



Blended learning class *Sociology of Education International*: Teach local, learn global

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The teaching project “Sociology of Education International” offers undergraduate students to collaborate online with students across the globe while studying on-campus. It demonstrates how blended learning enhances the quality of teaching and learning and proves the need of meaningful inter-institutional agreements not only on research but on teaching. The poster shows the challenges and outcomes associated with establishing an international teaching cooperation by using eLearning tools. It may inspire academics and students to think about eLearning as a path to go global. Detailed information about challenges, outcomes and recommendations will be provided on a handout. Recommendations included Collaborate with departments within your university; use blended learning as didactic concept to teach your subject and related vocational skills without over-emphasising the technical side of eLearning; and use your blended learning concept and your experiences to develop teaching cooperations within your country.

Keywords: Blended learning, e-portfolio, virtual mobility

Introduction

“Going global” in higher education means usually that students and academics experience higher education abroad to expand their knowledge of other cultures, languages and scientific discourses, and to better equip themselves in an increasingly globalized labour market.

But what if studying abroad is not a compulsory part of students’ studies? How can they experience intercultural learning while staying on-campus?

How can access to mobility be broaden if many students are still excluded from mobility opportunities because of their financial situation and face substantial difficulties regarding the compatibility of studying abroad with the demands and requirements of the study course in their own country?

How can international mobility be included into the curriculum to prepare and motivate students to go abroad despite key barriers like lack of information, languages, cultural and financial issues?

Course concept

Our teaching project *Sociology of Education Intercultural* demonstrates how a blended learning class can lead undergraduate students to intercultural learning experience and encourage them to increase their virtual mobility.

Due to excellent evaluation results our teaching project will last until summer 2010. The blended learning class is embedded in ILIAS, a German virtual learning environment with forums and learning modules. To communicate with international partners we use a virtual classroom and Skype. In winter 08/09 and summer 09 our students had the chance to discuss the similarities and differences of the German and American educational system as well as the issues of first generation students with our American cooperation partners Ellen Eckman and Heidi Schweizer (Marquette University/Milwaukee) and David John Frank (University of California/Irvine).

This winter term our students will do their own qualitative research project. They will interview foreign students worldwide via Skype about conditions of study and living. The interview outcomes results will be analysed and presented on their own ePortfolios (Mahara). During the whole class our students will be encouraged to practice peer-review techniques.

Poster presentation

The poster shows the challenges and outcomes associated with establishing an international teaching cooperation by using eLearning tools. It may inspire academics and students to think about eLearning as a path to “learn global, but teach local”.

Challenges

1. Institutional barriers, e.g. delicate and time-consuming adjustment to local curricula, lack of inter-institutional agreements and experiences on teaching
2. Temporal barriers, e.g. different time zones and different academic years
3. Technical barriers, e.g. different VLEs, open source vs. proprietary software
4. Blended learning barriers, e.g. coordination of dates for synchronous learning, didactic settings

Outcomes

1. Excellent evaluation results by students: e.g. “I think it was a great experience to be able to go to attend the VC (virtual classroom) with the ladies and the man in the US.” (quotation of a German student)
2. Access to scientific discourses across the globe and intercultural learning experiences for students
3. Equal access to international mobility for all students according to EU’s demand for increasing mobility in HE
4. Promotion of teaching in general and enhancement of innovative didactic methods like peer-review techniques, self-study and networking.
5. Laying the foundation for *Recommendations*.

Recommendations

1. Allow yourself plenty of time in advance to acquire and counsel potential cooperation partners.
2. Use the international network of your university and private contacts of academic staff.
3. Collaborate with departments within your university.
4. Present your project on (inter-)national conferences to extend your network.
5. Reveal potential cooperation partners the challenges and benefits of a teaching cooperation.
6. Use blended learning as didactic concept to teach your subject and related vocational skills without over-emphasising the technical side of eLearning.
7. Inform your students about the challenges and outcomes of your project.
8. Evaluate your project by your students to improve your project.
9. Establish inter-institutional agreements on learning to increase the sustainability of your project.
10. Support the enhancement of teaching to demonstrate the meaning of your project and blended learning in general.
11. Use your blended learning concept and your experiences to develop teaching cooperations within your country.

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