REMOTE IS NOT SO FAR AWAY: A SELF-REFLECTIVE CASE OF INTERNATIONALISATION USING COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Jonas Christensen[1], Monika Altenreiter, Karen Meixner[2]
Malmö University (Sweden)[1],
 FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences (Austria)[2]

Abstract

This paper aims to reflect on internationalisation in social work education in a collaborative context. The research question addressed is how collaborative online international learning (COIL) supports the concept of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) to promote glocal knowledge in innovative social work education. The study is case-based, in which a thematic webinar on human rights issues connected students of social work from various countries in an international classroom. It discusses how the concept of Internationalisation at Home can be used effectively in practice through participatory design and participant feedback. The main conclusion of this case-based paper is that social work education should promote innovative learning scenarios that support the glocal approach, so that students are able to 'act locally and think globally', supported by a blended learning design.

KEY WORDS: social work education, Internationalisation at Home, blended learning, collaboration, glocal.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje siekiama reflektyviai apmąstyti internacionalizaciją socialinio darbo studijose žvelgiant bendradarbiavimo aspektu. Tyrimo klausimas, kaip mokymasis bendradarbiaujant nuotolinių tarptautinių studijų atveju dera su *internacionalizacijos namuose* sąvoka ir plečia glokalias žinias inovatyvių socialinio darbo studijų atveju. Atvejo analize paremtam tyrimui atlikti pasitelktas nuotolinis seminaras, kuriame studentai iš įvairių šalių susirinkę vienoje auditorijoje mokėsi kartu su nuotoliu prisijungusiais užsienio studentais. Analizuojama, kaip *internacionalizacijos namuose* sąvoka gali būti veiksmingai vartojama praktiškai, taikant dalyvių įtraukimą ir grįžtamąjį ryšį. Kadangi ypatingų iššūkių kelia migracijos problema, pagrindine išvada teigiama, kad socialinio darbo studijos turėtų taikyti inovatyvaus mokymosi metodus, kurie skatina glokalų požiūrį, ugdo gebėjimą lokaliai veikti ir globaliai mąstyti bei derina, mišrias mokymosi formas.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: socialinio darbo studijos, internacionalizacija namuose, mišrus mokymasis, bendradarbiavimas, glokalus.

Introduction

This paper aims to reflect on internationalisation in social work education in a collaborative context. Global knowledge is increasingly essential for all aspects of social work. Today's professionals respond to concerns including permeable borders, unrest caused by war, forced migration, displaced workers, human traffick-

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ing, and global crises, such as the very recent outbreak of the Corona pandemic.[1] On a local level, social work professionals work with clients from international backgrounds. Globally relevant concepts, such as human rights, development and inclusion, offer new prospects to enhance policy and practice, and to facilitate the international exchange of ideas. Therefore, social work professionals, educators, academics and students must concern themselves with international developments, and understand how their practice, research and studies connect with international matters, regardless of whether they work locally, globally or glocally[2] (Healy, 2012).

How can we be, and stay, international when a crisis like the current Covid-19 pandemic entails travel restrictions across the globe? If we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as formulated by the UN aiming at 'quality education' (goal number 4), which in a global world cannot stay only national, as well as 'climate action' (goal number 13), how can we be international without flying across continents? One answer lies in innovative learning concepts such as COIL (collaborative online international learning). Through COIL classrooms, we can meet the criteria of the concept of Internationalisation at Home in higher education, as proposed by the European Union, while at the same time staying true to the International Global Agenda of Sustainable Development (Jones, Reiffenrath, 2018). The research question addressed in this paper is:

How can collaborative online international learning (COIL) support the concept of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) in order to promote glocal knowledge in innovative social work education?

The COIL classroom discussed in this paper is an example of good practice that is the result of ongoing collaboration between the University of Malmö in Sweden and the FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences in Graz in Austria. The University of Malmö has a long tradition of international partnerships and study programmes, as well as experience in conducting synchronous multi-cultural and international classrooms. Malmö's 'Social Work in a Local and Global Context' course caters for students of up to seven different nationalities. After a trip by Austrian social work students and faculty from the FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences to Malmö in 2018, the idea was born to establish regular COIL classes in order to allow students to experience international perspectives without having to travel, and by doing so making social work education both international and glocal. The case we focus on in this paper took place on 12 November 2019. It

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[1] On 12 March 2020, the WHO announced the outbreak of Covid-19 as a pandemic, following the rapid increase of cases outside China. For more information, see: http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic; retrieved: 13 April 2020.

