

Birgit Wolf, Tobias Schmohl, Larisa Buhin,  
Michael Stricker (Eds.)

# From Splendid Isolation to Global Engagement

Exploring Internationalization  
in Higher Education

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Birgit Wolf, Tobias Schmohl, Larisa Buhin,  
Michael Stricker (Eds.)

## Editors of the "TeachingXchange" Series

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# From Splendid Isolation to Global Engagement: Reflecting Global and Domestic Changes

## *Foreword*

LARRY MONETA

Studies indicate that nearly 6 million students enroll in colleges and universities outside their home countries. While a relatively small percentage of the overall college student body of approximately 225 million, the impact of international students' presence at institutions of higher education is significant. Every aspect of the college experience offers the opportunity to engage international students as learners or, conversely, to widen the divide between their domestic student counterparts. For an international student, simply navigating institutional housing, dining, healthcare, and recreational processes can be daunting and discouraging. Fortunately, many institutions offer support through dedicated offices and services directed specifically at addressing these needs. However, admitting international students into a college or university hardly ensures a truly integrative and engaging experience - one where international and domestic students authentically learn from each other's experiences and environments.

As uncomfortable as it may be for international students to adapt to the cultural, logistical, and educational differences associated with study in a foreign country, necessity is, according to the proverb, the "mother of invention" requiring international students to adjust as needed, generally with some help from the institution, in order to survive and advance. Domestic students in most countries may avoid all forms of discomfort, often choosing paths of least resistance through their post-graduate studies and beyond. A truly global and internationally focused education stretches the mind, enables experiences beyond the sheltered norm and encourages exposure to alternate viewpoints, challenging conditions, and cultural diversity.

International and domestic students are often too sheltered from the life experiences of others. Both will benefit from understanding the plights of first-generation students, students with various immigration backgrounds, gendered perspectives, religious and racial differences, sexual orientation, and other identity characteristics. To be sure, designing a curriculum and pedagogical practices that can effectively introduce identity, cultural, and environmental differences spanning local and international perspectives is complex and daunting. Yet, it is this very challenge that makes this book and the work of Wolf, Schmohl, Buhin, and Stricker even more compelling.

Over my nearly 50-year career in higher education, both as a faculty member and an administrator, I've rarely seen effective approaches to truly internationalizing the



collegiate experience. International students are generally expected to adjust to local rules and rituals with fairly significant disregard for confusing and stressful cultural conditions and expectations. As a result, international students often bond only with other international students and avoid or are uninvited to connect with domestic students.

Equally suboptimal are the international exposure and content offered to domestic students. For those who can and opt to study abroad for a semester or two, the international experience can be meaningful and illuminating. This is especially true for students who seek opportunities outside their comfort zones and choose international venues where culture, history, and conditions require substantial acculturation and reconditioning. Unfortunately, educational tourism often influences the choices of host countries and institutions.

Internationalizing a curriculum requires heightened sensitivity to a host of critical factors. Global challenges and conditions influence pedagogy and course content; local political processes and contexts, including national immigration policies and conflicts as well as racial, gender, and religious conditions (among other identity concerns), influence teaching and learning; and regional circumstances and relationships (e. g., European, Pan-Asian, and Latin American distinctions) greatly influence educational priorities, perspectives, and environments. Thus, curricula and pedagogy are always in flux and subject to forces within a country's context and history as much as they are shaped by external influences such as visiting international students and scholars.

But nowhere is the opportunity for genuine internationalization of the learner more likely and currently under-realized than in the classroom. Internationalizing the classroom experience requires new and effective approaches to teaching and learning in both didactic and experiential forms. An internationalized curriculum should contextualize learner outcomes in varied and global circumstances. Problem-based learning that features cases and scenarios grounded in world-wide crises, conditions, and characteristics will transcend narrower local perspectives. Experiential elements of a course that embed students in multinational and international challenges should stimulate far greater creativity, reflection, and understanding of life beyond domestic borders and invite more intensive and fulfilling engagement with students who bring different experiences and expectations to the institution.

All this is to simply affirm the timeliness and critical need for this book. By focusing on the teaching mission of colleges and universities, Wolf, Schmohl, Buhin and Stricker have provided a set of chapters, each of which addresses key opportunities for genuine internationalization of instructional processes. Readers are invited to draw from these texts a variety of innovative approaches to inform curricular development, the integration of experiential techniques to complement formal teaching methodologies, and the application of technologies that permit both asynchronous and synchronous learning on a campus and everywhere in the world where their students are likely to be found.

This book will inspire enhanced approaches to assessment of learning outcomes, the development of competencies, and consideration of the multicultural, multilingual,

and identity diversity ever present in all classrooms. Suggestions are grounded in theory, offered with evidence of efficacy, and featured with considerable flexibility to meet the needs of institutions across the globe. The chapters address the internationalization of the liberal arts as well as of pre-professional education.

“From splendid isolation to global engagement: exploring internationalization in higher education” offers unambiguous advocacy. To avoid democratization and internationalization of the classroom is to stay rooted in outdated and ineffective models of teaching with diminished outcomes. For the next generation of leaders to be properly prepared for the challenges ahead—all of which have global implications—colleges and universities must dramatically alter their educational efforts. Wolf, Schmohl, Buhin and Stricker provide a roadmap and a wide variety of tools for innovation in teaching and learning, which will inspire institutional leaders and faculty to rise to the occasion.

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# From Splendid Isolation to Global Engagement: Exploring Internationalization in Higher Education — A Comprehensive Perspective

BIRGIT WOLF, TOBIAS SCHMOHL, LARISA BUHIN & MICHAEL STRICKER

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Evolution and Impact of Internationalization in Higher Education

In the modern academic milieu, internationalization has emerged as a vital aspect and objective within universities around the globe. Originating in the 1960s, this phenomenon has witnessed significant transformation, including the escalating recruitment of international students, the integration of global perspectives into curricula, and the expansion of research collaborations. These shifts have empowered students to tap into career opportunities overseas, thereby augmenting their employability and, for some, even serving as pathways to immigration (OECD, 2022).

In general terms, internationalization refers to the “infusion of an international or intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service through a combination of a wide range of activities, policies, and procedures” (Knight, 1999, p. 15). As characterized by Teichler (2017), the concept includes, among others, the following six main aspects: the global transfer of knowledge through various media; physical mobility across countries involving students and staff; international cooperation and communication among countries and educational institutions; international education and research fostering intercultural learning and understanding; international convergence and similarity; and the pursuit of international reputation and quality.

Teichler adds, however, that these classifications are not rigorous. For instance, the Bologna Process in Europe (Curaj et al., 2015) highlighted additional factors such as student mobility flows, internationalization as a catalyst for change in higher education, intercultural competence, strategic international cooperation, funding for internationalization, and a quality review of internationality. These aspects align with the OECD’s (1999) definition of internationalization, which encapsulates the infusion of an international or intercultural dimension into a university’s core functions such as teaching, research, and service.

Knight (2006) aptly distinguishes between *Internationalization Abroad (IA)* and *Internationalization at Home (IaH)*. IA refers to the mobility of students, faculty, and staff, whereas IaH signifies the process of diversifying and globalizing the curriculum and pedagogy in order to appeal to both international and non-traditional domestic students (Sa & Serpa, 2020). IA and IaH, while distinct, interact synergistically to enhance internationalization. For example, the internationalization of home curricula aug-

ments the experience of students studying within their countries while simultaneously attracting more international students.

The global crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for technology-supported activities (de Wit & Altbach, 2020), triggering the inception of a third paradigm, *Internationalization at a Distance (IaD)*:

“a rising number of technology-supported activities have created new opportunities for university internationalization. For example, students can now remain ‘at home’ while using technology to study with an institution or program that is simultaneously located ‘abroad’. We have conceptualized these activities as a new third category called Internationalization at a Distance” (Mittelmeier et al., 2020).

IaD encompasses all forms of cross-border education where teaching and learning processes need to be facilitated by technology because students, personnel, and institutional resources are geographically separated (Mittelmeier et al., 2020). The current discourse in this context is geared towards exploring the development of students’ intercultural competence and its implications for online collaborative international learning pedagogy (Liu & Shirley, 2021).

## 1.2 Internationalization at Home and its Implications for Higher Education

Our discussion within this book focuses on *IaH*, which encompasses initiatives aimed at amplifying the international and intercultural dimensions of higher education within the domestic campus:

“Internationalisation of the curriculum is the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning processes and support services of a program of study” (Leask, 2009, p. 209).

From our viewpoint, IaH extends to curricular and co-curricular activities such as introducing international themes in the curriculum, hosting international speakers, cultivating intercultural competencies, and collaborating with international partners in research and educational projects (de Wit, 2020). Given its potential to prepare students for becoming global citizens (Cottong et al., 2018), elevating institutional prestige, generating research, addressing global issues, and contributing to the internationalization of the local communities (Almeida et al, 2018), this manifestation of internationalization has gained strategic significance in higher education research, policy, and practice.

Leask (2015) and Beelen and Leask (2011) underscore that IaH should not be restricted solely to the presence of international students. Rather, it should be leveraged as an opportunity to cultivate diversity within the classroom by expanding the definition of culture to encompass elements such as gender and social class. This approach holds particular promise for institutions aspiring to promote IaH but lacking a substantial international student body.

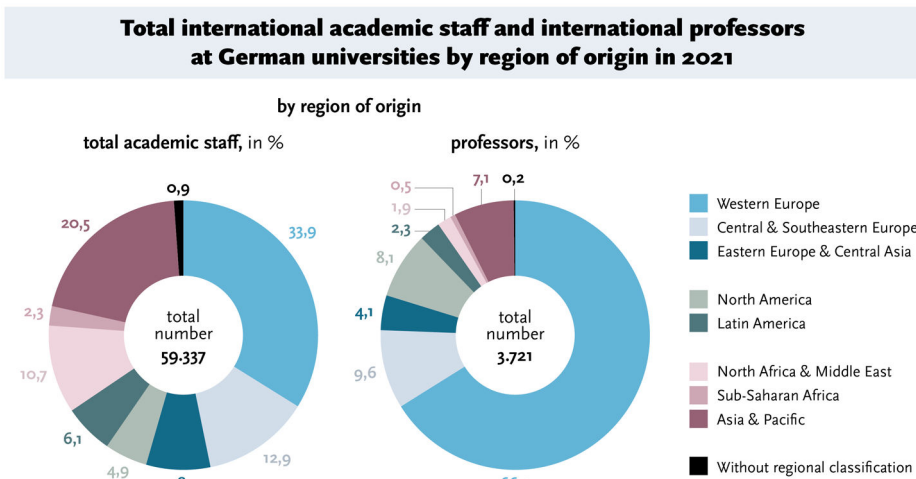
Empirical evidence illustrating the efficacy of IaH in fostering global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies has been provided by Soria and Troisi (2013). Their study, conducted across nine large public research universities in the United States, demonstrates that IaH activities significantly amplify students’ cross-

cultural and global competencies, thereby shaping them into globally competent graduates and citizens. Concurrently, Baldassar and Mckenzie (2016) advocate the integration of diverse pedagogical approaches in IaH activities to facilitate cross-cultural engagement, emphasizing cultural immersion, perspective-taking, critical reflection, and community involvement as instrumental in achieving the anticipated benefits of IaH.

The COVID-19 pandemic has paradoxically catalyzed *and* impeded IaH, inducing temporary reductions in mobility, increased use of teleconferencing, and modifications to curricula, pedagogy, and assessment (Jensen, Marinoni, & van't Land, 2022). These changes could potentially become permanent, fostering greater participation and diversity in higher education. Simultaneously, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation poses substantial challenges to globalization, affecting cross-border flows of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas. The consequent implications for higher education continue to evolve.

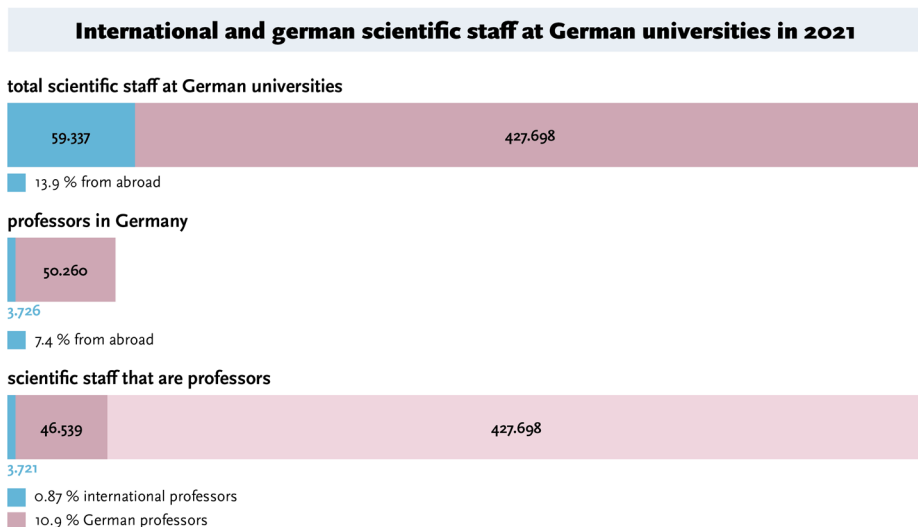
## 2 Internationalization in German Higher Education: The Paradox of “splendid Isolation”

The term “Splendid Isolation”, coined by Wildt (2013), a well-known expert on German higher education, aptly summarizes the prevailing condition in the country: despite a myriad of educational initiatives being undertaken, a tangible disconnect from the global pedagogical community exists. Supporting this assertion, staffing statistics from German universities (DAAD, 2023) reveal that the share of international staff in the total of 427,698 academics at German universities is a paltry 13.9 % (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1:** Figure based on data provided by the German Federal Statistical Office (university personnel statistics) and the data preparation in DAAD (2023, p. 17)

The proportion shrinks even further for foreign professorships: of the 59,337 academic and artistic personnel with foreign citizenship, a mere 7.4 % (3,721) are professors (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2:** Figure based on data provided by the German Federal Statistical Office (university personnel statistics) and the data preparation in DAAD (2023, p. 17)

Additionally, the “international” staff turns out to be mainly from Western Europe, which is the primary region of origin for foreign academic employees, contributing 34 % of all foreign academic staff and 66 % of foreign professors in Germany. A significant number of these foreign academics hail from German-speaking countries such as Austria (19 %) and Switzerland (9 %).

This striking dearth of international pedagogical engagement stands in contrast to the ongoing trends of globalization and regionalization, which typically reshape national landscapes and inherently influence higher education systems (van der Hijden, 2014). This stark divergence between the nationally focused educational approach and the evolving global milieu, characterized by increased migration and a rising demand for international education, not only curtails the development of global citizenship and authentic intercultural exchanges but also constrains the potential benefits for universities and their increasingly diverse student communities.

### 3 The Evolving Role of Higher Education in Internationalization: A Deep Dive into Our Publication

Against this backdrop, our publication serves as a humble attempt to probe into the role of higher education in bolstering internationalization—more specifically: IaH—with an intention to magnify the global facet of the three central missions of higher

education: teaching, research, and societal service. Such integration culminates in the enhancement of education and research quality for all students and staff, thereby making a significant contribution to society (de Wit, 2020, p. ii). In this context, we find Hudzik's (2011) expansion of Knight's definition of "comprehensive internationalization" especially relevant as it encompasses the curriculum, the learning outcomes, and the *ethos* of higher education.

Our publication is divided into two interconnected domains. The first field scrutinizes responses to the changing and diverse classroom environment that results from IaH. These contributions focus on curriculum adaptations meant to cater to an increasingly student body (Sa & Serp. 2020), taking into account incoming international students as well as societal shifts such as immigration influx. The second area focuses on educational goals with an international outlook, particularly the development of intercultural and social competencies deemed crucial for higher education graduates and prospective global citizens.

The chapters in this book are primarily written by educators and researchers who strive to address the social dimension by adjusting their curricula and teaching methodologies in highly international and intercultural higher education institutions. We believe that the cross-disciplinary nature of the chapters will demonstrate that internationalization and interculturalism in the classroom are vital considerations across all academic fields.

As a community of educators, we share the conviction that higher education transcends the mere transmission of information and the facilitation of learning. It also has a growing duty to prepare a workforce capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly industrialized, technologically advanced, and globalized world. In response to this, higher education must keep pace with developments in various industrial and technological sectors.

In compiling the chapters in this book, we seek to foster a pioneering spirit of transformation and evolution in the sector of higher education, pinpointing ways to increase the accessibility and advantages of higher education to the wider public. It is incumbent upon educational institutions to not just educate but also to foster an inclusive environment advocating for equity, diversity, and responsiveness to local community needs. We argue that integrating internationalization across institutional structures and operations is crucial. By nurturing a campus culture that esteems and promotes intercultural exchange, the international potential of the student body can be fully realized, resulting in a more socially conscious and diverse university. We trust this book will offer readers insights and guidance on how to navigate the changing landscape of internationalized higher education at home and provide practical approaches to teaching and learning for future global citizens.

## **Part I: The Global Classroom: Embracing Diversity, Inclusivity, and Sustainability**

In a world that is becoming increasingly globalized, education must equip students with the skills to navigate the complexities that accompany a diverse society. Conse-



quently, the first section of this book takes a broad look at the necessary transformations regarding teaching and learning practices within higher education. It underscores the importance of cultivating comprehensive viewpoints and the development of inclusive pedagogies and curricula to serve a diverse student body. Additionally, it sheds light on the importance of incorporating sustainability studies to help students confront the challenges that come with crossing cultural, national, and geographical boundaries.

The contribution by **O'Rourke and Kreber** delves into the experiences of Indian students in Canada. The authors conducted surveys and semi-structured interviews to gain insights into these students' experiences in the Canadian university system. The authors' findings underscore the importance of understanding diverse perspectives and adapting teaching and learning practices accordingly. Such practices will foster a more inclusive and accommodating environment for an international student body.

**Bengtson's** work further emphasizes the need to adapt educational practices and foster inclusivity. His focus is on doctoral education, specifically the requirement for higher education to produce socially responsible researchers. Bengtson's discussion brings attention to the societal demands and globalization agendas that are shaping PhD programs and doctoral education.

**Crawford's** work echoes the sentiments shared by Bengtson and stresses the need for education to cultivate well-rounded, socially responsible individuals. His focus is on the value of humanities education within the context of a liberal arts approach. The article underscores the need for international and culturally diverse education and the importance of adapting course outcomes to multicultural settings.

**Charry Roje's** article explores the cultural implications of assessment privacy, an area often overlooked in discussions of intercultural learning. The investigation emphasizes the importance of understanding and adapting educational practices to accommodate cultural differences, ultimately creating an inclusive learning environment.

**Fahrner, Wolf, and Schmieder's** research provides empirical data on the shift from on-campus to online teaching and learning in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings suggest that well-planned and utilized technical environments may positively affect students' competence development. The authors also highlight the importance of fostering interdisciplinary skills to empower students to solve problems independently and collaboratively.

**Sonnleitner and Ruffeis** examine the importance of formative assessment in online and blended learning environments, a topic of great relevance in the digital age. Their work explores the significance of Bloom's taxonomy and constructive alignment in facilitating a more student-centered and competency-based approach to teaching and learning.

**Stricker and Burow** demonstrate how academic writing assistance can further enhance teaching and learning practices in higher education. Their contribution presents a course titled "Techniques of Academic Work" (TAW), which aids students in their introductory period by teaching academic writing skills.

Lastly, **Božinović and Havelka Meštrović** address the role of learning strategies in language acquisition within multicultural and multilingual learning environments. Their work emphasizes the importance of educators being familiar with the necessary skills and methods for successful language teaching in a multicultural setting.

Taken together, these chapters present a comprehensive view of the various strategies needed to internationalize higher education. They discuss the significance of inclusive pedagogies, the understanding of diverse perspectives, and the adaptation of teaching and learning practices to meet the needs of a diverse student body in an increasingly globalized world.

## **Part II: Training Global Citizens: Integration of Multicultural and International Dimensions into the Curriculum**

The increasingly globalized nature of our contemporary society calls for an inclusive and internationalized higher education system that equips students with the necessary multicultural competencies. Our authors have risen to this challenge. In this section, they present theoretical approaches, empirical data, and their own experiences as instructors in higher education.

**Buhin and Moskovits** lay the groundwork, advocating for education steeped in liberation pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and cultural humility. They have developed courses emphasizing critical thinking and bias identification in students. These courses, with their focus on culturally relevant literature and disclosure of assessment methods, contribute to a lively and encouraging learning environment.

In the spirit of internationalizing education, **Lüdeke and Lüdeke** further build upon this concept by calling attention to the importance of language education in the context of management careers. Noting the significance of students' early decisions regarding their foreign language specializations, they show how language acquisition can expand the cultural understanding crucial to a global workforce.

The theme of practical skill development is central to our discussions. **Čondić-Jurkić** presents an innovative approach: a semester-long valuation project integrated into finance education. Echoing Buhin and Moskovits' focus on critical thinking, Čondić-Jurkić's project is designed to encourage students to hone the same skill, applied to a real-world business context. Additionally, it links with Lüdeke and Lüdeke's emphasis on career preparation by offering students insight into potential career paths.

Despite these innovative approaches, challenges persist. **Theiss-Abendroth** details one such issue, discussing the difficulties in integrating psychoanalysis into higher education. Despite the complexity and controversy surrounding the field, Theiss-Abendroth aligns with our earlier authors, emphasizing the need for open dialogue and comprehensive understanding, a thread of thought that can be found in all of the contributions.

**Biniok** presents an innovative experiential training program, the EVE-LaB Training Program. Much like Čondić-Jurkić's valuation project, this program employs hands-on learning. Aligning with Theiss-Abendroth's approach, Biniok's program also necessitates deep understanding and application of a field of knowledge—in this case, teacher training—to ensure effective instruction.

As we redefine our traditional learning spaces, **Schmidt & Vejzagić** provide an example from RIT Croatia. They repurpose a classic introductory Financial Accounting course using a flipped classroom model, connecting back to the theme of innovative instruction and pedagogical strategies presented in previous contributions, thus further enriching the discourse on internationalizing higher education.

Finally, **Lüdeke and Brock** explore the impact of varied instructional strategies in business education. Building on the interconnected themes of practical application and critical thinking seen in Čondić-Jurkić's contribution, Lüdeke and Brock examine how deep familiarity with business practices can impact student perception and evaluation.

The synergy among these diverse yet interconnected perspectives illuminates our understanding of internationalizing higher education. Each contribution emphasizes the need for inclusive education that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical skills, innovative pedagogical strategies, and a rich understanding of multicultural competencies to prepare students for a globally interconnected workforce.

## 4 Conclusion

As we prepared this book and dug deeper into the various contributions, it became evident to us that IaH is not merely a passing trend but a paradigm shift that is reshaping the landscape of higher education. This shift is driven by the realization that in our increasingly interconnected world, it is essential for students to develop global competencies and intercultural understanding.

As a strategy, IaH aims to incorporate an international and intercultural dimension into the curriculum and pedagogy of institutions of higher education. This strategy enables all students to gain international exposure and develop global competencies, not just those who can afford to study abroad. It is a response to the requirement that higher education prepare students for a globalized workforce and promote global citizenship (Leask, 2015).

Implementing IaH necessitates novel pedagogical approaches capable of effectively integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the curriculum. This book's contributions demonstrate that these approaches should aim to foster students' intercultural competencies, global awareness, and understanding of global issues.

The advantages of IaH are numerous. It improves educational quality by giving students a global perspective and cultivating intercultural competencies that prepare them for a globalized workforce. Furthermore, it contributes to the internationalization of the local community and improves the international reputation of higher education institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

However, implementing IaH may also lead to new obstacles. For one, it necessitates a shift in institutional culture, modifications to the curriculum and pedagogy, and investments in infrastructure and resources. In addition, successful long-term implementation of IaH depends on the dedication and support of all stakeholders, including faculty, students, and administrators (Leask, 2015).

After editing this book, we believe that IaH is an essential response to the need for higher education to prepare students for a globalized workforce and to foster global citizenship. Successful implementation of IaH entails novel pedagogical approaches as well as the commitment and support of all stakeholders. Despite the difficulties, however, the advantages of IaH far outweigh the disadvantages, making it a worthwhile investment for higher education institutions.

We hope that this book contributes to this development by providing inspiration and insight that may enhance institutional prestige, generate research that addresses global issues, help students become global citizens, and promote the internationalization of local communities. Last, but not least, we as the editors, would like to thank our authors for their contributions and flexibility in meeting the special requirements of a double-blind review process. It has been a great pleasure working on this project with so many enthusiastic experts. Having mentioned this, we would of course particularly like to thank the scientific reviewers who supported the quality assurance for this publication by taking part in this double-blind review process.

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# **The Global Classroom**



# Understanding Implications and Considerations for International Students at a Canadian University

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## 1 Introduction

Increasing student mobility and thereby attracting students from other countries is one among many strategies employed in the effort to internationalize higher education (Knight, 2012). The motivations of the host country and institution for recruiting international students are often many, varied, and at times conflicting. It has been argued that these efforts are increasingly driven by economic considerations, but academic, social/cultural, ethical, and political reasons are not uncommon either (Kreber, 2009). Arguments in favor of attracting international students therefore range from seeking to include a global perspective into courses and programs of study to increasing diversity on campus and in the wider local community, to wanting to help the home country innovate and develop, and to the hope of enhancing intercultural understanding among graduates and society. An additional motivation for international student recruitment, especially at graduate and doctoral levels, is to secure the required brain power to strengthen one's own country's economic, social, and cultural development, as well as its competitiveness in a global knowledge economy, through research (Conference Board of Canada, 2018). The economic rationale obviously features strongly at this level.

In a relatively sparsely populated region such as Cape Breton (Canada), which over many years has experienced a steady decline in domestic students and a slowly diversifying economy (following the decline of a formerly booming industry based in coal and steel), attracting international students is often seen as a beacon of hope for a more prosperous future. In a context where government funding of public universities is based on student enrollment, where gradual increases in annual transfer payments to universities have not kept pace with inflation, and where tuition fees make up a substantial proportion of an institution's annual budget, many universities see the recruitment of more students—including international students—as imperative, not just for development but often for sheer survival. In this article, we report on a small study grounded in survey and interview data collected from international students and their instructors at Cape Breton University (CBU), a small, primarily undergraduate institution in Atlantic Canada that doubled its enrollment over the past five years, largely through the recruitment of international students. Our focus is on students from India,



who make up the largest proportion of international students at Canadian postsecondary institutions such as CBU.

The article is organized into four sections. We begin by reporting some pertinent statistics on international students in Canada and providing an overview of Cape Breton University and its region, both of which are relevant for the subsequent discussion. We then introduce the study's design, followed by its major findings. Here, we focus on international students' academic needs and challenges, pedagogical approaches employed by instructors, and attempts to internationalize curricula and assessment practices. We also report on the extent to which international students feel integrated with their international and domestic peers both inside and outside the classroom. We conclude with recommendations for instructors and institutions on how to best support international students and refine higher education programming and policy for *all students*.

## 2 Cape Breton University in Context

Canadian colleges and universities have experienced a substantial increase in international student enrollment, from 228,924 to 388,782 per year (an increase of 69.8 %) over five years. The vast majority of international students (46 %) are from India (Erudera, 2022). Most international students in Canada (65 %) are enrolled at universities, most of them pursuing a bachelor's degree or a two-year diploma program. The majority of international students in Canada study engineering, business, administration, or are enrolled in health-related programs (Erudera, 2022). In 2021, there were 11,251 international students in the Province of Nova Scotia in Atlantic Canada, well over half of whom were from India and China (MPHEC, 2021). With nearly 62 % of students at Cape Breton University (CBU) being international in 2021, CBU has had by far the greatest percentage of international students among Nova Scotian universities over the past few years; at the other nine universities, the percentage of international students ranges from 3.5 % to 28.8 % (MPHEC, 2021).

CBU is located on an island of only 130,000 inhabitants, which is connected to the mainland of Nova Scotia by a causeway. Although the entire population of Nova Scotia is only one million people, the province features ten degree-granting institutions, five of which are located in the famous port city and Nova Scotia's capital, Halifax.

Due to its many natural and cultural attractions, such as vast parks and impressive coastlines, the Bras D'Or Lake biosphere reserve, and numerous theater and music festivals, Cape Breton Island is a renowned tourist destination, especially during the summer months. However, just like the rest of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton is also characterized by substantial economic deprivation and significant inequalities in income across families. More than one-third of all families in Cape Breton live below the poverty line (Frank et al., 2020). Although going back as far as the 1950s under the name of *Xavier Junior College* (an offspring of Saint Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia), Cape Breton University, formerly known as the *College of Cape Breton* and later the

*University College of Cape Breton*, is one of the newest universities in Canada, having been granted university status through an act of provincial legislature in 2004.

Historically, four distinct cultural groups have defined the region. These include the Mi'kmaq, the Acadians, the Gaels, and people of African Nova Scotian heritage. Although culturally significant, these four groups make up a relatively small percentage of the total population of Cape Breton and the rest of Nova Scotia. Today, the majority of Cape Breton's local population is comprised of descendants of white European settlers and immigrants of mainly Scottish, English, Irish, French, and German heritage. However, the population also includes recent immigrants from Syria and several other countries plagued by political upheavals, as well as small numbers of people from Asian countries who have made Nova Scotia their home.

As previously noted, compared to the rest of the province and Canada at large, CBU attracts a substantial number of international students. The latest numbers for spring 2022 show that despite the ongoing global pandemic, 2,573 of a total of 4,469 students at CBU—i.e., well over half—are international, with the remaining ones being from Cape Breton and other parts of Canada. International students at CBU come from more than 40 different countries, with students from India, China, and Nigeria representing the largest cultural groups within the international student body. For the past five years, Indian students have made up the vast majority, now accounting for almost 70% of all international students at CBU. Looking more specifically at the program level at CBU, students from India study in many programs, but the highest numbers are found in two-year diploma programs in the areas of engineering, public health, and business, mirroring the observations reported for the national level (Erudera, 2022).

Data released by the Canadian Bureau for International Education shows that 60% of all international students in Canada have plans to become permanent residents after graduation (CBIE, 2022). According to Canadian rules on immigration (Immigration and Citizenship, 2017), international students who have graduated from a Canadian institution on a program that involved at least two years of full-time study are eligible for a post-graduation work permit of three years, which can bring valuable work experience and facilitate the path to permanent residency and, eventually, Canadian citizenship. Many international students at CBU see an additional opportunity for immigration in the Atlantic Immigration Program (Atlantic Immigration Program, 2022). This program is meant to meet the needs of employers in the region and allows recent graduates from a recognized postsecondary institution in Atlantic Canada to apply for permanent residency as soon as they have found an employer.

Considering these pathways to immigration, it is not surprising that the vast majority of international students at CBU either enroll in programs leading to a diploma or post-baccalaureate diploma—either of which requires two years of full-time study—or seek advanced standing through a four-year bachelor's degree program. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the majority of international students at CBU have gained previous postsecondary experience in their home country. Nearly all of CBU's international students from India hold prior degrees.

Tuition fees at CBU are comparable to those charged at other universities in the province but somewhat lower than at many of the bigger universities elsewhere in Canada. At Canadian universities, international students pay approximately two to three times the fees of domestic students. To put this in perspective, fees for one year of full-time study at the undergraduate level at CBU are currently around \$8,500 for domestic students and approximately \$17,000 for international students. Once international students obtain permanent residence status (PR) in Canada, they pay the same fees as Canadian students. Therefore, many students continue their studies at that time to pursue higher-paid careers in their field.

Although the reported change in student demographics at CBU has been welcomed, many foundational hurdles and gaps in infrastructure and student services have come with the sudden growth and increased cultural representation on campus. To help begin to bridge these gaps, a forward-thinking and innovative strategic plan (Cape Breton University, 2019) was created in 2019 to realign the university with a realistic mission, vision, and set of values. In 2018, over 200 community and institutional consultations shaped and created the strategic plan and its five directions:

1. Invest in our Students,
2. Champion the Island's Prosperity,
3. Indigenize the L'nu<sup>1</sup> Way,
4. Globalize with a Difference, and
5. Empower Faculty and Staff.

As a derivative of the strategic plan, an academic plan (Cape Breton University, 2020) was created. Grounded in experiential learning and inquiry, its goal is to prepare all students to be global citizens by providing intercultural academic perspectives.

Although the academic plan has been enthusiastically embraced by academic and instructional support staff, it is recognized as ambitious. Providing valuable intercultural academic experiences and perspectives within programs initially designed for much smaller and more culturally homogeneous cohorts is not without problems. Below, we compare the experiences of international students and their instructors, focusing on perceived challenges and any adaptations made to teaching and learning.

### 3 Study design

The mixed-methods design involved an electronic survey consisting of closed and open-ended questions completed by 146 Indian students enrolled at CBU as well as semi-structured interviews with nine Indian students and eleven CBU instructors. The first survey was distributed in 2019. Areas of focus included Indian students' opinions of Cape Breton, CBU, their social lives in Canada, and their academic experiences. The second survey was distributed in the spring of 2022 with nearly identical questions,

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1 L'nu is the Mi'kmaq term used to describe Indigenous people from this area of Nova Scotia.

although we included more questions on academic experience. This additional insight was aimed at examining whether the academic plan's goals were being met.

Following the second survey, nine virtual interviews were conducted with international students from India using Microsoft Teams. A mix of first-year students and spring graduates discussed their experiences as students at CBU. Five of these students were from the Engineering programs, two from Public Administration, and one from Public Health. The semi-structured interviews were designed to deepen our understanding of themes emerging from the two previous surveys and to examine how students see and perceive their own learning experiences. The eight questions that shaped each interview focused on students' perspectives on their initial perceptions of Cape Breton and CBU and if/how those have changed over time, their instructors, CBU academic rigor, assessment methods, studying in English, and perceptions of plagiarism.

To provide a broader institutional perspective, eleven instructors from the Business, Public Health, Public Administration, and Engineering programs who regularly teach courses with international students also participated in individual virtual interviews carried out through Microsoft Teams. The questions that guided the semi-structured interviews with the instructors focused on challenges they see Indian students facing in the classroom and in the community, on adaptations they make to their courses and teaching methods, on how students' prior degrees and formal education impact their performance, on how English levels and plagiarism affect student performance, and on students' academic writing skills.

## 4 Main Findings from Surveys and Interviews with Students

The 2019 survey, the 2022 survey, and the individual interviews shared several common themes that show that student experiences have not changed significantly over the 3-year period. Students have an overwhelmingly positive perspective on Cape Breton Island and CBT. It is understood that students who feel a part of a supportive community and whose psychological needs are met are more likely to be successful (Memarzia, 2018). Moreover, when physiological needs are met, we see growth in self-esteem and self-actualization (Lowe, 2023). We were pleased to see that in our predominantly Caucasian community, international students reported few experiences with racism. Rather, the opposite seemed to be the case: locals were described as interested in learning about India and its culture. This can be seen as Indian students are employed everywhere around the city of Sydney and its surrounding communities. Moreover, these businesses are celebrating Indian holidays and forms of cultural expression alongside their new employees, in addition to importing goods from India. As employees, the Indian students demonstrate resilience, intercultural competence, flexibility, and commitment (McFadden & Seedorff, 2017), making them ideal employees. One could presume this is due to several factors. Firstly, many of the Indian students who come to Canada are young adults who had careers in India. Their understanding of responsibil-

ity and accountability in the workplace is established. Secondly, most students from India need to work to fund their education and livelihood. Missed shifts equal smaller paychecks. This is different from many other international students who come from more affluent backgrounds. Lastly, and widely articulated in our research, due to the significant lack of jobs in Cape Breton, those who are fortunate enough to have gained employment are diligent and responsible employees to minimize the risk of losing their positions.

The following several sections dive more deeply into the data, presenting many excerpts from the surveys and interviews verbatim to demonstrate authentic student voices.

#### 4.1 Challenges

The biggest barrier and cause of stress for Indian students at CBU is employment. Some students commented on this topic in their surveys and interviews:

“Job opportunities are less and financial stability is important aspect which cannot be ignored.”

“In Cape Breton ... to find part time job is quite hard. A person can survive with their GIC [Guaranteed Investment Certificate]<sup>2</sup> but the property rent is too high nowadays that it is higher than their monthly GIC payment.”

“There are not enough jobs and not good pay rate ... haven't got job in 2 years.”

These sentiments were repeated throughout both surveys and individual interviews. In the post-industrial community of Cape Breton Island, many jobs typically held by students are lifelong careers for locals as the municipality continues to build a new infrastructure of tourism and entrepreneurial ventures. Therefore, the jobs are scarce and in high demand.

The financial burden experienced by Indian students adds another layer of stress to their academic endeavors. A total of 87% of Indian students responding to our survey possessed a university degree prior to attending CBU. However, they still struggled with several elements of higher education, as outlined below.

79% of students articulated in both the surveys and interviews that they lack understanding regarding the processes and rules of academic writing. Students were told to seek assistance from the university writing center, but resources, as shown by our data, do not seem to meet the demands of the student body on a regular day-to-day basis:

“The professors tell me to go to the writing center but appointments are always full. I need more help than they have time to give to me. Because English is my 3<sup>rd</sup> language, writing is sometimes hard.”

“The professors at CBU are very kind but I understand they cannot help us all. Writing papers and assignments is new to many of us.”

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2 A Guaranteed Investment Certificate demonstrates that international students have sufficient funds for one year of living in Canada.

When asked about plagiarism, 94% of respondents claimed they knew what it was. However, they said that the standards and ethics of academic writing are not enforced as strongly in India as they are in Canada. Since plagiarizing to get by is not uncommon in their home country, it can be difficult for Indian students to change that mindset. The following interview excerpts are illustrative of students' struggles with plagiarism once they join CBU:

"Even if we paraphrase the whole content and submit. It still says plagiarism is found ... no idea."

"Some people I know try and risk it. They just want to pass the course so they can work towards their PR."

"I find doing things without plagiarism is possible through thorough understanding and faculty guidance. But a certain plagiarism percentage should be accepted."

Moreover, it also appears that their understanding of plagiarism is inaccurate. The participants' see plagiarism as a way to succeed rather than an academic violation. CBU has an Academic Integrity Module on Moodle that all students are required to complete prior to the start of classes. However, one may wonder if the module is culturally responsive and relevant to a large target audience. This question can be asked as the data expresses a continued lack of understanding of plagiarism as well as the writing difficulties described by Indian students despite the implementation of the module.

## 4.2 Overall Academic Experience

Despite the challenges experienced by Indian students, the data suggests that they are enjoying their academic journeys at CBU. Our research showed that Indian students at CBU are, overall, very happy with their academic experiences. Eighty-six percent of participants said that professors were kind, helpful, and very willing to put in extra time to help international students understand the course expectations, which differed significantly from those of courses in India. The following excerpts show how this topic was addressed in the interviews:

"India has lots of larger exams. I think this is because there are so many students in every class. So, you had to study very hard for one test. Here, at CBU, assignments and group work are hard to understand at the beginning but a much nicer way to learn."

"Right now, I am doing petroleum engineering technology. I love my course. It's really interesting and have best professors to teach this program."

"CBU definitely is student-centric and I can say it focuses on creating a better learning experience for students."

The data shows that the efforts, particularly those made by instructors, are recognized and appreciated. CBU's student-centered pedagogical approach to learning resonates with the students. Despite cultural academic challenges, students feel strongly supported by their instructors due to their efforts to internationalize curriculum and courses and ensure that their readings, case studies, and examples represent global contexts:

“Professors are aware that the students belong to different backgrounds and they keep their teachers teaching methods very relevant.”

“They try to explain topics to us that Canadian students already know of. Like different current events or historical events that impacted our field. They try to talk about India and things that happened there to help us get the idea.”

“I get it. I’m in Canada so they’re going to talk about Canada things. But I really like it when they talk about other countries. Some teachers really try hard to do that. Make the course more global.”

Students also discussed their feelings of belonging among the other international and domestic students on campus:

“I made a lot of friends from different parts of the world. It was easy as majority of people are nice and good.”

“I think it’s great we are getting a opportunity to live with different people with different cultures and I think it’s helps to learn even more better when we surround ourselves with different positive solutions.”

However, the programs in which the majority of Indian students choose to study have mostly Indian students enrolled. This adds an interesting dynamic to classes, as the instructor is often one of the few Canadians in the room. It also challenges the universities’ enrollment strategy and could potentially have a negative impact on the institutions’ reputation. As one Indian student described it in an interview: “The majority of my classmates are from the same place where I am from. My program doesn’t have even one native Canadian! Depressing. Forget being classmates with a native, my program has all the students from my home country.”

While the data suggests that CBU is increasingly culturally responsive to our international students, there are still some significant gaps that need to be addressed by strategic enrollment management planning, including services and infrastructure that will have an impact on the student experience.

## 5 Main Findings from Interviews with Instructors

As with our findings from our interviews with students, the findings presented in this section are also grouped to show emergent themes and subthemes. Occasional interview excerpts are included to substantiate the claims made.

The instructors interviewed for this study teach in programs that are predominantly populated by international students at CBU. Several interviewees raised concerns about generalizing the group of “Indian students”, acknowledging the great diversity within the Indian student population at CBU with regards to prior academic preparation, English language proficiency, critical thinking, independence of thought, motivation, and effort. Some also pointed out that India is a vast country with various sub-cultures (both geographically and economically). Acknowledging that each region

in India was already heterogeneous, it was observed that—in the instructors' experience—students from the regions of Punjab and Kerala would tend to not socialize much with one another but remain within their respective cultural circles. It was also noted that students from Kerala usually had a better command of the English language than those from Punjab. Despite the caveat to avoid unjustified generalizations about “Indian students”, instructors identified several differences between Indian and other students they had taught. They were also able to point to numerous challenges they saw Indian students face while studying at CBU.

## 5.1 Challenges

The key challenges identified by the instructors were related to cultural adaptation (including getting used to the Western system of education and associated expectations), accommodation, financial distress and the associated need to find employment, and, regrettably, racism. Nine of the eleven interviewed instructors reported that financial concerns had a negative impact on studying and even health:

“The first thing that they typically struggle with is getting employment. Until they get that taken care of, they're in a bad place. Now, in order to come here, they have to have their first year paid for ... but many of them don't have their second year paid for. So, everyone at home has saved for them to go here, to come to Canada. There is a lot of pressure [on them] to succeed.”

“And then they're struggling to find work. They have to find jobs. They need to make money. Some of them are living close to the bone. And I know some of them are going hungry. Some of them will come and say ‘Well, I missed class because I was so hungry. I couldn't get out of bed because I hadn't eaten in 24 hours.’ And then they'll admit that they can't afford to buy the textbook ... their financial status impacts their ability because they can't afford to buy textbooks?”

While it was noted that some of the challenges Indian students experienced were the same as for domestic students, such as “being on their own for the very first time, which can make it difficult to stay motivated to attend class and complete assignments when there's no immediate consequences”, a few instructors also identified mental health issues and racism as particularly burdensome challenges:

“And most of them experience these physical symptoms and they go to the doctor. And then the doctor is like, oh ... you have anxiety or you're depressed and it's almost like the students don't realize that it is a mental health issue at first.”

“I had a student come to me who just had a great deal of mental health challenges, and she struggled the entire term. ... And then at the end of the term, she had to have an abortion. ... I think a lot of students are going through those things and they don't tell you.”

“[A]nd then I'll get people [students] talking about discrimination and racism. Now I remember stories of a guy being harassed by people in the apartment complex that he's living in ... Saying ugly things about him. I had women talking, young women, talking about being harassed on buses and having people say ugly things to them. You know, what are you doing here? You people don't belong here. You're taking our job, you go back to where you belong. Right? One woman was almost crying in class ... and I said ... yeah,



these people are stupid. There are a lot of stupid, stupid, ugly, ugly Canadians. But that's not the majority of us ..."

In terms of academic challenges, all instructors highlighted Indian students' unfamiliarity with the expectations associated with studying and succeeding at a Canadian university. There was a shared assumption among all the instructors we interviewed that students in India were taught to reproduce rather than create knowledge. When these students were assessed on their knowledge in India, it was via methods that did not involve much writing, and if so, no emphasis was placed on proper referencing and citations:

"I've been told in Indian universities they're expected to just memorize things and they're given their set schedule of courses to take and they just are expected to go to class and then they'll pass. Whereas here we're ... expecting them to learn how to problem-solve and learn how to learn. So, it's not just memorization and repeating back to you what you've told them. They have to kind of learn how to understand things on a deeper level ..."

"Yeah, I think that they're not as independent in some way. So, they expect a lot more from me ... I walk them through the process of that, especially in the beginning, because they're not prepared. They're used to writing tests. They're not used to collecting information and formulating that information and using the research to inform their ideas ..."

However, there was also appreciation for the significant progress the students made over the course of their two-year study period. Instructors mentioned that many students would adapt and rise to the challenge of succeeding within the Canadian education system:

"At the beginning. I think they're very stressed out ... because it's a different way of learning. And by the time they've taken a course from any one of us, because most of us have that same applied learning principle, they get more and more comfortable ... and then you see the separation of those who have the capability to learn that way and the others who just can't lose the method that they've learned in the past, which is just memorization."

"I think over the course of the two years for the diploma that the Indian students do get better at this; they're becoming a bit more, I don't know, Canadian or Westernized."

Regarding different academic cultures, many instructors identified language and especially academic writing as big challenges. "Now if you look at it academically, writing is their biggest change. Comprehension, that's not usually an issue. Usually comprehension is very good", one instructor explained. Some also raised concerns about the disconnect between the students' reported language proficiency score at the time of admission to the program and their actual demonstrated writing ability on assignments.

Furthermore, eight of eleven interviewees recognized the connection between plagiarism (which was highlighted as a frequent occurrence) and writing skills, observing that students were reluctant to hand in their own work as they perceived their language skills to be inadequate. Others noted that many students from India did not understand what counts as plagiarism at a Canadian university and required lots of additional sup-

port to both understand the concept and learn how to write, reference, and cite properly. In this context, some instructors pointed out that the problem with plagiarism might, to an extent, be cultural in the sense that Indian students were used to working collaboratively and needed the difference between collaboration and plagiarism to be explained to them more clearly:

“Working together is not frowned upon, so that’s where you get the plagiarism and then, you know, they put in the work but the working might involve, you know, meetings with the cousin, submitting assignments from their cousin, and yeah, that’s a bit of a struggle.”

Several instructors also mentioned a lack of understanding of cultural references among many of their Indian students. This was recognized as a challenge, especially in courses where familiarity with certain aspects of local culture was critical to understanding the course material. While not understanding Canadian pop-culture references in an engineering course may leave international students feeling left out, not being attuned to current social or political affairs in the region or country can be a real hindrance to academic success in a field like public administration or public health. The following quote from an instructor teaching Public Administration sums this up quite nicely:

“I just take it for granted that Canadian students know when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister. But I mean, I know that some Indian students have never even heard of Stephen Harper before. ... Or political cases that we talk about ... especially the SNC Lavalin affair of a couple of years ago. You know, it’s huge breaking news, it’s a headline for weeks and weeks in Canada, and they’ve never heard of it. I guess the advantage that a domestic student would have is they might not know the ins and outs of it all, but they’ll know the basics ...”

All interviewees recognized that obtaining a work visa and, eventually, permanent residence status in Canada was the long-term plan of most Indian students. However, there was a general sense that the programs from which the students graduated had a real impact on their future employment and could improve their chances for immigration. Instructors noted that in many cases, the degree or diploma a student obtained from CBU provided an additional qualification to their existing degree from India, thereby further enhancing employment prospects in related areas.

Instructors held varying perspectives on whether students applied themselves sufficiently to the course material or were adequately prepared for the program they were studying. Depending on the program, instructors felt that their students’ previous academic background correlated more or less strongly with success. In the Public Administration and Business programs, previous academic background was perceived to matter less than in the Engineering programs, where prior knowledge of advanced math was important, or in Public Health, where previous study of a health-related field such as biology or chemistry proved to be an asset.

All the interviewed instructors felt that Cape Breton Island would benefit from more international students settling in the region and the positive intercultural ex-

changes within the wider community that this could engender. At the same time, they recognized that the scarcity of available employment opportunities would likely lead many students to eventually leave the region and move to larger, more diverse, and economically vibrant urban centers such as Halifax, Toronto, or Vancouver.

## 5.2 Adaptations

Among the many adaptations to both teaching methods and supplementary curriculum resources implemented by instructors were speaking more slowly, avoiding jargon, supplying more background information on local issues (and not taking too much prior knowledge for granted), employing more interactive teaching methods, giving choices on assignments (on occasion allowing presentations rather than an essay or report), and, as was mentioned very often, providing help with academic writing. The latter included a range of different strategies, including:

1. Being explicit about what plagiarism involves and providing multiple examples on how to reference properly,
2. referring students to a Moodle module on academic integrity developed by the institution,
3. using Turnitin as a learning resource,
4. making editorial suggestions directly on the student's writing or inviting students to office hours to go over the suggestions orally to make sure the feedback was engaged with, and
5. referring students to the writing support available on campus or bringing this support into the classroom.

The fifth strategy was adopted by several instructors because they observed that only very few students, and typically only the strongest, would actually avail themselves of the services of the Writing Center, even though especially those with weak writing skills were repeatedly encouraged to seek help there.

Below are two examples of how instructors adapted their courses in response to language and plagiarism challenges experienced by students:

“Yes. I do [correct their sentences when they are off]. And I have them submit their assignments on paper ... I know it's not good for the trees, but it helps me because I can make the corrections on the paper so much quicker and it's easier for me ...”

“So, the biggest thing that I've done to adapt my courses to Indian students, and like I said, international students in general, is to discuss plagiarism more in depth by giving them more instruction on how to summarize properly and how to cite things properly. That has been the big thing.”

Several instructors noted that in case of plagiarism on the first assignment, they give students a grace period—meaning that students could redo the assignment in response to constructive feedback and would not be penalized.

Instructors also commented that it was important that they make resources available for students who find themselves in distress and that they ensure their students are aware of these resources early on.

“The other thing that I do, especially for the Indian students because I’ve had a few students come to me that were, like, in distress, is to incorporate in my syllabus all the Student Wellness resources that we have on campus, including the International student app. And I talk about those at the beginning of the term because I get a really strong feeling that the students do not know what resources are available to them on campus when they get here. And I’ve had students who have had really hard times and come to me for help.”

Making textbooks and other learning resources available free of charge was also mentioned as an adaptation. Not unexpectedly, many instructors commented on making course content more relevant for Indian students, either by asking students for examples or by finding pertinent material or case studies to include in their courses. There was also a sense that Canada should not be portrayed uncritically in the scope of course examples and case studies. The following two quotes illustrate this point:

“I have an interesting assignment and it’s with regard to asbestos. In Canada, up until probably seven years ago, we were mining asbestos. It was illegal to mine and sell asbestos in Canada, but it wasn’t illegal to sell it to another country ... and we were selling it to India. It’s really good for discussion. And I have, yeah, there’s a documentary. What’s it called? ‘Canada’s dirty secret’ ...”

“In one of the courses I teach, I have some case studies and one of the case studies actually compares matters of ethics and corruption. How a certain ethical issue would be dealt with in Canada and African Commonwealth countries and in India ... The basic idea is to say ... corruption can occur anywhere. Had Canada not been exempt from corrupt officials ...”

A particularly interesting adaptation was the development of a political science course that focused specifically on the history and politics of the Canadian immigration system. This course is now very popular among Indian students because of their desire to settle in Canada permanently. The instructor explains:

“This is the one course that they truly love. Towards the end, it’s all about the procedures of Canadian immigration and the numbers of immigrants, so that they begin to see where the process that they’re all having to go through came from and how it works from a Canadian point of view? And how Canada wants ... young, healthy immigrants who ... come in in their 20s and who will be good taxpaying citizens for some 40 years before they really need the expenses of a healthcare system ...”

Instructors also commented on the importance of making students comfortable and on the value of integrating more group work activities. However, they observe that students tend to remain within their cultural groups during group work activities. “I’m not likely to see a lot of diversity in the groups”, a Business instructor commented. “It’s due to the social castes within in the Indian culture where some group of Indian stu-

dents will absolutely not mingle with another group of Indian students”, added an Engineering instructor.

Despite these observations, some of the instructors explicitly remarked on the value teamwork had for both domestic and international students:

“Umm, the diversity was a really big driver ... there were so many Indian students in the class and I had a couple Chinese students that year and one or two domestic students, and they were completely in the corner, not talking to anyone.”

“Umm, so it was really trying to get the domestic students engaged, too, in the class. I found that they would kind of go off to the side because they felt, you know, somewhat outnumbered. In all of my classes I incorporate teamwork. I choose the group and ... I try to mix them, especially in first year classes, to try to avoid that [they stay in their own cultural groups].”

The interviewees almost universally expressed a sense that Indian students particularly enjoy working in groups. Yet, there was also a perception that when Canadian students were part of the group, they tended to be in charge. One Business instructor observed:

“And it’s almost always the case, and it might be because the other students just defer to them more because they assume that there’s a stronger English competency, or that they have cultural knowledge that they might not have, or they just are more familiar with our academic system here in Canada. So, they might just defer to the Canadian student for many different reasons. But I tend to get the Canadian students coming to me and saying ‘My group members are doing none of the work or not helping to ...’ It’s not the case that none of the group members are helping, but usually the Canadian student feels like they’re doing much more of the work.”

Interestingly, although all instructors commented on the value of including examples from India to make learning relevant for this cultural group, they also expressed the reservation that one might end up incorporating too many examples from India into the course. “The Canadian students will sort of be wondering about the relevance from their perspective. You know what I mean”, commented one Public Administration instructor.

A further adaptation made by some instructors was to let students know about local and provincial employment opportunities: “We try to get a lot of guest speakers or employers on campus, too, whether it’s in a class time or lecture or sometimes outside class or lecture. Umm, to just let the students know, especially international students, of what’s out there, employment-wise.”

In addition to commenting specifically on the adaptations they made to their courses, instructors also offered more general observations on the large numbers of international students admitted over the past several years and how this increase in enrollment impacted their teaching approach and, by extension, student learning. It was noted that while teamwork, discussion, and student presentations were very valuable teaching methods, the sheer volume of students that had to be accommodated—especially prior to the pandemic, when intake was even higher—made the employment of interactive teaching methods difficult.

“What I found was when I stopped doing those activities [discussion, group presentations, etc.] I didn't get to know the students. They didn't get to know each other. I found that they weren't getting as much out of the classroom as they did before. So now I'm going back again to more discussions, more interaction, the opportunities for presentations in the class where students are working with each other to develop presentations ... It's so much better, the marks are going way up again ...”

Instructors also reported that many students found the program structure too prescriptive and wanted more flexibility in terms of course offerings and available course sections, as the latter would fill up quickly, making it difficult for some students to complete the program within their two-year study period. Many instructors mentioned having felt overrun by the sudden influx of international students five years ago. In relation to this, they highlighted the problem of having to teach to the lowest common denominator given the wide range of prior experiences and backgrounds of students suddenly enrolling in their courses. The following two interview excerpts provide a more in-depth illustration of these points:

“I know the first year they started those programs [post-baccalaureate programs in Business], the supply chain management program might have been first, I'm not sure, but they anticipated, like, 25 students coming in and there were 750 students, and so that meant everybody was scrambling to try to accommodate larger classes.”

“So we tend to have students who are highly qualified [in business-related areas such as organizational behaviour] and even experts [with graduate degrees] in their field. And yet I'm teaching them something that's for them very fundamental, like, they already have this knowledge, but they're in the class because they need to get a degree so that they can get a work visa. And so it's really part of their immigration plan and not necessarily for their own learning ... Whereas other students are coming and they have maybe an undergraduate degree in chemistry or all kinds of stuff not related to business. And so I find I have really no option but to teach at a very introductory level.”

While there was a perception among the instructors we interviewed that Indian students with prior postsecondary experience were better prepared for studying at CBU than those who had joined straight from high school, this view was not held unanimously. Some instructors noted drastic differences in quality among the many universities in India, suggesting that preparation for further study depended largely on the particular institution from which the students had graduated. Others argued that the field the students had studied prior to joining CBU was decisive for how well they did on the program, and some felt that prior postsecondary experience was perhaps not the best predictor of academic success in any case and that personal attributes such as perseverance were more critical factors.

## 6 Comparing Perspectives

The students and instructors who participated in our study shared many similar perspectives on the academic experiences of Indian students at CBU. For example, both

students and instructors highlighted financial stressors and lack of employment as significant challenges for Indian students at CBU. These stressors may also lead to or compound existing mental health issues, as particularly discussed by the instructors. This mental state follows the students into the classroom, where they are confronted with teaching methods that involve less memorization and material regurgitation than they previously experienced at Indian universities. Instead, problem-solving and critical thinking are two of the main goals of Canadian postsecondary programs. The necessary shift in the way students think and learn is challenging at first, as discussed by students and observed by instructors. The participants commented that, with time, the methods the students learn at CBU turn into a more desirable way of learning. Students and instructors also see the local Canadian context as a challenge when learning and discussing case studies and North American examples. Instructors have adjusted their courses by explaining North American contexts and course content that might be unfamiliar to their international students and by adding more global and Indian examples. The students, in turn, notice and appreciate both approaches and the changes their instructors have made.

While there were many similar perspectives in the data, there were also two topics that showed that students and instructors had significantly different views. While students did not allude to experiencing much racism, the instructors discussed their students' first-hand accounts of racism within the local community. Perhaps the methods used in our study did not provide a safe space for the students themselves to openly discuss this topic—or perhaps our participants simply did not experience consistent racism. Similarly, the incidents of racism discussed by the instructors might have been isolated incidents, or the students might have felt that it was safe to divulge this information to instructors they already knew. Regardless, racism and how it affects students must be part of the conversation to ensure that institutions maintain support for all students who experience racism in the community.

The instructors we interviewed believed that academic and writing support were in plentiful supply because they work diligently with their classes on the development of their skills, their writing, and, especially, their education on plagiarism. Additionally, eight of eleven instructors even invited representatives of CBU's writing center into their courses to provide general tips and an overview of the services available to the students. However, institutional resources remain an issue. Instructors are asking students to utilize academic resources such as the writing center, but students cannot get appointments. The data shows that this is a common problem, leading us to the question whether CBU has sufficient resources in place to meet the needs of both domestic and international students. Similarly, the mandatory module on plagiarism is seen as a teaching tool that aims to mitigate and decrease instances of plagiarism, but there continues to be a lack of student comprehension concerning the rules of proper citation and paraphrasing.

If universities want international students to have positive learning experiences, providing them with services and a culturally appropriate environment will enable and promote a successful academic experience (Roberts & Dunworth, 2012).

## 7 Recommendations for instructors and institutions

As Canadian universities continue to prosper from international student tuition, infrastructure needs to be in place to accommodate the many and diverse needs of the new student demographic. Especially if located in predominantly white communities, universities cannot continue to accept international students and expect them to assimilate without appropriate support (Andrade, 2006). Moreover, there are provincial and institutional pressures to ensure cultural considerations and equitable processes for domestic students from equity-seeking backgrounds. In the case of CBU, this includes African Canadians, Indigenous students, and the preservation of Gaelic culture. Government funding provides the resources to ensure that the founding cultures of Nova Scotia receive additional student support in postsecondary institutions. At the same time, local governments ought to recognize that international students are an important part of economic and cultural development, particularly in smaller communities. Without the appropriate infrastructure, however, students' negative experiences in the local communities will logically decrease their desire to stay post-graduation.

In addition to the instructors' perspective on the issue, this study provided student voice—which can be described as “a metaphor for identity and agency and ... a strategy for promoting empowerment, inclusion and equity” (McLeod, 2011, p. 179)—that articulated clear gaps in CBU's current international student support system, especially with regard to Indian students. If universities across the globe are committed to providing culturally responsive education to international students, implementing recommendations as outlined below will demonstrate the university's respect for international student voice and experience.

Our research suggests that the barriers to student success lie in several areas, including sustainable financial security, understanding cultural references, English language comprehension and academic writing, and understanding Canadian university level expectations. Several key recommendations can be derived from the findings previously discussed.

At the level of the institution, we recommend a variety of strategies that will foster the learning and well-being of students while they adjust to western expectations in academia:

- Institutions provide a course for *all*<sup>3</sup> students on learning and studying at the university level.
- Institutions provide additional support and services to assist international students with academic and mental health concerns.
- Institutions provide mandatory courses on academic writing for students whose first language is not English.
- Institutions develop academic integrity policies that are focused on teaching the students what academic integrity is and how to improve and maintain it rather

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3 This would include domestic students as well, as the rigors of academia are not exclusive to international students.



than exclusively punishing students for not complying with Western expectations.

We also suggest that institutions liaise with local communities to understand the resources available to international students.

- Institutions advocate for international students with local employers.
- Institutions find ways to offer affordable, quality housing for students, both on campus for those who choose to live there and in the city.
- Institutions find ways to make learning resources available free of charge (e.g., online textbooks).

At the level of the instructors, we recommend a series of strategies that do not compromise academic integrity but encourage culturally responsive pedagogical approaches.

- Make efforts to integrate resources and examples from different countries and cultures into their courses, and to encourage their students to add their own examples to facilitate intercultural learning.
- Encourage students from different cultures to work together in groups.
- Employ a wide range of instructional strategies (not only Western approaches such as the Socratic method) to promote deep, high-level learning as well as intercultural understanding.
- Provide examples of how to write properly for academic purposes and provide feedback to students.
- Explain plagiarism and academic integrity within Western systems of education and offer many examples.
- Make every effort to learn about individual students, be aware of the various challenges they might experience (financial, social, cultural, academic, emotional, or psychological), and offer appropriate accommodations and/or assistance.
- Share job opportunities with students and help them gain insight into how to apply for jobs in their field.

## 8 Final Thoughts

With many universities now depending on international student tuition to survive, grow, and thrive, it is important for institutions to ensure that student services accommodate all students and that policies and practices reflect the current student demographic. For smaller institutions, the shift in student population has exposed how policies, processes, and resources are largely designed for domestic students and that the varying needs of international students are not adequately considered in long-term planning. International students' voices and instructors' perspectives provide institutional leaders and educators with insight and knowledge into international students' experiences in Canadian universities and the gaps that still exist. This understanding will not only inform policy and resource decisions but also challenge the inaccurate

perspectives of Western narratives of international students, their intentions, and needs (Guo & Guo, 2017). A shift in pedagogy to reflect the diverse and intercultural student population is one that comes with exciting transformation, data-informed recommendations, and the willingness to change.

