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Learning to See – The Mapping of Inclusion as a Tool for Internationalization of Teacher Education in the Area of Inclusion and Inclusivity

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Abstract

This text starts with a paradoxical observation: While education has almost always been associated with the broadening of perspectives and, also geographical references, the aspect of internationalization only plays a fringe role in teacher education. As such, the very people responsible for eliciting transformative processes in learners and students are stripped of that very resource and experience. Therefore, this text as well as the project outlines (the Mapping of Inclusion, MoI) address this problem by presenting a possibility to enrich teacher education with international perspectives. The thematic focus is set on the field of inclusion and inclusivity as this area exhibits a large degree of thematic divergence depending on the cultural and geographical background. By employing mechanisms related to Open Educational Resources and Practices, the MoI provides students possibilities to engage with internationally-oriented contents but also partake in the endeavor of mapping the multiple and diverse understandings and realizations of inclusion.

Keywords: virtual internationalization, cartography, inclusion, student research, open educational resources, OER

Outline

1. Internationalization, Teacher Education, and the Art of Seeing – Introduction
2. Seeing Inclusion Differently from an International Comparative Perspective
3. Introducing the Mapping of Inclusion (MoI) Project
4. How to Engage Students in the MoI by Focusing on OER?
5. Conclusion

„The only true voyage of discovery [...] would be
not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes.”
Marcel Proust, *La Prisonnière*

1 Internationalization, Teacher Education, and the Art of Seeing – Introduction

This text discusses the benefits of internationalization efforts in teacher education as well as a tool which may help to diversify teacher education in that regard. The necessity for doing this is rather surprising as the introductory quote by Marcel Proust is considered by many to be a truism: traveling and/or seeing different places is often assumed to correlate with a widened perspective as well as an open mind – a prerequisite for education. As such, educational endeavors and traveling appear to be a natural fit. In his considerations regarding *Bildung* (see also Redecker, 2024, in this anthology), Humboldt stresses the point that the entire endeavor is about the ascertainment and acquirement (*‘Erfassung und Aneignung’*) of the world (cf. Dörpinghaus, 2015, 467). On the same subject, Hegel argues that *Bildung* is about estrangement and atonement (*‘Entfremdung und Versöhnung’*) (cf. Sandkaulen, 2014) – perception, foreign elements, and transformation seem to go hand in hand. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the concept of the *Bildungreise* (cf. Schäffer, 2000) tries to cater to the implicit promises of personal growth and a widening of the personal horizon through traveling.

The discussions briefly outlined above are not limited to the German discourse as Kottler (1998) first introduced the concept of *transformative travel*, which he considers to be a process of (self-)actualization of “something missing” initiated and powered by “intellectual curiosity, emotional need, or physical challenge” (Kottler, 1998, 26). The idea of transformative travel has been developed further and is regarded as the “result of a process that begins with some type of experience that does not fit within the boundaries of the traveler’s assumptions, expectations, worldviews, or cultural paradigms” (Robertson, 2002, 4). Hence, it ultimately elicits transformation and growth. As such, the idea of traveling has also globally found its way into schools and further educational arrangements as field trips, school trips, or the like and can be considered a common practice, which “help students play with concepts, activities often not possible in the classroom” and thereby make “[e]arlier course content suddenly [...] relevant as students assimilate and accommodate new understanding and cognition” (cf. Behrendt & Franklin, 2014, 236).

In line with these tentative observations, the process of learning and growth has been framed by developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1975/1954) as an interplay between assimilation of new perceptual impulses and accommodation thereof in gradually more sophisticated conceptual structures. Following the Piagetian line of thought, development, learning, and growth always occur in relation to the perceived environment “and it should be noted that the Piagetian environment was an emergent property of exploratory behavior, rather than an objective given” (Peterson & Flanders, 2002, 433). Later psychological research has confirmed these insights and further argues that the cerebral structure responsible for memory and the retrieval thereof op-

erate like a cognitive or mental map (cf. O’Keefe 1990), in which structures of the map are consulted and either validated or revised depending on the corresponding experiences. Russian neuropsychologist E. N. Sokolov (1969) argued in similar fashion by claiming that the nervous system was primarily a malleable, internal mechanism trying to model the external world (cf. also Peterson & Flanders, 2002). Updates of the internal structures may occur through refinement of the existing model or by changing the “principles by which such information is handled, so that the process of regulation will prove more effective” (Sokolov 1969, 683) – “[t]he parallelism with Piaget’s thought is clear” (Peterson & Flanders, 2002, 434), yet this detour into psychological research also illustrates that the introductory quote by Marcel Proust is literally true. Depending on what human beings have seen and experienced, the mechanisms by which they perceive, understand, and incorporate these things alter – they, quite literally, see the world with different eyes. This even goes so far that some scholars argue that the very act of seeing is a mere reflection of a person’s goal structure as every ‘object’ could be perceived in an almost infinite amount of ways (cf. Medin & Aguilar, 1999).