[2] For a definition and discussion of the term 'Glocalisation', see 2.4.

was the fourth time a COIL classroom had been carried out between the two universities. Each time there were slight modifications to the process resulting from the previous experience, which will be discussed in the Methodology section.

In the following, we present theoretical concepts, such as internationalisation in general, and Internationalisation at Home in particular, collaborative online international classrooms, and global, local and glocal social work, which provided the theoretical basis for conducting our joint classroom. In the Methodology section of this paper, we describe the classroom set-ups in more detail, and the actual content of our classes. The final section analyses and evaluates our COIL class, and takes a look at the future with potential improvements.

1. The theoretical framework

1.1. Internationalisation

One of the main aims stated in the Bologna Process was to promote international cooperation, strengthen the competitiveness of European higher education, and foster student mobility. In 2009, the Conference of European Ministers of Higher Education formulated an ambitious goal: 'In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a period of study or training abroad' (communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009). Furthermore, in 2013, the European Commission launched a new strategy entitled 'European Higher Education in the World', which should encourage mobility and cooperation between member states and non-EU countries. The key points stated in this document are international student and staff mobility, the internationalisation and improvement of curricula, including digital learning, and strategic cooperation and partnerships.

Both universities working together in this COIL class have implemented the above-mentioned EU strategies in their curriculum. Malmö University pledges in its mission statement to provide vision, quality and internationalisation. Likewise, one of the pillars of the FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences is internationalisation. In this paper, however, we would like to take a broader perspective when it comes to internationalisation. The definition by Knight (2004) lends itself well to our purpose, as it incorporates intercultural and global issues. According to Knight, internationalisation is the process of 'integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (p. 11). A more recent definition by Leask supports Knight, but goes a step further to include learning outcomes and teaching methods as well as support services. According to Leask (2015), the internationalisation of the curri-

culum is 'the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study' (p. 43).

The above-mentioned definitions of internationalisation presuppose a certain kind of mobility by either students, or staff, which is funded in the EU by programmes like Erasmus. However, when talking about internationalisation, we should take into consideration the concept of Internationalisation at Home (IaH), which emerged around 2000 in response to the then dominant practice of equating internationalisation with actual mobility. According to Beelen and Jones (2015), 'IaH is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments' (p. 69). This definition serves well to explain the rationale of our COIL class. In the following, we describe how individual requirements as stated in Beelen and Jones' definition are met in our COIL classrooms.

1.2. Internationalisation at Home (IaH) exemplified in our COIL classroom

The criteria for IaH were suggested by Elspeth Jones in her plenary session at the EAIE (European Association of International Education) spotlight seminar at The Hague in 2018, which stated that IaH:

- offers all students global perspectives in their programme of study, whether or not they spend time abroad;
- moves beyond electives or specialised programmes;
- involves developing international and intercultural perspectives through internationalised learning outcomes in the formal curriculum;
- is supported by informal (co-)curriculum activities across the institution;
- makes purposeful use of cultural diversity in the classroom for inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practice;
- creates opportunities for student engagement with 'cultural others' in local society;
- involves all staff, not only academics and international officers;
- may or may not include teaching in English or another *lingua franca*;
- can include virtual mobility through online working with partner universities;
- fosters purposeful engagement with international students.

We discuss below the points which are relevant to and apply to our COIL class.

IaH offers all students global perspectives within their programmes of study, whether or not they spend time abroad.

IaH is not to be considered as a substitute or a 'second-best option' for students who may not be internationally mobile during their studies. On the contrary, all students in their respective programmes of study are addressed through measures taken by their lecturers in class. By doing so, global perspectives are integrated, thereby enriching the quality of a study programme. Furthermore, diverse student cohorts can be included, both internationally mobile incoming students and local students from a variety of backgrounds, in the teaching and learning process. Our virtual classroom fulfilled all the above-mentioned criteria. In Malmö, students from Sweden, Germany, the USA, Italy, Great Britain and Austria attended our COIL class. In Graz, there was a combination of Austrian and Erasmus students.

