



## **The Role of IMID (Idaho Museum of International Diaspora) in Fostering Global Skills, as well as Emotional and Cultural Intelligence in Trainee Teachers at Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia)**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to explore specific skills and competences deemed necessary to future profession of trainee teachers, focusing predominantly on the global skills, as well as the emotional and cultural intelligence which are central to their future practice. We introduced thirteen university teachers at Matej Bel University (MBU), Banská Bystrica, Slovakia to a selection of authentic and expert materials produced by Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (IMID). We suggested the integration of these materials into participants' teaching of compulsory and optional courses in ELT methodology, EL practicum, American and British literature, sociolinguistics, and other related areas. We aimed to research more into how the opinions of university lecturers have evolved on the topic of diaspora and culture during the period of intensive immersion in IMID scope of focus. The data was collected through interviews and online focus-group discussions. These were then immediately analysed. Another of the study's central aims was to research the potential of IMID's online materials in elevating the global skills, emotional and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers studying English language and literature and other subjects at the Faculty of Arts at MBU. The findings showed that integration of IMID's freely accessible online materials can have a substantial benefit on the professional and personal development of trainee teachers.*

**Keywords:** *global skills, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, trainee teachers, IMID, MBU, human journey stories*

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of Idaho Museum of International Diaspora's publicly accessible (digital) audio-visual materials in fostering the global skills, and the emotional and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers studying at the Faculty of Arts (Matej Bel University) in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Our initial aim is to find out to what extent and in which way, Department of English and American Studies university teachers, who are in charge of the cohort of trainee teachers, will avail of the given materials during their seminars and lectures in 2022/2023 academic year and whether these materials will be used to enhance necessary professional skills of their students. Education today must cover more than just traditional areas connected with teaching basic language skills and language systems. Therefore, we suppose that future global skills educators should be well-equipped in the following areas, (5 clusters of global skills) [1]: 1. Communication and collaboration; 2. Creativity and critical thinking; 3. Intercultural competence and citizenship ; 4. Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing; 5. Digital literacies.

We assume that navigating our students through global skills, supporting their levels of emotional, and cultural intelligence, and exposing them to a range of life-skill fostering activities, can enable them to



deal with the impact which global issues (such as pandemic, war, international conflicts, environmental issues, arrival of refugees from Ukraine, diasporas, etc.) can have on their lives. In *Psychology Today* it is stated that “emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one’s own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Cultural intelligence, on the other hand, has been defined as “the skill or ability to relate to and work with groups of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences,” as well as “a person’s capability to function and manage him- or herself successfully in culturally diverse settings.” [2] Based on this, we opine that our students need to be exposed as much as possible to such tasks and activities which are global skills-oriented, meaningful, real-life based and which provoke their thinking skills, fostering their emotional, and cultural intelligence. “*If they are to benefit now and in the future, learners need to learn the skills – referred to as global skills -that are critical for lifelong learning and success in these difficult years.*” [3] Arising out of this, it is important to educate candidate teachers in such a way that they will be able to pass down their skills to their future learners. [4] This led us to explore more about how IMID’s online repository could help university teachers to elevate their students’ global skills as well as emotional, and cultural intelligence.

## 1.2. Purpose of the article

Teachers in our small-scale survey are taking a model from an established institution - the IMID, to incorporate selected aspects of that model into their lessons and syllabi, making sure that they are taking specific examples aimed at global skills, emotional, and cultural intelligence development into their courses’ design. The research cohort provides education and training for trainee (candidate) teachers. We suggest that thanks to IMID’s model applied in the curriculum aimed at candidate teachers, they will be able to recognise how our behaviour might impact others, and how this behaviour might be contradictory to someone’s else’s, how respecting diversity matters, and how important it is to be emotionally, and culturally intelligent in order to lead an effective and successful intercultural communication, and how crucial it is to become a critically thinking individual, and a role model for learners. To summarize, our purpose is to contribute to a transformational change through exposing university academics to IMID’s materials and see how those could help them to prepare trainee teachers for their job.

## 2. Why IMID and why their materials?

Idaho Museum of International Diaspora (abbrev. IMID), located in Boise (Idaho, USA) is a multipurpose museum which strives to foster and support human journey stories dialogues across the globe and to initiate similar initiatives worldwide. [5] In Slovakia there is not such an institution which would house under one roof all minorities or ethnic groups located in the region. There are individual small museums (Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia, Museum of Ruthenian Culture, Museum of German Culture, etc., and all of them are museums of national (historical) minorities) governed by the Slovak National Museum. IMID provides us with a good example of the broader understanding of local and international heritage, creating space for expressing multiple identities living in Idaho, USA. IMID creates, fosters and promotes not solely material artefacts (as tangible heritage) from the past, but also current narratives and oral histories (stories) (intangible heritage), human journey stories of people (former refugees), etc.