So far, an interdisciplinary argument has been sketched out that diverse environments/inputs result in personal growth or – following the psychological lingua – in a more sophisticated mental map about the world. As such, it can be argued that a finer as well as more well-developed mental map should be considered a valuable resource for different reasons: Firstly, less surprises – mismatches between the map and reality – occur, which contributes to feelings of security, calmness, and well-being (cf. Hirsh, Mar & Peterson, 2012). Secondly, even when such surprises occur, the remaining structures (the ones not affected by the surprise/external shock) can be consulted to work a way around and ultimately integrate the anomaly into one’s structures. Given these benefits, it should be considered self-evident, that especially teachers require diverse inputs during their preparation and training. But instead, the academic as well as practical phases of teacher training appear to be very goal-directed (i. e. regarding the subjects/courses to study or skills to acquire) and, if any, barely incorporate aspects from outside the national school system as teacher training and schools in general (re-)produce a national primacy regarding their focus and outlook (cf. Neuhaus & Jacobsen, 2022). As such, teacher training strips itself of valuable resources, as alternative ways of seeing and thinking are actively excluded and the mental maps of teacher training graduates are not as sophisticated and far-reaching as they could be. The act and art of seeing schools and teaching from a widened perspective should be part of teacher training curriculums but somehow it is not. This lack of preparation can manifest itself in feelings of insecurity (cf. Dicke et al., 2016) as well as a lack of options at hand.

In the following, this chapter will present the *Mapping of Inclusion* (MoI) project (section 3) which addresses these shortcomings by providing a place and space to share and engage with student outputs from the field of inclusion. Prior to the presentation of the MoI, it will be argued that inclusion and internationalization require such a project by sketching out diverging understandings of inclusion from different regions and states (section 2). The MoI will also be connected to approaches of Open Education as well as Open Educational Resources (section 4). The chapter ends with a summary of key findings and results.

2 Seeing Inclusion Differently from an International Comparative Perspective

When it comes to challenges for education, inclusion is one of the main demands for proper teaching. Even though the claim itself might sound alike in many countries, the ways of how to realize practices of inclusion differ broadly amongst the global educational systems.

Looking at German developments from a diachronic perspective, it can be noted that the concept of inclusion has been in competition with the concept of integration for years; in this context, the demarcation was never clear. In some realms, both terms were used “synonymously” (translated from German: Hinz, 2002, see also Reiser, 2003). According to Hinz (2002), the term “integration” can be characterized by the following exemplary features: Children are classified along the “two groups theory (i. e. disabled/non-disabled)” (Hinz 2002, 11) and resources are provided “for children with disabilities” (Hinz, 2002, 12) (critical discussions by Biewer & Schütz 2016, 125). Another demarcation criterion between integration and inclusion was that in the integration discourse often the medical model – disability as an ontological construct rooted in medical conditions and diagnoses – was used. The inclusion discourse rather referred and refers to the social model; disability as the result of social arrangements which are not aligned with the needs of specific populations (cf. Biewer & Schütz, 2016, 125). However, these differences are not consistently pursued by scientists either; Heimlich’s (2015, 118) concept of integration, for example, also includes other dimensions such as cultural heterogeneity. It is precisely here that the weakness with regard to a semantic differentiation becomes apparent. Particularly “influential” in the discourse on integration is the definition of Feuser (1995) to which Heimlich (2015) refers, according to which integration is defined by the fact that “[...] all children and pupils play, learn and work in cooperation with each other at their respective developmental level [...] on and with a ‘common object’” (translated from German: Feuser, 1995, 173, after Heimlich, 2015, 118).

