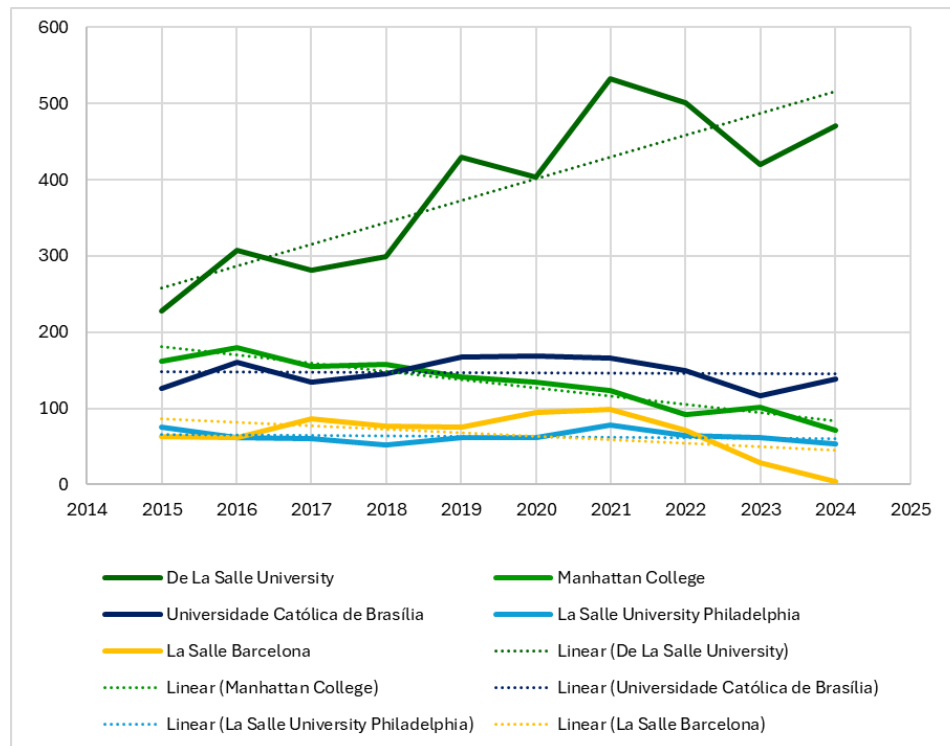
Table 1 presents the number of research articles published by each of the five most productive IALU institutions. These are visually represented in Figure 1, together with their trendlines. The number of research articles published by an institution serves as a proxy indicator of its research

activity, as it reflects sustained scholarly output, demonstrates research capacity, correlates with financial investment in research, illustrates the breadth of inquiry, and contributes to the institution's visibility and global footprint.

Table 1: Number of published research articles per institution from 2015 to 2024

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DLSUM	228	307	281	299	429	403	532	501	420	470
MCB	162	180	155	158	141	134	124	92	101	72
UCDBB	126	160	134	146	167	169	166	150	117	138
LSUP	75	62	60	52	62	62	78	64	62	54
LSB	63	62	86	77	75	95	99	72	29	4

Figure 1: Curves and trendlines of research production in the five most productive IALU institutions



The analysis of paper production across five institutions from 2015 to 2024 revealed statistically significant differences in annual research output distribution, $\chi^2(36, N = 10,506) = 252.64$,

$p < .001$. Overall, DLSUM consistently dominated the network's scholarly production, contributing 36.8% of the total output over the ten-year period. Its share rose steadily from 31.7% in 2015 to 41.4% in 2024, indicating sustained growth in research capacity and productivity. MCB displayed an identical numerical profile in the dataset (36.8% of total output), suggesting either equivalent output volume or a possible data entry duplication that warrants verification. UCDBB ranked third, producing 14.0% of all indexed papers, with its proportion of annual output gradually declining from 17.5% in 2015 to 12.1% in 2024. LSUP (6.0%) maintained a relatively stable yet modest share, with percentages per year ranging between 4.8% and 12.4%. LSB accounted for 6.3% of total production, showing an early peak in 2017 (13.0%) followed by a marked decline to near-zero production in 2024 (0.6%).

Temporal trends indicate that the period from 2019 to 2021 saw the highest collective output, peaking in 2021 ($n = 1,407$; 13.4% of total), coinciding with DMSUMs and MCB's peak productivity. The significant chi-square results, along with the linear-by-linear association test ($p < .001$), confirm a non-uniform distribution of scholarly output across institutions and years, reflecting differentiated trajectories in institutional research performance and potential shifts in strategic focus, resource allocation, or publication capacity within the IALU network.

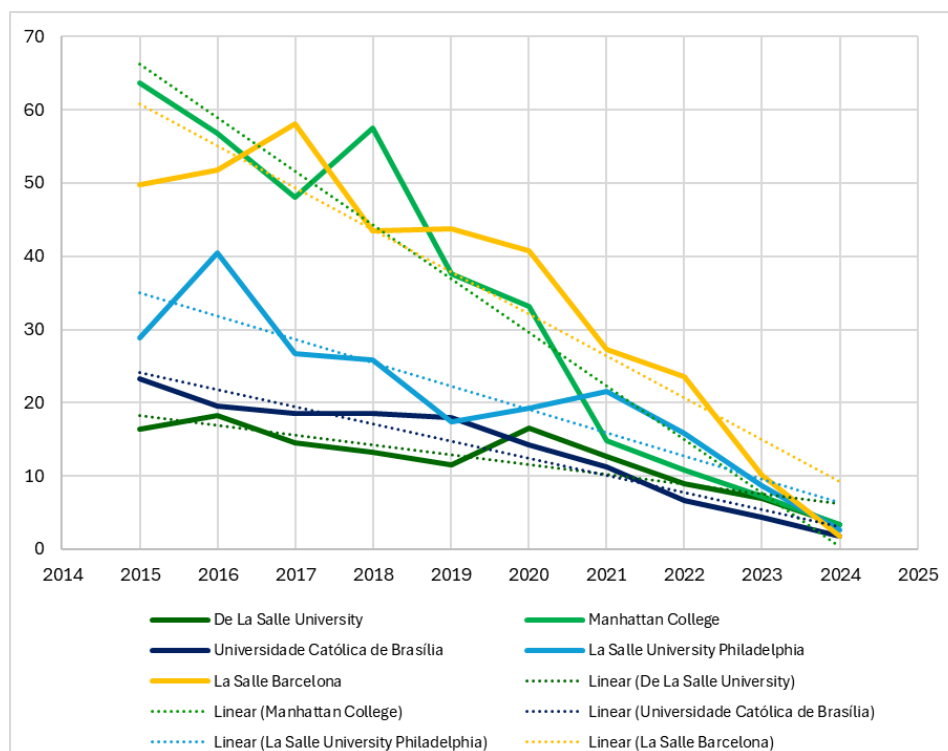
CITATIONS PER PUBLICATION

Table 2 illustrates the average number of citations per publication for the five institutions between 2015 and 2024. These are visually represented in Figure 2, together with their trendlines. Citations per publication serve as a proxy indicator of research quality, as they move beyond output volume to signal scholarly influence and peer recognition.

Table 2: Average number of citations per publication for the five institutions between 2015 and 2024

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DLSUM	16.4	18.3	14.6	13.3	11.5	16.6	12.7	9	7	3.4
MCB	63.6	56.8	48.1	57.5	37.6	33.1	14.8	10.8	7.2	3.3
UCDBB	23.2	19.6	18.6	18.6	17.9	14.2	11.2	6.6	4.4	1.8
LSUP	28.9	40.4	26.7	25.9	17.4	19.2	21.6	15.8	8.6	2.7
LSB	49.7	51.8	58.1	43.4	43.8	40.8	27.3	23.5	10.1	1.8

Figure 2: Curves and trendlines of the average citations per publication in the five most productive IALU institutions



Given the violation of the normality assumption confirmed by both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov ($D(50) = 0.179$, $p < .001$) and Shapiro–Wilk ($W(50) = 0.899$, $p < .001$) tests, a nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis H test was applied to assess differences in the average number of citations per publication among the five IALU institutions. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in citation distributions across institutions, $H(4) = 11.83$, $p = .019$, indicating that institutional affiliation plays a measurable role in per-publication citation performance.

The network-wide median citation rate was 18.10, and the frequency analysis above and below this threshold highlighted distinct institutional patterns. LSB and MCB had the largest proportions of outputs above the median (80% and 60%, respectively), aligning with their high mean citation rates ($M = 35.03$ and $M = 33.28$, respectively) and top mean ranks (34.85 and 31.20). LSUP ($M = 20.72$; 60% above median) also demonstrated relatively strong citation performance. In contrast, UCDBB ($M = 13.61$; 40% above median) and DLSUM ($M = 12.28$; only 10% above median)

were predominantly positioned below the median, suggesting lower per-publication visibility and impact.

The observed citation stratification points to the presence of high-impact research clusters within the IALU network, primarily led by LSUP and MCB. These differences may reflect variations in research specializations, collaboration patterns, journal targeting strategies, and institutional emphasis on high-impact publishing.

