3 Getting curious and gaining knowledge through transnational collaboration in foreign language teacher education

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1.   Introduction

The claim to strive for greater internationalisation in the fields of academic education not only corresponds to the pressures of an increasingly globalised world but is also a response to the ever-growing challenges of cultural diversity that exist within one's own country. For students, however, the geographical space relevant to their education is usually constituted not by the nation state but by an educationally autonomous entity of subordinate size. This is especially true in states such as Germany, where the federal system is constitutive of public education. However, every territory with educational sovereignty is in constant contact with national and international educational concepts which – depending on the topic – have a concrete relevance for its own educational structure. This interplay can be well seen, for example, in the appreciation of social multilingualism and its consideration in school policy. The field of foreign language teacher training is a prime example in this respect in its interweaving with overarching educational concepts. For teachers and students, the importance of individual multilingualism is revealed in their dealings with people from a wide variety of migrant backgrounds, in different places on journeys, and in many professional fields around the world. Therefore, it is

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particularly effective for prospective teachers to experience the benefits and function of foreign language skills in an international context from the very beginning and to incorporate these experiences into their teaching skills. In this sense, the internationalisation of foreign language teacher education is an essential element of professionalisation that broadens teachers' subject didactic horizons, enables them to experience the social significance of foreign language learning in a transnational perspective, strengthens motivation to acquire communicative competences in several languages, and clarifies the special status of regional and migrant languages alongside the use of national languages. Thus, it is of great value for prospective language teachers in one country to recognise the role that French, Spanish, English, or German play as foreign languages in other countries and to be aware of the different situations of social multilingualism. It is important to recognise that a couple of well-defined factors significantly influence the way foreign languages are taught and learned in other places.

2. Transculturality as a theoretical background

The increasing internationalisation of the teaching profession requires that contact with other countries and nations takes place from a pedagogical perspective. In this context, the concept of transculturality is of particular importance and has a formative effect on forms of intercultural learning and professional development. Fundamentally, the aspect of transculturality must be distinguished from the experience of intercultural learning: the modern understanding of cultural reality and its experience defines itself as 'transcultural' and not as 'intercultural'. In the 1990's, Wolfgang Welsch consciously coined the term 'transculturality' as the antithesis to that of 'interculturality', because the latter threatened to fossilise in the notion of a specific cultural determination of identity in each case – connected with the distinction between self-culture and foreign culture – as well as in cultural thinking in separate clusters. Nevertheless, it remains justified to ascribe so much modernity to today's understanding of intercultural learning that

the continued use of the term in foreign language didactics seems sensible (Heimböckel & Weinberg, 2014)[3].

What makes 'transculturality' indispensable as an analytical concept, however, is made clear by three "essential determining moments" (Welsch, 1999, p. 197ff.):

- the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures, which thus usually appear as inhomogeneous;

- the external networking of cultures, especially across national borders; and

- a form of hybridisation, by which is essentially meant the interweaving of the most diverse cultures anywhere in the world.

The connection between transculturality and internationality is represented in Welsch's (1999) definition in particular by the aspect of networking, on which he states the following:

> "[c]ultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures. The way of life for an economist, an academic or a journalist is no longer German or French, but rather European or global in tone. The new forms of entanglement are a consequence of migratory processes, as well as of worldwide material and immaterial communication systems and economic interdependencies and dependencies. It is here, of course, that questions of power come in" (p. 197).

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3. The concept of intercultural learning is held onto especially in Europe, both in subject didactic research and in educational policy. The discussion has been going on for more than three decades and has led to a great variety of definitional approaches. Our concept of cultural learning fits into a line of interpretation that emphasises the subjective experience of cultural diversity and sees the change of perspective as essential. From a pedagogical point of view, we agree with the following statement: "the idea of this learning process is that the student should learn to tolerate diversity between people and cultures, to look sensitively at members of other cultural groups and, through discovering and learning about the foreign, to perceive and treat his or her own culture from a different, new perspective" (Walkowska, 2018, p. 193, own translation).

In this sense, the goal of internationalisation in teacher education is based on the concept of transculturality, which seeks to discover what connects rather than what divides individual identity formation and culture shaping with the characteristics of cultural interpenetration and cultural commonalities. Moreover, the concept of transculturality seems ideally suited to recognise and use the aspect of cultural diversity as a constructive experience in any living and educational space (Wulf, 2020).

