

Professionalisation through Internationalisation in Teacher Education

The International Project (IPC) as an Example for "Internationalization@home"

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Professionalisation is a key factor in teacher education and can add towards educating quality teachers. Internationalisation can foster this process, especially in today's increasingly diversified teaching environment. Being confronted with other education systems, ideas on pedagogy, educational values and traditions can provoke (future) teachers to reflect on their own approaches and beliefs and provide them with a wide range of inspirations on how to handle new and unexpected changes in their future classrooms. Taking Goodwin's five knowledge domains – personal, contextual, pedagogical, sociological and social knowledge – plus an additional sixth domain – innovative knowledge – as a theoretical framework, this paper analyses how the internationalisation of teacher education can support the process of professionalisation. This theoretical analysis is exemplified by using an "Internationalization@home" project coordinated by Prof. Dr. Klaudia Schultheis at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt as a case study. It highlights how internationalisation can be integrated into teacher education programs and shows that such an international project can lead to increased knowledge in the six knowledge domains.

— **Keywords:**

globalisation

internationalisation

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Introduction

"Quality Teachers and Quality Teacher Education: Research, Policy and Practice" was the title of the TEPE conference in 2019. This provides a good starting point for this paper as it highlights two important aspects. First, it implicitly suggests that quality teachers are strongly connected to quality teacher education, and second, it shows that quality teacher education must be looked at from different perspectives – informed by research, supported by policies, and applied in the practices of teacher education and, of course, teaching itself. Still, the question remains: What does it mean to provide quality teacher education and to foster quality teachers? This question gains even more complexity when we look at the changes in our classrooms. Teachers that were educated 40 years ago, for example, did not have to think about digitalisation in their teacher training, but they are facing this challenge today in their everyday work. This means that teachers have to respond to new developments in society, childhood, technology, and so forth throughout their whole career. In other words, their education, or better self-education, never ends. Therefore, providing high-quality teacher education certainly means educating (future) teachers who are aware of changes in their environment and who are able to find ways and solutions to how to respond to them in a professional way.

In this paper, I will argue that the concept of professionalisation in teacher education can add towards educating quality teachers. Internationalisation can foster this process, especially in today's increasingly diversified teaching environment. Being confronted with other education systems, ideas on pedagogy, educational values and traditions can provoke (future) teachers to reflect on their own approaches and beliefs and provide them with a wide range of inspirations on how to handle new and unexpected changes in their future classrooms. Thus, the internationalisation of teacher education can add towards professionalisation. One good example of how internationalisation can be applied in teacher education is the International Project (IPC), which will serve as a case study to highlight how internationalisation and professionalisation can be brought together.



Professionalisation and Internationalisation in Teacher Education

Professionalisation in Teacher Education

When considering professionalisation in teacher education, one first needs to clarify what a profession is. From a sociological point of view, an occupation was traditionally (in the 1950s and 1960s) considered a profession when it aligned with certain criteria. Those criteria most often included practices that are based on theoretical knowledge, the certification of those skills by examination, and an influential professional organisation (Millerson, 1964). As teaching in most countries did not match all criteria, it was considered a "quasi-" or "semi-profession" (Whitty, 2006). With teachers endeavoring to meet the full catalog of criteria of a profession, the process of professionalisation started in teacher education. Even if, in later years, sociologists acknowledged that the list of characteristics for a profession is rather normative and is not fitting for all professions (ibidem), the term "professionalisation" still prevails in teacher education.

Today's perception of a profession is moving away from the traditional definition that emerged in the medical and juridical context and is more sensitive to different occupational particularities. Whitty suggests that "a profession is whatever people think it is at any particular time and that can vary. So the fact that we normally talk about the teaching profession means that teaching is a profession, even when we cannot tick off those core characteristics listed earlier" (ibidem, p. 282).

He refers in this respect to Hanlon, who describes his use of the term as follows: "[W]hen I discuss professionals I am talking about groups such as doctors, academics, teachers, accountants, lawyers, engineers, civil servants, etc., that is those groups commonly thought of as professional by the lay public, academics, the professionals themselves and so on" (1998, p. 45). Following the propositions of Whitty and Hanlon, we can thus define teaching as a profession.