IaH moves beyond electives or specialised programmes. IaH involves developing international and intercultural perspectives through internationalised learning outcomes in the formal curriculum.

As Jones and Reiffenrath (2018) suggest in their EAIE blog, IaH does not merely address students who may already be interested in international issues: it includes all students. Ideally, elements of internationalisation are integrated systematically into the formal curriculum. In both Sweden and Austria, the COIL class was part of a curriculum-based course. The Swedish classroom was represented by students of different nationalities who were part of Malmö's International Social Policies and Welfare Studies course. For Austrian students, the COIL class was part of the International Social Work semester course. Thus, not only students who may already have been interested in international matters were targeted, but the entire student cohort.

IaH may or may not include teaching in English or another *lingua franca*.

In our case, the COIL class language was English. This makes English a necessary tool for communication, and thus entails a shift in orientation from merely translating existing curricula into English as A lingua franca to pay lip service to internationalisation.

IaH can include virtual mobility through online working with partner universities.

IaH Involves all staff, not only academics and international officers.

Our COIL class served to expand intercultural perspectives on social issues in classroom discussions, and to sensitise students to other forms of knowledge production and creation, as well as modes of conducting scientific research. Students gain and create both formal and informal knowledge through online interaction which is not accessible elsewhere. Furthermore, the IT departments at both universities had to collaborate in order to set up and make the virtual classroom ready.

IaH fosters purposeful engagement with international students.

We found that our COIL classes stimulated exchange and collaboration between students from diverse backgrounds, whether they are domestic or international, local or global. Through our COIL classes, students were able to discuss and share their attitudes and experiences on this topic first-hand.

IaH creates opportunities for student engagement with 'cultural others' in local society.

A COIL class can serve to dismantle biases and create an opportunity to learn from the *other*. Rather than perceiving your conversation partner as the *other*, commonalities between participants are emphasised (see 4.1 Student Feedback). This bridges the gap between oneself and the person encountered on screen, who will probably also have a different cultural background. For social work in particular, becoming aware of and dismantling the concept of *other* plays an important role in a professional context, as well as for one's own professional identity. A social worker has to be conscious of their own value judgments, their perception of social distance and cultural biases. In their paper *Writing against Othering*, Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012) point out that 'Otherness comes from the separating line or border created, and from its exclusionary effect [so that] the Others are in effect sent into "symbolic exile".' Furthermore, they identify three dimensions of the relationship between *self* and *other* which are: 'value judgments (the other is perceived as good/bad), social distance (the other is perceived as distant psychologically and physically), and knowledge (the history and culture of the other is relatively unknown)' (p. 300). To conclude, a COIL class can work against othering and stereotyping.

1.3. COIL – collaborative online international learning

To put it simply, COIL can be defined as a form of online learning involving classes in two or more countries working on a given topic either synchronously or asynchronously. However, looked at more closely, COIL also includes a learning element that cannot be neglected: intercultural skills. Seen from the perspective of internationalisation and IaH, COIL can prove very useful in promoting intercultural competence, as well as other components of communicative language ability in learners. One of the leading roles in the COIL community was taken by the Suny COIL Center in Albany, NY.[3] On their homepage, it states that COIL is:

[...] a teaching and learning methodology which provides innovative cost-effective Internationalisation strategies. Such programs foster faculty and student interaction with peers abroad through co-taught multicultural online and blended learning environments emphasizing experiential student collaboration.

In order to qualify as COIL, activities must meet the following criteria:

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[3] http://coil.suny.edu/

- Collaborative: staff from different universities co-teach a module. Their students have to cooperate effectively to produce a previously stated output.
- Online: the interaction between students and staff takes place online.
- International: the interaction crosses borders, i.e. one or more universities are involved in the effort. Their interaction leads to an improvement in international and intercultural competences.
- Learning: rather than electives or optional tasks, COIL classes are an integral part of the curriculum.

Piet Van Hove (2019) emphasises in his blog on the EAIE homepage (European Association for International Education) that all of the criteria listed above must be met in order for a class to qualify as a COIL class. The conditions are 'cumulative and strict', which was the case in our example.

