EXAMINING DIVERSITY:
COLLABORATIVE INSIGHTS BY TEACHER CANDIDATES & LEADERSHIP INTERNS

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Dr. Markert served thirteen years as Dean of SUNY Oswego’s School of Education before returning to her full professor position in the Department of Educational Administration. She currently instructs graduate candidates in the Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership. She is also responsible for bringing over $3 million in external grant funds to SUNY Oswego. She held a professorship for fifteen years at San Jose State University, and earned her doctorate in Educational Administration from the University of the Pacific in California.
Doreen Bannasch-Grigoleit currently works in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (primary school). After studying English, German and Science she has worked as a teacher at primary and secondary schools for 10 years. She now teaches both student teachers during their 18 months traineeship and prospective teachers at the University of Potsdam.
Dr. Frederik Ahlgrimm works in the field of teacher education and school development. After studying music and Latin in Potsdam (Germany) and Turin (Italy) and working as a student teacher he received his Ph.D. for his research on school development and teacher collaboration in German schools. He has been a university lecturer at Potsdam University and school consultant since 2010 and is now responsible for the internationalization of teacher education at his institution.
• Why should students in teacher education interact online with foreign students abroad as part of their coursework?
• Why should persons who are studying to be school leaders interact online with foreign students abroad as part of their coursework?
• While it is widely acknowledged that future teachers and school administrators need to have broad understanding of a globalized world and be able to address diversity in schools productively, teacher education programs do not necessarily provide learning environments which include international, global, multilingual, and multicultural elements.
During Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 Semesters:

- Doreen & Linda Rae co-created a Course Module in which future teachers and educational leaders could have an opportunity to learn and speak about their beliefs about diversity in schools and how to address it, and would be exposed to diverse school settings themselves.

- Future educational leaders in the U.S., with years of practical experience in schools, and pre-service teachers in Germany were asked to observe diversity in schools and share their perceptions through a collaborative exchange online.
**Teaching English in the Inclusive Primary Classroom**

Professor Bannasch-Grigoleit's Course  
October 2016 – February 2017 (n = 21 teacher candidates)

- “English speaking inclusive classroom”  
  - Inclusive education means that all pupils attend regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

- “Rahmenlehrplan für moderne Fremdsprachen”  
  - (Curriculum for teaching modern languages)  
  - They took a closer look at the teacher’s responsibility to support the development of their pupils’ different skills.

- Differentiated activities  
  - Teacher candidates were expected to transfer their findings into practical scenarios so that all class members could learn and participate together.

- Job shadowing activities in elementary schools were provided.
• Leadership Internships
  • Leadership candidates were placed in one or more educational administrative positions in both school buildings and school district locations.
  • Candidates carried out an array of educational leadership duties and responsibilities, while being supervised by Markert and a certified building or district administrator who was employed in the district where the internship duties were being completed.
  • Candidates were provided coherent, authentic experiences in multiple, varied and diverse educational settings.
THE PROJECT

During our COIL partnership, we asked pre-service teachers and educational leadership interns to examine the concept of diversity as it pertained to their work with school-aged students in Germany and the United States.
After the teams corresponded electronically, each person individually wrote a 2-3 page Platform Statement titled “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners.”

The following prompts were provided:

• How do teachers provide equity for all students?
• How do they differentiate instruction to meet all students’ needs?
• How do administrators & teachers demonstrate courage to address social justice issues?
• How do they model this in their school (and other) settings?
• How do they celebrate success for all students?
• Review/editing process
  • The professors asked the teams to review and edit one another’s papers in an effort to produce a set of collaboratively written essays.

• Feedback
  • We encouraged them to provide feedback about the content, noting specific examples of how educational policies and instructional practices are similar or different in Germany in comparison to the United States.

• Online Discussions/BLOG site
  • Candidates shared discussions online, and via other connections as deemed desirable by all group members. Although the teams didn’t entirely meet these expected learning outcomes, several of the participants published their papers on a BLOG site we created for them.
Is it possible to co-plan and co-organize an international online collaboration amongst academics who had never met in the real world before, and how?
Considerations:

- Diverging semester start and finish times
- Six-hour time zone difference
- Language barriers
- Unequal class sizes
- Students have wide and varied backgrounds
- Including planned activities in to the preexisting syllabi
- Expected compliance with unequal course requirements

Potential Roadblocks
RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES

• Both scholars met several times via Skype during the summer to get to know one another, and learn about our respective course requirements

• Each contributed ideas to create the COIL Module, and it took four drafts to arrive at the assignment that was ultimately included in both courses

• We basically ignored the time zone differences in order for each faculty member to meet with students in the other’s class via Skype

• Students enrolled in both courses were given autonomy to establish their partnership in whatever manner felt suitable

• We made adjustments in our syllabi so the COIL Module could be added without causing students to feel the course requirements had been changed unexpectedly
What is diversity?

