COLLABORATIVE ONLINE LEARNING – A CULTURE APPROACH BETWEEN DENMARK AND GREENLAND

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Abstract

Recently, attempts have been made at Copenhagen University College (KP) to combine traditional learning activities whit a globally teaching concept, where the students aiming to support digital interactions between students across countries. A COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) involves online interactions between KP students and students from continuing education institutions in a different country, with the focus to collaborate on a subject-specific teaching assignment (Vil-lar-Onrubia & Rajpal 2015). Compared to traditional face-to-face courses, this course gave students the opportunity to work with the development of digital skills, as well as collaboration with students from other cultures, within the same field of study.

Keywords: E-learning, higher education, culture and intercultural competence, learning experience.

1. Introduction

COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) is a global, widespread, and recognized teaching concept aiming to support digital interactions between students across countries, thereby strengthening intercultural and digital competencies (Coil, 2022).

University College Copenhagen's (KP) International Department and the Institute for Didactic and Digitalization joined forces to offer their support to lecturers wishing to test the method in the period Autumn 2020 or Spring 2021. Together, with interested lecturers across KP's educational programs, we explored the educational potentials recognized by international research (Taylor,2016) in relation to our students' educational goals and exchange (Coil, 2022).

In 2020-2021 the educational institutions of Denmark, as all over the world, were affected by covid-19 restrictions. It, therefore, required the development of new didactic initiatives within the pedagogical courses at University College Copenhagen (KP).

2. Design

The developed and tested program COIL has been designed as a didactic framework characterized by its freedom of method and flexibility with only a couple of framework-setting requirements, which brings an innovative approach to lessons.

As a part of our pedagogy students' education, we developed a COIL to pair alongside the existing curriculum. This had the intention of challenging the students' own digital comprehension as well as focusing on the exchange between cultures. This created an academic echo chamber, where the students from Denmark and Greenland could discuss *"digital vulnerability within a cultural perspective",* with the main concern being children and youths in the two respective countries.

Greenland is part of the Danish Realm but have a high degree of self-government as lately was expanded in 2009. Even though Greenland is classified as part of Denmark, are our culture and way of living quite different, also the country´s digitalization approach.

The term *digital vulnerability* is meant to comprehend that digitalization within a given society can bring inequity among youths and children, viewed from the perspective that the digital space does not inherently bring equal opportunity for participation. This can be seen across cultures where digital skills and the approach towards technology are not the same for everyone (Nyboe, 2009). With this topic, we tried to support the students' knowledge on how they can, through their academic work, help facilitate the digital comprehension of children and youths

3. Objectives

The project required essential didactical considerations in advance. Therefore, our COIL included the following:

1. INTERNATIONAL MEETING: Contact was made with the Social Pedagogy Seminary in Ilulissat (Det Socialpædagogiske Seminarium i Ilulissat). The students from University College Copenhagen and Greenland had to, through *blended learning*, be taught together (online synchronically) as well as through group work across borders (online asynchronously).
2. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: The project had a selected subject area, which had the ambition to support a global perspective in the classroom. Focusing on *"digital vulnerability"*, the students worked on understanding and knowledge within the subject area. This had the intention of creating transverse cultural understanding and, through their intuition as a pedagogue, to work prophylactically - with regard to the topic of *digital vulnerability* among children and youths in their respective social context.
3. REFLECTION: The project included a reflection segment that facilitated the students' reflection on the international interaction and their academic dividend. Here the students used the online tool, Padlet (https://padlet.com/katrinegellert/t3vynzyy585odfb5).
4. DIGITAL: The project used various digital platforms, which made the international interaction possible - with the help of synchronized interactions (through video conferences, facetime, online classes through Zoom, chat functions and social media) and asynchronized interactions (through e-mail, Google Drive texts, exchanging videos and evaluation tools).