1.4. Glocalisation and social work

The term glocalisation is often used when it comes to business market policies, where it signifies the integration of local markets into world capitalism. For our purpose, we refer to the definition of glocal and glocalisation by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). In 2014, the IFSW, together with the IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work), revised the global definition of social work, to emphasise its glocal nature. The term glocal implies closer and more dynamic interaction between the local and global aspects of social work issues and practice. In an academic setting, glocalisation advocates a positive learning experience and encourages the enhancement of learners' glocal experience through the critical academic and the cultural exchange of global and local socio-economic and political issues (Patel, Lynch, 2013). Glocalised learning and teaching means curricula consideration and pedagogical framing of local and global community connectedness in relation to social responsibility, justice and sustainability. In this paper, we support the interpretation by Patel and Lynch (2013) asserting that glocalisation is a good description of blending and connecting local and global contexts, while maintaining the significant contributions of the different cultural communities and contexts. As was pointed out by Cox and Pawar (2004), dimensions in international social work need to have a local as well as a global face, and the reality of globalisation is that it requires a dimension of localisation. Righard (2013) discusses how the various definitions of international social work have changed over time, and categorises these changes according to three groups: modernisation, radicalisation and globalisation. In this last category, a major challenge for the social worker is to find strategies to face the challenges that arise in a global society. Globalisation affects the social policy discourse in many ways, and therefore it also affects social work and social work education (Cousins, 2005).

Already in 2000, Nagy and Falk claimed that the impact of ongoing global processes on the social work profession was dramatic, and that reformulating social work education to include more international and cross-border cultural content was needed. This statement has become even more relevant in our times (see Introduction).

2. Research methodology

2.1 Preparation: general

The following section describes in more detail the methodology used in the COIL case discussed. This is the fourth time a COIL classroom has been carried out between Malmö and Graz. Each time there have been slight modifications to the process resulting from previous experience. As lecturers, we have become more confident about the technology and the process. What should be emphasised is the fact that a COIL activity needs careful planning. As Pouromid (2019) points out, 'The interaction, of course, has to be planned and principled. The instructors of the two classes need to meet up before the exchange sessions and plan carefully for what they expect the sessions to achieve and design ways to achieve them' (p. 629).

It is advisable to allow for an extended preparatory phase, and to start planning well in advance. Once a date is chosen and a timeframe is established, the specific content of the lesson needs to be chosen, and discussions about learning outcomes, the other goals of the class, and the methodology to be used and the structure of the class, need to take place. This process will probably involve at least three online meetings, as well as written communication to cover the process, from brainstorming ideas to finalising details, and establishing roles and responsibilities and timing. We believe that time invested in preparation is time well spent, and that it is necessary to achieve a successful online learning experience. Another important aspect for us was the involvement of the IT departments at both universities in our planning. Knowing that we lacked the skills and equipment to ensure a successful online session, we approached our respective IT teams to ask for support in our endeavour. The IT pedagogue[4] in Malmö then consulted peers in Graz. This is a practical application of point 7 in Jones' list of ten points concerning IaH (see 2.2 above): 'IaH involves all staff, not only academics and international officers.' The technical staff also benefitted from the opportunity to work in an international and intercultural context. In a final preparatory meeting, teaching and IT staff met in a simulation of how the real class would look to check the final details. Online mee-

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[4]   The term IT pedagogue refers to the fact that the IT expert in XX also has a pedagogical background and is responsible for in-house staff training.

tings using the Zoom platform took place with all the above-mentioned colleagues to coordinate our efforts. In earlier versions of our COIL classroom, Skype was used. However, Skype requires both parties have an account, whereas when using Zoom it is enough if the host is registered. Another reason we decided to switch to Zoom was because it had better picture and sound quality during the meeting itself. Furthermore, although up to now we have not divided participants into different break-out rooms, we do see this as a possible further development and an advantage of Zoom over Skype.

2.2. Preparation for the online class: the student

The students in Graz and Malmö were given a scientific article to read in advance ('Social Work is a Human Rights Profession', Mapp et al., 2019). In addition, the students were asked to formulate questions in relation to the content of the article, which were collected by their lecturers.