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# Doctoral Education In-the-World. (Dis-)Connections between Research and Society

SØREN S. E. BENGTSSEN

## 1 Introduction: The Highest Education—a Torn Curriculum?

When the societal purpose and value of the “highest education”, i. e., the PhD, was first discussed not only in terms of research but also in terms of education and curriculum, Ernest Rudd (1975) emphasized that doctoral education should not only meet the promise of the highest international standards of research but should also hold the promise of influencing, engaging with, and perhaps even changing the world in which research was situated. Ever since, both research and researchers have been considered increasingly essential to social and economic competitiveness and societal health (Andres, 2015). As a consequence, and in the wake of globalization agendas at universities around the world, the investment in research and doctoral education has been highly intensified in order to increase innovation and internationalization. The education of future researchers, mainly through doctoral education, has turned into a topic of growing political, institutional, and educational interest. Such changes have been visible through increased enrollment of doctoral students, increased and centralized administration of doctoral education through graduate schools, and the institutional implementation of strategies for professionalization of the doctorate, quality assurance, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Andres et al., 2015; Gokhberg et al., 2015; Nerad & Evans, 2014).

As recently discussed by Bengtsen and colleagues (Bengtsen et al., 2021), doctoral education and the PhD face various societal entanglements. With the acknowledgment of research as a source of economic and political power, individual prosperity, and globalized capital accumulation, discussions around societal impact, as Hazelkorn (2015) argues, take the form of negotiations between institutions, governments, corporate stakeholders, and the wider public sphere as a way of “sealing a ‘social contract’ between the taxpayer, structured government financing, and the research community” (p. 26). However, as McCowan (2018) points out, agendas aiming for societal impact are never neutral. They always create implicit hierarchies between different understandings of knowledge, research approaches, and the relevance and timeliness of certain topics over others, which, in turn, become increasingly marginalized and peripheral. The expanded mandate and complexity of doctoral education and the PhD have received various bleak replies, such as Goldman and Massy’s (2000) warning that gradu-

ate schools are turning into “PhD factories”, or Cassuto’s (2015) description of the organizational and educational complexity of PhD programs as a “Graduate School Mess”. In a recent study, Mantai and Marrone (2022) show the expanding and multiple expectations posed to doctoral education, including a whirlpool of various pieces of knowledge, skills, and competencies catering to a myriad of internal and external stakeholders simultaneously stretching the doctoral curriculum to the extreme.

I argue that we witness at least three major yet unaligned curricular strands pulling the doctoral curriculum (including doctoral students and their supervisors) in different directions.

Firstly, the goal of doctoral education is to contribute new and original knowledge to an academic discipline or sub-discipline. Thus, in Golde and Walker’s (2006) term, the PhD becomes a future “steward of the discipline”. Strong disciplinary anchoring is often an advantage when applying for large and prestigious research grants, and it can also help researchers become acknowledged and recognized within established academic communities and networks on a local, national, or international level. The curriculum often focuses on the enculturation of doctoral students into the disciplinary norms regarding research methods and dissertation genres. The *de facto* curriculum leadership is first taken on by the doctoral supervisors and international experts within the field(s), but over time, as the doctoral researchers’ autonomy develops, they become legitimate and appreciated members of the community of practice in their respective academic fields (Wisker, 2012). However, as Acker and Haque (2017) report, the massive increase in the number of PhD students graduating each year does not match the postgraduate labor market in academia. As a result, universities worldwide have witnessed an exponential rise in contract work and researcher precarity. Additionally, Burford (2018) points out that graduate schools are dealing with a “cruel optimism”, where doctoral students’ aspirations are raised on false assumptions.

Secondly, graduate schools and PhD programs align increasingly with national and international policies, thereby obligating themselves to uphold certain (international) standards regarding the quality of doctoral students’ research, the timely completion of projects, and their relevance to a job market that extends beyond the university and its research environments (Nerad & Evans, 2014). As Bernstein and colleagues (2014) describe it, a wide range of new requirements has been integrated into the doctoral curriculum, including students’ early commitment to their chosen career, the development of teaching competencies, proficiency in data management and ethical conduct, high proficiency in English (often the working language in highly internationalized research cohorts), effective communication (often targeting stakeholders beyond the research communities), the ability to work in teams and navigate between several supervisors (some even from non-academic fields), as well as the ability to translate research expertise for public audiences and policymakers. As already pointed out by Nerad and Heggelund (2008), these sets of transferrable skills and generic competencies were not traditionally part of doctoral education. Therefore, doctoral supervisors and research leaders do not necessarily know how (or why) to integrate them with a more research-focused learning trajectory. Such institutional and curricular “darkness” has been described by Bengtson (2016a) in relation to the increased centralization and

complexity of graduate schools. Here, indecisiveness regarding the educational and pedagogical framings of doctoral education and supervision practices can put a strain on supervisors and students alike (Bengtsen, 2016b). Recently, Bengtsen and McAlpine (2022) have shown how differently doctoral supervisors respond to the increased and complex pressures on doctoral education. While some of them try to influence the curriculum by taking on leadership roles and responsibilities, others increase their efforts in building stronger informal researcher communities, both locally and internationally. Others still become demotivated and invest less time and energy in their supervision responsibilities and doctoral education altogether.

Thirdly, doctoral scholarships and, thereby, doctoral education and the PhD rely increasingly on external funding. The STEM fields have worked within this institutional framework for decades already, but by now it has become the inescapable reality of the HASS fields, too (Benneworth et al., 2016). As more and more PhD scholarships for the HASS disciplines are co-financed in collaboration with public organizations (museums, libraries, NGOs), municipalities (daycare institutions, social services), teacher training colleges, or private companies (publishing houses, drawing offices, digital platforms, and technology developers), research projects often address local challenges or problems that need immediate solving. The research is often carried out in close collaboration with practitioners in the respective professional domains, including users and customers. Especially within HASS, such partnership PhDs give rise to curricular debate as the supervisors' responsibilities are shared across academic and professional contexts. Negotiating the distribution of tasks and responsibilities is an unfamiliar process for many supervisors and program leaders, especially if they are trying to model their strategies on the doctoral supervision and learning trajectory they experienced themselves within a very different institutional and curricular framework. The PhD students and their supervisors find themselves challenged by how to deal with the widening mandate and uncertain ownership, when epistemic, social, economic, and political interests may overlap, and where the notion of criticality may feel unexpectedly and uncomfortably negotiable (Bengtsen et al., 2021).

Seen this way, doctoral education and the PhD have increasingly become boundary objects (Elmgren et al., 2015), with the responsibilities of managing and integrating the various interests of the universities and researchers themselves with the interests of stakeholders within the policy community, the private sector, and other public institutions and organizations. With regards to the United States, Golde and Dore (2001, as quoted in Bernstein et al., 2014, p. 15) have termed the situation a three-way mismatch between the purpose of doctoral education, the aspirations of doctoral students and supervisors, and the reality of possible careers within and outside academia. Commenting on developments in New Zealand and South Africa, Grant (2011) captures the various tensions in doctoral education with the term "inchoate curriculum", and in a Nordic context, Bengtsen and colleagues (Bengtsen et al., 2021) have used the term "torn curriculum" to similarly describe how various interests and intentions pull the doctoral curriculum in different directions. This tension does not necessarily lead to chaos and hopelessness, but it certainly leaves undecided curricular spaces open to further negotiation as well as educational and pedagogical decision-making.

## 2 Emerging Trends: Situating the PhD in the World

New trends are emerging to situate doctoral education and the PhD in the world without reducing research practices and collaborations to mere economic schemes or practical solutions to already well-known problems. The connections between research and the world—or science and society—are breaking new ground, and I will comment on what I see as the three most prominent emerging trends:

- (1) an ecological curriculum,
- (2) a sustainability curriculum, and
- (3) a justice curriculum.

### 2.1 An Ecological Curriculum for Doctoral Education

The idea behind the ecological curriculum is that doctoral education and the PhD act as the glue binding otherwise separate individuals, institutions, organizations, and the public in a shared synergy and collaboration around knowledge creation. Instead of being assimilated into other socio-economic or socio-political pursuits, doctoral students and graduates act as both knowledge brokers and translators between different knowledge systems—and as the catalysts through which entirely new and creative forms of knowledge creation become possible. The understanding of an ecological university and knowledge ecologies is found in the work of Barnett (2018) and Wright (2016), where the meaning of ecology becomes the very resistance to subordinating one form of knowledge to another. The ecology manifests itself as a plurality of knowledge forms and societal aims, which achieve the possibility of a new and much stronger potential for knowledge creation through joint and collaborative, yet mutually autonomous, engagements (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020).

Elliot and her colleagues (Elliot et al., 2016) describe how doctoral education creates an ecology for the individual researcher. The research and learning process ties together different parts of the world in which the doctoral researcher lives, merging personal, intellectual, social, bodily, institutional, societal, and cultural contexts. Doctoral education and the PhD are not neatly confined to certain institutional and intellectual identities and practices but travel through a range of identities, practices, and contexts, revealing doctoral education as a deeply embodied, contextually anchored, institutionally mediated, and socio-culturally dependent learning trajectory. Also, Elliot and colleagues (Elliot et al., 2020) show how formal and informal curricula constitute a complementary learning ecology for the individual doctoral researcher. Elsewhere (Bengtson, 2019), and in the same vein, I have described how doctoral ecologies take shape as the vibrant middle ground between the formalization of doctoral education, the informal and non-linear learning trajectories of individual doctoral researchers, and the intellectual and social community building that may encompass local institutions as well as national and international networks. The ecological curriculum is constituted by the very intersecting learning and research journeys happening *between* and in the gray zones of individual, institutional, and societal contexts.

An example of the ecological curriculum put into practice can be found in an ongoing (as I write this) Horizons 2020 project titled “Opening Doors”, for which I interviewed the director of a large publishing house that creates educational materials and digital platforms for upper secondary education. By investing in a PhD scholarship through a partnership model that is co-financed by a local secondary school and the largest university in the country, the publishing house aimed to improve cohesion between the institutional practices in upper secondary schools. The research is done within the field of educational technology, focusing on the publishing house’s particular approach to the design of learning materials for secondary schools. Through the doctoral researcher’s activities, a “research-practice hub” emerged within the publishing house, gathering otherwise loosely connected stakeholders around shared knowledge creation and collaboration—such as local publishing agents from the publishing house, teachers and leaders from upper secondary schools, science journalists, developers of educational technology and learning platforms, and researchers from universities and research centers. Here, the research project, process, and activities formed the very glue and mutual attraction of the doctoral ecology.

## 2.2 A Sustainability Curriculum for Doctoral Education

This concept focuses on the idea that doctoral education and the PhD have a societal and moral obligation to respond to impending and grand global challenges, aiming to provide solutions for problems such as the climate crisis, pandemics, and refugees fleeing from zones of war and armed conflict (Barnacle & Cuthbert, 2021). On the more comprehensive global level, the trend connects with discussions focusing on the social, cultural, and geopolitical responsibilities of research in a world where the notion of the human increasingly blends with digital technology (transhumanism) and the notion of a (post-)Anthropocene characterized by the way in which the role and self-awareness of the human species change altogether in the face of the much more extensive (and, sometimes, more violent) forces of the Earth (Braidotti, 2021; Latour, 2021; Morton, 2013). The sustainability curriculum suggests that research and researchers develop a more vital geopolitical awareness and a heightened sense of cultural leadership. Universities and research form alliances with various publics, addressing immediate and far-reaching issues such as politics or the climate that, if not solved in a timely manner, may have severe social and cultural repercussions.

In the literature, we find calls for greater focus on societal outreach in the doctoral curriculum through “public and persuasive PhD programmes” with a “commitment to outreach” that would generate more “community engagement and career paths” for doctoral researchers (Cuthbert & Barnacle, 2021, p. 101 and p. 105). Instead of aiming to produce stewards of the disciplines in the traditional doctoral curriculum (as mentioned above), the goal is to transform doctoral researchers into “stewards of the Earth” (Cuthbert & Barnacle, 2021, p. 106). According to this concept, research and knowledge can never be the main objectives of doctoral education: they must always serve the more important goal of sustainability. The trend links up with a call for care in doctoral education and a “Care-Full PhD” (Barnacle, 2018). As Barnacle argues, the responsibil-



ity of research and, therefore, the researchers' education is to understand current social, cultural, and bio-political crises as the doctoral curriculum itself. Doctoral education cannot avoid the bio- and geo-moral demands. The notion of care comprises intellectual openness, curiosity, and creativity, as well as social and cultural openness and responsibility. As McAlpine (2021) argues, in order for the individual researcher, research team, or institution to play a meaningful role in tackling grand global challenges, the curricular framing has to take place through a series of nested contexts where global issues (macro level) become translated into a national context (meso level), and further into a concrete organizational or social issue that can be addressed locally (micro level).

An example of the sustainability curriculum in practice can be found in McAlpine's (2021) description of a public outreach project that, through a series of nested contexts, centers around the challenge of creating eco-friendly play environments for preschool children by using only recycled materials. On the micro level, we find the drivers of the project, including the local university, the research team, and the individual doctoral researchers and their supervisors. The researchers connect and collaborate with stakeholders on the meso level, including daycare institutions, the parent groups involved in the project, playground designers, and the city council. These stakeholders all contribute various pieces of knowledge as well as their different experiences, expertise, networks, and resources relevant to the research project. However, they are involved not only as informants but as *co-researchers*, which would define this type of research as often having an affinity with action research in one variant or another. On the macro level, the participants of these research projects must align with national laws, rules, and regulations for playground design and with policies and strategies for daycare education and pedagogy. The example shows new opportunities for shared and nested agency between researchers and various external stakeholders, as well as the joint creation of momentum and enhanced focus on core sustainability issues in our societies around the world.

### 2.3 A Justice Curriculum for Doctoral education

This idea is based on the premise that research has an inbuilt ethical obligation to, through its knowing efforts, enhance the level of democracy, equality, and equity of the societal context within which it operates. Through research collaborations, social identities, unrecognized and unacknowledged perspectives on gender, age, or ethnicity may receive a more societally accepted and integrated position. The idea connects with theories on social and epistemic (in-)justice found in the works of Fricker (2010) and de Sousa Santos (2016), who describe how knowledge and research practices may, sometimes unintentionally, silence and suppress certain social and cultural voices and identities that are not wanted or prioritized in any given socio-political context. Through "testimonial justice" (Fricker, 2010), i. e., through research endeavors and collaborations, silenced and marginalized social groups may (re-)gain social and societal recognition and agency. Through "hermeneutical justice" (Fricker, 2010), historically and collectively censored, manipulated, and otherwise suppressed truths about one's own

country, political anchoring, institutions, or even family heritage may emerge in a different light, giving rise to new forms of social and cultural fairness and inclusion. Similarly, McArthur (2013) argues that research and researcher education may help disclose hidden or suppressed distortions or even pathologies that stand in the way of people achieving genuine freedom and the capacity for a good and just life.

Sivertsen and Meijer (2020) argue that the societal value of research is created through daily and ongoing collaboration and commitment to social issues and not through significant big-bang research results that send shockwaves of impact throughout society. They suggest that researchers should be societally aware and embed critical and carefully thought-out social justice strategies within their core epistemic endeavors. In their recent philosophical study of academic value creation in societies, Shumar and Bengtsen (2021) argue that entrepreneurship in academic contexts should rest on an ethical rather than an economic and political foundation. Entrepreneurship connected to research and doctoral education shows itself as an ethical activity through recognizing and acknowledging value(s) that we do not necessarily fully understand ourselves but that may be necessary for others. Further, we find similar arguments in the emerging literature on academic activism (Davids & Waghid, 2021; Nørgård & Bengtsen, 2021), where research and the pursuit of knowledge are seen first and foremost not as a politicized topic but as a forceful social and ethical awareness emerging through research and higher education. The foundational obligation of research is to recognize what is strange, weird, different, and “kept in the margins of our consciousness and language to enter into institutional and societal awareness and debate and to become culturally real and a part of our societies” (Nørgård & Bengtsen, 2021, p. 508).

An example of the sustainability curriculum put into practice can be found in Sigurðarson’s (2020) social justice-inspired study of social capacities, where knowledge and skills developed through research are not understood as something that is merely to be moved, piece by piece, from one place to another. On the contrary, social capacities are “built over time in particular places” and “developed through sustainable interactions with individuals and societies” (Sigurðarson, 2020, p. 73). Sigurðarson argues that research may kindle the empowerment and agency of local communities, which would otherwise remain in the peripheries and margins of mainstream societal awareness and privilege. In Sigurðarson’s study, the Icelandic sign-language community, by way of the Communication Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, entered a research collaboration with the University of Iceland that was supported by a range of Nordic funds and networks. One of the results was that the signing community changed from a societally peripheral and socially vulnerable community, “becoming more self-confident, accepted, and capable”, while the Icelandic-speaking community also became “more capable through a ‘more robust debate’”, and sign language in general became “more obvious in public space and more accepted” (Sigurðarson, 2020, p. 74). In the social justice trend, we find ethical dialectics encouraging doctoral education and the PhD to assume a greater social and cultural (and sometimes political) responsibility of their research, both through their research and within their respective research interactions and partnerships.

### 3 Ownership and Agency in Doctoral Education Revisited

The influence of external stakeholders on doctoral education and the PhD is radically increasing these years, not only through co-financing but also through direct collaboration with policy communities, professionals, public organizations and institutions, or the private sector. As the examples above show, new and exciting ways of going beyond solely economic regimes are emerging and already generating social value. A new societal meaning seems to open up for doctoral students and their supervisors. However, the new trends in the doctoral curriculum do not leave doctoral education and the PhD with more clearly settled terms of ownership. Due to the increased number of collaborative research projects and processes, where the PhD product itself may partly consist of a societally anchored result (sustainable playgrounds for preschool children, voice and empowerment for social groups in the margins of society), it may be even more challenging to define ownership and academic autonomy. Even though, on the one hand, it is compelling to open doctoral education and the PhD towards a more societally engaged and involved curriculum, we also need to take into account the point made by Rider (2018): that universities and research endeavors should never lose their status as a “safe zone” suspended between the interests of the market on the one side and the state’s governance on the other. Indeed, the issue of *confused ownership* is mandatory to tackle in the doctoral curriculum for times to come.

Consequently, a related issue of *blurred agency* arises, too. Who acts through the PhD? Is it the doctoral researcher themselves, connected academic communities, or the professional partners involved—or do they all act at the same time, getting entangled in multiple ways within the frame of doctoral education? As McAlpine and Amundsen (2018) argue, developing researcher agency is paramount to the doctoral learning journey. Researcher agency is not developed in a vacuum but aims to navigate opportunities, structures, and horizons for action. While opportunity structures represent an individual’s “structural knowledge, including knowledge about employment in different sectors, organizational structures and missions”, horizons for action represent “the perceived viable or attractive option within opportunity structures”, which may be influenced by factors such as “experience, personal intentions and relationships, and suggestions and desires of important others” (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2018, pp. 52–53). However, who will be able to detect when opportunity structures in professional contexts close down originality and creativity in research? And who can tell when the doctoral student’s horizon for action slowly but inescapably narrows, leaving the doctoral research project in a confined and governed space? Barnett (2022) raises the concern that doctoral researchers, their supervisors, or even leaders of doctoral programs may become so engaged and enthused by a professional collaboration that they do not wish to see how the research creativity slowly loses height and becomes uncritical. Barnett (2022) argues that if students, supervisors, or leaders become too caught up in “state regulatory systems or their desire to acquire instrumentally valuable skills—and so are *forgoing* their academic freedoms—then there is a responsibility upon those who teach them to encourage those students to take on the *burdens* of academic free-

dom” (p. 93). With blurred agency comes the need for new discussions about criticality in research and the question of how doctoral researchers who work in close collaboration with external partners can become aware of assumptions that may challenge or compromise their criticality.

Paradoxically, when new trends emerge and direct our gaze towards social, technical, or cultural issues that, in the face of prioritized research interests, have thus far been overlooked, unacknowledged, and unrecognized, there is always a certain risk of other issues being crowded out and pushed into the (new) social peripheries and cultural margins. Relevant as the new trends may be (ecology, sustainability, social justice), foregrounding new research agendas and priorities for research funding always keeps other agendas and, potentially, similarly worthy topics and research issues in the background. Further, as mentioned above, research and impact agendas are always normative and favor some topics, methods, or dissertation genres over others. The social norms guiding research strategies may even blacklist some approaches, such as the unwillingness to collaborate with external partners or research projects with no immediate relevance or visible social or technical outcome. As Bengtzen and Barnett (2018) have argued, contesting and challenging dominant trends in both research and doctoral education may sometimes be the only way to “understand other ecologies only marginally connected to political and economic drivers” and may only be relevant for marginal ‘subcultures [and] personal lifeworlds’ (Bengtzen & Barnett, 2018, p. 22) without much relevance for big data, hot political topics, or research buzz. When doctoral education and the PhD move too close to the political and cultural mainstream, criticality and creativity in researcher formation and research approaches risk becoming eclipsed.

## 4 Conclusion

In doctoral education and the PhD, we are witnessing different curricular pulls and tensions between disciplinary interests. On the one hand, there is a strong push towards integrating more generic competencies and transferrable skills into doctoral education, but on the other hand, doctoral education must also address the potentially conflicting interests of external stakeholders (local or national) and the expectations of an international community of experts within a given field. New trends in doctoral education seem to be able to successfully move doctoral education and the PhD beyond narrow discussions of societal impact, embedded in economic policy regimes, and outside the institutional walls—thereby situating doctoral education and the PhD in the world in new ways. From these new trends, I have identified three major curricular drivers: ecology, sustainability, and social justice. All of these trends aim to bring doctoral researchers and their supervisors together with external partners within professional contexts around shared goals and aims. However, in the wake of intensified external collaborations, challenging issues around confused ownership, blurred agency,

and topical (including epistemic and disciplinary) marginalization threaten to become an unintentional result.

The educational and pedagogical implications for doctoral education through collaborative projects with multiple stakeholders are still underresearched. This will be an essential dimension to follow up on in the future. Regarding the doctoral students, learning and formation trajectories lead in different directions. Students may not know whether doctoral education will direct them towards careers as professional researchers, or towards positions as highly qualified knowledge workers in other professional contexts. Meanwhile, the doctoral supervisors may find it hard to understand and relate to the students' concerns and uncertainties. Many of today's supervisors have experienced a vastly different PhD trajectory, with expectations and career trajectories that do not match their students' realities. Therefore, possible ways of guiding and supporting those students are not always immediately apparent. Elsewhere, I have argued (Bengtson, 2022) for the renewed importance of leadership in doctoral education and the introduction of a role that goes beyond the immediate quality assurance and project management provided by doctoral supervisors by incorporating the task of guiding and advising (perhaps even mediating between) the partners involved. This leadership would not aim to monitor and manage the research top-down but to support doctoral students (and their supervisors), to facilitate researcher integrity and agency by helping them navigate the unknown waters between multiple stakeholders and research interests. Perhaps senior doctoral supervisors might be able to take on such a leadership role, and perhaps even some external partners may prove unexpectedly helpful and valuable. However, the new demands for leadership (and *not* management) in doctoral education require excellent collaboration cultures not only beyond the institutions but very much so also within universities and doctoral programs.

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# The Liberal Arts Approach to Higher Education: A Case for the Humanities

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Several years ago, when our university was undergoing accreditation, I was asked to appear before a committee comprised of some sixteen German academics. An American literary scholar by training, at my university I teach undergraduate courses in American literature, college composition, business writing, and public speaking, as well as graduate-level courses in Jewish studies and Holocaust representation. After different members addressed my colleagues in German, one council member addressed me in English: “Professor Crawford, we understand that, as a professor of English, your job is to correct the students’ papers, but what else do you do here? Could you please justify your presence as a member of the *business* faculty? How do your contributions add value to the program and to the students’ education?”

This question revealed an attitude that categorizes the literature and the writing course as an unnecessary luxury for all students not studying in fields with English language and culture at their center. This viewpoint imagines the liberal arts class as appropriate only for students who intend to become future language teachers, editors, translators, and content creators, as well as professors of literature themselves one day. Such a course for the student of management (our undergraduate program’s single area of concentration at that time) was likely seen, by this committee member at least, as a distraction from the student’s educational process. Viewed from this skeptical perspective, the course that teaches great works of literature or writing must have been seen as ornamental: its value is decorative, lacking the depth and practical utility of courses in, say, accounting that offer skills directly applicable to the management student who may soon be doing some accounting herself or even supervising accountants.

I recount this exchange because it reveals a clash of cultures that represent distinctly different approaches to higher education. Our different viewpoints represent two systems intersecting here: on the one hand, the typical liberal arts university structure that offers a wide range of various courses that supplement the focus of the student’s major, and on the other hand, the more strongly segmented German university system where students choose a field that defines the bulk of their studies from the outset, with less room to choose a smaller number of elective, supplemental courses outside of their major. An American university in Berlin, Germany, offering both an American and a German degree, must, of course, find a way to negotiate the norms of the two systems of higher education.

By naming my purpose as “the person designated to correct students’ papers,” this committee member showed me that he understood the teaching of writing to be the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. I had the impression he saw my

role at the college as the native speaker of American English who explains to our students where the commas should go. His choice to ask how my contribution “adds value” to the students’ education—a question not posed to my fellow business faculty members with degrees in economics, marketing, or finance—revealed to me that the inherent value of teaching reading and writing, the essence of the humanities, was lost on him. From the perspective of an accountant scrutinizing our ledger’s bottom line, literature and writing courses likely seemed indulgences in an outmoded form of entertainment (the novel) or a technical reinforcement for students who will need to use correct English at the workplace.

Even though the value of the humanities and the liberal arts approach to education may be obvious to many, some do not recognize its worth. Here I am reminded of the arguments offered by a speech delivered by C. P. Snow in 1959, who asserted then that there was a growing, unbridgeable gap between the scientists and the literary people, and this gap was making it increasingly difficult, or even impossible, for the “two cultures” (1961), to speak to one another. Snow, himself, was a novelist, but he had trained as a physicist and spent many years working as a scientist in that field. At the time of publication of *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1961), he spoke from a position as a native informant, literate in the two opposing cultures of academic labor. In his essay, Snow argued for the necessity of the two cultures finding common ground and meeting one another in conversation, calling for the sciences and the humanities to open a dialogue and share the benefits of learning from their partners’ disciplinary perspectives.

The defense of the humanities has a long history, with Snow’s voice only one in a long line of thinkers calling for the continuation of this particular tradition of learning and thinking.<sup>1</sup> From the vantage point of more than sixty years after Snow’s work, I marvel at the even footing on which he placed the two groups as he called for a dialogue between these two cultures. Much has changed since he delivered his lecture, since today these two cultures exist in different economic classes on university campuses, with substantial funding supporting the sciences and restrictions and budget cuts now thinning the support for the arts and humanities.

This hierarchy has not always been in place, of course. Oxford, where Snow taught, has always been a significant model for American higher education, and was established as a training center for the church<sup>2</sup> (Oxford University, n. d.). Is it any surprise that even in the early part of the twentieth century, the typical American university curriculum was far more steeped in the humanities than it is today, based on the ideas that “Greek, Latin, Christianity, and respectable upper-class social values were the

1 One prominent tradition of written texts that defend the humanities can be traced back to the liberal arts educational approach in classical Greece and later in medieval Europe, where the teaching of the Trivium—the study of rhetoric, logic, and grammar—forms the foundation of education. Many scholars since Aristotle have written works that extol the value of poetry and argue for its necessity in education. To take just two examples out of many, consider Horace whose *Ars Poetica* emerged in the Augustan Age of the Roman Empire and famously argued that the poetic work should aim to instruct and delight. The impact of Horace’s dictum was revisited in 1595 with the publication of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy*. Sidney argued that poetry should indeed instruct and delight, and that readers of virtuous work would themselves express that moral virtue in their behavior in the world.

2 With the first abbey, St. Frideswide, built in Oxford in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the foundation of religious scholarship at Oxford began.

foundation of a good education” (Graff, 2007, p. 75)? In classical Greece, education was established on the foundations of rhetoric, logic, and grammar, as named in Aristotle’s *Organon*, later to be named the “Trivium” (Joseph, 2014). And scholars of the Talmud (compiled between the second and sixth centuries C. E.) train their students through reading and interpreting a series of fragments of Jewish legal code, read together with commentaries on these fragments, and then commentaries on the commentary (My Jewish Learning, n. d.). Education has a long history of being grounded in this essential practice of reading and writing and in responding to writing with more writing, aimed at developing the skills of analysis, interpretation, reasoning, and argument. Many skills and conditions we consider necessary for participatory democracy, such as a free press and a society improved by a self-reflective public discourse, are grounded in this approach to education.<sup>3</sup>

This essay compares two models of education: one that values highly specialized courses in one’s field at the expense of other courses, and another that prioritizes courses in one’s major but includes a variety of general education courses that provide experiences in the humanities as part of a liberal arts method of teaching. We could call these two curricular philosophies the *specialist* approach and the *integrationist* approach. The specialist approach views the field of study as a complete, closed discourse and set of established, “settled knowledge” (Graff, 2007, p. 63), which constitutes information that the student must learn as a prerequisite to becoming a member of the profession. Such a model has its advantages and shows a direct and observable link between the student’s labor in the classroom to acquire certain forms of familiarity and competence and the graduate’s practice in the office, the laboratory, or the field. The integrationist approach, which characterizes the liberal arts curricular design, places one’s major within the broader context of courses that develop the student’s mind in other ways, teaching skills for thought, expression, and participation in civil society.

From the specialist’s viewpoint, the integrationist approach to curriculum design merely offers the student a watered-down experience that jeopardizes the integrity of the training itself. Combining specialized courses with other courses that seem to be, on the surface, irrelevant—at least in terms of their content—must appear to the specialist as an undesirable compromise. Although it might be nice to give the management student some courses in literature, the thinking goes, such a nicety comes at the cost of fewer courses in the focus of study, leaving the student disadvantaged among competitors who have received a greater number of specialized courses in the field. I argue, however, that the opposite is true.

The liberal arts model as an approach to higher education, regardless of one’s major or primary area of study, exposes the student to a broad range of supplementary experiences and disciplines, with a solid base in the humanities and the arts. While

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3 There is a long history of viewing the poet and the artist with skepticism. Plato, who proposed a society ruled by the philosopher king (*Republic*, Book V, 473 c-e; Plato, Grube, & Reeve, 1992, p. 148), also famously exiled the poets (Book X, 595b, p. 265), whose craft he compared to deception (Book III and Book X). Many of the contemporary arguments calling for censorship find their origins in passages from the *Republic* where the storyteller’s power and ability to influence common people are acknowledged, and therefore must be strictly controlled (see, for example, Book III, 386b, p. 61). Yet many scholars, rather than fearing the influence of poets, philosophers, and historians, instead view them as a foundation for education.

higher education in the United States has commonly approached learning in this manner, there is a general trend to make higher education programs leaner by cutting liberal arts funding and curricular requirements. Given this decline in support for liberal arts in US higher education and the dominance of a specialist approach to curriculum worldwide (Godwin & Altbach, 2016), it is the increasing rarity of the liberal arts approach to learning in universities everywhere that concerns me here, as well as the consequences of this narrowed perspective.

In this essay, I argue that the humanities classroom has a critical place in the curriculum and must therefore remain a part of the educational path for everyone, including students who pursue degrees in the sciences and in areas of study seen as applied and practical. Writing, after all, is a form of thinking itself and not merely an expression of finished thought.<sup>4</sup> Two foundational pillars of self-reflection are the development of writing skills and the (written and oral) engagement with models of thought found in reading a variety of texts. To maintain this engagement, the concept of literacy must go beyond its rudiments. Exceeding the basic definition of literacy as the simple capacity to read words written on the page, a more sophisticated approach to literacy assumes the reader can connect the ideas from different written works and assemble in the mind (and in speech, and on paper) a response that participates in a conversation.

One of the foundations of democracy is the free press, and in order for a democracy to work, a sophisticated form of literacy and an awareness of public discourse are necessary conditions for participation. The humanities provide students with the skills necessary for participatory democracy, modeling the kinds of thought and reinforcing the habits of mind that make the free press a central component in a free society. Teaching students advanced skills in writing and reading aids in promoting public discourse and training self-expression and encourages careful listening and reflection. Self-reflection and empathy are more frequently found in the student trained to reflect on complex literary objects (Johnson et al., 2013; Junker & Jacquemin, 2017; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Leavy, 2019, p. 194; Thexton et al., 2019). This approach to teaching and learning includes an attempt to make a society fairer, fighting discrimination by widening the range of represented viewpoints. In this manner, the humanities classroom works toward social justice by catering to diverse student groups who identify with voices included in the curriculum. Of course, more needs to be understood about how effective these approaches are in terms of learning outcomes, but modeling intercultural dialogue has at least the potential to increase the likelihood that such exchanges continue beyond the confines of the classroom.

Where does this view of education come from—one that frames the liberal arts, with their emphasis on the humanities, as a luxurious indulgence? This brand of skepticism belongs to a common, long-held viewpoint that equates higher education with vocational training and sees courses in the humanities as a waste of time and money (Jay, 2014). Studies that track future earnings with university majors frequently show

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4 Dramatist Heinrich von Kleist famously argued that speech is an action facilitating thought, not merely an expression of a finished thought; he encouraged his readers to find out what they think about something by speaking about it with someone who listens (Kleist, 1878).

that English majors are projected to earn far less than their peers in economics and the hard sciences (e. g., Belfield et al., 2018). As the cost of higher education continues to increase, parents are looking at the college experience with more scrutiny on the return on investment, as a recent article shows students in American universities leaving the English major en masse. (Heller, 2023). In terms of the job market, it would seem at first glance that the skills learned in a literature classroom might not be valued. And yet, studies linking employability to higher education skills include “good written and verbal communication skills” on a short list of key transferrable “soft” skills that employers seek when hiring (Andrews & Higson, 2008). I often hear from corporate leaders that a skill they often seek is the ability to write clearly, to tell a coherent story, to explain an idea, to listen, and, in short, to communicate well.

One reason the literature course is undervalued by specialist curriculum designers, may arise from a difference in method. While courses of study in chemistry and accounting teach students the essential skills necessary to become chemists and accountants, a course in literature does not teach students how to become novelists, poets, or playwrights. What students in the literature course generate is not, in fact, their object of study: the novel, poem, or play. Instead, as Gerald Graff has observed, what these students produce is criticism (Graff, 2007, p. 289). The asymmetry of approaches in classrooms for literature versus the empirical sciences reveals a difference in alignment that contrasts teaching methods with their objects of study. In the model of the chemistry or accounting class, skills taught are transparent in their application to the workplace: those future workers are training to become chemists and accountants, and in such labs and classrooms they learn the rules, practices, and applied behaviors of their profession. The literature classroom does not train the student to reproduce the object of study, nor does it use the same educational method as the skills taught in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (commonly known as STEM) classes. The next part of this chapter will attempt to identify what models of learning are present in the writing classroom. And since literature students are being taught to produce criticism, one should consider the question: what is criticism’s value?

Before I address these questions, first some context. The institution of higher education where I am currently employed, Touro University Berlin, a campus of Touro University New York, USA, finds itself in an unusual position because of the hybrid nature of the place, combining American, German, and international elements. On the one hand, our degree-granting power, as well as much of our academic structure and support, comes directly from our American parent institution. We are accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, an American accrediting body that authorizes the undergraduate program to offer American bachelor’s degrees. On the other hand, we operate in Germany and adhere to higher education standards dictated by the laws of the state, Berlin, and the federal standard across Germany, both of which, in turn, are shaped by rules and norms established by the European Union. Our college is a Fachhochschule, which, in English, might best be translated as a technical college, but it differs from an American technical college because our degrees are bachelor’s degrees, not associate’s degrees. The German Fachhochschule looks for its fac-

ulty to have qualifications not only through their academic degrees and publications but also from practical experience. Maintaining policy and standards of practice that negotiate at least two distinct philosophies of education has presented regular challenges to the faculty and administrative staff of our institution.

For an audience familiar only with one model of higher education, it is necessary to highlight some contrasting aspects of the partner model. While the American liberal arts model includes a large number of arts and humanities courses as core requirements for every student, no matter what one's major, the German model is far more specialized, with nearly all required courses taught within one's major. Consider the German tendency to view the university as a place of scientific knowledge—as opposed to the English Oxbridge model, where the university is seen as a cultural institution, with its mission of building character—and it becomes easy to understand why a tight focus on specialization shapes the curriculum in the German model of higher education (Scott, 1996, p. 37).

Here in Berlin, the contemporary labor market is global and international. Far more English is spoken in Berlin than a generation ago. In the global context, English is the dominant language. It dominates the internet, commerce, academic journals, international diplomacy, and many forms of cultural products, such as music, cinema, and television. Experts surmise that the number of non-native English speakers in the world surpassed the number of native speakers just after the start of the millennium, making English a language whose role as a lingua franca has outstripped its use as a national, or even international, anglophone tongue (Mauranen, 2003). As Berlin has become an international city where many startups and established corporations conduct their business in English, the labor market has changed to reflect these qualities. Even a venerable German automobile company like Daimler-Benz has changed significantly with globalization; in 1998 Daimler-Benz merged with US car company Chrysler, and one result of the formation of this multinational corporation is the daily use of English in the workplace (Erling & Walton, 2007).

As the educational landscape changes here in Europe to reflect a globalized marketplace, the demographics of our college reflect these shifts. Like many other international programs in Berlin, our undergraduate classes are taught in English. Nearly half of the student body is native to Germany, and the other half hails from countries on six continents. The makeup of this student body, is, therefore, unusually multicultural and polylingual, which creates an environment where the students' varied backgrounds enrich the classrooms with a multiplicity of viewpoints and approaches. Such a resource for students' learning about one another and themselves should not be overlooked, and the liberal arts approach enhances this richness in an inclusive dialogue.

So, to return to this essay's starting point, I claim that the liberal arts approach to higher education situates the humanities as a necessary and essential aspect of the curriculum. In the context of a German pedagogical framework that presumes students at an institution of higher education already possess the basics of reading and writing and, therefore, have no further need of courses in the arts and humanities, I offer the following line of reflection.

As a professor who teaches literature and academic writing, I take the literature classroom and the writing course as models of liberal arts for this discussion, but one may substitute for them a range of courses in the humanities, including philosophy, history, film studies, art history, cultural studies, gender studies, and more. The traditional liberal arts argument claims that the goal of education is not merely to train an employee but to educate the whole person (Lewis, 2018; Roche, 2010). I agree with this claim, but I go even further to argue that even when considered by those who view the central aim of higher education as a preparation for employment, the benefits of a liberal arts education are manifold and supplement specialized knowledge in an important fashion. The liberal arts component of the college curriculum provides rigorous intellectual training for the student that complements her professional expertise.

That this training takes place in areas that examine topics beyond the student's own major is an asset rather than a liability. To ask the student to make observations about a fictional world is to liberate the student from making arguments constrained by the conditions of politics and identities that situate one in the present. Precisely by asking the student to explain a concept as it appears in a virtual object such as a novel, one is asking the student to identify an argument outside of the context of one's daily life, to isolate it, and to examine how that idea has been presented to the reader. By requiring the student to produce criticism, we ask her to interpret the situations and experiences that may be found in a fictional world; by asking a student to respond to a complex set of ideas that present themselves in a text, we maintain that her assertions must be supported by evidence found in the text itself. Once this dialogue is established, the student is encouraged to compare the ideas in the text to those beyond it, by engaging with, for example, critical texts, legal and historical documents, other cultural products, or the arguments of a fellow student. These same skills ground the student in the exchange of reasoned thought made in the here and now that makes debate possible, training the student to make arguments that hold water, testing them against arguments and observations of other critics, including those made by peers in the classroom.

Students enhance these skills as they develop a more refined understanding of complex arguments found in texts, giving them the chance to better understand one another—a crucial element for building and maintaining a democratic society. The discussion that takes place in a classroom where one is examining a text raises the level of consciousness simply because language is being used to examine language, promoting a higher stage of self-awareness. Likewise, the interlocutors in this discussion, when presenting their own ideas or responses to their colleagues' ideas, must become adept at listening in order to grasp what their classmates propose.

The process of learning in the humanities classroom works counter to the rules and training learning model of the specialist curriculum precisely because the subject matter (the novel) in the liberal arts classroom is not the same as the product (criticism) that the students generate together. Consider a novel, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1997, original 1934), that explores, among many other things, the nature of relationships between children and their parents or between partners in a marriage. In the



social sciences, there is an increasingly common view that considers fiction as a kind of research practice (Leavy, 2016), and fiction can be understood as an imaginative response to the real world. The student who is asked to examine Joyce's novel must try to make sense of this response. An assigned reflection on how those familial relationships are represented may teach the student how to interpret a written representation of the world that demands much from its reader as one finds in the text of *Ulysses*, but the assignment also gives the student the chance to reflect on how children and parents misunderstand each other or how parents cannot help but to see themselves in their children. Opportunities to reflect on the nature of these kinds of relationships are often unavailable when we look at our own relationships, simply because we lack enough distance to allow helpful reflection. A reading of *Ulysses* that attempts to understand how Joyce sees Stephen's relationship to his father, or to Bloom, might not hold the key to unlocking universal truths about the nature of father-son relationships, but it certainly provides the student with the opportunity to make sense of Joyce's (or at least Stephen's or Bloom's) point of view on this matter while providing the student with food for thought to reflect on their own primary relationships.

Every literature and college composition class contains assignments that invite the student to come to terms with her own arguments and to learn how the process of developing coherent thought (when it happens successfully) through the stages of revision can train the mind to think more coherently, and with more complexity and sophistication. What I propose is that engagement with one's own writing, together with literature (or history, or philosophy, etc.) is a form of training that provides its primary benefit through its *process*, and this benefit is supplemented by its *content*. The student engaged in this manner produces what Gerald Graff (2007, p. 289) calls criticism, which is a way of using language that moves through literary texts but does not necessarily train the student to produce literary texts; instead, this practice teaches students to produce sophisticated, reflective observations as the outcome of engaging with literary texts, resulting in precise forms that track and communicate these thoughts. While I hope that my students will someday look back and fondly remember how Huckleberry Finn grew into a young adult during his journey with Jim on the raft, what I believe are the enduring lessons from our classes come not from remembering the plot or the characters of a literary work but instead from the experiences of the engagement itself. The student who can explain, independently, how satire works and what kinds of behavior Twain finds worthy of ridicule is a student who can manage a very complicated set of ideas in a way that makes sense. This process of engagement generates tangible rewards in training nuanced, sophisticated written and spoken responses to the world.

The fact that this process happens in a classroom is important because of the collective nature of this engagement. In the literary classroom, the student is not only faced with her own interpretation of, for example, Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (2018, original 1929), but also has the shared experience of reading this novel in synchrony with her peers, and she is invited to engage with her classmates' different interpretations of this novel, the characters' motivations, and the circumstances that create con-

flicts within the characters. Larsen's novel allows the reader insight into how race, gender, and class inform one another in 1920s Chicago and Harlem by following the narrative of two friends whose conflicts around their own racial, economic, and sexual identities generate the plot. Indeed, the notion of whiteness and the identity positions of African American people in the United States are highlighted in a narrative that explores the consequences of one woman's choice to "pass" as a white European-American. Instead of approaching the content of Larsen's novel as settled knowledge, the student experiences it as a proposed claim that is tested as her own reading is placed in dialogue with her peers' varied interpretations. Here, the value comes from the experience of argumentation, and the process of reading forms a community of practice where the students are united by the shared experience of reading a common text. Students not only address an important cultural and historical moment that resonates in contemporary conflicts, but as they audit one another's own concepts of passing, they define and identify the categorical limits of belonging—categories of racial, national, and sexual identity—with one another in a manner that does important work in promoting tolerance and generating empathy for a range of people in and beyond the classroom.

The liberal arts course also promotes pluralistic values. Every student who has done the reading can actively participate in the community of readers by sharing her thoughts about the character, the plot, the author's choices, conflicts that arise, moral decisions characters make, their successes and regrets, and their growth—or failure to grow—from these experiences. Every reader in the class can respond to other students' explanations of their understanding of the literary work. A classroom set up in this way promotes pluralism, giving the student an encounter with perspectives that represent her peers as well as with voices from texts that originate outside of the classroom. The chance to make sense of Adrienne Rich's poetry or essays, for example, is the opportunity to hear a voice that belongs to traditionally marginalized groups (as Rich was a lesbian and a Jew)<sup>5</sup>, and also the chance to hear from a voice now only present in written form since the author is no longer alive. Additionally, the literature professor who shares with the students the reasons for making the curricular choices of who is on the semester's reading list shares the question of how we respond to a literary tradition and what considerations one makes when deciding what, and whom, to read. The examination of a text like Adrienne Rich's *Diving into the Wreck* (1973) demands that the student take note of what it means to be part of a tradition by participating in criticism of that tradition, addressing Rich's efforts to generate a more inclusive dialogue.

Furthermore, the literature course functions as an avenue of cultural exchange, exposing the student, in my case, for example, to works by American writers from the nineteenth century to the present. The student who encounters ideas of nation and belonging in an American literature course has the chance to explore how national identities are formed and may notice which habits of thought have remained in the

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5 Rich struggled with trying to find the right language to express her experiences in thought and her experiences in the world, which she acknowledged was a difficult task since she was working within linguistic traditions that had historically been employed to silence voices like her own.

discourse and which have changed over time. The student who participates in this engagement with classic and recent new additions to the now-destabilized literary canon is one who contributes to a form of literacy that traces arguments through cultural production across generations.

I assert that the student, as a future employee and a future productive citizen, with a well-rounded set of skills taught in courses that make the humanities and arts a significant part of their education, is more capable of clear verbal and written expression, more capable of productive reflection, and more capable of revealing one's own chain of thoughts along any particular line of reasoning when compared to the student who lacks this form of intellectual training. The person who can explain her ideas to others not only verbally but in written form, whose abstract claims are supplemented by illustration and example, is a person whose ideas can reach many fellow members of the community and the nation, as well as fellow colleagues, customers, and clients.

In defense of the liberal arts education, I argue that the classroom benefits from its structure as a space of rule-bound play, and perhaps it is the playful aspect of studying literature that suggests the students are not engaged in serious work. I argue that in the literature class, serious work gets done in the guise of play. In developmental psychology, play is understood as something profoundly important for the child's capacity to grow (Singer et al., 2006; Winnicott, 1973). Other scholars (Van Leeuwen & Westwood, 2008) draw on Winnicott's seminal work on play (1973) when asserting that the "creative and experimental character of play which in [Winnicott's] view constitutes the self-therapeutic importance of play at all ages with positive consequences for health and well-being." Recent studies reveal what developmental psychologists have been arguing for decades, confirming there is a strong relationship between children's playfulness and their cognitive and emotional development (Whitebread et. al, 2007, p. 15). Recent research shows that one advantage of play, in both humans and animals, is the liberation from "ends"-oriented thinking, creating contexts that liberate individuals to focus on "means" instead of "ends" (Pellegrini, 2009, cited in Whitebread, 2012, p. 14). Play allows children to develop language and the capacity to self-regulate—the ability of the individual to control one's own emotional and cognitive processes. A recent report on play concludes: "The significance of this insight has become increasingly recognized as evidence has mounted that these two abilities, language and self-regulation, are intimately interrelated (Vallaton & Ayoub, 2011) and together form the most powerful predictors of children's academic achievement and of their emotional well-being (Whitebread, 2011)" (Whitebread, 2012). Developing the capacity for symbolic forms of play, as this research suggests, fosters skills and trains behaviors that have long-lasting consequences in terms of individual welfare and student success.

In other words, play is serious business because it is where critical learning takes place. If the work of reading novels together with one's peers and one's professor sounds more like a leisure activity than an intentional act of learning, one should consider that learning and development are often precisely what is at stake when the mind is engaged in play. In an essay on the topics of play and the imagination, Gregory Bateson (1955) observes animals at play and famously describes the playful nip as the bite

that connotes a bite, but one marked with an important difference, since the nip does not denote what an actual painful and possibly injurious bite would denote. That is, the nip is, importantly, a representation of a bite but not an actual bite itself, and therefore the nip allows the animals to explore a circumstance of aggression by staging a safer version of it, which is a preferable way to learn in comparison to being exposed to dangerous raw aggression itself. The kind of work performed in the literature classroom also offers an engagement in interpretive play, where the readers of a literary work propose their interpretations and understandings of what they have observed in the text, where fictional representations of the world form a kind of playful staging of that world suspended from the judgment we might apply if those circumstances were real. For example, a discussion about Joyce's description of Paddy Dignam's funeral may occasion various readings of what the novel suggests is happening psychologically when Bloom is dealing with death directly, or the students may observe certain cultural habits associated with mourning, or they may focus on observing the behaviors of particular characters. These observations taking place in a classroom are possible precisely because they are liberated from the real stakes that appear when attending an actual funeral, when one's attentions would be focused on other, more practical matters than pure observation and reflection.

The conditions that permit a state of play in the literature classroom, one in which the *interpretive act itself* is given priority over the *content* of the reading materials alone, are conditions that allow the student to focus on the processes of argumentation, gathering evidence, and assembling a logical set of claims. This state of play allows both student and instructor to focus on the process of reasoning itself rather than the supposed correct answer, which may be less possible when one is learning, for example, a set of protocols necessary for reading and interpreting a balance sheet in corporate finance. Of course, the ability to correctly interpret a balance sheet is an important skill, and one that management students should master. Yet, what I am suggesting here is that the student in the practical classroom setting whose task is to learn the norms, codes, and procedures of a specific profession, such as accounting, benefits immensely from learning how this profession works and is even taught how professionals in that field think and speak. A student who takes this avenue of study without the supplement of a liberal arts approach to the curriculum, however, misses the experience of interpretive freedom found in the humanities classroom. While the analysis of plot, character, motivation, and other aspects of an author's argument are still subject to testing, the humanities classroom may invite more disagreement and a wider set of viewpoints when the student is not being judged against the norms of the principles and practices of her chosen profession. I argue that the combination of both kinds of learning environments is important for the university student because their methods and goals are different and complementary.

An environment where the student's task is to respond to a literary work with criticism, and to assert her own set of observations about a text, asks the reader to explore a hypothetical case in a world that reveals specific problems in, say, Hamlet's ability to enter adulthood. These skills that result from training the student to make observations

about a fictional, imagined world are the same ones that enhance the student's observations about the real world. A decade ago, a pathbreaking study appeared in the journal *Science* (Kidd & Castano, 2013), whose findings indicate that the act of reading literary fiction strengthens the reader's performances in tests that measure "empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence" (Belluck, 2013). The conclusions drawn from this study suggest that reading what it calls "literary fiction" increases one's capacity for certain forms of social intelligence; another study establishes a causal link between reading "literary fiction" and prosocial behavior (Johnson et al., 2013). The results of these studies have encouraged further research that continues to assert the value of reading fiction for building desirable capacities and character traits in members of a functioning society (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017; Thexton et al., 2019). These findings may not surprise fellow professors of literature, but they may give pause to skeptics who still view liberal arts curricular components with disdain.

One may think of fiction as an imagined response to the real world, and as such, it provides the student with a complex object to be examined. The act of assessing a narrative strengthens the student's own narrative capacity as well as their evaluative power and critical faculties. The novel may present readers with a world in conflict and, as such, raise philosophical (including moral and ethical questions) as well as sociological and political questions about a range of matters that appear in this staged performance on the page. The literature student presents the class with her own understanding and observations about the text, inviting classmates and the professor to fine-tune this set of assessments and claims. All of this work allows the student to engage with the imagination of the author, and the result is a strengthening of the student's own imagination. For those who think of imagination as something that only children enjoy, or as a sort of frivolity, I remind them here that without the capacity to imagine, new solutions to problems will never be found. Without the capacity to imagine, the student is confined to a restricted world, and even goals, if they are articulated, remain at a baseline of development.

As for the student in the college composition classroom, the tools learned there may seem to have some obvious direct application because the student who learns to write an essay will be better prepared for essay assignments in other classes. Though true, this claim represents only the barest notion of writing's utility as a skill. After all, writing is not just one tool among many, but rather a form of thinking itself. The beginning writer will often tell me that she does not yet know what to write because she does not yet know what she thinks, as if thinking happened first, followed later by the act of writing the thought down. I argue that in my experience, writing often happens first, and I may not know what I think about something until I have written about it. The recursive writing process allows one to externalize ideas onto paper, then permits reflection, and only then allows the writer to produce further, more complex responses to those words. This process trains the development of thought to increase the student's capacity for communication and the clear expression of ideas. This kind of learning reinforces self-reflection and not only improves articulation and the further development of ideas but also supports the students' capacity for self-understanding.

In a chapter that examines the place of the liberal arts in higher education, with literary studies as its central example, representations of the liberal arts in popular culture should reveal some relevant cultural fault lines that suggest further sources of skepticism. Frequently in cinema and television, the representation of the English professor is the object of ridicule. A recent television series on Netflix, *The Chair* (Benioff et al., 2021), portrays an English department fighting to prove its relevance on its small college campus as funding is cut for a department viewed by the university administrators as non-essential and antiquated. Although I began watching this series with enthusiasm, I was soon disappointed by the way that the series fell into reinforcing caricatures and negative stereotypes about the work being done by literary scholars, as if believing in the relevance and importance of work done in such a classroom only reveals the professors' own naiveté. The aging scholars who teach courses in literature from the fourteenth (a Chaucer scholar played by Holland Taylor) or the nineteenth century (a Melville scholar played by Bob Balaban) appear so old and out of touch with their students that one wonders if they could be coevals of the authors they teach. Although some of the younger faculty seem better able to connect with their students, one of the show's principal characters, Bill Dobson (played by Jay Duplass), who is admired by many of his students because of his fame as a successful novelist, appears to have the maturity of the least grown-up of his charges.<sup>6</sup> His inability to get his act together is counterbalanced by his academic sophistication, as seen in his first lecture, where he examines Camus' and Beckett's responses to fascism with absurdism (Peet & Wyman, 2021, 0:26:51). Even there, his lack of judgment is shown in his choice to illustrate fascism by making the Nazi salute in class, which, of course, goes viral with predictably catastrophic consequences since the students are filming him with their cell phones. These English professors may be brilliant in their own way, the show seems to

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6 In the first episode of the series, Dobson is shown drinking heavily, waking up dressed in yesterday's clothes in various places after his class has started, and, at one point, unable to find where he left his car, he takes an electric scooter on a zany ride toward campus until he loses control, veers off the road, and takes a madcap spill, flying through the air slapstick-style to land in a row of hedges and emerge unscathed (Peet & Wyman, 2021, 0:10:20). As the inebriated Bill Dobson leaves a bar, fails to find his automobile, urinates in public while a passing mother shields her children from the sight of his bare behind, and then steals a golf cart, which he drives at unsafe speeds around the parking structure, the scene is cross-cut with the character played by Sandra Oh, who, as the new department chair, delivers the bad news of budget reductions for the English department in a faculty meeting. As she makes this speech, while we watch these embarrassing, drunken antics of a popular English professor, she recites a litany of reasons that justify the existence of literary studies, which, when placed against the background of Bill Dobson's childish behavior, sound naïve, self-important, deluded, and ridiculous. The new chair says to her colleagues: "I'm not gonna sugarcoat this. We are in dire crisis. Enrollments are down more than thirty percent. Our budget is being gutted. It feels like the sea is washing the ground out from under our feet. But in these unprecedented times, we have to prove that what we do in the classroom—modeling critical thinking, stressing the value of empathy—is more important than ever, and has value to the public good. It's true, we can't teach our students coding or engineering. What we teach them cannot be quantified, or put down on a résumé as a skill. But let us have pride in what we can offer future generations. We need to remind these young people that knowledge doesn't just come from spreadsheets, or Wiki entries. Hey, I was thinking this morning about our tech-addled culture, and how our students are hyper-connected twenty-four hours a day, and I was reminded of something Harold Bloom wrote. He said, 'Information is endlessly available to us. Where shall wisdom be found?'" (Peet & Wyman, 2021, 0:03:13). By presenting the viewer with many of the common arguments for the humanities—some of which appear in this chapter—as a voiceover for a montage that portrays the clownish behavior of an out-of-control English professor, the irony of the contrast invites the viewer to see the department chair's impassioned speech with skepticism, suggesting that wisdom is not found in the pursuit of reading great works, nor are any of those reasons anything more than delusions by well-meaning, naïve people. The arguments, by now familiar to readers of this chapter, that the study of the humanities promotes critical thinking or empathy, are dismissed here as hogwash, sold at the price of a cheap laugh.

admit, but as they are represented, these members of the profession do not have a place in today's world.

Or, consider the character of the English professor in the feature film *Stranger Than Fiction* (Forster, 2006). The literature professor played by Dustin Hoffman is an eccentric genius who seems to have read every founding myth and fable but also seems to belong more in the world of myth and imagination than in the practical world, because although he wears a tailored suit, he also wears no shoes. These representations of literary scholars suggest that a common view sees them as admittedly intelligent but impractical people who are more entertaining than enlightening, and this view may help explain the low value given to the liberal arts component.

In response to the general skepticism that undervalues the role of the liberal arts, novelists may have something useful to say about these trends in higher education. Here, it seems fitting to consider the warning found in a novel in concluding this chapter. In Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) the reader encounters a dystopian world set in the not-too-distant future. In this society, the arts and humanities are used only instrumentally; the student of language and art history only mines those academic fields to become better advertisers for goods sold on the market, suggesting they offer no value beyond their commercial use. The reader sees the low value assigned to the arts and humanities by the poor facilities at the dilapidated campus where such courses are still taught. By contrast, the novel's universities that teach the sciences are palaces of privilege and luxury, where a student's every need is met by a pampering staff and lavish facilities. On one of these research campuses, the science runs amok—unchecked by any healthy culture of ethical debate, where competing values might have been discussed and options weighed—so that experiments that began inside a laboratory get loose and transform the flora and fauna of our planet into something unrecognizable. These genetic experiments kill much of humanity and create new, unnatural creatures, some strange and some threatening, some of which have already been produced in actual laboratories today. Atwood's novel stands as a warning to those of us who would turn toward the promises of science and the free market, disengaged from any reflective power and critical dialogue that could have been generated by a solid grounding in the humanities and liberal arts.

My answer to the committee member who asked how an English professor added value to the management program was more succinct than these reflections here. My response was essentially this: Our students training to be future leaders in the business world really need what they get in the writing and literature classrooms. The question is not how such classes “add value,” I argued, because without them everything else is in jeopardy. I suggested that his comment showed that he did not grasp the importance of a whole set of skills that may not have been visible to some members of the committee but are essential to any university graduate. I argued that what was at stake in this form of education was “the whole shooting match.” If our graduates have learned rules and procedures but are unable to share their thoughts clearly in a meeting or a report, or if they are unable to read carefully enough or consider the impact of a decision being

weighed, or if they are simply unable to imagine a problem from another point of view, how will they add value to their place of employment or to their community?

The student who struggles in the humanities classroom is often one who learns new capacities for thought and expression that remain a part of her for a lifetime. By continuing to teach the development of the imagination and the capacity for articulating thought, we pass on our own values and ideals to the next generation, providing them with tools for examining the world they inherit so they may continue discussing what works and what doesn't, with the hope they will then forge some new, better paths ahead.

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# “The Teacher always announced our Grades out loud.” Student Motivation and International Practices in Assessment Privacy

REBECCA CHARRY ROJE

## 1 Introduction

The evolution of higher education towards ever more transnational contexts has accelerated dramatically in recent years, fuelled by market pressures, advances in communication technology, and the aftermath of the 2020 global pandemic. Higher education today brings diverse groups of learners and teachers together in digitally mediated transnational contexts that could hardly be imagined even a generation ago. These intercultural learning contexts almost inevitably involve contrasting or even conflicting sets of values, traditions, and daily classroom practices, which must be thoughtfully negotiated if we are to maximize student learning.

Among the many academic contexts in which cultural differences may surface is the delivery of instructor feedback and assessment results, specifically, the degree of privacy that is granted to individual students regarding their grades. Interestingly, the issue of assessment privacy has not received as much attention as other aspects of intercultural learning, perhaps because cultural assumptions about the public or private nature of students' individual assessment results can be so deeply ingrained and so widely accepted that many instructors may not even be aware of alternative practices. North Americans, for example, generally assume the privacy of student grades as the unquestioned norm and a fundamental principle of good assessment practices (Parks, 2017; Seevers et al., 2014; Strickland, 2019; Tudor, 2015). Recent research in North America has focused on the increased challenges posed by the age of big data, learning analytics, and the general movement towards online learning and digital recordkeeping. As a consequence, some researchers are concerned that current regulations intended to protect student privacy may no longer be adequate (Alier et al., 2021; Parks, 2017; Strickland, 2019).

In contrast to this orientation towards privacy of student assessment results, many educators in Europe and elsewhere are accustomed to public sharing of individual student assessment results, whether announced aloud by the teacher in the classroom, posted on public notice boards, or published in local media (Gil, 2015; Gillespie, 2017; Lapat et al., 2011). In some countries, including Balkan nations, the public delivery of individual student assessment results may even be required by national educational protocols (Lapat et al., 2011; Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2010). These

results may be final year-end or semester-end grades, as well as individual test or exam results.

Not surprisingly, when these contrasting orientations come into contact, some cultural differences or even conflict may arise. Learning about the traditions of public assessment results, some North Americans may feel shocked at what seems to them the cruel humiliation to which European educators subject their students. Meanwhile, some Europeans may be puzzled by the American practice of keeping grades “secret” and scoff at the coddling with which it seems to them American students are indulged.

Within the context of these two divergent views—one that values students’ right to privacy and sees public announcement of individual grades as humiliating and demotivating, and another that encourages public release of grades in the name of transparency and motivation—this paper investigates contrasting assessment delivery practices, the pedagogical and cultural philosophies that lie beneath them, and the impact of these various practices on students.

Beginning with an exploration of differences in beliefs and practices regarding the privacy of student grades and assessment results on a theoretical basis, this paper then provides data regarding the perspectives and preferences of students at a private four-year undergraduate college in Croatia who experienced both assessment orientations. In particular, the research explores how the students felt about the approaches to assessment privacy that they had experienced, and how well they felt that these different practices had motivated them to study.

Deepening our insight into the consequences of various approaches to assessment privacy is an important task, particularly as educators face an ever-evolving array of tools for digital assessment and recordkeeping, along with changing regulations regarding data privacy in general. The data collected here can help educators adapt assessment delivery strategies for the international classrooms of the future as we move forward into a world where intercultural and transnational education become the norm.