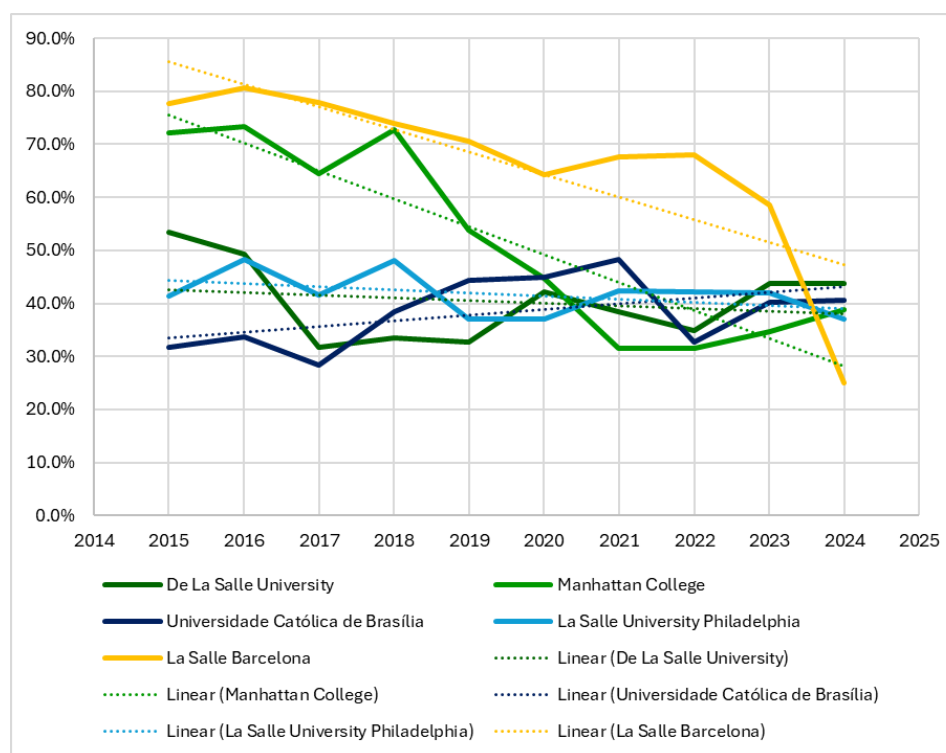
INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Table 3 displays the percentages of scholarly outputs with international collaborations produced by the five institutions between 2015 and 2024. These are visually represented in Figure 3, together with their trendlines. The proportion of internationally co-authored papers is a key proxy for research quality, as it reflects peer recognition and trust, alignment with global standards, higher citation potential, and access to diverse expertise and resources.

Table 3: Percentage of scholarly outputs with international collaborations produced by the five institutions between 2015 and 2024

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DLSUM	53.5%	49.2%	31.7%	33.4%	32.6%	42.2%	38.3%	34.9%	43.8%	43.8%
MCB	72.2%	73.3%	64.5%	72.8%	53.9%	44.8%	31.5%	31.5%	34.7%	38.9%
UCDBB	31.7%	33.8%	28.4%	38.4%	44.3%	45.0%	48.2%	32.7%	40.2%	40.6%
LSUP	41.3%	48.4%	41.7%	48.1%	37.1%	37.1%	42.3%	42.2%	41.9%	37.0%
LSB	77.8%	80.6%	77.9%	74.0%	70.7%	64.2%	67.7%	68.1%	58.6%	25.0%

Figure 3: Curves and trendlines of the international collaboration percentages in the five most productive IALU institutions



The regression analysis indicated a strong model fit, $R = .774$, $R^2 = .600$, and Adjusted $R^2 = .554$, suggesting that 60% of the variance in international collaboration percentages across the 10-year period was explained by the predictors. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(5, 44) = 13.182$, $p < .001$. In this regression model, DLSUM was specified as the reference institution, serving as the baseline against which the other institutions were compared.

Results revealed a significant negative effect of time ($B = -1.914$, $p < .001$), indicating a consistent decline in collaboration rates over the decade. Compared to DLSUM, MCB ($B = 11.470$, $p = .017$) and LSB ($B = 26.120$, $p < .001$) exhibited significantly higher collaboration levels, whereas UCDBB ($B = -2.010$, $p = .664$) and LSUP ($B = 1.370$, $p = .767$) did not significantly differ.

These findings highlight the comparatively stronger international engagement of LSB and MCB while underscoring the role of DLSUM as a benchmark institution for collaboration within the IALU network. The overall negative temporal trend raises concerns regarding the sustainability of

international collaborations, suggesting the need for strategic institutional interventions to maintain and strengthen global research linkages.

COLLABORATING COUNTRIES

Table 4 presents the recorded number of collaborating countries per institution. From a bibliometric standpoint, institutions with higher numbers of collaborating countries are better positioned to leverage diverse research networks, expand knowledge exchange, and enhance their global scholarly visibility. Conversely, institutions with fewer international partners may face more limited opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and reduced global dissemination of research outputs.

Table 4: Number of collaborating countries of the five institutions

	Number of Collaborating Countries	Average Number of Papers Co-Produced per Collaborating Country	Top 5 Collaborating Countries	Number of Papers Co-Produced by Top 5 Collaborating Countries
DLSUM	100	38.47	Taiwan (360) Japan (276) Malaysia (262) United States (256) China (211)	1365
MCB	92	217.58	Canada (535) United Kingdom (505) China (491) Switzerland (488) Italy (486)	2508
UCDBB	73	12.51	United States (258) France (54) Australia (44) Canada (42) United Kingdom (36)	434
LSUP	56	13.31	Germany (212) Iran (125) Italy (79) Canada (58) Spain 48)	522
LSB	63	101.45	France (662) United States (364) United Kingdom (362) China (359) Italy (357)	2104

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicated statistically significant differences in the distribution of the number of collaborating countries among IALU institutions, $\chi^2(4, N = 384) = 18.32$, $p = .001$. This result demonstrates that the observed patterns of international collaboration are not evenly distributed across the network (Expected $n=76.8$), with some institutions engaging with a broader range of countries than others.

The five institutions demonstrate varied levels of international engagement. DLSUM (DLSU) collaborates with the widest network, partnering with 100 countries, though averaging 38.47 papers per partner. MCB, while having fewer collaborators (92), produces the highest average with 217.58 papers per country, indicating concentrated and productive partnerships. UCDBB (73) and LSUP (56) have more modest averages at 12.51 and 13.31, respectively, reflecting limited intensity. LSB stands out with 63 collaborators but a high average of 101.45, suggesting balanced breadth and depth of collaboration.

DLSUM's top collaborators—Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, the U.S., and China—produced 1,365 papers. MCB partnered with Canada, the U.K., China, Switzerland, and Italy (2,508 papers). UCDBB relied on the U.S., France, Australia, Canada, and the U.K. (434). LSUP's 522 papers involved Germany, Iran, Italy, Canada, and Spain, while LSB co-produced 2,104 papers with France, the U.S., the U.K., China, and Italy. These patterns highlight distinct regional networks shaping institutional visibility and research impact. These institutional collaboration patterns may be attributed to historical, linguistic, and strategic priorities, resulting in distinct geographic profiles that may influence each institution's research visibility, co-authorship networks, and access to diverse scholarly perspectives within the global research landscape.

CORPORATE COLLABORATIONS

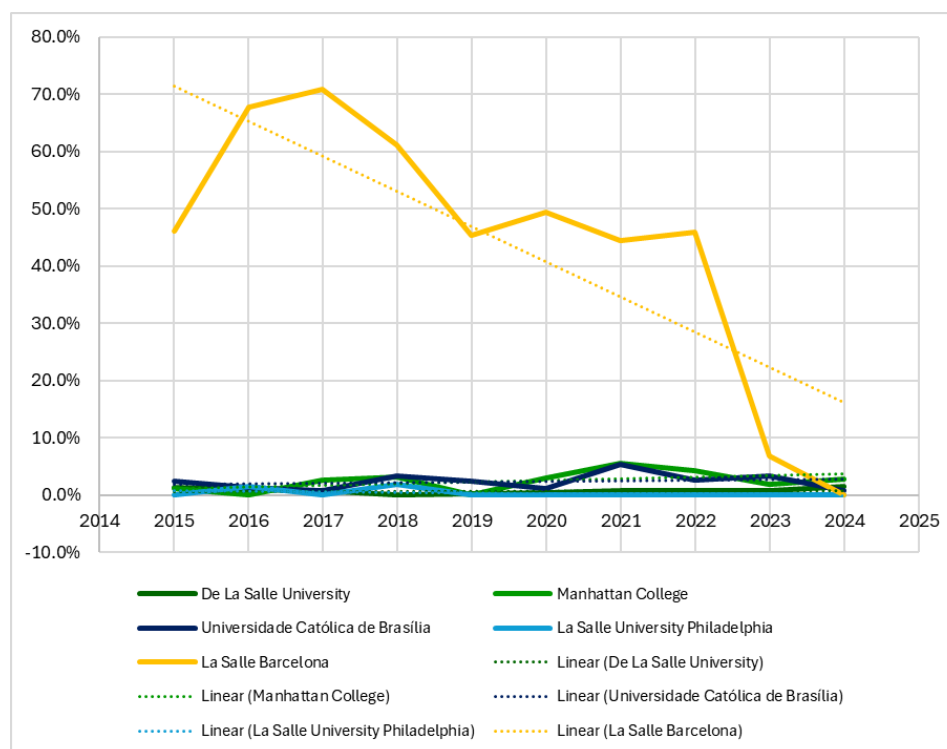
Table 5 presents the percentage of scholarly outputs with corporate collaboration produced by the five institutions between 2015 and 2024, which are also illustrated in Figure 4 with trendlines.

Corporate collaboration serves as an important proxy for research quality, as it reflects knowledge transfer and application, innovation potential, access to funding and resources, and institutional reputation and trust.