The Malmö group were an international class doing social work studies on an independent course, Social Work in a Local and Global Context.[5] The students represented six countries in total (Sweden, the UK, Germany, Austria, Ethiopia and Italy). The group from Graz were social work students from the FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences. The students were informed that the workshop was part of an international collaboration and would be recorded. They gave their permission in advance in accordance with data protection guidelines. They were also aware that the aim of the workshop was to reflect and develop knowledge and understanding in relation to social work as a profession in a local and global perspective.

2.3. Classroom set-up

The class was set up with a table in the centre for those taking part in the active discussions. The set-up was the same in both Malmö and Graz. The discussions were recorded. After a short introduction about the desired learning outcome, as well as a repeat of the framing of the workshop, students in the Malmö international group were split into four groups (A, B, C and D), and discussed the respective group questions with their counterparts in Graz (who were also divided into four groups). The facilitation was carried out by one lecturer in Malmö and one in Graz. The role of the teaching instructor was to facilitate the discussion without interfering in it. This COIL class took place on 12 November 2019. We set up a precise timetable and sent it out to our students in advance. The technical staff met 30 minutes before the start of the class to check and synchronise the equipment, and the teaching staff were there 15 minutes before to ensure everything was in place.

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[5]   https://mau.se/en/study-education/course/hs165e/

There was a short introduction before the first groups engaged with each other, and then each of the four groups discussed for 20 minutes. At the end, there was a brief summing-up of the session, and participants were thanked for their contributions. A short evaluation questionnaire was filled in immediately after the class by the students. The total duration of the class was two hours.

3. Results

3.1. Student feedback (based on an evaluation questionnaire)

Q1: What do you think of the COIL approach with students in more than one location?

None of the students opposed the idea, and 25 out of 32 students (almost 80%) were explicitly positive about the approach. The only reservations were about language difficulties (using English to communicate): three out of 32 students mentioned this point (although one student mentioned this challenge as an added benefit), and concerns about the technology not functioning correctly (2/32).

Q2: In what way did the class meet/not meet your expectations?

From the responses to the questionnaires, it can be seen that our COIL class met or exceeded students' expectations. It was frequently mentioned that the class was well organised. The students appreciated the fact that they sat in a group in front of the camera and were not on their own: they felt less inhibited and not under as much pressure with this structure. Several felt that it was easier than they had expected to talk and discuss with the other group. It was often mentioned that the topic was interesting and important, as were the discussions that emanated from it. Some expressed surprise at how talkative the participants were.

However, there were also some points where the class failed to meet students' expectations, or where students felt improvements could be made. The most frequently mentioned point by students in Graz was the technical problems that were encountered, despite the careful preparations (the visuals and sound were often out of sync, which was disconcerting). Some students felt that the text and the topic were complicated, and would have appreciated more preparation time, and others wanted to have more free conversation and discussion.

Q3: *What are the most important reflections you took with you from this session, specifically with regard to your own understanding of social work as an occupation/profession?*

One key point made here was students' reflections on social work in a global context. After the session, students seemed to be of the opinion that their general

understanding of social work and its values were very similar, regardless of where they came from. This corresponds to what was written above in section 2.2, that our classroom can serve to emphasise the commonalities between participants, and to bridge the gap between participants with different cultural backgrounds. Students realised that it was more in the details and the implementation of practice that differences could be found. One student from Malmö said: 'Social work as a profession follows the same values/attitudes, etc, across the globe. While certain roles, restrictions, policies and education may differ as a whole, we all strive for human rights.' Another from Graz wrote: 'So the core values, etc, for social workers are very similar everywhere, but the implementation is just different.'

Students also reflected on the topic of human rights. The fact that they believe more attention needs to be paid to this subject can be seen from the following statements taken from the written feedback. Graz students pointed out that: 'Human rights should be implemented more in our profession in general' and 'Human rights as a topic of discussion are not present enough in our society.' Students from Malmö stated: 'Social workers promote human rights in the course of their profession. But human rights activities vary from one country to another' and 'Overall, it could be seen that too little attention is paid to the subject of human rights, which makes it even more important to connect on a global level to face the matter.'