3. The proPIC project as a positive experience of internationalisation in higher education

The proPIC project was an Erasmus+ funded project, being part of the worldwide initiatives for more internationalisation in higher education (cf. the summarising and informative presentation by De Wit & Altbach, 2020). In practice, proPIC adopted the concept of transnational collaboration as far as it applies to the education sector. The defining moments of this concept decisive for proPIC were the following[4].

- Partnership: friendly ties and commitment to the other (at proPIC, five universities from four European countries worked together[5]).

- Common concern: fixation on problem areas of supranational relevance (at proPIC, among other things, the use of digital media in education, see below).

- Integration: strengthening interaction to achieve an overarching goal (at proPIC, promoting transculturality and intercultural learning, see above).

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4. A systematic review of transnational collaboration in higher education can be found in Caniglia et al. (2017).

5. In detail, the following institutions were involved: University of Education Karlsruhe (Germany), Kiel University (Germany), University of Borås (Sweden), University of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain), and Newcastle University (England, Great Britain).

- Cooperation: mutual coordination of measures, structural development to increase efficiency (more information on this in the course of this article).

- Professionalism: development of a self-reflective attitude as an individual approach to one's Continuing Professional Development (more information on CPD can be found in Mann & Webb, 2022 and Oesterle & Schwab, 2022, Chapters 1 and 2, this volume).

The course of the proPIC project clearly showed that a practice-oriented exchange of foreign language teachers beyond the subject boundaries in the narrower sense proves its worth. To the extent that dealing with transculturality and social multilingualism is at the forefront of such an exchange, teaching and learning can no longer be solely about optimising the structural teaching of individual foreign languages. Particularly in international educational contexts, it is very much possible to focus on the specific dimensions and realities associated with the acquisition of communicative competence in a second or third language and to sharpen the focus on how students can be supported in acquiring this competence. Attention to the very different conditions that exist in schools and universities in other countries with regard to foreign language learning may also create a better awareness of the value and possibilities of including first languages. Finally, the function of English as a global language of communication is also grasped in a more differentiated way when it is understood from the perspective of English teaching in different countries[6].

Empirical studies on the diverse intercultural learning processes promoted in the proPIC project as well as on the gain in foreign language didactic competences are still pending[7]. However, based on students' statements in surveys and feedback questionnaires, as a positive outcome of proPIC, we can support the thesis that every effort towards transnational collaboration makes a valuable contribution to the professional development of teacher candidates. It is not only in Germany

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6. On some of the main problems associated with internationalisation in higher education, see Makhmudov (2020), Smith (2010), and Crăciun and Orosz (2018).

7. Cf. on this desideratum with reference to Eastern Europe Onishchuk et al. (2020) as an example.

that the training of foreign language teachers, which is limited to the respective federal state, carries the danger of a fixation on the curricular framework and teaching practice in one's own country, making it difficult to focus on the diversity of multilingual experiences and the diversity of the use of 'foreign languages' in different parts of the world. Ultimately, this shortcoming leads to a significant limitation of the possible change of perspective on the value of multilingualism outside the cultural and educational horizon given solely by the particular place of education. Of course, within the framework of educational institutions, there are several mechanisms to get out of the isolation or narrowness of one's own cultural consideration. However, in this endeavour, the effort of transnational collaboration contributes efficiently and sustainably in any case to give teacher education a decisive *kick* in this direction. It also shows a way to constructively use forms of internationalisation 'at home' in the educational process alongside the experiences of otherness abroad. It probably even represents a decisive key to permanently anchoring a transcultural awareness of foreign language teachers in their professional practice.

4.   The special challenge of internationalisation and mobility in teacher education

The desideratum of internationalising teacher education is not new and has already led to a number of measures of cooperation between various countries (cf. a comparative study of Leutwyler, Popov, & Wolhuter, 2017). These are pilot initiatives to promote the cross-border mobility of student teachers – partly on the basis of special study programmes – whose results can be meta-analytically evaluated. This evaluation of already existing experiences – especially on the basis of feedback studies – was an important basis for the concrete design of the study programme of proPIC as an essential component of this project with the aim of profound professionalisation through transnational collaboration.

