

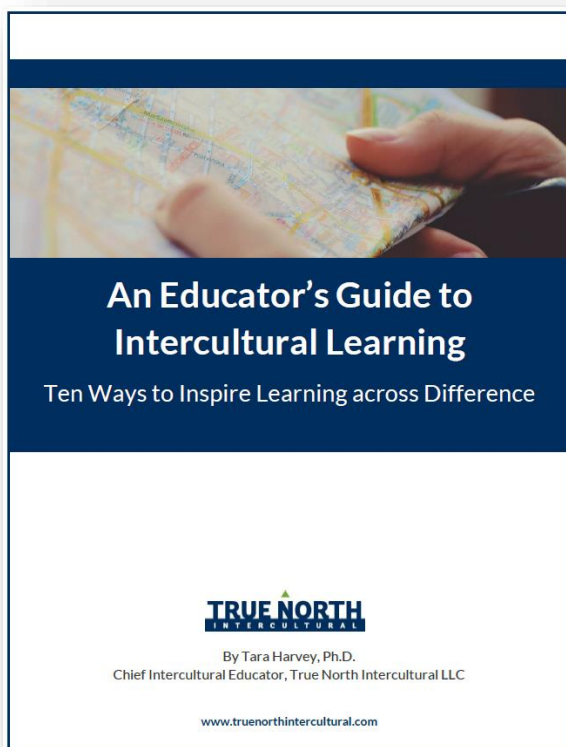
Issue topic: International perspectives on social education

INSPIRATION

Inspiration

Introducing a new intercultural learning tool by Tara Harvey

An Educator's Guide to Intercultural Learning. Ten Ways to Inspire Learning across Difference



Educational institutions are increasingly interested in fostering intercultural competence and global understanding. Many school mission statements or strategic plans now reference “global competence,” “intercultural understanding,” or similar. One of the key means articulated for achieving that goal is through study abroad or domestic cultural immersion experiences, which I will collectively refer to as “study away.”

There's often an unstated assumption that study away experiences lead to greater intercultural competence. Unfortunately, there's a flaw in that logic.

While it has a lot of positive benefits, **research has actually shown that, on average, study away does not help students develop their intercultural competence.** That is, there is not necessarily a cause-and-effect relationship.

Study away research, as well as student development literature, now strongly

support the idea that students need *intentional* and *frequent* intervention to help them develop their intercultural competence through study away experiences. That is, being exposed to or even immersed in another culture is not usually sufficient to help students develop intercultural skills. Educators need to help students learn to actively reflect on and make sense of their experiences, then extract and put into practice their new learning.

In addition to teaching your given discipline in a different country or culture, also being responsible for facilitating students' intercultural learning and growth during the experience may seem like a daunting task. But it can also be extremely *rewarding*. In addition, arming students with the tools they need to learn through their experience can actually make your job as a study away leader *easier*!

This guide is meant to help you get started and know where to focus your efforts in order to more proactively foster intercultural learning.

The good news is that your efforts to expand your capacities for furthering intercultural learning can have a *big* impact. You will not only help your students learn about their host culture, but also gain lifelong intercultural skills that are transferrable to any experience in which they are engaging across difference—which, let's face it, is pretty much any time we're interacting with other human beings!

The Educator's Guide to Intercultural Learning by Tara Harvey is available for free [here](#).



Tara Harvey has been in the field of international education since 2000, and specifically focused on how to maximize the learning and growth inherent in intercultural experiences since 2006, when she began Ph.D. studies to explore this question. In addition to working in language learning, international student services, and study abroad, Tara has designed and/or taught intercultural courses at the University of Minnesota, Middlebury Institute for International Studies, and through CIEE (the Council on International Exchange). As Academic Director of Intercultural Learning at CIEE, she was responsible for developing intercultural curricula for the world-wide study abroad programs, as well as training, coaching, and supporting the resident staff around the world in how to facilitate intercultural learning. In 2016, following many requests from universities to provide similar training for their faculty and staff, Tara started True North Intercultural.