3.2. Staff feedback in Austria and Sweden

The term staff in this context refers to all faculty members involved in the COIL classroom. These were: a) lecturers; b) IT pedagogues; and c) IT personnel. The lecturers belong to the institute of social work and teach in the area of international social work. The IT pedagogues at both universities are responsible for staff training in IT skills and training. In Austria, one member of the IT department was responsible for the technical set-up, whereas at Malmö university, as was mentioned earlier, the IT pedagogue also has the function of IT technician.

The questions for staff feedback were: (1) How did you perceive the COIL classroom? (2) What would you do differently in future COIL classes?

Feedback from lecturers. The authors of this paper conducted a total of four COIL classes together. Experience showed that the smaller the group, the better the outcome, as everyone gets more opportunity to talk directly to colleagues on screen. The preparation times on Zoom reduced over time, since we have built on our previous experience. Better conference equipment for online classes would be appreciated; this is particularly true for Graz.

Feedback from IT pedagogues. The attempt to create a COIL class in the social work department was much appreciated by our IT pedagogues, since it represents a hands-on opportunity to put to use methods that have been promoted at both uni-

versities. Our colleagues stressed the need for good-quality conference equipment on campus. Regarding filming, they recommended filming only the centre of the room where students were participating actively. This allows for taking in facial expressions, which are a vital part of communication. At the same time, students who do not wish to be on camera can still participate but will not be filmed. This is important from an ethical perspective.

Feedback from Austrian IT technician. Without proper technical equipment and expertise, a COIL class would not be possible. That is why it is important to include the technician(s) from the outset. In their feedback, they mentioned that they appreciated the inclusion of all contributing parties right from the beginning. For further improvement, one IT technician pointed out that better teleconference equipment would facilitate future COIL classes. Malmö was better equipped in this respect.

In general, all the participating staff felt that with each repetition of the COIL class, improvements were made: change of group size, change of camera position, change of online video tool, change of classroom structure/organisation. Each time brought new innovative ideas to the surface. These ideas are discussed in section 5.2 'Future outlook'.

4. Discussion

It is through encounters between people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and frameworks that we are challenged in our notions, and not least in learning environments and contexts. This case study reinforces the impression we were given based on other COIL classroom experience, and shows how implementing a COIL design can make a substantial contribution to international social work education. It also shows a way of encouraging students to feel motivated and be active learners, thereby offering a way to improve attendance and participation in the classroom. In addition, this case study shows clearly the importance of realising that students do not represent a homogenous group (in the sense of having the same needs and expectations). Our COIL classroom also contributes to reducing inequalities between students.[6] Students who would be unable to travel to gain international experience and competence for financial reasons or family circumstances are now able to benefit from and contribute to international exchange. Furthermore, especially due to the specific focus of this case 'Social Work as a Human Rights Profession', and the fact that six different nationalities took part, we believe that the project can contribute to peaceful and inclusive societies, since these are

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[6]   SDG 10: Reduce inequalities within and between countries.

certainly more likely when cultural understanding is promoted.[7] Virtual exchange, also known as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), Globally Networked Learning, or Tele-Collaboration, extends real opportunities for intercultural and transnational learning to students within the university curriculum. Through co-developed and co-taught modules, virtual exchange supports the development of 21st-century workforce skills, and provides opportunities for applied learning experiences (Forward, 2020). In our research group, a pragmatic intersection of our three disciplinary backgrounds and experiences are represented (humanities, pedagogy, education), and two different societies, Austrian and Swedish. In our writing process, we have met regularly, both on campus and online, to share our thoughts. This article represents a reflective research orientation, addressing international collaboration in social work education. One essential realisation from our case study is that it takes time. Time is needed to clarify problem definitions, and consider both professional and institutional roles, as well as complexities in collaboration. When professionals meet in a cross-border context, different kinds of exchange take place, including social, academic and cultural dimensions. This kind of exchange has indeed given valuable added depth to this COIL experience.

