THINKING OTHERWISE: HOW GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES TRANSFORM EDUCATION

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How the ITEC Group Emerged

(Internationalizing the Teacher Education Curriculum)

• Started with an idea but little experience of global networking
• Participated in COIL Conference 2012 as SUNY grantees
• Received Geneseo Curriculum Development Grant 2013
• Previous international experience of group members (but these had only a small digital element) For example:
  • Student teaching exchange with the University of Exeter
  • Student teaching program in Ghana
  • Fulbright year in Jordan and sabbatical year in the West Bank, Palestinian Territories
Framing Our Approach


• Why did we like this article?
  • Examines reforming curricula to foster *engaged, global citizenship* and *personal transformation*
  • Counters the notions of “American exceptionalism” (the U.S. does it better) and intellectual tourism, and suggests that activities should be guided through networks or partnerships by *principles of mutuality and reciprocity*
  • Critiques the goal of internationalizing the curriculum as being to train students how to reap profits for international corporations
  • The goal is developing understanding of diversity through *intercultural communication* and *connecting local and global issues*
ITEC Goals

• To increase our students’ knowledge and awareness of education and culture in other countries

• To allow college students to “think otherwise”
  • We broaden our perspectives by understanding other cultures through intellectual and academic dialogue, cooperation, and critical analysis with college students and educators in other places

• To initiate exchanges in which all participants learn something

• To implement the College and SOE mission to “internationalize the curriculum” by infusing international elements into new or existing courses
How Does COIL Help ITEC Reach Its Goals?

• Travel is expensive; global networking is inexpensive
• Students can connect through familiar social media (Facebook, Skype, web-based video sharing)
• Modules or activities can be worked into existing or new courses
  • Describe modules/activities
  • Can be any length
• Create an opportunity for international, collaborative learning that would not otherwise exist
How to Start

• The biggest hurdle can be finding contacts or partners
• Identify and read research from scholars at the university with whom you would like to work
  • Contact them by email
  • Be persistent
  • Project has to have something in it for everyone
• Discuss networking with people from a potential partnership site at conferences
• Direct contact and conversations with partners in their settings are valuable. For example:
  • Sabbatical or Fulbright work, Study Abroad contacts, or Working with a professor from your university who is teaching abroad
• Examine the COIL Contacts List to find contacts
Integrating the Module or Activity into a Course

• Have students do some research on the partner country
• Share information about education in the partner country with students
• Lay the groundwork for cultural interactions while still teaching the course content: It’s a balancing act
Context Matters

- Develop an interest in the country or region; develop knowledge and background.
  - “It is one thing to travel to another country and see their culture but communicating with them through the web via pictures adds another dimension to it... The Finnish students already have posted pictures that are filled with different ways to show diversity and it will be fascinating to see the rest of the images!” ~ Student Participant

- Begin the process of recognizing your own perspectives and influences

- How do we encourage engagement when the impulse is to turn away for different reasons? (Finland, Ghana, and the Middle East)
  - Students felt “shy” in the Skype encounters with people in Jordan. They described themselves as ignorant about the Middle East. Typical remarks were: “I never knew that!” “I’m worried that I might say something insulting.”
ITEC Activities and Projects

• Meetings
• Planning Matrix (categories)
• Library Workshops: Using digital tools and equipment (e.g., using Skype in classrooms with webcams and external microphones)
• Dialogue, Flexibility, and Negotiation: Pathways and pace may vary
• A Project Experiment and Reflection (Meeting with experts and students, but then what?)
• Other ITEC Projects
Digital Communication Tools

• These can be quite simple
  • Synchronous
    • Video Chats: Skype (benefits and some of the pitfalls too, e.g. time differences; bad connections)
  • Asynchronous
    • Email communication
    • Facebook or other social media
    • Digital Storytelling (e.g., using a web-based tool that facilitates international collaboration and communication between teachers and classrooms)
  • Mutual projects (e.g., club activities or curriculum projects)
• Other: VoiceThread, Animoto, PowerPoint slideshow or poster sharing, wikis, blogs, podcasts, iMovie creation and sharing (e.g., via Vimeo), KidNet
Privacy and Possible Ethical Issues

- Preserve **anonymity** of students’ contributions as much as possible. However, some of the forms of digital communication are not private.
  - Private Group Facebook page
- Raise **sensitivity** to issues of **cultural differences**
- Give participants **guidelines for the interactions**
- Use the **IRB** process and informed consent at your university for collaborative research
- Each project weighted and **graded by the “home” professor**
How Will We Know if We are Going in the Right Direction?

- ITEC Group can serve as a space for its members to deliberate about their ideas and challenges.

- Road signs ITEC members might use:
  - Ongoing informal assessment and adjustments
  - Records and analysis of discussions
  - Analysis of assignments
  - Analysis of shared projects
  - Focus group interviews
  - Assessment tools such as a validated instrument that measures global understanding or cultural competence
ITEC Group Projects: Under Construction