## **2 North American Academic Practices: The Case for Assessment Privacy**

Use of assessment tools is universal in nearly all forms of education, based on a broad consensus that measurement of student skills and knowledge is one of the instructor’s primary responsibilities. Feedback (both positive and negative) for students about their performance is also considered essential to motivating students to assess themselves and set their own learning goals. Assessment feedback aims to help students understand their individual strengths and weaknesses, and it encourages them to take steps to build on or improve their skills and close gaps in their performance (Newton, 2007; Van Heerden, 2020).

However, the methods, techniques, frequency, and format in which assessment results and other forms of feedback are delivered vary widely among and within cul-

tures. In North America, student grades, assessment results, and other forms of performance feedback are generally treated with a high level of privacy at all age and grade levels (Seevers et al., 2014). In this view, assessment results are considered students' personal data, over which they are granted some degree of control. In classroom settings, test and assignment results are usually delivered privately to each student by the teacher or instructor, whether in written, digital, or oral form. For example, paper tests and assignments with written grades and comments may be placed face down on each student's desk. When results are recorded in digital form on an online educational platform, the data is password protected, and students have access only to their own records. On rare occasions when grades or class rankings are posted publicly, student ID numbers or other coding methods may be used to conceal individual students' identities. While aggregate scores or averages of a particular school or class may be made public, and individual schools may be publicly ranked against each other in view of these scores, public sharing of individual student grades is generally avoided and frowned upon if it does occur (Strauss, 2014b).

Since the passage of the 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in the United States, and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) in Canada, enforcement of students' rights to privacy has increased. These and similar laws prohibit the disclosure of personally identifiable information about minor students' grades and transcripts without the parents' explicit written consent. When students turn 18, they gain legal control of their own academic records, including grades. In the absence of student consent, parents and even some faculty or staff within the educational institution may be restricted from accessing this information.

These laws and practices can be seen as part of a wider student-centered approach to education, in which students are seen as empowered agents of their own education and given some degree of control over their own learning processes and over the use of academic information about themselves. In this view, particular emphasis is placed on the private delivery of negative feedback or poor results. Widespread consensus among North American educators is that students should be protected from embarrassment or shame in front of their peers when they do not do well (Beresin, 2001; Monroe, 2009). However, the case has been made that high-achieving students also need to be protected from what Susan Jacoby has called "nerd shaming." In this view, high-performing students may not experience public praise for positive academic performance as a reward but rather as a punishment (Jacoby, 2008).

Traditional privacy standards in the United States have been tested in recent years within the context of the movement toward data-driven education, with its emphasis on quantifiable progress measured by standardized test scores. Fuelled in part by federal legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), this movement aims to hold individual public school districts, principals, and teachers accountable for measurable student progress and achievement. In this high-stakes environment, teachers, principals, schools, and school districts face various forms of shaming, punishment (including loss of federal funding), or dismissal from their positions if students as a group fail to achieve certain benchmarks (Klein, 2015).

In recent years, many schools in the US have adopted practices such as “data walls” or “data war rooms”, where test scores of particular classes and sometimes individual students are displayed or graphed, sometimes with color-coded symbols, such as red for below-benchmark and green for above-benchmark results (Marsh, 2016). A wide variety of practices at the discretion of individual teachers and schools have created a spectrum of privacy controls. For example, the “data wall” may be displayed in a teacher-only room, where individual student names may or may not be visible.

Nevertheless, Marsh (2016) reported on “potentially demotivating” classroom practices involving data sharing, such as “sharing data publicly [and] comparing results with others” in a middle school setting. She found that the use of public data walls in the US seems to increase students’ “achievement goal” orientation, with its emphasis on achievement of grades and external motivation rather than an internally motivated quest for knowledge and skills (Marsh, 2016). Data walls have also come under attack as an invasion of students’ privacy and a source of demotivating “humiliation” for students (Strauss, 2014a; 2014b).

While academic privacy concerns seem to be most strongly rooted and legally codified in North America, this orientation is not exclusive to the West. Al-Saggaf and Weckert (2011), in a study of college students in Saudi Arabia, found that grades and transcripts were the most important information that these students wanted to keep private. Students in their research viewed their grades as personal and private information and felt violated if their grades were made public or revealed to other students without their permission. In the absence of legal clarity and procedural norms, the authors make a moral case for the privacy of student grades within an Arabic-Muslim cultural context.

### **3 European Customs: The Case for Assessment Transparency**

In contrast to the predominantly North American orientation towards privacy, educators in much of the rest of the world appear oriented towards transparency and publicity of student assessment results. The practice of orally announcing grades aloud during class time, which American researchers may deem “extreme” (SeEVERS et al., 2014, p. 88), appears to be quite common throughout Europe and Asia. Consistent with a view of education as a public good (publicly funded and centrally controlled by the state), individual student grades are often considered part of the public domain. In this view, public grading is a form of transparency that serves both the individual student and the larger society. Although scholarly literature articulating and exploring this orientation appears scarce, insight into the rationale behind these practices can be gleaned from government documents and lively discussions in popular media.

In many countries, the practice of public oral examinations during class, both announced and unannounced, often begins in first grade of elementary school. These oral examinations are usually graded immediately and announced aloud by the teacher

in front of the class (Bidjerano, 2010; Lapat et al., 2011; “Fear and loathing in the classroom”, 2001). In European higher education, individual final exam results may also be published publicly in written form, along with the student’s name. In the United Kingdom, for example, “[p]ublishing examination results [in the media] is a common and accepted practice. Many students enjoy seeing their name in print, particularly in the local press” (UK Information Commissioner’s Office, 2014).

In Croatia, public grading is explicitly required by national educational standards and procedures published by government agencies. Public grading is expected, particularly in the case of individual oral examinations, which are conducted during class time, beginning in elementary school. Oral examinations may be announced in advance or students may be called upon spontaneously without warning. According to the Croatian Ministry of Education rulebook (*pravilnik*), teachers are required to announce and record the oral examination grade “immediately and publicly” (Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2010).

Investigating elementary school assessment practices in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina, Lapat et al. (2011) argue that public delivery of feedback is a key component of successful assessment. According to their research, characteristics of good grading practices in these countries are that grades should be objective, clear, *public*, and diverse. This form of grading has several purposes, including a psychological effect on the student, the teacher, the parents, and *the wider social community* (Lapat et al., 2011, p. 4). The authors also argue that hearing other students’ grades allows students to measure their performance in relation to others and to witness examples of both exemplary and poor work.

Support for the tradition of public grading, regarding not only year-end university exams but also routine tests and other assignments in primary and secondary education, was voiced more recently in conversation with educational experts from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Zagreb, Dr. Vesna Vlahović-Štetić and Dr. Željka Kamenov (personal communication, June 15, 2021). In their view, public grading, particularly in unannounced oral examinations, provides students with a sense of how they compare to others. The student gets an example of what “good” work looks like from hearing the examples of others who performed better than he did, and thus the student understands why he received the grade he did. They pointed out that the public delivery of assessment results acts as a check on the teacher and discourages favoritism or corruption since all students in the class serve as “witnesses” to the assessment process.

Active and lively discussions in online news media and various social media forums suggest that a wide variety of public grading practices are also used in many European and Asian nations, including Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Scandinavia, Russia, Ukraine, China, Korea, and India. (Adkins, n. d.; SuperHeroY, 2015; Ws, 2017; “Fear and loathing in the classroom”, 2001). Many commenters on these forums, identifying themselves as university students who had their grades made public without their consent, express strong negative opinions on public grading, calling it “cruel”, “humiliating”, and “horrible” (Ws, 2017).



On the other hand, an online comment from a debate on this issue in Ukraine may articulate the views of supporters of public grading:

Publicly announcing grades is a great way to promote competition and transparency. Of course, there will be good students and bad students, but in the real world there are also successful people and might-have-beens. Let's teach our children how to work hard and overcome difficulties. Maybe it's ruthless, but it's fair! (Bogatsky, 2001)

Other arguments in favor of public grading focus on the value of transparency (e. g., allowing students to petition for a change of grade in case of professor error) and the prevention of collusion or bribery. As another reader of the *Kiyv Post* (Ukraine) commented: “The corruption level Ukraine currently has, combined with the lack of funding and low teacher salaries, makes a private grading system *more susceptible to bribery*” (Starodubska, 2001, emphasis added).

Others argue that institutional procedures designed to safeguard student privacy are bound to fail since students often share assessment results with each other informally. In this view, complete privacy is practically unattainable. Notably, this view focuses on the end result—the public release of the grade—but overlooks the issue of the students' agency in the release of the grades. This raises the question of whether a student's intentional revelation of his or her own grade to an audience of peers of their own choosing has the same psychological and motivational effect as the teacher's release of the grade to the entire class. As Seevers et al. (2014) particularly noted, this public grading practice not only provides the student with immediate feedback about his or her performance, but it also allows and encourages the students themselves and their peers to form judgments and predictions about their own future grades. Whether these (self)judgments and predictions of others are useful to the student is a separate question, which will be investigated in the following section.

## 4 Motivational Theory, Culture, and Feedback Transparency

Interestingly, advocates of both private and public grading generally point to the motivational role of assessment as justification for either practice, claiming that public (or private) feedback will better motivate students to improve their performance. Indeed, empirical research on the motivational function of assessment has identified the public or private delivery of assessment results as a key factor in students' overall orientation towards their own learning (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Marsh et al., 2014).

Private delivery of assessment results has been found to be an important element in the development of a “mastery orientation” (Hsieh, 2011), in which students are internally motivated by the intrinsic value of mastering a particular skill. In this orientation, the emphasis is on self-regulation and progress over time related to self. In contrast, public grading is associated with a “performance goal” orientation (Hsieh, 2011), in which students focus on grades and achievement in comparison with others, em-

phasizing competition among students. Goal performance orientation has been found to be associated with negative outcomes, such as students avoiding challenging or difficult tasks and giving up, while mastery orientation has been correlated with positive educational outcomes such as engagement and positive affect (DeLuca et al., 2020; Ames, 1992; Pintrich, 2000).

Focusing particularly on feedback valence (positive or negative), Seevers et al. (2014) investigated the transparency of evaluative feedback in light of research findings in the area of sales and marketing. In business contexts, strategies that promote public positive and private negative feedback have been found to incentivize job performance (e.g., office bulletin boards tracking individual sales or employee of the month rewards). Applying these business models to an educational context, Seevers et al.'s research on American college students who were accustomed to a private feedback environment found that "there may be little to gain from public delivery of grades that fall below a student's expectations. Public announcement of a low grade seems to weaken student ... motivation and satisfaction" (Seevers et al., 2014, p. 95). However, they also found that public announcement of a positive grade increased student motivation and therefore encouraged educators to incorporate public praise where appropriate.

Thus, the question remains: Does negative public instructor feedback motivate students to try harder, close gaps in their learning, and adjust and improve their study habits? Or will it simply cause maladaptive shame and guilt, which lead to low self-esteem and the avoidance of difficult tasks in the future? Does positive public feedback encourage high-achieving students to continue working even harder, or does it also create an unintended sense of embarrassment or set unreasonably high expectations that may hinder the students' progress? Recent research suggests that the answer may depend partly on the individual student's temperament and cultural background.

In a study of emotional responses to perceived academic failure among elementary school students, Bidjerano (2010) noted that the emotional effect of negative performance feedback or academic failure varies not only by individual temperament, but also by culture (Bidjerano, 2010). She compared American students (accustomed to a private grading environment) and Bulgarian students (accustomed to a public grading environment) and noted that American culture in general is strongly individualistic, while Bulgarian culture is more collectivist, as defined by Dutch cultural sociologist Geert Hofstede ("National Culture", n. d.) and others. She found that students in collectivist cultures tend to express more positive beliefs about negative emotions (such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment) associated with negative public feedback and that their self-esteem is relatively unaffected by such practices. She also found that they are more likely to experience increased motivation, persistence, and desire for future success following public grading, compared to American students accustomed to a private grading environment. Therefore, in collectivist cultures where public sharing of student grades is considered normal, it may be useful in motivating students to perform better. Furthermore, she argues that in collectivistic cultures, negative feelings are not necessarily maladaptive but can be seen as normative or even motivational (Bidjerano, 2010).

## 5 Public or Private Grades: An Unsettled Question

In the ongoing debates among advocates of public and private grading, there are some signs that both extremes may be moving towards the center. While commitment to the privacy of student grades is generally accepted throughout North America, exactly where to draw the line or establish a boundary for students' rights to privacy has been, and continues to be, a subject of debate. The privacy of student grades is rarely a simple or obvious matter. Thus, a wide variety of assessment practices have been developed along a broad continuum of relative privacy.

For example, a common practice of peer assessment can involve students grading each other's assignments and announcing the results aloud in front of the class. This practice was legally challenged as an invasion of students' privacy and a violation of FERPA in the American court case of *Owasso Independent School District vs. Falvo* (2002). The mother of three students in the district claimed that public peer grading was causing her children embarrassment, and the prosecution sought to have this assessment practice banned in the school district. The US Supreme Court eventually decided in favor of the school district, allowing students to grade and report aloud their peers' results, arguing that the scores on an individual assignment did not constitute a formal “educational record,” as would be the case with a final grade for the term or semester. This case demonstrates some willingness to recognize limits on students' legal rights to privacy under FERPA (Friedman, 2002).

Meanwhile, the European tradition of public grading has also come under increased scrutiny, with critics voicing scepticism about the supposed motivational benefits for both strong and weak students. In this system, as one commenter from Ukraine put it, “the straight-A student has to bear the burden of being number one, whereas the poor student receives his usual portion of humiliation” (Nikitina, 2002).

Elsewhere in Europe, concrete changes to public grading systems have been made amid rising attention to students' psychological wellbeing and to data protection in general. The University of Oxford (England) stopped publicizing exam results in 2009 after more than 40 percent of students enrolled in an opt-out mechanism put in place to protect privacy (Gil, 2015).

At Cambridge University (England), the tradition of publicizing exam results provoked a protracted university-wide debate that began in 2015, lasted nearly three years, and reached the highest levels of university administration. A student-led campaign sought to abolish public grading, citing privacy concerns as well as “a culture of grade shaming” that could have negative psychological effects on students (Gil, 2015). Cambridge traditionalists, on the other hand, argued that public grading, including a storied tradition of oral announcement of exam results in front of an assembled crowd, which dates from 1748, is an integral part of the university's heritage and should be retained out of respect for tradition. Eventually, public grading was retained, with an opt-out mechanism put in place for students who choose not to participate (Gillespie, 2017).

The Cambridge case points up the potential conflict between the interests of the individual student and the interests of the educational institution or society at large. At

Cambridge, those in favor of public grading acknowledged that some students may be harmed but argued that their needs were outweighed by the wishes of the institution or the larger society. Interestingly, the effect of public grading on **student engagement and motivation to study** did not seem to be of major concern to either side in the debate. This paper, therefore, aims to shed light on this particular issue through a collection of data from students themselves.

## 6 Assessment Privacy: A Survey of Student Attitudes

In order to more fully investigate the relationship between assessment privacy and student motivation, a survey was conducted to measure the attitudes and experiences of undergraduate college students who have experienced both systems and are therefore uniquely suited for exploration of these contrasting approaches. The purpose was to investigate student perceptions of how public and private grading systems influence their own motivation to study and to discover which orientation they prefer. The survey also investigated possible correlations between gender and overall academic achievement with these attitudes.

### 6.1 Method

Participants (N = 246) were recruited from the student body of RIT Croatia, a global campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, a private American institution of higher education operating in Croatia that is accredited by both American and Croatian educational authorities. The RIT Croatia campus in Dubrovnik opened in 1997 in cooperation with the Croatian Ministry of Education, offering a four-year undergraduate program in Hospitality and Service Management (now Hospitality and Tourism Management). A second campus was opened in the capital city of Zagreb in 2015, offering four-year undergraduate degrees in International Business and Web and Mobile Computing. More than 5,000 students have graduated since the college opened.

The American-style education that RIT Croatia offers goes far beyond the academic curriculum and use of English as the language of instruction. In addition, in compliance with the US Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and in keeping with North American academic norms, RIT Croatia assumes an orientation of strict privacy regarding student grades and assessment results, both orally and in writing. This stands in sharp contrast to most students' previous experiences in public elementary and high schools, in which teachers often announce student grades aloud during class time.

Participants included 138 male and 108 female students in a four-year undergraduate program who voluntarily completed a confidential and anonymous online questionnaire. The instrument included five 7-point Likert scale questions regarding their experience of public and private grading (the frequency of public grading they experienced, their feelings about public grading, the motivational effect of public grading, their feelings about private grading, the motivational effect of private grading, and their overall

preference). There were also five demographic items (gender, year level, age, country in which they attended high school, and overall self-reported grades), and one open-ended question inviting general comments. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. Both English and Croatian versions of the questionnaire were available, and participants were invited to select the language of their choice.

## 6.2 Results

The survey results confirm that public delivery of assessment results is common in Croatia and its neighboring countries. Over 77.5 percent of respondents reported having experienced public grading (teachers announcing grades aloud or posting them publicly) at least “sometimes”. Of these, 54.2 percent reported having experienced public grading “usually” or “always”. Data from students who reported that they rarely or never experienced public grading was excluded from further analysis.

Students ( $n = 190$ ) with significant experiences with both public and private grading reported their feelings about private grading on a 7-point scale where 1 = strongly negative, 4 = neutral, and 7 = strongly positive. Comparison of mean scores indicated that respondents held more positive feelings about private over public grading ( $M_{\text{private}} = 5.6$ ,  $SD = 1.33$  vs.  $M_{\text{public}} = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) and found private grading more motivational than public grading ( $M_{\text{private}} = 4.9$ ,  $SD = 1.56$  vs.  $M_{\text{public}} = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ). Overall, student preference for private grading was indicated by a mean response of 5.3 ( $SD = 1.58$ ) on a 7-point scale where 1 = strong preference for public grades and 7 = strong preference for private grades.

Looking beyond these mean values, however, further analysis of the results showed that student attitudes vary considerably, with significant groups of students expressing contrasting points of view as well as a significant number of neutral responses.

### Feelings about public grading

About 41 percent of students reported neutral feelings about having their grades made public, while 35.3 percent reported negative feelings about this practice. About one quarter of students (24.7 percent) reported positive feelings about public grading.

### Feelings about private grades

The majority of respondents (52.8 percent) reported positive feelings about private grading, while 39.2 percent reported neutral feelings. Eight percent reported negative feelings about private grading.

### Effect on motivation to study

Participants were asked whether having their grades publicized encouraged or discouraged them to study. About 41 percent reported that public grading had no effect at all on their motivation to study. About 25 percent of students reported that public grading had a negative effect on their motivation to study, while 34 percent reported a positive effect.

When asked about the effect of private grading on motivation to study, 49.5 percent reported that it had no effect, while 46.8 percent reported that private grading improved their motivation. Only 3 percent reported that private grading had a slight negative effect on their motivation to study.

### Overall preference

When asked for their overall preference between the two approaches, the majority of respondents (64.2 percent) expressed a clear preference for private grades. In their comments, they reiterated the belief that grades should be considered private information belonging to the student. They expressed particular concern for protecting poor students from public embarrassment and cited the demotivating and discouraging effect of public negative feedback. Nine students in this group explicitly commented that sharing grades with peers should be their own decision, not the teacher's. As one student put it, "I think that an individual's grades are their own private business. If they want to share the grades with someone else, they will do it themselves, just as they earned the grade themselves."

Another student also emphasized the importance of student autonomy and agency in determining the level of privacy accorded to his or her own grades:

I think this topic is very important for every student, and that grades should be kept private at all universities. The student himself is the only one who should be able to announce his grades to his colleagues because it is his private thing.

A third student in this group pointed out that public grading may have a negative effect even on high-achieving students:

I never liked the whole idea regarding grades being shouted out loud in front of the class. To some that got bad grades or even to those that got good grades, it was a bit annoying because they wanted to keep it to themselves. All in all, grades should be kept private and be discussed between the professor and the student only.

However, a significant group—23.6 percent of respondents—expressed no preference for either public or private grades. Comments from these neutral students suggested that they believe neither system has any effect on their motivation to study: "I study for myself and I don't care if anyone knows my grades or not", one of them wrote.

A few respondents (about 13 percent) said they preferred public grades and felt that competition motivated them and others positively. "When grades are announced publicly, I will be motivated to study more often and strive for that better grade", one of these students commented.

Interestingly, among the 34 percent of respondents who reported that public grading increased their motivation to study, over half (53 percent) expressed an overall preference for private grading.

### Influence of Gender

The survey results suggest that attitudes toward public and private grading are correlated with gender, with females expressing more negative feelings about public grades and an even stronger preference for private grading than males. Female students also felt more negatively than their male counterparts about having their grades made public, and they also felt more strongly that private grades motivated them to study. Males, overall, responded more neutrally to all questions (see table 1).

**Table 1:** Mean values on 7-point scale (1 = strongly negative, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly positive)

	Feelings about public grades	Feelings about private grades	Public grading is motivational	Private grading is motivational	Overall preference
Males	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.6	5.0
Females	3.7	4.8	4.2	5.2	5.7

The correlation between gender and attitudes towards assessment privacy is also supported by the finding that the small group of respondents who preferred public grading overall (13 percent of respondents) was 75 percent male.

### High- vs. low-achieving students

Since only 4 percent of respondents reported their own grades as below average, these results were combined with those of students who reported their own grades as average (51.5 percent) and compared with those of students who reported their own grades as above average (44.2 percent).

Students who reported their own grades generally as “above average” or “among the better in the class” felt generally neutral about public grading ( $M = 4.1$ ) while students with average or below average self-reported grades felt slightly negatively ( $M = 3.7$ ). In addition, good students found public grading slightly more motivating ( $M = 4.3$ ) than students who reported their own grades generally as “below average.” ( $M = 3.9$ ) However, high-achieving students found private grading even more motivating ( $M = 5.0$ ) than their weaker colleagues ( $M = 4.8$ ). Both groups expressed an equal preference for private grading overall ( $M = 5.3$ ).

Comments suggest that some high-performing students may not see public praise as a reward or positive incentive to study. “As a good student I feel that I would be discriminated against when people knew my grades. I am already seen as smart and it is not great”, commented one student. “Even students who get good grades sometimes want to keep that information to themselves”, commented another.

## 7 Discussion

Survey results show that most students with experience in both public and private grading environments find the public announcement of their grades either generally incon-

sequential or counterproductive to their motivation and engagement. Conversely, they find private grading more motivating and generally preferable. The privacy of assessment results seems particularly important to female students and, interestingly, equally important to high-achieving and average students. Significant numbers of students, particularly females, do not experience the public delivery of their assessment results as a positive incentive to improve their performance, while high-performing students often want to keep their success to themselves.

At the same time, the results presented here suggest that public grading as a cultural norm may not be as devastating as some privacy advocates assume. A significant number of students with long experience with public grading claim to be largely unaffected by it. Some students, particularly males, may even relish the sense of competition that public grading provides, and perhaps develop internal strategies to successfully insulate themselves from destructive levels of embarrassment when their results are poor. Yet, even these students tend to prefer private grades when exposed to a private system and offered the opportunity to choose. Most participants, citing their own and others' potential embarrassment over both poor and successful grades, prefer private grades. Notably, the participants in this research had been raised with public grading as a cultural norm, yet they generally did not prefer the familiar status quo in which they had been raised when exposed to an alternative orientation and given a choice. Based on this preliminary evidence that public grading can undermine student motivation, educators should approach the public delivery of assessment results with caution, even when the practice is customary, permitted, or legally required.

As transnational education continues to grow and educators find themselves teaching students from ever more diverse backgrounds—often through asynchronous digital platforms that minimize personal contact—attending to these issues will become even more crucial. Educators and administrators should pay particular attention to exploring their own personal orientations and institutional practices regarding standards and expectations of grading privacy. When moving from one cultural context to another, or from one institution to another, educators may need guidance and training regarding the expectations, laws, and traditions of the institution and culture in which they teach. In order to foster student motivation and engagement, educators will also need to be familiar with the previous experiences and expectations of their students in regard to assessment privacy.

These findings invite opportunities for both future research and practical application. In the classroom, instructors have an excellent pedagogical opportunity to explore the issue of assessment privacy directly with students, asking their opinions and inviting their input on flexible and innovative ways of delivering assessment results. An open discussion among students and instructors presents an occasion to encourage learner autonomy and invite students to take a more active role in shaping classroom policies. Methods of encouraging those students who respond positively to a competitive environment should also be explored. Encouraging discussion of this issue additionally signals to students that instructors value their emotional and social wellbeing, in addition to their academic progress.



These findings also have significant implications for theorists and practitioners of public grading, as they throw into question one of the major justifications for full transparency of grades: competition and comparison with others as positive motivators. These results add weight to the concern that public grading, as a form of external affirmation motivated by an extrinsic reward, encourages students to focus even more on the attainment of the grade as an end in itself rather than on the intrinsic reward of the attainment of lasting knowledge and skills. This is especially true when class time and attention are devoted to the public announcement of grades in a tense and emotional atmosphere.

For advocates of fostering a mastery orientation among students, private grading is a concrete way in which educators can signal that they expect students to move away from a comparison with others to forms of self-assessment, taking more responsibility for their own goal setting and benchmarking, and moving to an internal set of criteria to measure their own academic success.

As researchers continue to explore the overall context of delivery of assessment results (DeLuca, 2020), further research should more deeply explore the connection between the degree of privacy of assessment results and students' performance goals or mastery orientations (Pintrich, 2000), with particular emphasis on gender differences. Additional research is also necessary to investigate whether public grading practices serve to strengthen the hierarchical relationship between students and instructors, positioning students more passively as they work to achieve goals set by the instructor rather than developing goals themselves. In this view, public grading may encourage students to shift some responsibility for the result from themselves to the instructor. Their question becomes, “What grade did she give me?” rather than “What grade did I earn?”

Moreover, future innovations in the overall context of assessment, including peer assessment, should take into account the public or private nature of assessment results, allowing and encouraging some forms of benchmarking while maintaining some degree of student privacy. Instructors, researchers, and administrators should ensure that students are involved in developing standards of privacy and transparency for individual assignments, courses, and institutions. As we navigate the changing landscape of internationalized higher education, instructors should take advantage of opportunities to create innovative assessment structures that consider the role of privacy in fostering students' academic motivation and psychological well-being.

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# Academic Writing in the Study Entrance Phase

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## 1 Problem Definition

The introductory phase of studies is described by Dehne et al. (2019) as a threshold situation that marks the transition from school or the vocational education system to the academic system of higher education. During this phase, students are confronted with numerous new challenges, for example, with the increasing heterogeneity of educational and personal backgrounds within their own group of first-year students, with new organizational structures and administrative processes, as well as concepts of teaching and learning in academia that place new demands on competence and performance (Dehne et al., 2019).

Recent studies show that the initial phase is also of particular importance for academic success (Coertjens et al., 2017; Jenert et al., 2016). As they enter higher education, students learn to deal with a wide variety of requirements. These include **personal** (e. g., dealing with the stress caused by exams and performance pressure, or time management), **organizational** (e. g., coping with formal requirements and exam conditions), **content-related** (e. g., keeping pace with the progression of their subject, developing (academic) language skills), and **social** requirements (e. g., teamwork and communicating with teachers) (Trautwein & Bosse, 2017). To fulfill these requirements, students need different skills, which they start to develop during their first semesters of study. Academic work—and academic writing in particular—play a special role in this as it requires a skill set that must be continuously honed throughout the entire study program.

To help students develop these skills, most universities provide specialized training, either through compulsory classes embedded in the curriculum or with optional seminars that students may take on as an addition to their course of study. This type of skill training is usually well documented and evaluated. Universities can, for example, use the results to better understand students' concerns, to review the impact of their training measures, or as a means to further the development of the study program. By offering their unique perspectives on the impact of these training opportunities, academic disciplines such as educational research, educational sciences, or psychology have given rise to a certain methodological diversity in this field. The methods applied to course evaluation therefore range from student satisfaction surveys to experimental settings and go far beyond a purely self-referential attitude of the participants (Beywl et al., 2019).

This article explores the question of which methods can be used to evaluate the impact of support with regard to academic writing that students may receive in the

introductory phase of their studies. We first present an overview of different evaluation methods, then illustrate how they can be applied to a course. Our findings are based on evaluation forms and field reports from the seminar “Techniques of Academic Work” (TAW), which is part of the bachelor’s program “Social Work” at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts. We examine these documents in order to find out which benefits the participants of the seminar see for themselves and what further support they would like to successfully complete their studies. In addition, we discuss how the results of this evaluation can have an impact on the further development of both this study program’s introductory phase and academic writing courses aimed at an increasingly heterogeneous student body.

## 2 Academic Writing

The introductory phase begins with students’ enrollment in higher education. According to the majority of studies on this subject, it lasts one year and is characterized by the challenges associated with the transition from school to higher education (Bargel, 2015, p. 6; Trautwein & Bosse, 2017, p. 372; Schaeper, 2020, p. 96; Ruhalahti et al., 2021). During this phase, the course is set for successful integration into the new system, with several factors influencing the outcome.

In their study on first-year students’ experiences, Trautwein and Bosse (2017) identify the following requirements as relevant from the students’ perspective:

- **Social** requirements, e. g., educational background, health impairments;
- **Individual** requirements, e. g., previous knowledge, grade of university entrance qualification;
- **Organizational** requirements, e. g., the higher education system with its rules, regulations, and institutional frameworks;
- **Content-related** requirements, e. g., the content of the academic program and its courses, subject-specific approaches (such as conventions regarding academic language) or performance and assessment standards that require specific academic skills.

These requirements intertwine with the dimensions of diversity found within a heterogeneous student body, creating a multidimensional construct with complex interactions at the micro, meso, and macro levels. As a result, different characteristics of this heterogeneity can prove relevant for student success, and their significance depends on which study requirements are being considered (Bohndick et al., 2021; Wallis & Bosse, 2020). In particular, the subject-specific approaches are perceived as problematic by students with a migration background and/or a non-academic background (Wallis & Bosse, 2020, p. 24). Considering the fact that around 20 % of all students at German universities have a migrant background (Middendorff et al., 2017, p. 32) and more than 50 % come from a non-academic family (Middendorff et al., 2017, p. 27), familiarity with the concepts and rules of academic work proves to be an important condition for a successful start into a university career.

Academic writing skills as part of academic working practices would, according to Trautwein and Bosse (2017), primarily be counted among the content-related requirements. The *Gesellschaft für Schreibdidaktik und Schreibforschung* (gefsus)—which translates to *Society for Writing Didactics and Research*—defines academic writing skills as the

[a]bility to use texts for learning, as starting points for one's own text production, and to express oneself appropriately in writing. This ability is composed of interdisciplinary and subject-specific components and can be described in three dimensions: Competent writers use writing to think critically, productively manage their own writing process, and communicate appropriately according to the text conventions present within the community relevant to the subject. (Society for Writing Didactics and Research, 2018)

It becomes clear that the very same skill set students need to develop for academic writing is also closely interwoven with many of the prerequisites for a successful entry phase. Therefore, academic writing can be considered one of the key competencies necessary for successful study. Nevertheless, Harju and Werner (2019) find that in subject-specific approaches to teaching, writing skills are usually assumed to be already developed and therefore rarely taught. Instead of integrating the complex process of academic writing into the study program and providing structured support, higher education tends to teach it separately, either as part of propaedeutics or in optional courses that students may or may not choose to attend.

In Germany, the so-called “writing centers” have made an effort to institutionalize academic writing courses and help students meet the requirements of academic work posed by their university in general and their respective degree programs in particular. In the process, a number of innovative writing concepts have emerged (Knorr, 2016; Lahm et al., 2021). The centers were first created as projects funded by the *Quality Pact for Teaching* (QPL), but as their support services were successfully evaluated, many universities decided to maintain their writing centers after the initial funding had ended. Writing centers focus primarily on academic writing; the writing skills that students might need for professions outside of academia tend not to be addressed there.

In today's information society, not only academic writing but writing in general is an important part of many professions. The proficiency with which writing tasks are addressed may therefore determine both personal and economic success (Everke Buchanan & Meyer, 2016). As universities of applied sciences explicitly aim to prepare students for their professional lives, the study program must also include the development of written communication skills that students can apply to both their studies and their future careers.

At the same time, however, it is becoming apparent that, as part of universities' performance requirements, academic writing poses a challenge to both students and institutions. Studies show that performance problems—often caused by high demands regarding the quality and quantity of academic work—rank among the most common reasons why German students drop out of higher education. Among students with a migration background, the number of dropouts caused by this type of problem is especially high (Ebert & Heublein, 2017; Heublein et al., 2017).



### 3 Implementation at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts: The Seminar “Techniques of Academic Work”

In order to prevent academic writing from turning into a “trial and error” process (Gottschalk & Hjortshoj, 2004, p. 4), students generally need both writing instruction and practice during the introductory phase of their studies. Therefore, students enrolled in the “Social Work” program at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts must attend a seminar called “Techniques of Academic Work” (TAW) during their first semester.

#### 3.1 Concept

The seminar aims to facilitate entry into the study program and prepare the heterogeneous student body for the requirements of higher education by working on their academic writing skills. Over the course of the semester, the newly acquired knowledge is put into practice as students write a term paper. The development process for this paper is based on the writing process model by Flower and Hayes (1980) and takes into account the typical steps involved in writing a scientific paper, such as preparation and planning, data collection and the gathering of material, text revision, the final edit, and publication (Kruse, 2007).

The students work in small groups that follow a common concept but allow for individual adaptation by the respective teachers. In the seminar, the basic skills of academic work and writing are taught and practiced. This way, students learn to narrow down the topic of their term paper, to find a good question on which they can focus, to create a logical and formally correct outline, to both find and cite suitable literature, and to structure and revise their texts. In cooperation with the university’s library, students can also participate in an additional library orientation course, which provides information about the research options and advisory services available on site.

The term papers are based on the seminars “Introduction to Social Work Science” and “Social Science Basics for Social Work”, which are part of the curriculum for the first semester of the study program “Social Work”. Students can freely choose the individual topics for their papers from a selection that is updated every semester. They can also use the content of their term papers as preparation for the oral examination in the corresponding modules.

As the students write their term papers, the teachers provide close supervision. The writing process is structured by the following two milestones: 1) the exposé, which contains the topic, the question, and the approach; and 2) the first draft of the paper. Each of these texts is handed in by the deadline specified in the seminar schedule. The teacher then provides detailed feedback, pointing out which aspects of academic writing are already well-executed, and offering individual recommendations on how to improve in other areas (Bean & Weimer, 2011).

In addition to the term paper, students also learn to write non-academic texts (e. g., reports specific to professions within the field of social work) and texts meant for oral

presentation. This way, the TAW seminar helps students apply their writing skills to the presentations, discussions, and speeches they will need to pass their classes and examinations.

The courses are accompanied by a supplementary tutorial, which is organized and run independently by students from the same department. In regular group sessions, students can deepen the knowledge they gain in the seminar and exchange information about academic work and writing within a peer group setting. If students need more support than peer tutors can provide (e. g., for writing in German as a foreign or second language), they can also make use of the department's writing counseling service, which, among other things, provides individual feedback on the parts of the text that they have already written.

The skills acquired in the TAW seminar are referred to throughout the entire study program. The detailed so-called "work aid", which serves as a basis for the preparation of term papers in the first semester, is valid as an orientation for the modules that use the examination form of term paper or report up to the final thesis after consultation with the department's teaching staff. On the self-study platform of Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts, students can also find useful materials and templates for academic work and writing across all courses, which they can refer to throughout their studies.

### 3.2 Evaluation Using Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

In the context of higher education, evaluation is defined as "the systematic analysis and empirical investigation of concepts, conditions, processes, and effects of goal-oriented activities for the purpose of assessment and modification" (Rindermann 2003, p. 233). As part of a university's quality assurance strategy, evaluations of teaching and learning processes are not only designed to achieve accountability or allow for a performance-based allocation of funds. They are also used to identify strengths and weaknesses and, on this basis, make recommendations for further action (Knödler, 2018). Active use of evaluation on the part of universities thus presupposes that the evaluation serves at least one of the following purposes:

- *Insight*: gathering evidence on the properties and effects of the study program;
- *Optimization*: using the findings for targeted improvement;
- *Learning*: fostering dialogue about the results of the evaluation;
- *Legitimation*: gaining insight into the development and implementation of an intervention that can, in turn, be used to legitimize said intervention.

Insights obtained through evaluation are commonly used to provide verifiable evidence on the effort (input), the performance (output), and the effects (impact) achieved over time (Döring, 2014; Döring & Bortz, 2022; Stockmann, 2004, 2016).

At German universities, course evaluation is usually based on student surveys in the form of questionnaires (Großmann & Wolbring, 2016, pp. 3–4; Knödler, 2018, p. 117). Großmann and Wolbring (2016) criticize this widespread use of cross-sectional studies by pointing out the danger of "bias due to selective effects and confounding variables which may go unnoticed" (p. 4). Such confounding variables might include

the physical attractiveness of instructors, gender effects, or grading (Wolbring, 2013, p. 14). They therefore recommend the use of a wider variety of research methods in order to achieve more precise evaluation results (for further information on this topic, see Bosse & Barnat, 2019).

For this reason, we present a mixed-method evaluation that uses qualitative research (content analysis of reports written by students in the TAW seminar) to enrich a predominantly quantitative student survey. The data was collected during the winter semester of 2020/21 and the summer semester of 2021. During this time, not only the TAW courses but the entire study program “Social Work” took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3.3 Quantitative Analysis: Course Evaluation

The quantitative analysis was carried out via EvaSys. In accordance with the regulations for course evaluation at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the questionnaire is mandatory. The questions included in the survey cover the relevance and usefulness of the course content as well as the teacher, their teaching methods, students’ stimulation and motivation, their learning success, and workload. Additionally, the questionnaire provides respondents with room for individual feedback under the headline “Your praise/criticism for this course”. The scale applied to the items ranges from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “fully agree”—or “strongly agree” in questions 5.4 (motivation) and 7.2 (workload)—and 5 meaning “do not agree” or, respectively, “strongly disagree” in the aforementioned questions 5.4 and 7.2. The survey ran online for two weeks during the summer semester of 2021, June 6–18. The respondents were students taking the TAW seminar as part of the bachelor’s degree program in “Social Work”, including both full-time and part-time students enrolled in this program. A total of 40 students participated in the survey, which puts the response rate at 31.5%.

#### Relevance/usefulness of the content

80% of respondents fully agree that the relevance/benefit of the topics covered in the seminar is clearly apparent to them ( $md = 1$ ). 70% affirm that the course links theory with practice ( $md = 1.5$ ), and 90% of respondents can clearly see how the content covered in this course might prove relevant for further studies or for practical applications ( $md = 1$ ).

#### The teacher

The majority of respondents consider the teacher 1) to be well prepared, 2) to communicate clearly and articulately, and 3) to react to students’ questions ( $md = 1$  each).

#### Teaching methods

87.2% ( $md = 1$ ) of students find that the teacher illustrates the subject matter with examples/practical cases/case studies. 95% of respondents claim that the teacher enables them to check their understanding and learning progress during the seminar ( $md = 1$ ). The examples and tasks given to improve students’ understanding of the contents are

considered helpful by 90 % of respondents ( $md = 1$ ). 92.5 % of students ( $md = 1$ ) find the teaching materials used in the course to be easily accessible.

### **Stimulation and motivation**

For 95 % of students ( $md = 1$ ), participation in discussions on the course content is ensured by the course's use of various avenues of communication (e. g., online forum, chat, videoconference). All respondents state that the teacher responds appropriately to questions, feedback, and criticism regarding the course content. 87.5 % of participants ( $md = 1$ ) are motivated to engage with the content through various formats and tasks. The replies to the item "My motivation to engage with the content of the class has significantly increased or decreased due to online teaching" are distributed equally across all options ( $mw = 2.6$ ;  $md = 2.5$ ). 13 respondents, however, have not answered this particular question.

### **Learning success**

92.5 % of students ( $md = 1$ ) rate the amount of knowledge gained through the course as high.

### **Workload**

The average amount of work required to prepare for and follow up on the course (excluding the hours spent on the seminar itself, on exams or exam preparation, etc.) per week is distributed across almost all possible answers with the exception of "no work required". 22.5 % of students claim to need 0–1 hour, 12.5 % need 1–2 hours, 25 % need 2–3 hours, 30 % need 3–4 hours, and 10 % spend more than 4 hours per week on preparation and follow-ups.

For 62.5 % of respondents, the amount of work has increased considerably due to online teaching as compared to previous face-to-face teaching, while 12.5 % claim that it has decreased considerably ( $md = 2$ ). Only eight students answered these questions; 32 abstained.

### **Individual feedback**

The evaluation of the feedback given via the text box for item 8.1—"Your praise/criticism for this course"—paints a picture that correlates well with the results of the quantitative part of the survey. There were 14 entries in which students primarily expressed thanks for a successful event and praised the teacher for her open attitude and/or competence regarding the subject matter. The overall concept of the course was assessed as well thought out, and the small size of the groups (15 people maximum) was described as pleasant.

## **3.4 Qualitative analysis: testimonials**

The field reports are part of the TAW seminar. Students write them at the end of the semester to familiarize themselves with this particular type of report, in which they are

supposed to reflect on events they have witnessed firsthand. Therefore, the field reports are authentic texts that were not primarily written for research purposes.

In order to practice adopting a reflective attitude, which is fundamental for professional action in social work, the TAW students write a field report of approximately two pages. In this text, they reflect on the writing process of their term paper, on the knowledge they have gained, and on the TAW seminar in general. Since the assignment does not specify a fixed structure, the students can independently decide which processes they want to reflect more or less intensely in their field report.

On a voluntary basis, 45 field reports were collected during the winter semester of 2020/21 and the summer semester of 2021. The reports were anonymized and analyzed using MAXQDA software and the methods of qualitative content analysis proposed by Mayring and Fenzl (2014).

The categories for the analysis are based on three sources:

- **The model of the writing process** according to Flower and Hayes (1980): knowledge of the writing process, research, planning, formulation, revision, and editing.
- **Requirements in the study entry phase** according to Trautwein and Bosse (2017), including social, personal, and organizational requirements.
- **Student surveys used for course evaluation** at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts, including relevance of content, the teacher, teaching methods, students' stimulation and motivation, learning success, and workload.

A total of 518 text passages can be assigned to at least one of these categories. Our first review of the data revealed that the writing process, with its subcategories, is addressed in 373 passages (72%). The requirements of the study entry phase are mapped in 86 (16.6%) passages and the social dimension of the requirements students face during the introductory phase of higher education is mentioned in 49 passages (9.4%). Personal requirements are mentioned in 31 passages (6%) and organizational aspects are the topic of 6 passages. The course survey remains mostly unmentioned, but 59 passages (11.4%) reflect on the subcategory "learning success".

In the following, an exemplary review of selected results is presented.

### Writing process

During their first semester, students often either possess no previous knowledge of (academic) writing processes or they consider their knowledge to be insufficient:

Before starting on the term paper, I did not know much about how to write a term paper. Although I had already written a similar paper in school, it was not really comparable to what was expected of us here. (p. 11)

On the other hand, students who have already completed an apprenticeship or who have prior experience in higher education say that they feel well prepared:

The subject area of ‘academic work’ is not completely new territory for me. I have already written term papers of a similar scope in my prior field of study (economics), and in the context of my training as a health and nursing assistant. (p.75)

The structured approach to writing the paper facilitates the planning process and provides orientation:

In the end, however, I felt that TAW accompanied my writing process very well, and time and again I found that I had already taken a step forward—be it by initially narrowing down the topic, or in creating the outline. (p. 62)

In particular, writing an exposé as a mandatory step before students may start to work on their term paper is usually presented as helpful yet challenging because the function of this text is not immediately apparent: “The hardest part for me was writing the exposé; it felt like I had to know the entire structure of my term paper way too soon” (p. 35).

The phase of literature research and editing is perceived quite controversially. Some writers describe it as trouble-free and easy: “I found it to be very easy” (p. 5) or “I quickly had a diverse selection of literature on my computer” (p.7). Meanwhile, other students found this stage of the process rather challenging, e. g., because they had underestimated the time required for research and reading:

I will also make sure to start earlier and be more consistent, not just with my research but also when it comes to reading the literature, since the latter in particular was more time-consuming than I had planned, and because it is also a prerequisite for some important steps in the process. (p. 92)

The elocution stage, in which students do the actual writing, is not presented as problematic in the reports, whereas text revision is associated with a lot of effort: “I revised my texts and also my outline several times, starting fresh again and again because I was dissatisfied with my performance” (p.74).

For the revision process, students use various resources, including the knowledge and experience of fellow students, TAW teachers, other university teaching staff, friends, and family. Feedback is always appreciated and often actively requested: “Feedback on my writing helped me enormously. Of course, it was an advantage if it came directly from the teacher, but the feedback from my fellow students, other teaching staff, and a trusted person also helped me” (p. 103).

However, a distinction must be made between feedback provided by others, and editing. The latter can be carried out in two very different ways. On the one hand, there is the final edit of the text, which can be created either by the writer or by a third-party editor (professional or not) at the end of the writing process. On the other hand, there is the teacher’s edit of the text, which is part of assessment and grading once the term paper has been handed in. Inexperienced writers usually do not leave enough time for editing their text before handing it in. Therefore, this step is often associated with uncertainty and stress: “I uploaded my paper at the last minute, without anyone proof-

reading it, and without having done a final check on it with the help of the guidelines from the course, as I had planned” (p. 8).

One special feature of the TAW seminars is that students can take advantage of an interim edit supplied by the teacher after the submission of their first draft. This allows them to incorporate the feedback before submitting the final version of their term paper. In their reports, students also reflect on this process:

I was aware that my first paper failed the first time around, but in the end that was a good thing because the teacher commented on exactly what the problem was, and so I was able to address those specific issues. (p. 69)

Close supervision and multiple submissions are perceived as a relief: “But at the time, it helped that I knew we had multiple deadlines and that this assignment was there to ‘learn’, so to speak, and that it would not be graded” (p. 69).

### **Requirements in the introductory phase of studies**

The social dimension of the study requirements was widely reflected in the experience reports. On the one hand, this was due to the changes in students’ social lives caused by the transition to higher education. On the other hand, during the two semesters covered by our data, the COVID-19 pandemic played a major role, as there were many rules and restrictions in place that also affected student life. It became clear that sometimes diametrically opposed assessments can occur. Some students took every opportunity to network by actively participating in digital breakout sessions during the course, forming online study groups, and organizing WhatsApp groups. Meanwhile, other students felt disconnected and were unable to connect with their peers: “I missed the exchange and contact with other fellow students and being on site at the university of applied sciences” (p. 96). Another student explains: “The difficulty was, among other things, the exchange with fellow students and with the teachers, which also set me back over the course of the semester. I definitely missed being able to talk about questions and problems in person” (p. 93), while a third points out: “On top of that, this is an online semester, so exchange within the course, getting to know fellow students, and passing on information can only take place to a very limited extent” (p. 66).

Personal demands were often associated with feelings in the reports. Fear played an important role: “When I found out that we had to write a paper, I was afraid” (p. 69). The exchange with fellow students and the lecturers usually helped against this: “I was also able to exchange information with the other participants about their progress and working methods, and so some of my fear and sometimes despair was taken away” (p. 67).

While students clearly focused on the social and personal dimensions, they rarely used their reports to reflect on the organizational requirements of the introduction phase of their studies (6 passages). The only exception from this rule was the observation that passing the TAW homework would be crucial for admission to examinations.

### Student course survey

Learning success is the only subcategory on which the field reports reflect in detail. Mostly, the students write about the knowledge they gained through the course in the form of recommendations for action addressed to their future selves or by explaining what they would do differently when writing the next term paper:

During these seven weeks, I have learned what it means to review the literature, to structure and organize myself, and to recognize and use many previously unknown ways or options. What opportunities I can create for myself to make the situation more pleasant, clearer, and easier to understand. The whole seminar was a huge learning process, but one that I have yet to complete. (p. 58)

Overall, the relevance of the writing-specific topics is evident in the TAW experience reports. The students mainly reflected on the categories “requirements for the study entry phase” and “student course survey” from their point of view as writers.

## 4 Discussion: Subjective views on TAW and study success

Based on the quantitative evaluation of the student surveys, the TAW seminar seems to be very well organized: students are satisfied with the seminar, the teachers, and their teaching methods. They gain much knowledge, are highly motivated, and invest a reasonable amount of work to prepare for the course and follow up on the content. However, the use of student surveys as the sole evaluation instrument has been the object of criticism for several years now. As the German Sociological Association (DGS) points out, these surveys may open the door for undesirable extraneous influences. Firstly, the survey design proves vulnerable to influences that are independent of the quality of the course, such as the attractiveness of the teachers. Secondly, underlying conditions can determine the outcome, such as students' prior knowledge of a subject or the room in which a course takes place. Thirdly, the surveys are easy to manipulate, e. g., through a reduction in workload or grade inflation (DGS—German Sociological Association, 2020).

The qualitative evaluation, on the other hand, provides in-depth insight into subjective views and experiences, which partly differ from the results of the standardized procedures. Regarding the TAW seminar, this part of the evaluation showed that students had difficulties with some parts of the course. At the same time, however, it also becomes apparent how they overcame these difficulties and what conclusions they drew for their further studies.

If students' academic success is measured from an institutional perspective, it primarily serves the purpose of evidence-based management. This perspective includes basic, statistically easy-to-objectify characteristics such as degree completion, grades, and duration of studies as the central criteria of successful studies (Bornkessel, 2018). In contrast, the subject-oriented perspective focuses on the students and their needs. Additionally, the requirements of the academic discipline, its questions, methods, and



findings are of interest as they determine how students can successfully integrate themselves into the system of higher education (van den Berk et al., 2016).

The interaction between the different approaches to course evaluation allows us to investigate the quality of a course from both a formal institutional and a subjective perspective.

## 5 Effects on the Development of the Study Program

Analyses of student writing processes can be used to rethink the curriculum of the respective degree program. Regarding the “Social Work” program at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the TAW course provides students with an opportunity to engage with core concepts and rules of academic writing during their first semester. The other major writing projects students must complete to earn their degree are a graded term paper in the specialization module (4<sup>th</sup> semester), ungraded practice reports (2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> semesters), and a bachelor’s thesis (6<sup>th</sup> semester). The idea of teaching the necessary writing skills exclusively in the first semester by means of an exploratory term paper appears to be attractive from the perspective of the study program organization. The teaching capacities for the subject content are used in the hope that students’ writing skills will develop freely during the study program and do not need to be controlled by teachers. The development of competencies for academic work is supported by the writing advisory service provided by the department and the self-organized student tutorials. At the same time, teachers repeatedly find that the available writing support is sometimes insufficient and in need of more systematization.

The question of whether a practice term paper must be written in the first semester of study can be discussed in different ways. The TAW course evaluation shows that it causes anxiety and stress for many students, but once the term paper has been successfully completed, there is also a sense of achievement.

In the field reports we examined, the segmentation of the writing process was perceived as helpful for the successful submission of the term paper. The individual steps of the writing process are embedded in a framework of close supervision and regular feedback. As the field reports show, the reflective attitude that students adopted can further support the development of competencies and highlight the personal strengths of the writers. This might help students with a migration background and/or a non-academic background feel more self-assured during the writing process, whereas teachers can use the framework and its feedback loops for timely, targeted intervention in the event of writing problems.

Taking into account the results of the course evaluation, the following suggestion for the further development of the course curriculum can be derived: *The writing process should continue to be the focus.* However, students might consider the introductory phase of studies to be less stressful if, over the course of the TAW seminar, they could develop a (digital) portfolio instead of a term paper. With a portfolio, all phases of the academic writing process would be adequately represented and reflected upon (Bräuer, 2016).

This would, in turn, bring the individual development of students' writing skills to the fore and might even help them develop more confidence in their ability to apply the methods of academic work and academic writing. Furthermore, the creation of a portfolio supports a more continuous learning process. At the same time, teachers could differentiate more directly and respond to the heterogeneous needs of an increasingly diverse student body in a more targeted manner. This would also make the study program "Social Work" more attractive for future students. Of course, the new course concept would have to be comprehensively evaluated and adapted if necessary.

For the degree program, however, this change would have several other important implications. With the elimination of the practice term paper from the TAW seminar, the first term paper would be postponed to the fourth semester. This would most likely mean that the difficulties expressed by the students in the field reports—such as problems with scheduling or even failing the first attempt due to lack of practice—would occur at this stage during the program, with potentially fatal consequences for the course of study. To avoid this, competence-oriented writing exercises are necessary in all semesters and modules. Hüllemann and Spiroudis (2021, p. 217) have developed promising elements of a curriculum for teaching reading and writing skills in the academic field of social work: They suggest subject modules complemented by writing modules. Applying this concept to the TAW seminars could mean offering a writing seminar in each semester, adapting the content of the courses to the different taxonomies of competencies.

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# Teaching and Learning in Times of Social Distancing. Synchronous Lecture Formats and Student Competence Development

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## 1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a radical reduction of social contacts and forced higher education to shift from on-campus to online teaching and learning. A total of 1,542,412,000 learners—89.4% of all learners worldwide—were affected by shutdowns (Marinoni, 2020). Consequently, almost all institutions of higher education replaced face-to-face education on campus with virtual face-to-face interaction. At many institutions, neither instructors nor students were prepared for this sudden change. Both the online formats and the technical tools used to create and use virtual learning environments were unfamiliar territory. This leads to the questions we aim to address in this article: How did digital synchronous lecture formats influence the competence development of students during the first semesters of online teaching and learning? Did the digital learning environments influence competence development in different ways? And how did instructors' and students' use of digital environments influence teaching and learning?

As the concept of “competence” includes a broad set of different subcategories, we first have to take a closer look at the specific concept of competence (Erpenbeck & von Rosenstiel, 2007). In the didactic literature, there is generally a distinction made between professional, methodological, social, and self-competence (Kauffeld et al., 2017). Professional competence is the ability to make knowledge suitable for new tasks and to generate it, whereas methodological competence is reflected in the structuring of discussion processes and in the naming of the most important goals (p. 334). Social competence is evidenced by statements that relate to interaction as well as judgmental statements towards people, and statements on participation may be interpreted as evidence of self-competence (p. 335). This study focuses exclusively on professional competence.

In Germany, as well as in most countries in the world, the majority of institutions quickly switched to online classes in the spring of 2020 (Deihamm et al., 2020). This allowed not only for the continuation of classes during lockdowns, but also allowed students who had to stay with their families in or outside their country of instruction to still be included and take part in the newly set-up digital teaching and learning environments. The study presented here delivers a first analysis of synchronous lecture formats and their influence on student competences based on three modules at three different German institutions of higher education (Bielefeld University of Applied Sci-

ences and Arts, Touro College Berlin, and BSP Business and Law School in Berlin). By early 2021, at the end of their second online semester, instructors and students were on a very steep learning curve regarding remote teaching and learning, including their familiarity with digital tools and the pedagogical design of online lectures. Their effort and dedication shaped the conversion of higher education from on-campus to online formats. Our analysis offers empirical data for a better understanding of online formats and can support the future planning of online formats in higher education.

When switching to online teaching during the pandemic, many instructors chose synchronous lecture settings. Synchronous lecture settings include students' active participation and should therefore not be confused with frontal teaching. In the past, this form of online teaching and learning had been described as the "poor cousin of asynchronous interactions" (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2007) and associated with many challenges regarding scheduling, availability and cost of equipment, bandwidth requirements, stability, or reliability (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2007). For reasons such as these, digital synchronous lectures were only used on a limited scale (Slack et al., 2003). The switch to online teaching and the consequent use of synchronous digital formats during the COVID-19 pandemic might have changed this perception. Videoconferencing applications like Cisco WebEx Meetings, GoToMeeting, Jitsi, BigBlueButton, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom had already been available before the pandemic started, but until March 2020, there was very little demand for online teaching and learning in higher education.

With the analysis of the sudden and rapid change in demand for and utilization of digital learning environments, however, the empirical basis has grown substantially, offering new insights into online teaching and learning formats. This article elaborates on lessons learned and potential benefits for the continued use of digital formats in higher education, such as the promotion of digital formats within current curricula when pedagogically appropriate and the so-called "internationalisation at home" (De Wit et al., 2015), which could offer students international and intercultural experiences without having to physically leave the country. To this end, we describe a quantitative study that focuses on digital teaching and its impact on student competencies. The study is based on student feedback on synchronous online lessons at three different institutions of higher education in Germany. The interviews were conducted during the first two semesters of online teaching (spring 2020 and fall 2020/21). We evaluated one larger course, which took place at a public university of applied sciences (on average, 30–120 students per lecture), and two smaller-scale courses, which took place at two private universities of applied sciences (on average, 5–20 students per lecture). All three of them were undergraduate courses: Principles of Law & Social Management, Principles of Accounting, and Mathematics. For each course, students provided general course evaluations at the end of the semester. Additionally, a number of these students also participated in a second evaluation with a specific focus on digital breakout sessions. Our analysis of these evaluations is based on regression analysis. Overall, the results indicate a significant positive influence of social interaction among students on competence development if the technical environment—i.e., the use of the different

functions of the videoconferencing tool—is well planned for and used in an expedient and pedagogically sound manner.

This article is comprised of four sections. The first introduces the topic, and the second provides an overview of the theoretical foundation of the analysis, including a short outline of the underlying pedagogical framework and its relevance for the evaluated courses. The third section then describes the quantitative analysis and its results. To conclude the article, the fourth section provides a short summary of the main findings, outlines the limitations of our research, and highlights possible avenues for future research.

## 2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The courses analyzed for this study are embedded in a moderate constructivist understanding of teaching and learning as described by Reinmann-Rotmeier and Mandl (2001). The next paragraph provides a short introduction to this concept, followed by an elaboration on online teaching and a description of the main pedagogical elements of the evaluated courses. These had originally been designed for on-site teaching and learning but were transformed into online courses due to the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

### 2.1 Pedagogical Framework

The overarching idea of the moderate constructivist understanding is that teaching in higher education should not only encourage students to reproduce factual knowledge as proposed by behavioral theory (Kunath & Fürstenau, 2019). Instead, teaching should also promote interdisciplinary skills and enable students to combine knowledge with action. In practice, this means that instructors must ensure that students are encouraged to achieve their learning goals by applying their newly acquired knowledge to real-life situations. The ultimate goal would be the creation of a learning environment in which students are empowered to solve problems both independently and with others (Reinmann-Rotmeier & Mandl, 2001). A prime element of this approach is so-called “multifaceted interaction” (see Reinmann-Rotmeier & Mandl, 2001). This type of interaction might happen between instructor and student, student and student, or student and content. An associated approach with a specific focus on social learning is known as the situative approach. Here, the group work itself is understood as a continuously negotiated process based on interaction (Greeno, 1998, p. 14). The learning goal—interpretation and solving of problems—is achieved through working on questions or specific projects, focusing on the learners’ competence development through social interaction within work and learning groups (Greeno, 1998; Greeno et al., 1993; Dewey, 1978/1910). In line with the main concepts of the moderate constructivist understanding, the situative approach does not provide instructors with specific recommendations



on how to teach. Instead, it recommends the inclusion of different learning practices, especially those of inquiry and sense-making.<sup>1</sup>

The term “interaction” includes all forms of interaction, i. e., between instructors and students, students and students, or students and content (e. g., accessing the content via learning platforms). The term “social interaction”, on the other hand, describes processes in which individuals interact *with each other*, for example within the framework of group collaboration or in discussions with instructors and fellow students. This type of interaction focuses on the process and is also possible in online formats. In a digital synchronous learning environment, social interaction may, for example, include the virtual hand-raising feature, which lets participants know that someone would like to speak up in a videoconference. This function helps the instructor manage the lecture and moderate discussions. During a lecture, the so-called breakout rooms can be used to create virtual rooms in which smaller numbers of participants may meet. The screen-sharing feature also helps to present and discuss the results of group efforts or individual students’ contributions. Social interaction in a synchronous digital learning environment might also include the use of instant messages (chats) or a voting feature that lets participants vote on a poll created by the host. Our analysis does not include the informal social learning spaces such as the cafeteria, which students may use outside the lecture (for a specific outline, see Matthews et al., 2011).

## 2.2 Online Course Pedagogy

In an article on myths about digitization, Schulmeister and Loviscach (2017) outline the benefits of learning from “analog”, i. e., face-to-face formats. The driving force of learning processes is the immediate presence, the interaction between learners and teachers, as well as the participation in knowledge and cognitive processes. Schulmeister and Loviscach also emphasize the limits of structural digitization due to complex motivational interactions, cognitive as well as social feedback and effects (Schulmeister & Loviscach, 2017). Important aspects of social interaction in face-to-face formats cannot entirely be replaced in online formats. Online teaching in higher education has become increasingly important over the past decades. The forceful transition of most teaching activities to online settings during the COVID-19 pandemic was a major disruption to higher education and created a plethora of new challenges for instructors. Usually, planning an online course in higher education takes several months. Hodges et al. (2020) even estimate that a period of six to nine months would be appropriate for designing a full online course—excluding the preparation of activating methods under consideration of the features available within the videoconferencing tool used. Due to the rapid course of events in early 2020, neither instructors nor students had this much time to prepare. Rather, they had to adapt and quickly get to know the built-in features of the videoconferencing tools used at their specific institution of higher education.

Research has shown that meaningful interaction of various kinds—between student and student, student and instructor, or even student and content—increases learning outcomes but also needs to be planned carefully (Hodges et al., 2020; Means

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1 For an overview of the situative approach, see, for example, Renkl (2010), Stegmann et al. (2018), or Schmohl (2021).

et al., 2014; Dillenbourg, 2002). Detailed planning includes the thoughtful set-up of interaction and collaboration between students. In a literature review on online collaboration in international environments, Kolm et al. (2021) identified two main challenges to successful collaboration: On the one hand, the method needs to be explicitly promoted in an online environment, and on the other hand, the learning tasks must be adapted to the specific structure of the digital environment. Ku et al. (2013) conducted another empirical study on collaboration in online settings. They found that students mentioned the following elements of a digital learning environment as the main indicators for successful collaboration:

(1) instructor support and encouragement, (2) team commitment, (3) clear objectives and goals, (4) clear communication, (5) timely resources, (6) frequent communication, (7) use of interactive software, (8) synchronous meetings, (9) opportunities to access and view examples, and (10) well-defined and well-organized instruction. (Ku et al., 2013, p. 928)

The authors also noted that 73 % of the participating students felt that the collaborative environment had produced better learning results (Ku et al., 2013, p. 928). A meta-analysis conducted by Rosen and Salomon (2007) showed major advantages for competence development in digital learning environments designed in line with the situative approach in comparison to analog learning environments (Rosen & Salomon, 2007). Hence, digital collaboration and specifically social interaction seem to be effective pedagogical measures to enhance engagement and learning in online environments (Ku et al., 2013, p. 928; Stegmann et al., 2018). However, one element is crucial to successful online teaching and learning: the technology. In 1999, Jonassen already pointed out that in order to make online teaching both reliable and convenient, transparent and functioning technology would be of great importance. By the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, most institutions of higher education in Germany had the digital infrastructure to make use of various videoconferencing tools. This required, among other things, a stable internet connection with an appropriate bandwidth.