An educator's guide through the eyes of Czech educators:

Lenka Gulová

Department of Social Education
Faculty of Education
Masaryk University

“Internationalization is a major topic in our higher education, particularly in relation to student mobility. In this mobility, and in internationalization as a whole, we see lots of positive aspects, both for the individual and for the environment, in which the experience connected with getting used to and penetrating other cultures can then be reflected. If we stay on the surface of the issue, then we understand what encountering another culture entails. But is that not too little for an ambition as great as the internationalization of higher education? Do we truly understand what internationalization entails and what its objectives can be, for example in relation to social pedagogy? The Educator's Guide to Intercultural Learning brings us interesting inspiration in relation to looking at such topics, and even more importantly for dealing with them in practice. These are not merely some methodical instructions, but essentially a relatively “living” interpretation of what intercultural competences and global understanding are (rather fundamental topics connected with internationalization), how to acquire them, and why it's important to embrace them. A major bonus of this “guide” are the links to various theories and sources, which lend the entire text greater importance. Naturally, intercultural competences and global understanding are something with which social pedagogy as a profession or a scientific discipline definitely counts on in many areas of a social pedagogue's work. For example, in relation to dealing with otherness, value education, various target groups in social pedagogy and frequently social disadvantage, or in the ambitions of social pedagogy as a discipline which strives to activate and motivate the individual, and by extension transform society in terms of its humanization, openness and democratization.

Activation, work with the environment, values, experience, sharing, transformation, respect, development, empathy, openness, social disadvantage, fairness, constructivism; these are some of the terms which we could relate to social pedagogy. We also find similar terms in the Educator's Guide to Intercultural Learning. A purely random similarity? I think not. Therefore, it's not just about what internationalization could mean for social pedagogy, but also what social pedagogy could mean for internationalization.”

Jana Zerzová

Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Education
Masaryk University

“Studying and developing our own intercultural competence leads us from our frequent and often unconscious tendency to rely on various aspects of our monocultural mindsets to adopt a more pluricultural one, opens our eyes to diversity, replaces shallow stereotyping and tolerance with informed tolerance, helps us make informed choices in our communication, and corrects our expectations of others.

Although it may seem a common stereotype, cultural variety does not only exist across foreign cultures. Our attempt to understand various realms of cultural variety, at least to some extent, inevitably leads us to abandon the common perception of the superficial value of humankind and look for a deeper understanding of it.

That said, the importance of personal self-development in this area cannot be stressed enough. Be it teachers, social pedagogues, students, doctors, businessmen, members of the army, government, churches, cultural institutions, or any other groups and institutions, we all can benefit from the development of our intercultural competence, because where two people meet, cultural variety inevitably arises, giving us the potential to harm or help, misunderstand or enrich and respect each other, work effectively and emphatically, or miss our chance to do so.”

Jakub Hladík

Department of Pedagogical Sciences
Faculty of Humanities
Tomas Bata University in Zlín

“The whole characteristic of the text is involved in the title. It is a guide, meaning that the text is short and should serve as an initial orientation to the issue. The second part of the title refers to the content of the text, in which the author uses ten points to introduce readers (mainly teachers) to basics topics related to foreign students and students from different cultural learning backgrounds. Tara Harvey primarily deals with how to teach, not what to teach. Specifically, the guide should allow for “gaining lifelong intercultural skills that are transferable to any experience in which they are engaging across differences”. This is quite ambitious, but at the same time it is a positive trait of this guide. The guide could be titled in another way as well, e.g., “How not to be afraid of intercultural education”. The content of the guide is transferable to a different cultural environment and could inspire Czech teachers or social pedagogues, for example, who thus far have rarely encountered cultural differences in schools. It is “only” a guide; it isn’t a handbook and readers can’t expect deeply elaborated instructions. However, the most important attribute of this guide is that it is a simple and understandable pathway to other more difficult topics of education in a culturally diverse society.



Lenka Gulová is a Czech teacher, Head of the Department of Social Education at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in Brno. She focuses her professional and civic life on the support of individuals and development of communities. For many years, her most powerful tool has been project planning that allowed her to effectively bind theory with practice. She has experience in government work as well as NGOs, and aside from thirty years of experience in the field, she is an active member of a leisure-time society with some overlap in environmental studies. Spirituality and faith, activation and motivation towards a meaningful life, and respect for others give hope to her life.



Jana Zerzová works as an assistant professor at the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University and as a consultant in a Digital Literacy project at the Faculty of Education at Palacky University. In her research, she focuses on the development of intercultural communicative competence, research of realised curriculum, development of digital literacy, CLIL, second language acquisition and teaching English to pupils with ASD, and other topics from the area of second language acquisition and teaching.



Jakub Hladik works as an associate professor at the Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín. He is interested in social pedagogy, self-regulation and multicultural education. In this research field, he has published articles in domestic and foreign journals. He was a member of many research teams. He is a chairman of Association of Educators in Social pedagogy, Czech Republic and he is an Editor-in-Chief of Social Education journal.