



Internationalization of Teacher Education in Higher Education

Theories, Concepts and Practical Approaches of Virtual, Blended and Physical Mobility



THEMA 142 Blickpunkt Hochschuldidaktik

dghd
Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Hochschuldidaktik

wbv

The article serves as an introduction to the anthology "Internationalization of Teacher Education in Higher Education: Theories, Concepts and Practical Approaches of Virtual, Blended and Physical Mobility".

Schlagworte: internationalization; teacher education; virtual mobility; blended mobility; physical mobility

Zitiervorschlag: Brück-Hübner, Annika, Müller, Ulrike Beate & Seifert, Anja (2024). *Internationalization of Teacher Education in Higher Education: Theories, Concepts and Practical Approaches of Virtual, Blended and Physical Mobility*. In Annika Brück-Hübner, Ulrike Beate Müller & Anja Seifert (Hg.), *Internationalization of Teacher Education in Higher Education: Introduction* (S. 11-18). Bielefeld: wbv Publikation. <https://doi.org/10.3278/177352W001>

E-Book Einzelbeitrag

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aus: Internationalization of Teacher Education in Higher Education (9783763977352)
Erscheinungsjahr: 2024
Seiten: 11 - 18
DOI: 10.3278/177352W001

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Introduction

Since the middle of the last century, the internationalization of higher education has become increasingly important. While initially the primary goal was to promote awareness and understanding of intercultural similarities and differences through the internationalization of higher education and thus to advance society (cf. Liu & Gao, 2022, p. 13), since the 1980s processes of commercialization (“export of educational goods”) and processes of elite formation (e. g. global rankings of universities with regard to the number of international students and researchers) have become increasingly important. However, these processes of commercialization and elite formation are at odds with the original intention of internationalization, which creates a field of tension: on the one hand, (international) cooperation and (intercultural) exchange should be promoted, on the other hand, the institutions of higher education and all actors involved are in competition with each other (see de Wit et al., 2015, pp. 289–290).

In view of current crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war and climate change, there are repeated calls to put economic interests in the background and focus more on the original ideas of internationalization (see e. g. Rizvi, 2020; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). The background to this is the thesis that the major global problems and challenges of our century can only be overcome jointly, with the close cooperation of international partners (de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 44). To do this, all these partners need global knowledge, diverse (intercultural) skills, openness to the world and an awareness and understanding of intercultural similarities and differences (cf. Osakwe et al., 2022, p. 25). Central to the discussion is the call for “internationalization for all”: it is important to give as many students as possible access to internationalized courses and intercultural exchange (cf. International Education Association of South Africa, 2014, p. 2; de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 44).

Nationally and internationally, the importance of internationalization applies in particular to teacher education. What constitutes professional teaching and a professional teacher in a changing society differs across countries and national traditions. Thus, there are similarities and differences in teacher education internationally. Based on the competence-oriented professional theory (c. f. Baumert & Kunter, 2013), it is assumed in a relevant area of international professional research that teachers have to

distinguish between subject-specific and subject-didactic knowledge, between didactic knowledge and profession-related convictions. Within the last years, internationalization has become an important topic, particularly in teacher training and teacher education. On the one hand, this relates to the fact that there is little mobility overall and teacher education is nationally orientated. On the other hand, the aims and advantages of internationalization, particularly in teacher education, are also clearly stated (Falkenhagen et al., 2019; Kricke & Kürten, 2015). Today teachers not only have to deal productively with the increasing heterogeneity of the student body in schools, they also have the task of adequately preparing students for life in a heterogeneous society and – in the sense of global citizenship – of developing them into responsible, tolerant and interculturally competent adults. This shall also be considered in teacher education in higher education.

While there is agreement on the importance of greater internationalization of teacher education, there are also very different concepts and approaches as to how exactly internationalization can be implemented in teacher education. The term internationalization hereby is used in many different ways. In the context of higher education, it is often equated with “mobility”. However, a closer look shows that the term “internationalization” has become a diversified umbrella term that covers numerous dimensions, elements, approaches and activities: from various forms of mobility (e. g. for the acquisition of credit points and degrees) to the development of curricula and syllabi to the establishment of franchises and campus branches (in reference to de Wit et al., 2015, p. 41). It is therefore necessary to make further conceptual distinctions between the central forms of internationalization in higher education at this point. The term mobility is certainly the most obvious for the discussion on internationalization. In the context of the internationalization of higher education teaching, physical mobility means the journey of one or more people to another country in order to participate in courses or other learning and exchange formats in presence (face-to-face) (“internationalization abroad”, de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 29).