Another feature of a profession that is traditionally brought into the discussion is autonomy. In this respect, a profession is independent from the state and economy and bases its actions and decisions on self-governance (Whitty, 2006). Typically, members of a profession were self-employed in the past, but with industrialisation, the majority of "professionals are directly employed and/or regulated by the state"



(ibidem, p. 283). Dale (1989) distinguishes two dominant forms of autonomy for today's professionals: first, licensed autonomy, as, for example, in law, and medicine, and second, regulated autonomy, as, for example, in teaching. In most countries, teachers are employed by the state and have to orient their teaching towards a curriculum, and thus they are regulated by the state. Nevertheless, they do have a certain degree of freedom within their classrooms. The ILO/UNESCO support this claim in their recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers from 1966 by stating: "The teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties. Since teachers are particularly qualified to judge the teaching aids and methods most suitable for their pupils, they should be given the essential role in the choice and the adaptation of teaching material, the selection of textbooks, and the application of teaching methods, within the framework of approved programmes, and with the assistance of the educational authorities" (ILO/UNESCO, 2008 [1966], p. 32).

By doing so, they are in line with Whitty and Hanlon in acknowledging teaching as a profession. The recommendation also makes it clear that teachers do have regulated autonomy as they should seek the assistance of educational authorities and work within approved programmes. Thus, their decisions are not entirely based on their professional judgment but are also defined by an authority.

In the literature, several terms are used to describe the sphere of professionalisation. As already outlined, there are the concepts of "professional", "semi-professiona" and "quasi-professional". Next to this, based on the work of Eric Hoyle, some authors distinguish between professionalism and professionality. According to Holye (1974), professionalism is a rather political concept as it refers to the strategies, actions, and rhetoric of professionals that are targeted to improve the situation and/or status of their profession. Professionality, on the other hand, is an expression for the skills, knowledge and procedures that are used by a professional to fulfill their "professional duties", to use the words of the ILO/UNESCO recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Even if the political and policy spheres highly impact on teacher education and teaching, the latter is more relevant to this paper. In this respect, professionalisation in this context does not refer to the political dimension of professionalism that secures teachers' status as professionals. Rather, it relates to the meaning



of professionalism – the process of becoming a professional during one's teacher education and its continuation during their entire career.

The underlying idea is thus a pedagogical conception instead of a political discussion. Pedagogy in this context can be understood as "the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted" (Alexander, 2009, p. 928).

Putting this pedagogical view in the centre of the discussion, teacher educators and teachers themselves can be described "as responsible for advancing the capacities and potentialities of the next generation. This is a very large responsibility, and it is the essence of academic duty" (Kennedy, cited in: Fitzmaurice, 2008, p. 347). This aspect has a double meaning for teacher educators as it hands them the duty to act accordingly as well as to educate their students with regard to this responsibility. In other words, it is another value inherent in the profession of teacher educators alongside that of teaching content to their students.

In order to enable students to act pedagogically and professionally, many teaching standards have picked up the idea of professionalisation. The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards are one of the most commonly known sets of standards, and they are also reflected in the standards of other countries than the USA. The Professionsstandards of the Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz are an example of their adaption in another context. Concerning professionalisation, they include the following points:

Standard #9:

Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner. [CCSSO, 2013, p. 41]

Professional Standard #9:

Reflects on Own Experiences (Professionality)

The teacher continuously reflects on the effects of his/her own decisions and activities on others (students, parents and other



teachers) and approaches further education in a professional manner, which means actively and responsibly. [Pädagogische Hochschule Schwyz, 2017, p. 44, transl. by the author]

Summarising the key points of these standards, being or acting as a professional involves a process of life-long learning, self-evaluation and critical self-reflection, being adaptive to diverse cohorts of learners, and pursuing further education in accordance with emerging needs. The previously mentioned aspect of autonomy comes into play in these excerpts as well. Both standards assume a proactive approach of the teacher towards professionalisation and, thus, autonomous behaviour. Still, the question "What does it mean for teacher educators to foster such professionalism in teacher education and beyond?" remains.

New Challenges for Teacher Education, Teaching and Learning

This question is not new to teacher educators but becomes even more complex in a globalised world that is constantly changing. Goodwin (2010) describes six aspects that are changing our societies in the global age:

1. Human mobility on a global scale that is multidirectional, transiently permanent (meaning long periods abroad without the intention/opportunity/possibility to permanently relocate), culturally inclusive, and life-embedded;
2. Transnational employment in all sectors ranging from highly-skilled to minimally-skilled workers;
3. The forced migration of people triggered by war, natural disasters, economic needs and so forth;
4. An even wider gap between the rich and the poor, generated by massive income growth in some sectors;
5. Global competition between nations for resources such as oil;
6. Technological advancements, especially in the area of communication.