From an international-comparative perspective, it is striking that even in the European area, very different understandings of inclusion are rampant. The understandings partially disagree as well as interfere with developments in Germany. For example, Anastasiou, Kauffman, and Di Nuovo (cf. 2015, 3) note for Italy that the term “*integrazione scolastica*” is clearly more influential in the discourse than the concept of inclusion, even though there are efforts here to use the concept of inclusion more strongly. With regard to Sweden, Barow and Berhanu (2021, 6) conclude that no uniformized definition is currently available. The authors state that with the concept of integration there is an established predecessor in the field, which also has overlaps with the concept of inclusion (Barow, Persson & Allan, 2015, 199).

These preceding remarks about differences amongst the countries can serve as hints for variances and ambiguities of the concept of inclusion from a historical and synchronous comparative perspective. In view of the above-mentioned findings, the ambiguity of the concept of inclusion is widely discussed in the research literature:

Löser and Werning (2015, 17) refer to a “diffuseness of the concept of inclusion” (German: Diffusität) in the national and international discourse, Neuhaus, Pieper, and Schäffer-Trencsényi (2023) point to a “fuzzy concept” in view of the variances of the term. According to Biewer and Schütz (2016), the “English-language educational literature (...) often uses inclusion and ‘inclusive education’ synonymously” (translated from German: Biewer & Schütz 2016, 124). Furthermore, Biewer and Schütz (ibid. 124) state, referring to the English-language discourse, “The use of ‘inclusion’ is diverse and there is no single consensus definition. Often, ‘inclusion’ stands for a development process that leads to more educational rights for marginalized groups” (translated from German: Biewer & Schütz, 2016, 124).

3 Introducing the Mapping of Inclusion (MoI) Project

The previous sections highlighted the gaps with regard to the internationalization of teacher education. Furthermore, it was shown that a stronger contextualization of the inclusion discourse is of particular importance for (future) teachers (for further theoretical considerations of internationalization in context of inclusive teacher education see Müller, 2024, in this anthology). These challenges are addressed by the project ‘Mapping of Inclusion’ (MoI), which is theoretically based on a so-called “broad understanding of inclusion” (cf. Textor, 2018). It does not only consider the dimension ‘disability’, in contrast to the ‘narrow’ concept of inclusion, but also other dimensions that differentiate people, such as socioeconomic differences, gender, age, and cultural background (for discussion: Heimlich, 2015, 124; Hardy & Woodcock, 2014; Werning, 2014; Textor, 2018). This perspective avoids an analytical narrowing, is internationally connectable, and therefore necessary for an international-comparative research approach, and furthermore avoids stigmatization and discrimination due to a strict categorization into ‘healthy’ and ‘sick’. In this context, inclusion is understood more comprehensively than in its exclusive reference to school settings. In the generalization to inclusive education, we refer to Biewer (2010):

“Inclusive pedagogy refers to theories of education, upbringing and development that reject labels and classifications, take their starting point from the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people, advocate for their participation in all areas of life and aim at a structural change of regular institutions in order to meet the diversity of preconditions and needs of all users” (translated from German: Biewer, 2010, 193 after Biewer & Schütz, 2016, 125).

The project presented here takes the multiplicity of the inclusion concept seriously as it tries to provide a cartography of the different facets. Driven by a communal effort and tied back to higher education teaching settings, it attempts to integrate students into the decentral effort of mapping the different branches and ideas related to the *fuzzy* concept of inclusion.

The MoI was initiated in 2022 and has been funded by Bielefeld University within the framework of the ‘Qualitätsfond Lehre’. The aim of the project is the innovative extension of teaching-learning methods in the university context. The project is driven by the working group around Michaela Vogt from Bielefeld University¹. It is initially focused on educational science topics, but the technical applications also offer further impulses that can be used outside the discipline’s boundaries.

Mentioning just some of the advantages of the project, it enables the participants to develop a broad and reflexive understanding of inclusion based on international insights and comparisons. Furthermore, the MoI also recognizes world regions in particular that have been neglected so far, such as the global South (Tröhler, 2023). To this end, students are also encouraged to overcome narrow geographical perspectives and look beyond Europe. Following the presentation of Weidemann (2010), we see the teaching project as a useful approach to promote intercultural learning (Bolten, 2010). Research in comparative education, for example, still shows a significant imbalance in favor of considering North America and Europe, although changes are increasingly taking place in these discourses as well (Tröhler, 2023). The idea of ‘Open Education’ which also recognizes the social responsibility of science for society, is also reflected in the fact that the products are published under creative common’s licenses. This also enables further work and updating of the products, that are made publicly available on an online platform based on ‘Taskcard’². For describing the MoI on a practical level, the platform will in the following be described from two perspectives: From the perspective of the recipients and the product producers.