### **2.3 Courses under Investigation**

The original design of the courses upon which this paper focuses included a selection of different teaching methods and specifically activating methods to enhance social interaction. All three of the courses included short units of up-front lecturing and short video sequences, and they all focused on discussions in smaller and larger groups as well as collaboration based on either case studies or problem-based assignments. The redesign of the courses, which was made necessary by the COVID-19 restrictions, maintained this groundwork and made use of the software and applications available to set up the digital learning environments to include various forms of interaction framed by activating methods.

The first pedagogical decision was to transform face-to-face classroom settings into synchronous online formats. Each of the three institutions of higher education provided access to either Zoom or Microsoft Teams as a videoconferencing platform. This way, the lectures could take place live and in real-time (recordings were prohib-

ited), using the originally defined lecture slot while allowing students and instructors to attend from different locations.<sup>2</sup> The interactive elements of the synchronous lectures included a similar variety of methods as originally incorporated in the concepts for on-campus teaching but transformed them by taking advantage of the various digital features available.

Due to the pandemic situation and the lack of alternatives for meeting and interacting in person, instructors focused strongly on activating methods, creating a digital learning environment in which their students would have space to collaborate in small groups. For this reason, they ruled out asynchronous lectures. These would have been lectures with no fixed time schedule, which would have allowed students to access the material from different locations and—the main difference between synchronous and asynchronous teaching—whenever they wanted to. Although collaboration is generally possible within both formats, group activities in real-time, with the instructor acting as a coach or supervisor, are impossible in asynchronous settings. Following the pedagogical understanding outlined above, the instructors of the courses we analyzed deliberately decided on synchronous lectures because they wanted to offer sufficient contact and social interaction to students and instructors. This meant providing structures for learning activities in which knowledge of the subject matter was envisaged to become meaningful and functional (Greeno, 1998, p. 19), and planning for activating methods that foster social interaction and collaboration between students.

There were different digital spaces set up for social interaction between students. The main digital room served as a virtual classroom in which the entire group could interact, while the so-called breakout rooms—time-limited sessions in which smaller groups of students met in separate digital rooms—aimed to involve all the students in discussions. The smaller groups in the breakout rooms worked on outlined problems and case studies or discussed the literature. After finishing their work in the breakout rooms, the individual groups then shared, presented, and discussed their results with the entire group.

The underlying assumption of our analysis is that interactive formats such as these have a positive impact on students' competence development. When planning and designing the courses on-site as well as re-designing them for online teaching and learning, the instructors followed the "Teaching as Design" approach (e. g., Reinmann, 2015), which was adapted to the pandemic situation and online teaching by Reinmann (2020). Our study was guided by the following research question: Which factors—as seen from the perspective of the participating students—contribute most to professional competence development in synchronous lecture sessions?

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2 For a detailed outline of how to facilitate synchronous lectures, see, for example, Finkelstein (2006).

### 3 Quantitative Analysis

The students from the three different institutions participated in course evaluation surveys at the end of the first two full online semesters during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of each of these two semesters, they also provided feedback regarding their experience with breakout sessions. The first questionnaire represents an overall evaluation of the courses the students attended (Questionnaire 1), and the second represents an evaluation of the breakout sessions they experienced as part of the synchronous online lectures (Questionnaire 2). The analysis covers feedback provided by two cohorts of students (spring semester 2020, fall semester 2020/21).

Students at the public University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Bielefeld received their questionnaire in German; the students at the two private universities of applied sciences (Touro College Berlin and BSP) received theirs in English.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the students who participated in the survey were studying at the larger institution and attended large-scale lectures. The two questionnaires were each statistically analyzed once using only the data from the larger public institution (48 students) and a second time with the data from all three universities (70 students). Questionnaire 2, which focused on the breakout sessions, was completed by 107 students from the public institution and by 124 students in total.<sup>4</sup> The same types of statistical analyses were used on both questionnaires.

#### 3.1 Variables Used in the Course Evaluation

Questionnaire 1 contained, among other things, the category *Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult*. As the name suggests, this part of the survey asked the students to rate how easy or difficult they found individual sections of the courses they attended. Answers were given on a scale from 1 (= easy) to 10 (= difficult); the value of the category *Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult* was calculated by averaging the respective answers. Furthermore, students evaluated how functional they considered the use of the technical tools embedded within the videoconferencing application used for the lectures (category *Utilisation of Technical Tools*). Here, students also commented on how well the chat was organized, whether the instructional videos could be viewed without any problems (including posting of links, saving of videos on a shared platform, etc.), and whether technical tools such as raising the hand could be handled well. Answers could be given on a scale from 1 (= very good) to 10 (= not good at all). In the category *Overall Methodological Approach*, students were asked to comment on the instructors' methodological approach to teaching their respective courses; more specifically, they were asked to rate two different questions on a scale from 1 (= fully) to 10 (= not at all). The two questions target the extent to which the students thought that the teaching methods used in a course a) promoted learning and b) kept their attention on

3 Students at Touro College Berlin and BSP received their survey in English because it is the language of instruction at these universities of applied sciences.

4 Small class sizes at the private universities of applied sciences give an explanation why most of the answers came from the students at the public University of Applied Sciences and Arts.



the lecture and its content. The value of each of these three categories was calculated by averaging the scores of the questions within the category.

Questionnaire 1 also listed the items *Understanding the Course Content* (“I understand the content of the seminar”), *Presentation of the Instructor* (“The presentation/explanation of the instructor facilitated understanding”), *Social Interaction* (“The discussions/exchange in the groups facilitated gaining knowledge”), and *Reviewing Relevant Literature* (“I looked at the recommended literature before the corresponding lecture”). The answers could again be given on a scale from 1 (= absolutely) to 10 (= not at all). Finally, some questions in Questionnaire 1 also referred to the professional competence the students acquired during the course. For example, students were asked to what extent they were now able to illustrate complicated issues (item: *Illustration*) or to what extent they were able to deal with typical questions related to the course content (item: *Working on Typical Questions*) after having attended the online lecture. These questions could be answered on a scale from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 10 (= strongly agree). As a superordinate factor for all questions related to the newly acquired professional competence, the category *Competence Development* was finally formed by averaging. Figure 1 shows the variables used in Questionnaire 1.

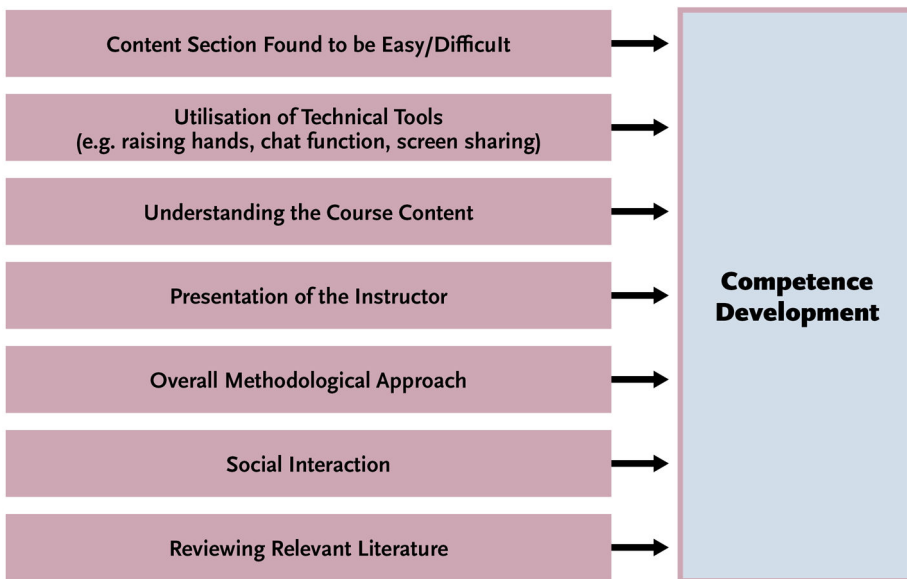


Figure 1: Variables of the overall course evaluation (Questionnaire 1)

### 3.2 Evaluation of the Breakout Sessions

Questionnaire 2 included the item *Social Interaction*, for which students were asked how important they considered the breakout sessions to be for interaction (e.g., for discussions, communication, or networking) with their fellow students. It also included the item *Fellow Students Turning on their Cameras*, for which students were asked how important they considered seeing their fellow students in an online lecture,

and the item *Active Participation*, in which students were asked to rate how important they considered the active participation of other students during group work to be. In addition, Questionnaire 2 incorporated the item *Choosing Groups*: Here, students were asked to rate the importance of choosing the group they wanted to work with themselves (as compared to being assigned to a group). For *Returning to the Main Session*, students were asked to rate how important they thought it was that they were allowed to return to the main session during a breakout session. Some students realize after a while that they do not want to work in their group anymore. Returning to the main session gives them the opportunity to collaborate with other students from the main session and thereby form new groups that are potentially more successful than the old original ones. The item *Leaving the Breakout Session* then asked students to rate how important they thought it was that during the breakout sessions, students were allowed to choose not to participate in any group and work independently instead. The responses to all these questions could be given on a scale from 1 (= very important) to 4 (= not at all important).

Furthermore, Questionnaire 2 asked students to rate how quickly they started working productively during breakout sessions (item *Productivity*). This question could be answered on a scale from 1 (= slow) to 5 (= fast). In addition, the students were asked whether they thought the breakout sessions were used according to their needs (item *Using the Breakout Sessions*). Here, the answers “yes” and “no” were registered for the statistical analyses. This section of the questionnaire also included some questions on how well individual aspects, where students had a direct influence on the classroom activities, functioned during breakout sessions. The participants commented on how willing they were to switch on their camera during breakout sessions (item *Turning on the Camera*), how willing they were to share their own screen (item *Screen Sharing*), to what extent writing work was taken over by individual members of a group during the breakout sessions (item *Distribution of Digital Writing Work*), or how well the groups’ arrangements for presenting their results to the entire group worked (item *Arrangement for Presentation of Group Results*). All answers could be given on a scale from 1 (= very good) to 5 (= not good at all). Finally, students rated how important they thought the breakout sessions were for their personal gain of knowledge (item *Competence Development*). To measure competence development, self-assessed gain of competence was used because previous studies have shown that self-assessed competence development can be regarded as a valid indicator of *actual* competence development (Braun et al., 2008). This question could be answered on a scale from 1 (= very important) to 4 (= not important at all). Some additional items were not included in this analysis.<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 shows all analyzed variables of Questionnaire 2.

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5 These additional items were not relevant for the questions that were asked in this article.

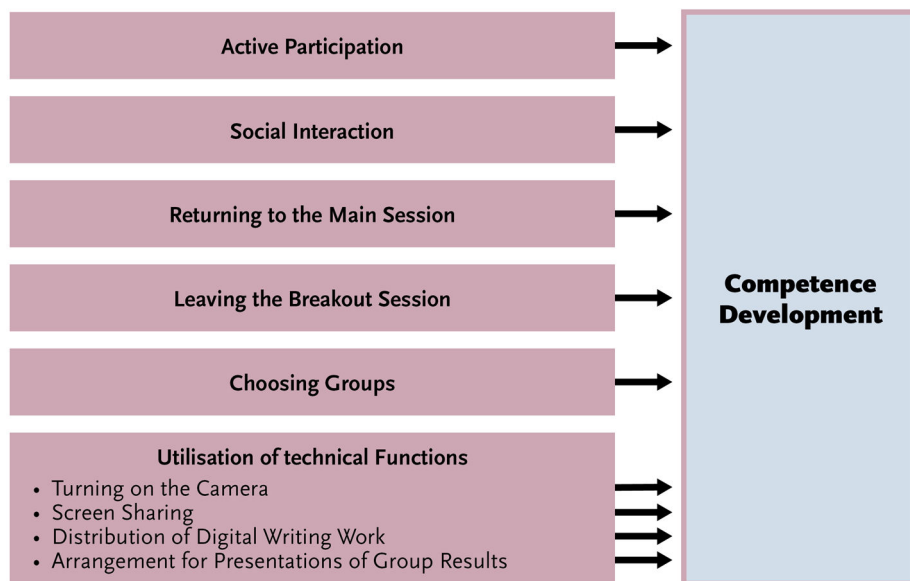


Figure 2: Variables used to evaluate the breakout sessions (Questionnaire 2)

## 4 Results

The results of the regression analyses based on the general student evaluation suggest a significant influence of the utilization of technical tools during the lectures on students' self-assessed competence development. These tools are provided within the videoconferencing applications and are described above in the Section 2.1 as parts of the pedagogical framework. The results of the regression analyses based on the evaluation of the breakout sessions show a significant influence of social interaction—via the breakout sessions and the collaboration they allow—on students' self-reported competence development. The analysis of students' experiences with breakout sessions is based on an analysis of the large-scale lecture at the public University of Applied Sciences and Arts plus a combined analysis of the large- and small-scale lectures at all three institutions.

### 4.1 Overall Course Evaluations

The independent variables in the regression analyses of Questionnaire 1 were *Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult*, *Utilisation of Technical Tools*, *Overall Methodological Approach*, *Understanding the Course Content*, *Presentation of the Instructor*, *Social Interaction*, and *Reviewing Relevant Literature*. The dependent variable in the first regression analysis conducted was *Illustration* (regression analysis 1.1); in the second regression analysis, it was *Working on Typical Questions* (regression analysis 1.2); in a third set of regression analyses, it was *Competence Development* (regression analysis 1.3). All inde-

pendent variables were tested for multicollinearity, but there was no significant multicollinearity to be observed in any of the cases.

The following section describes the results of regression analyses 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 with the data taken from the evaluation of the public University of Applied Sciences and Arts ( $n = 48$ ). Regression analysis 1.1 shows an almost significant positive influence of the independent variable *Utilisation of Technical Tools* on the dependent variable *Illustration* (p-value of approximately 0.06, so more than 0.05 and less than 0.1). All the other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable. In regression analysis 1.2, there was also an almost significant positive influence of the variable *Utilisation of Technical Tools* on the variable *Working on Typical Questions* (p-value between 0.05 and 0.06). Again, all other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable. Finally, in regression analysis 1.3, there was a significant positive influence of the variable *Utilisation of Technical Tools* on the variable *Competence Development* (p-value of approximately 0.04). As before, all the other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable.

All three of these regression analyses were also carried out with the combined data of the students from the larger public institution and the data of the students from the two smaller private institutions ( $n = 70$ ). The results of these analyses essentially did not differ from the results just described. The only exception is the variable *Understanding the Course Content*, which had a significant positive influence on the dependent variable in some analyses (regression analysis 1.1 and 1.3). Thus, based on the overall regression analyses performed, it can be stated that in addition to understanding the course content, it is primarily the *Utilisation of Technical Tools* that has a significant positive effect on students' competence development. Figure 3 provides a summary of these findings.



Regression	Predictor	p-Value	Result
<b>Regression 1.1</b> Which factors contribute to the successful presentation of assignments?	Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult	0.52	The utilization of technical tools contributes slightly significantly to a successful presentation of assignments.
	Utilisation of Technical Tools (e.g. raising hands, chat function, screen sharing)	0.06	
	Understanding the Course Content	0.29	
	Presentation of the Instructor	0.41	
	Overall Methodological Approach	0.61	
	Social Interaction	0.84	
	Reviewing Relevant Literature	0.57	
<b>Regression 1.2</b> Which factors help students to work on questions typical for the course content?	Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult	0.74	The utilization of technical tools contributes slightly significantly to students' answers to questions typical for the course content.
	Utilisation of Technical Tools (e.g. raising hands, chat function, screen sharing)	0.06	
	Understanding the Course Content	0.36	
	Presentation of the Instructor	0.50	
	Overall Methodological Approach	0.33	
	Social Interaction	0.12	
	Reviewing Relevant Literature	0.55	
<b>Regression 1.3</b> Which factors predict students' overall development of competences over the course of the lecture?	Content Section Found to Be Easy/Difficult	0.76	The utilization of technical tools contributes significantly to students' overall development over the course of the lecture.
	Utilisation of Technical Tools (e.g. raising hands, chat function, screen sharing)	0.04	
	Understanding the Course Content	0.26	
	Presentation of the Instructor	0.36	
	Overall Methodological Approach	0.38	
	Social Interaction	0.18	
	Reviewing Relevant Literature	0.95	

Figure 3: Regression analysis of overall student evaluations (Questionnaire 1)

## 4.2 Evaluation of the Breakout Rooms

The independent variables in the regression analyses related to Questionnaire 2 were always *Social Interaction*, *Turning on the Camera of Fellow Students*, *Active Participation*, *Choosing Groups*, *Returning to the Main Session*, *Leaving the Breakout Session*, *Using the Breakout Sessions*, and *Productivity*. The dependent variable was always *Competence Development*. In addition to the aforementioned independent variables, the first regression analysis included the independent variable *Turning on the Camera* (regression

analysis 2.1). In the second regression analysis, the independent variable *Screen Sharing* (regression analysis 2.2) was also added. Finally, in the third regression analysis, the independent variables *Turning on the Camera*, *Screen Sharing*, *Distribution of Digital Writing Work*, and *Arrangements for Presentations* (regression analysis 2.3) were added.

The following paragraph describes the results of the regression analyses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 with the combined data for the large- and small-scale lectures ( $n = 124$ ). Regression analysis 2.1 revealed a significant positive influence of the independent variable *Social Interaction* on the dependent variable *Competence Development* ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, a significant negative influence of the variable *Leaving the Breakout Session* on the variable *Competence Development* was shown ( $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, the influence of the variable *Turning on the Camera* on the variable *Competence Gain* was almost significantly positive ( $p$ -value between 0.05 and 0.1). All other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable. In regression analysis 2.2, there was again a significant positive influence of the independent variable *Social Interaction* on the dependent variable *Competence Development* ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, a significant negative influence of the variable *Leaving the Breakout Session* on the variable *Competence Development* was shown ( $p < 0.01$ ). All other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable. Finally, in regression analysis 2.3, as before, there was a significant positive influence of the independent variable *Social Interaction* on the dependent variable *Competence Development* ( $p < 0.01$ ), as well as a significant negative influence of the variable *Leaving the Breakout Session* on the variable *Competence Development* ( $p < 0.01$ ). The influence of the variable *Turning on the Camera* on the variable *Competence Development* was significantly positive ( $p < 0.01$ ). All the other independent variables had no significant influence on the dependent variable.

The regression analyses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 were also carried out only with the data of students from the larger public institution ( $n = 107$ ). The results of these analyses were almost identical to the results just presented. In summary, the regression analyses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 show that *Social Interaction* within the group has a significant positive influence on the students' competence development, whereas *Leaving the Breakout Session* has a significant negative influence on competence development. In addition, *Turning on the Camera* appears to have a significant positive impact on skill development, as well. The following section provides a more detailed discussion of these results.

Regression	Predictor	p-Value	Result
<b>Regression 2.1</b> Which factors help to develop competences in Breakout Sessions I ?	Active Participation	0.83	Social interaction contributes significantly positive, option to leave the Breakout Session significantly negative to competence development.
	Social Interaction	< 0.01	
	Leaving the Breakout Session	0.00	
	Choice of Groups	0.23	
	Returning to the Main Session	0.17	
	Productivity	0.19	
	Turning on the Camera	0.38	
<b>Regression 2.2</b> Which factors help to develop competences in Breakout Sessions II ?	Active Participation	0.74	Social interaction contributes significantly positive, leaving the Breakout Session significantly negative to competence development.
	Social Interaction	< 0.01	
	Leaving the Breakout Session	0.01	
	Choice of Groups	0.17	
	Returning to the Main Session	0.10	
	Using the Breakout Session	0.17	
	Screen Sharing	0.40	
<b>Regression 2.3</b> Which factors help to develop competences in Breakout Sessions III ?	Active Participation	0.68	Social interaction as well as Turning on the Camera contributes significantly positive, leaving the Breakout Session significantly negative to competence development.
	Social Interaction	< 0.01	
	Leaving the Breakout Session	< 0.01	
	Turning on the Camera	0.01	
	Screen Sharing	0.09	
	Distribution of Digital Writing Work	0.49	
	Arrangements for Presentations	0.26	

Figure 4: Regression analysis of the evaluation of the breakout sessions (Questionnaire 2)

## 5 Discussion

Before we summarize and interpret our results, we would like to once again emphasize the unique situation of higher education in 2020. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher education endured a nearly complete shutdown: almost all teaching and learning activities on campuses worldwide ceased for two semesters. In this context, it is worth mentioning a first set of recommendations based on

qualitative student and instructor feedback that was received by Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the larger public institution in our survey. The recommendations were presented in June 2020 and were meant for application within the faculty of social studies. The first full online semester, which at this time was about to end, was described as overwhelmingly unfamiliar; both students and instructors experienced online interactions as exhausting and “strange”. Their recommendation for the upcoming months was to include a new primary goal for each of the online courses: to foster students’ participation and activity in virtual learning environments, which—as students and faculty emphasized—needed to be explicitly explained and practiced. All participants had to get used to the videoconferencing tools, which included becoming familiar with the features so they could use them more intuitively to interact with each other despite distance and isolation.

Despite the exceptional situation in higher education and the challenges linked to the shift from on-campus settings to online teaching and learning, the two-year period spent (mostly) online due to COVID-19 now provides new insights into teaching designs that may enhance future online teaching and learning. The outline presented in this article offers a first glimpse of useful adaptations which may be of assistance when designing new courses or single online sessions.

Overall, our quantitative analysis offers insights into students’ perceptions regarding a synchronous online format that takes advantage of various technical tools such as breakout rooms during each session. Our study included large-scale and small-scale synchronous online courses, but regression analyses of the three universities of applied sciences ( $n = 70$ ) showed very similar results. The only major difference was the significant positive effect of understanding the content sections on students’ competence development, which we observed in our analysis of the combined data from all three institutions. In addition to the students’ understanding of the course content, the utilisation of technical tools seems to have a significant effect on the increase in student competencies. The aspects of videoconferencing applications being available and properly set up, and of users being familiar with an application’s technical options were a challenge at the beginning of the pandemic. Instructors and students alike needed a fair amount of time and training to get used to their new virtual surroundings. Nevertheless, the various technical tools allowed for social interaction during these periods of online-only teaching and learning. From the students’ perspective, this supported them in developing their competencies.

The second part of our quantitative analysis focused on the evaluation of breakout sessions (Questionnaire 2). The results for the analysis of the larger public institution ( $n = 107$ ) and the joint analysis of large- and small-scale lectures ( $n = 147$ ) proved to be almost identical. Both the willingness of fellow students to turn on their cameras and the social interaction among students during breakout sessions were perceived as having a significant positive impact on competence development. This comes as no surprise because social learning is considered a fundamental part of the learning process in face-to-face courses. Based on the results of our regression analyses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, it can be assumed that social learning also represents an essential component of the

learning process in digital teaching formats: Social interaction had a significant positive influence on the students' competence development in all three analyses. It even seems reasonable to assume, considering the other results outlined in Sections 3 and 4, that social interaction within the learning group is the most significant factor for a successful learning process. Besides social interaction, the influence of the variable *Utilisation of Technical Tools* on the development of competences was also significantly positive. Adequate *Utilisation of Technical Tools*, however, makes good social interaction within the learning group possible in the first place, so that sufficient *Utilisation of Technical Tools* can be seen as a prerequisite for successful social interaction in online settings. Successful social interaction, in turn, is ultimately decisive for a successfully designed learning process. This theory can also be corroborated by the fact that turning on the camera during synchronous online lectures, which allows for a less anonymous learning experience, had a significant positive impact on the students' self-reported competence development. It seems reasonable to assume that turning on the camera can be understood as an essential prerequisite for productive social interaction and, thereby, social learning. More productive social interaction is made possible by turning on the camera, which consequently leads to an improvement in students' competencies.

As mentioned above, leaving the group during breakout sessions had a significant negative effect on students' competence development. If individual students leave the breakout sessions to study individually, the stability of the remaining study group is in danger—which, in turn, can have a negative effect on social learning and the related communication within the group. Stable composition of the groups working within the breakout rooms thus appears to be a prerequisite for successful social interaction and, consequently, competence development via breakout sessions.

## 6 Conclusion and Limits of this Research

We conducted this study to provide new insights into successful teaching and learning in online environments. Our goal was to elaborate on the components of online teaching and learning that may enhance student competencies. According to our analyses, students are of the opinion that the evaluated courses facilitate competence development mainly by utilising technical tools. Since an appropriate choice of digital tools is what facilitates social interaction in virtual learning environments, we suggest that social interaction, both in breakout sessions and digital classrooms in general, is essential for successful online learning. Virtual learning environments that provide a variety of options for stable and multifaceted social interaction are therefore crucial for future online teaching. Our study also revealed that synchronously organized online teaching and learning can be very conducive to social interaction. Here, the utilisation of breakout rooms during synchronous lecture sessions seems to be of utmost importance. The group work that takes place in these breakout rooms, however, needs to be prepared and presented in a professional manner, including a plan for setting up the groups for

collaboration. Breakout sessions are designed for social interaction, but this interaction does not happen automatically. Therefore, the group work needs to be embedded within a carefully planned pedagogical concept that includes a stable and constant composition of breakout groups in which students keep their cameras switched on to help achieve the desired learning goals.

According to our analysis, the most important prerequisite for competence development in online teaching and learning is the appropriate use of the technical features included in videoconferencing applications. This assumes that the necessary hardware and software are available, installed, and functioning properly. As trivial as it seems to be, in practice, well-functioning equipment can be a challenge that often proves hard to solve (Christian et al., 2021). The student feedback we analyzed was provided at the start of the pandemic, when 6% of all students in Germany did not have access to online lectures due to technical issues (Deihamm et al., 2020). Worldwide, the situation was much worse: In South America, for example, approximately 30% of all students did not have access to the digital infrastructure necessary for online teaching; in the Sub-Saharan regions of Africa, approximately 58% of all students could not participate in online classes due to a lack of viable equipment (Salmi, 2020). A quantitative study taking into account student evaluations ( $n = 3,534$ ) from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland provided insights into the availability of technical equipment for students during the first online semester in spring 2020 (Kreidl & Dittler, 2021). At that point in time, 47.6% of the participating students did not have high-speed internet (broadband) available for online learning, and 33.2% of all students did not have a camera to use. During the first months of the pandemic, this problem was difficult to solve. According to the evaluations, the students participating in the analysis by Kreidl and Dittler (2021) were nevertheless quite satisfied (43.2% very satisfied, 41.4% satisfied) with their participation in online classes that used videoconferencing tools.

According to our analysis, social interaction and collaboration appear to be essential for successful teaching and learning. Appropriate technical equipment, including enough bandwidth, a camera, and a microphone, is therefore a prerequisite for successful participation and social learning. Our analysis is based exclusively on students' feedback and self-assessment, but in the study of Kreidel and Dittler (2021), instructors in higher education were found to share this perception. The authors also found social interaction within the classroom to be one of the central drivers of students' competence development (Kreidel & Dittler, 2021, p. 101). Schulmeister and Loviscatch already outlined in 2017 that social interaction may have a particularly positive impact on competence development if the different methodologies of the academic disciplines are taken into account. In the natural sciences and mathematics, for example, social interaction should help learners to think more rationally without including their own personal opinion; in the humanities, learners should be motivated to include their own personal opinion as well. They also emphasize the importance of adapting social interaction to the learning environment, the social contexts, and the motivation of the students. Less educated learners, e. g., need more positive feedback and encouragement, whereas well-educated learners profit more from critical comments. Further research

could now focus on activating teaching methods that enhance social interaction in synchronous online lectures, specifically during breakout sessions. How to plan for these and create an environment in which students can participate and benefit even more would be of particular interest to higher education.

As this paper focused on the students' perspective, investigating the instructors' perspective and the assessment methods they use for synchronous online lectures might also lead to additional insight into this particular form of online teaching and learning. The forced digital transformation of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic demanded much flexibility from students, instructors, and institutions. The large number of empirical studies on this topic now allows for a more detailed and thorough understanding of online formats and provides an opportunity for sustainable change. In 2018, Stegman claimed that in order for digital media to have a lasting positive influence on learning, existing and future evidence should be summarized more systematically, and findings would need to be communicated to practitioners in appropriate forms (p. 983). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this situation has now improved. More empirical analyses are available now and offer insights into pedagogical practice. It can be claimed that synchronous interaction in higher education is no longer the "poor cousin of asynchronous interactions" (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2007). Quite the contrary: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, synchronous lecture formats have evolved into well-established formats of teaching and learning in higher education. This could provide arguments for institutions of higher education to include new digital teaching and learning methods in the curriculum for their own students, as well as setting up digital learning environments which may allow students to gain international and intercultural experience without the need to fund cross-border activities (Mittelmeier et al., 2020).

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# The Role of Formative Assessments in Competency-based Online Teaching of Higher Education Institutions

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## 1 Introduction and research question

Different kinds of formative and summative assessments are used in higher education. Moreover, due to the pandemic, many teaching and testing formats have been transferred to asynchronous and synchronous online settings since 2020. This article compares the role of formative assessment in online and traditional face-to-face teaching. It provides an overview of assessment formats such as quizzes, structuring cards, or short interviews that can be implemented online, and highlights the legal implications that may arise from such online assessments according to the principles for examinations in Austrian higher education.

After an overview of the legal basis for asynchronous and synchronous teaching (2), this article describes the distinction between formative and summative assessments (3). It then focuses on formative assessment in lectures (4), identifying ways to motivate students and discussing the principles of good feedback. These aspects underline the importance of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) and the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011) for course design (5). Both theories are relevant to the creation and evaluation of competence-based learning and assessment tasks. All the chapters prepare the basis for the description of a seminar (6) which is used as an example of how the theories described in this article can be implemented for teaching and assessment in online settings. The conclusion (7) provides guidelines for online course design based on the constructive alignment approach.

## 2 Legal basis for asynchronous and synchronous teaching and the consequences for the teachers' role

The *Mitteilungsblatt* of the Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (2018, Section 20 (1)), which came into effect in 2018, entitled teachers to use digital teaching and learning elements and formats in their courses. The use of e-learning and virtual teaching to the extent of 20% was thus guaranteed unless the individual curricula provided otherwise (paragrap. 2). The prerequisite for this is to inform the students in an appropriate manner—and before the start of the semester—about the schedule of the course and about the

planned use of digital teaching and learning elements (paragrap. 3). A subsequent change during the course is not possible (Hutter & Walter-Laager, 2020, p. 210), so students must be informed about both the criteria for virtual teaching (e. g., the outcomes, form, content, dates, methods, and assessment standards) and the criteria for “regular” face-to-face courses in a suitable manner (§76 Abs 2 UG).<sup>1</sup>

What does this mean for the lectures? Virtual teaching is defined as textual or audiovisual virtual presence in the form of immediate (synchronous) or time-delayed (asynchronous) interaction. Synchronous teaching covers, for example, online lectures or seminars that use a video conferencing tool such as Big Blue Button or Zoom. Although these courses are independent of the learners’ individual locations, they are held in real time. Examinations can be conducted in similar synchronous formats, either as online versions of written examinations (using tools like Perception) or as oral examinations via videoconferencing tools. Asynchronous teaching offers even more flexibility in terms of time. In these formats, the teacher sets tasks (and usually a deadline), and the students get to decide when they want to study and exercise. The learning materials the students may need, such as teaching videos, presentations with audio recordings, virtual labs, or literature, can be uploaded to learning platforms or transmitted by email. Asynchronous examinations may include written assignments as well as remote take-home exams (written or oral). However, asynchronous teaching also challenges students to communicate exclusively in a text-based and time-delayed manner (McGrath et al., 1990; Saghafian & O’Neill, 2018, p. 60). Since this form of learning and assessment requires self-directed learning (Sonnleitner, 2016, p. 288), which evolved in constructivism, of the students, the teacher must consider in the design where the students’ limits lie and whether they will be able to use the freedom and flexibility granted.

As in constructivism in general, when self-directed learning processes are initiated, the teacher’s role changes to that of a consultant. The teacher creates a stimulating learning environment through his wealth of experience and prior knowledge, and helps learners define problems and tasks. Dubs developed one of many models of self-directed learning and emphasizes adequate scaffolding, in which dialogues between students as well as dialogues between students and their teachers must be encouraged. An example of successful scaffolding would be a discussion in which no predetermined answers or solutions are formulated. Instead, the teacher offers the basis for an independent critical and constructive discussion through specific thought-provoking impulses. In addition, the learners themselves are required to evaluate and reflect on their newly acquired knowledge (Dubs, 2006a, p. 307; Dubs, 2006b, p. 438; Dubs, 2007, p. 7).

Not only the digital transformation but ultimately the COVID-19 pandemic led the authors of this article to the conclusion that the adaptation of §20 was necessary to make teaching and learning even more diverse and flexible for students and teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> What constitutes this suitable manner, however, is not specified. A presentation of the intended teaching schedule in the UGO (Uni Graz Online system) would be conceivable, especially since the phrase “before the beginning of the semester” suggests that students must receive information before they decide to register for a specific course.

Since January 1, 2021, up to 60 % of the contact hours of a course can be held using virtual teaching unless specified otherwise in the curriculum (§ 20 Satzungsteil Studienrechtliche Bestimmungen). The director of studies can even approve a higher extent.

Teaching includes all types of courses according to § 18 (Satzungsteil Studienrechtliche Bestimmungen). In the case of the course type, not only the teaching format is decisive, the type of examination must also be considered. Whereas a lecture is characterized by the lecturer's presentation and a single examination, a lecture that includes mandatory tutoring combines knowledge transfer via the lecture with practical tasks and solutions. These two examples already show that the teacher must differentiate which forms of examination (e. g., summative and/or formative) are permitted before preparing the content and didactics.

Based on the aforementioned legal principles, formative forms of examination in lectures are ruled out because the examination consists of a single summative act (§ 18 Abs 1 Z 1; § 76 Abs 3 UG). However, in other types of courses, such as seminars or lectures that are combined with exercises, formative examination can be easily used. Both regulations apply to face-to-face and virtual courses. However, § 76a UG stipulates that special rules apply to electronic audits in addition to the general rules. Accordingly, the standards with which students' computers must comply to participate in examinations have to be announced before the beginning of the semester. Technical or organizational measures must be provided to ensure that students take the examination on their own.

### 3 Formative and summative assessments

If a teacher wants to know whether his approach to teaching has been successful and the students have achieved the intended learning goals, there are two ways of finding out. On the one hand, he can assess his students once they have reached the end of a learning period, for example at the end of a lecture or a course (summative assessment). Summative assessment is a performance review which addresses the totality of the learning process and usually includes a grading process that compares students to each other (Wildt & Wildt, 2011, p. 29).

On the other hand, a teacher can review his students' progress during the learning period, which in higher education means during the semester (formative "mid-time assessment"), and use the results to guide the further processes of teaching and learning. Therefore, formative assessment can be defined as a method of evaluation used by teachers to recognize and respond to students' progress (or lack thereof) in order to enhance the learning process while it is still ongoing (Cowie & Bell, 1996, p. 3). (1) The teacher must share the learning targets and clearly state the criteria for success. (2) Feedback is necessary to inform the students about their learning progress and (3) student self-assessment can be implemented as well as peer assessment. Formative assessments aim to improve learning and do not focus only on the grade. So, the pro-

cess is in the foreground and involves both (4) strategic teacher questioning and (5) students' engagement in asking effective questions. (6) Student goal setting means that the students focus on goal-directed behavior (Moss & Brookhart, 2019, p. 5). There is a change from "assessment *of* learning" to "assessment *for* learning" so that the students are learning how to learn (Torrance, 2007).

## 4 Formative assessment in lectures

The lecture plays a central role in university teaching. In the classical sense, the teachers present their knowledge, experience, and research in their field to students. In the past, and to some extent today, the focus has not necessarily been student-centered and on interactive elements that promote student learning. Rather, the expert knowledge of the lecturers is imparted to students without special focus on the practical application of the content.

Ever since the Bologna process, higher education has adopted a more student-centered and competence-based approach to learning and teaching in any given course format. Instead of focusing on their own knowledge and the content of their courses, teachers are expected to focus more on students' learning processes and their achievement of the outlined learning outcomes. The teacher has become more of a facilitator than a conveyor of his own expert knowledge, while students have become active agents in the learning process (Barman, 2013).

However, this only partially applies to lectures, which in many cases still use a teacher-centered setting. In lecture style teaching—and, to some extent, in online settings—students still play a passive and teachers an active role. Additionally, the shift to online teaching or hybrid settings may provide a large variety of technological means of interaction and student activation, but it also significantly decreases real-life social interactions. As a result of the weaker interaction and the increased share of self-learning phases in online teaching and blended learning settings, formative assessments seem to play an important role in online teaching formats as they influence students' self-regulated learning (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010). So, with the growing importance of online teaching, it would make sense to use more formative assessments. According to Rezaei and Lovorn (2010), frequent assessments could be used as an integral part of teaching to engage students and to enhance their learning. Day et al. (2018) identify continuous assessment as a useful tool for lecturers because it encourages consistent work effort on the students' part throughout the course.

Two main drivers of formative assessment being important in this context are incentives for good work habits (Scheyvens et al., 2008) and students' motivation. According to Agnew et al. (2021), students recognize the benefits of preparatory work completed prior to lectures, but this insight does not increase their motivation to complete those preparatory tasks. Other research has found that students who engage in continuous online assessments are more likely to achieve higher marks on summative, high-stakes assessments such as examinations. In their study, Agnew et al. (2021) state that

“completion of small-stakes online continuous assessment identifies students who are doing better academically because they are engaged, motivated students rather than identifying any inherent benefit from actually completing the online assessment tasks.” (p. 174). According to the study, students are less likely to complete formative online assessments if the small-stakes incentives are removed. Agnew et al. (2021) argue that the removal harms student motivation and achievement. Students who complete formative online assessments without incentives make fewer attempts, start their work on the assessment later in the allotted time frame, spend less time completing the assessments, and achieve a lower mean score than students who work on formative assessments *with* incentives. The study concludes that lack of incentives adversely impacts the average final examination achievement.

Hence, any form of formative assessment which is deployed to initiate assessment for learning is not mandatory and cannot be graded. Non-graded activities can therefore only be suggested to students to assist them to deepen their knowledge and develop their competences by applying what they have learned. In lectures, these activities, in the form of formative assessments, are only complementary to the summative assessment and are not mandatory. Based on these circumstances, the question remains how to increase the motivation of students to complete tasks and assignments in the form of formative assessments despite missing incentives which could support their learning process and positively impact self-regulated learning.

Whether students are actively engaging in courses and whether they are learning highly depends on their motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Students' motivation, in turn, is affected by the formative assessment practice through the satisfaction of students' basic psychological needs (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Leenknecht et al., 2021). Students who are studying because they like the task or the process in which they are engaged are autonomously motivated. Furthermore, autonomous motivation is associated with higher achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Leenknecht et al., 2021).

The formative assessment itself promotes students' feelings of competence as it provides the students with insight into their own progress (Leenknecht et al., 2021). In addition to intrinsic and autonomous motivation, Onah et al. (2020) state that students may regulate their learning (self-regulated learning) under a third party's direction. Leenknecht et al. (2021) also note that teachers can influence the motivation of their students through, as they describe it, external mechanisms:

1. contingency,
2. help,
3. expectations, and
4. translations.

Those external mechanisms explain why formative assessment practices result in either the satisfaction or the frustration of needs, depending on whether the students' feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met or not. To enable students to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, Leenknecht et al. (2021) de-

scribe (1) a context (contingency) created by teachers and the course design in which students' actions result in the desired outcomes. In the context of formative assessment, this means that students are provided with tasks that help them reach the intended learning outcomes. Students also need to receive the appropriate (2) level of help to complete those tasks. This includes resources as well as information (strategy explanations) on how to apply these resources to achieve a certain goal. Providing help to students will empower them to act autonomously and effectively. The third external mechanism, (3) expectation, stimulates students to act by communicating clearly what is expected of them and how they can take action. The last mechanism Leenknecht et al. (2021) mention is (4) translation of formative assessment through feedback. Those translations are about attribution: why did you fail or succeed, and what role did you play in this? Feedback that provides information on how to proceed (feed-forward) has proven to be effective (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Wylie and Lyon (2015) conclude that contingency is essential for effective feedback. Feedback can be used to communicate clear expectations as well. Feedback containing information about the learning goals, actual task performance and suggestions on how to proceed contributes to students' feelings of competence (Wollenschläger et al., 2016).

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) state that there is strong evidence that feedback messages are invariably complex and therefore difficult to interpret correctly and meaningfully. Students require opportunities to gain an understanding of how feedback messages work before they can use them to regulate their own performance (Ivanic et al., 2000; Higgins et al., 2001).

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) formulate seven principles of good feedback practice to facilitate self-regulation. Good feedback:

1. clarifies what is considered "good performance" (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue on learning;
5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and improves learners' self-esteem;
6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. provides information to teachers that can be used to shape teaching processes.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that formative assessment and feedback should be used in higher education to empower students as self-regulated learners. They further state that in practice, self-regulation manifests as active monitoring and regulation of a number of different learning processes, such as the setting of and orientation towards learning goals, the strategies used to achieve these goals, the management of resources, the effort exerted, students' reactions to external feedback, and the products produced.

In online settings, the mode of classical lectures has changed at the University of Graz. Both digital technologies and the specific teaching concepts which focus on

media-supported formats are used more frequently because teachers were forced to adopt a more diverse mode of teaching when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. This, in turn, has created more options for integrating different forms of synchronous and asynchronous teaching into the classical lecture format. These formats make the use of formative assessments a valuable choice, even though—as outlined before—those assessments are non-graded activities.

Pachler et al. (2010) argue that technology alone does not generate formative effects. They furthermore state

that ‘formative e-assessment’ is better understood as multiple processes involving technologies, where evidence is generated about a learner’s state of understanding relative to desirable goals, and where individuals are enabled to take actions which bring about changes in learners’ skills, knowledge and understanding, or in teachers’ pedagogical practice. (p. 8)

However, in line with Leenknecht et al. (2021), Pachler et al. also concede that the technology does not in and of itself create these moments of contingency. They depend on the set of human responses, motivational factors, and socio-inter-active contexts which create opportunities for the choices made by learners and for actions taken in conjunction with feedback and interaction offered by electronic tools. Pachler et al. (2010) conclude that the tools have particular shaping effects on the types of choices and actions which can emerge.

When creating a teaching concept for online teaching, it seems to be important to consider the aforementioned four mechanisms of contingency, help, expectations, and translations. Therefore, technologies and teaching designs for media-supported formats should be applied in a way that enhances these mechanisms in order to facilitate self-regulated learning. The effect of formative assessments has been proven in many studies when it comes to grading activities. In “classic” lectures which typically do not include any assessment of individual assignments or tasks, the students’ willingness to learn must be controlled via motivation. The integration of low-stake assessments or classroom assessment tools into the teaching and learning process is therefore another additional option which may support students on their way through the course. Teachers can be advised to follow the described mechanisms contingency, help, expectation and translation. The technologies used in online settings can only support a well-conceived didactical design and not replace it. As formulated before, the moments of contingency also depend on human responses and the socio-inter-active context. Transparency, clear work assignments, and clearly defined learning outcomes that are aligned with the assessment (formative and summative) in the sense of constructive alignment and feedback play a very important role. In the sense of the expression “assessment drives learning”, we might alternatively say: “motivation drives learning.”



## 5 Bloom's taxonomy and constructive alignment, or: a Janus-faced view on how to create a course

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Bloom et al. (1956) developed a hierarchical approach to the classification of learning settings, the so-called “Taxonomy of Educational Outcomes” which today is usually referred to as “Bloom’s taxonomy”. The levels of this taxonomy are to be considered when deciding which contents are to be taught using which teaching methods and which forms of assessment. Due to the hierarchical structure of the system, each learning level serves as the foundation of the next level. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) defined new terms at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The three most important changes were that 1) the categories of Bloom’s taxonomy were changed from noun to verb form, 2) that “knowledge” was changed to “remembering”, and 3) “synthesis” was updated to “creating”.

At the level of **remembering**, learners must first gather facts and information to build their knowledge. This includes, for example, their knowledge of terminology, specific facts, methodology, theories, and structures as well as metacognitive knowledge—all of which they must memorize before they can access it in their long-term memory. All the other levels in the taxonomy are based on this knowledge. The intended learning outcome for the first stage is therefore to internalize and reproduce information. Suitable methods to achieve this goal in both face-to-face and online teaching include lectures, instructional videos, and self-study of specialized literature.

The second level, **understanding**, means placing what has already been learned in a different context. This enables the learner to reproduce the content of their learning materials in their own words, and to create connections and links between different facts. This level of understanding can be promoted by exercises which confront students with familiar knowledge but present it in a new way.

The third level, **applying**, then focuses on the transfer of knowledge (e.g., via translation, interpretation, or extrapolation). To achieve this goal, learners should work on problems which allow them to find, execute, or use concrete solutions. This application strengthens imparted knowledge and, consequently, grants a deeper understanding. In digital teaching environments, virtual role-playing exercises in break-out rooms or design tasks in which the students have to create their own presentation or questionnaire can be used to promote application.

In the fourth stage, **analysing**, the already acquired information is broken down into individual elements and examined to see how other procedures and models affect it. The learners review, draw conclusions, and consolidate the previous stages by analyzing elements, relationships, or organizational principles. With this goal in mind, teachers can provide forums, chats, and empirical research results or mind maps to promote exchange.

The focus of the fifth stage is **evaluating** the facts based on criteria or standards. Students formulate alternative solutions and new contexts, thereby creating a synthesis of what they have learned. At this stage, teachers can support their students by tasking them with the evaluation of complex data sets and ideas. This could mean, for example,

that students may be included in the development, implementation, and analysis of an empirical study, or asked to develop recommendations.

The sixth level of the taxonomy takes this idea one step further as learners start **creating** their own ideas. They generate hypotheses, present content, weigh theories against each other, defend their own opinions, and criticize constructively. This goal may be achieved via projects which are both complex and creative, such as drafting a business plan or constructing a new machine (Baumgartner, 2011; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

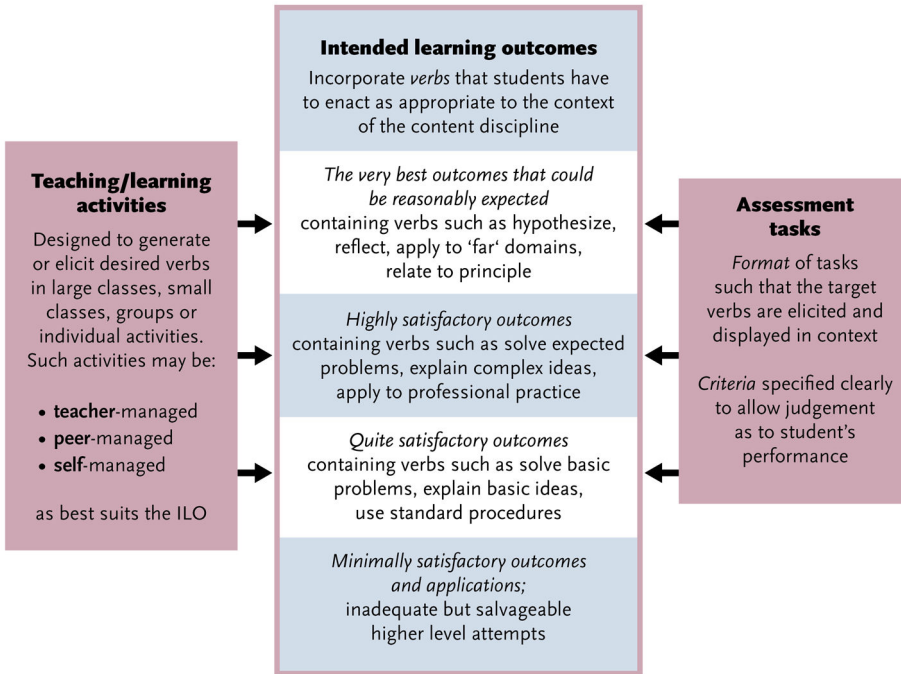
For successful knowledge transfer in online teaching and learning, the levels of Bloom's taxonomy need to be supported by the virtual learning environment. Traditional online learning formats can still be used at the level of knowledge and understanding, in which the learners familiarize themselves with the provided content through self-study, but the higher levels of application—analysis, assessment, and creation—need online learning scenarios which engender social interaction between learners.

Once the central competencies have been determined, the next step is to transfer the outcomes into suitable teaching, learning, and examination arrangements. Constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), which has increasingly found its way into everyday teaching in higher education (Reinmann, 2018), is suitable for this purpose. This concept is based on constructivist theory and summarized by Tyler (1949, p. 63) as follows: "Learning takes place through the active behavior of the learner; it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does." Constructivism postulates the self-organization and self-activity of the learner. The teacher acts more as a guide who may provide feedback and help as needed. Consequently, constructivist learning environments are characterized by complex real-life problems which can be conveyed to the students via different media. The initiation of learning processes requires an active, self-directed, constructive, situational, and social process (Shuell, 1986; Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 55; Gräsel & Gniewosz, 2015, p. 22).

"The term 'alignment' is used because both teaching and assessment need to be aligned to the intended learning outcomes" (Biggs, 2014, p. 9). Consequently, the teacher must first define the intended learning outcomes and the assessment when planning a lesson. Intended learning outcomes are what the students *should* learn. Assessment describes the learning activities in which the learners should engage to reach the intended learning outcomes.

From this basic concept, Biggs and Tang derive four steps for developing a lesson design:

1. Describe the intended learning outcome in the form of a verb (learning activity) and its object (the content), and specify the context and a standard the students are to attain;
2. create a learning environment using teaching/learning activities that address that verb and therefore are likely to bring about the intended outcome;
3. use assessment tasks that also contain that verb, thus enabling you to judge with the help of rubrics if and how well students' performances meet the criteria;
4. transform these judgments into standard grading criteria. (Biggs & Tang 2011, p. 100)



**Figure 1:** Aligning the intended learning outcomes with teaching activities and assessment tasks (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 105)

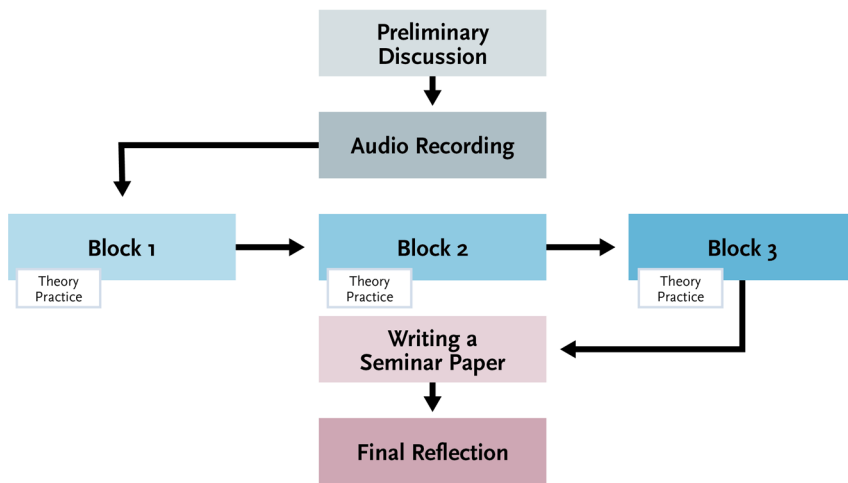
So, if the competence goals are reflected in the assessment tasks and these goals have been made accessible to the learners beforehand, it is possible to control students' learning behavior. For teachers, this means that the examinations must be adapted precisely to the competence outcomes. It does not make sense to conduct an examination in which only knowledge is tested. In this case, it is necessary to at least use application-related examples (Schaper & Hilkenmeier, 2013, p. 21). Both theories, Bloom's taxonomy as well as constructive alignment, offer teachers the chance to develop and evaluate competence-oriented learning and assessment tasks.

## 6 Example: Seminar Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation

What do the outlined considerations mean for practice? We will use the seminar Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation, which is part of the legal studies at the University of Graz, to illustrate how formative assessments can be integrated into a virtual setting. In the discourse on legal education, questions arise not only about the content, but also about the methods and educational designs that are used to teach legal knowledge and skills. Lachmayer (2012, p. 139) suggests a constructivist approach which

teaches jurisprudential knowledge in combination with social skills. Both could be taught at the same time by a teacher who not only addresses important legal issues but also discusses or debates them critically with his students. The development of these problem-solving and argumentation skills requires the promotion of cooperative and self-directed learning methods that are applied in a learner-centered manner (Bayreuter, 2012, p. 187; Zumbach & Moser, 2012, p. 125).

The content and the methodological part must be prepared in great detail when teaching is done in presence. When digital and hybrid learning environments are (or have to be) implemented, the design also must be changed.



**Figure 2:** The structure of the seminar Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation (own illustration)

In presence, the seminar was a so-called “Blockseminar” which was held over the course of three days. This did not change in the hybrid version. As the intensity of a three-day seminar may affect both the learner and the learning process, the teachers decided to split the course schedule into asynchronous and synchronous digital phases. The seminar therefore starts with a preliminary meeting in which the students get to know the procedure and the content of the seminar, the different topics, and the requirements for receiving a grade. Each student must prepare a presentation on a specific topic. In the seminar, the students will acquire knowledge in the field of alternative dispute resolution and the ability to analyze different forms of dispute resolution. The overall aim of the course is for the students to acquire an overview of dispute resolution tools. After the seminar, they should be able to identify differences and similarities between these tools.

**Table 1:** Example for the practical implementation of Bloom's Taxonomy in a seminar

Levels of Bloom's Taxonomy	Example Seminar Alternative dispute resolution and mediation
Remembering	The student repeats and listens to the general types of alternative dispute resolutions.
Understanding	The student reviews and paraphrases the content on the topics of mediation and negotiation in small groups.
Applying	Each student presents his prepared topic to the class.
Analysing	The students ask each other questions and work in small groups to structure their topics through mind-maps.
Evaluating	The students reflect on and debate supreme court and arbitration decisions as well as mediation cases in the context of alternative dispute resolution.
Creating	In small groups, the participants negotiate in a roleplay, trying to solve an already escalated conflict as judge, mediator, and negotiator/arbitrator. This allows them to experience different perspectives and roles. At the end of the seminar, the students are able to devise an appropriate form of dispute resolution for a case.

The oral presentations of the students will be prepared in advance, using Power Point and audio recordings, and made available for mandatory self-study to all participants in the Moodle course. Each student is required to come up with questions on the presentations of all other students and post them in the forums available through the Moodle course. Additionally, learning materials in the form of PDF files and links to websites are available in the Moodle course, and students can use exercises in the Moodle course to review and deepen their newly acquired knowledge.

Questions regarding the preparation of the presentations and the seminar papers are answered during the online preliminary meeting as well as via email by the course instructors. If course units cannot be held with students in attendance on campus, they will be held synchronously as videoconferences using uniMEET (Big Blue Button). Partial course assessments that would otherwise take the form of oral participation but cannot be held in class will be completed as videoconferences as well. The grade and, in turn, the formative assessments are on the one hand based on the presentation (Power Point and audio recording) and the questions which the students worked out. On the other hand, the students must pass tests (e. g., multiple choice or single choice), work in groups (role-playing exercises, mock mediations), and write a seminar paper.

## 7 Conclusion

Bloom et al. (1956) developed the taxonomy levels that should be considered when deciding which content can and should be conveyed by applying different teaching methods and assessment formats. Using the concept of constructive alignment, the learning outcomes can be defined to provide teachers with a goal for which they can design appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Based on the framework of Bloom's

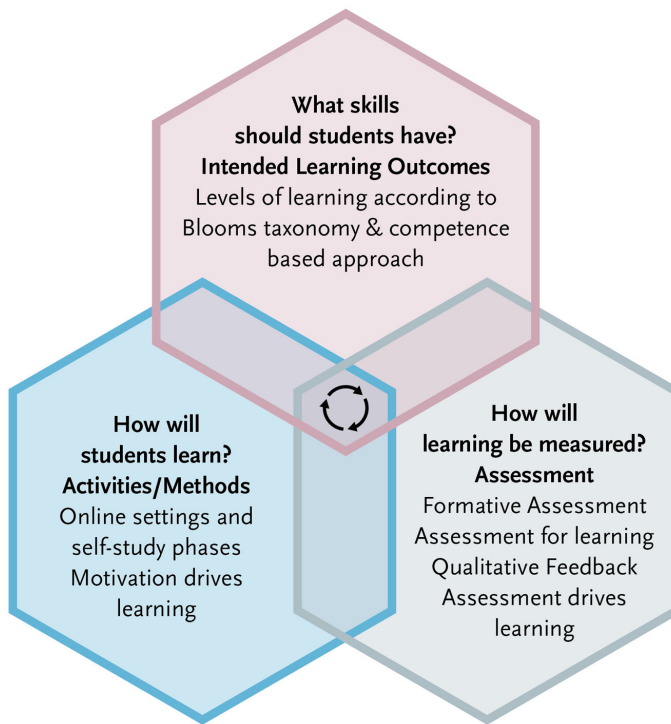
taxonomy and constructive alignment, this paper gave an overview of how higher levels of learning can be achieved in the design of teaching concepts for different course formats and what role formative assessments play in this context. Constructive alignment is characterized by the fact that both the central elements of a teaching/learning design and the examinations are related to the competence goals with the respective competence level of Bloom's taxonomy.

The following guidelines may therefore serve as a basis for the design of a course that includes the learning outcomes, the possible summative and formative forms of assessment, and the activities and methods used in online teaching formats.

- (1) Start by defining the learning outcomes according to the levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Choose no more than three to five goals for a lesson and make sure that they are as concrete, clear, and realistic as possible. Reduce the lesson content accordingly in a didactically sensible way. Remain honest in your expectations towards yourself and your students.
- (2) In the second step, design assessment tasks that can be used to test the intended learning outcomes. There is a recognizable tendency of students to primarily focus on content that is already part of the assessment. Biggs (2003) calls this the "backwash effect". Due to the increase of self-study phases in online settings, formative assessments offer more opportunities to control the learning process of students in the sense of assessment *for* learning. Feedback acts as small incentives that have positive effects on the motivation of students and—depending on the course format—can support continuous learning progress.
- (3) In the third step, you will design the actual course. The teaching activities you choose during this stage are meant to prepare your students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and succeed in possible examinations. This strengthens the students' motivation to actively participate in the learning process and be responsible for self-study phases in online settings.

If constructive alignment is implemented consistently, the effort for students and teachers is indeed comparatively high at the beginning of the semester. It is, however, rewarded by a clear lesson structure and higher student motivation. Constructive alignment can be facilitated by aiming for greater differentiation and flexibility in the development of examinations—of course always within the framework of the examination regulations, which includes the approved forms of examination.

With respect to online teaching, it seems important to emphasize that the use of technology alone does not generate formative effects. Formative assessment and assessment for learning in online settings can be defined as complex processes involving digital technologies. These processes create moments of contingency through teachers' activities (Pachler et al., 2010). Besides the technologies themselves, clearly defined learning outcomes, well aligned assessment tasks, and teaching activities (constructive alignment) in conjunction with human responses (feedback), motivational factors, and socio-inter-actions are the most important factors in the design of online teaching formats.



**Figure 3:** The role of formative assessment and constructive alignment in online learning settings (adapted from Smith, 2020)

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# Multicultural and Multilingual Learning Environments: Challenges and Advantages

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## 1 Introduction

The foundations of the cognitive theory of learning are derived from the cognitive frameworks of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. Research in the field of cognitive psychology attempts to answer, among other things, the question of how cognitive abilities affect successful language learning and language acquisition. In particular, the cognitive theory of learning recognizes learning strategies as one of the significant cognitive processes critical for foreign language acquisition. The cognitive theory of learning defines L2 (language 2) acquisition as a complex cognitive skill. This is based on the observation that learning a foreign language is very similar to learning other cognitive skills. Furthermore, McLaughlin (1987) points out that learning a foreign language includes internal ideas that are based on the language system that regulates and governs performance, and at the same time includes ways of selecting adequate grammatical rules, as well as vocabulary, which results in the restructuring of knowledge. Learning a foreign language represents a complex skill that cognitive psychologist Anderson (1990) defined as the ability to perform various mental operations. He establishes a conceptual dichotomy and explains the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge, and it was precisely the distinction between these two forms of knowledge in cognitive psychology that was transferred to the field of foreign language acquisition and especially to the field of learning strategies (Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Ellis, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Declarative knowledge is defined as a special type of information in long-term memory that consists of knowledge of facts and rules about things we know, whereas procedural knowledge consists of what we know how to do. Declarative knowledge is acquired suddenly by receiving a message, whereas procedural knowledge is acquired gradually by performing the skill. Declarative knowledge does not necessarily have to be communicated verbally, and it can include a time series such as remembering the order of events or visual memory. On the other hand, the term "cognitive skill", as used by Anderson (1990), refers to the ability to perform various mental operations. Our ability to understand and generate language, or our ability to apply a certain rule to solve a problem, is an example of procedural knowledge. In other words, Anderson points out that declarative knowledge is static, whereas procedural knowledge is dynamic.

In accordance with Anderson's model, known as the Adaptive Control of Thought Model – ECT Model (Ellis, 1995), language acquisition is a three-stage process that includes cognitive, associative, and autonomous stages, during which declarative knowl-

edge (i. e., information stored as facts) becomes proceduralized through practice. It is transformed through practice into procedural knowledge that enables simple and effective language production. The process of acquiring new language knowledge is different from the process of gaining control over language knowledge, so new knowledge can be categorized as declarative while automatic knowledge is procedural. Progression from declarative to procedural knowledge is achieved through the development of control, and therefore numerous errors in learners' language production can be attributed to the lack of procedural, not declarative, knowledge. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) claim that procedural knowledge refers to the executive function of a complex cognitive skill and includes activities such as problem solving, language comprehension and production, and the use of strategies. O'Malley and Chamot emphasize that in this theory, similarly to some other cognitive theories of L2 acquisition, learning strategies can be described as complex cognitive skills. They are used consciously in the initial stages of learning, but can become proceduralized by practice, i. e., by moving through the cognitive, associative, and autonomous stages of learning.