All of these have an impact on schools, teaching and learning. Increased mobility leads to diversified and multicultural societies that are also represented in classrooms around the globe. Today's teachers might have children in their classrooms who come from different cultural



backgrounds and social classes and speak different languages. They might have to deal with traumatised children who have experienced war, natural disasters, or great poverty. Some of their students might have "nomadic" histories of constant moves between countries due to their parents' work, while others might have never left their own small community due to a lack of financial resources and/or opportunities. This diverse studentship needs to be addressed in an individualised way in order to give children the best chance to profit from their education.

Increased global competition and global developments can lead towards increased fears in children, and this needs to be addressed. Burnham points out that "the causes of contemporary fears of youth vary; however, many fears have emerged across time because of children's and adolescents' exposure to situations on a frequent basis" (2009, p. 87). Such situations can be rooted in global events, such as, for example, pandemic outbreaks or natural disasters, television and media exposure, especially mass media, and societal changes. As new political and societal changes as well as global problems such as climate change and social inequality emerge or amplify, children develop new fears, assumptions and ideas about the world around them, and it is the teacher's responsibility to respond to them sensitively.

As already mentioned, (social) media play a crucial role in this respect, as while modern communication technologies lead towards new problems such as cyberbullying (Li, 2007), they also provide chances such as enhanced communication between different cultures and countries without any time delays or spatial hurdles (Goodwin, 2010). This can support children who have moved between countries and can serve as a valuable resource for teaching in an intercultural context. It also means that students are exposed to news and developments far away from their homes, and this requires them to deal with global challenges and developments. In other words, they are not only part of their local community but inhabit a global space. With respect to professionalisation, teachers need to take all these developments into account when planning, conducting and evaluating their own teaching. This means that teachers need to be aware of societal, political, and technological changes on an individual, local, and global scale to adapt their own practices.



As teacher educators cannot predict what societal, political or technological changes will happen in the future, it is an impossible task to prepare prospective teachers for all possible situations or types of students they might encounter in their classrooms. Thus, the question is: What knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes do teachers need to help their prospective pupils to "learn about the world, from the world, and with the world" (Devlin-Foltz, 2010, p. 113) and to become global citizens (Mahon, 2010)? Like our children, do our future teachers need "the knowledge, skills, and values that many now describe as "global competence" to be responsible citizens of the world and their own multicultural communities, and to be effective participants in the global marketplace" (Devlin-Foltz, 2010, p. 113)?

In order to prepare prospective teachers for a globalised world with an unknown future, Goodwin (2010, p. 22) suggests five knowledge domains:

1. Personal knowledge: autobiography and philosophy of teaching;
2. Contextual knowledge: understanding children, schools, and society;
3. Pedagogical knowledge: content, theories, and methods of teaching, and curriculum development;
4. Sociological knowledge: diversity, cultural relevance, and social justice; and
5. Social knowledge: co-operative, democratic group process, and conflict resolution.

Even if Goodwin's work is based on her and her colleagues' own experiences and research in the US context, the mentioned knowledge domains are widely acknowledged in the academic community (see Ochoa, 2010; Budak, Çakmak & Gündüz, 2015; Pachler & Redondo, 2015). Thus, they seem to be a good starting point to respond to challenges brought through globalisation on different levels to teaching and learning. The strengthening of one's own abilities in these domains is based on thorough (self-)reflection and the will for self-development, but they "do not take place in a vacuum" (Kissock & Richardson, 2010, p. 92). In other words, they need a context to be developed in; they are based on past and present experiences, and these experiences need to be adapted to the needs of the next generations of pupils



(Steiner, 1996). Internationalisation could provide a promising context for advancing necessary skills and knowledge by enabling students to reflect on their own experiences with teaching, being taught, their social and cultural background, and their biases and prejudices about the world.