Table 5: Percentage of scholarly outputs with corporate collaboration produced by the five institutions between 2015 and 2024

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DLSUM	1.3%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	1.5%
MCB	1.2%	0.0%	2.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%	5.6%	4.3%	2.0%	2.8%
UCDBB	2.4%	1.3%	0.7%	3.4%	2.4%	1.2%	5.4%	2.7%	3.4%	0.7%
LSUP	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
LSB	46.0%	67.7%	70.9%	61.0%	45.3%	49.5%	44.4%	45.8%	6.9%	0.0%

Figure 4: Curves and trendlines of the corporate collaboration percentages in the five most productive IALU institutions



The regression analysis demonstrated a strong predictive relationship between institutional affiliation and corporate collaboration over a 10-year period. The model was statistically significant, $F(5, 44) = 29.664$, $p < .001$, with an $R = .878$, $R \text{ Square} = .771$, and $\text{Adjusted } R \text{ Square} = .745$, indicating that approximately 74.5% of the variance in collaboration percentages was explained by the predictors. The predictors included Year, MCB, UCDBB, LSUP, and LSB, with DLSUM serving as the reference institution.

Examination of the coefficients revealed that Year had a significant negative association with collaboration percentage ($B = -1.168$, $SE = 0.493$, $\beta = -0.171$, $t = -2.367$, $p = .022$), suggesting a slight decline in collaboration outcomes across time when holding other predictors constant. LSB emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($B = 43.000$, $SE = 4.481$, $\beta = 0.875$, $t = 9.596$, $p < .001$), highlighting its significantly higher collaboration outcomes compared to DLSUM. In contrast, the coefficients for MCB ($B = 1.720$, $SE = 4.481$, $\beta = 0.035$, $t = 0.384$, $p = .703$), UCDBB ($B = 1.610$, $SE = 4.481$, $\beta = 0.033$, $t = 0.359$, $p = .721$), and LSUP ($B = -0.400$, $SE = 4.481$, $\beta = -0.008$, $t = -0.089$, $p = .929$) were not statistically significant, indicating no meaningful difference in their corporate collaboration percentages relative to DLSUM.

These findings underscore the central role of institutional context in shaping corporate collaboration outcomes within the IALU network. While DLSUM was used as the reference point, only LSB demonstrated a significantly stronger collaboration trajectory, positioning it as a key driver of network-wide engagement with corporate partners. From a bibliometric perspective, these disparities suggest that LSB sustains a strategic and institutionally embedded partnership model with industry, likely shaped by regional economic ecosystems, policy environments, and an applied research orientation. Conversely, the lower levels observed in other institutions may indicate a focus on academic-driven outputs with limited industry integration. Such divergence holds implications for knowledge transfer capacity, innovation potential, and the balance between academic and industry-oriented research trajectories within the IALU network.

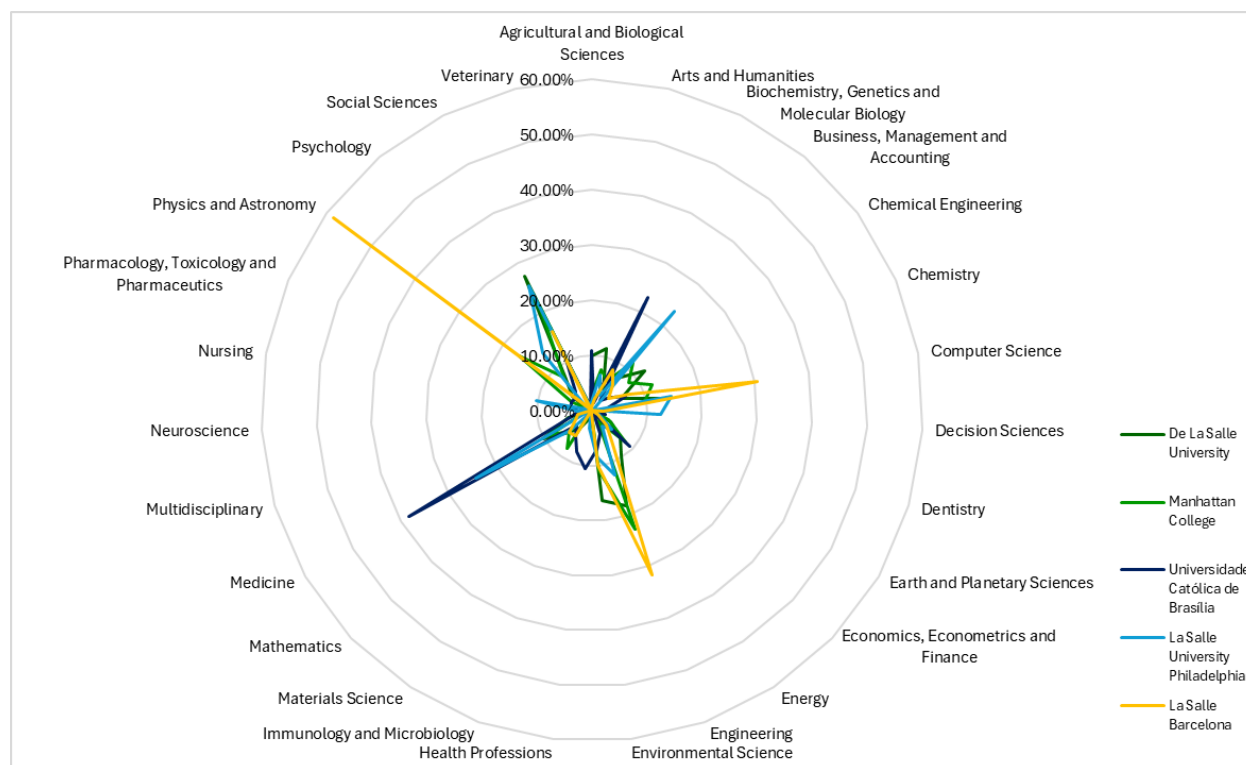
SUBJECT AREAS COVERED

Table 6 presents the percentages of scholarly outputs produced per subject area by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024. These are visually represented in Figure 5. The 27 subject areas in this table are based on the subject area classifications used by Scopus. Percentages of scholarly outputs across subject areas is an important proxy indicator of research breadth as it reflects diversity of inquiry, balance across disciplines, strategic specialization, and alignment with institutional priorities.

Table 6: Percentages of scholarly outputs produced per subject area by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024

Subject Area	DLSUM	MCB	UCDBB	LSUP	LSB
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	9.93%	3.06%	10.95%	1.56%	0.67%
Arts and Humanities	11.56%	7.65%	1.49%	6.56%	2.34%
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	4.43%	6.12%	22.84%	3.13%	8.36%
Business, Management and Accounting	7.95%	11.47%	2.30%	23.44%	6.02%
Chemical Engineering	12.04%	8.41%	4.05%	0.31%	3.68%
Chemistry	5.76%	11.85%	6.62%	0.31%	7.36%
Computer Science	13.16%	9.75%	2.97%	14.69%	30.43%
Decision Sciences	1.03%	0.96%	1.22%	12.50%	2.01%
Dentistry	0.00%	0.00%	2.57%	0.00%	0.00%
Earth and Planetary Sciences	4.00%	3.44%	0.41%	1.56%	1.34%
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	7.01%	8.41%	9.46%	5.00%	3.68%
Energy	9.72%	2.10%	0.68%	3.44%	6.69%
Engineering	18.40%	22.94%	4.32%	12.50%	31.77%
Environmental Science	16.47%	10.90%	7.03%	8.44%	10.03%
Health Professions	0.99%	0.76%	10.54%	3.13%	0.67%
Immunology and Microbiology	1.68%	0.00%	7.84%	0.94%	0.00%
Materials Science	3.87%	8.22%	5.41%	0.63%	5.35%
Mathematics	5.89%	5.54%	3.78%	5.31%	5.69%
Medicine	10.19%	8.80%	38.38%	24.38%	3.34%
Multidisciplinary	4.56%	1.34%	3.78%	0.63%	2.68%
Neuroscience	0.52%	1.34%	2.30%	2.50%	0.00%
Nursing	1.25%	0.19%	3.78%	10.31%	0.00%
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	0.90%	4.02%	4.05%	0.94%	0.00%
Physics and Astronomy	4.30%	16.44%	3.65%	1.25%	58.53%
Psychology	7.35%	7.84%	4.46%	13.75%	0.67%
Social Sciences	27.26%	21.22%	10.54%	25.31%	16.05%
Veterinary	0.26%	0.19%	0.68%	0.31%	0.00%

Figure 5: Radar chart on percentage of scholarly outputs produced per subject area by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024



The subject area distribution of research across five IALU institutions highlights distinct strengths and specializations. DLSUM demonstrates balance, excelling in Social Sciences, Engineering, Environmental Science, and Computer Science. MCB is strong in Engineering, Social Sciences, and Physics. UCDBB is concentrated in Medicine and Biochemistry, with limited technical research. LSUP emphasizes Social Sciences, Medicine, and Business, while LSB is highly specialized in Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science. Social Sciences emerge as a shared strength across institutions, while Dentistry and Veterinary remain consistently underrepresented.

Several disciplines were heavily concentrated in specific institutions, such as Dentistry (UCDBB), Decision Sciences (LSUP), and Physics and Astronomy (LSB). These patterns reveal complementary but differentiated institutional research profiles.