In a recent Germany-wide study on the mobility of students of various subjects, Krämer and Springob find that, overall, teacher trainees are no less mobile than students of other subjects. According to this, 60% of foreign language students

spend some time of their education abroad (Krämer & Springob, 2019, p. 197f.). However, Ahlgrimm et al. point out that the framework conditions for stays abroad in teacher education are often unfavourable due to the study structure and the lack of recognition of externally earned credits (Ahlgrimm, Westphal, Wallert, & Heck, 2019, p. 221f.). In a meta-analysis of 33 international studies on the effects of international mobility of student teachers, Kercher and Schifferings summarise that intercultural learning, self-reflection, and strengthening of professional self-confidence are cited as positive areas of impact. They also note that even a short stay leads to positive effects (Kercher & Schifferings, 2019, p. 250ff.). Leutwyler (2014) points out that

> "teaching-specific benefit increases when (pre-service or in-service) teachers are involved in occupational activities (either as a participant or as an observer), provided they have the opportunity to teach at least some units in the foreign context themselves, or if they have the opportunity to observe daily school routines and discuss what they have observed with local counterparts" (p. 113).

Furthermore, a comprehensive structural embedding of the stay abroad in the home study programme is of particular importance; for example, its adequate preparation, an individual support programme (coaching, supervision) during the stay, and the evaluation phase (debriefing, wrap-ups) after the return (Leutwyler, 2014). Of course, this requirement is very difficult to realise when there is no firm bilateral cooperation between the respective training institutions.

Cushner (2009) emphasises the importance of "carefully structured, international field experiences" (p. 158f.) and points out in this context that the stay abroad should ideally include a brief immersion in the new and different cultural environment. He also emphasises that an accompanied critical self-reflection of one's own and the foreign culture is an indispensable prerequisite for the success of any transnational study programme. This component can be at least partially integrated into local training programmes with the help of a teaching module on intercultural learning. However, it also depends on the general educational level of the students in this respect.

Before we present our specific proPIC programme, we would like to call attention to another important consideration. The approach of proPIC goes beyond the general desire for a transnational component in the studies of students of different subjects. ProPIC does not primarily aim to promote the internationalisation of teacher education by creating offers in the sense of exchange programmes. Rather, the aim is to call for an area of the curriculum in which a form of transnational cooperation is clearly structured, which corresponds to the competence orientation of the professional field, uses the digital possibilities more creatively than before for professional training, and creates a collective expert awareness on a level that may be transdisciplinary but is nevertheless strictly related to the professional field. This extended training offer is primarily foreign language didactic and can also take place at training locations abroad where the foreign language studied by the trainees in their home country is not represented as a school subject. Following these objectives, the proPIC team has developed an adaptable study programme which, in the sense of an extended transcultural experience during foreign language studies, contributes to strengthening the CPD of the trainees at an early stage.

5.   The proPIC study programme as a concrete proposal for transnational collaboration

The guiding principle of the ProPIC project is to enable both trainee teachers and teacher educators to actively engage in lifelong learning processes in terms of CPD and to cooperatively establish a professional ethos of self-reflection, innovation, and transculturality in foreign and second language learning and teaching. Three main objectives, previously identified in the funding application, guided the development of the study programme, as below.

- Research orientation: through a variety of problem-based assignments and their own research project, participants link the theoretical framework (CPD) to their personal experiences, while continuously documenting, reflecting, and sharing their progress, experiences, and results through the use of mobile technologies.

- Transnational collaboration: promoting intercultural understanding and multilingualism in relation to the needs of a changing and diverse society. Participants share their traditions and methods in teaching and learning a foreign language and build intercultural and transnational networks.

- Mobile technologies: mobile technologies are seen as tools for creative development and application of theory in practice. Participants practise the use of new technologies to enrich teaching, enhance learning experiences, enable virtual mobility, and create new opportunities for research. Further specific objectives are set in relation to different groups, which can be reviewed in the final report[8] on the developed study programme.

ProPIC has developed and continuously improved the programme over a period of three years, above all by constructively taking into account local conditions and feedback from participants as far as we were able. In its final form, it looks like the following.