Moreover, it could support an additional sixth knowledge domain that is necessary to implement the acquired knowledge. This sixth domain, with which I want to complement Goodwin's ideas, is a meta-knowledge domain. It is an attitude, mindset or stance rather than a concrete kind of knowledge that can be acquired through traditional teaching methods. Nevertheless, it involves knowledge about how to implement change and how to adapt to new situations in a creative way. Thus, I call this knowledge domain "innovative knowledge". Its nature as a meta-domain derives from the idea that knowledge is not enough to implement change; a certain attitude and motivation are also needed, and it is exactly this combination of knowledge with a fitting attitude that is part of what I call innovative knowledge. Three mindsets are of importance in this knowledge domain: (1) open-mindedness, (2) flexibility, and (3) curiosity.

1. Open-mindedness is an important attitude as it allows (future) teachers to get intensively involved with their students' situations, beliefs, assumptions, behaviour, needs, desires, and so forth – or, in short, with their personality and context. Adopting an open-minded approach towards students, parents and colleagues can also offer plenty of learning opportunities for teachers as they might be confronted with new/alternative ways of thinking about the world due to different cultures, life histories and experiences. Thus, it provides a fertile ground for self-development and continuous professionalisation.
2. Flexibility is necessary on a general as well as on a situational level. On a general level, teachers need to be flexible to respond to changes in the education system as well as to their current environment. They need to prevent themselves from blindly following set routines, principles and policies. By being flexible in adopting policies and their own routines, teachers can take the students' personalities and contexts into account when planning educational situations. On a day-to-day basis, teachers also need the ability to react flexibly to all kinds of educational



and organisational situations in the classroom and school; thus, flexibility is needed on a situational level.

3. Finally, there is the aspect of curiosity to consider. Only by being curious about the world we live in are teachers able to detect small changes in themselves, their students, their schools, and the local, regional and global environments. This is the first step for reflecting on their possible influence on teaching and learning. By being curious, teachers can also adopt an open-minded approach towards developments in education in different systems, countries, and situations. This can then serve as an inspiration for how the detected changes can be responded to in the educational process.

It becomes clear that open-mindedness, flexibility and curiosity are not three separate concepts but complement and overlap each other. In combination, they can support (prospective) teachers in dealing with an unknown future for the benefit of their students and thus form an essential part of modern professionalisation.

Is Internationalisation the Answer?

In the previous section, I suggested that internationalising teacher education can support the process of professionalisation in a global context. Before moving on to elaborate further on the possible chances that internationalisation can have for teacher education, I want to clarify what internationalisation in teacher education can mean. In the literature, there is often no clear differentiation between the concepts of globalisation, internationalisation, multiculturalism, or cross-culturalism (Buczynski et al., 2010).

Jane Knight makes the interconnectedness of globalisation and internationalisation clear when stating that "[i]nternationalisation is changing the world of education and globalisation is changing the world of internationalisation" (2003, p. 3). Through this lens, globalisation can be viewed as a global development and internationalisation as a strategic response of different systems to globalisation. Education is then influenced by policy and practical decisions taken as part of internationalisation strategies in the educational arena. The direction of this influence is not one-sided; an interaction between all three exists. Changes in the education system can, for example, influence



internationalisation strategies and have an effect on processes of globalisation.

Multicultural and global education (sometimes called cross-cultural education) refer to educational ideas and aims. Both overlap, as Wilson (1993) suggests that multicultural education can support the development of a global perspective. Davenport (2000) distinguishes both by emphasising that multiculturalism is based on a local and intra-national context, whereas global education focuses on an international perspective.

In summary, globalisation is a global development without a clear target or stakeholder, whereas internationalisation is a strategic response to globalisation. In this context, multicultural and global education can be viewed as curriculum elements that respond to challenges and the chances brought by globalisation to education, even if these ideas developed separately from the globalisation of education research approach (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). As such, they are part of a wider internationalisation strategy. Internationalisation in teacher education can thus be seen as a strategic element for preparing (prospective) teachers for integrating a global dimension into a globalised classroom. Therefore, internationalisation forms an important part of developing professionalism further.

How much internationalisation can add towards professionalism in teacher education will be highlighted by using Goodwin's (2010) previously outlined knowledge domains as well as the "innovative knowledge" domain, as they are a valuable foundation for contemporary professionalisation in teacher education.