Although Anderson (1995) does not distinguish between learning strategies and other cognitive processes, his theoretical analysis of cognition includes a number of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. For example, imagery is a cognitive process that fosters storing information in memory. Images can also be helpful when recalling verbal materials, and relating verbal information to images, in turn, can be helpful when learning vocabulary. Another cognitive process that plays an important role in remembering meaningful materials is elaboration. It is also the foundation for the development of transfer and deductive strategies that enable guessing from context.

However, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out certain limitations of the application of Anderson's theory to viewing language acquisition as a complex cognitive skill, but at the same time emphasize the advantages of identifying mental processes that can be presented to learners as ways to facilitate their own learning.

## 2 Multicultural and multilingual learning environments

Today, more and more countries are becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Over 4.6 million students in higher education already study abroad (UNESCO, 2017), and it is assumed that more than eight million students will study abroad by 2025. However, this mobility continues to develop (Egroun-Polak & Hudson, 2014). This development affects educational institutions with ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse student populations. A diploma obtained at international educational institutions is especially valued, and more and more employers need graduates with good foreign language and decision-making skills (Van Mol, 2017). In recent years, multicultural educators have therefore made additional efforts to tailor their courses and learning outcomes to accommodate student populations from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Watkins, 2016). The question is how teachers can create such a multilingual environment with relatively few resources available. Since bilingual children de-

velop both language systems simultaneously (Cummins, 1976) and their language and culture are integrated in the learning environment (Cummins & Early, 2011), one of the guidelines would be to encourage bilingual students to share and communicate their experiences in both languages in the classroom. In turn, monolingual students will gain a better insight into another culture and thus acquire greater competence in the new language. On the European continent, international programs are usually conducted in English, but there are also examples of programs taught in other languages, such as French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014).

Moreover, it is obvious that in the countries where those languages are one of the official or national languages, many mobile students choose precisely some of the aforementioned languages with the aim of developing a particular language competence. Therefore, it makes sense to talk about the importance of acquiring different foreign languages in the European context. Nowadays, there is an increasing migration of students and academic staff to parts of the world where English is spoken, and many teachers tend to go to countries where English is used in higher education.

Considering the current economic, social, and cultural trends in Europe—including current trends in education—multilingualism is becoming an essential feature of European identity (Jessner, 2008). In this context, Jessner (2008) emphasizes the importance of learning strategies as a crucial aspect of multilingual development and points out that metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness play a significant role in the development of learning strategies in multilingual speakers. Jessner also argues that multilingual speakers use different strategies in contrast to monolingual speakers, that strategies represent only a form of mental activity that takes place at a specific level in the process of foreign language learning, and that they are not necessarily problem-oriented and consciously used (Jessner, 2008).

### **3 What are language learning strategies?**

Language learning strategies have been the subject of interest in the scientific research discipline studying the process of second language acquisition for several decades. Research on foreign language strategies began back in the nineteen-seventies (Rubin, 1975; Savignon, 1972; Stern, 1975), while during the eighties and nineties, learning strategies posed one of the most intriguing areas of study in foreign language learning (MacIntyre, 1994). A significant contribution to the study of learning strategies was made by Oxford (1990), who defined learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques taken by the learner to make learning easier, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more efficient, and more transferable to new situations. Oxford (1990) points out that strategies facilitate the internalization, storage, invocation, or use of a new language, and states that strategies are mechanisms for self-directed action, which are indispensable for developing communicative competence.

Ellis (1995), however, states that strategies are related to some kind of mental activity or behavior that can occur in a particular phase of the learning and communication process. Cohen (1998) emphasizes that these are operations selected by the learner partly consciously in order to enhance L2 learning through storage, recall, and application of information about the language. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) believe that these are special ways of information processing that can enhance comprehension, learning, and storing of information more effectively. In this framework, language learning strategies are complex cognitive skills that can be learnt or taught. Some definitions are very general, while others are quite specific. Learning strategies can be seen as mental processes over which students have conscious control, being able to choose them when performing tasks (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2017). Students actively participate in the learning process, consciously or unconsciously using different mental strategies to organise their language system and improve their competence in the target language. The main research foci pointed out by researchers dealing with language learning strategies are related to the role of strategies in language acquisition or the connection of strategies to other individual characteristics of learners, such as learning style, learners' proficiency level (Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003), motivation (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Braten & Olausson, 1998; Mihaljević Djigunović, 1999, 2001; Chang, 2005; Dörnyei, 2006), gender (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Green & Oxford, 1995; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Lee & Oh, 2001; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990; Kaylani, 1996; Vandergrift, 1997; Liu, 2004), attitude toward learning, foreign language anxiety (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2000), cultural background (Griffiths & Parr, 2000; Dickinson, 1996; Parry, 1993; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Tyacke & Mendelsohn, 1986), and some other factors. Strategies can be declarative and conscious at the beginning of their application, and they subconsciously transform into automatised, unconscious behaviors.

Strategies cannot be characterized as either good or bad but as potentially useful (Cohen, 1998). They are resources that learners can use when solving language learning tasks. The learners employ strategies intentionally with the goal of making learning more effective. They may influence their motivational and affective states or the way they select, acquire, organize, or integrate new knowledge (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986).

### 3.1 Features of language learning strategies

It is argued that the best approach to defining the concept of language learning strategies is to list their main features. Oxford (1990) lists 12 basic characteristics of language learning strategies, emphasising that strategies are oriented toward the development of communicative language competence and include interaction between learners:

- (1) Strategies are specific actions or techniques used by learners rather than general approaches to learning, as suggested by Stern (1986).
- (2) Some strategies are observable and some are not; they involve both physical and mental activities.

- (3) Strategies are problem-oriented, i. e., oriented towards a specific language task. They are efficient and productive in problem-solving (Bialystok, 1990).
- (4) Strategies contribute to learning, both directly and indirectly.
- (5) The issue of consciousness and learning strategies is still controversial. Strategies are often used deliberately and consciously, but their use can become automatic, i. e., subconscious. It can be concluded that language learning strategies are conscious, potentially conscious, or subconscious, depending on individual learners and the task in which they are engaged.
- (6) The use of language learning strategies is motivated by the learners' desire to learn, but other factors, such as affective ones, should also be taken into account.
- (7) Strategies can be changed, i. e., the existing ones can be adapted, new ones learned and acquired, and unsuccessful ones abandoned.
- (8) Strategies are oriented towards the broad goal of developing communicative competence.
- (9) Strategies enable learners to self-regulate their own learning and become autonomous and effective outside the classroom.
- (10) Strategies expand the role of teachers in such a way that the traditional role of the teacher in the educational process changes. The teacher now assumes the role of a person who facilitates the learning process by helping, advising, diagnosing, coordinating the learning process, and participating in communication.
- (11) In addition to the cognitive aspect, language learning strategies also involve metacognitive, social, and affective aspects.
- (12) The choice of language learning strategies is influenced by a number of factors, such as the teachers' expectations, the learners' proficiency levels, age, sex, nationality, learning style, previous experience in learning, education, motivation, self-efficacy, as well as personal beliefs and assumptions about language learning.

One of the critical features of learning strategies emphasised by Pavičić Takač (2008) is that language learning strategies are systematic. Learners do not incidentally discover a learning strategy; they use it systematically based on their knowledge (Bialystok, 1990). The question of the relationship between strategy and awareness is controversial. According to Cohen (1998), awareness makes a critical difference between strategies, and processes that are not strategic. Therefore, only conscious processes are included in learning strategies and the element of choice is an essential feature, as learners consciously choose the strategies that suit them best and use them intentionally to make learning more efficient. Pavičić Takač (2008) further states that the use of strategies is quite flexible so that existing ones can be adapted, new ones can be adopted or learned, and ineffective ones can be rejected. Naiman et al. (1978) emphasize the concept of "cognitive flexibility," which is a student's ability to choose those strategies that have proven successful. In addition to the fact that learning strategies represent conscious actions, several authors have suggested that strategies can be taught (Chamot, 1998; Green & Oxford, 1995; Lee & Oxford, 2008). Namely, students may become aware of the



use of their strategies through strategic training, and it should be taken into account that more successful students possess a higher degree of metacognitive awareness and use a more significant number of metacognitive strategies that represent higher-order strategies, which comprise analysis, monitoring, evaluation, planning, and organizing one's own learning process (Dörnyei, 2005). The next section provides a more detailed description of metacognitive strategies that play a significant role in the process of foreign language learning.

### **3.2 The importance of metacognitive strategies in the process of foreign language learning**

Research on learning strategies during the 1980s contributed to a deeper understanding of the concept of language learning strategies by recognizing metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive learning strategies. Metacognitive strategies, according to Wenden (1991), contain the aspect of the learners' awareness of their own strategy use, i. e., the learners themselves oversee, direct, and regulate the learning process. These kinds of strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. Cohen and Dörnyei (2002) define them as processes that learners consciously use to monitor their own learning. They involve planning, setting goals, thinking about the learning process, monitoring performance, and evaluating the learning process. Metacognitive strategies are based on knowledge about language learning, i. e., metacognitive knowledge. Wenden (1991) emphasizes the importance of metacognitive knowledge and the role of metacognition in learning a foreign language and explains the difference between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. Metacognition integrates knowledge about one's competencies and cognitive functioning, and it occupies a central place in long-term memory. Metacognition refers to the ability to monitor one's cognitive processes and the ability to regulate them in order to study their effectiveness. Metacognitive knowledge includes facts about the cognitive processes that students adopt and apply when they intend to acquire skills in different circumstances. Students' metacognitive knowledge includes their beliefs, insights, and concepts about language and the language learning process. The learning process thus becomes an integral part of the learning content, and such a process requires a new, strategic distribution of power in the classroom. Teachers and students play a crucial role in raising awareness of their views on learning strategies, openly discussing difficulties in learning, and the opportunities available to them. Strategically oriented learning and teaching strive for students to take responsibility for their learning and gain autonomy in learning, guided by their learning process.

Wenden (1991) lists three types of metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategic knowledge. Person knowledge is general knowledge that learners have about learning or themselves as learners, which includes cognitive and affective factors that facilitate learning. Task knowledge refers to what learners need to know about the procedures involved in the task in order to complete it successfully. Wenden lists the variables by which students differ and which affect the level of ultimate language attainment in the acquisition of a foreign language. These are individual differences among students, such as age, language aptitude, intelligence, motiva-

tion, personality, sociocultural background, as well as cognitive and learning styles. Strategic knowledge is students' stored knowledge about strategies, which Wenden divides into two groups: The first group represents knowledge about which strategies work best, and the second group consists of knowledge about general approaches to language learning that can guide learners' selection of strategies. Since metacognitive strategies encompass strategic knowledge, the concept of strategic competence has been expanded to represent a group of metacognitive strategies that play a crucial role in successful language learning.

The most widely accepted classification of learning strategies was offered by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and it is similar to the categorization proposed by Oxford (1990). The taxonomy of learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990) comprises six categories of learning strategies, subdividing them into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve direct learning and require mental processing of the language, while indirect strategies support learning indirectly and play an important role in the language learning process. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) distinguish between cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Cognitive strategies concern mental steps or actions that are employed in learning or problem solving, and they require direct analysis, transformation, or direct manipulation of learning materials. They include language processing in the human mind and represent mental processes directly concerned with the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information in order to learn. Cognitive strategies include a specific manipulation or transformation of the material that is to be learned, i. e., language input such as repetition of material, summarizing information, using mnemonics, etc. (Dörnyei, 2005). They help students understand the language material they are studying and include students' interaction with the learning content as well as the use of specific techniques in solving the language task. Unlike cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies are higher-order strategies with executive functions. They comprise analysis, monitoring, evaluation, planning, and organizing one's learning process. The use of metacognitive strategies enables language transfer and greater autonomy in learning a foreign language. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out that learners who do not have a metacognitive approach or do not know how to apply it remain without a real goal and direction, without the ability to plan their learning, monitor their own progress in learning, and their achievements, and future goals of learning. In addition to cognitive and metacognitive strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) point out that socio-affective strategies include interaction with other learners, the teacher, or speakers of the L2. These strategies put learners in an environment where they can practice without affecting the learning process directly.

Jessner (2008) points out that metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness play a significant role in developing learning strategies in multilingual speakers. Multilingual speakers use different strategies than monolingual speakers (McLaughlin, 1990; Jessner, 2008). Pavičić Takač (2008) emphasizes that there are so-called main, i. e., universal strategies used by students of all languages, and specific strategies whose use depends on the specific language. Therefore, in addition to universal strategies, multilingual speakers use a wide range of specific learning strategies that they transfer when

learning different foreign languages. Meißner (2004) developed a multilingual processing model that is based on the assumption that strategies are mutually upgraded and developed. For example, if a student is learning Spanish as a foreign language, it will be easier for him to master the language if he has already developed receptive skills in other Romance languages. Following this model, students rely on their knowledge of the previous language, using it as their starting point for learning a new language. Škiljan (1987) points out that in typologically similar languages, there are more similarities regarding structural expressions.

Foreign language learning strategies represent a significant individual characteristic of learners. Numerous foreign language researchers (Ellis, 2006; Jessner, 2008; Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot, 2004; Pawlak, 2008) have pointed out the importance of explicit strategy instruction and the development of individual strategy systems. Explicit instruction includes the development of students' awareness of their strategies, identifying them, and providing opportunities for practice and self-evaluation. Systematic, explicit strategy instruction should be offered to students from the very beginning of language learning, and it should be integrated into the general learning strategy instruction. Finally, the teacher's task is to guide students toward the use of efficient learning strategies, thereby enabling each student to be individually responsible for selecting and implementing a particular strategy. This will influence the development of positive attitudes towards language learning and encourage students to be autonomous and self-directed in the learning process.

## 4 Conclusion

Considering the linguistic diversity and complexity of multilingual education, multilingualism is becoming an essential feature of the linguistic and cultural identity of every nation. Jessner (2008) emphasizes the importance of learning strategies as a crucial aspect of multilingual development. Her research shows that the number of strategies used increases in line with the linguistic and cognitive development of students in contact with different languages. In other research, Jessner (2017) points out the importance of developing multilingual competence in students. She further emphasizes the need to design appropriate teaching materials aimed at raising students' language awareness related to the development of multilingual ability.

Multicompetence approaches to the development of teaching materials have to consider the need for common grammatical terminology as one of the prerequisites for multilingual learning. As pointed out by Jessner (2017), a great deal of multilingual learning happens through comparison and the promotion of metalinguistic awareness. A better awareness of language learning strategies can be built on the constructive potential of comparing languages. Ideally, the development of multiliteracies is an integral part of multilingual education (Cummins, 2006). If this interpretation is applied to a multilingual learning environment, explicit strategy instruction has to be implemented to achieve a particular level of success in foreign language learning (Jessner, 2008).

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# **Training Global Citizens**





# Respect, Reflect, Revise: Teaching Multicultural Competencies in a Globalized Undergraduate Classroom

LARISA BUHIN, JULES MOSKOVITS

## 1 Introduction

Multicultural counseling developed as a research, training, and applied specialty within the fields of psychological counseling and counseling psychology in the U. S. during the past 30 years. It problematized the approaches to psychology and psychotherapy dominant in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the grounds that, although developed from a narrow set of values, worldviews, and norms (White European, Christian, middle class, male, and heterosexual), they were nonetheless regarded and utilized as universally applicable. As Pedersen (2001) explained, multiculturalism challenged the prioritization of the search for universal explanations of human behavior (i. e., laws and rules parallel to those in natural sciences) and brought cultural differences into focus as equally important in understanding individuals, families, and groups. Furthermore, multicultural counseling stresses the need to incorporate broad socio-political forces like discrimination, racism, power, oppression, privilege, and social (in-)justice in understanding and treating the psychological and social functioning of individuals, families, and social groups, as these forces have direct and indirect consequences for their physical and psychological well-being and access to resources (Buhin, 2006a).

Multicultural counseling originally focused more narrowly on issues of race and ethnicity, then expanded to include gender, sexual orientation, social class, immigration, disability, and other social identities. Largely conceptualized as discrete or separate aspects of a person, these social identities were approached as requiring unique and distinct (domain-specific) sets of competencies for effective counseling and psychotherapeutic work. While the aspect of domain-specific competencies remains relevant, multicultural counseling now increasingly embraces the concept of intersectionality (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019; Crenshaw, 1989), which posits that the different social identities of an individual (e. g., gender, race, socio-economic class, etc.) interact with each other to create lived realities more complex than can be captured and understood by considering an individual's single social identity. For example, the experience of a poor, immigrant, single mother will be a complex simultaneous interaction of poverty *and* xenophobia *and* sexism rather than just immigrant status. In other words, as Crenshaw (1989) astutely argued, the "intersectional experience is greater than the sum" (p. 140) of discrete social identities. This complexity makes multicultural counseling

and resulting multicultural competencies inherently multidisciplinary and multidimensional.

The goal of multicultural counseling training is the development of multicultural counseling competencies or a set of specific skills that enable future counselors and therapists to work effectively with clients whose cultural identities differ from their own (Estrada, et al., 2002). Buhin (2006b) defined multicultural competencies as a set of skills for mental health professionals that include knowledge about various cultural groups existing in a society, theories of development of varied types of social identities, negative effects of oppression and inadequate access to psychological services on psychosocial well-being of disenfranchised social groups, and an adequate understanding of a variety of culturally appropriate intervention strategies ranging from assessment and psychotherapy to advocacy.

This chapter aims to briefly introduce multicultural counseling and competencies and make a case for including courses focused on the development of multicultural competencies in undergraduate education and in all areas of study (i. e., not only psychology and teacher education). Finally, we present a model course for teaching undergraduate students multicultural competencies in a highly globalized higher education setting. To accomplish this goal, we use as a case study a course delivered in the psychology program at Touro University Berlin (a campus of Touro University New York, USA).

## **2 Benefits of Teaching Multicultural Competencies to Undergraduate Students**

In the United States, multicultural counseling classes typically take place at the post-bachelor level of education in psychology and counseling. As master and/or doctorate degrees are required for the independent practice of counseling or psychotherapy, this gradual building up of professional knowledge and skills might make sense from a purely clinical or counseling perspective. Multicultural competencies appear to be similarly neglected in the psychology curriculum across Europe (Buhin-Krenek, 2019). We argue that the complete lack of attention to the development of multicultural competencies at the bachelor level of education — both within and outside psychology curricula — is shortsighted as most university students will complete their academic career at the bachelor level and enter a multicultural job market. Therefore, undergraduate education is an excellent time to intervene in the development of multicultural competencies and reach the broadest audience of learners. Understanding how to navigate interactions with a diverse array of individuals has beneficial consequences, such as perspective-taking and communication skills that propel us beyond our personal horizons, or an awareness of strengths and needs in vocational settings as well as in our daily lives (Meeussen, et al., 2014; Nguyen, 2019; Schwarzenhal et al., 2020). Creating a culture-focused undergraduate learning environment prompts students to start devel-

oping their multicultural competencies, which prepare them for the diverse workplace or further studies.

In the workplace, multicultural experience enriches teamwork processes, sparks creativity, and improves work performance (Nguyen, 2019). Cultural diversity in a team is a potent incubator for innovation, and individuals who are sensitive to a variety of communication styles and worldviews are better able to cooperate with an international workforce (Debesay, et al., 2022). Various aspects of multicultural competencies have also been linked to job satisfaction among professionals working abroad (expatriates). For example, Peltokorpi and Froese (2014) have found cultural empathy, emotional stability in stressful situations (like those that can arise in multicultural encounters), and the ability to establish relationships (social initiative) to contribute to the job satisfaction of expatriates. Understanding our own values in relation to those of others can provide the necessary impetus for effectively communicating our needs, thereby helping us feel seen, heard, and understood, which will heighten overall employee satisfaction. It follows that happy employees are productive employees, and when job satisfaction and performance are high, individuals tend to stick around (Bregenzer et al., 2020), decreasing the organizational burdens due to staff turnover.

Even within the academic world, teaching multicultural competence is not for naught. Learnings from one domain typically transfer to other areas. Instilling students with a sensitivity for diverse mindsets allows them to engage with their academic content through a critical lens and helps them question biases in their own work as well as in new content they encounter. Culturally humble individuals—that is, those who are aware of their own biases and limitations—make for intellectually humble individuals; “knowing that I may not know, but wanting to learn” is a foundational virtue for sound scientific work as well as personal growth. Research has shown that a curriculum that is infused with multiculturalism and multicultural competencies contributes to students with higher multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills as compared to those students who took only a single multicultural class (Dameron et al., 2020). García-Álvarez and colleagues (2022) found the following skills to be among the five most frequently named transversal — or soft — skills cited in research on university graduates’ employability: (a) socio-relational skills; (b) “fundamental skills for responding to situations and contexts that require compromise, agreement, and understanding in global environments” (p. 13); and (c) skills related to socially responsible behavior “in the face of the discrimination and social injustice that characterizes a competitive individualistic society” (p. 14). Both relational skills and skills related to socially responsible behavior are part of the multicultural competency behavioral repertoire. We therefore argue that multicultural competencies should be seen as an essential component of an array of skills acquired by students during their undergraduate studies, and recognized as a prerequisite for entry into the global job market. In other words, a multicultural approach to higher education is not just ideologically desirable, but also financially worthwhile.

## 3 Context of the Class

### 3.1 Institutional Context

Touro University Berlin (a campus of Touro University New York, USA) is a unique institution in the German higher education landscape: it is international, private, and Jewish. Its mission includes the creation of a diverse and inclusive academic environment in which learners acquire key academic subject knowledge as well as competencies for communication and work in multicultural, global settings. Since its inception in 2003, Touro Berlin has attracted an extremely high percentage of international students. In the past five years, the percentage of students with international backgrounds enrolled at Touro Berlin has consistently been upward of 60%. Furthermore, Touro Berlin attracts students of all religious affiliations. This uncommonly diverse student body simultaneously presents opportunities for co-constructed and culturally responsive teaching as well as curricular, pedagogical, and academic background challenges. In other words, our classes assert the need to attend to cultural difference regardless of the course content, and our institutional Jewish identity, the institution's geographic location in Berlin, and the very present history of the Holocaust add unique layers of complexity to the teaching encounters.

A further challenge in teaching such a diverse group of students is the variety of academic backgrounds as well as the different cultural discourses around culture, diversity, social (in)justice, and discrimination in which the students have been socialized and which are most likely unknown to the instructors. The authors' own teaching and learning experiences in this environment have overwhelmingly shown increased openness to and engaged curiosity about cultural difference among students. These predispositions, however, are no guarantee for avoidance of interpersonal or intercultural miscommunication and/or conflict.

### 3.2 Geopolitical Context

The Black Lives Matter movement had been gaining prominence in media outlets since 2014, and with the killing of George Floyd by the police in the United States in May of 2020, the global public support for the movement exploded. The brutality and visibility of this killing, most recent in a long series of killings of Black people by the police in the US, also led to more prominent discourse on racism in Europe. The opportunity to openly discuss racism in its different forms simultaneously posed a challenge as to how to address it outside of the US. Racism is difficult to discuss in many Western European countries for various reasons (Rastas, 2019), and it is often portrayed as an "American problem." Germany has an especially complicated relationship with racism because "Rasse", the German translation of the term "race", originally meant what in English would be described by the word "breed" and was used during the Nazi era as a derogatory term to dehumanize all people who were not "pure" or Aryan Germans, and particularly Jews. Since the end of WWII, many European states, and Germany especially, have attempted to distance themselves from the word "race" because of these Nazi connotations and connections. In the process, Germany along

with other European nations, seems to have somewhat lost a way to discuss the problem of racism.

In her teaching at Touro Berlin, Larisa Buhin, the first author of this chapter, has had several students report that there is no equivalent term for “race” in their native languages (although the term racism exists). At the same time, Touro Berlin is a very diverse institution of higher education with students who belong to various visible socially constructed racial groups and who have themselves experienced race-based discrimination and violence. Furthermore, with a geographically diverse student body studying in the EU at a German-U.S. institution, we needed to find both appropriate content and processes for teaching a class on multicultural competencies in a way that was not overly U. S.-centric (Gay, 2015).

## 4 Pedagogical Foundations of the Course

The course, *Multicultural Counseling*, which serves as a case study for this chapter, was added to the undergraduate psychology curriculum at Touro Berlin as an advanced topic course in 2017. The course presented here was delivered as an intensive two-week course with 10 daily sessions of 4,5 hrs. It has also been delivered as a 15-week, semester-long course. Psychology students who were in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year of study enrolled in the course. The course is based on the ideals of liberation pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2002), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000, 2015), and cultural pluralism (Schachner, 2019). As such, its foundational values were:

- cultural diversity as a social, personal, and professional value;
- the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2002) as a prerequisite for the development of a multicultural worldview and competencies;
- centering the knowledge and needs of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000);
- perspective-taking (Gay, 2000); and
- adoption of cultural humility (Hook et al., 2013) as a way of being.

The aims of the course were to teach the theory of multicultural counseling, to expose students to a conceptualization of psychological health, illness, and intervention in connection with broad social, political, and economic forces, and to foster an atmosphere conducive to cultivating a sustainable sense of cultural humility.

In his writings and work, Paulo Freire championed education as a way of bringing about social change and liberation. Freire (1970/2002) advocated for an engaged, critical approach to learning and teaching as well as a praxis that consisted of action and reflection leading to critical awareness-raising (a less-than-sufficient translation of Freire’s term “conscientization”), as prerequisites for the liberation of the oppressed in all global societies. This liberation would lead to a change of unbalanced power distributions and to a greater ability of individuals to participate in their societies equally and freely. While Freire primarily addressed the needs of the oppressed in his writings, he recognized that both the oppressed and the oppressors are damaged and dehumanized

through oppression. Therefore, liberation pedagogy would have long-term benefits for both groups. Individuals' lived experiences are centralized in Freire's approach and great value is placed on the critical examination of the sources of knowledge. At the same time, Freire criticized a hierarchical relationship between instructor and students in which the instructor is seen as *possessing* the knowledge and the students are seen as *receiving* the knowledge. Liberation pedagogy is based on an egalitarian relationship which is the foundation of the process of co-constructing knowledge and supporting the process of reflection and action. In a classroom built on ideas of liberation pedagogy, the instructor and the students determine learning goals together and learn from each other through meaningful dialogue.

Culturally responsive teaching espouses goals partially similar to liberation pedagogy in that it aims to be empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive pedagogy is "a student-centered approach to teaching that includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences" (Wisdom et al., 2019, p. 331). Gay (2000) writes that culturally responsive teaching validates and affirms students' heritage, incorporates a variety of pedagogical approaches to support students' academic strengths, uses examples meaningful to students' lived experiences to illustrate theoretical concepts and make them more approachable, and integrates "multicultural information, resources, and materials" (p. 29).

According to Schachner (2019), cultural pluralism is a more recent development in approaching cultural diversity in social psychology and education. Schachner (2019) treats the terms "cultural pluralism" and "multiculturalism" as synonymous (p. 3). Cultural pluralism criticizes cultural equality and inclusion for promoting color-blindness by overemphasizing commonalities and human universals, and instead strives to acknowledge and value group differences in the classroom as a learning resource. Consequently, we feel that there is a good fit between culturally responsive teaching, cultural pluralism, and multicultural competencies.

Hook and colleagues (2013) define the idea of cultural humility within multicultural counseling as "a virtue or a disposition" (p. 354) rather than a set of distinct skills a multiculturally competent mental health professional would possess. We find that this conceptualization of cultural humility as a way of being fits the academic developmental goals of undergraduate students well because it releases them from the burden of memorizing a quantifiable amount of knowledge. At the same time, this burden is replaced by a challenge "to overcome the natural tendency to view one's own beliefs, values, and worldview as superior" (Hook et al., 2013, p. 354) and to instead assume the position of a curious and engaged observer, comfortable in a perpetual state of relative ambiguity and open to the worldviews, beliefs, and values of others.

## 5 How to Teach Multicultural Competencies to Undergraduate Students

### 5.1 Pedagogical Foci

We considered the following realities and restrictions while designing the course:

- a) This was an undergraduate-level course;
- b) The geopolitical setting was the EU, but the students attending the course were from Europe, Asia, and Africa;
- c) not all students planned to pursue an advanced degree in clinical or counseling fields, such as psychology, psychotherapy, or social work; and
- d) the course was to meet entirely online (in real time) with severely limited opportunities for social interaction and experiential learning because due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, all museums, cultural institutions, houses of worship, coffee shops, restaurants, etc. were closed.

We based the course and the learning outcomes on the model of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies proposed by Ratts et al. (2016), which include knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, and actions, as well as concepts of privilege and marginalization, thereby drawing on literature in the areas of social justice and intersectionality. We used the broad meaning of multicultural counseling as a philosophy or worldview that is applicable in any professional and personal interaction as the starting point in designing the class. This broad definition includes race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, immigration status, national origin, disability, and religious affiliation (Buhin, 2006a). As society's thinking about social identity continues to evolve, the definition can be expected to evolve as well.

We additionally conceptualized multicultural counseling competencies as global and domain-specific. Global competencies encompass the knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills that are fundamental and applicable in any multicultural setting (counseling, business, education, health, etc.). They include understanding one's own worldview, cultural humility, tolerance for ambiguity, social justice, and intersectionality. Domain-specific skills and actions are developed within specific settings, e.g., through working with students with disabilities, transgender clients, immigrants, or refugees.

As this was an introductory course, we focused on dimensions of awareness, attitudes, and knowledge. We selected foundational readings in multicultural counseling, oppression and social justice and their effect on psychological well-being, and centered the class learning process on identity exploration, personal growth, and as much experiential learning as was possible during a pandemic lockdown. Larisa Buhin, the first author, was very fortunate to have an advanced student (Jules Moskovits, the chapter's co-author) conducting their internship with her and interested in co-teaching the class. After setting the pedagogical framework, we collaboratively developed the course content and involved the students in finalizing it as soon as the course began. Our pedagogical and curricular decisions were matched to the professional developmental stage



of the participants in the class, relying more on lived experiences, and self-reflection sparked by readings and conversations than on actual counseling experiences, which undergraduate students are unlikely to have, anyway. We found support for our decision in the literature. Pedersen (2001) wrote:

The foundation of competence is cultural self-awareness of his or her biases, stereotypes and beliefs by each counseling professional. Increased awareness requires challenging our assumptions about ourselves and about other groups and worldviews to discover those basic underlying assumptions which we each assume to be so obviously true that no proof or evidence is required. (p. 21)

## 5.2 Learning Outcomes

We set the following learning outcomes for the course:

- a) explaining theories of multicultural counseling, theories of identity development, and social justice;
- b) demonstrating an understanding of the ways in which individual identities, worldviews, values, and biases are shaped by multiple cultural influences;
- c) identifying and explaining the intersectionalities of one's own and others' cultural identities;
- d) discussing current theories and research related to the impact of culture on our daily ecologies in local and global contexts;
- e) engaging in intercultural contact with increased sensitivity and competence;
- f) critically evaluating psychologists' and counselors' role in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination;
- g) committing to engage in life-long development of cultural self-awareness.

These learning outcomes represent the mixed focus on acquisition of knowledge and personal reflection and growth consistent with the Ratts et al. (2016) model of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies described above. They also indicate the type of teaching that is required in a class such as this: a combination of lecture-based transmission of knowledge, promotion of intrapersonal reflection, group dialogue, experiential learning, and feedback. While this pedagogical list may seem daunting, the key strength and distinctive feature of teaching with a liberation pedagogy stance is that the responsibility for all of these processes is shared between students and instructors.

## 5.3 Teaching Strategies

Not every teaching strategy we used — not even the majority of them — is unique to liberation pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, or the teaching of multicultural competencies. Similar approaches can be found in feminist critical pedagogy (i. e., Dhala & Johnson, 2021). We will briefly highlight a few that may be less familiar to instructors who primarily teach lecture-based classes, and we will describe adaptations

that can easily be made to the more “traditional” Confucian-style teaching. Appendix 1 links learning outcomes with teaching strategies and learning assignments.

### **5.3.1 Co-Construction of Learning Goals and Assessments**

Once we conceptualized multicultural competencies as global and domain-specific, we constructed a basic syllabus and received students’ input on additional topics they were interested in. The students enrolled in the course had selected “sexual and gender identity” and “Muslim and Arab persons” as their topics due to students’ self-professed interests and high levels of Islamophobia in the EU and the US.

We then proceeded to have a conversation about how the students wanted to be assessed on their learning process. We created a few assessment options that had the potential to capture different student strengths, such as written or oral expression, creativity, and analytical reasoning. In addition, the students were in charge of creating appropriate grading rubrics which the instructor was to use in evaluating their work. The students indicated how the different aspects of an assignment should be evaluated: for example, should creativity of an assignment carry equal weight as the content presented and what should be the distribution of total points across different aspects. These strategies contribute to greater investment and participation of students (Damianakis et al., 2019).

### **5.3.2 Selection of Culturally Responsive Literature**

A critical question posed through liberation pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and multicultural counseling is the source of knowledge. Much of the fundamental psychological literature is written by researchers and practitioners of similar cultural backgrounds, the so-called WEIRD — Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (Pollet & Saxton, 2019) — and based on research conducted with participants of similar backgrounds (Henrich, et al., 2010). In 2008, Arnett conducted a review of top journals between the years 2003 and 2007, representing a range of foci of psychology — developmental, personality, abnormal, family, health, social, and educational — to determine the level of diversity represented in contemporary U. S. psychology. Arnett discovered an overrepresentation of first authors being based in US universities (73 %) and a gross underrepresentation of the world outside of the United States and Europe: 1 % of all findings covered by the review were from Asia, another 1 % from Israel specifically, and none from South America, Africa, Oceania, and the Middle East. Arnett’s additional analysis of the global representation of the samples included in studies published by the journals revealed an equally devastating picture: 67 % of the samples were from the U. S. and 13 % from Europe, while only “3 % were in Asia, 1 % were in Latin America, and less than 1 % were in Africa or the Middle East. One percent were Israeli” (p. 604). By contrast, North America and Europe make up about 14 % of the world’s population, while Asia and Africa combined account for about 78 % (Population Reference Bureau, 2022).

The problem with this bias in the production of science is, as Henrich and colleagues (2010) so eloquently put it:

The sample of contemporary Western undergraduates that so overwhelms our database is not just an extraordinarily restricted sample of humanity; it is frequently a distinct outlier vis-a-vis other global samples. It may represent the worst population on which to base our understanding of *Homo sapiens*. (p. 22)

We use this information twofold in the teaching of multicultural counseling. First, we introduce these findings and conclusions to the students to raise awareness and critically examine the sources of foundational knowledge in psychology as Freire (1970/2002) advocated. Second, we use this information to motivate the entire learning community (students and instructors alike) to search for more inclusive and representative literature, to bring in their own life experiences (Gay, 2000), as well as explanations of psychological phenomena offered by their own cultures as a way of providing cognitive complexity. Aral and colleagues (2022) describe the process of “heritage and intercultural learning” (p. 775) in which all students contribute knowledge of their traditions and customs, and the entire classroom has the opportunity to learn something new, particularly when it comes to underrepresented perspectives. This type of learning exchange meets several teaching and learning goals: reflecting on similarities and differences regarding the participants’ cultural backgrounds; observing and examining one’s own emotional and cognitive reactions to the learning, including any prejudices or other negative reactions that may be brought up; and practicing cultural humility.

### 5.3.3 Creating a Safe Space — Boundaries, Modeling and Feedback

For many students, this course is the first opportunity to put into words the cultural ways of life that are so commonplace to them that they do not even notice them. It is often their first time to speak publicly about their own negative experiences of cultural difference or “not belonging”, about having been ostracized, ridiculed, shamed or in other ways made to feel as cultural outsiders. Simultaneously, this is an opportunity for other students to practice the basic counseling skills of active listening, non-judging, and empathy.

Creating and protecting the type of a safe learning space where vulnerability is invited and honored requires the instructor to set clear boundaries. This includes discussions of personal boundaries, clarification of self-determination and agency, the instructor’s equal participation in the learning process, and a vigilant observation of classroom processes. In our class, the last point was greatly assisted by the fact that two of us co-taught. This way, we could share the responsibility for these numerous, parallel tasks. We were also guided by values embedded in transformational learning: building rapport, caring for each other, showing mutual respect, humility, and supporting students in taking learning risks (Calderwood & Rizzo, 2022).

In order to create the kind of learning environment in which students could feel comfortable sharing positive and negative reactions and experiences, we started the course by reviewing the desired learning outcomes and plans for assessing them as a way of ensuring the students knew what to expect. We see this as a process similar to informed consent in research, therapy, or counseling. Then, we proceeded to talk about expectations for class involvement, privacy, and confidentiality. We had a conversation

with the students about their comfort zones, difficult topics, and about possible ways of being challenged and challenging others. Before they shared intimate information about themselves, we encouraged students to consider what it would feel like to have relative strangers know these things about them. We offered the alternative of sharing something within the journal assignment, which was read only by the instructor. This process conversation or *talking about talking* is crucial for preparing a positive and growth-promoting learning environment.

We also talked about maintaining the confidentiality of what was shared within the classroom. Here, we explained that recording the class in any way was not permitted and emphasized that while it is not appropriate to identify course participants and what they may have said in class to others, it is appropriate to discuss the topics brought up in class. For example, it would be acceptable to say, “Today, we had a very interesting conversation in class about gender and what role it plays in people’s identities.” However, it would not be acceptable to say “I was so surprised when Student X came out as transgender today. Did you know that?” We find that especially undergraduate students appreciate these kinds of concrete examples for sharing their own learning in the class without inappropriately sharing stories that do not belong to them.

#### **5.3.4 Addressing Linguistic Differences and Talking About Uncomfortable Topics**

As we briefly mentioned before, some of the students in our class came from cultures where the topic of racism is considered a social taboo, whose languages do not include adequate vocabulary to address the social construction of race and/or the problem of racism, and who never before had an opportunity to discuss such difficult topics in class. The linguistic challenge regarding adequate terminology around racism and socially constructed ideas of race presents a good opportunity for discussing both concepts. We invited students to think about which racial and ethnic groups in their home countries were targets of prejudice and oppression. This sometimes required asking students what groups of people were seen as “acceptable” subjects of jokes in their cultures, or which groups of people were considered less desirable as workers or romantic partners. Students who have not had a chance to discuss racism openly may struggle with direct recognition of racism, but we found that these questions about sanctioned cultural practices inevitably resulted in emerging recognition of race- or ethnicity-based oppression and helped the students become aware of common mechanisms and tools of racism applied in different contexts.

In sharing their cultural experiences with each other, students were also exposed to different cultural practices, norms, and values. Discussing these varied norms and values gave the students an opportunity to practice cultural humility. Additionally, in order to bring both race and racism closer to students’ lived experiences, we used a lot of locally based media sources (i. e., newspaper articles) and polls (i. e., the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 2020) to demonstrate how racism extends beyond White and Black U. S. Americans, as it is sometimes perceived outside of the U. S. We applied theories and concepts learned from textbooks and scientific articles to analyze what we read in

daily newspapers and thereby met three of our goals: locally relevant texts, culturally responsive teaching, and applied learning.

### 5.3.5 Case Study Presentations

Each student chose a multicultural counseling case study from a collection of cases described by multicultural counseling experts and assembled in a textbook (Sue et al., 2013) on a topic or population of interest to them, thereby adding further domain-specific dimensions. They then prepared case presentations which had to include a summary of the case, a summary of clinical interventions along with explanations of how they represented multicultural counseling competencies, and their own thoughts. Students were asked to reflect upon the approach presented in the book, their individual learning insights, what they would have done differently, and what areas for their own growth they identified for more effective work with a similar client. Finally, each student created two questions for prompting a discussion with the rest of the class. Other students then offered feedback to the presenting student. The case study assignment gave students another opportunity to individualize their learning and work on their domain-specific multicultural competencies.

Because the cases in the textbook are described by experts in their respective fields, students receive realistic and structured representations of clinical situations. This practice appears to be a good learning step prior to actual job experience (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019). As our class at Touro Berlin was offered exclusively to 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-year psychology students, they had the prerequisite knowledge of clinical psychology and abnormal psychology on which they could build. In situations where the class is offered to students outside of psychology, a mix of case studies from industrial/organizational psychology, political science, coaching, sociology, medicine, and other academic fields would be more appropriate.

### 5.3.6 My Cultural Identity Presentation

This assignment was a personal presentation that integrated theoretical concepts. Students were asked to address as many of their own social identities as they felt comfortable sharing, and to reflect on personal experiences related to cultural, racial, and ethnic identity, as well as the personal or community impact of mechanisms of privilege, prejudice, and oppression on their lives along with the description of cultural norms, values, and worldviews during their presentations. We, the instructors, completed this assignment, too, presenting our own cultural identities consistent with the ideals of liberation pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2002). To make the assignment multidimensional, experiential, as well as fun, we typically invite students to share food that represents their culture. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the online nature of the course we shared recipes and pictures of favorite or typical foods and cultural resources available in Berlin instead, e. g., places of worship, galleries, cultural clubs, grocery stores, and restaurants.

### 5.3.7 Journaling

The Internal Journey Diary assignment started with students taking an Implicit Attitudes Test and reflecting on their results. We used the tests available through Project Implicit of Harvard University (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>). The students were instructed not to include their test results but rather discuss what they learned about themselves and the biases they may hold. Other instructions for the content of the diary stated that the entries should pertain to students' own racial and cultural self-explorations and consciousness-raising. We provided some structure for the diary in listing possible questions that students could answer. Those questions included discussing one's emotional reactions to a course reading or a current global event, a consideration of how those reactions might help or hinder a multicultural encounter, areas for growth identified through the reading, or one's own reactions that might lead to improved effectiveness in multicultural interactions. This type of critical self-reflection activity is part of a transformative pedagogy approach (Cranton, 2002). In alignment with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), we left the format of the diary entries open to interpretation. Students could submit essays, poems, photo-collages, drawings, paintings, visual or audio recordings, or other formats they felt best captured their internal journey of learning.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

The undergraduate psychology course described here was used as a model to encourage instructors and leadership across academic disciplines to consider the additional educational value they could offer to their students—both academically and professionally—by including such courses in their undergraduate curricula. We argue that multicultural competencies are needed for practically every human interaction in today's globalized work environment. Future librarians, historians, managers, engineers, or teachers will all work in diverse settings, where solid knowledge exclusively of their field of study will be insufficient for effective job performance.

### 6.1 Successes and Challenges

In our course at Touro Berlin, students and instructors successfully built a classroom environment that was warm and supportive yet challenging. The level of interaction and engagement was high, even though the class met exclusively online. Students expressed their appreciation for the course, stated that it challenged them to think about their sociocultural environment, and acquired a good deal of knowledge. Students found their own ways of challenging each other to consider different perspectives or to imagine how a comment could be insensitive and hurtful to others. Although the students as a group did not have any significant counseling experience, all participants—both students and co-instructors—made themselves vulnerable by sharing personal experiences and reactions to the course materials. This gave each of them a direct experience of “a different lived reality” on which they could then reflect, creating the possi-

bility for personal growth based in accordance with the goals of liberation (Freire, 1970/2002), transformation (Cranton, 2002), and critical feminist pedagogy (Dhala & Johnson, 2021).

The course presented here was designed as an intensive two-week course with 10 daily sessions of 4.5 hrs. Among the advantages of this format is that the extended periods of shared time allowed the class to become familiar and comfortable with one another, and to engage in connected, ongoing dialogue. At the same time, the daily sessions allowed for very limited reflection time in between classes. The schedule also made it challenging for the students to keep up with the readings, a fact that we anticipated and incorporated into the class design by giving students extended breaks during which they could review their reading notes. The course has also been offered as a semester-long (15 weeks) course, which allows different opportunities for experiential learning and reflection. For example, students have more time to think about their readings and prepare for an in-class discussion or to combine an assigned readings with a visit to a cultural center between classes.

Given the opportunity, an extremely diverse group of students will naturally contribute to a lively discussion around topics of multiculturalism and diversity. An instructor working with a less diverse class must pay very close attention to portraying a multitude of cultures and identities throughout the sessions without falling into the traps of essentialism, tokenism, or stereotyping. This might be done by means of guest lectures, excursions, videos, or other supporting material. Similarly, whereas a small number of students is advantageous in creating a connected learning team, it usually comes at the price of a smaller number of different perspectives present in class. With limited representation of diverse identities, there is always a risk of students being put in the role of “ambassador and spokesperson” for an entire group of people or, conversely, being dismissed and discounted as “only one perspective”. We encourage instructors to be vigilant about these disruptive processes and use them as learning opportunities by engaging students in dialogue about representation and resistance, for example. One way of accomplishing this could be by commenting on such interactions when they happen in the classroom and facilitating a conversation about them while drawing attention to the parallel process that members of marginalized identities often experience in professional or social interactions.

Compared to students socialized in the questioning style of the Socratic method, a highly interactive approach to teaching as is presented in this article places students who are more comfortable in a Confucian-style or lecture-based classroom at a disadvantage (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). This can be counteracted by spending sufficient time at the beginning of the course on explaining the nature of the course and the expectations for participation, as well as building a framework for discussion with the students in which they feel safe to disclose their thoughts and reactions. Additionally, grading components that are primarily individual, introspective, and written, thereby not requiring spontaneous in-group disclosure, can create a way for all students to participate in a way that suits them best.

## 6.2 Final Thoughts

Ultimately, we believe that society at large benefits when institutions of higher education shape students who are both intellectually and culturally competent. There is no excuse not to expand our undergraduate curricula by including multicultural competencies in today's internationalized higher education. In fact, any nation that wishes to internationalize its higher education and any institution that wishes to internationalize its student body should consider multicultural competencies in both formal/explicit and hidden/implicit curricula as essential to meeting that goal.

In developing their multicultural competencies, a person moves from increased awareness to knowledge acquisition and, finally, skill development (Sue et al., 1989). The process is circular rather than linear as each newly acquired fact or attempted intervention ideally triggers critical self-reflection and further increased awareness that spurs more knowledge-seeking. Therefore, it is more accurate to speak about the process of life-long development of multicultural competencies rather than the acquisition or state of achieved multicultural competence. An undergraduate course like the one presented here can start students on a life-long learning process and provide them with sufficient tools to support continued discovery of self and others.

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## Appendix

### Learning Outcomes and Corresponding Teaching Strategies and Assignments

Learning Outcomes	Teaching Strategies and Assignments
Explain theories of multicultural counseling, theories of identity development, and social justice.	Case study presentations Cultural identity presentation Journaling Lectures including student-led lectures Research summaries Discussions
Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which individual identities, worldviews, values, and biases are shaped by multiple cultural influences.	Maintaining a safe space Case study presentations Journaling Research summaries Discussions
Identify and explain the intersectionalities of one's own and others' cultural identities.	Case study presentations Journaling Research summaries Discussions
Discuss current theories and research related to the impact of culture on our daily ecologies in local and global contexts.	Case study presentations Journaling Lectures including student-led lectures Research summaries Discussions

Learning Outcomes	Teaching Strategies and Assignments
Engage in intercultural contact with increased sensitivity and competence.	Maintaining a safe space Case study presentations Discussions
Critically evaluate psychologists' role in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination.	Case study presentations Journaling Research summaries Discussions
Engage in life-long development of cultural self-awareness.	Co-construction of learning goals and assessments Journaling Discussions



# Language Education as an Antecedent of Management Careers: Findings from a Long-Term Career Panel in Germany

HOLGER LUEDEKE, REINAR LUEDEKE<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Business researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of second and third language acquisition for management careers. While research focusing on the connection between language and management was scarce even twenty years ago, the last decades have seen a surge of interest in language-related topics (for summaries of the main debates, see Karhunen et al. 2018; Tenzer et al., 2017). Initially, the main interest was in cross-cultural management and international managers moving to foreign subsidiaries of multinational conglomerates where they need to connect with local staff or customer bases (e. g., Caligiuri, 2006; Coulson-Thomas, 1992). But in the past few years, there has been a growing awareness that multi-lingual staff has become a common feature even in numerous small and medium-sized companies across the world (Angouri & Piekkari, 2018). Furthermore, a native speaker who never left their home country can nevertheless become a “linguistic expat” (Neeley, 2017, p. 42) in a work environment with a dominant non-native language. This often takes place in the context of corporate language mandates in large multinational corporations, particularly in the form of an official mandate for English as the lingua franca of business (Komori-Glatz, 2018; Neeley & Dumas, 2016).

But multilingual challenges are not limited to large companies. In export-oriented economies, even small and medium-sized firms are often confronted with different language requirements—in their sales and service operations, for example (Crick, 1999). Additionally, individual employees increasingly have careers involving numerous changes between organizations, making language proficiency an asset to develop and maintain for better job mobility throughout life (Pudelko & Tenzer, 2018). Accordingly, it is established in the literature that “the use of multiple languages [is] not limited to expatriates, but [has] become a defining feature of workplaces today ... and the significance of language skills in steering and shaping careers in 21st century organizations [has] increased” (Itani et al., 2015, pp. 368–369).

Surprisingly little can be found on the implications of these new realities for the important field of career planning (Gould, 1979). What choices should a proactive stu-

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dent make when trying to anticipate the challenges of a career in specialized business functions or general management? Should language education become a significant part of undergraduate and graduate business electives, or is language proficiency a skill better acquired in a career's later phases? What are the chances and risks of an early investment of time and resources in acquiring a foreign business language? This study focuses on the potential advantages of academic foreign business language acquisition in the career preparation phase of students in business and economics.

We argue and show empirically that early decisions concerning foreign language specialization can have positive long-term effects on graduates' careers. These positive effects exist within clear limits, however, as there are potential drawbacks, too. On the one hand, investment in language acquisition suffers from the unavoidable trade-off between specificity and flexibility. Specific languages may even generate lock-in situations<sup>2</sup> in which language proficiency leads to being stuck in particular job functions, e. g., in specialized communication or translation jobs or in a small number of organizational divisions that value a particular language. On the other hand, academic investment in the most flexible language, English, is not automatically the superior option. Since many organizations take fluent English for granted, proficiency does not offer a competitive career advantage, particularly in more senior positions. Our long-term findings show that the flexibility gained through an academic focus on English offers the strongest advantages in the first years of a graduate's career. After ten years, the results on subjective and objective career success are mixed. In the long run, an initial focus on learning business English has no additional positive impact on reaching senior management positions, at least not beyond the impact of language learning in general.

The article is structured as follows: First, we will look into theory of language and careers and develop some propositions regarding the effectiveness of learning business languages during the study of business and economics. Next, we introduce a long-term career database that was originally created by the second author and continued by the first author of this article. By following former graduates of business and economics through nearly 30 years of their respective careers, it is possible to test the short-term and long-term effects of early language specialization. In a third step, we present and interpret the empirical results, followed by a general discussion and an outlook on the limitations of our research as well as further theoretical questions.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Academic foreign language learning and subsequent career success

Command of multiple languages has become a key career skill (Bloch, 1995; Itani et al., 2015), due to the increasingly common organizational reality of “[g]lobal expansion of company activities, recruitment of an increasingly diverse workforce and access to new

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2 A lock-in effect occurs when a transaction partner is stuck in a (potentially suboptimal) business or contractual situation due to a specific investment that resulted in high costs of change (Williamson, 1981).

markets” (Angouri & Piekkari, 2018, p. 13). That does not mean, however, that there is no alternative to learning foreign languages early, i. e., during the (often academic) career preparation phase of upwardly mobile jobs. After graduates take a job, the human resources departments of many large companies provide them with language training, encourage them to persistently improve their foreign language skills, and offer extensive corporate language training to prepare them for international assignments (Neeley & Kaplan, 2014; Piekkari & Westney, 2017).

The literature offers three arguments for why language specialization during academic studies may still be an advantage: Firstly, many firms, particularly those with international operations, practice *language-sensitive recruiting*, which means that only applicants with sufficient language skills have a chance to enter promising career tracks that will eventually lead to business travels, international customers and suppliers, or assignments abroad (Peltokorpi, 2017; Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2017). Language-sensitive recruiting is “the easiest and cheapest way to approach the language problem” (Lester, 1994, p. 43), which makes language proficiency that has been acquired before applying for a job very beneficial.

Secondly, the decision to learn foreign languages before it is a mandatory job requirement has a *signaling function* (Akerlof, 1970), distinguishing the truly motivated and interested language learners from the rest. Personal initiative in language learning serves as a quality signal, as it is assumed that those who are interested in mastering several languages have hidden qualities such as cultural empathy and open-mindedness (Hedlund, 1986, p. 31; Piekkari & Westney, 2017) or above-average levels of creativity (Kharkhurin, 2015). Thirdly, high-level fluency is linked to *status effects*. Language proficiency contributes to ascribed status, i. e., the respect and deference employees enjoy due to ascribed durable characteristics (for a description of the link between status and language proficiency, see Neeley, 2013). In Europe, fluency in foreign languages, especially English, serves as a status symbol that distinguishes “international orientation” from “provincial orientation” (Prieur & Savage, 2011; see also Lueg & Lueg, 2014). Neeley has shown in her research that senior executives who lack proficiency in languages essential for corporate communication may suffer a loss of status despite their high levels of hierarchical formal authority and technical expertise (Neeley, 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016). Switching confidently between languages in oral communication is also considered part of a leader’s habitus, which is defined as distinguishing behavior based on a “feel for the game ... embodied and turned into a second nature” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63). To fully create status effects, foreign language use must appear natural and effortless; it should look neither bookish nor learned (Bourdieu, 1984). That means that early language acquisition may create competitive advantages, as employees are already able to demonstrate high language proficiency when they enter the competitive arena of their corporate careers.

The three above-mentioned arguments (selective recruiting, signaling function, and status effects) explain an early career advantage of language learning. We assume that the challenges of multilingual environments stay relevant or become even more pressing when careers develop into senior management roles. In export-oriented



economies, higher levels of responsibility are unavoidably linked to greater involvement with international customers and foreign subsidiaries. Hartmann (2016) has calculated that 78 % of the CEOs in Germany's largest corporations were promoted to the highest position only after they proved themselves in career phases abroad (p. 56). In managerial jobs, the tasks of communication, coordination, and decision-making have high priority (Mintzberg, 1989). International business research has demonstrated that in many industries and types of organizations, some of the main communication and coordination tasks of senior management profit from higher language proficiency (e.g., Angouri & Piekkari, 2018; Piekkari & Westney, 2017; Pudelko et al., 2015). Decision-making in multilingual firms improves when managers are not forced to focus on barely understood foreign languages because having to focus on intelligibility when business decisions should be at the forefront creates unnecessary distraction (Tenzer et al., 2017).

Overall, academic language acquisition as an investment in human capital (Becker, 1993) can therefore be expected to show positive effects during business graduates' career development, which leads to our first proposition:<sup>3</sup>

*Proposition 1: Foreign business language education is associated with career success.*

## 2.2 Flexibility and Specificity in Language Acquisition

Education and training as investments in human capital can result either in general skills that are easily transferable between workplaces or in firm-specific skills that create high value under current employment conditions but are harder to apply if employees move to other firms (Becker, 1993). For employees, the problem with firm-specific skills is that they decrease their external job mobility, as switching to other firms leads to a loss of value in some part of their own human capital. This causes employees to avoid firm-specific investments, especially since they often expect not to get adequately compensated for their loss of flexibility (Coff & Raffiee, 2015; Wang & Barney, 2006). In an era of the "boundaryless career" (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), with increasing job mobility and less reliance on long-term employment, language acquisition is perceived as a human capital investment in general skills, increasing the capacity to switch smoothly between a larger number of employers (Itani et al., 2015; Pudelko et al., 2016). In this logic, the number of potential employers grows with every additional language learned. However, this only fully applies if the employee is willing to move geographically, thereby switching between different language areas. If geographical mobility is low and/or counteracted by strong preferences for certain locations, the language advantage of higher flexibility may not hold. Decreased mobility is a typical development with growing age in later career stages (Groot & Verberne, 1997; Veiga, 1983), and strong location preferences can be observed even among highly mobile top managers (Yonker, 2016). For employees who are less mobile, specializing in a less common lan-

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<sup>3</sup> Since we have established broad theoretical mechanisms that we test in several phases of the career cycle, we develop *general* propositions. Detailed hypotheses on the differential impact of language education, e.g., the effect on perceived managerial discretion compared to the effect on perceived potential for promotion, have not been developed yet.

guage may limit their employment opportunities. To maintain full flexibility, one solution is to specialize in business English. English is the lingua franca of business all around the world, and it is used in most internationally operating firms—even those located in countries with other national languages (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2017). This turns a specialization in business English into the most general human capital investment of all language specializations.

Proficiency in business English also has disadvantages, which are linked to its general applicability: Due to its obvious utility value, there is a large labor pool of employees able to fluently communicate in English. Accordingly, this competency is unlikely to generate a rare competitive career advantage. Furthermore, excellence in business English may not be rewarded. To be more inclusive and to encourage participation from employees, many firms stress that English as a corporate language does not have to be spoken at an advanced level. The CEO of the large international corporation ABB even publicly described the chosen corporate language as “bad English” (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017, p. 58). In interviews with top managers from Germany, Ehrenreich (2010) was informed by some CEOs that “[a] manager must speak English, it’s not a matter of how well or badly, he must simply *speak* ... [and native speaker proficiency in English is] unrealistic [and] unnecessary from a cost-benefit point of view” (p. 418). It is therefore possible that the general applicability of business English reduces the career value of proficiency in other foreign languages.

Since theory in this largely unexplored field hints at contradictory effects of advanced business English, we suggest two competing propositions:

*Proposition 2a: Early foreign business language acquisition is more effective for career success when focused on business English.*

*Proposition 2b: Early foreign business language acquisition is less effective for career success when focused on business English.*

### 3 The Study

The panel data that we use to test our proposition is the result of a long-term research project that the second author initiated at the University of Passau, Germany.

#### 3.1 Sample characteristics: A unique longitudinal career panel

##### *a) The main panel project (1989–2003)*

The initial panel research had an economic focus on the financial returns of tertiary education and was undertaken together with the late Gerhard Kleinhenz, former director of the Research Institute of the German National Labor Agency (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung). The research took fifteen years and followed four cohorts of management and economics graduates at Passau University through their early career development from 1988 to 2003 (for a description, see Lüdeke & Allinger,

2004; Lüdeke et al., 1996). As part of a special data collection of German university records in business and management programs (Sonderauswertung), characteristics of the cluster sample (like the average age of graduates, average grades, and duration of studies) were checked for deviations from the overall population of German university students in the respective fields (Lüdeke & Beckmann, 2001): The authors did not find anything pointing to a lack of statistical representativeness.

The structure of the career panel survey resembles that of the German Socio-Economic Panel (Goebel et al., 2019): A regular set of questions covers annual changes in income, work hours, job changes, and other details of the work situation. This is complemented by one-time in-depth explorations of relevant topics. The career panel survey's main indicators were annual income, job situation, and subjective job satisfaction. The focus of the in-depth explorations was on the transition into the first job, the importance of language education, job mobility, the meaning of further on-the-job training and additional academic studies after graduation, and finally, a self-report on acquired knowledge as well as management and leadership skills, in particular the contribution of academic studies to the proficiency level reached. The surveys were sent by mail in (bi-)annual waves. Overall, the cohorts participated in six to eight survey waves. Probably due to the graduates' emotional attachment to their alma mater and the personal involvement of some of their former professors in data collection, the panel enjoyed extraordinary levels of support. Even after ten years, more than 60 % of all surveyed graduates responded, whereas half of this response rate is considered "unusually high" in comparable German research (Allinger, 2003, pp. 603–604). The panel started with 443 participants, led to a database with more than 3,000 person-years of data on many relevant job characteristics, and resulted in several publications (e. g., Lüdeke & Allinger, 2017; Lüdeke & Allinger, 2004; Lüdeke & Beckmann, 2001).

*b) Updates on the transition into senior management positions (2008/2012/2016/2021)*  
In 2003, after 15 years, the initial panel was completed. While the data had facilitated several research projects, the time and resources necessary to keep track of more than 400 highly mobile graduates proved to be demanding. Continuous updating of the address lists, tracking of name changes, sending mail surveys and follow-up letters, in-putting the regularly incoming answers, maintaining and updating separate databases under strict data privacy conditions—all of this was costly and required considerable administrative resources. Nevertheless, the idea of overcoming the typical short-term scope of career databases led to a continuation of the panel project under the direction of the first author, and on a level that promised a substantial reduction in workload while maintaining the longitudinal outlook. The career panel was narrowed down to one aspect (transition into senior management functions), research switched to external databases, and panel survey waves got restricted to selected cut-off years in the second and third decade of the graduates' careers (2008, 2012, and 2016). In 2022/23, we will finish the research project with a last management career exploration of the third and fourth panel cohorts, having collected nearly 30 years of career data on all four cohorts of the panel.

Transition into senior management functions is tracked through external management databases: the Hoppenstedt (later: Dun and Bradstreet) Management Directory/Managerdatenbank, the Firmenwissen/Creditreform database, and the Moneyhouse/Companyhouse registry. Since our main databases do not systematically track international careers outside of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, we also searched global business-related social networks and registries (LinkedIn, Xing, and Zoom Information/Zoom Info). A search for career data based on names, year of graduation, date of birth, and the last known place of residence led to the identification of the careers of 302 panelists (68%). For panelists who were registered only in our searched management databases in later waves, we also retrospectively updated the career data of former cut-off years. To make sure that we had not overlooked management careers due to name changes, we searched the remaining panelists on the search engine Google. Finding them online but not in the management databases led to a coding of 0 (= not following a managerial career track). For the panelists identified in business databases, we recorded the number of employees and sales of the organization where they worked, as well as their official job title and business function.