Figure 1. The research-oriented, transnational study programme
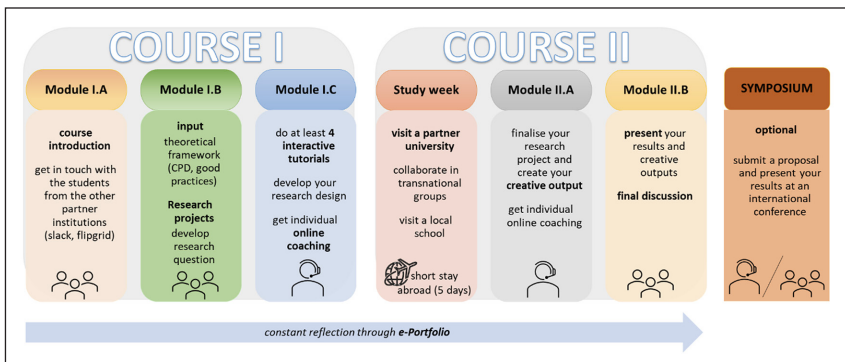
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The programme consists of two courses (Course 1 and 2) with three modules (Module 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) in the first course and two modules (Module 2.1, 2.2) and a study week (a short five-day stay at a partner university) in the second course. Module 1.1 contains an introductory overview, and Module 1.2 consists of an input phase (including CPD as a framework) and the development of individual research projects. Module 1.3 focuses on individual work on interactive tutorials and research projects embedded in online coaching, Module 2.1 promotes individual development of creative outputs embedded in online coaching, and Module 2.2 includes the presentation of results and a final discussion. A final conference at the end of the project allows participants to present their results to an international audience. Twelve prospective teachers per course and organisation were able to participate, for a total maximum of 60 students per cohort. The project credited the programme with between eight and ten ECTS points, depending on the local circumstances of the partner universities. After the first cohort, two possible model scenarios were developed on how the programme could be implemented: in an integrated model, the courses were incorporated into an existing degree programme, with the study week being an additional module for some students. In a separate model, the study programme was implemented as a new course, with the study week being a compulsory part of the course.

Students who participated in the project according to one of the models gave consistently positive feedback on their experience, especially with regard to their active participation in the study week. One student gave the following feedback.

> "I found the inputs during the study week very useful because that the discussion and exercises we had gave me a new point of view and it was also useful to discuss my own ideas with similar peers" (first cohort 2018, Respondent #20, SurveyMonkey).

However, this encouragement is matched by the major task of implementing the study programme in other institutional contexts beyond the current phase of proPIC. Such an undertaking depends on the will of those responsible locally,

the willingness to adapt the respective training curriculum, and, of course, the financial possibilities, especially to support student travel.

The fact that there are two delivery models (the integration and the separation model) makes it easier for the cooperation partners to adapt the study programme to their local needs and conditions. The partner institutions decide individually on the format of the sessions, which can take place either face-to-face or online. In doing so, the different circumstances of the institutions as well as the possibilities to also conduct the study programme by means of online sessions are taken into account. Basically, it is evident that flexibility in planning and concretisation is an elementary criterion for successful implementation. Due to the very different timetables and curricula, it was difficult for proPIC to recruit many students for the first cohort. According to the teacher trainers, many were interested in participating in the study programme but did not have enough time and capacity to go abroad for five days in between. Following the evaluation of the first cohort we limited the amount of work in the courses (e.g. by reducing the number of activities) as students stated that, for example:

> "The days were a bit long so you were completely exhausted at the end of the day" (first cohort 2018, Respondent #20, SurveyMonkey).

> "Not so many activities, because it's better to focus on less activities than doing a lot of them but in a superficial way" (first cohort 2018, Respondent #27, SurveyMonkey).

The different education systems pose a great challenge for the project participants to find suitable dates for the implementation of the programme. In addition to the regular semester and examination times, other points of conflict have to be explored, such as the so-called practical semester at the university in teacher training in Germany. This is accompanied by the question of the workload resulting from additional travel. These experiences coincide with Ahlgrimm et al.'s (2019) indication that the often complex study structure combined with the required time commitment can be a hindrance.