Goodwin's first knowledge domain, personal knowledge, is based on the assumption that all teachers bring their own beliefs, experiences and expectations deriving from their own schooling into teacher education programs and the profession. These personal ideas need to be reflected on in order to align them with theories and state-of-the-art knowledge on pedagogy, teaching and learning. Or, to use Goodwin's own words, "teacher preparation is a transition between what one has been in the past and will be in the future" (2010, p. 23). The internationalisation of teacher education can add towards this repositioning process by providing culturally diverse ideas, beliefs and expectations on education. By confronting students with different philosophies of education, pedagogical approaches and theories



on teaching and learning, a broader context arises in which personal experiences can be put into perspective. It becomes quite clear to the student that their own experiences are just some of many others, and this can challenge them to engage critically with their individual experiences during their schooling and studies in the light of diverse theories.

Contextual knowledge, the second knowledge domain, is a response to the problem that teacher educators cannot prepare future teachers for all possible situations. Goodwin suggests that by equipping prospective teachers with contextual knowledge, they are able to react to new and unforeseen changes and challenges in their classrooms and the surrounding communities. This type of knowledge becomes even more important in a globalised world as children move between different spheres and cultures, not least due to developments in communication technologies. Contextual knowledge is also important as an analytical tool for teachers as it "propels teachers beyond subject or instructional strategy to examine learners' needs as nested within multiple socio-cultural-economic-political locations" (Goodwin, 2010, p. 24). Goodwin also suggests that the internationalisation of teacher education can add towards gaining applied and in-depth contextual knowledge about the global and the local environment. Referring to Cushner (2007), Merryfield (1995) and Roberts (2007), she points out that "[t]echnology, international exchanges, and studying abroad all hold promise – and have evidenced success – as avenues towards greater intercultural knowledge and internationalisation" (Goodwin, 2010, p. 24). In an increasingly intercultural classroom, this kind of knowledge is an essential part of professionalisation.

The third knowledge domain, pedagogical knowledge, is the basis for high-quality teaching. Goodwin (2010) sees pedagogical knowledge as a key driver for transformation in education, including the education system, educational structures, teacher preparation, and assessment. In order to become an active partner in reform processes, teachers need to become pedagogical authorities. To do justice to all children, they need to be able to include not only the formal curriculum set by authorities but also the "informal, cultural, or personal curricula that children embody – the curriculum of home, the curriculum of community/ies, the curriculum of lived experiences" in their teaching as well as "to critically assess and adapt assigned materials or, possibly,



create new materials arising from students' unique contextual, academic, and personal needs" (ibidem, p. 25). International experiences can foster an understanding of different pedagogical traditions beyond one's own educational system, structure, values and traditions. As such, it can offer a variety of frameworks to rethink teachers' own educational systems, structures and practices and, thus, provides a fertile ground for transforming education and responding to the individual needs of children.

Sociological knowledge, the fourth knowledge domain, is concerned with a rather general transformation in societies worldwide that is due to diversification processes. Diversification is not new, but "globalisation has brought the world's diversity into high definition – diversity is no longer "out there" but right here" (ibidem, p. 26). For the teaching profession, this means that "none of us can ignore any longer the too many children who do not receive what they deserve, including a quality and caring education to help them develop into informed, thinking, moral, and empowered citizens" (ibidem, p. 26). Sociological knowledge is thus in line with the humanistic educational ideal. The role of teacher education is to challenge future teachers to overcome their own prejudices about children and the world. Or, to use Goodwin's words, "[t]eacher preparation will need to become uncomfortable, a space for interrupting low expectations, deficit thinking, racism, classism, xenophobia, and all other kinds of isms, if our intention is to develop teachers who can uphold the rights of children and are equipped to interrupt schooling practices that are discriminatory and harmful" (ibidem, p. 26). International experiences are a meaningful tool to challenge students in this respect as they can provide a context in which students are exposed to being "the other" or "the outsider". They can apprehend how it feels to be "the stranger", to not understand the language completely, and to be unable to express their own ideas and feelings clearly. By empathising with such situations, future teachers can better understand the challenges of some children in their classroom and thus react accordingly in a professional manner (Merryfield, 2010).

The fifth and last of Goodwin's knowledge domains is social knowledge. This domain refers to democratic and co-operative skills. Following up on the idea of teachers as drivers of change in education, these skills are important to enable teachers as professionals



to make joint decisions about pedagogy and the curriculum and to create classrooms in which students can learn these skills to act as global citizens in their later lives. Internationalisation can contribute to the development of these skills as a field of practice for students. Engaging with an international community requires them to co-operate with people from different socio-cultural-economic-political backgrounds and thus trains these skills in a highly complex but safe learning environment. In addition to the aspects outlined by Goodwin, social knowledge is of course important for work with all kinds of stakeholders in the educational process, such as parents, children, other professionals like psychologists or social workers, and colleagues and members of public institutions.