The Mapping of Inclusion from the recipient perspective

For recipients, who want to gain high quality knowledge on inclusion, the platform shows a map of the world, where collected academic writings and presentations about inclusion and exclusion all over the globe are linked to the areas of the world. Each product – papers, presentations etc. – is represented by a pin on the world map. When clicking on one of these pins, further information about the academic products appears. Also, the products themselves can be downloaded as each product is published under creative commons licenses. As a measure for quality assurance, all of works have been reviewed by academics before being uploaded. In addition to the pins on the world map, project results can also be displayed by keyword search, that is based on several search categories: The first category includes the country reference, the second focuses on educational institutions, divided into kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school, vocational training, and higher education. A final categorization is ‘Society and community’, which includes contexts such as family, peers, leisure clubs, and business institutions.

The topics covered by academic products on the platform are thematically quite divergent: There are products about educational policy and inclusion in Canada and

1 The working group around Michaela Vogt includes the research assistants: Marlene Pieper, Till Neuhaus, Mark Schäffer-Trencsényi and Christoph Bierschwale. At this point we would also like to thank the assistants Elora Sadiki, Magdalena Klaes and Michael Koppel for their active support.

2 Link to the webpage: <https://uni-bielefeld.taskcards.app/#/board/4505ad07-311a-4c38-b585-8121bc384124/view>

South Tyrol, but also about neo-institutionalist research on challenges in realizing inclusion. Additionally, a lot of selected facts about educational systems are present on the platform – not only from North American and European Context, but also, for example, from China and India.

The Mapping of Inclusion from the producer perspective

Also, within the framework of the MoI, it is possible to switch sides and to become a producer – based on extensive guidelines and also, when needed, with personal assistance from the project team. This allows individual students as well as docents from different universities to refer to the MoI and to make their products (more) available to the public as well as to other academics and students. Assistance for the barrier-free creation of teaching and learning products as well as quality criteria, i. e. instructions on design, language, and scientific conventions, are provided on the platform³. In addition, a step by step instruction on how to upload a product published under creative commons licenses has been put online; accompanied by relevant documents and additional instructions for product producers. This step by step description gently guides the producers through the process of uploading their product properly for the review process and does not overwhelm them with too much information.

When it comes to the relevance of the MoI for different teaching and learning formats for teacher education, it can serve as platform and source in many ways. The tool in its current form can be integrated into any teacher training seminar that deals with the topics of inclusion and/or international-comparative educational research. In topic-related seminars, the MoI can be combined with different assessment formats, presentations, and group works. Either students are advised to do research on the platform and to analyze certain topic areas on the platform (perspective: recipients), or the students themselves create high quality products as researchers and authors (perspective: product producers). In addition, individual students can use the platform independently from teaching courses to share academic products they are especially proud of, for example bachelor's or master's thesis. Finally, the core idea of a thematically organized platform which enables pronounced searching activities as well as the possible to share self-produced products can also be used in different contexts and subjects. Lastly, the materials in the digital platforms can be used for meta-analysis.

Limitations and Hurdles of the Mapping of Inclusion

Along with the benefits of the MoI come the challenges of the costs for the support and maintenance of the IT infrastructure. Also, the collection of academic products with an appropriate level regarding quality sometimes becomes difficult. Likewise, the recruitment of new docents for the expansion of the MoI – on the recipient as well as producer front – can be considered a viable challenge. Additionally, the products need to be supervised extensively and subjected to a quality check at the end, which requires personnel as well as time resources. Another huge area of challenges does come along with

3 <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/erziehungswissenschaft/arbeitsgruppen/ag11/moi/>

dissemination and visibility of the platform, which incurs costs for advertising measures, such as workshops.

As steps of further developments, the platform will be fed with additional academic products about inclusion around the world. It also will be made completely available in English and will be disseminated amongst interested docents, researchers, and students for increased visibility. Another important aspect of the platform is its combination with the OER discourse and a reflection on creative commons licenses and their effects.