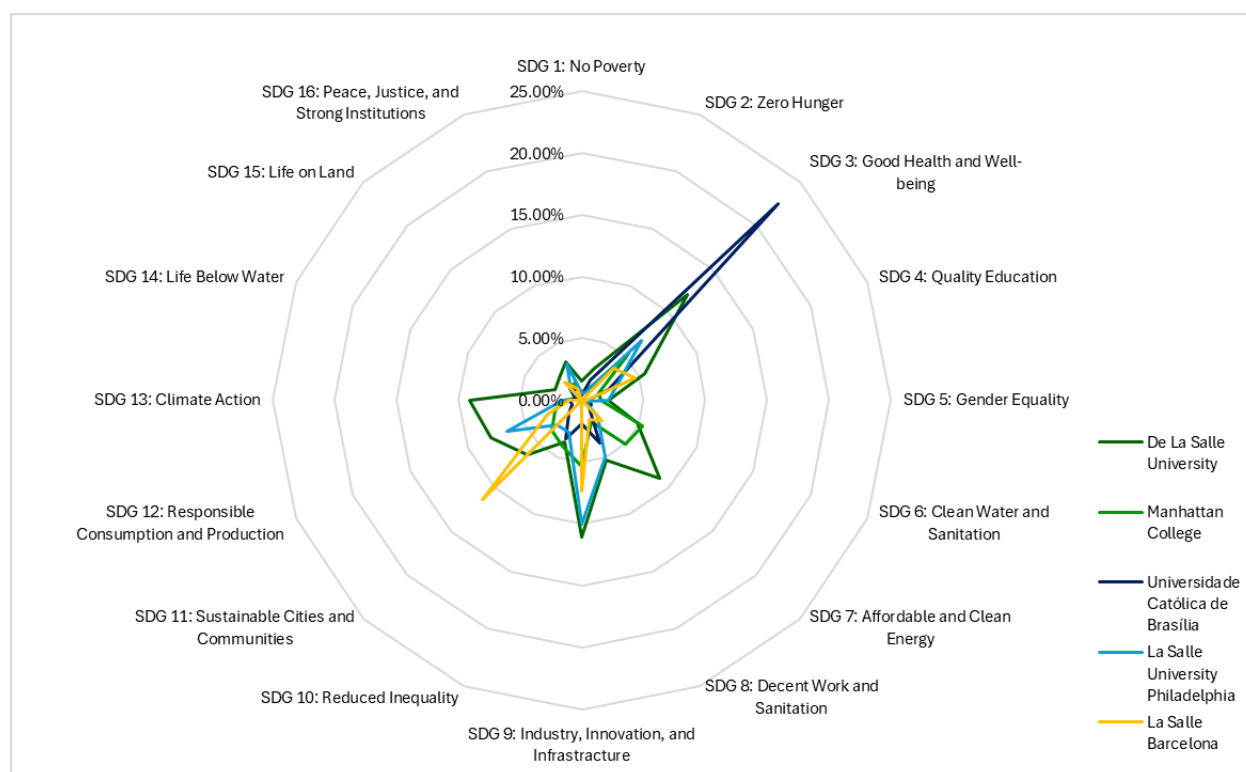
UNSDGS COVERED

Table 7 presents the percentages of scholarly outputs produced per United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024. These are visually represented in Figure 6. The UNSDGs are a set of 17 global targets adopted in 2015 to address urgent social, economic, and environmental challenges. They serve as a universal blueprint for achieving inclusive growth, equity, and sustainability by 2030. Only 16 SDGs are captured in Table 7 as the 17th goal, “partnerships for the goals,” is difficult to capture by each single published paper.

Table 7: Percentage of scholarly outputs produced per UNSDG by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024

UNSDSG	DLSUM	MCB	UCDBB	LSUP	LSB
SDG 1: No Poverty	1.50%	0.57%	0.41%	0.63%	0.00%
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	2.79%	0.76%	1.76%	0.63%	0.00%
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	12.04%	5.35%	22.43%	6.88%	3.68%
SDG 4: Quality Education	5.55%	1.53%	2.30%	3.13%	4.68%
SDG 5: Gender Equality	2.15%	1.53%	0.41%	2.19%	0.33%
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	4.82%	5.35%	0.81%	0.31%	0.00%
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	8.94%	4.97%	0.81%	1.88%	2.34%
SDG 8: Decent Work and Sanitation	5.20%	1.91%	3.78%	5.00%	1.67%
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	11.09%	5.35%	1.89%	10.00%	7.36%
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality	3.65%	4.02%	3.38%	2.81%	0.00%
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	6.28%	3.44%	1.49%	2.81%	11.37%
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	7.95%	2.29%	0.81%	6.56%	3.01%
SDG 13: Climate Action	9.03%	1.53%	0.95%	1.56%	1.00%
SDG 14: Life Below Water	2.32%	0.38%	0.54%	0.00%	0.00%
SDG 15: Life on Land	2.58%	1.34%	1.35%	1.25%	2.01%
SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	3.31%	1.53%	0.95%	3.13%	1.00%

Figure 6: Radar chart of the percentages of scholarly outputs produced per UNSDG by the five institutions from 2020 to 2024



The five institutions show varied emphases in UNSDG research. DLSUM demonstrates broad strengths, particularly in SDG 3 (12.04%), SDG 9 (11.09%), SDG 13 (9.03%), and SDG 7 (8.94%). MCB prioritizes health (5.35%) and water (5.35%), while UCDBB heavily emphasizes health (22.43%). LSUP's strongest areas are SDG 9 (10.00%) and SDG 12 (6.56%), while LSB uniquely leads in SDG 11 (11.37%). Poverty, hunger, and equality remain modestly represented across institutions, while SDGs 14 and 15 show limited focus. Overall, health, infrastructure, and sustainability emerge as the most researched areas, reflecting institutional strengths and global priorities. Overall, the patterns highlight both specialization and imbalance in SDG engagement within the IALU network. These findings suggest opportunities for strategic collaboration to bridge thematic gaps and enhance collective research impact.

CONCLUSION

This study provides the first systematic bibliometric comparison of the five most research-productive institutions within IALU over the decade 2015–2024. Using Scopus and SciVal data, it assesses research output, citation impact, collaboration patterns, thematic specializations, and alignment with UNSDGs. Findings reveal significant disparities in productivity and impact across institutions. DLSUM and MCB dominate publication output, together accounting for over 70% of indexed research. However, citation performance varies, with LSB and MCB achieving the highest per-publication visibility. International collaborations show a general decline over time, though LSB and MCB sustain stronger global networks compared to others. Corporate collaborations are unevenly distributed, with LSB standing out as the most industry-engaged partner, while others remain academically focused. Subject area strengths reveal differentiated research profiles. DLSUM in social sciences and engineering, UCDBB in medicine, LSUP in business and social sciences, and LSB in physics and computer science. In terms of SDGs, health, infrastructure, and sustainability emerge as leading themes, though areas such as poverty, hunger, and equality remain underrepresented. Overall, the study underscores IALU's collective potential while highlighting strategic imbalances and opportunities for strengthening research impact and collaboration.

The findings suggest several actionable steps for IALU policymakers and institutional leaders. First, there is a need to balance productivity and quality by encouraging high-impact publishing across all institutions. This can be achieved through targeted incentives, mentoring schemes, and journal selection training. Institutions with strong publication capacity, such as DLSUM, should partner with those excelling in citation impact, like MCB and LSB, to exchange strategies for enhancing visibility and influence.

Second, the declining trend in international collaboration requires urgent attention. IALU should establish structured research consortia, seed funding, and mobility programs to sustain long-term global partnerships. Special focus should be placed on connecting underrepresented institutions, such as LSUP and UCDBB, to more robust global networks.

Third, corporate collaboration remains uneven, with LSB significantly outperforming others. IALU can institutionalize knowledge-transfer platforms that link research outputs with industry needs,

fostering innovation-driven collaborations across regions. Sharing best practices from LSB's industry engagement model could help mainstream applied research throughout the network.

Fourth, to address imbalances in subject and SDG coverage, IALU should encourage cross-institutional thematic clusters. For example, UCDBB's strength in medicine could complement DLSUM's environmental sciences and LSB's engineering/physics to produce integrated SDG-focused projects.

Finally, IALU must prioritize capacity-building and resource sharing, including joint training in bibliometrics, open science, and grant writing. Institutional benchmarking and regular research audits should be institutionalized to guide strategic planning. Collectively, these measures will help IALU leverage its global presence, strengthen knowledge transfer, and amplify its contribution to both academic excellence and societal progress.

Future research should extend this bibliometric analysis by exploring three key directions. First, deeper qualitative studies are needed to uncover institutional strategies, governance practices, and cultural factors driving disparities in productivity, citation impact, and collaboration. Bibliometric data provides trends, but qualitative insights will explain the institutional choices shaping them.

Second, future work should expand the scope to include emerging IALU institutions with modest research outputs. Investigating barriers such as funding limitations, faculty capacity, or policy environments will help design interventions for network-wide inclusivity. Comparative studies between high- and low-output institutions may also yield replicable best practices.

Third, researchers should focus on impact-oriented bibliometrics, linking IALU's research to societal benefits, innovation outcomes, and SDG progress. For instance, tracing whether health-related publications influence policy, or whether environmental studies contribute to local sustainability programs, can move beyond output metrics toward demonstrating real-world relevance.

Additionally, cross-network comparisons with other mission-driven university consortia could contextualize IALU's performance within global Catholic, Jesuit, or faith-based academic networks. Finally, longitudinal studies examining the effect of global disruptions, such as COVID-19, on

collaboration and thematic priorities would enrich understanding of resilience and adaptability. Collectively, these directions can deepen insights and guide IALU's future research trajectory.