Conclusions

As was mentioned in the introduction to this paper, we are living in difficult times for people around the world. We can see how a pandemic can bring the world to a standstill. In the educational sector, however, we are privileged: we can carry on, not by being physically present in a classroom, but by connecting online. There are positive side effects arising out of the current need for online teaching. Not only students but also teachers and academics are now more competent and comfortable with this form of learning. In our case, the universities provided free intensive training courses in online tools, meaning that we now have the skills needed to set up a COIL classroom without too much dependence on IT experts. The universities have also been forced to invest in better IT infrastructure. Among other methods, COIL presents a good-practice example for these times. As things change quickly in education, as in all sectors of society, we believe the importance of developing cross-cultural communication skills and global understanding is as urgent as it ever has been. Furthermore, social work employers demand increasingly flexible, self-motivated, collaborative, communicative, creative, energetic and technology-savvy employees. These conditions fundamentally change service user and employer expectations of education. In many respects, we must work towards

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[7] SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

and plan for an evolving unknown goal, and as such, we should work to create dynamic contexts and learning experiences, in order to make students ready for their future work places (Burian, 2012). Transnational collaboration involves different kinds of exchange between professional staff, i.e., social, academic and cultural dimensions have to be respected. However, such collaboration provides opportunities to establish deeper professional relationships and networks, which could be a key for professional development by obtaining new insights from colleagues. Opportunities present themselves to develop common ground for further scientific collaboration, with partners who are equally responsible, involved and motivated. It is clear that after describing only one session in detail in the present paper, no firm conclusions can be drawn. However, we believe that since this one case proved to be beneficial to the participants, there is every indication that the methods applied in our case would work well for other classes, and we strongly encourage colleagues to consider implementing COIL. It showed how social work education must contain glocal knowledge, and demonstrated one way this can be achieved through innovative learning concepts that encourage social work students to act locally and think globally in practice. As one student wrote in the feedback: 'I liked how different (similar) our perspectives and experiences were. I think it helps widen our scope of thinking into a more global view, our social problems and solutions are not only local.'

Future outlook

Teaching in higher education is constantly evolving in terms of learning spaces, technology and methods. The use of technology in digital classrooms has become standard today, even more so out of necessity due to the Corona pandemic. Furthermore, millennials and generation Z have their own needs regarding classroom experience. They expect meaningful and interactive tasks that connect them with their peers within and beyond the physical classroom (Scholz, 2014). Despite the fact that many good practices in novel teaching methods and learning approaches exist in higher education, through internationalisation and intercultural learning among others, they are still often limited to small experiments (Burquel, Busch, 2019). It is our endeavour, therefore, to integrate the COIL classroom into our standard curricula. This would underline what Mittelmeier et al. (2019) state in their paper on internationalisation 'At a Distance and at Home', namely that there is 'the need for a much more complex narrative around internationalisation in distance learning settings in light of technological advances, requiring a potential reconsideration of what internationalisation "abroad" and "at home" might mean' in future (p. 1).

Once the COIL classroom is integrated into standard curricula, there are certain additions that can be made to increase the usefulness of the undertaking. Some students suggested in their feedback that they would like to have more preparation in the course before the class. One result of the current Covid-19 pandemic is that many people, our students included, have become experts in using virtual learning tools. This means that in the future it should be easier to implement this suggestion. Students could be put into mixed nationality groups before the official COIL takes place, and given the task of getting to know each other and preparing for the class together. This could reduce the stress some students feel, and allow for less inhibited interactions in the COIL class itself. Likewise, after the class, it would be interesting to have the students work collaboratively to produce more learning output (e.g., report, seminar paper, presentation).

Since we recorded the COIL sessions with the intention of making them available to other students, this is another way the teaching staff collaborate: producing effective learning materials that can be used at both universities. Today it is often no longer technology that puts limits on what we are able to do, but rather our own limited thinking. It would be interesting, for example, to experiment with different formats of COIL. More than two universities could be involved simultaneously, as envisioned in the new Erasmus+ generation 2021–2027 through BIPs (Blended Intensive Programmes, digital Erasmus+). The authors of this paper are already looking forward to their next COIL experience, and are considering ways it can be expanded and improved for the benefit of our students, international understanding, and innovative glocal social work.

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Jonas Christensen – associate professor, doctor of Social Sciences (Education), Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health and Society, Malmö University, Sweden.

E-mail: jonas.christensen@mau.se