Innovative knowledge, the domain that I added to Goodwin's list and outlined in the previous section, can be enriched by the internationalisation of teacher education. As innovative knowledge is a mindset rather than concrete knowledge, future students already need a certain degree of open-mindedness, flexibility and curiosity to be motivated to participate in international experiences. Nevertheless, a stimulating international experience can foster those attitudes by providing a varied and inspiring atmosphere with challenging and new ideas, philosophies and practices of education. In other words, internationalisation has the potential to amplify those mindsets in teacher education by providing a view beyond the horizon. Innovation in the educational process can also be fueled by increasing the range of knowledge in the other five knowledge domains and thus can lead towards a bigger repertoire for future practices, thoughts and critical reflections.

Overall, internationalisation in teacher education can provide "food for thought" and support the acquisition of knowledge belonging to the six knowledge domains. In doing so, internationalisation can contribute to professionalisation in teacher education. An obvious question now is: How can internationalisation be integrated into teacher education programs?

What Internationalisation Can Mean and Look Like in Teacher Education

Despite the potential benefits of internationalisation in teacher education, there is still no common approach on how to integrate it into



teacher education programs. As the study by Buczynski et al. (2010) shows, it is rather difficult to find an agreement on what this should look like, even when a democratic approach to policymaking is adopted. In the following, I want to use two dimensions to describe existing implementation strategies of internationalising teacher education.

The first dimension is concerned with the content of the internationalisation strategy, whether practical or academic. This is important to distinguish as teacher education is not only an academic discipline but includes practical training in the classroom; thus, in their international experience, students might focus either on academic endeavors or internships at school.

The second dimension is concerned with the place of internationalisation, whether abroad or at home. With big numbers of participants in teacher education programmes and a lack of funding, it is impossible to send all students abroad; thus, an international experience cannot be limited to studying/working abroad but should also be included in teacher education programmes at home to make it available for all future teachers. The first one is focused on study or work abroad, and the latter includes, for example, curriculum development; the co-operation of two or more universities in online formats; internships at international schools at home; and visiting lecturers, students and/or experts from abroad. The borders of these dimensions are fluid as they are a continuum rather than strict categories, but they can help to analyze the benefits and drawbacks of internationalisation in a systematic way.

A high degree of practical experience in the form of internships without them necessarily having an academic underpinning can foster, for example, one's own experiences with diverse educational situations. Thus, it has a high potential to contribute strongly to the personal knowledge domain by engaging with other educational practices. This is a good starting point for questioning and reflecting on one's own experiences. Pedagogical knowledge might, on the other hand, not be as present as in well-planned academic programmes.

Study/work experiences abroad can provide a high-level learning experience in the area of innovative knowledge as students need to be flexible in adapting to a new situation and need to be open-minded to get in touch with the other cultural and social environment. Having diverse chances for direct observation might increase the level



of curiosity about the other country. Thus, it might also add towards contextual knowledge in a particular case. Sociological knowledge is also a key dimension that can be fostered in an experience abroad because students in this situation do become "the other" in their new environment. Having an international experience in the form of an active online course, on the other hand, can have the potential to foster social knowledge as co-operation in this environment includes the additional challenge of not meeting people face-to-face. Contextual knowledge about diverse countries and cultures can be effectively brought into teacher education programmes with internationalisation strategies at home.

Regardless of the kind of internationalisation strategy, it is of utmost importance to include a critically reflective approach (Hollins, 1996). Otherwise, international experiences might be at risk of reinforcing students' prejudices instead of expanding their repertoire and questioning their own past, present and future experiences.

As it would go beyond the scope of this paper, I will not examine each internationalisation strategy but instead concentrate on one particular internationalisation project – the International Project (IPC). This project can be located within the "Internationalization@home" strategies in terms of its implementation and focuses on academic content rather than on practical experiences.