In contrast to physical mobility, virtual mobility (“virtual exchange”) does not require the actors involved to physically move around or spend time abroad. Students and/or teachers can take part in courses or other learning and exchange formats digitally from their home university or from home. For this reason, this is also referred to as “internationalization at home” (cf. e. g. Stallivieri, 2020). The design of virtual mobility can vary greatly – starting with individual synchronous seminar sessions to which international lecturers and/or students are invited, through asynchronous online learning environments (e. g. MOOCs) to completely digital (distance) international learning courses. Of course, there are also mixed forms of physical and virtual mobility: face-to-face and virtual offerings can be sensibly linked. In hybrid settings, it is possible for at least part of the group to meet in person, while others join in digitally. In blended settings, digital exchanges are linked with direct exchanges on site (physical mobility). This results in a wide variety of possible variants and forms of internationalization.

However, virtual mobility and “internationalization at home” are not the same thing, as the latter is not limited to digital exchange (cf. de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 29). Another variant of internationalization efforts is curricular internationalization. These

are processes of targeted integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curricula of regular domestic degree programs (cf. Beelen & Jones, 2015). Teaching in a foreign language, i. e. in a language that is not the official national language, is also considered another form of “internationalization at home”. In the area of “internationalization at home”, a further trend is currently emerging: more and more universities are offering their courses not only on their home campus or online, but also at international branch campuses. These campus offshoots (“off-shore campuses”) often bear the name of well-known universities as a trademark (franchise) and are marketed commercially. In contrast to the other forms of internationalization, there is no international mobility on the part of the students. Rather, it is a physical presence of international higher education institutions abroad (cf. Kleibert et al., 2020, p. 6).

Construction and Content of this Anthology

This anthology aims to make an important contribution to promoting the internationalization of teacher education. As it has already been made clear in the introductory remarks, there are theoretical, conceptional and practical levels on which the internationalization of teacher education can be considered. This anthology has been divided into two parts: While Part I “Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches” sets out the theoretical and presents conceptual frameworks, Part II “Reflected Practice” is devoted to the diverse practice and insights gained through the implementation of internationalization projects and events in teacher education in higher education. Although this division of the anthology into two parts suggests a clear separation of the different levels of internationalization, the contributions show impressively how theory, concept and practice are interwoven and form synergies (see Figure 1).

