GlobalSense:
Developing Global Sensitivity Among Student Teachers

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Background

- A cross-national study funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ program, focusing on the impact of online virtual interactions between student-teachers from five countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, and the USA).

- The Primary goal is to investigate how international (virtual) interactions shape student-teachers perceptions of global citizenship education (GCE) and if they impact their curricular-pedagogical considerations.

- Secondary goals:
  - Question the relationships between global and local aspects of GCE.
  - Refine how student-teachers perceive their curricular-pedagogical thinking in light of the exchanges with peers from other countries, considering the different cultural, political, and pedagogical traditions.

- Main argument: international (virtual) interactions have the potential to impact future teachers' personal and professional educational identities.
Theoretical Framework

- “Training teachers to facilitate GCED (Global Citizenship Education) should not be limited to the transmission of academic knowledge, but also include the development of an awareness of and sensitivity to how they and others may act as citizens in a complex, interconnected world” (UNESCO, 2009)

- General studies on international exchanges in teacher training (Patterson, 2015; Walters et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2022)

- Online tools to enhance teacher development (Hagevik et al., 2009)

- The benefits of virtual exchanges for future teachers are usually reduced to the following aspects (O’Dowd & Dooly, 2022):
  - Language learning
  - Intercultural practices
  - Exposure to culture

Missing, therefore, is an understanding on how such international virtual exchanges may contribute to the development of a global citizenship mindset among new teachers.
Pedagogical Design

1. Content introduction (global migration)
2. Lesson planning
3. International exchange (zoom)
4. Personal and group reflection
# Sample and Data Collection

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Findings

Identified Themes:

- Personal approach to the political topic
- Professional approach to pedagogy and classroom teaching
- Personal-professional identity
1. Personal approach to the political topic

Broadening the knowledge base

"I think the biggest realization for me again is: Knowledge is everything! To understand why people act the way they do, you need to get to know them and their history. So in teaching global issues in elementary school, I can build the base of that. But it also means that I have to educate myself, to read, reflect and question what happens in Germany, Europe, and the world." (Group 15 Post-Discussion Reflections)

More

"All of us focused heavily on the motivations for migration" (Group 11 Post-Discussion Reflections)

"This activity reinforced my understanding that immigration is a complicated, malleable topic that must be met with a plethora of different perspectives." (Group 15 Post-Discussion Reflections)

"To exchange some information helped me to realize that migration includes so many points and that it is good to talk to other teachers with other subjects" (Group 10 Post-Discussion Reflections)

Maintaining opinions

"It didn’t necessarily change my thoughts, but it strengthened them on the defense of global citizenship." (Group 7 Post-Discussion Reflections)

Raising citizenship questions

"I want to teach students what it means to be a global citizen and have them contrast and compare it to what it means to be a United States citizen. This, in a sense, will get them to focus on the varying meanings and interpretations of what a citizen is and how it can be both loosely and strictly defined depending on the context." (Group 12 Post-Discussion Reflections)

2. Professional approach to pedagogy and classroom teaching

Approaches toward teaching

“This international online meeting reinforced to me the importance of different mediation strategies to use in the classroom to ensure that every student feels safe to express their opinions regardless of differentiation of viewpoints.” (Group 9 Post-Discussion Reflections)

Alternative teaching methods

“Through the conversation with the other students, it became very clear that, on the one hand, there are many different perspectives on the topic, but that certain ideas, e.g., with regard to teaching practice, are similar despite great distances … It is precisely this openness that is important with regard to the topic of migration in general and migration in schools. As a teacher I would like to be always open for new perspectives.” (Group 11 Post-Discussion Reflections)

3. Personal-professional identity

Meta-educational shifts regarding their future role as a teacher.

“It also made me realize that as a teacher, I will be a facilitator in discussing immigration and ensuring that we are focusing on the global issues of immigration, not just the issues occurring in the United States.” (Group 9 Post-Discussion Reflections)

Responsibility for developing students’ moral approaches

“Through the exchange, I became aware that the law and morality are bound to each other and that this have to be addressed accordingly in the classroom as well.” (Group 8 Post-Discussion Reflections)

Personal behavior

“Teaching students about global issues seemed straightforward at first, but I now understand the importance of including different perspectives as well as creating empathy within students and assisting them in making connections between course content and contemporary world events.” (Group 11 Post-Discussion Reflections)

“From this online meeting, I learned how student-teachers from another country viewed a certain issue. As a person from the United States who has never been to Europe, I never understood the perspectives of individuals living there. This meeting gave me the opportunity to experience that. When I become a teacher, I will need to understand the backgrounds of my students and be able to help them grow.”

“In each country, different questions and problems were highlighted, but teaching the students to welcome and value one another was important to everyone. In the international meeting, it became clear to me that it cannot be assumed that students have an open mindset just by themselves … The teacher’s role cannot be underestimated regarding these highlighted questions. The most important thing I realized in the international meeting was the power a teacher’s role is bearing.”

“After this meeting … I think about the idea that maybe the global issues that we are facing could be the center of all tries to develop these empathetic values … I guess democracy and all values that come with it are indivisibly connected to the social room of a class, and at the same time with the understanding of a global citizen.” (Group 3 Post-Discussion Reflections)
**Discussion**

Cross-national exchanges can equip student-teachers to become better educators in diverse, multicultural classrooms. Exposure to different global perspectives can prompt reflection about how personal openness to and empathy with others can support becoming an open, empathic educator.

Through cross-national exchanges, student-teachers can learn about cultural differences, gain a deeper understanding of global issues, and learn about different pedagogical approaches, and gain insights into their own teaching practices.

Moreover, cross-national exchanges can provide student-teachers with opportunities to develop their own professional identity, connecting critical thinking on a *global* level to teaching skills that fit their *local* classrooms.

“My participation in the online meeting with student-teachers from other countries had a major impact on my thoughts about my future role as a teacher. Understanding different cultures and perspectives all over the world is something that I can bring into my own classroom."
References