Slovakia has become a direct observer of the war on Ukraine invaded by Russia in 2022, breaking all international peace laws. As a result of all harsh conditions put on the victims (citizens of Ukraine), thousands of them decided to flee to Slovakia, especially mothers and their children who are now enrolled in the Slovak education system. The trainee teachers have already been confronted with this situation in schools. Based on this, it would be essential for them to come into contact with diaspora topics as soon as possible and IMID could help in this context via sharing diaspora heritage in the broader community. The case of Boise’s IMID is very exceptional as the key aim of this institution is to value and celebrate human journey stories, which is also the main reason why we selected IMID’s publicly available online materials for a deeper scrutiny in terms of its use in the education of trainee teachers. The students will surely come across such terms as trauma, adaptation, identity, heritage, etc. during their studies, but will they be given the chance to think about them in a more detailed way? Our long-term intention is to integrate those topics (inspired by IMID) into the teaching program curriculum. We were motivated especially with how IMID as a museum (as well as an education



institution) deals with the trauma incurred by members of diaspora, or what lenses it uses to portray the diaspora heritage of individual identities living in Boise while being a representative of all Idaho diasporas. In this sense we agree that a/the museum in this case can be a place of therapy for those exposing their story and personal objects, not just solely of commemoration. In this sense, IMID has a potential to serve as a role model for other museums in the world based on the fact that it resembles a place where past is viewed from the lenses of the current representatives of diaspora, fostering their identity, and personal story through sharing human journey experiences with the local community, and contributing to fostering collective identity of the people living in Idaho. To sum it up, IMID stores a range of materials which could be used across the Slovak education system. Given the fact that the narrative of this museum is to show the human journey story and to celebrate it, IMID has become a new prototype for a museum which is fed from the past, nurtured by the present and fostered by the future of communities.

### 3. Research methods

In this chapter we will take a closer look at opinions held by university teachers at MBU's Department of English and American Studies, regarding IMID's audio-visual digital materials. A short-term qualitative survey was undertaken to explore more about where the university teachers see IMID's materials positioned in their syllabi. There were 13 university teachers (from English and American Studies Department) who undertook interviews and focus-group discussions in July 2022. We also explored how they viewed the special role of IMID in diaspora heritage support, cultivation, promotion, as well as in elevating global skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence of trainee teachers. We suggest that IMID's materials could help trainee teachers to recognise how our behaviour might impact others, and how this behaviour might be contradictory to someone's else's, supporting our students global skills (critical thinking, intercultural communication, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, etc.). We also opine that this inspiration could contribute significantly to transformational changes in education and training of trainee teachers.

#### 3.1 Results of Survey

The university teachers who participated in our small-scale survey took a model from an established institution, i.e. IMID to incorporate it into their lessons and syllabi. They were welcomed to pick up whatever they needed specifically for the objectives of their courses. They had a chance to go through the digital repository of IMID located in a publicly available website, online domain and take the materials which inspired them into their curriculum design in order to develop global skills of their students, as well as their emotional, and cultural intelligence. As can be viewed below, the selected participants of our small-scale survey viewed integration of IMID's materials into their courses as very adequate and plausibly applicable in the short-term horizon.

*"It is possible to use such topics at any time. I would definitely use it at the English Through Literature seminar, where we deal with topics such as: The position of women in society; Otherness; Indifference; War; (Im) migration, etc."* (respondent no. 1., woman).

*"In English lexicology or Sociolinguistics, I would be able to connect with the topic of intercultural communication. I would confront the diversity and non/acceptability of cultural-communication codes of other cultures in Slovakia."* (respondent no. 1., woman).

Except for the *English Through Literature*, *English Lexicology*, and *Sociolinguistics*, there were other respondents who saw IMID's materials well applicable in other courses as evident in the next paragraphs, which makes us conclude that the IMID's materials are flexible enough to be integrated on a wide scale in the teaching program curriculum established at Faculty of Arts, in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia:

*"I could apply IMID's materials in American Studies, especially those about human journey stories, such as one about Palina Louangketh and her immigration/refugee story and other issues about how humanity can protect the environment and vice versa."* (respondent no. 3., woman)



Trainee teachers have to attend a prescribed number of compulsory subjects which fall into the area of linguistics, cultural studies, and English language methodology. We assume that IMID's materials could create an interesting added value to the content of specific courses such as: *American Studies, British studies, Intercultural studies, Sociolinguistics, ELT methodology, and English through literature.*

Respondent no. 9., who teaches American studies, stated how important it is to discuss diaspora, immigration, and refugee topics with his students, who come on regular basis into contact with Ukrainian students or those from other cultural background:

*"One more idea: given that Slovakia is not generally known for the visibility of its diasporic and immigrant communities, it might be interesting to discuss the various such communities present here in Slovakia, at least according to students' personal experiences, and compare them with the list of diasporas present in Idaho." (respondent no. 9., man) "If material on specific diasporas, Idaho communities or individual stories is added, this could indeed serve useful purposes in my course, providing specific examples of diasporas in the American experience and adding more detail on the cultural fabric of the Rocky Mountain region (a region whose cultures are often underrepresented in overviews of US culture)."*

