

# Education, Multiculturalism and Internationalization



## Interview with Dr. Flavia Iuspa from Florida International University (FIU)

Dr. Iuspa is an Instructor and the Director of International Programs and Initiatives in the Department of Teaching and Learning. She received her Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with specialization in International and Intercultural Education from Florida International University. Before joining the School of Education and Human Development, Dr. Iuspa was the program manager at the College of Business (COB) directing the COB's off-shore programs. Dr. Iuspa is part of the Fulbright Specialist Roster Program. Her research areas include: Internationalization process of higher education institutions, Developing global perspectives in teachers and students, Global Citizenship Education, Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Teach Global Issues, Politics of Curriculum.

***Dialogia:*** Dr. Iuspa, first of all thank you very much for this interview for *Dialogia*. It is an honor for us. Let's begin learning some more about you. Tell us about your career and interests in research in Florida International University (FIU).

***Flavia Iuspa:*** Thank your inviting me. I was born and raised in Argentina. I moved to the US when I was 17 years old. Since then, I have been in Miami. I first joined FIU as a student of International Relations. My passion for cultures and languages led me to a Study Abroad to Paris, where I learned to appreciate the diversity of cultures and friendships. Upon my return, I decided to do a masters in International Business, and eventually my doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an specialization in international education. My research interests is based on providing my students the opportunity to engage in a critical thinking education where they are the agent of change, to empower them, following Paulo Freire's empowerment philosophy. My research focus on the internationalization efforts of higher education institutions, developing a global perspective and empathy on students and teachers.

***Dialogia:*** FIU has a reputed multicultural tradition. How to keep this notorious tradition in a sometimes so adverse political and social scenery this kind of approach faces nowadays?

***Flavia Iuspa:*** This is an excellent question. We are blessed that we are in a community where cultural diversity is the way we live. It is my opinion that as you walk through the FIU campuses, you will see that special effort is made to live up to the recognition of how diversity enriches our lives. It helps to recognize constantly that the world is more than just one culture or language, but rather together, we can live and find solutions to global issues.

***Dialogia:*** Concerning FIU's scenery, are cultural and languages differences a problem or a solution?

***Flavia Iuspa:*** In my mind, I do not think of cultural and languages differences neither as problem nor as a solution. I think having the ability to recognize other points of views, that come from one's cultural, language and experiences is a soft

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skill that we need to have and embrace. Globalization is giving us the opportunity to listen to each other and understand that differences do exist, but also local and global solutions are possible.

***Dialogia:*** How do you connect this so wide and notorious approach with Education, specially teaching and learning formation?

***Flavia Iuspa:*** As an Instructor, I strive to motivate my students to develop a life-long learning disposition because I believe that newly acquired knowledge yields unexpected revelations and experiences. As I reflect on my teaching philosophy, I identify with the philosophies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, as both played a key role in shaping the way I think about teaching and learning. Dewey advocated for a curriculum aligning to the social context that would promote democracy and a civil society. Freire highlighted the significance of a curriculum leading to empowerment and emancipation.

For example in one of my online courses, I incorporated the Collaborative Online International Learning experience (COIL). This learning experience allows my students from a period of six-weeks interact with the students from a university in Mexico. The purpose of this activity is for them, the US-Mexico students, to learn about the similarities or differences between the US and Mexico on global issues, and eventually for them to work on a solution.

This, for me, epitomize what my teaching is, providing students with real-life situations where learning allows them to bring together the theory and practice through cultural perspectives.

***Dialogia:*** Could you tell us how Latin American culture, specially the Brazilian one, is studied and researched at FIU? Have you ever received Brazilian graduate students and professors?

***Flavia Iuspa:*** Latin American studies at FIU are driven by the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at the School of International and Public Affairs. Within our School of Education and Human Developments, we do have students from Brazil coming to our Masters and Doctoral Programs. We do have faculty that are from Brazil, for example our Executive Director at the School, is from Brazil. I also know of a particular graduate student of mine that is Brazilian, and

her research is about promoting bilingualism at home. She focuses on Portuguese, but her research can be applied to any other situation where a second language is spoken at home.