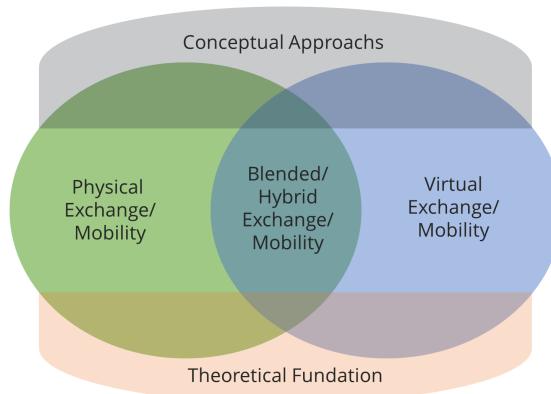


Figure 1: Levels of internationalization in teacher education

In **Part I**, the focus is initially on the theoretical foundation of the internationalization of teacher education. The article by Anja Seifert titled “*(Elementary) Teacher Education and Internationalization*” shows why internationalization of teacher education is important, but also points out key challenges and questions that need to be considered. The article “*Internationalization and Teacher Education for Inclusion*” by Ulrike Beate Müller focuses on the relation of internationalization and teacher education for inclusion. Firstly, teachers’ competences for inclusive education and the supposed influence of internationalized teacher education on the development of students’ competences are dealt with. Secondly, research findings of studies on the relation of internationalization of teacher education and (future) teachers’ competences for inclusive education are analyzed. “*Strengthening the Internationalization of Teacher Education through Education for Sustainable Development*” is the title of the article by Magdalena Buddeberg, Vanessa Henke and Sabine Hornberg. The article examines how Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) can be integrated in teacher education in higher education and discusses possibilities for incorporating international perspectives into teacher education to broaden teacher education students’ views on global crises and sustainable development in education. The theoretical foundation part concludes with the aspect of intercultural reflexivity and learning. In her article “*Promoting Intercultural Reflexivity and Learning in Virtual International Learning Environments – Theoretical Suggestions and Didactical Implications*”, Annika Brück-Hübner discusses the thesis that the virtual internationalization of teacher education does not automatically contribute to greater intercultural reflexivity and intercultural learning and points out first implications of how internationalization measures could be designed to promote these factors.

In addition to theoretical considerations, conceptual approaches are essential to be dealt with, as they function as a kind of connecting element between theory and practical transformation. The conceptual approaches of this anthology therefore concentrate on the question of what requirements internationalization measures place on different higher education stakeholders and what support structures are necessary to promote internationalization. In her article “*How to Internationalize Teacher Training: Overview of Barriers and Approaches to Solutions*” Jelena Bloch provides an overview of barriers and obstacles associated with international and intercultural learning experiences in teacher training and how barriers are met on an individual, institutional and structural level within the framework of the program “Lehramt.International”. Annika Brück-Hübner and Wiebke Nierste analyze and discuss the challenges of virtual international teaching and the resulting requirements for the design of the framework and infrastructure of institutions of higher education in their article “*Needs for the Successful Implementation of Virtual International Teaching in Higher Education – A Reflection Based on Practical Experiences*”. Strategy papers form an important basis for the development of higher education institutions and provide a framework within which internationalization measures can be implemented. In her article “*A Spotlight: Strategy Papers on the Internationalization of Teacher Education*”, Wiebke Nierste not only outlines the important functions of strategy papers for the internationalization of teacher education, but also presents two examples of good practice. In the article “*A Step-by-step Model for Inter-*

nationalization of Elementary School Teacher Education", Maximilian Kopp, Anja Seifert, and Ulrike Beate Müller present an internationalization concept that was developed as part of the GloPEG project to promote the internationalization of elementary school teacher education in a strategic and long-term planned manner.

Part II will then focus on the many faces and possibilities of internationalizing teacher education. On the basis of various practical projects and their initial evaluations, the aim here is to provide insights into the reflected practice of how internationalization of teacher education can be realized in practice and what opportunities, but also limitations, are associated with the various practical examples. This part is introduced by the article "*Virtual Exchange in Teacher Training – An Overview of Four Formats Carried out at University of Education Weingarten*". In their article Gabriella von Lieres and Sabine Lang present different forms of virtual internationalization of teacher training and reflect on their respective opportunities and limitations. More virtual and also hybrid formats are displayed and evaluated in the article "*Teachers Education Students and Virtual Mobility Formats – Insights from a Student Survey on the Flexibilization of Internationalization*" by Kathrin Wild in context of the project "Partners in flex-mobility". In her article "*Teaching in a Global World: Internationalization in Pre-Service Teacher Training – The IPC Project*" Klaudia Schultheis deals with the topic of broadening intercultural perspectives through different methods and levels of internationalization activities.

Concrete elaborations and evaluations of single virtual international formats are presented in the following part. Annika Brück-Hübner, Ulrike Beate Müller, Tatiana Joseph, Maire Tuul, and Felicitas Licht present a concrete example of the implementation of collaborative virtual international teaching (COIL) in the context of teacher education between Justus Liebig University in Giessen/Germany, Tallinn University in Estonia and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (USA) in their article "*VIEW: Virtual Intercultural Exchange Worldwide – A Seminar Concept for Intercultural Learning in Teacher Education*" and discuss its opportunities and limitations based on evaluation data. Another concrete example of a virtual seminar is given by Günter Renner in his article "*Virtual Exchange: A Comparative View of Teaching and Learning in Elementary Education*". This article gives an insight into a virtual exchange course, in which students in both Germany and Latvia worked together and investigated fundamental aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment at elementary schools. Lisa Sauer, Daniel Castner, and Agnes Pfrang provide and evaluate an example of an international virtual seminar on inclusive teaching between Germany and the USA, in the article called "*Teacher Education – Thinking Globally and Learning Internationally*". The opportunities and challenges of (virtual) summer schools as a form of internationalization of teacher education are discussed by Wiebke Nierste in her article "*Virtual International Summer School of the IMPACCT Project: Organization, Preparation, and Realization*" based on her own practical implementation experience. The question of how sustainable international cooperation between teachers in teacher education can be promoted and supported is discussed by Zina Morbach, Inga Steinbach, Sophie Bludau, Sven Page and