## 3.2 Variables and Methods

### Independent Variables

#### *Academic Language Education and English Part of Education*

The University of Passau pioneered the idea of combined language and management studies in Germany, being one of the first universities to offer a business degree with training and/or exam options in a variety of business language specializations. The language choices available here today include not only the most common languages like Spanish, French, and English, but also a number of less common language specializations like Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Italian, or Portuguese. The career panel took this pedagogical approach into account by regularly surveying graduates on the learned languages' importance and practical usefulness in their work lives. Three years after graduation, respondents were asked to indicate a) which foreign languages they spoke at the end of their studies, b) which language specializations they had chosen, and c) which level of specialization they had pursued, as language studies could be chosen on three levels with advancing expertise and duration. The variable Academic Language Education ranged from 0 (= no academic education in this language) to 3 (= highest level of academic education in this language). English Part of Education is an indicator variable (with 1 = academic education in business English).

### Dependent Variables

Due to the long-term orientation of the panel data, we could track indicators for objective and subjective career success in different career phases.

### *Job Interview and Job Offers*

In the first year after graduation, respondents were asked about several possible contributing factors that helped them get invitations for job interviews, as well as reasons why they received their first job offer. Receiving invitations is the first success measure in a multi-stage hiring process (Obukhova & Lan, 2013). The dummy variable *Job Interview* indicates whether a respondent reported that foreign language proficiency contributed to getting job interviews. The dummy variable *Job Offer* indicates that a respondent named foreign language proficiency as a reason for getting their first job.

### *Managerial Discretion and Potential for Promotion*

At the end of the first decade after graduation (in panel years 7–10, depending on the cohort), respondents were asked for a number of subjective evaluations of their career situation and career success, to be answered on a scale from 1 (= completely true) to 5 (= not true at all). We used reversed scores for our independent variables, with 5 as the maximum value to allow for a more intuitive interpretation since higher values in this system mean stronger agreement. *Managerial Discretion* is a respondent's evaluation of the extent to which the current job position offers opportunities to assume responsibility for leadership and coordination tasks. *Potential for Promotion* is the respondents' evaluation of the extent to which their current job position offers potential for further promotion into higher ranks.

### *Usefulness of Language*

At the end of the first decade after graduation (in panel years 7–10, depending on the cohort), respondents were asked to evaluate the perceived usefulness of academic language education for their subsequent career on a 3-level scale, with 1 = not very useful, 2 = useful, and 3 = very useful.

### *Income*

At the end of the first decade, we used the last three self-reported annual income values to calculate the average income of a graduate. Income is calculated as the mean of the natural logarithm for each of the three income values (recorded in Deutsche Mark in thousands).

### *Senior Executive and Top Management*

From the career panel in the second and third career decades, we created indicator variables that show whether a graduate worked in a senior management position. To identify the positions, we used the measurement levels offered by the business databases. *Top management* is a dummy variable indicating that a panelist is assigned the function of top manager (chief executive title) or vice-president with budget control, reporting directly to the CEO. Additionally, the person must be in charge of a large organization with either more than 250 employees or more than 50 million euros in annual sales. *Senior Executive* is a dummy variable indicating that a panelist is either assigned a top management position or a middle management position. We identified a panelist as a

middle manager if the person met the following definition: *Position is Director or Head of Department* in large corporations (>250 employees or > 50 million Euros in annual sales), or alternatively CEO, CFO (including authorized officers, the so-called “Einzelprokuristen”), COO, CIO, or another top executive in medium-sized corporations (50–250 employees or 10–50 million euros in annual sales).

### Controls

We controlled for additional influences known to have an impact on objective and subjective career success. *Male* is an indicator variable for gender, with 1 = respondent is male. *Age at Graduation* measures age differences between respondents. Due to the strong correlation of a respondent's age with the additional control variables *Years since graduation* (ranging from 1 to 28) and *Year of Wave* (the year in which the dependent variable was assessed, ranging from 1989 to 2016), we measured the age at the time of graduation as an invariant value. As students from different cohorts were surveyed in different years and different phases of their post-graduate career, we added *Years since graduation* and *Year of Wave* as a control to every model. Due to space limitations, the coefficients of these adjustments are not reported in our final Models 1–6. *Length of Studies* is a count variable for the number of semesters it took the graduate to complete their studies.

In year  $t = 3$  after graduation, respondents were asked to indicate what sort of international experience they had gained before graduation and how long they stayed in which country. *Corporate Stays Abroad* is a dummy variable indicating that a language spoken by a respondent was matched by an internship or student job abroad, which led to at least one month spent in the respective language zone (the average length of a work experience abroad was half a year). *Local student* is an indicator variable, with 1 = student lived not more than 150 kilometers from the university before studying. Local students are known to differ from other students in some career-relevant respects (Konrad et al., 2002). *Marketing Specialization and Finance Specialization* is also an indicator variable, with 1 = respondent specialized in Marketing (Finance) in the diploma subject choices. Marketing and Finance specialists often differ in their early career paths from others (Mintzberg, 2004). Control variables on specialization and local origin were calculated from university administration data. Due to the use of variables from different panel waves and cohorts, each model's sample size differs. Therefore, the sample size is reported for every model in addition to the model fit.

### Estimation

We tested our propositions on eight different measures of objective and subjective career success in different career phases. To ensure ease of comparison and interpretation of the results, we used linear regression models with robust standard errors for interval- and ratio-scaled dependent variables and linear probability models with robust standard errors for indicator variables (for advantages and limits of this procedure, see, e.g., Obukhova & Lan, 2013). As a robustness check, we additionally tested the Models 1, 2, 7, and 8 with logit regression models, and model 3 as an ordered logit regression model (Winship & Mare, 1984). The results were essentially unchanged. In Models 1 to

6, the data has a multilevel structure: at the lowest level, it consists of foreign languages spoken by a graduate, nested in graduates. Therefore, all regression models used standard errors clustered by persons. Since we were not interested in random between-person effects, we preferred clustered standard errors over multilevel regression models. In research contexts like ours, clustered standard errors are advantageous to deal with nested data structures, as they rely on fewer statistical assumptions than the multi-level alternatives (McNeish et al., 2016). In Models 7 and 8, we estimated a two-step regression to reflect that the graduates were (self-)selected into managerial career paths first, and then some of the managers made progress into senior management ranks. The sample consists of  $n = 1,281$  person-years.

To estimate in a first step who made it onto the managerial career track, a logit regression was run to predict who would be on the managerial career track after ten years. The value 1 was not only assigned to the future senior executives, but also to every graduate who had self-reported at least one year with managerial responsibility (“Geschäftsführung”) within the first ten years, and to everyone who indicated in the last career survey of the first decade that their managerial discretion or promotion potential was high (5 on a scale from 1 to 5). The results can be found in the lower part of Table 2. Although the results for selection into the managerial career track should be essentially identical for Models 7 and 8, they are estimated separately and simultaneously with the estimation of the subsequent senior management careers. Due to this, slight differences can appear that are statistically insignificant and become visible mainly in the second decimal place. We left both results in the table, although it would have been possible (but less accurate) to only illustrate one of the two estimation results in the lower part of Table 2.

With regard to the 47% of graduates who were identified as being on a managerial career track, we estimated, in a second step, who would fill senior management ranks in the second and third decade after graduation, i. e., in the years 2008, 2012, or 2016. One alternative possibility to our approach would have been to run a regression only on those 47% of the overall sample that were still on the career track for further promotion, to see how they develop further. The problem is that estimates focusing only on this smaller group will be biased if there are any unobserved factors that influence both whether someone is on a managerial career track after ten years and whether someone is actually promoted into senior management later on. In our context, several possible and unmeasured impact factors come to mind that could influence the move into management and senior management positions: the graduates’ ambition, their interest in work-life balance, their soft skills, etc. To adjust for possible estimation biases, we have implemented an extended linear regression model with two-stage selection. The upper part of the table, which is the most relevant one for our hypotheses, can be interpreted as the effects of the independent variables for everyone in the sample, *as if* the whole sample population was on a managerial career track<sup>4</sup> (Statacorp. 2021). Due to missing

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4 The extended regression model uses the results of both the first step (lower part) and second step (upper part) regression by allowing for correlated error terms between the two regression models. This way, the second-step regression in the upper part of the table is essentially a regression run on those on a managerial career track but includes the rest of the sample through the adjustment of coefficients by accounting for the correlated error terms (Statacorp. 2021).

values, the sample sizes for the eight statistical models differ; they are indicated at the bottom of the statistical tables. For all estimations, we used the software *Stata* and the procedures *regress* and *eregress*.

### 3.3 Results

Our first proposition assumed a positive association between academic language learning and subsequent career success. The model results point to a positive relationship that varies over time (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Language Education and Career Progress, Panel Data on the First Decade After Graduation (1989–2003; 4 cohorts, 8 waves of (bi-)annual mail surveys)

	EARLY TRANSITION INTO JOB		END OF FIRST DECADE			
	Job Interviews (Year 1) 1	Job Offers (Year 1) 2	Usefulness of Lang. Edu. (Years 7–10) 3	Income Effect (Years 8–10) 4	Managerial Discretion (7–10) 5	Potential for Promotion (7–10) 6
Acad.Language Educ.(P1)	0.07** (0.01)	0.07** (0.01)	0.07** (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)
English Part of Acad. Educ.(P2)	0.06** (0.02)	0.13** (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.08+ (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Male	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.14+ (0.08)	0.74** (0.10)	0.43* (0.20)	0.36* (0.17)
Age at Graduation	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01+ (0.00)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.06)
Length of Studies	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.06+ (0.03)
Local Students	-0.08* (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.12 (0.12)	-0.17 (0.11)	0.33 (0.25)	-0.49* (0.24)
Corp.Stays Abroad	0.09* (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)	0.07 (0.08)	0.16+ (0.10)	0.30+ (0.15)	0.32* (0.14)
Marketing Spec.	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.09)	-0.15+ (0.09)	-0.06 (0.18)	-0.16 (0.17)
Finance Spec.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.17 (0.17)	0.27 (0.17)
Intercept	0.34+ (0.18)	0.23+ (0.13)	2.84** (0.90)	12.73** (0.43)	4.52* (1.88)	3.32* (1.38)
	Dummy Variables for different cohorts and different survey years included in all models					
Sample Size	n = 1056	n = 1056	n = 703	n = 632	n = 639	n = 643
Model Fit (RMSE)	0,37	0,33	0,64	0,62	1,19	1,07

Linear Regression Models with robust standard errors, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05 + p < 0.1



The association between academic language learning and career success is unequivocally positive in the first years after graduation. Academic language education increases invitations to job interviews (+0.07,  $p < 0.01$  in Model 1) and leads to more job offers (+0.07,  $p < 0.01$  in Model 2) due to language proficiency. Even at the end of the first decade, the most committed language learners tended to confirm more than others that academic language education was useful in careers (+0.06,  $p < 0.05$  in Model 3). However, this perceived usefulness is not reflected in objective results like significant income gains (+0.03, n. s. in Model 4). Instead, academic language learners lag significantly behind in perceived managerial responsibility ( $-0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$  in Model 5) and do not have a higher self-evaluated promotion potential ( $-0.04$ , n. s. in Model 6) in their jobs. The negative impact is replicated in Models 7 and 8: academic language education contributes negatively to the chance of being on a managerial career track ( $-0.06$ ,  $p < 0.01$  in Models 7 and 8).

**Table 2:** Senior Management Careers in The Second and Third Decade After Graduation (2008–2016, 3 Waves, 2008, 2012, 2016)

	Senior Executive (18 %)	Top Management (11 %)
	Model 7	Model 8
Acad. Language Educ. (P1)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
English Part of Acad. Educ. (P2)	-0.54** (0.10)	-0.18 (0.14)
# Years since graduation	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Year of Wave	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Male	0.18** (0.05)	0.22** (0.03)
Selection into Managerial Career Track End of First Decade (47%)		
Acad. Language Educ.	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.06** (0.02)
English Part of Acad. Educ.	-0.04 (0.29)	-0.05 (0.29)
Corp. Stays Abroad	0.49** (0.14)	0.50** (0.14)
Male	0.51** (0.09)	0.53** (0.09)
Age at Graduation	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Length of Studies	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.07** (0.02)

(Continuing table 2)

	Senior Executive (18 %)	Top Management (11 %)
	Model 7	Model 8
Local Student	0.08 (0.11)	0.06 (0.11)
Marketing Spec.	-0.25** (0.08)	-0.27** (0.08)
Finance Spec.	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)
Career Timeout in First Decade	-0.14** (0.02)	-0.13** (0.02)
Sample Size	n = 1281	n = 1281
Model Fit (Wald Chi Square)	65.52**	71.04**

Extended Linear Regression Model with two stage selection and robust S. E., \*\*p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05 + p < 0.1

Interestingly enough, regarding the most prestigious and influential positions in top management ranks, language education once again has a positive impact (+0.03, p < 0.01 in Model 8). Conditional on making it onto the managerial career track (which appears to be less likely to happen for academic language learners), language education *does* help in rising to the highest ranks. This result applies to the overall population and is already adjusted for the pre-selection effect of language education, which makes it harder to get onto the managerial career track in the first place. The marginal effect calculation (implemented with *margins* in Stata) shows that, with all else being equal, if all the participants in our sample had increased their academic language education by one standard deviation (+2.42), 5 % more top managers could be expected in the sample after some decades (marginal effect = 0.05, 95%CI [0.013; 0.089]).

Our second proposition stated that learning a commonly spoken language like English leads to more flexibility and, thus, to higher subsequent career success. Business English is well received by employers during the transition into an employee’s first job (+0.06, p < 0.01 in job interviews/Model 1; +0.13, p < 0.01 in job offers/Model 2). At the end of the decade, there is no longer a visible effect of English specialization on income (-0.02, n. s. in Model 4),<sup>5</sup> and a subsequent strong negative effect on managers’ upward mobility into senior management positions (-0.54, p < 0.01 in Model 7). This negative effect is driven by middle management positions linked to small and medium sized firms, and by functions like controlling or financial supervision. Only for top management positions, there is no negative impact of early specialization in English (-0.18, n. s. in Model 8) that would go above and beyond the general positive effect of language specialization independent of the language acquired.

5 At the same time, academic English learners have an above-average perception of the managerial discretion achieved, but that does not seem to affect the transition into managerial career tracks.

## 4 Discussion

It has been established in research that the rise of global careers with high job mobility makes it necessary for employees to take responsibility for their own development of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). But little is known about what that means in particular for foreign language learning. What impact on subsequent job performance does career planning in the form of business language acquisition in higher education have? Research on the importance of language proficiency for job performance is either purely conceptual (Bloch, 1995; Piekkari, 2008) or cross-sectional in its empirical design (Itani et al., 2015; Latukha et al., 2016). The important dimension of time inherent in early language learning and later career returns has not been explored much. However, research on sustainable careers shows that career trajectories should be analyzed from a long-term perspective (De Vos et al., 2020). What constitutes an advantage in the short run can turn into a disadvantage in other career phases (De Vos et al., 2020, p. 4). Additionally, career trajectories are sometimes defined by cumulative advantage, such that “small advantages or disadvantages at an early stage of a process grow larger over time” (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006, p. 280). To make sure that evolving dynamics of this kind are not overlooked, longitudinal research is necessary.

We use a unique and proprietary database with data on the career evolution of former German business graduates over three decades to explore the advantages and limits of academic business language learning. First, we have discovered and acknowledged a dynamic relationship between academic language education and objective as well as subjective career success. Academic language specialization contributes to early success—such as quickly finding a first job—and even more than two decades after graduation, the advantages of early language learning are still apparent in the way that our panel respondents are more likely to gain and maintain top management positions. However, in the long phase between initial job success and senior management ranks, academic language specialization seems to lead to career paths that keep average panelists stuck in positions where their language proficiency proves useful, but which also tend to come with below-average managerial responsibility. Even among those who make it onto managerial career tracks in later career phases, academic language specialization only plays a role in the highest senior ranks of top management. This could be cautiously interpreted as evidence that the relationship between managerial discretion and the career advantage of academic language learning might follow a U-form: On the lowest levels of managerial discretion, such as entry-level positions or functional jobs with strong language requirements (e. g., export or service), advanced second language proficiency offers a competitive advantage. In the highest senior positions, where international representation and a distinguished leadership habitus make advanced second and third language proficiency attractive again, academic language training can be a career advantage as well. In midcareer phases, however, the potential advantage of early language specialization offers the smallest positive contribution or may even contribute to lock-ins that keep employees in positions with little upward mobility. Furthermore, other skills may be valued more in middle management posi-

tions, in small and medium-sized firms, and in finance and controlling functions. Similar curvilinear patterns have also been found for other assets (like social capital), which are considered relevant for upward mobility (McDonald & Mair, 2010).

Additionally, our study theorized on the potential problem of learning less common languages as an aspect of career preparation, which may lead to limited job mobility. We found that a supposed solution to this problem—the most flexible language specialization (business English as a *lingua franca*)—led to mixed career results. It seems that learning English as a part of higher education offers advantages in the early stages of a career but loses its importance in later years. On the one hand, graduates who had made English part of their studies were well-regarded by potential employers in their early careers. In later decades, though, this led to disadvantages for employees on a managerial career track trying to move up to middle management positions. To add a speculative thought, improving one's English on the job may be regarded as a mandatory prerequisite for everyone aspiring to senior positions, so that advanced English skills offer no additional career advantage in this phase. While English proficiency gained in academic business programs has no influence on upward mobility into top management positions, it constrains middle management careers. This could be due to the strong reliance on technical skills in fields like finance, accounting, or controlling, which are linked to our set of middle management positions. A preference for functional expertise might make an English language specialization look like a missed opportunity to advance technical skills in other electives. However, for those moving up to the most senior positions with more representative tasks, advanced language skills (whether English or other languages) pay off again.

## 5 Limitations and outlook

Our research followed the call for “greater attention to potential new data sources” (Tenzer et al., 2017, p. 815) linking the topics of language and management. While we gained several new insights, we also had to acknowledge the limits of many career databases. For example, we do not know the main causal logic of some developments: Why does learning English in university have a potentially negative impact on middle management ranks? Is it because English as a *lingua franca* can be learned on the job by everyone as a byproduct of working in an internationally diverse environment, making academic investments wasteful? Or is it due to the fact that employers neither expect nor want their employees to speak excellent business English because this might scare away less proficient employees and contradict the inclusive idea of English as a corporate language (Ehrenreich, 2010)? Qualitative interviews with employees in their mid- and late-career years could help to differentiate between competing causal claims that might play a role in the career tendencies we have documented.

Additionally, it would be helpful to learn more about the agency behind career moves. Are the career outcomes that we observed solely the results of competitive processes between employees who use their qualifications to improve their position on the

labor market, or do they partially reflect different levels of ambition and career focus? While we included some controls (e. g., the timeout in the first ten years as a control for varying work-life balance or the length of studies), future research would benefit from more insight into the connection between language choices and career ambition.

Another promising research subject is the interplay of language training and work experience in assignments abroad. Our research controlled for corporate stays abroad in order to separate the effects of language training from other types of experience with foreign languages. However, it is possible that the two aspects are mutually reinforcing over time. Language training may increase the willingness to take assignments abroad, while international experience could make language training more promising and more effective. How exactly such a moderating relationship evolves over time could be of high practical relevance for career research.

While our unique longitudinal setting allowed us to observe long-term developments, it also led to further research questions as mixed results and unexpectedly complex relationships emerged. Such results are a good reminder of the importance of longitudinal data. Too many alumni surveys are either cross-sectional or cover only a few years after graduation, barring insights into the influence of job experience on attitude changes. The full impact of academic qualifications may only become visible with growing job responsibilities. Furthermore, top management research on academic influences in later career stages (e. g., Crossland et al., 2014) has a survivor bias that only investigates the consequences of early qualifications among subsequently successful managers. For example, only asking the top managers in our sample after twenty years about the impact of academic language learning would most likely have led to an unequivocally positive evaluation that masks the underlying complexities and ignores the equally successful language learners who did not make it into the senior management sample. Additionally, selective insights from top management about their early academic paths would constitute a memory of past events, adding to the likelihood of biased results (Pierret, 2001).

Only in our longitudinal setting can we detect the possibility of an early lock-in into language-sensitive functions and organizational responsibilities that leads to an ideal person-job fit and early success but also inhibits subsequent job mobility—a constraint also observed in other fields of career research (Sirén et al., 2021). Longitudinal research that patiently follows managers through different phases of their careers has the best chance to generate unbiased results. Unfortunately, due to the immense resource and time investment, such databases are exceedingly rare. Developing and utilizing additional longitudinal data will contribute to a more balanced understanding of career transitions.

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# Teaching Psychoanalysis at Touro Berlin

PETER THEISS-ABENDROTH

## 1 Psychoanalysis and academia

The relationship between the psychoanalytic and the academic world, in particular the world of academic psychology and psychiatry, is not the most harmonious one, to say the least. There may have been better times, but nowadays mutual disdain and exclusion are the rule, not the exception. Their “thought styles” (Fleck, 1935) seem to be too different to value each other’s possible contributions. Even though there may be exceptions in the Romanic countries, this diagnosis is certainly true for the two academic cultures Touro University Berlin (a campus of Touro University New York, *Touro Berlin* in further text) rests upon, the North American and the Central European one. Yet there is an audible psychoanalytic voice contributing to the psychology program at the college, and it is the goal of this article to elucidate the cause and purpose that justify its presence, and to demonstrate some of its *modus operandi* in the classroom.

### 1.1 Historical roots of a conflict

It was probably for financial reasons that the talented and ambitious young scientist Sigmund Freud submitted his letter of resignation to the University of Vienna and opened his private practice during the Easter holidays of 1886. A year prior, he had completed his habilitation at the university and qualified for the title of an unscheduled professor, which, after an unusually long waiting period, he finally received in 1902 (Alt, 2016; Gay, 1995, p. 67 and p. 159; Lackinger & Döring, 2017, p. 185; Schröter, 2017b, p. 32). The exact cause for this delay is unknown, but anti-Semitism most likely played a role. To maintain his *venia legendi* (license to lecture), he had to continue lecturing at the university, which he did with great discipline, first on topics from the familiar field of neuropathology, then on psychoanalysis proper. His “Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis” from 1915–1917, given to a lay audience during the World War, marked the beginning of a psychoanalytic discourse in academia and still serve as a point of reference for psychoanalytic education (Freud, 1916–17).

Still, he never conquered the academy, nor did he convince contemporary psychiatrists of his ideas. Freud felt that the university—he primarily thought of the medical school—needed psychoanalysis more than vice versa. He therefore suggested a two-step model with an introductory class for all medical students, which should be open to a lay audience, and an advanced class as part of psychiatric training, like, to the best of his knowledge, many American universities had already implemented (Schröter, 2017a). The problem was that this had to be done on his terms. When it turned out that universities were rather unwilling to grant psychoanalysis recognition as an indepen-

dent academic discipline or the privilege of an exclusively psychoanalytic professorship, Freud was unwilling to compromise (Schröter, 2017b). He abhorred the idea that psychoanalysis could be “swallowed by medicine” and “finally deposited in the textbook of psychiatry, chapter on therapy” (Freud, 1926, p. 283). Instead, he and his successors fostered the development of a psychoanalytic culture of its own, with the characteristics of a “scientific thought collective”, as Fleck (1935, pp. 52–70 and pp. 129–164) described it: journals, conferences, training schemes, titles, and initiation rites. To this day, psychoanalytic associations and their corresponding institutes form the core of this structure. And yet, Freud dreamed of more. He imagined a psychoanalytic university (Freud, 1927, p. 289), a project that was realized just recently, in 2003 in Vienna and, in a more consistent way, in 2009 in Berlin, where two universities with an explicitly psychoanalytic denomination were inaugurated. The profile of Touro Berlin shares a number of commonalities with them.

## 1.2 Institutions: between segregation and collaboration

What is the broader contemporary context of the attempt to integrate psychoanalysis into the psychology curriculum at Touro Berlin? Which institutional obstacles or even forms of liaison between academia and psychoanalysis exist? We will see how psychoanalysts struggled to develop their educational concepts and how academia played changing roles in this.

The groundbreaking model for psychoanalytic training was developed in Berlin by Max Eitingon in the 1920s, when access to academia seemed out of reach for the emerging discipline (Schröter, 2021). The Eitingon model for psychoanalytic training institutes and affiliated outpatient clinics rests on the three pillars of thorough training analysis, theoretical seminars, and supervised practica. All three are concentrated in training institutes whose structures imitate those of a university. The Eitingon model continues to dominate psychoanalytical education worldwide—including the US and Germany—and bears a fair amount of responsibility for the seclusion of a psychoanalytic world parallel to academic structures. It has been challenged for its excessive concentration of power in the hands of a small number of training analysts (Bohleber, 2019) and after a lengthy controversy, the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) has formally accepted two more models, both of which are named after their country of origin (International Psychoanalytical Association, 2021). The French model tries to conceptualize the entire psychoanalytic learning process according to the principles of psychoanalytic experience and considers the Eitingon model as being too similar to academic teaching. The Uruguayan model, designed with a similar anti-authoritarian impetus, uses a different approach. It integrates the training and particularly the theoretical element into the curriculum at the Instituto Universitario de Postgrado en Psicoanálisis (IUPP), which offers a master’s degree in psychoanalysis (Bohleber, 2019; Instituto Universitario de Postgrado en Psicoanálisis, 2021). Both these two new models and the original Eitingon model have in common that they focus on the candidate’s personal analytical experience and aim to create an analytical identity beyond the mere acquisition of technical competencies.

In spite of its international diversification, most proponents of psychoanalysis share a view on epistemology that challenges academic psychology's emphasis on quantifiable data and stands in opposition to its dominant comprehension of empiricism and reproducibility.<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalytic methodology relies heavily on single-case studies and theoretical deductions, granting space not only to the subjectivity of the observed (generally a client), but also that of the observer (generally a clinician) and the feelings of countertransference he or she experiences. In Germany, this has led to a complex and widely ramified debate on the question of whether psychoanalysis should be better understood as belonging to the realm of the so-called "Geisteswissenschaften", a term which can only be poorly translated as "humanities".

Today, psychoanalysis claims a status beyond the traditional duality of hermeneutics versus the natural sciences and casts doubt on psychology's submission to a one-sided paradigm (Gödde, 2021; Warsitz & Küchenhoff, 2015). The psychoanalyst and anthropologist George Devereux (1967) even went so far as to accuse the behavioral sciences of using scientific methods of objectification as a tool to ward off their neurotic anxiety.

All this doesn't make things easy on the academic side. The German part of the story is quickly told. Although statutory health plans equally cover psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, and systemic psychotherapy for their members, who make up about 90 percent of the German population, 59 out of the 60 professorships for Clinical Psychology at state universities are occupied by the cognitive-behavioral camp, one by a psychoanalyst, and none by a systemic expert (Bühring, 2019). Interestingly, this disastrous situation is somewhat counterbalanced by the strong presence of psychoanalysts at private universities, which follow the demands of the market.<sup>2</sup> The activities of the students' initiative IDPAU (Interessensgemeinschaft der Psychoanalyse an Universitäten) to restore the presence of psychoanalytical research at German universities speak a similar language. Yet candidates for psychodynamic or psychoanalytical training, although interested in the field, typically start from scratch in the training institutes.

The situation in the US needs to be differentiated more. In 2005, leading representatives of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) diagnosed "that psychoanalysis is in danger of disappearing from undergraduate education" (Gourguechon & Hansell, 2005, p. 12), implemented a Task Force on Undergraduate Education (TFUE), and launched the "10,000 Minds Project" (Gourguechon, 2005) to solve this crisis. In this context, a quantitative study researching the course offerings of the top 150 colleges

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1 An interesting historical perspective claims that psychology, as an independent discipline, has a dual origin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: one in Leipzig with Wilhelm Wundt, who proposed it as an empirical or nomothetic science derived from positivism, modeled after the natural sciences, and aiming at general laws of human behavior; and another in Vienna with Sigmund Freud, who derived his idiographic approach from clinical practice and emphasized an in-depth study of the individual (Bornstein, 2005, p. 324).

2 It should be noted that while the German research landscape traditionally has a strong inclination toward non-university institutions, these often operate in close collaboration with universities. In this line, the Sigmund-Freud-Institut in Frankfurt has served as an influential center of psychoanalytic research for over 50 years (Leuzinger-Bohleber, 2017). On an international scale, an outstanding psychoanalytic research center worth mentioning is the Sigmund Freud Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as Freud himself was a founding member of its board of trustees (Alt, 2016; Schröter, 2017b). In the US, the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research plays a prominent role.

and universities for psychoanalytic content came to the surprising conclusion that “six times more courses featuring psychoanalytic ideas are available outside psychology departments than in them” (Redmond & Shulman, 2008, p. 400) and that the courses located in the humanities departments took little notice of psychoanalytic authors other than Freud and perhaps Lacan (Redmond & Shulman, 2008, p. 406). A qualitative look into the reality of undergraduate teaching adds more incongruities to the list (Yalof, 2015): Psychoanalytical ideas, if taught at all, are being misperceived and misrepresented, or they are adopted by cognitive psychology and relabeled without mention of the original psychoanalytic concept, while contemporary psychoanalytical findings tend to go ignored. Or, in the words of another researcher, “whereas psychoanalytic *concepts* remain strong, psychoanalysis as a *discipline* has become ‘disconnected’ from contemporary scientific and clinical psychology” (Bornstein, 2005, p. 324).

There is little evidence of the APsA initiative’s success, and the blame for this does not only lie with the academic side. A large number of traditional psychoanalysts still feel the same reserve as Freud. Any immersion in the world of nomothetic sciences brings about the risk of betraying what is most characteristic of psychoanalysis: the concern with the in-depth investigation into the unique mental structures and dynamics of an individual and his or her relevant relations (Bruns & Loetz, 2005). Yet many psychoanalysts on both sides of the Atlantic continue to claim that they have something valuable to contribute to the academic community. One of the possible contributions addresses the learning process itself. Jed Yalof summarizes some of the interpretive tools that psychoanalysts can bring to teaching in higher education:

Such concepts as the holding environment, transference, countertransference, the treatment framework, and a psychoanalytic appreciation of administrative-systemic organizationally driven pressures and dynamics that result in projective identifications and projective counter-identifications can each help the psychoanalytic-academic make sense of the many conflicts and experiences that shape daily work. (Yalof, 2015, p. 129)

These tools can be helpful regarding students’ problems with procrastination, organizational disputes—and particularly in such a diverse environment as Touro Berlin, where cultural stereotypes, projections, role expectations, and procedures need to be reassessed and negotiated every day.

### 1.3 Scientific attempts at rapprochement

A relevant number of American and German academic psychoanalysts has long left the self-inflicted position of isolation and produced an impressive bulk of empirical research findings providing evidence for the efficacy and effectiveness of psychoanalytic psychotherapy (American Psychoanalytic Association, 2022). These studies have been crucial for its continuing inclusion in the mental health care system in Germany and were in part financed by the psychoanalytical societies, not by academic institutions themselves. Since the complexity of the field can only be touched upon superficially in this article, a few words on the specific challenges psychoanalytic therapy research had to overcome must suffice. Typical outcome research works with highly selected patient

populations and demonstrates quantifiable reduction of symptoms at the end of therapy, thereby following the model of randomized controlled trials in pharmacology. In contrast, psychoanalysts aim to demonstrate that their method of therapy plays to its strengths in naturalistic settings—working with unselected patients who have a high degree of comorbidity—and that the effects are more long-lasting than those of shorter therapies (Leuzinger-Bohleber et al., 2020; Sandell, 2012).

In psychoanalysis, therapeutic goals beyond mere symptom reduction can, broadly speaking, be defined in terms of ego strength. To operationalize the contemporary version of this originally Freudian idea, two highly sophisticated diagnostic tools have been developed. Both of these already appeared in the second edition of the Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM-2), which was primarily an Italian-American attempt at integrating developmental perspectives with the standard diagnostic manuals DSM 5 and ICD 10 (Lingiardi & Mc Williams, 2015; 2017), and in the Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis OPD-2, which was authored by a group of German psychoanalytic academics and is also available in a number of foreign languages such as English, Spanish, or Chinese (OPD Task Force, 2013). There is overwhelming evidence that psychodynamic treatments work, that patients continue to show improvement after therapies have ended, and that the treatments' success is due to specifically psychodynamic factors. As a result, psychodynamic treatments continue to be covered by the German health insurance system (Leichsenring & Steinert, 2019; Leichsenring & Klein, 2020; Theiss-Abendroth, 2023).

Psychoanalysts have not only succeeded in illustrating that their therapies work but also in gaining increasing insight into the process of therapy itself (Ablon et al., 2012; Mc Carthy et al., 2019): Which intervention works how and why? What exactly characterizes and contributes to a fruitful therapeutic alliance? In this realm of process research, conversation analysis, with its sensitivity to scenic understanding and linguistics, promises to be a particularly valuable method to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and empirical research and, at the same time, stay true to a genuinely psychoanalytical approach (Buchholz, 2019; Buchholz & Kächel, 2013).

Beyond research on psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, with its profound understanding of early childhood development, has greatly contributed to developmental research (Luyten et al., 2012). Although Freud made childhood development the center of his theory, he relied only cursorily on direct observation. Instead, he would rather deduce his hypotheses from clinical practice with adult patients and reconstruct the past, admittedly with a certain amount of success, like opening the professional world's eyes to the relevance of experiences such as childhood trauma (Theiss-Abendroth 2021, p. 1028). Yet the speculative nature of his approach has given rise to criticism and led to the formation of a strictly behavioral school of baby watchers with a focus on cognitive development. In an attempt to merge both perspectives, the inward and the outward, and to gain a more complete picture of the baby's or the toddler's emotional, relational, and cognitive development, psychoanalysts have significantly contributed, some of them in ways that outgrew psychoanalysis proper. Attachment theory, mentalization theory, or Daniel Stern's insights into the developing self have changed our view of

everyone's inheritance from preverbal infancy on and given way to new treatment approaches (Debbané, 2019; Dornes, 1997; Dornes, 2000).

Finally, psychoanalysis' revitalized alliance with the neurosciences deserves a mention in this context. Freud was, at the core of his self-image, a neuropathologist and repeatedly expressed his hope that neuroscientific findings would in the future validate his psychological assumptions, which he always considered to be of a hypothetical nature. For decades, there seemed to be little evidence for his expectations. Recently, though, with the explosion of insight into cerebral functioning through modern neuroimaging techniques, this has changed. Neuroscientists increasingly emphasize the subjective aspect of mental processes, and many of them turn to psychoanalysis to find answers for their study of subjectivity, including its intentionality—answers computational neurosciences or neuroinformatics cannot provide (Solms, 2017). This has led to the development of the new field of neuropsychanalysis, an emerging area of research that was heralded by Nobel-prize winning Eric Kandel early in the new century and has become internationally established (Kandel, 2005; Neuropsychanalysis Association, 2021).

This array of promising research areas—outcome research, process research, developmental research, and neuropsychanalysis—far from being complete, can only give a rough overview of what contemporary psychoanalysis has to contribute to the world of empirically minded academic psychology. This should make clear that any exclusion of psychoanalysis from the university would mean a form of intellectual self-amputation for the academy.

## 2 Psychoanalytic contributions at Touro Berlin

So given that psychoanalysis has plenty to offer—its rich intellectual tradition plus a broad spectrum of responses to contemporary challenges—how can this play out in the concrete situation of Touro Berlin, with its international academic community and its very specific heritage as a Jewish institution of higher education in the capital of Germany? The following chapter will try to provide a number of answers, beginning with the most tangible aspect of the integration of psychoanalytic content in the undergraduate curriculum and the concrete contributions psychoanalysis can make to clinical psychology. The subsequent paragraphs proceed to the sociocultural questions of migration and racism and aim to demonstrate how a specifically psychoanalytical perspective can complement traditional social psychology on some core questions, such as the intrapsychic origin of racism and the inner transitional processes that come along with migration. Finally, central aspects of psychoanalytical psychotraumatology are discussed, some of which have their place in the MA program on Holocaust Communication and Tolerance.

At the same time, this chapter tries to point out not only what psychoanalysts think about these issues but also *how* they think, how the reflexive nature of psychoanalytic deliberations tends to turn back to the interlocutor, a characteristic that makes

them incompatible with the preferences of a streamlined academic discourse but—in the opinion of the author—also indispensable for the academy.

## 2.1 The undergraduate curriculum for psychology

The way psychoanalysis is embedded in the psychology curriculum can be understood by distinguishing between three different types of classes. In introductory classes,<sup>3</sup> students first get acquainted with some basic concepts of psychoanalysis. In clinical classes, they can test the applicability of psychoanalytic ideas to both the etiology of mental disorders and the clinical situation alongside the other main schools of psychotherapy. A third, elective course is dedicated solely to psychoanalysis in all its many facets. While the first two types of classes are probably taught in most American and some German university departments of psychology, the latter is rare in these countries, although common in most Latin American or French institutions of higher education (Massimi, 2015; Ruhs, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

But what does an introductory class on psychoanalysis look like when the core element of psychoanalytic training, self-reflection or self-experience, is impracticable due to the inherent power dynamics in academia?<sup>5</sup> It has to be mainly theoretical, providing a more profound introduction to the core ideas of psychoanalysis, to its five or six different schools of thought (two of them founded by Freud himself, plus a British, a French, and two American schools, each with its own controversies and overlaps), and to some examples of psychoanalytic investigation into contemporary social issues. The class offers the chance to finally read some of Freud's works after having heard so many half-truths about him, to become familiar with the basics of contemporary psychoanalytical research (as described in the previous chapter), and to put psychoanalytical ideas to work in an area of the student's choice. A popular example of this application would be the interpretation of a piece of art—a task for which, in my experience, students tend to prefer movies over novels. A very intriguing aspect of this class is the psychoanalytic comprehension of migration and cultural diversity, including such problematic aspects as anti-Semitism and xenophobia. However, before applying psychoanalysis as an interpretive tool to these sociocultural phenomena, the globalized trajectory of psychoanalysis itself deserves a closer look.

3 The dual situation of two overlapping psychology programs, one accredited in the US and the other in Germany, leads to the fact that—due to the different terminology used by these two academic systems—a “class” can also be a “module”.

4 Even in the limited format of classes on abnormal or clinical psychology, there is no reason to underestimate the critical potential of psychoanalysis, which may offer alternative views on traditional nosology. The diagnostic catalogs in use, such as the ICD or DSM, are constructivist by definition and supposedly atheoretical. In fact, their construction is often dictated by concealed and unreflected influences, one of which certainly stems from the commercial interests of the pharmaceutical industry. The attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder ADHD, for example, has made a remarkable career since its discrete beginnings as hyperkinetic syndrome, a career that has gone parallel to the development of the corresponding medication. Once a rarity, ADHD has become a global pandemic with a seemingly simple cure. Together with researchers specializing in cultural studies, a group of German psychoanalysts has deconstructed this diagnostic entity and proposed an alternative concept based on notions of precarious infantile masculinity, media consumption, and the idea of “motility defense” against anxieties. A bachelor's thesis in psychology written by a student at Touro University Berlin, a campus of Touro University New York, has elaborated on this approach (Ernst, 2018).

5 Interestingly, the new German Approbationsordnung (medical licensing regulation) for psychotherapy calls for the integration of an element of self-reflection into the academic program, paying special attention to the requirement to avoid any “relation of dependence” with the person grading this module (PsychThAppro, 2020, §11).



## 2.2 Psychoanalysis, Jewishness, and globalization

When speaking of psychoanalytic contributions in a globalized and diverse context, the international diversity of contemporary psychoanalytic doctrine itself also needs to be addressed. For better comprehension, it is helpful to assume a historical perspective, which includes the origins of psychoanalysis in Jewish intellectuality. After all, its cultural roots lie in the circles of late-19th-century Viennese secular Jewish academics—not necessarily physicians—and the first 20 members of the Freudian school were Jews as well. Initially, it was the project of a Jewish elite and arguably carried by Jewish ethical and humanitarian engagement, which has caused historians of psychoanalysis to speak of the “interpenetration of the Jewish redemptive vision with the psychoanalytic movement's redemptive hope for the eradication of neurosis” (Klein, 1985, p. 139; see also Brunner, 1991; Frosh, 2003). Freud, fearing marginalization, struggled hard to build bridges to the non-Jewish public. Nevertheless, the Nazis stigmatized psychoanalysis as a “Jewish science”, burned Freud’s books, and persecuted Jewish psychoanalysts. Stripped of their presumed Jewish destructiveness and fused with an imaginary Aryan psychology, a few psychoanalytic ideas somehow managed to survive in Nazi Germany, which valued their therapeutic effectiveness in clinical practice. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that psychoanalysis suffered severe distortions in German-speaking Central Europe and had to rediscover much of its legacy through an intellectual re-import of concepts after the war. However, psychoanalysis’ fate in the recipient countries of Jewish refugees proved complicated, too. In North America, where physicians, much to Freud’s dismay, monopolized access to psychoanalytic training for a long period of time, a medicalized variant flourished, ignorant of much of the cultural criticism the late Freud had emphasized so much, and again purified from the critical potential psychoanalytic cultural theory has to offer (Horn, 1989; Plänkers & Federn, 1994, pp. 179–209; Saller, 2015).<sup>6</sup> In other countries, the reception was tainted by faulty translations of Freud’s texts, all too often based on the questionable English Standard Edition by James Strachey and not on the German original.

Therefore, overall, an optimistic view sees contemporary pluralism of psychoanalysis as a result of creative appropriations in other languages and intellectual traditions, whereas the pessimistic interpretation speaks of a fragmented and shattered landscape of psychoanalytic thought. How can a science that has been diversified almost to a breaking point contribute to a better understanding of the issue in a college with a highly diverse community?

## 2.3 Migration and cross-cultural psychotherapy

When Argentinian psychoanalysts León and Rebeca Grinberg were forced into Spanish exile by the military dictatorship ruling their home country in the 1970s, they not only had to cope with the new situation but, as genuine psychoanalysts, also reflected on their own coping process. It seems fair to assume that their specific sensitivity to this

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<sup>6</sup> Another hypothesis blames the atmosphere of political paranoia during the Cold War, especially during the McCarthy era, when psychoanalysis was received by larger parts of academia, for a certain sterility of the American version of psychoanalysis.

topic stemmed from their cultural roots as descendants of Jewish immigrants to Buenos Aires. Their reflective work yielded a seminal book on migration and exile, which gave the starting shot to psychoanalytic investigations into the inner processes of migration (Grinberg & Grinberg, 2010). In the tradition of British object relations theory, the Grinbergs analyzed the fears and anxieties of the migrant mostly along the lines of such classical concepts as traumatic loss, regression, or defense mechanisms, among which projection plays a prominent role. In this context, they also made use of the notion of a transitional or potential space, as defined by the English psychoanalyst and pediatrician Donald Winnicott, to designate an infantile stage of development. According to Winnicott, this stage begins at about one year of age, precedes the regular subject-object division, and refers to a world of “subjective objects” or transitional objects, which—like a corner of cloth, a teddy bear, or the blanket a child resorts to when looking for comfort—are full of subjective meaning (Winnicott, 2005). Winnicott linked this phenomenon and the mental space “between me and not-me”, which is created by the use of such transitional objects, to imagination, playfulness, and finally, in adulthood, to creativity, artistry, and the creation of a cultural world. This notion of a transitional space has become one of the most fruitful contributions to psychoanalytical thought since Freud.

The Grinbergs, in turn, applied this concept to the migrant’s situation, understanding it as a transitional space between what used to be “me” (inside, country of origin, place of belonging) and “not-me” (outside, country of destination, place of strangeness) (Grinberg & Grinberg, 2010). The migrant desperately needs such a transitional space to maintain a sense of continuity and identity. Recently, this adaptation of Winnicott’s term has given the impetus to conceptualize cross-cultural psychotherapy as an endeavor in a corresponding transitional space and to define the clinician’s task to establish such a third space where the traditional “Landkarten der Bedeutung”—the “roadmaps of meaning”—lose their validity (Özbek & Wohlfahrt, 2006, p. 174). In such a space, meaning constantly needs to be re-created by both participants of the therapeutic couple, the client and the therapist, with insecurities on either side.

This coincides with another conceptualization of a third space, this one stemming from the critical theorist Homi Bhabha and his psychoanalytically informed work in the field of postcolonial studies. In his well-known “Location of Culture” (Bhabha, 1994), he deconstructs an essentialist perspective of cultural identity, basing his considerations instead on fluid concepts of cultural practices, characterized by qualities like hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry. Put simply, according to Bhabha, culture is not what one has or is, but rather the everyday actions and procedures whose meanings are constantly renegotiated.

Jointly, psychoanalysis and cultural studies contribute to the metaphor of a third space that serves as a useful framework to create a better understanding of the process of cross-cultural counseling and therapy (Nadig, 2006). Even notions of tentative assignment of meaning, playfulness, and creativity can enter this otherwise burdened field and give it a sense of lightness (Theiss-Abendroth, 2016). After all, as Winnicott once famously stated, “psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing,

that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 39). Considering the concept of the third space, is it then far-fetched to think of a small institution of higher education such as Touro Berlin—an institution that formally belongs to two academic cultures, the American and the German, while hosting students and academics from numerous countries, a campus on which languages like native Russian or Hebrew can often be heard—as a playful intercultural laboratory?

#### **2.4 The racial other and internal racism**

Alongside such bright notions, psychoanalysis also has some less pleasant messages to share, among them the concept of internal racism, currently one of the most interesting contributions to the psychological study of race and difference. It owes to London-based Fakhry Davids (2011), himself a person of color, who, as a typical psychoanalyst, uses his consultation room as an observational ground for his microanalysis of racism. Relying on a wide range of clinical experience, he develops his theory of a ubiquitous unconscious “defensive organization”, which establishes a categorical difference between the self and the racial other, building on features like ethnic or class difference. This racial (or social or cultural) other subsequently serves as a screen for paranoid projections—a universal mechanism to fend off anxieties. In some individuals who use what psychoanalysts call primitive defense mechanisms like splitting or primitive projections, this inner structure turns into a malignant internal racist organization, arousing destructive impulses. Of course, this is applicable to the comprehension of anti-Semitism, too.

Fakhry Davids shows how benevolent and paternalistic attitudes may serve to disguise such an internal racist organization, for instance, through the assumption that the analyst was—due to the color of his or her skin—a deplorable member of a lower social class. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this construction of the needy other often helps to alleviate the individual’s feelings of inferiority and dependence and may even motivate seemingly pro-social actions towards marginalized groups, as can be observed in some forms of philosemitism. An idealization of minorities frequently has its roots in such a defensive operation, prevents a real encounter with the other, and is prone to turn into sudden disappointment and devaluation (Bakhit in Davids, 2019, p. 12).

However, there is more to it than this often-hidden everyday racism based on unconscious projections. In a chapter on “epidermalizing inferiority”, Davids describes how people of color (“colonial subjects”) also internalize the notion of otherness and perceive their skin as “dirty” and in need of a thorough bath (Davids, 2019). Another section is dedicated to an analysis of institutional racism, even in psychotherapeutic institutions, which can remain as unconscious as individual racism.

In general, psychoanalysis provides us with an uncomfortable insight into the ubiquity of racism and helps us immunize ourselves against well-meant forms of it. After all, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

## 2.5 Psychoanalysis of trauma in the postgraduate curriculum

Psychoanalysis has accumulated a treasure trove of findings to contribute to the discussion of psychological trauma. It was Sigmund Freud himself who, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, believed he had found the origin of all neuroses in trauma, with the memory of trauma acting like a “foreign body” in the texture of an affected person’s mind and infiltrating its surroundings (Freud, 1895). After Freud’s death, as mentioned before, psychoanalysis itself turned into a traumatized science, both through the acts of violence committed against its Jewish representatives and through direct distortions of the doctrine that were aiming to create a purified version of it.

A class on the psychology of trauma in its various psychological, cultural, and historical aspects is part of the MA program on Holocaust Communication and Tolerance offered by Touro Berlin. This course creates a space in which students can familiarize themselves with some elements of psychoanalytical thought on trauma. This begins by demonstrating how deeply rooted psychoanalytical thought is in German philosophy and literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The notion of the dynamic unconscious as a result of repression is already apparent in Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s writings, and it was commonplace among many of their educated contemporaries as well. This includes the idea of the internalization of violence, which Heinrich Heine’s famous poem “Germany. A Winter’s Tale” aptly depicts in *Caput III* (Heine, 1844):

They are still that wooden pedantic lot:  
With stiff right angles, they pace,  
And the same old arrogance  
Remains frozen on their face.

And still, they strut about as stiff  
As a candle, straight upright,  
As if they’d swallowed the stick,  
Formerly used to put them right.

Yes, the sticks have never quite disappeared:  
Deep inside, old habits still exist:  
Inside the new glove of humane ways,  
There is still an iron fist.

The instrument of punishment, internalized as an “infiltrating foreign body”, in Freud’s terms, has informed the notion of the traumatic introject, a concept of great importance to the psychoanalytic comprehension of trauma sequelae (Hirsch, 2007, pp. 94–126). The system of violence ceases to remain exclusively external and instead becomes part of a person’s inner world. This notion explains the often-observed identification with the aggressor, which is another psychoanalytic term for the same phenomenon.

One of the most extraordinary psychoanalytic field studies gives ample evidence of its relevance. It was initiated by Bruno Bettelheim and supported by Ernst Federn, two Austrian psychoanalysts imprisoned in the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald as “political Jews” (Bettelheim, 1985; Becker, 2014; Theiss-Abendroth, 2014).

During their spare time, they managed to interview a sample of several hundred fellow inmates on their perception of and attitude towards their incarceration. Even though the methodology of this study no longer meets today's standards, the results are impressive. Bettelheim describes the regressive processes the prisoners underwent as well as their gradual identification with the system of violence, including their imitation of the guards' behavior, uniforms, and mannerisms. Many prisoners were extremely apologetic of the violence they endured, justified the existence of concentration camps, and just felt that in their case the police had committed an individual error. The longer the detention lasted, the further this identification process progressed. Long-term detainees went as far as to kill fellow inmates who were regarded as weak and unsuited to the task of keeping the camp functioning. Another drastic example gives testimony to this corruption of ethical and political values: When Bettelheim and Federn asked over a hundred political prisoners whether they should report the conditions of life in the concentration camp to the international press if they should be lucky enough to be released, only two interviewees answered that they would (Bettelheim, 1985, p. 90). The rest felt that Nazi Germany should resolve this domestic problem without foreign assistance.

The resistance to taking notice of the dimensions of German crimes against humanity was not limited to any one nationality. Bettelheim was liberated relatively quickly and could immigrate to the United States, where he later made a career as a child analyst. Upon his arrival, he wrote his manuscript from memory and then needed a whole year to find a publisher—even the American public had difficulties looking into the abyss of Nazi atrocities.

Psychoanalysis has contributed enormously to better comprehending the processes of self-alienation under conditions of terror. It has alerted us to the child's vulnerability to adverse conditions, and to the adult's predisposition to returning to such infantile states of dependence under extreme stress. Ethical judgments made today need to consider these deliberations.

### 3 Final psychoanalytic reflections

It has become clear so far that psychoanalysis focuses on human subjectivity and refuses to address the subject of its research with questionable notions of objectivity. Instead, it stresses the reflexive nature of human reasoning and inquires into the position of the respective speaker. Taking all this into consideration, what might it have to say about the vantage point of an instructor or a student at Touro Berlin? What is the *genius loci* of this institution? What implicit knowledge may its stakeholders share without knowing that they do?

Any attempt to answer these questions must be incomplete and insufficient to the point of incorrectness, yet psychoanalytical inquiry doesn't cease to ask. What does it mean, for example, to practice, teach, and study the freedom of speech and thought behind iron bars installed to protect those inside from anti-Semitic assaults? How does

the history of the building—erected in 1929 by a Jewish merchant who had to flee the Nazis to Uruguay, subsequently inhabited by the imperial minister for church affairs, an outspoken anti-Semite—play out, consciously or unconsciously, in the minds of those who are part of the community of Touro Berlin today? Back then, in the 1930s, Herrmann Göring came for frequent visits, and there is evidence that Adolf Hitler was present at least once (Nachama & Tuchel, 2012, p. 9). The traces of the uncanny can be followed even further: From the classrooms situated at the rear of the main building, the Stößensee, a sidearm of the Havel River, becomes visible. A brief glance at the map shows that a good swimmer or just an average rower could use the waterway to move easily from Touro Berlin to the House of the Wannsee Conference, where the Holocaust was organized in 1942. On the way down the river, our imaginary swimmer or rower would also pass by the idyllic island of Schwanenwerder, where Joseph Göbbels used to live and throw his pompous parties. With such a history of former residents and visitors, and with such an infamous neighborhood, how can one be sure Touro Berlin is not a haunted place?

Over a century ago, under the impression of World War I and the wounds it had left, Freud wrote his essay “The Uncanny” (Freud, 1919). In it, he developed a range of ideas, many of them relying on the etymology of the German word *unheimlich* for uncanny and its relationship to both *heimlich* (concealed, secret) and *heimelig* (homely). From his perspective, the uncanny has much to do with the unthought known (Bollas, 1987). A hundred years later, Michael J. Feldman, professor of psychiatry at Columbia University and member of the faculty of its psychoanalytic center, uses another term to describe the uncanny in transgenerational trauma (Feldman, 2019). He speaks of ghosts in the context of unmourned losses as a consequence of severe psychological trauma. In a case study, he worked with a relational approach that has been developed by North American psychoanalysis and took his own personal background, in particular the way it is grounded in his father’s traumatic biography, into account. Feldman began the analysis under the assumption that the transgenerational traumas of both the analysand and the analyst seemed to coincide. Yet this belief turned out to be a fallacy which led to a dead end until Feldman recognized the uniqueness and singularity of each *story* in connection with each *history*. Here, as so often, the analytical process served to turn a ghost story into a tellable and distinctive story.

Nowadays, new stories are being told at Touro Berlin in many different dialects and idioms. Psychoanalysis is among the narrators, convinced that it still has something to share.

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# Valuation Projects: A Taste of Real Life in Finance Education

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## 1 Introduction

Valuation plays a key role in many areas of finance; it is widely used by financial managers in corporations, by analysts in mergers and acquisitions, and in portfolio management. The valuation procedure as stipulated by finance textbooks is quite simple—it is the present value of future cash flows. Students in a basic course on corporate finance should be able to calculate this value based on given inputs like future cash flows, level of risk, growth potential, etc. However, the true challenge faced by a financial analyst in real life is how to estimate those input factors.

When I started to teach an advanced senior year course within the undergraduate finance minor program, a great part of which is dedicated to valuation, I relied on various problem sets and case studies dealing with particular challenges in valuation from different angles. I sincerely believed that my students were presented with more than enough versatile examples to be able to do valuation tasks once they started working. After two or three years, I had a conversation with one of my former students. He told me that when he started to work, he never had any problems with finance foundations, but that the greatest challenge for him was related to data. He said that he had been so overwhelmed with all the information from the real financial statements and other comprehensive reports that he hadn't known where or how to start. It was understandable why he felt that way—the data in the textbook examples, problem sets, and case studies, caters to students. The financial statements given here are stylized and typically contain only broad categories without many items that can be found in real financial statements. While those problem sets and case studies mimic reality, they often lack the complexity of real-world problems. That conversation triggered a decision to introduce a semester-long valuation project where students would apply all of the financial tools and techniques learned in class to two publicly traded companies from the same industry, a chosen company and its main competitor. Students are required to form their own teams of five to six participants to work on this project. The valuation project then serves as the basis for the report and oral presentation to be delivered in the last week of classes. The report needs to be written from the perspective of a team of analysts at a consulting company asked to provide a valuation analysis to a client who is interested in investing in a chosen firm.

The valuation project is divided into several phases that closely follow the topics covered in class: detailed analysis of financial statements using financial ratios, return on invested capital (ROIC) trees, economic value added (EVA), long-term and short-

term financial planning, estimations of riskiness, growth potential, cash flows, and valuation using different methods (discounted cash flow analysis and valuation using multiples of comparable companies).

The decision to introduce a valuation project was also accompanied by a change in my teaching approach. Although I have continued to use selected chapters from the same textbooks—Brigham and Houston’s *Fundamentals of Financial Management* (16<sup>th</sup> ed.) and Damodaran’s *Damodaran on Valuation: Security Analysis for Investment and Corporate Finance* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)—in my lectures, I have departed substantially from the examples and problem sets in the generic lecture notes. Instead, I started to use the latest financial statements and annual reports for a company of my choice to demonstrate how to approach the financial analysis. The analysis is done in Excel, and roughly 70 % of the class time is spent on developing spreadsheets.

When valuing a company, any analyst needs to make many assumptions and subjective decisions to be able to move forward with the valuation. This is a challenging task, even for experienced analysts, as any bias that they might have will surely be reflected in the end value. Being exposed to this process in the classroom and discussing the rationales for the decisions made in the valuation process, in addition to using comprehensive real-life financial statements rather than stylized textbook versions, gives students an idea of how to proceed with the valuation project for the companies of their choice at home.

The implementation of such an assignment is in line with the overall trend observed within AACSB-accredited programs that puts ever greater weight on experiential learning (AACSB, 2013). Experiential learning is simply learning by doing. Within an experience-based learning framework, students actively participate in the learning process by applying the knowledge gained in the classroom to a real-life problem. This way, individuals become notably more responsible for their own learning and create a more robust link between the learning experience and reality (Salas et al., 2009).

This article is organized as follows: first, it provides a brief review of the literature on experiential learning, as this concept is at the core of the valuation project assignment described above. This review is followed by a more detailed overview of the valuation project’s requirements. Finally, the benefits and challenges of such an experiential learning assignment are discussed.

## 2 Literature review

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, or “learning by doing”. One of the most prominent theories of experiential learning is Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory (ELT). The roots of his theory lie in the work of prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, which has been further developed by therapeutic psychology based on psychoanalysis (Carl Jung, Erik Erikson) and humanistic psychology (Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow), as well as the work of Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, and others (Miettinen, 2000). Kolb argues that he does

not want to develop an alternative theory of learning “but rather to suggest through experiential learning theory a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (Kolb, 1984, p. 21 as cited in Miettinen, 2000, p. 56).

According to Kolb (1984, p. 41), “[l]earning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.” He views the experiential learning process as a cycle of four basic elements, including concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualization (thinking), and active experimentation (doing). In later works, Kolb and Kolb (2005) also introduced the concept of learning space and suggested that student learning styles may be a way to describe the institutional learning environment experienced by students.

Experiential learning enables students to grasp the theoretical concepts while applying them to practice, expanding their perspectives and promoting their personal development (Deeley, 2010; Takahashi & Saito, 2013). Similarly, experiential learning is also referred to as

[a learning] process that takes place beyond the traditional classroom and that enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student. Such education can occur in a wide variety of settings, but it usually takes on a “learn-by-doing” aspect that engages the student directly in the subject, work or service involved. (Northeastern University, 1997, p. 1 as cited in Katula and Threnhauser, 1999, p. 240)

“Learning by doing” or “learning by experiencing” is a major component of this method. Burke (2013) claims that by implementing experiential learning, instructors can integrate innovative approaches like differentiation, constructivist theory, discovery learning, inquiry-based learning, simulations, critical thinking, problem solving, technology-based learning, and performance-based assessment into their teaching concepts. They all expose students to various experiences that consist of doing assigned work in and out of the classroom, detecting the problem, researching, analyzing the facts, discovering and synthesizing subject content to make decisions and solve problems, reflecting, and learning from mistakes. This teaching approach provides, on the one hand, more flexibility during the learning process, as students set their own pace and are required to reflect on their learning progress, but on the other hand, it also requires learners to be active participants rather than passive listeners.

In the process, students are often required to work in teams, which—in addition to the cognitive aspect—enhances the social, emotional, and behavioral aspects of learning. Voukelatou (2019) finds that “through communication and interaction, learners use their experiences, are encouraged, cultivate critical thinking, develop skills and are led to self-awareness and emotional maturity” (p. 9). The positive impact of experiential learning on critical thinking has also been documented by DeSimone and Buzza (2013), Samba et al. (2020), Odom et al. (2014), Hamilton and Klebba (2011), and Coker (2010).

Experience-based learning not only enhances students' competencies and understanding of theoretical concepts but also their motivation by getting them involved in learning by doing activities (Piercy, 2013; Hyams-Ssekasi & Caldwell, 2018), which ultimately leads to superior performance (Leal-Rodriguez & Albort-Morant, 2018; Valenzuela et al., 2018; Chapman et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2014; Cagle et al., 2010; Eckhaus et al., 2017; Piercy, 2013).

Furthermore, the ELT approach is highly interdisciplinary. It has found its application value in various disciplines such as education, strategic management, information systems, psychology, sociology, medicine, nursing, accounting, and law, among others (Kolb et al., 2001).

### 3 The Valuation Project

The team project on which this article focuses is designed to apply the financial tools and techniques that students learn in class to real-world examples. The team project lasts the entire semester (i. e., for fourteen weeks) and requires students to form their own teams of five to six participants. Each team must pick two publicly traded companies from the same industry—a company chosen for valuation and its main competitor. Different teams are not allowed to use the same companies, and the students cannot use companies that have already been valued by other students in previous semesters either. The valuation serves as the basis for the written report and oral presentation to be delivered in the last week of classes. The report must be written from the perspective of a team of analysts at a consulting company who have been asked to provide a valuation analysis to a client who is interested in investing in their chosen firm.

The students are required to provide an analysis that contains the following elements:

1. **Industry analysis**
2. **Analysis of financial statements**
3. **Discounted cash flow valuation.** For this, the students must apply the dividend discount model, the free cash flow to equity (FCFE) model, and/or the free cash flow to firm (FCFF) model. Ideally, students would use all of these valuation models, but if any of the models are not applicable, they can choose the model they think is most appropriate for their respective company. Students are required to complete an analysis of the key value drivers, for example, the growth rate assumption, the growth period assumption, or the net capital expenditure assumption, and to perform a sensitivity or scenario analysis to see how changing their assumptions would influence the valuation results.
4. **Relative valuation.** Students are required to choose a set of “comparable” companies, choose a multiple or set of multiples that will be used in relative valuation, and then evaluate companies relative to the chosen “comparables” using the multiples method. The students are also required to run regression analyses to better

position the analyzed firms within their sectors (industries), i. e., to see if the firms are undervalued, overvalued, or fairly priced.

5. **Conclusion on intrinsic value of chosen companies.** The students must compare and contrast the values obtained from the discounted cash flow with the results of their relative valuation models and comment on the results. As a final step, they need to make a final recommendation for their client.