IALU RESEARCHERS



Click to meet the IALU Researchers



Dear Participant or Reader,

We are doing a survey on “Research departments” with the intention to collect information on research sectors and/or departments, their heads, areas of interest for research and contacts. In line with this, you have been identified as one of the participants of this research and I would like to invite you to take part in this survey.

To help you make a decision, allow me to provide you the necessary information:

Voluntary Participation. We recognized you as a competent potential participant who has the autonomy to make a decision to participate in this research study. You have the right to refuse this study, to withdraw your participation anytime and to ask questions and receive answers about the study. You may skip questions that makes you uncomfortable.

Data Collection. Your personal and other information will be collected in this research and might be necessary in answering the general objective of the study.

Data Retention, Disposal and Protection. All data gathered will be retained only for the duration of the research (but maximum of 5 years). After, all data will be properly disposed following the standards set by the institution. Your responses will be stored securely. Physical documents will be kept in sealed cabinets while all digital data from this study will be encrypted and password protected.

Data Access, Confidentiality and Privacy. Identified entities that are involved in the conduct of this research will be given access to the all the data gathered. Should others be necessary in processing the data, they will have to sign a Non-disclosure Agreement. Additionally, all your personal information and identifiers will be kept with full confidence and anonymity will be applied.

Contact Person and Information. Should you have any questions anytime during the conduct of the study, you may reach the researcher, name of the research, through insert contact number/s and email address.

To update information, please send email to ialu.research@lasalle.org

Update information will be in the next edition.

To include information, visit <https://forms.gle/vQNJ4d4SaPNFBpKt7> or [click here](#)





Get to know RIILSA – La Salle International Research Network

***Conozca RIILSA –
Red Internacional de
Investigación La Salle***

In this section, we present RIILSA – the La Salle International Research Network, a science and technology network established in 2000 and continuously refined over the years by participating institutions. This initiative offers member institutions valuable opportunities to develop collaborative projects and conduct research in diverse areas of interest. Beyond its role in fostering academic cooperation, RIILSA demonstrates the significant impact that coordinated and networked efforts can have on societies worldwide.

For more information, inquiries can be directed via email to ialu.research@lasalle.org or addressed personally to Dr. Eduardo Gómez Ramírez, Research Vice-Rector of La Salle Mexico University.



MASTER PLAN FOR THE LA SALLE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK (RIILSA) 2025-2032

English version

Contents: RIILSA Coordination; RIILSA representatives; Present; Background of the Network; Objectives of the Network; Network Research Areas; Health; Design and Technology Area; Human and Social Development Area; Education; Objective of the Plan; Methodology used and structure of the Master Plan; Strategic axes of the Master Plan; 1. Strategic focus: Strengthening Research; 2. Strategic focus: Management and Administration; 3. Strategic focus: Dissemination and Communication; 4. Strategic focus: Social impact; 5. Strategic focus: Internationalization; 6. Strategic axis: Linkages and Financing; Final comments; Appendices; 1. Acronyms; 2. Work teams by strategic area.

RIILSA COORDINATION

Nestor Anaya Marín, fsc.

La Salle University Mexico

Eduardo Gómez Ramírez

La Salle University, Mexico

Roberto A. Vázquez Espinoza de los Monteros

La Salle University, Mexico

Esther Vargas Medina

La Salle University, Mexico

Rodolfo Ledesma Valdéz

La Salle University, Mexico

Victoria Contreras García

La Salle University, Mexico

Graciela Urbina

La Salle University, Mexico

RIILSA REPRESENTATIVES

Julia Victoria Escobar Londoño	<i>Lasallian University Corporation, Colombia</i>
Álvaro Rodolfo Fernández Del Carpio	<i>La Salle University Arequipa Peru</i>
Patricia Villasana Ramos	<i>La Salle Bajío University</i>
Laura Karina Coronel Basurto	<i>La Salle University Bajío</i>
Ariadna Rabelo Aguilar	<i>La Salle University Cancún</i>
René Adrián Moreno Parra	<i>La Salle University Chihuahua</i>
Michelle Quesada Víctor	<i>La Salle University Costa Rica</i>
Mayany Larrañaga Moreno	<i>La Salle University Cuernavaca</i>
Irma Leticia Canel Winder	<i>La Salle University Laguna</i>
Dolores Guadalupe Martínez Peña	<i>La Salle University Morelia</i>
Cristina Barrientos Durán	<i>La Salle University Nezahualcóyotl</i>
María Anabell Covarrubias Díaz-Couder	<i>La Salle Northwest University</i>
Anel Paulina Alvarado Vidal	<i>La Salle Noroeste University</i>
Lorena Carina Broca Domínguez	<i>La Salle Oaxaca University</i>
Sinead Martínez Ruiz	<i>La Salle University Pachuca</i>
María del Carmen Ramírez Villeda	<i>La Salle University Puebla</i>
Claudia María Peña Rodríguez	<i>La Salle University, Saltillo</i>
Diego Muñoz, FSC	<i>La Salle University Victoria</i>
Patricia Báez	<i>La Salle University Victoria</i>
Enrique Ismael Meléndez Ruíz	<i>La Salle University Victoria</i>

PRESENTATION

In the context of the tercentenary of the bull of approval of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, this RIILSA 2025–2032 Master Plan is presented as a living expression of the Lasallian commitment to social transformation through research, innovation, and academic collaboration.

Throughout these 300 years, the legacy of Saint John Baptist de La Salle has inspired generations of educators to respond with faith, fraternity, and service to the challenges of their time. Today, that same spirit drives us to strengthen the La Salle International Research Network (RIILSA) as a strategic space for generating knowledge with impact, promoting scientific, technological, humanistic, and artistic development, and contributing to the solution of the most pressing problems of our societies.

This Master Plan is the result of a collective, rigorous, and deeply participatory process. Through six strategic axes, it articulates a shared vision that recognizes the diversity of our institutions as a strength and aligns our actions with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Education Compact, and the guidelines of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

I sincerely thank all the people and institutions that have made this document possible. Their dedication and vision create RIILSA a living, dynamic network committed to the common good. May this plan be a guide for continuing to construct together a higher education that is meaningful, purposeful, and hopeful.

INDIVISA MANENT
Mtro. Nestor Anaya Marín
President of RIILSA
Rector
La Salle University
Mexico

BACKGROUND OF THE NETWORK

The La Salle International Research Network (RIILSA) is a science and technology network that emerged in October 2000 at La Salle University in Bogotá, during the First International Congress on Research in Lasallian Higher Education Institutions in Latin America, which brought together institutions from Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Spain, and Colombia. Its emergence is a response to the guidelines of the UNESCO "World Conference on Higher Education" held in Paris in October 1998, where it was proposed that the creation of networks was a priority task for higher education for internationalization and cooperation in areas such as scientific research. At this event, it was established that "Cooperation should be conceived as an integral part of the institutional mission of higher education institutions and systems, and should increasingly create utilize of networks, sharing responsibilities and solidarity as a basic principle for a better distribution of knowledge."

Likewise, this network was created on the recommendation of the "First International Meeting of Academic Representatives of the International Association of Lasallian Institutions of Higher Education (AIILES)" held in Mexico in November 1998, where it was agreed to work towards the "Lasallian University of the Future." The group effort during this meeting defined the general structure of RIILSA. A year later, in Cuernavaca, the organization of the network among Lasallian institutions of higher education in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula was proposed. It is assumed that in this globalized world, the future of higher education lies in achieving complementarity among sister institutions in the field of research. Therefore, the efforts made to form the network and ensure its proper operation will undoubtedly serve to support the formation of the Lasallian scientific community.

During this period, RIILSA held four thematic meetings in Mexico, the first two in Mexico City, Federal District (2002) and in Cuernavaca (2004), where work was done on the network's regulations, international interaction between Lasallian centers, the identification of lines of research of common interest, joint research projects, and collaboration in events and the publication of academic journals. It should be noted that each of the institutions in the network is at a different stage of development, so the research carried out in them is heterogeneous according to their age,

academic programs, and researchers. This represents a challenge for the work of RIILSA, which initially consisted of 21 institutions:

1. La Salle University. Bogotá, Colombia.
2. Lasallista University Corporation. Medellín, Colombia.
3. La Salle University. Federal District, Mexico.
4. La Salle University Center. Canoas, Brazil.
5. La Salle University Cancún. Mexico.
6. La Salle University Cuernavaca. Mexico.
7. La Salle University Pachuca. Mexico.
8. La Salle Bajío University. León, Mexico.
9. La Salle Benavente University. Puebla, Mexico.
10. San Pío X Higher Institute of Religious Catechetical Sciences. Madrid, Spain.
11. Ramon Llull University. Barcelona, Spain.
12. Institut Supérieur d'Action Internationale et de Production. Saint-Barthelemy d'Anjou, France.
13. La Salle University Morelia. Mexico.
14. Secretariat for Southern Mexico.
15. Secretariat for Northern Mexico.
16. La Salle Noroeste University. Cd. Obregón. Mexico.
17. La Salle Laguna University. Gómez Palacio, Mexico.
18. La Salle University Chihuahua. Mexico.
19. La Salle Victoria University. Cd. Victoria, Mexico.
20. La Salle Center for Higher Studies of the Regiomontano Institute A.C. (CESLAS). Monterrey, Mexico.
21. La Salle University Costa Rica. San José, Costa Rica.