Based on the evaluations of students and partners within the first cohort, the study week was reported to have had the greatest impact so far, as it made them aware of the importance of cooperating internationally and how helpful and inspiring it is to get other perspectives on learning and teaching (for further details see also Schwab & Oesterle, 2022, Chapter 4 this volume). This result is in line with the meta-analysis by Kercher and Schifferings (2019), according to which even short stays can have a positive effect. However, the experiences of the first cohort also showed the critical condition of too little or too unbalanced participation (e.g. in a study week with six Germans in Barcelona but no one from England or Sweden)[9].

Another challenge is the allocation of study-relevant ECTS points to the respective degree programme at the students' home university. Here, a different allocation of points can have a negative impact on the atmosphere or the acceptance of the entire programme. Students from the second Karlsruhe year, for example, criticised the workload in relation to the credit points received. Above all, the presentation of many new technologies was very time-consuming. At Newcastle University, on the other hand, student participation in the proPIC project was voluntary, so students did not receive credit points for their studies if they took part. According to Ahlgrimm et al. (2019), insufficient recognition as a course credit leads student teachers to refrain from studying abroad. It can also be assumed that a different allocation of points has an effect on the motivation and performance of the project participants when working together.

Finally, it should also be noted that the success of a project like ProPIC depends heavily on the coordination and willingness of the project partners. On the one hand, staff fluctuations lead to new perspectives in the project, but on the other hand, they can also inhibit the process, as the continuous joint collection and

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9. For details on critical feedback from the participants, see Schwab and Oesterle (2022, Chapter 4 this volume). Complaints included too few activities for group cohesion, days that were too long and exhausting, and a lack of time to carry out their own research projects. In response to this, the proPIC team created a guideline for the conception and implementation of a study week with adaptations to the study programme. These experiences show the particular relevance of a sensible group composition, the implementation of team-building measures, and clearly communicated guidelines on work assignments and workload.

processing of experiences are particularly valuable. In the context of ProPIC, international teams have proven their worth in partner meetings on specific topics and in planning social activities to foster a sense of togetherness among the individual project partners. Coordinators need a high level of commitment, problem-solving skills, and management strategies.

All optimisation strategies ultimately depend on the respective commitment of the individual partners, with whom they jointly agree on the ideas of transculturality and intercultural learning. As teacher educators, they serve as role models for internationalisation, research orientation, and digitalisation.

6. The role of digital tools and activities in transnational collaboration

The 'i' in proPIC stands for innovation and points to the consistent use of digital and mobile technologies in education, especially as preparation for later use in the teaching profession. In the context of this contribution, we will endeavour to present the innovative use of these technologies as an essential component of transnational cooperation and to illustrate their value. Our focus is on both the collaboration of international student learning groups and the technologically supported processes of collaboration among project partners as team-based research and organisation. Based on the survey after the first study week, the focus of our presentation will be on our experiences with the use and interaction of the digital tools and activities within proPIC. In doing so, we will also refer to the empirical results of relevant research.

Two now relatively widespread methods of digital support for learning were explicitly defined as the outputs of the project: interactive tutorials and e-portfolios. Both are discussed in more detail in separate contributions in this volume (see Baldwin & Ruhtenberg, 2022, and Cuesta, Batlle, González, & Pujolà, 2022, Chapters 5 and 7 this volume). At this point, we will only address the question of how these two products can influence certain forms of transnational cooperation.

Interactive tutorials are usually understood to be supportive learning scenarios that take place online and use personal knowledge exchange as a measure to increase individual learning progress. In contrast, the concept of interactive tutorials in proPIC is primarily digital (though not necessarily online) and to a large extent oriented towards forms of autonomous learning. As a media reference and product orientation, the focus is on the iBook and its use in transnational learning groups. Tool-based interactive tutorials, as represented by the iBook, are fundamentally aimed at multimodally supported knowledge acquisition (Kuleshow, 2008). Their conception and creation require, on the one hand, professional expertise, but also a high degree of media competence and didactic understanding. An essential moment in our creation of iBooks was the determination of use and user group. At the same time, it should be ensured that they make the learning material accessible to the widest possible circle of students. To achieve this last goal, it was necessary to use English as the vehicle language. A concrete difficulty was that the specific level of prior knowledge of the learners could not be assessed and taken into account, although it is possible in principle to design tool-based interactive tutorials in a differentiated way for example.With a selection of different learning paths and speeds taking into account the prior knowledge and experience of the learners, this proved to be utopian in the context of the concrete project work simply because of the effort involved.