Figure 1. (The diagram below illustrates the different teaching activities in our COIL).
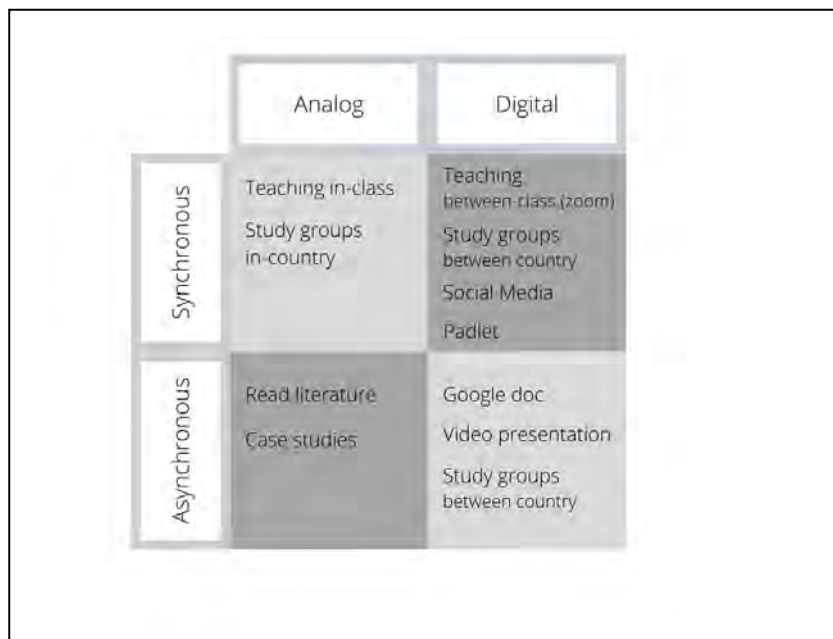
4. Methods

While **Blended Learning** is not a new term, on the contrary, it has even been used as a buzzword within various educational organizations. Blended learning can meet the students' need for learning to be served in different ways. *"Blended Learning can be defined as the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face -to-face and online approaches and technologies (Graham, 2006)"* (Kaur, 2013, p. 612).

Blended Learning combines the physical and digital, making learning more engaging, flexible, and effective. The teachings in this project have didacticized the teaching activities for in-class and out-class, across both synchronous and asynchronous methods, and across borders.

Throughout this project, we emphasized that the students be put in the center of their own learning through various teaching activities while making the students in question responsible for their own as well as fellow students' learning.

With a theoretical grounding in Lave & Wenger's conceptual apparatus *Situated learning* (1991) have we simultaneously created an expanded space for reflection and cooperation with fellow students, as

it is important not to underestimate the social aspect of the learning environment. Hence, it was important for our design that, despite physical distance, the students could socialize through different media. Therefore, we encouraged the students to use contact media such as Facebook, Messenger, and Facetime.

We evaluated with the Danish and Greenlandic students, who emphasized that the online learning environment, did not support the students' learning process equally. So, the challenges in this project have been to create a learning environment for the students, where they are included on equal terms, despite the students' different digital skills.

5. Conclusions

We have seen how this project has created student relations between countries. The students still have contact to this day and are still sparing with each other in an academic sense. Through this COIL, we acknowledge the global importance of preparing students for a digital future, as well as a strategic and academic goal - namely, to strengthen the pedagogy students' understanding of the digital paradigm in which children and youths are growing up.

This COIL project has proven to support fostering a close international collaboration network through program-specific projects, thereby strengthening students' and employees' academic and professional networks globally. Despite the local and cultural differences, this project has been meaningful and rewarding for both educational institutions involved.

"Det har været et super fedt samarbejde og der har været masser af sparring fra alles sider. Det har givet os indsigt i Danske og Grønlandske synspunkter om digital udsathed"

Trans: "It has been an awesome cooperation, and there has been lots of sparing from all sides. It has given us insight into Danish and Greenlandic views and digital vulnerability." (students, Padlet https://padlet.com/katrinegellert/t3vynzyy585odfb5)

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