—— **IPC: An Example of "Internationalization@home"**

The International Project (IPC)

IPC is an online course concept that focuses on providing an international experience at home for students. As such, it is an offer for students interested in engaging with an international community of fellow students and teacher educators that does not require any financial resources from the student's side. Due to the nature of an online course, students are free to decide when and where to participate. In other words, there are no conflicts between IPC, academics, family or other private obligations as long as the students are prepared to invest a couple of hours each week. How they distribute their time is fully up to the student's decisions. That means that from an organisational point of view, IPC is an easy and convenient way for students to engage in international activities and exchange ideas with international partners.



The original concept for the course was developed by Prof. Dr. Jean-Pol Martin at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and was adapted for teacher education by Prof. Dr. Klaudia Schultheis in 2008. Since then, the course has been regularly implemented by various partners from now four different continents. There are different formats of the course that vary with respect to the complexity of the content and the intensity of the international work¹. In this paper, I will focus on IPC Basic as this course has been offered on a regular basis since 2008 and has the biggest number of participating universities. In 2018, the participating universities were: Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany (coordinating university); University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria; Junshi University Nagasaki, Japan; "La Inmaculada" Escuela Universitaria Diocesana de Magisterio, Universidad de Granada, Spain; Yamaguchi University, Japan; Karlstad University, Sweden; and Australian Catholic University, Australia.

The IPC concept is based on an online course offered on the PowerSchool Learning platform. The course is also complemented by face-to-face introductory and final presentation sessions in each participating university. Thus, students will meet their local supervisors and fellow students twice during the course. In the online phase, students from the participating universities work under the supervision of their international teacher educators on small projects using the online platform and other digital or social media that they deem necessary. For group work, the bigger group is divided into smaller international teams to ensure that an in-depth knowledge exchange is possible. The students' distribution into smaller groups takes place randomly with the aim to include at least one to two students from each country. Each small group is supervised by one teacher educator coming from the participating universities. Despite their allocation to certain groups, all supervisors are available to students in case they have a particular question, concern or interest in one of the countries. As such, students and teacher educators have the chance to co-operate in an international team and to develop intercultural competencies and knowledge about teaching and teacher education in other countries.

1 For more information on the different formats, see www.internationalproject-ipc.com/en/didactical-formats-and-variations-of-the-ipc.



Most topics that students can choose from are based on a literature review, but it is also possible for students to decide to conduct a small qualitative research study. During the course, students discuss and translate the readings provided in their local language with their fellow group mates. This has the benefit that students can share academic content that comes from different educational cultures and would otherwise not be accessible to them due to language issues.

In the IPC class, the following learning objectives are addressed: (1) global competences, including global awareness, cultural understanding, international experience, intercultural competence, working in multinational teams, and comparisons of education systems, policies, research and publications; (2) expertise, including on curriculum-relevant topics, comparison of perspectives, critical thinking, and developing one's own reflected-on standpoint; (3) project skills, including autonomous project planning and performances, training of communication and collaboration skills, and the presentation of results; (4) internet skills, including online communication tools and internet platforms for educational purposes, such as discussion forums, video conference, social media and so on; and (5) language skills, as English is the common language of instruction and communication (IPC, 2020). Comparing the learning objectives of IPC with the knowledge domains, it becomes clear that all of them are covered to a certain degree. The extent to which they are experienced and perceived by the students participating in IPC will be discussed in the following section.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data used to show how far IPC can contribute to the six knowledge domains derives from an anonymous online evaluation questionnaire, conducted with the IPC class of 2018. Of concern for this paper are the answers to the following open questions: (1) What did you like in the IPC class? and (2) What did you dislike in the IPC class? These questions were used as they reflect the individual thoughts of students without focusing on their learning outcomes. Thus, the answers capture what students deemed to be most important in this international experience and show where an increase in knowledge was most valuable to the students.



The questionnaire was available to all participants after the IPC class had ended. The response rate was 55.42%. Out of the 46 students who participated in the survey, 29 students answered question one, and 27 students answered question two.

The data was analysed using a thematic analysis, following Braun and Clark (2006). The aim of the data analysis was to depict the main benefits and challenges that students had within the IPC course. As already mentioned, these aspects can also be used to see the extent to which students incorporated the content and learning objectives in their feedback about the course. It can thus provide implicit hints on what kind of knowledge domains they deemed to be most important within their individual learning experience during the online course.