The interactive tutorials iBooks of proPIC[10] were created by the teams of the individual project partners according to their respective expertise. The principle of international cooperation could only be realised to some extent at this point, namely by means of a cooperative evaluation of all partners involved. However, it must be taken into account that the tutorials were created as a quintessence of the particular focus at the individual educational institutions and are intended to create self-learning opportunities for students, so that interested parties from different national educational systems can gain expert access to this central educational content. Transnational cooperation is thus guaranteed here in the broadest sense by the fact that forms of autonomous learning are

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10. http://www.propiceuropa.com/io4-interactive-tutorials.html

also consciously placed in a meaningful international context. In addition, in the course of producing the tutorials, peer reviewing among the partners also provides an occasion for transnational academic exchange and helps to promote further developments.

However, with a view to the given scope of the interactive tutorials, more incentives for collaborative work could also be created. On the one hand, the added value of the respective topic, for example, digital tools (Interactive tutorial 6, see Ruhtenberg, Baldwin, & Oesterle, 2020), for special forms of collaboration is discussed in the individual tutorials. On the other hand, elements to promote factual collaboration among the participants would also be conceivable as a supplement. For example, a constructive proposal would be to design exercises that must be carried out compulsorily with a project participant from another university. However, such conditions would increase the organisational effort. In particular, it could prove difficult for a student to cooperate with a fellow student from another country in completing certain tasks due to different semester times or non-synchronised learning phases of autonomous learning. Therefore, the framework conditions for such individual cooperation in the transnational learning scenarios could certainly be further improved.

The e-portfolio has gained importance in recent years, especially in the field of foreign language teaching and learning (Shulman, 1998; Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007). Its tasks are diverse and range from the functions of a learning diary to documentation tools and collections of tasks. It is not only used by learners in the school environment, but also in the overarching training phases of trainee teachers, preferably in the practical parts. In the latter case, the e-portfolio as a digital collection tool offers a variety of possibilities for media presentation and storage of very different products, both individual and collected in class (Alexioua & Paraskeva, 2010). The possibility of reviewing also offers insights into one's own and others' learning processes and opportunities for professional reflection, which is promoted as a core competence for future teachers.

Within the framework of proPIC, the e-portfolio has proven its special importance as a reflection tool[11]. In the first cohort, only individual e-portfolios were created; from the second cohort onwards, joint portfolios were possible. Thus, some students also embedded in their portfolios jointly created materials from the study week, such as their film made during a workshop at Kiel University[12]. It is striking that in such cases only students from the same university have joined forces. It would therefore be a sensible task for the project partners from the different countries to encourage the participants to cooperate across countries in creating their e-portfolios.

Ultimately, the organisational effort and the importance of the e-portfolio as an assessment basis for the students should be taken into account. Without a doubt, e-portfolios have a much greater potential for transnational cooperation than was used in the framework of proPIC (see also Cuesta et al., 2022, Chapter 7 this volume). The online format would allow students to create and edit contributions asynchronously, independent of location, which the cooperation partner could in turn view and comment on. Further testing of these possibilities seems appropriate. It should also be noted that the project partners themselves have created a joint teacher training portfolio[13]. The project coordinator in Karlsruhe was responsible for the design and compilation of the contributions, but the embedded material was produced in an organised form through international cooperation. This shows that a joint transnational e-portfolio is certainly conceivable.

In the following, we will look at two groups of digital tools and activities that have played an important role in proPIC, interactive tutorials, and e-portfolios. One serves to realise efficient communicative settings and the other is intended to support the learning process of the participants.

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11. http://www.propiceuropa.com/students.html