After a period of inactivity, La Salle University Pachuca was chosen to serve as RIILSA's General Coordinator at the end of 2010.

On October 15, 2014, La Salle Bajío University assumed the General Coordination of RIILSA for the 2014-2016 period.

On October 18th, 2018, Brother Dr. Salvador Valle Gámez, Rector of La Salle Northwest University, took office as General Coordinator of the La Salle International Research Network (RIILSA) for the 2018-2022 term.

Since 2022, La Salle University Mexico has taken over the coordination of RIILSA.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NETWORK

The main objective of RIILSA is to establish strategic alliances of mutual benefit among the Lasallian higher education institutions that create up the network in order to generate technical and scientific cooperation actions through the creation of lines of work and joint development projects, contributing to the fields of teaching, cultural, and scientific research that promote sustainable development in the humanistic, social, and technological fields. All of this is framed within the Lasallian philosophy, which seeks the well-being of communities.

The specific objectives of the network are:

1. To promote the communication of experiences, programs, and projects among the member universities of the network.
2. To offer opportunities for cooperation in the fields of scientific, cultural, social, educational, and technological research.
3. To promote and maintain ongoing communication and gather the most relevant experiences, contributions, achievements, and needs of network members, and to establish conditions conducive to jointly leveraging the resources of network member universities and seeking financial support from international organizations.

RIILSA also has a dual purpose: first, to support the research work of the Lasallian higher education institutions that comprise it, in order to take on the challenges of the internationalization of knowledge and become an instrument for promoting scientific cooperation. Second, to strengthen

the development of research for the service of Lasallian education and respond to the guidelines of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (IHEC).

RESEARCH LINES OF THE NETWORK

Taking into account the recommendations of the IHEC, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Education Compact, as well as the projects and work presented at the seven annual meetings of Lasallian researchers, the Network's lines of research have focused on the following four areas:

Health

- Prevention, diagnosis, and care of metabolic diseases
- Healthy aging
- Mental health and well-being
- Biotechnology for health

Design and Technology Area

- Cities of the future (smart and sustainable cities)
- Environmental analysis and remediation

Human and Social Development Area

- Food sovereignty and security
- Interculturality
- Business ecosystem in Mexico

Education

- Inclusion and citizenship in educational contexts
- Media and digital citizenship

Although not exhaustive, it is recommended that these lines of research be considered by the institutions that create up the network in order to strengthen inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary collaboration.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PLAN

The main objective of this Master Plan is to guide, organize, and establish strategic actions in accordance with RIILSA's objectives that will create the conditions to promote innovation, the arts, scientific, technological, and humanistic development, as well as their application in solving the main problems of the social, economic, and cultural environment of our society.

METHODOLOGY USED AND STRUCTURE OF THE MASTER PLAN

Strategic planning is a key process for any research network that seeks not only to remain relevant in a constantly evolving environment, but also to maximize its impact and sustainability. To develop this Master Plan for the La Salle International Research Network, several strategic planning methodologies were applied, including SWOT analysis, an adaptation of the CANVAS methodology, and some Planning and Monitoring (PM) strategies.

The CANVAS methodology allowed us to visualize our differentiator, audience segments, communication and engagement channels, activities, key resources and allies, as well as sources of income. The SWOT analysis helped identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a solid basis for decision-making. In addition, the implementation of PM (Planning and Monitoring) strategies ensures that objectives are aligned with the network's mission and vision, while being adjusted based on the results obtained in a model of quality and continuous improvement.

The Master Plan was developed gradually, and during each biannual network meeting, highly specific activities were carried out, culminating in the proposal of this plan. Below is a brief description of the key elements that were worked on at each meeting.

- XXVII Meeting (November 17 and 24, 2023): The meeting began with a series of presentations to share the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship in academic

ecosystems, as well as the context of the general planning framework that would be used. A SWOT analysis of the RIILSA member institutions was carried out. Work began on applying the CANVAS methodology to identify the distinctive elements of the network and identify the strategic axes of the Plan.

- XXVIII Meeting (April 18 and 19, 2024): Work continued on developing the CANVAS methodology to identify the distinctive elements of the network. Similarly, the SWOT analysis of the projects previously carried out by the network was integrated. Based on these analyses, the initiatives identified were classified and categorized according to the strategic axes of the Plan.
- XXIX Meeting (November 21 and 22, 2024): With the strategic axes identified, a structure for the Master Plan was presented and work began on developing the structure according to the strategic planning model. Objectives, goals, and strategic initiatives for each axis were developed in working teams.
- XXX Meeting (April 4 and 11, 2025): The strategic axes were reviewed, a first draft of the document was integrated, and the work teams for each strategic axis were defined.

It is essential to recognize that this plan is the result of teamwork by all RIILSA members and seeks to continue strengthening the collaboration and focus of our programs and projects and to respond to the call of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to fulfill our mission.

The six strategic areas of the Master Plan are described below.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF THE MASTER PLAN

Based on the background and procedure described in the previous sections to achieve the Network's objectives, this RIILSA 2025-2032 Research Master Plan, aligned with the different Lasallian, national, and international contexts, is structured around the following six Strategic Development Pillars:

1. Strengthening Research
2. Management and Administration
3. Dissemination and Communication

4. Social Impact
5. Internationalization
6. Partnerships and Funding

These Strategic Development Lines will work in synergy with other programs run by institutions that form part of other existing networks and with the research committee of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (AIUL).

Each Strategic Axis is detailed with a strategic objective, a series of contribution objectives with their respective indicators and deliverables, goals, expected impacts, strategic initiatives, timing (semester or permanent) and necessary resources. It is essential to mention that in some areas, a diagnosis is still required to define indicators, and the goals will be set with the first advances of the strategic initiatives to consider goals based on historical results. Below is a detailed description of the six Strategic Areas with their components:

1. Strategic Area: Strengthening Research

Strategic objective: To promote multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary research with local, regional and global reach within the RIILSA academic community.

Contribution Objective 1.1: Increase the number of collaborations and participation in network events.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 1.1.1 Conduct an initial assessment of the resources available at each site and their characteristics for the participation of teachers and students, considering the proposed indicators (2025-II, human and technological resources).
- 1.1.2 Promote publication in our own editorial products (journals) (ongoing, human and technological resources).
- 1.1.3 Promote participation in national and international activities for students and researchers (ongoing, human and financial resources).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- No. of joint projects
- No. of publications in network journals
- No. of papers participating in network events
- No. of people participating in network events

Goals/Expected impacts:

A baseline assessment is considered necessary to establish commitment to each goal. The first numerical commitment goals will be specified once the initial assessment has been completed.

Contribution Objective 1.2: Provide training to strengthen research skills, taking into account the resources available to network member institutions

Strategic Initiatives:

- 1.2.1 Identification of training needs of network members
- 1.2.2 Training on the implications of multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary research (2025-I to 2032-I, human, technological, and financial resources)
- 1.2.3 Disciplinary and methodological training (2025-II to 2023-I, human, technological, and financial resources)

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of courses offered
- Number of people trained
- Number of courses completed and available in the repository

Goals/Expected impacts:

- 1 course per semester offered by RIILSA to its members
- Have a repository accessible to the entire network

2. Strategic area: Management and Administration

Contribution Objective 2.1: Review RIILSA's structure to provide optimal support and functioning to the Network.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 2.1.1 Review and propose an organizational chart for the network to ensure that it complies with the objectives of the Master Plan (2025-1, RIILSA master plan).
- 2.1.2 Formation of committees and working groups (ethics, bioethics, editorial, technology, etc.) (2025-1, RIILSA Master Plan).

Indicators/deliverables:

- Final RIILSA organizational chart.
- List of committees and working groups and their members.

Goals/Expected impact:

- Better governance for the management of the network and its master plan.

Contribution Objective 2.2: Review and generate guidelines for the operation of RIILSA.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 2.2.1 Define the working teams and guidelines to be developed (2025-I).
- 2.2.2 Establish guidelines, policies, and regulations for collaboration, agreements, joint purchases, resource and infrastructure sharing, social responsibility, and definition and monitoring of RIILSA research lines (2025-II).
- 2.2.3 Develop a Code of Ethics to strengthen the ethical culture within the Network (2026-I).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- List of teams and members.
- Guidelines, policies, and regulations.
- Code of Ethics.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Improved effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the objectives of RIILSA's master plan.

Contribution Objective 2.3: Document and systematize processes to optimize RIILSA's operations.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 2.3.1 Identify the processes carried out by RIILSA (2025-I).
- 2.3.2 Compile institutional documents and international references (2025-I).
- 2.3.3 Design and develop operating manuals: event organization, network operation, communication, registration of research projects, registration of new RIILSA members, repository and microsite management, etc. (2026-I).
- 2.3.4 Document the best practices of the institutions that create up RIILSA (2025-II – ongoing).

Indicators/deliverables:

- List of identified processes.
- Institutional documents and international references.
- Operating manuals.
- Good practice document.

Goals/expected impacts:

- Leverage the experience of all universities in the operation and management of the network.

Contribution Objective 2.4: Develop a training program in the areas of management and administration for RIILSA managers.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 2.4.1 Develop an induction program for new RIILSA members (2026-I).
- 2.4.2 Organize meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, and thematic areas for students, professors, managers, and researchers (2025-II – ongoing).
- 2.4.3 Develop a training program to strengthen the negotiation, leadership, dissemination, and management skills of RIILSA members (2026-I).