Another argument for using IMID's materials came from the lecturer teaching an American literature course, the respondent no. 8. (woman) mentioned that

*"The Idaho Museum of International Diasporas website proves to be a useful resource in my course focused on ethnic literatures, explaining in an accessible way how diasporas have been formed in the U.S. and implicitly explaining how diasporas relate to current events in Europe."*

As can be deduced, this university teacher (respondent no. 8., woman) referred implicitly to the war waged by Russia against Ukraine. She also mentioned the life story of the museum's founder, prof. Palina Louangketh (founder and executive director of IMID), published in USA Today, which could be used in her course as a text to discuss the social mobility of refugees in the U.S., with a focus on raising awareness of the issue of forced emigration and the need for civic engagement. [5]

Next respondents were inspired by Cross-cultural voices curriculum and the power of storytelling which they suppose as useful in their ELT-methodology oriented courses.

*"I do think that IMID's cross-cultural voices project could be used to inform my classes aimed at future teachers' education and training. The lessons designed according to Global Leadership Curriculum could elevate my students' global skills, emotional, as well as cultural intelligence." (respondent no. 5., woman)*

*"Through all the materials presented on the IMID's website, I deduce that most of them can serve really well as a platform for testing the power of storytelling in our English language methodology lessons, that could be elaborated and used in our ELT-oriented seminars..." (respondent no. 7., woman). In the case of this respondent, it would be plausible to also invite guest speakers to speak about their experience with involuntary displacement from their country of origin, or the experiences of their family members, etc., in order to elevate students' emotional as well as cultural intelligence.*

Respondent no. 6. viewed IMID's materials as motivational, and possibly applicable in *Intercultural studies, American studies, and American literature.*

*"There is an experience at the department – experience of otherness and I do also have personal experience of being a Canadian immigrant's granddaughter. I agree with the fact that we need to innovate, doing something unconventional in order to make our teaching program sustainable." (respondent no. 6., woman)*

It was inspiring to see how our respondents aligned the IMID's materials with the topics of their courses in order to elevate their students' emotional and cultural intelligence.

*"I would rather go the way of updating and applying to the situation connected with the current geopolitical situation affecting Slovakia. I am thinking of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian"*



*Federation. I am thinking of the 6 million Ukrainian refugees, migrants, detainees (whatever we call them), not to mention the internally displaced persons inside Ukraine who have been forced to flee their homes.” (respondent no. 1., woman)*

As respondent no. 1 indicated, she is motivated to use the IMID sources to challenge the opinions and mindsets of future teachers related to the current situation connected with the war in Ukraine. With this said, it is evident that respondent no. 1 aims to develop not only subject-related skills of future teachers but align them also with more practical global skills, which are generally all transferable and possible to integrate into any subject. All in all, the opinions of all respondents created a solid basis for further development of pedagogical implications made by authors of the article.

#### **4. Implications for Education and Training of Candidate Teachers**

Based on our analysis of interviews, focus-group discussions, and email communication, we assume that IMID’s materials generate a useful source for university lecturers in the Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. As it was stated several times by our respondents, the IMID’s materials were viewed as motivational, inspirational, and worth integrating in the courses offered for trainee teachers. All of our respondents agreed on the importance of elevating global skills, as well as the emotional and cultural intelligence of their students. These two intelligences were also mentioned because students’ concentration has been impacted negatively during COVID-19 restrictions when most teaching moved online. Thanks to IMID’s human journey stories integrated in the lessons, it would be possible to work with students’ senses, to involve them emotionally. This aligned with ethics and diversity principles of both institutions.

#### **Conclusion**

The university teachers in Department of English and American Studies expressed their interest and motivation to integrate the following topics in their courses (based on their immersion in IMID’s online repository): The power of storytelling related to the human journey story; Cross-cultural voices of diaspora; Cross-border voices of diaspora; Cross-culinary voices of diaspora; Revitalization of culture of indigenous people in the USA; Immigration to the USA; Selected aspects of emotional intelligence; Selected aspects of cultural intelligence; Intercultural communication, intercultural encounters; Otherness; Indifference; War; (Im)migration; Social inclusion and exclusion; Protection of human rights; Diversity and non/acceptability of cultural-communication codes of other cultures in Slovakia, and the USA; Values and their importance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and many others. Based on the respondents’ answers, trainee teachers’ critical thinking and other global skills can be very well trained by introducing them to IMID’s diverse online materials which provide them with the opportunity to learn, discover, and explore. To wrap up, the survey carried out in the Department of English and American Studies in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, was just a small-scale one. However, its implications can be transferred across various courses aimed at trainee teachers, in a manner which aligns with the long-term goal of: IMID and Matej Bel University, which is to transform the minds of future generational leaders by fostering their emotional, and cultural intelligence.

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