### 3.1 Industry analysis

Having chosen the companies that will be evaluated during the semester, students should first perform the industry analysis. It is suggested that they use Porter's (1979) *Five Forces Model* to explain the competitive characteristics of a particular industry. According to this framework, competitiveness depends on five basic forces: the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of suppliers, the bargaining power of buyers, the threat of substitute products or services, and existing industry rivalries. The interconnectedness of these forces determines the profit potential of an industry and thus its attractiveness. Without a thorough industry analysis, it will be hard to determine the growth potential for a particular firm or create a risk profile, both of which are inputs the students will need for their discounted cash flow analysis.

### 3.2 Analysis of financial statements: ratio analysis, ROIC tree, and EVA

In the next step, the students are required to analyze the financial health of their chosen firms. For this, they first need to obtain the financial data for the previous three years. It is suggested that they use the data from annual reports and/or 10-Ks, as well as information from the notes that accompany financial statements, to put the numbers into context. This is when students usually start to realize that analyzing the financial statements of a real company is much more complex than it looks in the examples that they know from basic finance textbooks. In the textbooks, financial statements are stylized and typically contain only broad categories that exclude many items that can be found in real financial statements. For example, typical textbook balance sheets show the main components of assets (cash, accounts receivable, inventory, PP&E, and non-tangible assets), liabilities (accounts payable, accruals, short- and long-term debt), and equity (paid-in capital, retained earnings, and treasury stock), but leave out other items such as non-controlling interests, lease obligations, deferred income taxes, and derivatives. This is why, instead of using an example from the book, I use the most recent financial statements of an actual company to show students how to navigate annual reports and analyze financial statements. When faced with such a comprehensive and detailed document, students are at first overwhelmed. However, as I present this task as a sort of discovery challenge—to earn excess returns, the imaginary investors for whom the students provide their analysis must have either better information (unlikely) or a better analysis than other investors—the students actually start enjoying the process.

The process of financial analysis starts with the calculation of financial ratios and a detailed analysis of profitability, liquidity, asset management, indebtedness, and mar-



ket ratios. The students are required to analyze those ratios over time for each of their two chosen firms (typically major competitors), to compare these two ratios, and to assess them in comparison with the industry average. Although comparing the ratios with a benchmark might seem trivial, and for some ratios, rules of thumb have been developed, the project requires students to dig deeper and provide more context behind the numbers. For example, the current ratio measures a firm's ability to pay off its current liabilities by liquidating its current assets. When assessing the liquidity position, analysts perceive a current ratio of 2 (indicating that the current assets are two times higher than the current liabilities) to be acceptable. Although a high current ratio generally indicates a very strong and safe liquidity position, it might also indicate that the firm has too much old inventory that will have to be written off and/or too many old accounts receivable that may turn into bad debts. Or it might indicate that the firm has too much cash, receivables, and inventory relative to its sales, in which case these assets are not being managed efficiently. Another example is the assessment of profitability ratios, which measure profits in relation to sales, assets, or equity. Any profitability ratio that includes net income is subject to potential problems of comparability. Net income is influenced by financial leverage. If firms use different amounts of borrowing, the firms with more debt therefore tend to have higher levels of profitability as well as higher levels of risk compared to firms that do not use as much debt.

Additionally, not all financial ratios are equally important when analyzing different industries. For example, while fixed asset turnover and inventory turnover ratios are important for analyzing firms in the manufacturing industry, they would not be as important for the analysis of a company in the service industry.

When analyzing the financial position of a firm, students are encouraged to look deeply into the full set of ratios before forming a judgment on how well the firm is performing. They also need to be aware that, although assessing a firm's historical financial performance is pretty straightforward, different factors like accounting rules, the choice of depreciation method, or management's "window dressing" can cloud the analyst's judgement. Furthermore, traditional financial ratios do not tell the analyst much when it comes to a firm's ability to sustain its current performance and create value in the future. Students are therefore instructed to explore more meaningful metrics like return on invested capital (ROIC) and economic value added (EVA) that can be related to long-term value creation. In order to create value, i. e., generate positive EVA, a firm needs to do more than just have good accounting profitability. EVA differs substantially from accounting profit because no charge for the use of shareholders' capital is reflected in the latter. So, students are required to investigate if the ROIC is greater than the cost of that capital. They are required to dig deeper and see how a firm's ROIC compares with that of its peer company (i. e., its competitor) and the industry average, how the firm's ROIC behaves over time, how fast the company has grown (absolutely and relative to its peers), and whether its growth has accelerated or slowed down over time. The ROIC tree is a useful tool that allows the students to break down the information contained in the ROIC numbers and identify the major value drivers. As part of the valuation project, students are required to develop their own ROIC trees and analyze

how different ratios are interconnected, how they feed into ROIC the number, and which variables have the greatest impact on value creation.

### 3.3 Discounted cash flow valuation

The valuation procedure as stipulated by finance textbooks is quite simple: the value is determined as the present (or discounted) value of the future cash flows. It is important to draw a distinction between cash flows to equity holders—after all, these cash flows are associated with debt financing such as interest and principal payments, and new debt issues—and cash flows to the firm that are ready for distribution to both debt holders and equity holders in the firm.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Free cash flow to equity (FCFE)} &= \text{Net income} - (\text{Capital expenditures} - \text{Depreciation}) \\ &\quad - \text{Change in NOWC} \\ &\quad + (\text{New debt raised} - \text{Debt repayment}) \end{aligned}$$

The free cash flows to the firm are cash flows attributable to all claim holders in the firm and can be calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Free cash flow to the firm (FCFF)} &= \text{Operating income} (1 - \text{Tax rate}) \\ &\quad - (\text{Capital expenditures} - \text{Depreciation}) \\ &\quad - \text{Change in NOWC} \end{aligned}$$

The intrinsic value of the firm is calculated as the present value of the estimated future free cash flows to the firm, discounted at the weighted average cost of capital (WACC). Additionally, in case of the estimated future cash flows being free cash flows to equity, students must calculate the intrinsic value of equity by discounting FCFE using the equity cost of capital.

The procedure mentioned above is pretty straightforward. In my experience, students find it easy to apply once they have all the inputs they need, such as the future cash flows, the level of risk that is reflected in the cost of capital, the growth potential, etc. However, the true challenge faced by a financial analyst in real life is how to estimate those input factors properly.

As indicated above, calculation of both FCFE and FCFF is based on accounting earnings—operating income for FCFF and net income for FCFE. Although obtaining these numbers from financial statements is a pretty easy task, when valuing firms, an analyst needs to make certain choices and/or adjustments to the current year's earnings before using them as a base for projections: (1) choose whether to use the most recent or "trailing twelve months" data, in particular when analyzing young firms that are changing rapidly over time; (2) correct the earnings for accounting misclassifications, the most common ones being treating R&D expenses as operating instead of capital expenses, and operating lease expenses as operating instead of financial expenses; and (3) adjust the earnings for any one-time or extraordinary items (Damodaran, 2006).

Forecasting the expected future cash flows comes with further challenges. One of them is related to determining the potential growth rate during the extraordinary growth period. An accurate estimation of the growth rate depends on the quality of the industry analysis and the analysis of the company's competitive advantage. Another challenge is related to the estimation of how long a company will be able to sustain its extraordinary growth period. In order to estimate this, students will need to analyze factors such as the size of the company (as smaller ones are more likely to experience longer periods of high growth), the company's ability to generate excess returns, its competitive advantage, and its ability to sustain it over time, which will depend on market structure, barriers to entry, strategic decisions, etc.

Once they have decided what the expected length of the extraordinary growth period should be and which growth rate should be applied to this period, students need to determine the terminal value. In theory, firms can stay in business forever, but analysts cannot estimate cash flows infinitely, so analysts typically forecast the cash flows during the extraordinary growth period and determine the terminal value at the end of that period. Although there are several methods that can be used to determine terminal value, students are expected to assume that beyond its high growth period, a company will forever continue to grow at a constant rate, and to determine the terminal value in period  $t$  as  $TV_t = \text{Cash flow}_{t+1} / (r-g)$ . The choice of the discount rate  $r$  will depend on whether estimated cash flows are dividends and FCFE or FCFF. In the former case, the cost of equity will be used as a discount rate, while in the latter case, the discount rate should be WACC. The stable growth rate  $g$  at which the firm will grow in perpetuity should reflect the characteristics of a mature company: lower level of risk, greater financial leverage, low or zero excess returns, and reinvestment ratios. Obviously, an estimate of each of these factors will certainly have a significant impact on the value. Nevertheless, it is important to link the growth rate with the firm's reinvestment rate as well as the return on the capital reinvested in future growth opportunities.

In the next step, depending on how the company will make the transition from high growth to stable growth, students need to decide on the optimal variation of the discount cash flow model. They can use 1) the Gordon growth model for mature firms at a stage of steady growth; 2) a two-stage model for firms that experience a high growth rate in the initial phase that drops to a lower yet sustainable growth rate once the company has reached a stable phase of growth; or 3) a three-stage model for firms that experience a high growth rate in the initial phase, followed by a gradual (linear) decline of the growth rate in the second stage until they reach a third stage of low yet stable growth that will be sustained in perpetuity.

Students in a basic course on corporate finance should be able to calculate the value based on provided inputs like future cash flows, level of risk, and growth potential. However, the true challenge faced by a financial analyst in real life is how to estimate those input factors. As students progress through the process described above, they need to make assumptions every step of the way in order to move forward—just like financial analysts in real life. Those assumptions and any biases that they might have will be reflected in their value calculation.

### 3.4 Relative valuation

When performing a discounted cash flow valuation, students are required to determine the value of the company based on variables such as estimated future cash flows, the company's growth potential, and its risk profile. In relative valuation, they need to determine the value based on how similar companies are priced in the market. Their first step in relative valuation would be to find a set of "comparable" companies. Since there are no two firms that are exactly the same, students should find companies that are most comparable in terms of their growth potential and risk profiles. Then, the students need to translate the value of each comparable company into a multiple of some common firm characteristics, such as revenues, earnings, book value, or sector-specific characteristics. This multiple is then applied to the firm characteristics of the assessed company to determine its value. For example, if we want to determine the value of Pepsico using the relative valuation method, we could use Coca Cola as a comparable company, as we would assume that these two companies—from the same industry and at similar stages of their life cycles—have similar risk and growth profiles. If Coca Cola's P/E ratio is 27, it suggests that the value of equity is 27 times the multiple of the firm's earnings. Assuming that Pepsico and Coca Cola are similar, we would then multiply Pepsico's earnings by a multiple of 27 to find its equity value. If students can find several comparable companies, they can determine the average of their multiples and apply it to their firm's characteristics to estimate a value.

The example above illustrates that multiples analysis is fairly easy to use, and many students interested in finance are already familiar with it. However, I spend a great deal of time in class emphasizing that multiples analysis can also be easily used *incorrectly*, which can lead to erroneous conclusions if an analyst fails to pay attention to certain details. Firstly, multiples need to be consistently defined, meaning that the value in a multiple's numerator and denominator needs to be consistent (Damodaran, 2006). For example, multiples like the P/E ratio or the Enterprise Value/Sales must be consistently determined. In the case of the P/E ratio, the numerator is the price per share, which is an equity value, and the denominator is the EPS, i. e., the earnings that belong to equity holders. In the case of Enterprise Value/Sales, both the numerator and the denominator are firm values. An example of an inconsistently defined multiple would be P/Sales, where the numerator is an equity value and the denominator measures revenues that belong to both equity and debt holders. In order to apply multiples wisely, it is important to understand the cross-sectional determinants of each multiple as well as the fundamental determinants that drive the multiple. If we fail to control for fundamental variables like expected growth rate, risk, payout ratio, return on capital, profit margins, etc., we might come to the wrong conclusions regarding a firm's value. For example, firms with higher growth rates should trade at a higher multiple, while companies with low growth rates should trade at low multiples. So, if we do not control for differences in growth rates between the observed companies, we might erroneously conclude that low-growth companies are undervalued and high-growth companies are overvalued (Damodaran, 2006).

In order to avoid such valuation bias and control for multiple differences across the companies in the sector, students are required to run a regression analysis that describes the relationship between a multiple and the fundamentals. This analysis allows them to better position their firms within their respective sectors (industries), i. e., to determine with greater accuracy if their firms are undervalued, overvalued, or fairly priced.

### 3.5 Oral presentation

Each team is required to submit a written valuation report of at least five pages, plus supplementary tables and graphs. In the last week of classes, the students present their findings. This is a great opportunity to practice several things at once. Firstly, the students must decide which parts of such an extensive analysis are most important and need to be presented, and which parts should be explained in the written report. Secondly, they must find a way to present numerical data that is professional and keeps the audience interested. Thirdly, they hone the oral communication skills they will later need for presentations in their professional lives.

## 4 Benefits and challenges of the valuation project

Students' reactions to the valuation project have been very positive. This has consistently been reflected in the course evaluations as well. Through this project, I have learned that students enjoy working in teams on this type of assignment, which offers them an opportunity to put theory into practice by connecting the knowledge gained in the classroom and applying it to a real-world valuation task.

In my experience, the benefits of implementing such a valuation project are manifold, confirming the findings of Stohs (1999) and Bredthauer (2016). Firstly, assignments from the domain of experiential learning enhance the learning experience. The project is demanding, and I noticed that it leads students to develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills that would be harder to develop through more traditional methods of teaching. Furthermore, since the students themselves choose which firms they want to evaluate, they show a greater level of motivation and enthusiasm throughout the entire process. They typically choose companies in which they have an intrinsic interest. Whatever the reasoning behind their choice may be, intrinsic motivation to perform a detailed financial analysis on chosen companies and the industry in which they do business results in a deeper and longer-lasting understanding of the course concepts.

In addition to a higher level of engagement that may foster more effective learning, this type of assignment also promotes collaboration and provides students with a great opportunity to practice being a team player. The fact that the project is quite comprehensive and lasts the entire semester (i. e., fourteen weeks) creates not only an opportunity but also a *need* for students to practice their management skills, including time management and leadership.

Another important benefit of the project is the enhancement of Excel skills, which are continually ranked highly by employers. In my opinion, Excel is a cornerstone of modern finance education because it provides students with powerful tools (financial functions, Goal Seek, Data Table, Scenario Manager, Data Analysis, Solver Toolpak, etc.) they can use to analyze financial problems. My own ten years of experience using Excel tools in class show that students (1) are more engaged in practical demonstrations—which, in turn, makes the lectures themselves more effective—and (2) feel that good Excel skills are a competitive advantage that may be noticed during internships and will prepare them for future job requirements.

In addition to all of these benefits, this type of assignment also creates value by departing from well-structured textbook problem sets and adding more of the chaos that is pertinent to real-world work environments. As pointed out by Tashjian (2020), students know that an exam will require them to apply a certain number of tools, and a good student simply chooses the right tools from a small set they have prepared for the occasion. However, students who do well in this sort of scenario may start to struggle when they have to first identify the *right* tool from a larger set or if they—like my former student—are confronted with a comprehensive set of data when solving real business problems, be it as part of a job interview or in the first years of their careers. Assignments such as the valuation project teach students how to navigate oceans of data and figure out which data to use—and how. Making them aware of potential biases in valuation that, if not addressed properly, will find their way into the end result, their work on the valuation project also highlights the importance of critical thinking. But perhaps the most important lesson is how to continue acquiring new skills and knowledge, which will surely be integral parts of their future careers.

Finally, experiential learning can also be beneficial to the reputation of the business school itself, combining theory with practice in a way that helps students gain both the proficiency and the confidence they will need to make a smooth transition from higher education into their professional lives. If used as a regular part of teaching in business degrees, experiential learning projects such as the valuation project may therefore prove to be useful marketing tools for the admissions office of a business school.

Despite its many benefits, however, even experiential learning comes with certain downsides. One of the challenges that I have recognized over the past few years is related to the fact that the project requires group work. Experiential learning offers more freedom and flexibility, and students can decide how much time and effort they want to use for different tasks. It is therefore crucial to design the assignment in a way that ensures that all students take part in equal measure. For me, the biggest challenge as the instructor accompanying and, later, grading the projects was measuring individual students' contributions. The fact that the project lasts the entire semester and requires a lot of serious work helps in a sense: students start fairly early to disapprove of their team members' procrastinating behavior, and most groups deal pretty effectively with the resulting unequal distribution of their workload. As I want students to take the project seriously, its grade contributes 25% to their overall grade for the course. In

order to assess students' performance and the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved on an individual level, after a few semesters I started to ask my students to evaluate their own contributions to the teamwork, what they have learned in the process, and what they would do differently. This way, students take ownership of their work, and in my experience, they are pretty honest about their performance. A tool often suggested to measure results in group work is peer assessment; however, I choose not to use it as I fear it might influence group dynamics negatively.

For some students, experiential learning means that they need to leave their comfort zone. In this project, this mostly concerns the oral presentations that are held in front of the entire class. Although all students are encouraged to present some part of their group project, their participation in this part of the exercise is not mandatory. However, I suggest that instructors take some time during office hours to talk to students who have issues with oral presentations, explaining that the classroom is a safe environment in which they can practice many different skills and that, while they can choose to skip the presentation in the course, they will certainly have to present the results of their analyses in their future careers.

Implementing experiential learning means that the instructor will have to invest more time in consultation and individual guidance for the teams. When students start to work on their projects, they might run into many different issues and not know how to proceed further without the instructor's help. For example, one team working on the valuation project chose two airline companies that were severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively affected the income that serves as a starting point for discounted cash flow valuation, making it difficult for the students to estimate whether or not they were working with reliable numbers. In other cases, students didn't know how to deal with some of the items they encountered in financial statements, or they picked high-growth companies and struggled with determining the length of the extraordinary growth period and the corresponding growth rate. In experiential learning scenarios, the instructor needs to offer advice on how to deal with challenges such as these. I usually invite students to discuss their issues during office hours, trying not to offer them a solution but to gently steer them in the right direction so they can solve the problem themselves. Sometimes, this can be quite time-consuming, but I believe it is well worth the time, as students indicated that these meetings were exceptionally valuable for their learning processes.

Lastly, for this kind of assignment, it is of the utmost importance to be familiar with the teaching materials for the class and to state clearly what is expected from the students. Otherwise, students might feel discouraged and lose motivation. My suggestion is to start with fewer but well-structured and thoroughly explained requirements, expanding the assignment in line with students' learning outcomes over the course of the following years.

Overall, I believe that the challenges of an experiential learning setting are outweighed by all the benefits mentioned above. In my experience, the implementation of the valuation project substantially increased the quality of the course.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper aimed to describe how a semester-long valuation project can be used to expose undergraduate students in finance to the complexities of real-life valuation tasks by creating an opportunity to apply theoretical frameworks to the numbers of actual businesses, thereby providing them with a taste of what their future jobs may entail. The work on a project of this scope is demanding for instructors and students alike, but it is well worth the effort as it enhances problem-solving and critical thinking skills that would be much harder to develop through more traditional methods of teaching in higher education. The project not only fosters a higher level of engagement, which leads to more effective learning processes, but it also promotes teamwork and collaboration. The most important benefit, however, is that students practice dealing with professional challenges in their own way and that they learn that real-life tasks require continued work on their skillsets and knowledge.

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# The Self-Experience Format as an Innovation for Professional Teacher Trainings: The EVe-LaB Training Program as a Case Study

MAJKEN BIENIOK

## 1 Introduction

One of the major tasks of higher education is to qualify, train, and prepare teachers for one of the greatest challenges of modern society: educating the young and thereby shaping the society of tomorrow. The professional development of teachers is a complex issue due to multiple variables, e. g., the complexity of teaching itself, including required knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills, as well as the constantly shifting requirements of society and frameworks or school curricula (Hattie, 2009; Zierer, 2020; Timperley et al., 2007; Yoon et al., 2007).

Unfortunately, it is not sufficient to rely solely on the self-developmental capacities and competencies of teachers to adapt, improve, and promote teaching and learning conditions over time just by staying in the job (Burroughs et al., 2019; Gustafson & Nilson, 2016). Therefore, frequent professional teacher trainings are essential to keeping teaching standards high. In 2017, a new framework for teaching programs in general public schools (1<sup>st</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> grades) was introduced in Berlin and Brandenburg, two federal states of Germany (LISUM, 2017a, b). It was geared towards subjects like consumer education, health education, acceptance of diversity, learning in a global context/sustainable development, as well as other topics relevant to today's schools. This meant that new teaching skills related to these topics had to be conveyed (e. g., Fritz et al., 2019). As part of this enterprise, new teacher training programs for different school subjects were developed, including the training program *EVeLaB*<sup>1</sup>—*School-Based Nutrition and Consumer Education in the State of Brandenburg*, which covers the school subject “Wirtschaft—Arbeit—Technik” (WAT<sup>2</sup>), which teaches a selection of topics on economy, labor, and technology and is therefore related to many of the new topics mentioned above. The project was funded by the Brandenburg Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Integration, and Consumer Protection and supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports via its program *Quality Upgrading—School Catering*<sup>3</sup>.

As a case study for the implementation of the self-experience format, the aim of this article is to describe and analyze the context, concept, and evaluation results of *EVeLaB* as a training program for WAT teachers in the state of Brandenburg, Ger-

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1 EVeLaB – Schulische Ernährungs- und Verbraucherbildung im Land Brandenburg.

2 In German schools, the subject WAT (also known as AWT) integrates topics of fields of economy, labor, and technology.

3 Qualitätsoffensive Schulverpflegung.

many. Aiming to train the teachers with the curriculum's new content as well as prepare them for diverse classes, the training program was designed in an innovative self-experience format. This means that during training, teachers take on the role of students. This article discusses why such a self-experience format may provide as promising an approach to future training in the field of teachers' professional development as it already does in other fields of higher education, such as medicine, psychology, social work, or nursing.

## 2 Teachers' professional development

New training programs for teachers may provide solutions for professional development as well as additional benefits for teachers if they are well-designed and of high quality (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hattie, 2009; Hubers et al., 2020; Lipowsky & Rzejak, 2015; Timperley et al., 2007). Hattie (2012) defines powerful, passionate, accomplished teachers as teachers who:

1<sup>st</sup>, focus on students' cognitive engagement with the content of what it is that is being taught;

2<sup>nd</sup>, focus on developing a way of thinking and reasoning that emphasizes problem-solving and teaching strategies relating to the content that they wish students to learn;

3<sup>rd</sup>, focus on imparting new knowledge and understanding, and then monitor how students gain fluency and appreciation in this new knowledge;

4<sup>th</sup>, focus on providing feedback in an appropriate and timely manner to help students to attain the worthwhile goals of the lesson;

5<sup>th</sup>, seek feedback about their effect on the progress and proficiency of all of their students;

6<sup>th</sup>, have deep understanding about how we learn; and

7<sup>th</sup>, focus on seeing learning through the eyes of the students, appreciating their fits and starts in learning, and their often non-linear progressions to the goals, supporting their deliberate practice, providing feedback about their errors and misdirections, and caring that the students get to the goals and that the students share the teacher's passion for the material being learnt. (Hattie, 2012, pp. 19–20)

Certainly, one of the most important means by which these characteristics of a "good teacher" may be achieved is through teacher trainings that properly promote these characteristics. To that effect, both Linder (2011) and Jäger and Bodensohn (2007) highlight the factors that characterize excellent coaches for professional development: authenticity, pedagogical expertise, and high motivation.

The attitude and knowledge of teachers and coaches must be accompanied by optimal lesson structure. According to Hattie (2012), an optimal lesson in general should consider and cover expert strategies addressing:

1. Prior achievement: ... before the lesson is planned, the teacher must know what a student already knows and can do, ... teachers understand the attitudes and dispositions that students bring to the lesson, and aim to enhance these so that they are a positive part of learning ...
2. Targeted learning: ... teachers within the school jointly plan series of lessons, with learning intentions and success criteria related to worthwhile curricular specification ...
3. Components of learning intentions and success criteria:
  - a) invoke appropriate challenges that engage the students' commitment to invest in learning;
  - b) capitalize on and build students' confidence to attain the learning intentions;
  - c) are based on appropriately high expectations of outcomes for students;
  - d) lead to students having goals to master and wishing to reinvest in their learning; and
  - e) have learning intentions and success criteria that are explicitly known by [to] the student;
4. Teacher collaboration: ... all teachers are thoroughly familiar with the curriculum—in terms of content, levels of difficulty, expected progressions—and share common interpretations about these with each other. (Hattie, 2012, pp. 37–66)

Researchers like Lipowsky and Rzejak (2015), who, among other topics, explicitly deal with professional teacher trainings, stress that the following factors and their interactions should be considered important for creating successful trainings:

1. quality and quantity of learning opportunities;
2. characteristics and competencies of the facilitator;
3. the perception, interpretation, and use of provided content by participants of the training, depending on cognitive, motivational, and volitional characteristics; and
4. the general application conditions of the provided content in schools. Research shows that additional factors are also important, e. g., creating situations in which participants experience self-efficacy and connect with other professionals discussing familiar or newly learned teaching approaches.<sup>4</sup>

Further characteristics of successful teacher training can be summarized as follows: it is of sustained duration, supports collaboration, is accepted by teachers, is subject-specific and content-focused, draws on external expertise and coaching support as well as on research, incorporates active learning, uses references to existing knowledge, uses models of effective/good practice, offers feedback and reflection, and is practice-based (e. g., Cordingley et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It is of special value when the topics covered by the training take into consideration the goals and intentions of both the school and the teachers (e. g., Desimone, 2009; Penuel et al., 2007) and deal with different aspects of heterogeneity (social background, abilities, culture, religion, gender, etc.) as well as diversity-sensitive learning environments. Topics should also be related to praxis, incorporating training phases of input, experience, and reflection (Lipowsky & Rzejak, 2015). Desimone and Garet (2015) also highlight the significance of linking the training's content to the teachers' own school and teaching experience.

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4 For further reading on these aspects, see also Deci and Ryan (2000, 2004) and Vangrieken et al. (2015).

Furthermore, they propose to modulate trainings to individual teachers' needs and to offer opportunities to adjust the training because teachers may respond differently to the same training (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2009).

Social interaction, either intended or unintended, is an important intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factor for the outcome of teacher trainings (Rzejak et al., 2014). Other motivational factors are the wish to adapt to external expectations of peer groups and society (extrinsic), career orientation (instrumental), and developmental orientation (intrinsic), all of which may differ from person to person (Rzejak et al., 2014). Emphasizing social interaction and cooperation between teachers seems to be a constructive approach, since collaborative work provides benefits on the students' level (e.g., improvement of understanding and performance), on the teachers' level (e.g., motivation skills, communication, and efficiency), and on the school's level (e.g., school climate, innovation, professional culture of intellectual enquiry, and focus on the needs of students) (Vangrieken et al., 2015). It supports the acquisition of competencies, too (Berkemeyer et al., 2011; Bonsen & Rolff, 2006). Cooperative or peer learning also creates a valuable and adaptive learning environment for heterogeneous groups (Martschinke, 2015).

Generally speaking, a distinct concept and training structure, featuring both a comprehensible inner logic and cross-references between the individual topics, are beneficial to teachers' professional development (Fussangel et al., 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). These findings, pertaining to content, goals, duration, activities, format, and set-up, are equally applicable to face-to-face and online training formats (e.g., Becker et al., 2014; Fishman et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2013; Means et al., 2009; Rock, 2017).

### 3 The self-experience format in the EVE-LaB project

In order to satisfy as many criteria of a successful teacher training program as possible, a new training format was developed by the team that worked on the EVE-LaB project. The decision was made to conduct the training in a self-experience format in which the trainees (i. e., schoolteachers) would take on the role of students during lessons while the coaches would take on the role of teachers. This way, the trainees would experience the whole training (as opposed to particular situations or case vignettes) like students (see also: Crow & Nelson, 2015), with periodic reflection phases being the only exception. This explicitly refers to Hattie's (2012) teacher criterion no. 7, "focus on seeing learning through the eyes of the students" (p. 19), to criterion no. 1, "focus on students' cognitive engagement" (p. 19), as well as criteria no. 4 and no. 5, which cover the idea of providing and seeking feedback (p. 19). The format for the EVE-LaB teacher training program had to be developed from scratch since no similar format could be found in the related literature.

During the self-experience workshops, the participating teachers would become familiar with both subject matter and didactic methods through the perspective of students (see also Andresen et al., 1995). Utilizing this approach, Hattie's (2012) teacher

criteria no. 2, “problem-solving and teaching strategies relating to the content” (p. 19), no. 3, “focus on imparting new knowledge and understanding” (p. 19), and no. 6, “have deep understanding about how we learn” (p. 19), can be met. Deci and Ryan (2000, 2004) stress that contexts that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster greater internalization and integration of information than other contexts. The self-experience format creates exactly such a learning environment by providing opportunities for learning and skill acquisition in a manner that satisfies the aforementioned needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

First, autonomy can be experienced by both adopting the role of student and becoming familiar with the learning material, exercises, etc. Different learning challenges or compensatory strategies can be tested in the trainees’ imagination or in situ by, for example, using pictures rather than language while cooking or using noise-canceling headsets during exercises. Procedures like this provide learning opportunities that may increase teachers’ sensitivity to diversity and allow them to reflect on adaptive teaching strategies in diverse classes. Furthermore, the experience of taking on new perspectives is intended to foster a higher level of autonomy while teaching the content on one’s own after the training is complete.

Second, the learning material, the theoretical input provided by the coaches, and the participating teachers’ personal experiences promote higher levels of competency. Hence, new requirements of general or individual school curricula can be met more comprehensively.

Third, relatedness can be experienced in a group of teachers who may use the workshop to build new formal and informal networks, to discuss ideas and challenges, and to collaborate on developing individual solutions for their respective schools, meeting their colleagues in the same setting, etc. This procedure also aims to achieve Hattie’s (2012) criteria for an optimal lesson, for example “prior achievement—understanding the attitudes and dispositions of students” (p. 40), “targeted learning—plan series of lessons according to the curricula” (p. 47), “components of learning intentions and success criteria” (p. 51), and “teacher collaboration” (p. 56–66).

Several research approaches underline these findings. The “situative approach” (Greeno & Nokes-Malach, 2016; Nolen et al., 2015; Turner & Nolen, 2015), for example, shows the importance of context, time, social interaction, culture, and change as explanatory factors of learning, motivation, and identity development. Further research also points out the importance of different interactions and changes in social class arrangements during lessons because they lead to a higher motivational level and better learning outcomes (Antosch-Bardohn, 2019; Wecker & Fischer, 2014). By using this learning context, the self-experience format also facilitates the ongoing integration of new information (assimilation) as well as the broadening and adaptation of existing knowledge (accommodation) (see also Piaget, 1976). The more often information is provided for encoding, possibly embedded in multiple associations, the better informational storing and retrieval can proceed (Anderson, 2000; Janiszewski et al., 2003). These mechanisms are also considered in teacher training in a self-experience format, as is the value of breaks during the training program for explicit and implicit learning



processes (Antosch-Bardohn, 2018; Litman & Davachi, 2008). Adjacent and favorable approaches in pedagogy, such as “inquiry-based learning” or “problem-based learning”, address the discussed aspects of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their teaching conceptions (Kauffeld & Othmer, 2019; Fritz et al., 2019).

The 13 workshops of the EVE-LaB project were structurally designed in a similar fashion. They all start with a “speed dating” phase in which the participants are introduced to the topic(s) of the workshop. This is followed by theoretical input and practical exercises (including phases of reflection and exchange). The workshop concludes with final feedback. During the second stage of the project (2019–2020), three of the workshops were adapted to an online format. The content of the 13 workshops was conceptualized according to Hattie’s (2012) criteria for good lessons while also taking into account the following criteria (Meyer, 2004): well-defined teaching structure, high amount of “time on task”, learning-supportive climate, content clarity, meaningful communication, variety of instructional methods, individual support, well-preconceived exercises, transparent expectations, and a well-set learning environment.<sup>5</sup> In relation to nutrition and consumer education, the following interdisciplinary topics were covered, each for different learning levels: regional production, organic production, environmental conservation, sensual perception, conduct and motivation, healthy nutrition, inclusivity, as well as issues related to culture, religion, and ethics. The utilized material— developed for pupils of the 5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grades and used both by teachers in the training program and by pupils in school—is backed up with numerous pictures, enabling non-native-speakers and learners with special needs to actively participate.

In general, the provided teaching materials of the EVE-LaB program cover at least two whole school lessons (45 minutes each) and are always composed of three parts: 1<sup>st</sup>, teacher instructions and necessary information relevant to the topic and the lessons; 2<sup>nd</sup>, working materials including tasks, handouts, and exercises for different learning levels; and 3<sup>rd</sup>, recipes for cooking and instructions for games or the manufacturing of products related to the specific topic. All of these materials are suitable for both the professional development of teachers and application in school lessons.<sup>6</sup> The teaching materials were usually offered for three learning levels.

Evidence on the benefits of distributed practice, i. e., the implementation of a schedule of practice that spreads out study activities over time for learning processes, can be found in the research of Dunlosky et al. (2013). In their ranking of useful learning strategies, distributed practice received high utility assessments because it benefits learners of different ages and abilities and has been shown to boost students’ performance across many criterion tasks and even in educational contexts. The EVE-LaB workshops were conceptualized according to these strategies for distributed learning, as were the school lessons presented in the workshops.

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5 For further reading on these aspects, see also Cordingley et al. (2015), Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), Deci & Ryan (2004), Lipowsky & Rzejak (2015), and Vangrieken et al. (2015).

6 The EVE-LaB teaching materials are available for download here: <https://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/thema-ernaehrung-material>.

The conception and teaching materials of the EVE-LaB project were implemented in 13 face-to-face workshops:

1. Self-made and healthy fast food,
2. Super-organic regional food,
3. Check out the cafeteria,
4. Avoiding plastic products,
5. Food waste,
6. Meat and food production,
7. Tempting sugar, caffeine, etc.,
8. Thinking, Feeling, Acting!
9. Advertisement—expectations and reality,
10. Attractiveness of fat, sweet, and colorful food,
11. Inclusive cooking of exclusive meals,
12. Religious, ethical, and moral aspects of consumption, and
13. Pork, beef, and fish—animal breeding.

The content of these 13 workshops was improved continuously. The three workshops that were also transferred to an online format are: Avoiding plastic products (4), Food waste (5), and Religious, ethical, and moral aspects of consumption (12).

#### **4 Conception of the workshop “Thinking, Feeling, Acting!” or: How to create new routines in nutrition consumer behavior through mindfulness**

Using the workshop *Thinking, Feeling, Acting! or: How to create new routines in nutrition consumer behavior through mindfulness*, theoretical content, instructions, exercises, and procedures of the teacher training will be demonstrated in this section. The workshop starts with a presentation on the instructions and information provided to the participating teachers. The first item on the training’s agenda is the presentation of a list of competencies that are to be facilitated through the school lessons. The second item is a “speed dating” session for all participating teachers, in which three topics are each to be discussed with a different colleague for two minutes:

1. Please talk about your associations regarding “consumption” and “nutrition”.
2. Please talk about your latest experiences of enjoying something to eat while remaining silent.
3. Please talk about possible reasons for children to enjoy eating while remaining silent.

The exercise may also be adapted for children and presents a topical stimulus for the first lesson in class. In the teacher training workshop, this exercise is followed by a presentation on the question of how to administer the lessons to children, including necessary materials and time, group size, students’ age and learning levels, security information for learning settings in the kitchen, health-relevant information about the

food prepared, etc. Since the workshops focus strongly on diverse learning groups (e. g., Brodesser et al., 2020), sequences of possible school lessons and their adaptability for special needs education and various learning levels are presented and discussed. Though this brief reflective section of the lesson is solely applied during teacher training and not for students in school, it is indispensable to the self-experience format.

The material for the first lesson on the topic *Thinking, Feeling, Acting!* provides either an “imagine your favorite food” exercise or, alternatively, a more active and adventurous exercise (eating a dried apple ring without using one’s hands), both of which come with a subsequent exchange of personal experiences. Additionally, instructions for self-made apple rings along with their nutritional values are provided. Another alternative for the first lesson (or another subsequent lesson) is a short story about eating, which may be read to students or shown as a video.<sup>7</sup> As a next step, students are requested to mindfully eat a dried apple ring or the self-prepared food (from the core lesson described below) and to fill out the provided poster as an exercise. In the poster exercise, students are invited to think about the ingredients of the product “dried apple ring”, their sensory experience, feelings, and bodily sensations, as well as possible distractions while consuming and enjoying the food. At this point, another exchange of experiences is appropriate for all learners.

The core lesson consists of preparing food from organic and regional products. The recipes created and adapted for the lessons combine Asian and German influences. The menu consists of fruit and vegetable dishes like Japanese onigiri, maki sushi, and Vietnamese summer rolls with spicy Chinese plum sauce, a sweet plum sauce from Brandenburg, salty Vietnamese soy sauce, and a sweet mint sauce. This lesson is presented entirely in the self-experience format. For the teacher training, the two workshop coaches provide all necessary ingredients and cooking equipment, but for the lesson as it is later taught at schools, the students, as an additional exercise, may plan, organize, and buy the necessary ingredients themselves. All recipes are designed in such a manner that even children with minimal reading skills can follow their requirements by looking at the picture attached to each step. Figure 1 shows a section of the recipe for onigiri with fruit, beginning with step 28.

After preparing the food and setting the tables, everybody is invited to eat the dishes in a mindful manner without speaking. It is possible to combine this step with additional tasks from the poster exercise. The coaches may also offer further experimental exercises like holding one’s nose, using noise-canceling headsets, wearing colored glasses, or eating with one’s eyes closed. Afterwards, individual experiences may be compiled and discussed in the group, including collecting possible or typical distractions from mindful or silent eating in general or at home (e. g., time pressure, other people around, thinking of obligations or plans). As a follow-up, it is advisable to develop strategies suitable for preventing distractions as well as strategies for establishing a calmer setting for consumption in daily routines, and to consider possible occasions to which these strategies could be applied. Both teacher training and teaching materials

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7 Story and video were developed and produced by the EVeLaB project. The video version of *The Great Dispute About Apple Rings* is available on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oH-GPVoxss&ab\\_channel=C](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oH-GPVoxss&ab_channel=C).

also provide helpful hints for establishing new routines as well as further information on consumption and stimulation (e. g., pros and cons of routines, differences between hunger and appetite). The lesson ends with a joint clean-up, which provides an opportunity for students to interact with their peers in an informal fashion.

<p><b>Step</b> 28</p>	<p>Put some rice on your palm and fingers. Gently press the rice into your hand.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 29</p>	<p>Put some pieces of fruit on top of the rice.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 30</p>	<p>Slowly close your hand. The rice should now cover the fruit from all sides.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 31</p>	<p>Press the edges with the other hand and close all remaining holes. Make sure that you create a triangle shape.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 32</p>	<p>This is how it looks.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 33</p>	<p>Dip the edges of the rice triangle into ground nuts.</p>	
<p><b>Step</b> 34</p>	<p>Decorate all products on a plate. Done!</p>	

**Figure 1:** Section of the recipe provided for onigiri with fruit

At this point in the teacher training workshop, the participants are encouraged to reflect on their experience of being in the role of students, and on possible learning challenges like learning with disabilities or diverse backgrounds, not speaking the language, etc. Particularly, experiences made during the experimental exercises (e. g., preparing and eating food without talking or while using noise-canceling headsets,

holding one's nose while eating, using colored glasses, or closing the eyes while eating) are intended to facilitate perspective-taking and to provide new insights into these matters.

This training sequence is followed by a group conversation on the adaptability of the experienced lesson and the materials for the teachers' own schools. In this context, coaches and teachers may address relevant previous experiences, personal apprehensions, or organizational, structural, and environmental challenges. Individual solutions, expertise, new insights, and mutual support may emerge in the peer discussion, as well.

Before the training workshop *Thinking, Feeling, Acting!* concludes with an evaluation, possible follow-up lessons are presented. For this workshop's topic, there are additional exercises for students, such as conducting interviews about eating habits with people they know, creating short videos about distractions during eating, developing theater or role plays of the story *The Great Dispute About Apple Rings* (including creating masks) to teach other people to be mindful eaters, writing a consumption diary, or analyzing the ingredients of their favorite foods. As further topics for discussion in class, the coaches suggest:

1. Local and global perspectives on consumption (e. g., hunger and poverty, religion, norms and values, seasons of the year, or the environment);
2. Health promotion (e. g., food ingredients, nutritional value, diets, allergies, emotional eating, and eating disorders); and
3. Media influences, social networks, and peers.

In other workshops, the coaches provide similarly corresponding topics for further consideration, and cross-reference other workshops from the EVe-LaB program.

Again, the teachers are requested to jointly develop approaches fitting their individual contexts as well as general and individual school curricula. Interdisciplinary connections and links to contiguous school subjects like psychology, geography, biology, religion, or ethics are drawn. Special skills that are trained (e. g., fine motor skills, reading and understanding, mindful consumption) and acquired knowledge (e. g., regional organic production of food, nutritional value, how to cook rice, how to prepare sauces) are accentuated by subsequent input. Accompanying links to relevant literature are also provided by the coaches.

## 5 EVe-LaB—training for nutrition and consumer education

The EVe-LaB training, consisting of 13 workshops in total, aims primarily at consolidating teachers' knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivation, as well as conveying attitudes (see also Lindner & Mayerhofer, 2018) suitable to fostering their students' nutritional awareness and consumer conduct (KMK, 2019). The training's secondary aim is to equip teachers with additional subject-related knowledge, teaching skills, and self- and social competence. The total duration of the EVe-LaB project was 44 months (May 1<sup>st</sup>,

2017, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020). A particularity during the project's first run (2017–2018) was that the teacher training workshops were conducted at the respective schools of the participating teachers (decentralized venue). The training program was designed in such a way that each participant attended workshops at his or her own school as well as two workshops at other schools. Later, the second cohort of teachers (2019–2020) attended all workshops at the University of Potsdam (centralized venue) or, due to restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, online. Additionally, the respective workshops were organized in such a manner that teachers who worked at different schools and taught different school types (primary school, secondary school, schools for students with special needs, etc.) could attend the same workshops. Each teacher attended three different workshops on average over a period of approximately one school year in changing group configurations. Group sizes varied from five to twelve teachers. In the first cohort, attendees also experienced different school locations. This practice allowed them to interact with peers and learn about other teaching perspectives. Up to three teachers from each school could participate in the EVE-LaB workshops. Since the EVE-LaB project was sponsored by the State of Brandenburg, attendance at the workshops was free of charge. Attendees were released from their respective school duties during attendance days while receiving their full salary and travel expenses.

In addition, attendees were offered support by the EVE-LaB project for the development of individual school curricula according to the newly established requirements (KMK, 2019). Accordingly, additional counseling opportunities were offered, including a visitation at the teachers' own schools. On these occasions, an objective agreement for the training program was signed between the EVE-LaB project and the respective schools, and subsequently, a self-developed school project in the field of nutrition and consumer education was planned. Schools were also offered support by the EVE-LaB project in applying for financial support from the State of Brandenburg for the planned school projects in question. At the end of a series of up to nine workshops per school, the implementation of financially supported school projects was presented at a final get-together with all participants (1<sup>st</sup> cohort: 2017–2018). In 2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> cohort: 2019–2020), these additional offers could not be provided due to financial and COVID-19 restrictions, respectively, but the EVE-LaB training program (including all workshops) was carried on as planned and was even expanded regarding its range of topics.

## 6 Evaluation

Altogether, 117 teachers from 52 different schools and of different school types were trained with the innovative self-experience training format and the newly developed teaching materials (Table 1). One teacher from one cohort participated in three workshops on average. Over the course of three years and eight months, four different coaches in varying lineups conducted a total of 44 workshops (17 face-to-face workshop. 2017–2018, 20 face-to-face workshop. 2019–2020, and seven digital workshop. 2019–2020). Group sizes varied from five to twelve attendees per workshop.

Throughout the project (May 2017 to December 2020), the training was evaluated using the items and 6-point Likert scale developed by Landes and Ziegler (2015) for the evaluation of teaching, which were supplemented by several additional items. The scale covered the following aspects to be rated by the teachers:

1. *Structure & Materials* (4 items: distinct conception & structure; attainment of many new insights; achievement of defined goals; supportive learning materials);
2. *Conception & Didactics* (6 items: emphasis on the learning progress; application of examples; comprehensible inner logic; references to existing knowledge; application of distinct language; exercises establishing understanding); and
3. *Interaction* (3 items: critical discussion of the topics encouraged; supportive atmosphere of dialogue; comprehensible responses)

This way, several criteria for optimal lessons (e. g., Hattie, 2012; Meyer, 2004) and successful teacher training (Lipowsky & Rzejak, 2015) could be covered in an economic, reliable, and valid way.

Additional items referring to a possible application in specific school contexts, an interesting presentation of the topics, and satisfied expectations were assessed. These additional items were allocated on a 6-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (= not true) to 6 (= very true). The list of items was supplemented by two general measures: a) satisfaction in general and b) satisfaction with the coaches, which were also assessed using a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (= very good/excellent) to 6 (= very poor/failure).

**Table 1:** Numbers of participants, schools, and evaluations

	2017/2018 face-to-face	2019/2020 face-to-face	2019/2020 digital	total
participants	48	47	22	117
schools	18	22	12	52
evaluations	130	124	44	298

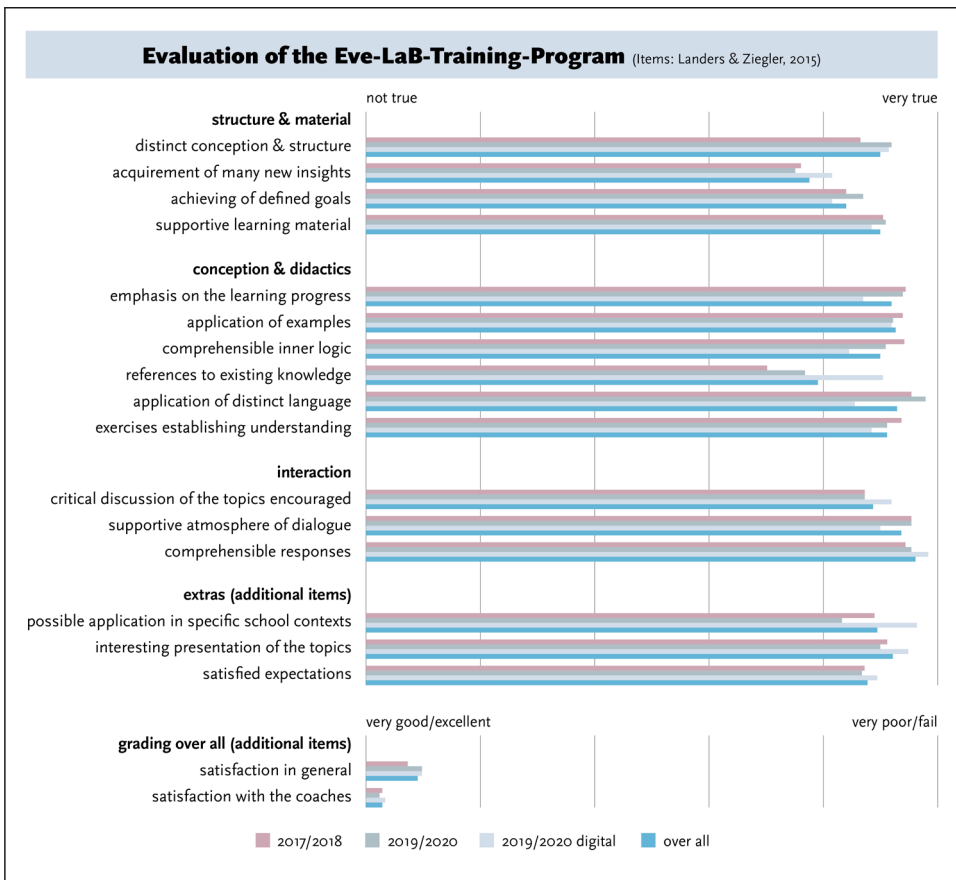
The evaluation results (overall descriptive data analysis) show a very high score and outstanding satisfaction with both the workshop content (mean = 1.45) and the coaches (mean = 1.14). Among other things, the evaluation showed that the “expected learning goals” were achieved very well (mean = 5.21), that the “utilized material” was exceedingly helpful (mean = 5.50), and that the “attainment of many new insights” was achieved well (mean = 4.81). Items referring to the interaction with the coaches also show very high scores: participants thought that they encouraged critical discussion of the topics (mean = 5.44), created a supportive atmosphere of dialogue (mean = 5.69), and provided comprehensible responses (mean = 5.81) to questions arising during the workshops.

Since there was no explicit introduction of items referring to the self-experience format, it is of particular interest to outline the items “distinct conceptions & structure” (mean = 5.50) and “exercises establishing understanding” (mean = 5.56), since in the

context of the EVE-LaB training program, these two items refer to the self-experience format in which the training program was conducted. Both show very high scores.

Scores for criteria of *Conception & Didactics* in general, like “emphasis on the learning progress” (mean = 5.60), “application of examples” (mean = 5.64), “comprehensible inner logic” (mean = 5.50), “references to existing knowledge” (mean = 4.96), and “application of distinct language” (mean = 5.65) were also high or even very high.

The scores regarding supplementary items such as the possible “application in specific school contexts” (mean = 5.48), the “interesting presentation of the topics” (mean = 5.61), or “satisfied expectations” (mean = 5.39), also proved to be excellent.



**Figure 2:** Evaluation of the EVE-LaB training program

Figure 2, which shows the evaluation outcome, also differentiates two time periods (1<sup>st</sup> cohort: 2017–2018; 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort: 2019–2020) and selected topics (2<sup>nd</sup> cohort online format: 2019–2020 digital), which, due to corona restrictions, were conducted online and with corresponding online exercises and didactical approaches (three workshops: *Avoiding plastic products*, *Food waste*, and *Religious, ethical, and moral aspects of consumption*). Data



shows that transferring workshops to an online format had no noteworthy impact on the evaluation outcome (see Figure 2). Unfortunately, further statistics and differential analyses of the evaluation data cannot be presented in this article since the data for statistical contingency tables is incomplete for relevant variables like “topic and material of the provided workshop”, “coaching team”, “face-to-face or digital format”, “first, second, or third participation round”, “central or decentral venue”, “participants”, and “group size”, due to the setup of the project.

## 7 Discussion

The EVE-LaB training program for nutrition and consumer education was conducted between May 2017 and December 2020. It attempted to enable teachers at all school types to teach subjects related to nutrition and consumption and was meant to address a very wide range and a highly diverse group of students (5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade, at various learning levels, of diverse backgrounds, with special needs, and at different school types).

There is no other way to describe the results of the evaluation of the EVE-LaB training program, designed in an innovative self-experience format, than as excellent (mean > 5). The results pertaining to the aspects of *Structure & Material*, *Conception & Didactics*, and *Interaction*, supplemented with additional items, indicate that the criteria for optimal lessons and successful trainings (Hattie, 2012; Lipowsky & Rzejak, 2015; Meyer, 2004) were very well met. Slight improvements could still be achieved by providing more “references to existing knowledge” and “enabling the attainment of new insights”, at least in the face-to-face setting.

The workshop’s structure seems to be a promising one for professional teacher trainings. These findings are of little surprise, however, because the EVE-LaB training program was conducted in accordance with the criteria of an “optimal lesson” (Hattie, 2012) and “successful training” (Lipowsky & Rzejak, 2015). Yet, the workshop concept’s compliance with the criteria of “optimal lesson” and “successful training” may not, in and of itself, be a sufficient explanation for the exceedingly high scores achieved in the training’s evaluation. In our view, an important element of this training concept must have helped the training to comply to a high extent with these criteria and thereby boost the evaluation scores.

Three major reasons lead us to the assumption that the training’s self-experience framework is responsible for the high scores: Firstly, the training workshops were presented to the teaching staff by four different coaches in changing lineups; secondly, the coaches conducted a total of 44 workshops; and thirdly, the workshops were rated almost equally high over the course of three years and eight months, with just about insignificant variability. These factors exclude other possible explanations (such as an especially successful coaching lineup or experience gained over time) and leave the workshop self-experience format itself as the only explanation for the training’s notable success. Searching for the specific element that might have granted this concept its

success, we find that what distinguishes this teacher training from more conventional training programs is the self-experience format.

The self-experience format was implemented in such a way that teachers experienced two complete lessons in the role of students. They had to work through the exercises as students and thereby became familiar with the way the lesson might be experienced by their own students later on. Occasionally, the teachers' role as students was deliberately interrupted to enable them to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the exercises as well as the theoretical background and to discuss the adjustment of the materials to their respective school settings (e. g., to students with reading disabilities, to students from foreign countries, or to the facilities available).

It must be noted that reliable information about and comparison with other training programs utilizing the self-experience format is not available. Nor are we aware of a published study addressing the proportion of teacher training programs utilizing the self-experience format or the proportion of teacher training programs in general scoring in their respective evaluations as high as the EVE-LaB program.

Hence, it remains an assumption that the self-experience format may be a key element in elevating the quality of teacher training. Therefore, comprehensive studies related to the self-experience format are required in order to determine its potential for enhancing future conceptions of professional teacher trainings as well as its potential for the development of future school programs that are better suited for diverse student populations.

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# Financial Accounting in a Flipped Classroom: Experience and Insights

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## 1 Introduction: Is there a Better Solution?

The authors of this article teach Financial Accounting in the International Business program at RIT Croatia in Zagreb, a global campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology. The language of instruction is English, which is a foreign language for the majority of the student population. We started flipping the Financial Accounting classroom in 2013. By the time this article was written, the course had run 20 times with a total of  $n = 1,194$  enrolled students.

This article examines a multi-year field study on flipping the classroom for an introductory Financial Accounting course, in which the authors share their experience, their results as obtained through observation and student surveys, and best practices advice for anyone interested in trying a flipped classroom approach for one of their courses.

### 1.1 Situation: “Won’t You Please Pay Attention and Do the Work?”

Financial Accounting is traditionally perceived as “hard”, “boring”, and “impossible” for those “not good with numbers”.<sup>1</sup> The grade distribution usually shows a fat tail on the F side. Many students seem unmotivated or lack discipline and good work habits, and many of them earn low grades, which result in high withdrawal or failure rates.

We set out to explore whether the classroom lecture method may be to blame since this model obviously collides with reality. *How it supposedly is:* The teacher stands in front of a class while the students are listening attentively. They take notes, learn, and succeed in their exams. They value the experience. *How it really is:* The teacher stands in front of the class, but the students do not conform to the assumptions of the classroom lecture model. For many of them, it is difficult to sit quietly for over an hour and focus on the instruction dispensed by the teacher. They want to learn, but in the classroom, they doze off, are easily distracted, lack simple study skills like good notetaking, and struggle with discipline. Outside the classroom, they are engaged in social media, video games, or video and music clips—activities that only require a short attention span.

Disillusioned by the end-of-semester outcomes of lecture-style teaching, we asked ourselves: Is there a better way?

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1 Quotes taken from student feedback questionnaires collected over the course of several semesters.



## 1.2 The Idea: What Could Be Done Differently?

A common description of the learning process distinguishes two phases: First comes *transmission*, which is followed by *assimilation*.<sup>2</sup> Transmission refers to the transfer of information and the explanation of new concepts by the teacher with students in a predominantly passive role. Assimilation refers to students' active engagement in the new material as they apply the new information to relevant practice problems. Assimilation follows transmission in order to consolidate the newly learned content.

Studies on the efficiency of learning techniques proclaim that "Practice Testing" and "Distributed Practice" proved to be the most efficient learning methods (Dunlosky et al., 2013). "Practice Testing" is defined as working on practice problems that involve the concepts the students have just learned, while "Distributed Practice" is working steadily but at a low intensity on newly learned concepts over a longer period of time. As we know firsthand, the biggest challenges for freshmen are poor study habits, a lack of discipline, and being overwhelmed, which can result in disinterest.<sup>3</sup> They need guidance in learning how to learn.

The classroom hours are traditionally occupied with transmission, so there is little time left to guide students to successful assimilation. Instructors commonly rely on what students accomplish at home on their own—not the most promising strategy for freshmen.

Thus, the traditional lecture-teaching approach has some major flaws: The burden on the student is higher for assimilation than for transmission, but help is more readily available during transmission than it is during the processes of higher-order assimilation, which mostly take place at home (Nickles, 2012). And to make matters worse, transmission by in-class lecture is a one-shot event, and inattentive or absent students will miss the lesson for good.

As a fixed curriculum must be covered during the semester, time for in-class practice could be freed up by outsourcing transmission to video lectures, which can be studied in advance. The hope is that students are more likely and willing to study a video at home than to engage in more difficult assimilative practice, i. e., classic homework. Students today are used to consuming digital media, and the increasing accessibility of video has long been experimented with in education, pioneered by digital media platforms and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). For an instructor open to experimentation, "how-to" information regarding video-supported teaching models is easy to find.<sup>4</sup>

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2 The terminology traces back to Benjamin S. Bloom ("Bloom's Taxonomy"), see Crouch & Mazur (2001), p. 973, and Talbert (2012).

3 As is readily confirmed in the literature. See, e. g., Brinkworth et al. (2009), p. 168.

4 One of the earliest sources on the inverted (or flipped) classroom comes from Miami University's Economics Department (Lage et al., 2000). A very useful, up-to-date guide for faculty interested in implementing a flipped classroom course is Talbert (2017). Valuable comprehensive studies providing a solid foundation for the flipped classroom are Santos Green, Banas, and Perkins (2017), as well as Reidsema, Kavanagh, Hadgraft, and Smith (2017). Also helpful for a practical approach is Talbert (2014).

## 2 Methods and Setup of the Flipped Classroom Exploration

### 2.1 Making Videos: Contents and Form

Our first step towards a flipped classroom was to lay down a curriculum for the whole semester, using an established textbook as the backbone. We were able to take the course structure from our traditional lecture version of the Financial Accounting course and then record the first edition of the videos “on the fly” as the semester progressed.

Instructional videos for flipped classroom designs should not be too long so as not to thwart students’ curiosity (Crawford & Senecal, 2017). Due to notetaking, reproducing calculations or accounting procedures, and rewatching difficult passages,<sup>5</sup> studying a lecture video will take the student a multiple of the video’s net length. The average length of our videos for Financial Accounting turned out to be 13 minutes. Overall, our course turned out to fit into 65 videos with a total net time of 17 hours.

At least initially, full scripts are helpful for the production of video material. With increasing practice, we managed to record unscripted lectures based on the screencast material, usually PowerPoint slides or tablet drawings, and our teaching experience. After a few videos, teaching “to the laptop” becomes familiar. Video lecture production therefore comes with a steep learning curve: the first videos took a day each to produce, not to mention the hours spent on trial and error, exploring both the software and the hardware setup, and learning the procedure. Besides the actual recording, production includes preparing the presentation material, post-production steps, and server upload. But soon the ratio shrank to about 4:1, leaving us with 40 minutes of production time for a 10-minute video.

A video lecture is far denser in information than a live class. After all, videos allow the teacher to save time, which is usually spent on classroom management, developing the whiteboard content, or on questions and conversations that may interrupt the lecture flow. Time-consuming attempts to elicit student participation are not necessary in this lecture format, and intentional repetitions of key content can be omitted because students can rewatch the video as needed.

### 2.2 Making Videos: The Technology

Recording lecture videos is possible even on a shoestring budget. Our initial equipment was a Windows laptop, on which we used Microsoft Office, mostly for PowerPoint slides and Excel worksheets, to generate the screencast material. Additionally, we used a simple Wacom Bamboo tablet, size A5, to simulate the classroom whiteboard. We combined the tablet with SmoothDraw 4, a freeware drawing program that sup-

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5 A good recommendation to every flipped classroom instructor is to enroll in a video-based MOOC themselves to experience the receiving side of the model firsthand in order to develop a sense for the students’ situation.

ports image layering, so that prepared drawings could be overlaid as content was developed during the recorded lecture (see the Appendix for details).<sup>6</sup>

Excellent sound quality is crucial to successfully reaching the audience with an instructional video (Akçayir & Akçayir, 2018). It is therefore important to choose an external, high-quality microphone because ambient noise (air conditioning, telephones, street noise, etc.) cannot always be avoided and the built-in microphones of most laptops pick up too much of it. Therefore, we recommend investing in an external microphone, preferably with its own sound card, in its simplest form as a USB plug-in. We settled for a wireless Logitech USB headset microphone.

A camera, on the other hand, is only needed if a face overlay of the teacher is desired. We decided against it because it complicates the production process and reduces the visible screen space.

Screencasts can be recorded with simple screen capture software. We used a commercial program called SnagIt by TechSmith (see Appendix), which at the time of the recording was recommended by our university. SnagIt does not allow editing of the video, so all videos must be uncut one-takes.<sup>7</sup> Not being able to edit seems like a serious limitation until we consider that a teacher never gets to edit anything in the live classroom, either. Lecture videos need not be perfect to serve as good teaching tools. The time spent learning how to edit videos, added to the actual editing process, would make the production of learning materials for the flipped classroom even more time-consuming. Facing this trade-off, we quickly learned to tolerate small imperfections in our video clips.

Even the production of a simple one-take screencast lecture format turned out to be time-consuming. There are many more advanced video production features available, and for teachers at a large university who can rely on the support of a professional media center, the process of video production may be much easier. For a shoestring budget DIY approach like ours, however, which uses a laptop and has the teacher act as the screenwriter, set designer, main actor, and sole producer all rolled into one, the simple screencast version is challenging enough. Fortunately, for the purpose of the flipped classroom, the quality of the results proved sufficient. On the one hand, transferring the content of our lecture to videos meant that we needed to invest a considerable amount of time. On the other hand, the video lectures will amortize over the years.

An unexpected windfall in our case was the ease with which we could adapt the course to the COVID-19 restrictions. Since we already had several years of experience working with a flipped classroom, our already-prepared setup made the move to online teaching very easy.

### 2.3 Video Hosting: Making Lecture Videos Available to Students

The next step is to make the video lectures available to students. Compared to public hosting sites like YouTube, which provide the instructional videos in a deliberately dis-

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6 A helpful hands-on explanation of how to make simple educational videos using SmoothDraw is provided by Bourassa (2011). The Khan Academy, an online-education institution for high school and college education established by Salman Khan, popularized flipped classroom teaching through their large collection of short and simple educational videos.

7 If editing the lecture videos cannot be avoided, the more powerful TechSmith product Camtasia Studio is an option.

tracting user environment, a school video server is the far cleaner and preferred solution. We hosted on the RIT Ensemble video server, which allows the creation of video playlists that can easily be embedded in the learning management system (LMS), in RIT's case myCourses by Brightspace/Desire2Learn.<sup>8</sup> We recommend the simplest solution possible, preferably auto-updating playlists directly from the server whenever new or updated videos have been uploaded, thus saving time and preventing errors.