Indicators/deliverables:

- Induction program for new members.
- Schedule of events.
- Training programs.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Reduce the impact of manager mobility and the corresponding learning curve.

Contribution Objective 2.5: Design an evaluation model to measure the degree of consolidation of RIILSA considering the objectives of the Master Plan.

Strategic initiatives:

- 2.5.1 Define the indicators that will create up the evaluation model (2026-II).
- 2.5.2 Design the assessment tools (2027-I).
- 2.5.3 Apply the instruments on a regular basis (2027-I – annual).
- 2.5.4 Present the results of the application to the Network and the relevant authorities (2027-II – annual).

2.5.5 Incorporate the results of the application into RIILSA's planning (2027-II – annual).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- List of indicators.
- Assessment tool.
- Periodic reports.
- Presentation of each report.
- Improvement Plans.

Goals/Expected Impacts:

- Objectively evaluate the results of the master plan.

Contribution Objective 2.6: Define the management model for the RIILSA repository and microsite.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 2.6.1 Design the structure of the RIILSA microsite (2025-I).
- 2.6.2 Seek the best technological options in accordance with the design of the RIILSA microsite (2025-I).
- 2.6.3 Operate the RIILSA microsite (2025-I).
- 2.6.4 Review the different repositories that have been used to locate the digitized information (2025-II).
- 2.6.5 Design the structure of the RIILSA repository (2026-I).
- 2.6.6 Operate and maintain the RIILSA repository up to date (2026-II).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Site map and selection of proposed technology.
- Number of notes published, number of visits.
- Inventory of repositories.
- Repository map.
- Number of visits.

Goals/Expected Impacts:

- Strengthen communication and organization of the network both between universities and with different sectors.

3. Strategic axis: Dissemination and communication

Strategic objective: Develop a dissemination plan for initiatives that consolidate and position the Network and its members as agents of social and academic transformation at the international level.

Contribution Objective 3.1: Efficiently disseminate the activities carried out by the Network to different audiences.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 3.1.1 Define the target audiences and communication channels to be used, as well as the indicators for each channel used (2025-II)
- 3.1.2 Establish a mechanism for direct liaison between RIILSA and the communication departments of each university (2025-II to 2026-I, resources: communication team, representatives from each university to share information, budget for promotion on different platforms).
- 3.1.3 Feeding and updating information for the RIILSA microsite (2025-II - biannual)

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of visits and downloads on the microsite.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Participation of RIILSA members in national and international conferences, giving presentations to raise awareness.
- Participation of all member institutions.
- Greater recognition and visibility for the network.
- Increased interaction with different audiences.

Contribution Objective 3.2: Disseminate the Network's outreach strategies.

Strategic Initiatives:

3.2.1 Establish a database and information gathering mechanism to showcase RIILSA's outreach activities (2026-II – biannual).

3.2.2 Feed and update information for the RIILSA microsite (2025-II – biannual).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of participants in the strategies disseminated (conferences, calls for proposals)
- Number of publications resulting from the strategies disseminated with Network members.
- Number of institutions and number of projects in which the institutions participate.
- Number of collaborative projects carried out between the Network and other public and private organizations.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Encourage all network members to implement the dissemination strategies.
- Strengthen networking.

- Greater integration of institutions in joint initiatives.

Contribution Objective 3.3: Raise awareness of the dissemination and outreach resources available to the Network.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 3.3.1 Establish and propose communication strategies that assist consolidate and disseminate work and create links for and by the Network (2026-I semester).
- 3.3.2 Define the working teams and frequency with which they will evaluate and create dissemination plans (2026-II semester, Communication and Dissemination Team, RIILSA microsite, budget for dissemination strategies).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Database and registration forms.
- Number of people/users who have access to the resources.
- Number of downloads and materials consulted.
- Average time spent on the page (repository) where the resources are hosted.
- Reach (number of people impacted) for each campaign or dissemination on social media.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Increase the number of visits to the RIILSA website.
- Make better utilize of available communication channels.
- More efficient dissemination of the Network's activities and academic output.

Contribution Objective 3.4: Identify the most effective dissemination and outreach channels.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 3.4.1 Diagnosis and analysis of current dissemination channels, as well as communication plans and content (2027-I semester, survey and impact assessment team, digital surveys to measure audience preferences (Google Forms, SurveyMonkey), investment in automation and audience segmentation tools).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Percentage growth of audience per channel in a given period.
- Percentage of members who are aware of all available channels of the Network.
- Percentage of users who utilize the information received through each communication channel.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Increase the number of users and interactions on each channel.
- Optimize internal and external communication within the network.
- Strengthen the sense of belonging and collaboration among Network members.

4. Strategic focus: Social Impact

Strategic objective: To design a model for evaluating the social impact of research carried out at Lasallian universities in the Network.

Contribution Objective 4.1: Establish a definition of social impact for Lasallian universities based on national and international frameworks of what social impact is.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 4.1.1 Review of concepts of social impact of research (2025-II).
- 4.1.2 Analysis of information for the construction of the concept (2025-II).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Document with national and international concepts and criteria for evaluating social impact.
- Definition of social impact that will serve as the framework for developing the evaluation model.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- To be defined based on the proposed definition of social impact.
- Propose at least five national and five international criteria.

Contribution Objective 4.2: Establish qualitative and quantitative indicators of the social impact of research carried out at Lasallian universities.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 4.2.1 Review different documents on social impact indicators and establish consistency with the established definition (2026-I, working team, databases, documents).
- 4.2.2 Propose quantitative and qualitative indicators (2026-II, working team, databases, documents).

Indicators/deliverables:

- List of quantitative and qualitative indicators for social impact assessment.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Have a tool/rubric to assess the social impact of the network's projects and activities.

Contribution Objective 4.3: Define the model for evaluating the social impact of research carried out at Lasallian universities.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 4.3.1 Construction of the social impact assessment model (2027-I and 2027-II).

4.3.2 Design of the tool for assessing social impact (2027-I and 2027-II, working team, related networks, among others).

4.3.3 Development of an operating manual that includes a flow chart of the stages of the model (2027-I and 2027-II).

4.3.4 Disseminate the first version of the social impact assessment model document (2028-I).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Social impact assessment model document.
- Tool for assessing social impact.
- A manual of procedures for operating the model in Lasallian universities.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- To have a tool that allows for the evaluation of the social impact of the network's projects.

Contribution Objective 4.4: Validate the model for assessing the social impact of research carried out at Lasallian universities.

Strategic Initiatives:

4.5.1 Invite a sample of Lasallian universities to participate in the validation process (2028-II, coordinated by RIILSA).

4.5.2 Training on reporting information (2028-II).

4.5.3 Apply the social impact assessment model to the sample of universities (2029-I).

4.5.4 Analysis of the information obtained in the application (2029-II).

4.5.5 Identification of areas for improvement in the model (2029-II).

4.5.6 Adjustments to the first version of the social impact assessment model (2030-I).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of Lasallian universities participating in the validation process.
- Number of projects reported.
- Number of people participating in the validation of the model.
- Report on observations derived from the application of the social impact assessment.

Goals/Expected Impact:

- Application of the social impact assessment model to review its relevance and feasibility.
- Feedback on the social impact assessment model.

5. Strategic axis: Internationalization

Strategic objective: Consolidate the internationalization process of RIILSA based on the recognition of its members and the establishment of strategic alliances to strengthen the impact of Lasallian research, the presence and global impact of the universities in the network, promoting international collaboration in the field of research, knowledge exchange, the strengthening of academic networks, and the continuous improvement of research quality.

Contribution Objective 5.1: Recognize the members who create up the Lasallian research network.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 5.1.1. Create a directory of Lasallian researchers for each Research Line (2025-II, database, forms, team responsible).
- 5.1.2 Regularly update the directory (permanent, database, forms, team responsible).
- 5.1.3 Reactivate the "collaboration networks" within RIILSA (2026-I, digital communication channels).
- 5.1.4 Map and identify research activities carried out (2025-II, research activity reports).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of researchers in the network.
- Number of international collaborations between researchers in the network.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Have a complete directory of researchers in the network.
- Link and encourage collaboration among members.

Contribution Objective 5.2: Establish and strengthen international partnerships.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 5.2.1 Share and participate in calls for proposals to obtain resources (2026-II, biannual, participation budget).
- 5.2.2 Document current and past calls for proposals on the RIILSA microsite (2026-II, biannual participation budget).
- 5.2.3 Invite universities within the Lasallian network to participate in calls for proposals (2026-II ongoing).
- 5.2.4 Establish communication with other universities (2025-II ongoing).
- 5.2.5 Send invitations to Lasallian universities to join RIILSA (2026-I permanent).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of new international research partnerships established annually.
- Percentage of international research projects in which universities in the network participate.
- Amount of international funding obtained for joint projects.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Establish new international research partnerships over a given period.
- Increase the participation of universities in the network in international research projects over the next three years.
- Increase the percentage of resources from international funds.

Contribution Objective 5.3: Design and monitoring of the internationalization process.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 5.3.1 Strengthen communication and collaboration between AIUL, the Lasallian International Teaching Network (RIDUL), and RIILSA (2025-I and 2026-II).
- 5.3.2 Establish the procedure for the development of internationalization (2026-I).
- 5.3.3 Define the different scales or levels of research, as well as the desired objectives for each (2026-II ongoing).
- 5.3.4 Document and share beneficial practices in network research projects (2026-II ongoing).
- 5.3.5 Measure the results of internationalization in the short, medium, and long term (2027-I permanent).
- 5.3.6 Promote greater participation by Lasallian institutions in the annual meeting of researchers (evaluation of participation in 2027-I).
- 5.3.7 Prepare a report on RIILSA activities and results and upload it to the microsite (2027-I permanent annual).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Internationalization plan.
- Number of internationalization activities implemented.
- Degree of compliance with the internationalization plan.