Different Individuals Valuing Each other Regardless of Skin, Intellect, Talent or Years!
Diversity in education is the epitome of what makes public education beautiful. Our American, “melting pot”, society is reflected in our school systems inclusive of diverse cultures, traditions, appearances, status, abilities, and, on top of it all, learning styles and needs.
Diversity in education is the acceptance of all students regardless of background or ability. It is ensuring that all are provided an equitable and equal education in an inclusive and least restrictive environment. Expectations remain the same for all students. School buildings and classrooms have an unbiased culture and climate that accepts, celebrates, and welcomes the diverse learners of today’s society.
Diversity in education essentially means you recognize that students come to our schools with a variety of differences in their languages, abilities and life experiences. Teachers and leaders need, therefore, to use whatever strategies are available to provide a level playing field for all of them to be successful.
The leadership interns and pre-service teachers reflected on their encounters during the COIL assignment, and noted they had:

• Enjoyed an exciting exchange of ideas
• Learned new perspectives about the topics of inclusion
• Discovered differences and similarities regarding the philosophy of inclusion between U.S. and German school systems
• Practiced their communicative language skills
• Examined different theories and beliefs about inclusive educational classrooms
• Expanded their knowledge base for different pedagogical methods in the inclusive classroom to meet the needs of (all) diverse learners.
INTERNS’ REFLECTIONS REGARDING:

SIMILARITIES

• A relevant similarity between the U.S. and German education systems was the level of diversity within a single classroom. In both settings there were students who were identified as autistic or as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); all worked in a fully inclusive classroom. My German partners spoke of a classroom in which the lesson was taught in English yet there were students who spoke primarily German or even Spanish.

• Both educational systems were striving to provide a better education for all of their students. My German partners shared a passion for students with disabilities, and were dedicated to differentiating their teaching strategies to better meet the needs of their learners. At the same time, they recognized that rigor and expectations need to remain high for all.
A notable difference between the U.S. and German educational systems was the approach taken to working with the diverse student population. In the U.S. we seem to have a more structured, systematic approach. This includes utilizing various experts from specific fields (e.g., English as a New Language [ENL] or Speech Therapy) to work one on one, or in a small group with the student. This, often mandated, approach typically results in the student being pulled from the classroom which seems counterintuitive when attempting to create an inclusive classroom.

In Germany those experts may be available but are not mandated to be utilized in that manner, allowing the teacher more autonomy and opportunity to create a full-time inclusive classroom. My German partners described a classroom where the teacher spoke three languages and accepted answers from her students in their native language while encouraging them to extend their abilities to continue growing. She created a positive environment that fostered acceptance, celebrated diversity, and enabled all students to grow individually while working together.
INTERNS’ REFLECTIONS REGARDING: DIFFERENCES

• Another difference noted had to do with resources available to support the needs of students who had special needs. In the United States it is common for teachers to work in what is called an Integrated Co-Taught [ICT] classroom where there might be: a general education teacher, special education teacher, teaching assistant and a 1:1 teacher’s aide for a student with cerebral palsy who was confined to a wheelchair.

• My German partners expressed to me that the supports my sixth grade students had access to throughout the day far outweighed the supports available to school-aged students in Germany.
All inclusive!

Administrative encouragement
Encouragement
Ideas
Help
Leaders
Strengthening diverse learners and cultures
Supporting a diverse range of learners
Encouraging students to pursue their goals
Motivation
Intrinsic/extrinsic
Focus on strengths

Beneficial learning environment
Bloom's Taxonomy of higher level of questioning
Tolerance
Compassion
Positive relationships
Language
Rules
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Human Motivation
Consistency
KOOPERATION “SUNY OSWEGO”

VORWISSEN
- theoretisch - Vorlesungen/Seminare im BA+MA
- Inklusion in Praxis?
- Neue Blickwinkel
- Regier Informationsauswertung
- Erkenntnisse, Wachstum

ERWARTUNGEN

HOSPITATION
- Rosa-Luxemburg Grundschule
- 4. - 6. Klasse
- Schüler alle gleichwertig
- Keine Sonderpädagogen
- Keine Differenzierung
- Subtile Differenzierung
- Motivation aller Schüler
- Interaktion

DIFERENZIERUNG

INKLUSION

GER | USA

GER
- Förderer und Förderung
- Integration von Förderpädagogen
- Schülerehen
- Schülerzentriert
- Förderung, aber nicht überfordern
- Nicht nur Material

USA
- Separation von "Förderklassen"
- Kategorien "of disabilites"
- Special education teacher
- "Fair is not always equal" (Ward)
LESSONS LEARNED

• Including a “low stakes” meet and greet exercise for the candidates to get to know one another prior to asking them to start the formal COIL assignment.

• Expand the time for the collaboration beyond a few months.

• Despite the time zone difference, we need to set fixed dates for classes to meet, and include Skye sessions during the officially scheduled portions of the semester(s).

• We should include media literacy as a key learning outcome for the seminar.

  And,

• While providing autonomy is beneficial, we must create a certain amount of structure and set clearer parameters regarding the work we expect the candidates to complete – both individually and collaboratively.
OUR BLOG SITE

- [https://organizationalandinstitutionalchange.wordpress.com/](https://organizationalandinstitutionalchange.wordpress.com/)
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Has your definition of diversity changed, as it pertains to your profession?