We set the server to disallow the download of video content in favor of streaming online because we wanted to retain as much control over the content as possible, e. g., in case we chose to replace a video with an improved version.

## 2.4 In-Class Practice: Content and Timing

Once the students have accomplished “transmission” by studying the lecture videos, the “assimilation” phase follows. In the flipped classroom, this means in-class practice guided by a teacher. Again, the selection, adaptation, or creation of suitable material requires a considerable amount of time. The sessions should therefore be planned with an eye towards aligning them with the assigned video content because good synchronization of video content and in-class practice is key for student motivation.

Initially, however, this synchronization is hard to achieve because the teacher still lacks a sense for the time required for each task when using the flipped classroom method for the first time. A comprehensive textbook with a wide selection of practice problems to choose from comes in handy for the in-class portion of the flipped classroom model. Nevertheless, selecting and adapting problems remains a considerable task, especially if the video lectures leave out some of the textbook content. If a textbook is to be used in a flipped classroom scenario, we recommend that teachers carefully scrutinize the practice material beforehand in order to avoid skipped content.

The quality of each in-class practice session crucially depends on the level of student preparation. We experimented with various motivational approaches. Initially, we tried old-fashioned admonitions, justified by suspiciously low video viewing statistics. In later semesters, we developed 13 quizzes, which we integrated into the LMS. These quizzes were administered and auto-graded weekly, using random questions from custom-made pools. Students take these quizzes at their own pace on the day this content will be discussed and practiced in class. It was our subjective impression that the gentle pressure of weekly quizzes improved the level of preparedness over mere admonitions, as was visible in in-class participation. While the initial time investment for the teacher is high, it will amortize over the semesters.

## 2.5 Logistics of In-Class Practice

In the semesters before the COVID-19 pandemic, we divided the class into groups of four students, mixing stronger and weaker students, and used their weekly quiz results to assess them. This strategy ignores social ties and makes it more likely that instead of the students' plans for the weekend, the theory and practice of financial accounting will

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8 RIT uses myCourses by Desire2Learn (D2L) as its LMS, a product also marketed under the brand name Brightspace.

be their main topic of conversation. We also reckon that at least some students per group will always be sufficiently prepared to tackle practice problems.

Stronger students may reinforce their understanding by explaining concepts to weaker students. The weaker students, in turn, can ask a peer to provide necessary explanations instead of the teacher, who will be moving from group to group, making sure that they are all successfully applying the newly learned concepts. If nothing else, these in-class sessions will show weaker students that their peers are mastering the content that they themselves do not yet understand. Ideally, they will derive motivation from this insight.

To save the in-class group work during the COVID-19 lockdowns, we used Zoom to move the practice sessions online. With the breakout room feature, teachers can divide their classes into groups with a predefined head count. Each of these groups is then assigned a virtual room in which they can meet and work.<sup>9</sup> The teacher can move from one room to the next in a digital equivalent of moving from one circle of chairs to the next in the physical classroom.

Instead of paper, the practice material is distributed via Google Sheets. Every group has its own sheet on which the members can collaborate. One student shares the spreadsheet on the screen in the breakout room, and all members can edit it simultaneously. This makes for an even stronger collaborative experience than in the traditional circle of chairs, where everyone has their own sheet in front of them. The teacher's preparations for these virtual collaboration tasks include setting up folders for each in-class session on Google Drive and breakout rooms in Zoom, copying spreadsheets and adjusting the options for collaboration, and sharing the link to the folder with the students in the Zoom chat before letting the groups move to their respective breakout rooms.

## 2.6 Textbook

As the backbone of our video lectures, we used an established accounting textbook that we had already used in the traditional in-class version of the course, which provided both structure and practice material. We chose an open access textbook from an American university, Larry M. Walther's *Principles of Accounting* (Walther, n. d.), which supported students' individual study preferences. If they wanted to supplement their video lecture with additional textbook reading, they had a choice of reading the book online or using the PDF version to print the material.

## 2.7 Communication: Discussion Forum and Instant Messaging

A discussion forum in the LMS can serve as a convenient extension of the in-class practice sessions. Students can continue to interact there when finishing up problem sets or re-doing problems in preparation for exams, and they can also discuss their difficul-

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<sup>9</sup> We chose Zoom's random assignment of students to breakout rooms for efficiency. Had we tried to reproduce the previous strategy of mixing strong and weak students, the preparations in Zoom would have taken extra time, only to become obsolete and cause *ad hoc* reshuffling if some of the students did not show up for class. As an additional benefit, the randomness of the groups in each new practice session prevented "group fatigue", i. e., students getting bored or even annoyed with the group to which they were assigned.

ties and insights along the way. Answers can be posted either by peers or by the teacher, and—unlike replies to individual student e-mails—are accessible to all. As of late, messenger platforms like Slack provide a more advanced and easier-to-use technology that allows us to achieve the same effect.

We created one discussion forum per textbook chapter, plus a general forum for video-related questions, to make the forums as user-friendly as possible and pertinent information easy to locate. Clear rules on posting etiquette and an emphasis on concise subject lines must be impressed on students to make for a smooth experience. For example, each post must be placed in the appropriate forum thread, the subject line must clearly reference the chapter, problem, or issue in question, and the general rules of courtesy and conciseness expected in e-mails should be encouraged.

Creating a livelier discussion platform for all class sections is one of the strongest arguments for merging all sections of the course into one common course shell on the LMS.<sup>10</sup> The disadvantage of giving up the technical control over individual sections will be compensated by improved LMS functionality.

As a reaction to COVID-19 restrictions, we introduced the Slack instant messaging platform, which became part of the RIT tech infrastructure at that time. On Slack, student questions can be answered within minutes, making the messenger far more attractive than asynchronous discussion through the forums. Our primary motivation to start using Slack, however, was to regain some sense of the proximity we had lost to social distancing and lockdowns. Slack turned out to be far more versatile than expected, replacing many office hour visits and a great percentage of what under different circumstances would have been e-mail communication. Additionally, Slack even helped with students' social communication during lockdowns. Due to these benefits, we will surely keep using the messenger after the return to in-person classes, phasing out the old-fashioned forums.

### 3 Results: What Works—and What Does Not (Yet)?

This section reports the results of our flipped classroom teaching experiment, based on feedback elicited from  $n = 1,194$  students in 20 iterations of the flipped classroom version of the Financial Accounting course. Feedback was collected via regular online course evaluations, with an average response rate of 87%. Additionally, we used selectively administered anonymous paper-based course survey questionnaires, which students filled out unsupervised during the last session of the course. This procedure was chosen to guarantee full response rates for the questionnaires while maintaining the responding students' anonymity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Typically, a course in any given semester would consist of 4 or 5 sections of 30–40 students.

<sup>11</sup> Since RIT's online evaluation has undergone various changes in both format and administration policy (full semester vs. summer classes), not all iterations of the course used the same set of feedback formats. Further, we administered our elaborate course survey questionnaire to four iterations of the course to test the impact of the choices we made in our continued efforts to improve the course over the long observation period. The results reported in this section are therefore more of an evaluation-supported qualitative nature than a thorough and rigorous statistical analysis.

### 3.1 Videos

Depending on the features of the video server and LMS used in a flipped classroom design, streaming statistics may be available, at least on a per-video basis.<sup>12</sup> These statistics provide some insight into student engagement and preparation. While we could not (and would not care to) police students individually, the overall viewing statistics per video were nevertheless useful to call students to order: After all, the low view counts on the lecture videos convincingly convey to the students that there may be very simple explanations for poor exam results.

Fortunately, the viewing statistics of the video lectures, as evidenced by the video hosting system, were reasonably high and stable. In the long run, they also showed that students on average watched each video more than once, which can be considered successful student engagement. The number of views per video declined slightly for the later videos, which is in line with the strongly declining number of students still participating in the course towards the end of the semester.<sup>13</sup>

Student reactions to the videos, as evidenced by both the course evaluation and the questionnaires, were overwhelmingly positive. Only about 3% of students expressed dislike for the lecture videos in the surveys.

By their own account, students were shocked by how quickly video study time backlog builds up. In debriefing discussions, students have suggested that before experiencing video-based lectures, they associated videos with relaxation and entertainment but not with serious studying. Therefore, a list of videos they still need to work on seems deceptively less “dangerous” than a list of unread textbook chapters. Many students indicated that they tried binge-watching several hours of our video content before an exam to make up for prior dawdling. The consequences were as one might expect: If students do not keep up with their studies, they are just as lost in the virtual segment of the flipped classroom as they would have been in a conventional lecture-and-textbook course. Firstly, binge watching before an exam is as useless as an all-nighter with the textbook, and secondly, success in a Financial Accounting exam requires a level of practice in solving actual accounting problems, which skimming the videos will not provide.

Fortunately, access to technology has proved unproblematic, even in the early years of this field study. When we started flipping the classroom in 2013, smart mobile devices and video content were still less common, but except for occasional initial hiccups such as login ID malfunctions, students did not complain about difficulties regarding the accessibility of the course and its content.

### 3.2 In-Class Practice

Dividing the class according to students’ skill levels and ensuring that each study group consisted of strong *and* weak students presented several challenges. Firstly, if the group division was prepared beforehand, there was always a certain risk that it might become

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12 RIT’s infrastructure at the time did not allow by-student viewing statistics. This unfortunately limited our ability to examine the correlation between viewing statistics and individual course success.

13 The failure or withdrawal percentage of enrolled students ranges between 25% and 33% in the observed period. See Section 3.5, Grades and Withdrawals, for more detail.

obsolete due to some students not being in class that day. In this case, groups had to be rearranged on the spot, filling gaps with whoever was available. Secondly, group dynamics are notoriously unpredictable when students are thrown together regardless of social ties. Individual groups may lack motivation, while others split into subgroups. In one scenario, the stronger students may make progress while the weaker students are too far behind to keep up with them, growing ever more frustrated. In another scenario, the unprepared students may chit-chat while those willing to practice ignore them and get the work done. To resolve issues such as these, we chose to re-mix the study groups every three weeks.

Over the years, we found four students to be a good size for a study group. While smaller groups could easily turn dysfunctional if their members are not sufficiently prepared for a lesson, a team of four is usually able to absorb at least some of the effects of individual group members coming to class without adequate preparation. Although attending in-class practice unprepared is still a waste of the student's time, a group that also includes *some* prepared peers at least shows the unprepared that the class is moving on without them. For some, this may translate into the motivation they need to be prepared next time.

The in-class logistics for practice groups proved rather time-consuming. It is most efficient to prepare the classroom beforehand by setting up circles of chairs and to seat students in their groups immediately upon arrival. Ideally, we would recommend scheduling flipped classroom courses back-to-back so the classroom arrangement can be reused. Furthermore, it is advisable to plan group practice for full class periods rather than for just parts of a class. Students are notoriously inert when asked to switch from a forward-facing lecture mode to seating arrangements more conducive to discussion within their study groups, and much time is lost in the process.

Perfect coordination between the video assignment and the in-class practice session proved essential but hard to achieve since it is not always easy to predict how much progress a class will make during an in-class session. Even under ideal circumstances, with ample time to watch the videos and the practice material exactly matching the video content, student preparation often covers only the bare minimum. While allowing the teachers to move on with the lesson, this keeps the class from moving *swiftly*. If students are clueless as to what to do with the practice problems, the best intention to provide guided assimilation will fail—and so the class inevitably slows down until everyone has caught up with the material.

Over the course of several semesters, we noticed two types of groups emerging in the flipped classroom. On the one hand, there are groups that work well, constantly check their interim results, and ask for cues on the next problem. On the other hand, there are groups that need to be pushed to make up for their lack of motivation or preparation. For the teachers, dividing their attention between six to ten groups is demanding. There is plenty of running around and trying to keep each individual group's processes going, but witnessing students' occasional *aha!* moments during assimilation still makes it a rewarding experience.



In group practice, some idling and inefficiency are inevitable. We would even go so far as to consider it inherent to the method. However, the benchmark to which we compare the progress made through in-class practice should *not* be teacher-led practice with the entire class, which speeds up the process by cutting out the time students need to think, interact, and engage in order to work out the solution in a study group. Instead, our benchmark should be the speed at which an average student would do their homework. The best a teacher can do to support students' progress in this setting is to minimize the amount of time lost on logistics.

For our Financial Accounting course, the most efficient protocol turned out to be assigning a certain period of time during which the study groups may work on a practice problem. Once this time has elapsed, we interrupt the group work and discuss the results with the entire class. For an average class of 80 minutes, about four such alternations between group work and class debriefing are feasible. These alternating phases keep the process moving along, even for those groups that are lost or slow, while also giving the teacher more control over the progress.

In our evaluations, on average, 70% of the students indicated that they liked the in-class practice, and about one quarter of them even considered it an outstanding feature of the course, mentioning that they would like to see more of it. Other students clearly realized that they botched their in-class practice because they came unprepared—a helpful insight if they fail their exams and have to repeat the course.

The group work during in-class practice received mixed feedback. Only a few students expressed high satisfaction with the study groups. About 15% of our students suggested changing to a teacher-centered form of practice in which the entire class is guided through the process of problem solving. We only rarely used such forms of in-class practice because they keep the students in a mostly passive role.

Very few students, presumably those who came prepared and ready to work, expressed dissatisfaction at their groupmates' ignorance. Some students noted that they would have liked group work if their peers had presented the same level of preparedness and motivation. We find that a good way to respond to such frustrations is to tell students that explaining content to a peer can be a rewarding task, too, because it deepens the explaining student's own understanding: You learn by teaching.

The practice groups were easy to move online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The breakout room setup on Zoom requires just a few clicks—compared to rearranging the physical classroom, this actually saved time—and randomized group division made the discussion of the pros and cons of different types of group composition obsolete. In the beginning, however, some time had to be budgeted to teach students breakout room etiquette and how to handle the electronically delivered material.

A final interesting outcome for us teachers was the realization of how hard it is to truly abstain from lecturing to the class in a flipped classroom setup. It takes a few iterations of the course for the teachers to really trust the method and become comfortable with letting go of lecturing, focusing on review, questions, and guidance instead.

### 3.3 Textbook

Larry M. Walther's *Principles of Accounting* (Walther, n. d.) proved an excellent choice. The text is well edited and up-to-date, and it comes with the usual material for use in higher education (glossary, practice problems). Despite the book being more concise than most printed introductory accounting textbooks,<sup>14</sup> it still provides plenty of material for a one-semester introduction to financial accounting. While the book provides a good selection of practice problems, we felt that some chapters didn't provide enough basic problems and therefore created additional practice material of our own.

By their own account, most students (92 %) prefer the free online version of the textbook. Only 6 % state that they would have preferred a traditional printed textbook to accompany the flipped classroom. Concerning the textbook as such, students praised the explanations and the succinct, no-frills style. The fact that the book was available online was also seen as an advantage when traveling.

However, this part of the evaluation also showed an unexpected cultural aspect: In order to appeal to students, many modern American undergraduate textbooks use glossy images and elaborate "real life" stories tailored to students immersed in American culture. Even though RIT Croatia teaches in English, very few students have an American background. Therefore, the *Americana* included in the textbook at best failed to pull in non-American students—and at worst, they were considered a distraction. From the perspective of a non-native speaker who may already be struggling with the vocabulary and therefore reading with diminished speed, less is certainly more.

Discipline regarding self-organized learning, concerning the video lectures as well as classroom practice, proved crucial to student success in Financial Accounting, as students will hardly be able to catch up once they fall behind. If students are idle during the first four weeks, when the fundamental concepts of bookkeeping are taught, the coursework of the remaining ten weeks will become incomprehensible. Even if they realize their mistake five weeks in and make an effort to catch up, they will struggle to do that and simultaneously keep abreast of all the new study assignments that accumulate in the meantime. Once they have fallen behind, only a few students manage to recover and succeed.

### 3.4 Out-of-Class Interaction: Discussion Forum and Messaging

Participation in LMS discussion forums varied greatly between different classes and sections of the course. Habits emerging during the first weeks determine the result. Even with approximately equal section sizes, the participation level from section to section of the same semester on the LMS discussion forum varies widely.<sup>15</sup> It comes as no surprise that more engaged sections are associated with higher grades: For the same year, the mean final grade was 73 % for the least active section, while it was 78 % for the most engaged section mentioned above.

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14 Typical accounting textbooks easily amount to 700 pages and are usually an expensive, glossy cash drain, particularly on a non-US market.

15 As an example, in the fall semester 2014/15, among approximately equal-sized sections, the most active section had 207 postings, while the least active section had only 42 postings on the discussion forums of the LMS. While in the most active section students replied to one another, in the least active section the students would only post questions but rarely any replies, leaving the answers largely up to the instructor.

Discussion forum statistics regularly show anxious activity in the 36 hours before an exam—confirming, unfortunately, that many of the forum’s users do not study regularly. We consistently observe that forum participation is driven by very few individuals; usually fewer than five students are regularly engaged in any given section. On average, user statistics over the course of a semester reveal that almost 100 % of postings are authored by just 20 % of the students in each section, while 80 % remain passive, posting only the occasional question or reply. When it comes to reading the forum posts, this changes dramatically: Between half and two-thirds of all students read every posting, even if they do not actively post themselves. Only a very few students never used the discussion forum at all.

In our evaluations, the discussion forums did not rank very high in students’ appreciation. Only about 10 % of our students perceived the forums as an outstanding feature of the course. Specifically, the layout of the discussion forum in our particular LMS was criticized by some as convoluted, unattractive, and not user-friendly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we introduced Slack instant messaging, first at our initiative on a free plan. As the pandemic persisted, RIT acquired a university-wide license that allowed integration with other RIT tech infrastructure. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the near-synchronous experience, especially when compared to the asynchronous discussion posts, which were perceived as old-fashioned. Since Slack is available on mobile phones, as soon as a question pops up, it is convenient and easy for the students to reply. Even adding a snapshot of a practice problem in progress is simple. By adopting Slack as a means of communication, we could even successfully retain some of the feeling of proximity and immediacy lost to social distancing and online teaching. For us, the messenger proved a “keeper” for post-COVID teaching.

### 3.5 Grades and Withdrawals

Starting with an original enrollment of 110 to 140 students per semester, the long-term average shows that a third of all students withdraw or fail the course. Regarding these numbers, the flipped classroom unfortunately achieves no improvement: Prior traditional formats had a dropout rate of about one third, too. The improvement we expected to see regarding students’ grades did not happen either.

One possible explanation for the high withdrawal and failure rate is that quantitative courses like Financial Accounting traditionally act as a filter during the freshman year. This effect may be even more pronounced if there is no quantitatively oriented entrance examination before enrollment. In the absence of an entrance exam, it is inevitable that student ranks will be thinned out by the exams of the first semesters, and it is preferable to confront students with a reality check regarding their study program sooner rather than later.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Due to coaching sessions with freshmen taking the First Year Enrichment courses at RIT Croatia, we are aware that many students see business as a “safe” choice to study. They enroll because they have not yet found a career about which they are passionate, because they are swayed by the supposedly good job prospects, or because of parental pressure. Students who choose business because of their own inclination or because they are passionate about the career options that come with it seem to be much rarer.

In many semesters, however, the distribution of grades shows an A as the most frequent passing grade, a peculiarity we also observed in the exams (two midterms, one final per semester), while in prior iterations of the traditional lecture format showed a more equal distribution among the passing grades of A to D. This points to a positive effect of the flipped classroom method: the students who knew how to put in the work required to prepare their lessons often excel in the flipped classroom, while mid-level grades are less frequent. Nevertheless, we were disappointed to realize that the video component does not seem to help *more* students make a habit of disciplined, self-organized studying.

More specifically, and arguing for Financial Accounting in particular, the majority of the students in our evaluations express, even if only implicitly, a dislike for “working with numbers” or for quantitative subjects in general. On average, less than 30% of students comment favorably on the subject of the course. More than two-thirds unenthusiastically accept that accounting is necessary and maybe even important in business but also state that the subject is certainly not appealing to them. Some of these students do not even beat around the bush when it comes to their aversions: “good teaching, but horrible course”, opined one student in our questionnaire.

Taking all of these findings into account, we, as teachers, face a dilemma: If a flipped classroom course is portrayed as “easy” or “more accessible”, many students do not feel a need to try hard. Advertising the flipped classroom as “easier” because the video lectures replace the intimidatingly thick accounting textbook may tempt some students to think that clicking “play” is all it takes to pass this course. By the time students realize this fallacy, it is often too late to catch up.

Our evaluations show that almost half of all students participating in the Financial Accounting course will admit that they do not study regularly. This is corroborated by feedback conversations in which many students readily admit to all-night cramming before the exam. The same trend is also evidenced by the significant increase in video viewing statistics in the hours before an exam. Students are unaware that video is especially unsuitable for effective cramming. Unlike book pages, which allow for speedy (if superficial) consumption, instructional videos come with a predetermined viewing time that cannot be reduced by much before the audio turns incomprehensible.

Of course, a skill-oriented course like Financial Accounting does not only require the students to learn new concepts; they also need to acquire and hone new skills, which is why binge learning never works. Watching a video does not teach students how to think through the solution of a complex accounting problem. Assimilation of the transmitted knowledge must inevitably happen through their own work and effort.

Anecdotal evidence of erratic grades confirms this: Occasionally, students on a low-grade trajectory score surprisingly well on a single quiz or exam. In follow-up conversations, it then turns out that this time they have indeed put in the disciplined prep work. The opposite is also true, where straight-A students score a C or even a D as an outlier because—for once—they did not prepare according to their usual standards. We regard a tight correlation between effort and grade outcome as a positive quality of a

course. If the time spent on preparation and practice leads to noticeably better grades, students will have a strong incentive to study.

Study discipline, regrettably, remains a notoriously weak point. Data from the fall semester 2014/15 showed that, despite requiring all students with a D or F to visit their teachers during office hours for a face-to-face talk, only 43 % of these students actually showed up. Of those who took the office hour visits seriously, the overwhelming majority then admitted that they did not adequately prepare. This suggests that the flipped classroom model fails to pull in the unmotivated or undisciplined portion of the student population. Perhaps as much as 40 % of all students seem unwilling to seriously engage in their chosen study program: They ignore support offers and do not make use of the resources available, such as teachers' office hours, peer tutoring, discussion forums, or messaging platforms, to have questions answered, to clarify concepts, or to check their problem solutions.

In our conversations, these students often revealed that they are conscious of their predicament, but regarding possible solutions, they seemed almost paralyzed, unable to change their behavior. We hypothesize that the freshman experience plays a role here: Freshmen move out of their parents' home, come to a different city, may live alone for the first time, and for the first time in their lives find themselves responsible for their own daily schedule. Additionally, at RIT Croatia, most students leave a non-American school system for an American-style college experience and have to get accustomed to a foreign language *and* a different learning culture. Given this long list of challenges, it is not surprising that some are overwhelmed at the first attempt.

## 4 Discussion: Is Flipping Worth the Trouble?

What are the pros and cons that we can identify when taking into consideration the 20 iterations of freshman Financial Accounting we have taught in the flipped classroom? The results are mixed. There is no unambiguous enthusiasm allowing us to proclaim that with this teaching method we have discovered a panacea. At best, we can say that those students who are willing to work for their success do well, possibly scoring higher grades than in a traditional format, and that students are generally likely to find the flipped classroom approach more appealing than a traditional textbook-based course. At the same time, the flipped classroom method will not compensate for a lack of motivation or interest, let alone a lack of discipline. This explains the persistently high frequency of E and F grades: an unmotivated student will not be stirred by the teacher flipping anything.<sup>17</sup>

Besides this general verdict, some details and variations of the method merit additional discussion. On the one hand, creating homogeneous practice groups may be worth a try, replacing our attempt to induce some "peer teaching" by mixing different ability levels in one group. On the other hand, there is a certain risk that groups made

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<sup>17</sup> Statistics from North Carolina State University's Friday Institute for Educational Innovation show that for about 10 % of students, even a flipped classroom does not work (Gimbar, 2011).

up of exclusively weak and unprepared students will waste their practice time and fall behind. It would be an ethically questionable approach to give up on those students by putting them in groups of “lost causes”.

In our courses, students keep suggesting that we should let them choose their own groupmates. We have reservations because this will result in best friends hanging out in the same group, which will not necessarily improve student learning. Students who are unprepared or unmotivated may easily end up chatting, bored, and inactive. We believe that the groups with mixed skill levels remain the best solution and would rather suggest remixing them every few weeks to prevent group dynamics from turning stale.

We also believe that graded incentives like our weekly online quizzes on the LMS are important to support steady work. Such quizzes are yet another time-consuming component to set up, like video production or practice problem design, but they, too, amortize, and the benefit for students justifies the investment. Our statistics show that less than 10% of all such quizzes were missed by our students, so we consider them successful pacemakers.

There is room for further improvement, based on students’ feedback and our own observations. Here are our top recommendations to teachers contemplating the method.

1. Do not go halfway: You have to really *quit* in-class lecturing. Student feedback confirms that reverting to in-class lecturing sabotages the flipped classroom because students start relying on the teacher to explain things anyway, which may drastically impact their willingness to thoroughly prepare the lessons.
2. Make use of students’ affinity for new media and plan with a limited span of attention: two ten-minute videos are better than a single twenty-minute clip. Resist the temptation to “squeeze it all in” and space it out instead.
3. Maximize in-class practice and experimentation with variations of in-class practice formats, e.g., instructor-led vs. group practice, group practice in various group sizes, group practice in self-selected vs. pre-assigned groups, etc. Consider the students’ preferences, which can easily be surveyed on the spot with online services like [mentimeter.com](http://mentimeter.com).
4. Fine-tune the coordination between video assignment and in-class practice to encourage on-time preparation of the lesson material. Use incentives such as quizzes to motivate students to show up “transmission accomplished” and ready for in-class practice. We consider this the single most important prerequisite for successful assimilation.
5. Refrain from advertising the flipped classroom format as “easy.” Switching from a teacher-centric approach to video lectures will not make learning *easier*. On the contrary: students tend to not take video-based studying seriously and fail.

The question remains: do the results justify the effort? We think they do. Even though the outcome fell short of our optimistic expectations, there are many positive effects. Overall, the grade scale shows more students scoring an A, a trend likely induced by the

new method. In the long run, we often observe that students who have already dropped out of the course once score an A or B their second time around. We attribute this success to the video teaching method, which enabled them to understand the concepts once they started over the right way.

Another reason for updating teaching methods is to stay open and abreast of the advancement of technology and instructional innovation. Once upon a time, when printed sources of knowledge were hard to come by, lecturing *ex cathedra* was, by default, state-of-the-art. But teaching has undergone much change since and embraced many innovations, which arguably improved the quality of teaching. We can never go back because the old methods no longer serve today's realities. While innovation always seems to make things easier, standards and expectations grow along with the possibilities. In the long run, therefore, we must keep questioning established methods and attempt to continually innovate the classroom experience.

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## Appendix: Flipped Classroom Resources

### A Free or Low-Budget Downloadable or Online Textbooks

These online publishers offer textbooks on a wide variety of subjects, not restricted to business or economics.

- **Bookboon:** Free ad-supported college textbooks, <http://bookboon.com/en/textbooks>
- **Flat World Knowledge Online:** Publisher of original customizable low-budget textbooks, <http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/>
- **Merlot:** A large multimedia repository of free educational resources for learning and online teaching, maintained by the California State University, <http://merlot.org>
- **College Open Textbooks:** The following sites offer creative commons license textbooks, mostly for free download, partly available for purchase as low budget prints.
  - <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>
  - <https://open.bccampus.ca/>
- **Saylor Academy Open Textbooks:** The Saylor Foundation's virtual bookshelf contains the content of Flat World Knowledge and other textbooks under a creative commons license, <http://www.saylor.org/books/>



## B Other Online Media and Courses

These providers of video-based courses can serve as models for designing a flipped classroom course. It is helpful to observe the effectiveness of the various video lecture formats used in different courses.

- **Open Education Database:** Over 10,000 open courses available from many of the providers listed below and others, <http://oedb.org/open/>
- **Khan Academy**, <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
- **Coursera**, <https://www.coursera.org/>
- **edX**, <https://www.edx.org/>
- **Udemy**, <https://www.udemy.com/>
- **MIT OpenCourseWare**, <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>

## C Software

This is the software we used in our flipped classroom setup:

- **SmoothDraw~4:** A drawing and writing software for graphic tablets, <http://www.smoothdraw.com/>
- **Snagit:** Screen capture software for images and video, <http://www.techsmith.com/snagit.html>. As an alternative, we can also recommend **Camtasia Studio**, a more comprehensive video recording and editing package by TechSmith, <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html>. The TechSmith website also provides excellent free educational material on how to record educational videos.
- There are many other options for recording software, even some free online screencast recording software that requires no installation on your computer. For a current and comprehensive overview on screencast recording software see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_screencasting\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_screencasting_software).
- **Google Drive and Google Sheets:** To make practice materials available to groups in an online teaching situation, e. g., in a pandemic lockdown.
- **Microsoft Office (PowerPoint):** To produce the slide decks used in screencast lecture videos unless the material was directly developed during the video by drawing and writing on a graphic tablet.

# Does Business Familiarity Breed Liking or Critical Distance?

## *The Impact of Applied Business Education on Social Evaluations of Firms*

HOLGER LÜDEKE, SABRA BROCK<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

One of the teaching goals in undergraduate business education is to familiarize students with typical challenges and management activities in corporations, combined with a focus on critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication (Colby et al., 2011). However, the applied focus of many teaching approaches in business is rarely explicitly addressed in research on pedagogy and tertiary education. It is mostly mentioned in discussions of the portfolio of skills and competencies resulting from practice-oriented education (e. g., Baldwin et al., 2011; Colby et al., 2011) and/or when the career and status consequences of applied degrees are of interest (e. g., Baldwin et al., 2011; Benton, 2011).

A rarely debated question is what it means for the mindset, attitudes, and judgments of the students when their attention is directed at the details and complexity of corporate practice. This paper explores what applied business education, defined as education with a focus on “practical tasks in authentic contexts” (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 583), means for the students’ social judgments of the corporate world. The process of social judgment—“an evaluator’s decision or opinion about the social properties of an organization” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 152) — is strongly influenced by the amount of detailed knowledge available to the evaluator (Bitektine, 2011; Tost, 2011). In particular, we are interested in how applied education influences the evaluator’s opinions on corporate reputation as a form of social judgment.<sup>2</sup>

The implicit but untested assumption of many stakeholders like university administrators, educators, and recruiters seems to be that theoretical closeness to corporate proceedings leads to emotional and cognitive closeness, too. Managers in Germany stated that they prefer recruits from applied programs as they are easier to integrate and need less training and socialization time (Holuscha, 2012, p. 67; for similar ideas in

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2 The three most common forms of social evaluation of firms are reputation, status, and legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011). The role of status and legitimacy is left out of our considerations to focus the discussion on reputation.

the USA, see Cappelli, 2014). Anecdotal evidence shows that students especially appreciate applied business education as it allows them to better fit in because information on “business norms and practices provide[s] important signals to students concerning what is valued in organizations and what credentials are likely to produce the best prospects for employment” (Rynes et al., 2003, p. 810; Bishop, 1992). Career data from Germany also shows that students from applied programs are faster at securing their first job after college and faster at getting promoted into their first leadership position.<sup>3</sup>

Applied learning often puts students in theoretical situations where they are in charge of decision-making and have leverage to come to their final decisions, which can make them less critical through the affirmative perspective of power and status (for a summary of the link between powerful positions and psychology, see Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The potential overall effect is self-identification with the corporate world through ingroup favoritism, defined as the effect that “novel ingroups to which the self has been assigned are evaluated positively by default” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010, p. 1031). Applied learning leads to permanent exposure to the “normative idealization of organizational goals ... [that] aim at achieving organization-wide technical efficiency and effectiveness through instrumentally rational actions, and at propelling organizational growth in a competitive environment” (Shrivastava, 1986, p. 370). A pedagogical focus on hands-on approaches makes some educators fear that applied business education comes at the cost of diminished critical thinking skills, instead favoring vocational knowledge (for a summary of the problem discussion, see Bunch, 2019).

However, this is not the complete picture of applied learning. Insights into nuance-rich authentic settings can also help foster critical thinking, defined as the activity of “questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and testing the logic of ideas, proposals, and courses of action ... including raising awareness of hidden values, beliefs, and assumptions—those of others and our own” (Rousseau, 2012, p. 13). Such a questioning and self-regulatory cognitive distance to the daily routines can be achieved through learning that simulates some of the more challenging components of corporate practice (Lovelace et al., 2016). In particular, a questioning mindset is supported by teamwork and exchange with others, regular feedback on the outcomes of decisions over a period of time, and exposure to complex and dynamic settings with real-time information that require fast and frequent changes to a perception of past activities.

While proponents of critical thinking stress that “[t]he word *critical* is a loaded word [and] doesn’t mean being negative or oppositional” (Rousseau, 2012, p.13), other researchers also assume links between applied learning and a higher level of criticality. For example, Reynolds and Vince (2004) stress that in-depth insights into corporate practice can also foster stronger opposition to the status quo. Applied learners will often experience that decisions in practice prioritize the interests of some organizational members over others and that strong constraints on their freedom to decide what could work best exist, resulting from “processes of power, control, and vested interests” (Reynolds & Vince, 2004, p. 443). Bunch (2019) presents additional evidence that business

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3 However, this advantage disappears and is potentially reversed in later career stages; for a summary of the inconclusive research findings in Germany, see Holuscha, 2012.

students are more negative about the current jobs they are holding (compared to other undergraduate majors), and that they expect to gain less job satisfaction in future jobs than other students (e. g., Easterling & Smith, 2011).

To summarize, the literature on applied business education is inconclusive regarding the consequences of corporate realities on social evaluations. We are looking for a research base establishing whether practice-based business curricula have an impact on critical thinking skills in students. Our contribution to the discussion is a focus on business familiarity as a mediating mechanism that explains the link between applied education and social evaluations and a careful exploration of the consequences of business familiarity on reputation judgments.

We will proceed as follows: First, we develop the theory that applied education leads to increased business familiarity, which in turn has a positive influence on the variance (but not on the central tendency) of corporate reputation judgments. In a second step, we will introduce the empirical setting in which we tested our assumptions, and present and interpret our empirical results. Finally, we will discuss the theoretical implications and limits of our research.

## 2 Theory and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1 Positive association with applied business education—business familiarity

Business education programs differ in their focus on application. The programs most dedicated to “practical tasks in authentic contexts” (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 583) have integrated a portfolio of educational concepts to contribute to business familiarity, defined as *observer or stakeholder awareness of an organization or a group of organizations without judgment* (Barnett et al., 2006). We introduce three of the most common teaching approaches, namely a problem-based focus, experiential learning, and imitation-based transfer of tacit knowledge. While this is far from a complete list of educational options, it covers many of the common pedagogies that also happen to play a role in our empirical setting. We first want to show that a main contribution of these selected teaching approaches is to contribute to increased, in-depth awareness of organizations and their industry contexts.

#### *a) Problem-based focus of applied teaching*

A common approach in applied settings is to focus on solving realistic problems of corporate practice instead of starting with generalizable rules and social laws. This idea was first introduced in the 1920s by the Harvard Business School, where teaching by case studies without previous theoretical studies became the guiding philosophy (Porter & Siggelkow, 1999). Case studies are a description of “real-life situations that business executives have faced. Casewriters, as good reporters, have written up these situations to present [students] with the information available to the executive involved” (Hammond, 1980, p. 1). The idea is that students should be exposed to “a focused form

of learning by doing ... [and] cut across a range of organizations and situations ... [for] exposure far greater than you are likely to experience in your day-to-day routines" (Hammond, 1980, p. 1). The learning goal is that by getting acquainted with a large number of business situations, students improve analogical reasoning (Gavetti et al., 2005; Gavetti & Rivkin, 2005). They start to get a feeling for which facts in the clutter of information have more practical relevance, which similarities between unique situations matter, and which similarities are only superficial and can be neglected. Just as important as the content of the case studies is the group discussion of potential solutions in the classroom that "potentially simulates the emotional atmosphere in which managers must operate [in top management team meetings]" (Contardo & Wensley, 2004, p. 220). It is important for students to understand that there is "no single, demonstrably right answer to a business problem ... [and that in] every business situation, there is always a reasonable possibility that the best answer has not yet been found—even by the teachers" (Hammond, 1980, p. 3). While case studies have no optimal solution, at least they usually come with some potential case solutions (best practices) as imagined in the case writer's teaching notes.

An even more open-ended exercise is to assign student groups to current, real-life consulting cases from corporations in academic-business cooperation programs (Ungaretti et al., 2015). This teaching approach resembles a medical diagnosis course insofar as "the first day of class, instead of receiving a lecture, students are given a problem [and the ] class session would focus on the development of a list of questions that should be asked ... and why those questions are relevant (Ungaretti et al., 2015, p. 175). The main difference between these assignments and case studies is that the latter approach "provides cases that have solutions", while involvement in consulting "provides problems that are yet to be solved" (p. 176). Both teaching angles share that they familiarize students with the perspective of a decision maker, as they follow the same teaching guideline: "Make the manager's problems *your* problems" (Hammond, 1980, p. 2).

#### *b) Experiential learning in applied teaching*

Experiential learning, defined as "learning through reflection on doing" (Smith, 2016, p. 139), aims at a full immersion of the student in corporate activities. In this view, learning about business is ineffective if it is not accompanied by actual experience on top of which to build later reflection (Mintzberg, 2004). Based on integrative learning, the pedagogical approach "is holistic and as such addresses the whole person physically and mentally; not only in a specialized skill or job role but in the context of his or her total life situation" (Kolb et al., 1986, p. 21), including, for example, tasks like dealing with difficult others, overwhelming information complexity, the challenge of having clear opinions in ambiguous decision situations, and the need for stress management due to negative emotions, deadlines, or time pressure.

A common approach to foster experiential learning is one or more mandatory internship experiences or a semester practicum (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006). The most effective applied learning is based on actual experience in the field. A consistent result

of student surveys is that a semester-long practicum is perceived to be the most profound educational experience (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006), and recruiters increasingly value internship experience as the most important advantage of applicants in the selection process (Bunch, 2019). A student's opportunity to "learn about the field, profession, or business" and to learn "a lot of things that [they] would never have been able to learn in the classroom" proves by far the strongest predictor of satisfaction with an internship, ranking far higher than contextual factors like the (in)flexibility of work hours, commute time, or pay satisfaction (D'abate et al., 2009, p. 537). This demonstrates impressively that students understand and value "action-learning situations which compel them to apply classroom theory and knowledge to practice in a manner that builds deep, practical in situ business, management and decision-making skills" (p. 528).

But also other, less time-intensive, complementary approaches like role-plays (Whetten & Cameron, 2015) and, more recently, web-based management and business simulations (Kayes et al., 2005; Lovelace et al., 2016) contribute to experiential learning. In experiential role-plays, students are not only exposed to critical business incidents, they are also supposed to re-live the troubling cognitive limits of corporate decision making and even the emotions involved in difficult situations, simulating a "direct, personal encounter with the phenomena being investigated" (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006, p. 201). Role-playing allows to repeatedly practice behavioral guidelines in an academic, low-risk environment and to adapt the theoretical principles to personal style through repetition and learning from feedback (Whetten & Cameron, 2015). Web-based management simulations are defined as "[i]nternet-based, synthetic learning environments where decisions are made within a complex and dynamic setting, and where students experience real-time information and feedback" (Lovelace et al., 2016, p. 101). The usual design is that student teams must make a series of decisions in an environment that replicates a typical workplace. Fast-paced feedback on the consequences of their first decisions within a longer timeframe allows students to learn from mistakes and discover unintentional side effects, often in realistic industry settings. The result is a simulation of practice that contributes both to content knowledge regarding industries and corporate functions, and to skill development when it comes to decision making in complex environments. Common to all approaches to experiential learning is that instead of merely thinking about a situation or case, students must make real decisions that have immediate consequences on the simulation (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006).

### *c) Imitation-based transfer of educators' tacit knowledge*

Many other pedagogical angles try to contribute to business familiarity, among them the often relatively unnoticed advantages of faculty members with practical experience in business. In many applied programs, some business experience is expected of educators or even institutionally mandated. In Germany's application-focused institutions of higher education, the so-called "Fachhochschulen", job experience of at least three years outside the academic world is the mandatory minimum standard. Learning from

practitioners is not only about access to networks outside academia or access to business details that cannot be found in textbooks. Learning from practitioners also allows “knowledge-by-exemplification: one that is demonstrative, creative, and unreflectively performative, transmitted directly through the demeanor, style, and mannerism of management educators rather than through the content of lectures” (Chia & Holt, 2008, p. 471). The underlying pedagogical concept is that many ways of operating in business are forms of tacit, practical knowing (“knowing how” and “knowing when”) that can only be learned through participation and imitation (Chia & Holt, 2008). In particular, an experienced practitioner’s habitus, their “feel for the game ... embodied and turned into a second nature” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63), and the naturalness of professional behavior that Bourdieu calls “casualness amid familiarity” (p. 66), can only be learned through permanent exposure and subsequent imitation. John McArthur, the former dean of the Harvard Business School, coined the famous phrase “how we teach, is what we teach” (Contardo & Wensley, 2004, p. 220), implying that the main aspect to be learned from the case instructors is the capability to show self-confidence and demonstrate consistency in decision-making even in situations of overwhelming complexity.

To sum up, applied education has the goal of familiarizing students with a multitude of aspects relevant to corporate practice: from detailed insights into different firms and functions to comparative aspects of business contexts and industries and to holistic experiences that may be gained from taking the perspectives of decision-makers. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H1:** Applied business education is associated with higher business familiarity.

## **2.2 Positive association with business familiarity—variance in reputation judgments**

In the next step, we will explore the relationship between business familiarity and social evaluations of firms. We assume that there is no direct effect of familiarity on positive social evaluations. This conclusion stands in stark contrast to early research on familiarity and liking that hypothesized that stronger familiarity leads to more emotional and cognitive closeness and increased personal attraction to well-known firms and business contexts. Surveys covering the effects of business familiarity (e. g., Lange et al., 2011; Mariconda & Lurati, 2014) regularly list numerous research settings in which the better-known companies gained in popularity and reputation. The theoretical background of many of these early papers is based on the psychological principles of exposure and fluency.

Research on the “mere exposure” effect states that increased exposure to an object most often will result in more positive evaluations of that object due to the increased familiarity that is interpreted as a good sign (Zajonc, 1968; Reis, 2011). Additionally, the theory of “fluency” describes the experience that traits of familiar objects tend to be processed perceptually and cognitively in a more fluent manner. Such fluency, in turn, is experienced by evaluators in positive affective ways—you like what you can easily

grasp and deal with (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1994; Finkel et al., 2015). However, critics have stressed early on that the research on exposure effects and fluency relies too much on familiarity with stimuli that “tend to be low in prior experience and meaning to participants receiving them (e.g., nonsense syllables, foreign words, Chinese ideographs)” (Brooks & Highhouse, 2006, p. 106), while more meaningful stimuli such as the names of well-known companies may require different cognitive theories.

The best-known approach to business familiarity assumes that familiarity allows an observer to pick selective arguments from the large flow of information that results from closeness to a firm (Brooks & Highhouse, 2006; Brooks et al., 2003). As a familiar observer is unavoidably aware of many contradictory positive and negative business details, familiarity contributes to an ambiguous and unclear picture of the firm. What mainly counts for the overall effect is how the judging person *wants* to see the business. Brooks and Highhouse (2006) call this biased search for supporting information “response mode” (p. 111). With growing familiarity, it is easier for a person to back up their own negative or positive response with supporting evidence. This way, familiarity leads to stronger opinions that can be either positive or negative, depending on the decision situation and the personal bias of the judging observer. A similar possibility of stronger opinions drifting off in either direction is also noted by social psychologists with regard to interpersonal liking (Norton et al., 2007; Norton et al., 2011): With increasing familiarity, judging persons will either have their positive attitudes toward others confirmed and strengthened, or the growing information flow may lead to low regard and critical distance if familiarity makes the gaps between the status quo and the desired benchmarks more visible.

While we do not question the possibility of higher variance of opinions due to initial expectations and their confirmation or disappointment (and we control for this possibility in our empirical setting), our main interest lies in providing *an* explanation for higher variance due to increasing familiarity that applies even if biases are controlled for. Accordingly, we apply the theory of social judgments developed by a group of organizational scholars (Bitektine, 2011; Bitektine et al., 2020; Tost, 2011) to explain how evaluators develop a series of related personal opinions on corporations, including their legitimacy, status, and reputation. In this perspective, theories on social evaluations such as the reputation of a firm have to focus on how social actors develop “active cognitive processing, information search efforts, and social interactions that precede the formation of ... [reputation] ... judgments” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 151). The form of social judgment mainly relevant for our context is corporate reputation, defined as judgment on the following question: “How will the organization perform/ behave in the future relative to other organizations in the set?” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 163). Reputation judgments focus on comparisons among organizations and stress the perceived economic differences between them, with the main goal of distinguishing one firm from another based on their perceived ability to create value (for a summary of reputation definitions with sources, see Bitektine, 2011, p. 162). These reputation judgments can be formed in different ways, as evaluators may choose how to process their judgment. This decision is based on cognitive economy (how much time and resources should be



invested in the information search) and social context (how do others perceive and evaluate my judgments). An observer familiar with a business context has enough information to pursue a “feature-based judgment” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 164), which is a cognitively demanding, rational evaluation of the features of an organization that fully acknowledges the differences between organizations, based on an extensive information search and rational choice evaluation.

However, for an unfamiliar observer who does not have the resources available to make such judgments, there are alternative forms of judgment formation, in particular using heuristics and shortcuts that require less cognitive processing effort (Simon, 1987). While research has identified numerous cognitive shortcuts that can be used under conditions of bounded rationality (Gilovich et al., 2002), a main heuristic in reputation judgments under uncertainty and lack of information is: “When an organization’s reputation is unknown, the organization will most likely be treated as reputation neutral, since neither positive nor negative predictions about its future behavior normally can be made when there is a lack of information” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 165). Based on this heuristic, it is to be expected that respondents in a survey that asks them to form an immediate reputation judgment on firms they are not fully familiar with will assign average reputation scores.

A second common alternative to feature-based social evaluations is relying on the opinions of others through “judgment compensation heuristics”, which means that “evaluators may substitute simpler and less ‘expensive’ category-based forms of judgment ... for more complex feature-based judgments” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 166). So instead of evaluating every single firm on its own, through processing every bit of information on the firms’ qualities and traits, respondents may rely on broader categories (for example “Is this a typical member of the industry?”; a cognitive legitimacy judgment) or on the evaluation of others (for example: “How do others in society evaluate this firm?”; a status judgment) (Bitektine et al., 2020). An example of a possible evaluation outcome is the assignment of generally high or low scores to all unfamiliar firms in the chemical industry, due to the assumed high or low status of the chemical industry in society.

The theory of social judgments does not lead to predictions on the central tendencies of status evaluations based on familiarity. The status judgment of a familiar observer is not generally higher or lower than the evaluation by less familiar observers. What can be hypothesized is that the *variance* of the status judgments is larger—a feature-based evaluation that acknowledges all existing differences between firms leads to more pronounced evaluations than judgments by unfamiliar observers. The latter are based on assigning average reputation scores for less well-known firms or reputation scores derived from broader categories, both of which make the judgments less differentiated. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H2:** Business familiarity is associated with a larger variance in reputation judgments.

We assume that the influence of applied business education on the larger variance of reputation judgments is mainly caused by the students' increasing business familiarity. In other words, we theorize a mediating relationship, leading to our last hypothesis:

**H3:** Business familiarity mediates the relationship between applied business education and variance of status judgments.

## 3 Methods

### 3.1 Sample and Procedure

Our goal was to survey students with differing familiarity towards corporations and business contexts, participating both in applied and more theory-driven programs. Surveys in eight different programs at various institutions of tertiary education in different German cities were handed out and collected in 2015. The selection of programs was convenience-driven, so the resulting sample is not necessarily representative. However, the inclusion of programs with varied teaching approaches is sufficient for gaining initial insights into our topics of interest.

The sampling approach resulted in 364 questionnaires with answers filled out in all relevant survey sections; respondents who did not answer demographic questions or did not evaluate at least one organization's reputation were dropped from the sample. The respondents received a portfolio of ten different industry sectors<sup>4</sup> with a list of companies from each sector. They were then asked to focus on the industry they know best to evaluate organizational reputation. They were advised to offer only social evaluations of firms within the industry of which they were sufficiently aware. This resulted in 5,339 reputation scores. On average, every respondent in the sample evaluated 15 organizations.

### 3.2 Dependent variables

*Reputation:* After respondents had decided on the industry they understood best, they received a list of industry participants (taken from the *Manager Magazin* reputation ranking 2014) and were asked to offer their own opinion on several aspects related to the reputation of every firm on the list. Additionally, they were reminded of the option to not offer scores and leave boxes empty for organizations they were not sure about.

Following common practice, we built the corporate reputation score as a summative index of the different aspects of reputation. We used the items and scales best known in the German context due to their regular inclusion in the biannual *Manager Magazin* reputation ranking. Respondents had been asked to evaluate five aspects—the corporation's management quality, financial solidity, innovativeness, customer orientation, and environmental sustainability—on a scale from 0 (= very bad) to 10 (= very

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4 The sectors to choose from were IT & Communication/Automobile/Consumer Goods/Retail/Machinery & Industrial Goods/Tourism & Transportation/Media/Pharmaceuticals/Finance & Insurance/Commodities.

good). To improve validity, a general item was included (“How do you evaluate the reputation?”) in addition to the component scores (as suggested by Helm, 2005). The general reputation item also used a scale ranging from 0 to 10. Overall, this procedure led to 5,339 summative reputation index scores included in the statistical analysis.

*Variance of Reputation:* To measure the degree of differentiation of personal judgments, we calculated the standard deviation of the reputation scores per respondent, with higher values indicating a more differentiated set of evaluations.

*Business Familiarity:* A respondent’s awareness of the business situation was measured by an item asking for knowledge of the evaluated industry, on a scale from 0 (= “I do not know the industry at all”) to 10 (= “I know the industry very well”).

### 3.3 Independent Variable & Controls

*Applied Business Education:* We measured applied education as an indicator variable with 1 = part of an applied business education program. For that, we utilized the institutional separation of applied and theory-driven programs in the German tertiary education system. Applied programs are offered by separate institutions accredited as “Fachhochschulen”, which use a pedagogical approach comparable to American business schools. Three years of professional practice outside academia are mandatory for their specialized faculty, and their programs focus on teaching in applied settings. To ensure a wide range of business familiarity, we surveyed advanced students from applied programs with mandatory internships and requested work experience, as well as first-semester students from academic research universities. Students participating in applied business programs at a Fachhochschule were assigned a 1 in our indicator variable, while 0 was assigned to students in more theory-driven academic business programs, and to non-business social science students in applied programs.

Several control variables were added to the models.

*Gender and Age:* As demographic controls, we used gender and age. Gender was measured by a dummy variable, indicating 1 if the respondent was male. Age measured the age of respondents in years at the time of the survey.

*Job Experience:* To control for the impact of diverse practical experience on judging corporate practice, we measured job experience as the number of industries in which a respondent has already held job, apprenticeship, or internship positions. The variable is a count variable derived from the actual positions the respondents have held, as indicated by them in the open-answer format of the questionnaire: “If you have already gained work experience (e. g., because of an apprenticeship, internship, or employment before you started studying), in which industries did you gain this experience?” (more than one answer possible). The count ranged from zero to five different industry experiences.

*Strength of Home Region:* We also controlled for the economic strength of the region in which the respondent grew up. By doing so, we accounted for an impact on business familiarity and social evaluations of firms beyond the academic influence. Porter (1998) assumes that the most competitive international business environments are characterized by highly critical customers with above-average expectations who drive improvement through their business familiarity and impatience with low performance, and their subsequent willingness to permanently address a lack of progress in product development and business upgrading if it becomes visible to them. Since the impact of critical customers is mainly on a regional level (Porter, 2003), we measured it in the survey by asking German students to indicate the federal state (“Bundesland”) they grew up in, while international students were asked to indicate their home country. The variable “Strength of Home Region” measures the average gross domestic product per person (in euros) in the federal state (or country) of origin, with data derived from the Eurostat database and a German statistical agency (“Arbeitskreis Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen der Länder”).

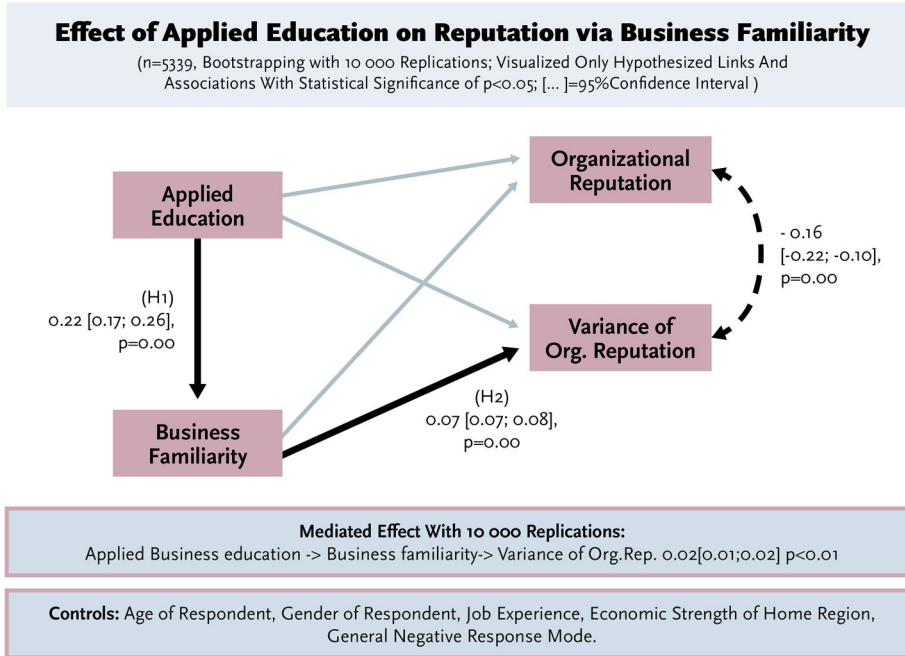
*General Negative Outlook on Business:* To account for a respondent’s general negative (or positive) bias towards business (the response mode), we calculated the average opinion of a respondent regarding society’s evaluation of the ten industries introduced in our survey (see Appendix 1), ranging from 0 (= “The reputation of this industry in society is very bad”) to 10 (= “The reputation of this industry in society is very good”). The reverse-scored average of the ten evaluation scores was used as a proxy for how pessimistic or negative the respondent sees business in general, with higher scores indicating more negative views on corporate’s position in society. The respondents showed considerable variance in their opinions, confirming the strong subjective component of the proxy measure.

### 3.4 Methods

To estimate our mediation model, we built a path model with full-information maximum likelihood (Muthén et al., 2016). All calculations were performed with the MPlus Software package (version 8.6). We used linear regression analysis with robust standard errors clustered by organization. As the calculation of confidence intervals in mediated relationships requires a resampling procedure like bootstrapping (Hayes, 2017), we drew 10,000 random samples with replacement from our dataset and calculated a bootstrap confidence interval. By bootstrapping, we adjusted for the non-normal sampling distribution in the mediated relationship “Applied Business Education → Business Familiarity → Variance of Organizational Reputation” (e. g., Hayes, 2017).

## 4 Results

All three of our basic hypotheses were supported by the evidence, as shown in Figure 1:



**Figure 1:** Effect of Applied Education on Reputation via Business Familiarity

Although we had not stated a hypothesis regarding the relationship between applied education and the central tendency of the corporate reputation scores, we included the calculation in the model to support our assumption that applied education does not make corporations look more or less likeable (and, accordingly, the reputation scores higher or lower). As expected, we did not find a significant direct link between applied education and the dependent reputation variables (Organizational Reputation and Variance of Organizational Reputation). Neither was there a significant direct effect of business familiarity on the average reputation score. Therefore, we thinned out the three respective arrows in Figure 1 to indicate that the relationships were calculated (as controls, outside of our stated hypotheses) but had no significant impact.

Hypothesis 1 states a relationship between applied business education and familiarity with business. We found a positive association ( $b = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). An additional effect size calculation showed that the difference in business familiarity between respondents in the applied business programs and the rest is  $d = 0.15$  standard deviations of business familiarity (95 % Confidence Interval is [0.12; 0.18]).

The assumed relationship between business familiarity and variance in organizational reputation in Hypothesis 2 was also supported. The link is positive and statisti-

cally significant ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with an effect size of  $d = 0.19$ , which means that an increase of one standard deviation in business familiarity leads to an increase of 0.19 standard deviations in the reputation variance (with a 95% confidence interval of [0.17;0.20]).

The effect of business familiarity as a mediator (Hypothesis 3: Applied Business Education  $\rightarrow$  Business Familiarity  $\rightarrow$  Variance of Organizational Reputation) was significant on a level of  $p < 0.01$  when using bootstrap confidence intervals with 10,000 replications ( $b = 0.02$ , 95% Confidence Interval [0.01; 0.02]).

We had also included a number of controls that were either not significant or showed effects in the direction expected by theory. For further details on the model coefficients, including controls, see Appendix 2. The negative correlation between average reputation scores and variance of reputation scores ( $\rho = -0.16$ ) was not covered in our hypotheses, but it is to be expected. Reputation scores usually have a left-skewed distribution. In our sample, the median reputation score was a 7 on a scale from 0 to 10, and there were nearly five times as many scores of 10 as scores of 0. If the reputation scores increasingly deviate from the average, the upper limit of 10 for a corporation is therefore reached sooner than the lower limit of 0, and even if the familiar observer is strongly convinced of the best corporations, it cannot get better than the score of 10. Therefore, stronger opinions mainly show in the data as a slight shift towards the lower values, but this is most likely a statistical artifact.

## 5 Discussion: Limits and Outlook

The question of the practical applicability of academic management and business knowledge lies at the heart of the discipline. Hundreds of articles and several special issues of the leading management journals have been dedicated to the question of whether practicing managers and business professionals can (and should) use the knowledge generated in universities and other academic institutions in real-life decision-making (for a summary of the discussion, see Kieser et al., 2015). The *Academy of Management Learning & Education Journal* regularly introduces state-of-the-art approaches to make business learning more applied and to make understood the practical consequences of abstract theories.

However, when it comes to the empirical measurement of specific consequences of applied education, the field is surprisingly underexplored. Next to pedagogical manifestos, anecdotal success stories and speculative essays, very few empirical assessments exist on the actual consequences of implemented academic business knowledge and its pedagogical surroundings.

We focus on one specific teaching outcome: How does an applied business focus influence the social evaluation of companies by the students? While empirical research shows little impact of applied education on a differentiated understanding of business (Baldwin et al., 2011), a constant pedagogical concern is that the main effect of applied teaching might be an unreasonable closeness to vocational and effectiveness goals that

inhibits critical thinking and does not allow an abstract and critical distance to the status quo to better understand the potential for improvement (Bunch, 2019). Our research says otherwise: at least when it comes to pronounced social evaluations, students from applied settings develop stronger business familiarity that allows them to better differentiate the situations in which corporations interact. Instead of relying on general judgments and broad categories, business familiarity enables a feature-based, detailed evaluation of firms that better acknowledges existing differences between competitors and leads to stronger and more decisive judgments on organizational reputation.

Some limitations of our research project should not go unmentioned. As we rely on cross-sectional data, it is not possible to estimate the impact of self-selection into the education programs. Maybe some students decided to enroll in programs with an applied focus exactly *because* they already had more detailed business knowledge and were familiar with applied settings. Future research could try to utilize longitudinal data to compare students before enrollment in applied vs. more theoretical programs, and then two or three years after enrollment, when the learning progress has become fully visible. This way, it might be easier to isolate the influence of students self-selecting into programs that befit their style of thinking, compared to the causal effect of learning about business details through higher education.

Furthermore, a more complex path model with additional dependent variables could help to fully grasp the impact of applied education. While we controlled for job experience and the general attitude towards business, we are fully aware that these factors might interact with applied education as well. A theory exploring the mutual influences of business familiarity, the general response mode towards corporations, differentiated social firm evaluations, and applied business education could help advance the field. As the whole topic has been underexplored so far, we focused on establishing some basic relationships: Applied education contributes effectively to business familiarity, which in turn allows for more differentiated and pronounced judgments on firms. This alone is a point worth making, in particular with respect to the ideas expressed so far. However, this can only be a first step towards a much better empirical understanding of the consequences of applied business education.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: The Mediated Impact of Applied Education on Reputation (n = 5339)

	Dependent Variables		
	Org. Reputation		Variance Org.Rep.
Business Familiarity	-0.02 (0.02)		0.07** (0.00)
Applied Education	-0.05 (0.05)		0.01 (0.01)
Job Experience	0.03 (0.03)		0.04** (0.00)
Male	-0.07 (0.09)		0.13** (0.02)
Age	-0.01* (0.01)		-0.00* (0.00)
Strength of Home Region	-0.02** (0.00)		0.00** (0.00)
General Neg. Outlook on Bus.	-0.30** (0.02)		0.11** (0.01)
Intercept	8.71** (0.24)		0.53** (0.07)
Dep. Variable: Business Familiarity			
Applied Education		0.22** (0.02)	
Job Experience		0.15** (0.01)	
Male		0.70** (0.04)	
Age		-0.05** (0.00)	
Strength of Home Region		0.00 (0.00)	
General Neg. Outlook on Bus.		-0.27** (0.03)	
Intercept		9.57** (0.18)	
Model Fit(Log Likelihood)			-23622.66

Maximum Likelihood Path Model, Robust Standard Errors, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

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This publication aspires to clarify and illustrate the role of higher education in promoting internationalisation, especially Internationalization at Home (IaH). It aims to highlight higher education's three central roles: teaching, research, and community service, each in its global context.

The anthology actively promotes change and development in the higher education sector and identifies strategies like online learning platforms and community partnerships that make higher education more accessible and enhance its benefits. The publication comprises two interconnected sections: the first addresses the evolving classroom dynamics due to IaH, focusing on curriculum adaptations for a varied student body. The second section delves into educational goals, emphasizing an international perspective.

Targeted at educators and researchers, the anthology offers guidance on integrating international and intercultural perspectives into curricula and teaching methods, with a focus on social inclusivity.