4 How to Engage Students in the MoI by Focusing on OER?

The MoI as a teaching concept links the mapping of international perspectives on inclusion with an infrastructure to actively engage with these perspectives. But how exactly can the MoI platform and procedures contribute to the goal of fostering *internationalization at home* for all of the students? The project is based on the supposition that such a learning experience cannot consist of the mere acquisition of inclusion-related information from other countries and school systems but needs to build on the active engagement with international bodies of knowledge. Therefore, the MoI returns to principles of Open Education to encourage these critical reflections. Open Education as a concept has impactful tools at its disposal to act as a vehicle to benefit internationalized teaching and learning experiences, especially in the digital realm. Due to the multiplicity of actors involved and practices created, Open Education cannot be precisely defined (cf. Cronin & MacLaren, 2018) since various interpretations and understandings are present in a widely diverse movement (Iiyoshi & Vijay Kumar, 2010). Identifying a key tenet of Open Education, however, Iiyoshi and Vijay Kumar agree on the idea that “*education can be improved by making educational assets visible and accessible and by harnessing the collective wisdom of a community of practice and reflection*” (2010, p. 2, emphasis in original). According to the Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) this is to be achieved by:

“creating, using, adapting and improving open educational resources; embracing educational practices built around collaboration, discovery and the creation of knowledge; and inviting peers and colleagues to get involved”.

The project in general already builds on these principles through its focus on student outputs, their contribution to an ever-growing open knowledge hub, and the referencing of each other. There are two levels on which the principles of Open Education promote the project’s goal.

First of all, Open Education enables internationalized teaching and learning on a *practical and technical level*. The idea of Open Educational Resources (OER) supports this notion. OER are “learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and

redistribution by others” (UNESCO, 2012 OER Declaration). Students contribute to the MoI as a knowledge hub by having their work published under an open license. Moreover, the idea of OER allows students to access products from their peers and process, modify or remix them (i. e. combine them with further openly licensed content). In this way, OER and the principles of Open Education are a key tool in enabling the discourse on inclusion in an international context to be anchored and sustained in teaching and learning settings. Openness in this sense is the foundation for collaboratively thinking about international perspectives on inclusion in teaching and learning. Furthermore, Open Education is to be understood as a contribution to the deeper educational process in the sense of *Bildung* (cf. Pieper, Neuhaus & Vogt, 2023). The MoI is not primarily to be considered as a repository or archive for students’ outputs, but rather as a teaching and learning concept for internationalized Higher Education. Thus, Open Education also functions as an impactful tool on a *conceptual level*.

As the focus is on the publication of student products, “learner-generated” (Hegarty, 2015, 9) contributions and thus the own creation of (educational) resources are at the center of the project. This is where the participatory element of Open Education is realized. We argue that *learner-centeredness* enables learners not only to process an established canon of knowledge about inclusion but encourages them to create space for their own reflection processes, especially when outputs are being created around individual interests. This approach is grouped around the idea of *knowledge creation*, which is a process parallel to knowledge consumption through which students “shape the public knowledge commons of which they are a part” (DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017). Given that Open Pedagogy – as a pedagogical perspective on Open Education – empowers learners “to shape the world as they encounter it” (ibid.), the MoI aims to become a basis for a deeply contextualized learning about inclusion in an international context and to initiate (self-)reflexive learning processes. By acknowledging that knowledge “is co-constructed, contextualized, cumulative, iterative, and recursive” (DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017), the MoI explicitly invites *dialogic and connected* engagement with the content of other users and contributors.

Open Education contributes on a practical and conceptual level to the functioning of the MoI and creates a framework for Open Educational Practices, which can be defined as involving students in “active, constructive engagement with content, tools and services in the learning process, and promot[ing] learners’ self-management, creativity and working in teams” (Geser, 2007, OLCOS Roadmap 2012, p. 37).

5 Conclusion

The project outlined in this chapter addresses this shortcoming of current teacher training programs. The *Mapping of Inclusion* is an internationally-oriented project which can be incorporated into current teaching programs/courses and aims at widening the scope and horizon of future teachers – an *internationalization at home* so-to-speak – in the field of inclusion and inclusivity as this field (still) poses high demands

and is accompanied by an abundance of surprises. As such, the MoI's goal is to equip students with insights and approaches from around the globe regarding inclusive practices and theories. Thereby, the MoI does not just widen students' perspective on inclusion but also opens up alternative ways to see, think, and ultimately act differently in their teaching practice – as argued, this process is primarily driven by the provided inputs, ergo the *act and art of seeing*.

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