- Impact on international research.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Develop and approve an internationalization plan for the network's research.
- Implement internationalization activities.
- Meet the objectives set out in the internationalization plan each year.

6. Strategic axis: Linkages and Financing

Strategic objective: Promote outreach and financing actions that enhance efficient resource management, inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary collaboration, and the transfer of knowledge and innovation to strengthen RIILSA.

Contribution Objective 6.1: Promote external financing actions for research projects

Strategic Initiatives:

- 6.1.1 Raise awareness of access to funding opportunities (2025-II permanent, website/repository, human resources).
- 6.1.2 Promote the attraction of financial and in-kind resources by strengthening links with companies and sources of funding (2025-II permanent, databases, planned events, website/repository, human and financial resources).
- 6.1.3 Promote strategic alliances to finance collaborative research (2025-II permanent, human resources, and coordination).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- To be defined based on the actions defined.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Promote the sustainability of research.

Contribution Objective 6.2: Promote collaborative actions for the efficient management of research resources.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 6.2.1 Promote the implementation of management systems and processes for financial and in-kind resources (good practices) (2025-II to 2026-II, human resources, institutional infrastructure).
- 6.2.2 Promote joint procurement related to the network's functions with other networks that manage them (2025-II ongoing, human resources and coordination, institutional infrastructure).
- 6.2.3 Implement and update the centralized repository of projects, calls for proposals, and infrastructure (2025-II permanent, website/repository, human resources).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of calls for proposals in which the institution participates.
- Amount of resources obtained (in thousands of pesos per year).
- Number of projects supported.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Strengthen the development and impact of the Network's research projects.

Contribution Objective 6.3: Strengthen links for inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary collaboration with different sectors.

Strategic Initiatives:

- 6.3.1 Promote student participation in collaborative projects (professional internships and social service) (2025-II permanent, calls for proposals, list of collaborative projects).

6.3.2 Strengthen collaboration between network institutions and collaboration between work teams to generate interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary projects (2025-II permanent, calls for proposals, list of collaborative projects) with different sectors.

6.3.3 Strengthen collaboration with the AIUL Research Committee (2025-II permanent).

6.3.4 Propose organizational initiatives to promote recognition of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary work (2025-II to 2026-II, institutional policies).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of collaborative projects.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Promote inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary collaboration.

Contribution Objective 6.4: Promote the transfer of knowledge and innovation to different sectors of society.

Strategic Initiatives:

6.4.1 Increase training in R&D&I project management and fundraising for researchers, teachers, and students (2025-II permanent).

6.4.2 Strengthen the transfer of knowledge and beneficial practices in R&D&I and financing among members of the RIILSA Network (2025-II permanent, courses, workshops, webinars).

Indicators/Deliverables:

- Number of patents and prototypes.
- Number of projects transferred.

Goals/Expected impacts:

- Greater participation and dialogue with different sectors of society for the development of transdisciplinary projects.

FINAL COMMENTS

This year, 2025, marks the 300th anniversary of the papal bull approving the Institute, and on this tricentennial, it is essential to highlight the importance of resilience and the spirit of faith and innovation that our founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, had in facing all the challenges that came his way. For all Lasallians, his life and work are a great example to follow, not only in education but in all areas of our lives.

These roots are undoubtedly part of our DNA, and it is essential that we remember them as our purpose and live them every day. We are a community that was born with a purpose reflected in our values of faith, fraternity, and service. The Global Education Pact and the SDGs are more than just identified problems. They are calls for collaboration and action, global proposals that seek to raise awareness of the commitment we have as higher education institutions to society and to the generation and application of knowledge with social impact. UNESCO proposes in "The Futures of Education" a new social contract that allows us to consider differently about learning and the relationships between students, teachers, knowledge, and the world. In this social contract, research and innovation at all levels of education play a fundamental role. These calls to action that have been made in recent decades have been part of the Lasallian mission since its inception.

Our differences and the diversity of the institutions that create up RIILSA are our greatest strength. Over the years, we have recognized what sets us apart and we now have an essential opportunity to leverage our experience, history, and potential to take action and transform our society.

We have a great challenge ahead of us, but we are confident that with the network of experts we have in each of our institutions, our talent and human capital, and our long-term strategic vision, we will respond with commitment to the formation of committed professionals with values to propose

innovative solutions well grounded in the knowledge that is generated and applied every day in our universities.

Our diversity is our strength, and the network will be successful if we all work together in an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship.

La Salle International Research Network, RIILSA

April 2025

APPENDICES

1.- Acronyms

AIUL – International Association of Lasallian Universities

RIILSA – La Salle International Research Network

RIDUL – International Lasallian Teaching Network

R&D&I – Research, Development and Innovation

2.- Work teams by Strategic Area

STRATEGIC AXIS 1. STRENGTHENING RESEARCH

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Dolores Martínez	La Salle University Morelia
Lorena Broca	La Salle University Oaxaca
Joaquín Liedo	La Salle University, Pachuca
Patricia Villasana Ramos	La Salle University Bajío
René Adrián Moreno Parra	La Salle University Chihuahua
Mayany Larrañaga Moreno	La Salle University Cuernavaca
Anabell Covarrubias Díaz-Couder	La Salle Northwest University
Esther Vargas	La Salle University Mexico

STRATEGIC TEAM 2. R&D&I MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Karina Coronel	La Salle Bajío University
Juan Manuel Tello	La Salle University Morelia
Aaron Rodriguez	La Salle University Mexico
Eduardo Gómez	La Salle University Mexico
Roberto Antonio Vázquez	La Salle University, Mexico

STRATEGIC AXIS 3. AXIS OF DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Rodolfo Ledesma	La Salle University Mexico
Sinead Martínez	La Salle University Pachuca
Claudia Peña	La Salle University Saltillo
Leticia Canel	La Salle University Laguna
Michelle Quesada	La Salle University Costa Rica
María del Carmen Ramírez	La Salle University Puebla
Cristina Barrientos	La Salle University Nezahualcóyotl

STRATEGIC AXIS 4. SOCIAL IMPACT

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Cristina Barrientos	La Salle University Neza
Karina Coronel	La Salle Bajío University
Leticia Canel	La Salle University Laguna
Carmen Ramirez	La Salle University Puebla
René Moreno	La Salle University Chihuahua
Patricia Báez	La Salle University Victoria
Sinead Martinez	La Salle University, Pachuca
Esther Vargas	La Salle University Mexico
Roberto Vázquez	La Salle University Mexico

STRATEGIC AXIS 5. INTERNATIONALIZATION

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Anabell Covarrubias Diaz-Couder	La Salle Northwest University
Juan Manuel Tello Contreras	La Salle University Morelia
Lorena Carina Broca Domínguez	La Salle University Oaxaca
Joaquín Liedo Lavaniegos	La Salle University, Pachuca
Michelle Quesada Victor	La Salle University Costa Rica
Rodolfo Ledesma Valdez	La Salle University Mexico
Aaron Rodriguez Delgado	La Salle University Mexico

STRATEGIC AXIS 6. LINKAGES AND FINANCING

MEMBERS	INSTITUTION
Victoria Contreras García	La Salle University Mexico
Ariadna Rabelo Aguilar	La Salle University Cancún
Patricia Villasana Ramos	La Salle University Bajío
Anabell Covarrubias	La Salle Northwest University
Eduardo Gómez Ramírez	La Salle University Mexico

RIILSA RESEARCHERS



Click to meet the RIILSA Researchers





Lasallian higher education around the world

***La educación superior
Lasaliana en el mundo***

EXPLORE THE LASALLIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WORLDWIDE

In this section, readers are introduced to Lasallian higher education institutions around the world. You will be directed to a database where you may choose the most convenient way to access information about the institutions—by IALU regions, by fields of knowledge, and through links to the respective official websites. Updates or additions may be submitted to ialu.research@lasalle.org.

IALU REGION

IALU REGION	BACHELOR	DOCTORAL	MASTER
Mexico	266	10	186
South and Central America	250	11	36
Asia and Pacific Islands	262	49	124
North America, Bethlehem and English speaking Africa	288	13	128
Europe and French Speaking Africa	95	10	80

Click to access the database



Copyright

© [IALU – International Association of Lasallian Universities]. All rights reserved.

This ebook is protected by international copyright laws. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or conveyed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the author or the responsible institution, except as permitted by applicable law. For permission requests or additional information, please contact: ialu.research@lasalle.org.

Website IALU
ialu.org/ialu

Contact
ialu@lasalle.org

Derechos de Autor

© [IALU – Asociación Internacional de Universidades Lasallistas].

Todos los derechos reservados. Este ebook está protegido por leyes internacionales de derechos de autor. Ninguna parte de esta publicación puede ser reproducida, distribuida, transmitida, almacenada en un sistema de recuperación o comunicada de ninguna forma o por ningún medio, ya sea electrónico, mecánico, fotocopia, grabación u otro, sin el permiso previo por escrito del autor o de la institución responsable, excepto en los casos permitidos por la legislación aplicable. Para solicitudes de autorización o información adicional, por favor contacte a: ialu.research@lasalle.org.

Website IALU
ialu.org/ialu

Contacto
ialu@lasalle.org