Benefits and Drawbacks of IPC for the Knowledge Domains

The things that students liked most in the IPC class were connected to (1) the format of the course, (2) the opportunity to work with people from other countries and to share ideas and knowledge with them, (3) the skills and knowledge acquired, and (4) communication and group work. Of importance for receiving an insight into how far the international experience increased knowledge in the six domains are themes two, three and four.

Theme two, the opportunity to work with people from other countries, includes aspects such as "learning about other countries" and "discussing problems of other countries" – this gives us a hint that gaining contextual knowledge was an important aspect for students. Students also claim that they learnt about "other points of view" and "shared a lot of different opinions and information". This could mean that they reflected on their own education and thus increased their personal knowledge. Discussing different opinions and information can be seen as a step towards acquiring in-depth and diverse pedagogical and sociological knowledge.

Theme three, acquired skills and knowledge, covers statements such as "it is a way to learn English and to catch up with other methods of education", "getting to know other people and other teaching methods" and "the fact that I learnt new things and met new people". It becomes obvious that students increased their repertoire about teaching methods; thus, IPC adds towards the pedagogical knowledge domain. Meeting new people from other countries and exchanging



ideas with them is a recurring theme within the collected data. Students see this as an added value, and it can be assumed that this might add towards several knowledge domains, especially the sixth domain of innovative knowledge. Being curious and open-minded about other countries and engaging with "strangers" from other backgrounds is an important aspect of it.

The fourth theme, communication and group work, is closely linked to social knowledge and language skills. The raised aspects were, for example, "teamwork, fluid communication and helpful peers", "the international communication", "the teamwork with other countries" and "seeing how other countries and students worked on group presentations and projects". Co-operation and seeing different problem-solving approaches might have added towards the contextual knowledge domain, too.

The students of this IPC class struggled most with (1) communication and group work, (2) content and course execution, (3) the medium of instruction and the online platform, (4) English language problems, and (5) time management. Although point two is mainly concerned with technical problems and point five with project management skills, the other three are of significance for this paper.

Communication and group work have already been pointed out as positive aspects in the IPC class, but as group work is highly dependent on the individual group, some of the students struggled quite a lot with it. In other words, social knowledge and support in this domain could be included more intensively in this course format.

Concerning the content and execution, one student complained that not enough content was covered in the course. Another student wrote: "we never really talked about our own countries and the differences of being a teacher in this or that country. The traits of good teachers have been in every country more or less the same". This quote shows that contextual knowledge is important from the perspective of students, but it also highlights that there are a lot of similarities within the participating countries that students were not aware of at the beginning of the course. Innovative knowledge can be interpreted in this theme as well, as students did not feel that they covered enough content to satisfy their curiosity about other countries and other education systems. Despite this, it shows that students were not curious enough to use the open space to start



communicating freely about these issues. This might be connected to a lack of social knowledge. Other students within this theme just did not like some of the tasks or were not satisfied with the course structure and set-up.

Problems with English as the language of communication hint at the idea that students learnt how it feels to be an "outsider" and unable to communicate in the desired way with the group. Even if it was an unpleasant experience for the students, it could add towards a learning process within the sociological knowledge domain.

Conclusion

Although the data presented in this paper has a range of limitations such as the small sample size, taking only one cohort of students into account, and a missing direct link between the considered questions and the six knowledge domains, it still shows that an academic internationalisation project at home has great potential to deepen knowledge in the six knowledge domains. This is even true for the cases where the experience is not entirely positive as, at some points, teacher education needs to become an uncomfortable space in order to challenge students on their views on the world and on education (Goodwin, 2010). The potential of the IPC for professionalisation in teacher education, including deeper understanding within the six knowledge domains, becomes quite clear when looking at some of the closing words of the students:

It was very constructive and interesting. We got knowledge, abilities to share information with people from different countries, and we learnt how education was in other countries. It was definitely a very good experience.

I found it interesting to learn something from students from different countries and about the different school systems.

It was exciting working with unknown people, I haven't done anything like IPC in my life.

In the broader context of professionalisation in teacher education, this means that internationalisation can be a valuable part of the teacher



education curriculum. It can add towards professionalism, especially in today's increasingly diversified classrooms and given the uncertainty of the future. Nevertheless, more systematic research is needed to evaluate the concrete potential of international experiences in teacher education. Currently, most research studies show how different local projects have impacted students' professional development, but there is still a lack of a systematic overview in terms of considering the format of the internationalisation strategy.

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