Annette Huppert in their article “*International and Sustainable?! Digital Pathways to Building International Cooperation in Teacher Education from a Management Perspective.*”

Formats of blended or physical cross-border mobility will follow in the next section. In their article “*Blended Mobility Format of Continuing Education Links School Teachers of German Schools Abroad and Students of Teacher Education of the University of Cologne*”, Katrin Kaiser and Christiane Biehl show how cooperation between student teachers and teachers at German schools abroad can be organized. In their article “*Breaking Down Barriers with MAPS – (How) Do Future Elementary School Teachers Use International Learning Opportunities?*” Frederike Bartels, Friederike-Sophie Maasch, Vera Willgosch, and Sarah Winkler describe a cooperative initiative between Estonia, Italy and Germany, which includes the structural integration of a study abroad program, an international summer school of teacher education, and expanded collaboration activities. The article “*Inclusion-related Professionalization of Ongoing Elementary School Teachers – Collaborative and Bilingual Teaching of the Subject Inclusive Education in a Multilingual Border Region*” of Simone Seitz and Heidrun Demo focuses on the specific conceptualization of bilingually (German/Italian) und multilingually (German, Italian, Ladin) joint courses and lectures in Italy/South Tyrol. The focus of Sandra Bellet’s article “*Elementary School Placements Worldwide: Austrian Student Teachers Engage with Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Through Hands-on Experience*” is on the demands of a globalized world and the need of cultural and linguistic competences and career development. The article describes collaborations and outlines a successful (research) project that was implemented and evaluated in Israel.

The close link between conceptual approaches and practice is particularly evident in two contributions: “*Discussing Transcultural Trainings in Video Conferences. Digital Teacher Education for an Inclusive World*” by Anke Redecker considers transcultural trainings in video conferences where prospective teachers are encouraged to get aware of problems and chances in diversity education with the aim of building an inclusive society, supported by dialogic didactics. The article “*Learning to See – The Mapping of Inclusion as a Tool for Internationalization of Teacher Education in the Area of Inclusion and Inclusivity*” by Michaela Vogt, Till Neuhaus, Marlene Pieper, Christoph Bierschwale, and Mark Schäffer-Trencsényi presents the Mapping of Inclusion (MoI) Project which provides students with possibilities to engage with internationally-oriented contents and also to partake in the endeavor of mapping the multiple and diverse understandings of inclusion.

The practical section ends with a look beyond the context of higher education. In form of an interview, the article “*Projects of Internationalization in Context of the German Association Lehrerinnen und Lehrer ohne Grenzen: An Interview with Wiebke Enders*” by Thomas Bürger and Wiebke Enders presents the organization “Teachers Without Borders” which strives to implement sustainable projects to give children and youth access to basic education. Through involving in such kind of projects, prospective teachers can gain a deeper insight into transcultural educational processes.

The anthology concludes with the final chapter “*Potentials and Barriers of (Virtual) Internationalization of Teacher Education*” written by the editors. Based on a survey of

the authors involved in the anthology and a review of the contributions, the central potentials but also limits of the (virtual) internationalization of teacher training will be examined in this conclusion.

In sum, this anthology presents an overview and a concrete insight into different levels of internationalization in teacher education – theoretical foundation, conceptual approaches and formats of physical, virtual, and blended mobility. Through such a structure and elaboration, the anthology aims to make an important contribution to promoting the internationalization of teacher education not only in Germany but also in other countries.

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