COIL as a Double Helix: Insights from a Three Year German-American On-line Learning Collaboration

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Overview

- Who are we and where are we from?
- Rationale for Internationalizing Teacher Education
- Our project:
  - How things came to happen
  - Evolution: Our Learning by Doing
  - Outcomes and Student Feedback
- Lessons Learned
- Discussion
Who are we and where are we from?

Rationale for Internationalizing Teacher Education

Our project:
  • How things came to happen
  • Evolution: Our Learning by Doing
  • Outcomes and Student Feedback

Lessons Learned

Discussion
Who are we?

Dr. William E. Herman

Professor at the Department of Psychology at SUNY Potsdam

Research Interests:
• Translation of the teaching and learning knowledge base into professional practices
• Test anxiety, achievement motivation, and attribution theory
• Values acquisition and moral development

Dr. Frederik Ahlgrimm

Lecturer in Teacher Education programs at Potsdam University
Coordinator for the Internationalization of Teacher Education

Scholarly interests:
• Teacher education
• School development and management
• Heterogenity and Inclusion in education
Where are we from?

SUNY Potsdam

Bill Herman
Where are we from?

Germany

→ about 4% of the US area
→ about 25% of the US population
→ highest population and biggest economy in Europe
Where are we from?

Brandenburg

→ one of the sixteen German federal states
→ surrounds (but does not include) the German national capital and city-state Berlin (population of 3.4 million people)
Where are we from?

Potsdam

→ Capital City of Brandenburg
→ Directly borders the German capital Berlin
→ About 159,000 Inhabitants
Where am I from?

University of Potsdam

→ Brandenburg's largest university
→ about 20,000 students overall
→ situated across four campuses
→ about 4,000 students in teacher education programs (2,800 undergraduate, 1,200 graduate)
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Why Internationalizing Teacher Education?

- Foster students’ awareness of being *citizens of the world*
- Develop global competencies (Niehaus et al, 2013): Students
  - investigate the world beyond their immediate environment;
  - recognize varying perspectives;
  - communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences; and,
  - take action to improve conditions.
- Create capacities for students to address global challenges and opportunities in the future
- Discrepancy between the claim for internationalization in teacher education and regionally regulated teacher education programs worldwide
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How did we get to know each other?

Some milestones

• Existing partnership and prior exchanges between the two Potsdams
• Visit of a SUNY delegation in summer 2013
• Individual meeting after the official part
• Regular, weekly Skype meetings (between 60 and 90 minutes)
• Heavy email traffic, including syllabuses, publications, CVs, descriptions of professional obligations and a typical week
• Experiences from three seminars in 2013, 2014 and 2015
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The COIL idea

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

• Model developed at the SUNY Global Center
• Links real classes at different places around the world
• Enhances virtual mobility
• Bi-directional interaction at eye-level
• Combines face-to-face sessions with virtual collaboration
• For more information visit coil.suny.edu
Challanges

SUNY Potsdam: Educational Psychology

6 (5) hours time zone difference
Daylight saving time changes on different weekends

Semester times:
August to December  October to February
February to May    April to July
Two sessions of 75 minutes per week One session of 90 minutes per week

English language   German language
Work with one text book Work with different sources

Uni Potsdam: Einführung in die Schulpädagogik
What did we actually do?

**Experiment 1: 2013/14**

**Bill**
- Students enrolled on Bill’s Moodle site
- Picture and video of the German class
- Online discussions
- Invited colleagues to participate
- Shared learning and evaluation tools
- Had all our students watch and critique the same Hong Kong math lesson

**Frederik**
- Changed syllabus and synchronized topics with Bill’s syllabus in the first half of the semester
- Produced video and pictures to introduce the class
- Used Bill’s textbook (English and German) and had students read one chapter (40-50 pages) per week
- Introduced weekly multiple choice tests
- Actively participated in online discussions
What did we actually do?

Experiment 2: 2014/15

- Using the same textbook
- PolyCom video conference
- Pairing students from the U.S. and Germany
- Task of creating a common Prezi presentation on the topic of assessment and grading
What did we actually do?

Assessment and Grading
Experiences and thoughts
What did we actually do?

Experiment 3: 2015/16

- Using the same textbook
- Skype video conference
- Pairing students from the U.S. and Germany in live Skype session
- Task of creating a common PowerPoint presentations on the “ideal classroom”
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Overview and Student Feedback

The German students mentioned that they
• gained proficiency in the English language,
• learned about education in the U.S.A.,
• how to connect two worlds,
• and learned about others.

American students
• enjoyed learning about a different culture,
• learned not to be afraid of new experiences,
• found that higher education is more reasonable (less costly) and more challenging in Germany.
Overview and Student Feedback

Students on “both sides of the pond” remarked as problematic elements:

- Time Zone issues,
- technology support/breakdowns,
- time constraints,
- lack of motivation by partners,
- and more time was needed for one-on-one work
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Lessons Learned

• Experiments led to both joy and frustration.
• Extra energy and time was worth our professional time and energy.
• Expect great variation in results. When everything ‘clicks”, expect great things.
• Amazement and irritation are essential elements of intercultural learning experiences.
• Crucial elements: patience, openness to new experiences, understanding, etc.
• Faculty members are powerful role models.
• Personal relationships allow for virtual collaboration.
Thank you for your interest!

If you have any further questions or comments, please email us:

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Full paper available