12. https://sites.google.com/view/propic-kiel/home/2nd-day-in-project?authuser=0

13. http://www.propiceuropa.com/teacher-educators.html

The proPIC project has also used various tools for different communicative purposes. The project partners have regularly communicated digitally, both asynchronously – mostly by email, but occasionally via Slack – and synchronously via the now commonly known web conferences. Interestingly, neither traditional phone calls nor data-based spontaneous calls have played a major role in communication. All documents, presentations, photos, etc. were uploaded to a shared cloud folder and could be viewed by all project partners. In text documents with shared access, it was thus possible to work together with others. For their part, the students also networked with the communication tool Slack, on which special information and exchange channels (e.g. for study week) were set up in advance. The special communication structure of Slack, which also enables private chats and group chats, suggests that the students no longer resorted to WhatsApp or comparable media beyond that. In addition, from the second cohort onwards, participants were asked to upload a self-introduction as a video on Flipgrid before the start of the study week so that everyone could get to know each other in advance. During the study week itself, a web conference scheduled by the organisers was held with all participants from the second cohort onwards. Although most of the students first had to familiarise themselves with the communication tools used, they ultimately found their use to be a good basis for joint work and with their help quickly developed uncomplicated ways of working together while overcoming the distance. Various tools were also used to convey the specific learning content. For the joint generation of ideas, these were mainly Padlet and Mindmeister. Padlet was also used as a feedback tool (see Figure 2 below).

For scientific exchange, a public document in Google Docs was set up as a file for research topics and literature references[14]. The basic idea was that students with similar research interests could get in touch with each other. This opportunity was ultimately not used as some students did not share their projects. It can thus be stated that the collaborative potential of the tools used in the learning context within the framework of proPIC was mainly used in

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14. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WNkkZJ5MiY0yCEzlszxVQjr-ykVn-oH5Byz6Ic6MUQ0/edit

Courses 1 and 2 at the home universities. The decisive factor for this was the respective familiarity of the lecturers with these media in their everyday teaching.

Figure 2.   Extract of a Padlet used as feedback tool at CAU during the first cohort

So far, we have discussed the use of digital tools and activities in the context of transnational collaboration from the point of view of their practical affordances. However, we have seen in the past COVID-19 times that this is far from sufficient. A meaningful digitalisation of teaching must also ensure and support the social community of learning groups and their respective form of virtual collaboration in an appropriate way. While the good infrastructure of proPIC enabled participants to have a positive learning experience within a community, other initiatives that are less well secured in terms of material and structure run the risk of degenerating into poorly organised distance learning with a lack of contact among learners. This danger is countered by team-based and product-oriented learning tasks, which can be very well harmonised with the use of digitally based forms of learning.

A fruitful contribution to the digital development of our transnational training format was the integration of self-made video productions within the framework of the proPIC project, with which CAU already has many years of experience in foreign language teacher training. The Viducation project has been used at CAU since 2013 and is dedicated to the idea of filmmaking by students as part of curricular training, especially for the teaching profession[15]. The success of the project lies in the creative use of a form of media expression that is familiar to students both passively and actively – e.g. through the everyday use of tools such as Youtube, Vimeo, Instagram, or TikTok. As a partner university, Kiel has therefore stressed the importance of including educational videos and their self-production by students as a topic in proPIC from the very beginning. On the one hand, this has led to the creation and use of a corresponding interactive tutorial; on the other hand, it has also shaped the design of the proPIC courses in Kiel for the preparation and follow-up of the study week. The workshops were a special highlight on video production during the Kiel study weeks[16] and the videos created by the participants themselves[17].

The innovative character of this activity lay above all in the conceptual expansion of the educational video away from the pure explanatory video to a broad spectrum of alternative genres, which – partly in combination – represent a completely new form of inspiration for learning processes. The students also used this innovative potential of filmmaking in proPIC with joy and creativity:

> "we had a lot of fun. […] It's been really interesting to make this video, we were four girls from different countries. We all have the same opinion about that self-produced videos is a didactic potential, but we needed our time to agree on how to put it on an image" (Participant of the second cohort 2019, collected through the e-portfolio).

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15. Link to the project presentation of 'Viducation' on the 'Good Teaching Blog' of Kiel University; https://viducation.net/

16. Link to the workshop slides on 'Viducation' at the Kiel study weeks.

17. https://youtu.be/bNBrb6Q6ZaI

During the first study week, four incoming students had the task of making a documentary video[18] that offers a lot of space for interpretative accents and reflections on the learning processes experienced. These small film productions were one (and by no means the only) example within the framework of proPIC that offered the clear advantage of experiencing digitally based learning activities in internationally composed small groups as a community, while creating a small project in transnational collaboration. The mere fact that the specifics of the experienced learning scenarios and joint learning activities on site were perceived as 'different' from the perspective of the specific national realities of teacher education and provided food for thought for one's own professionalisation can and must be considered a success. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the finished product of the self-made short film can be used in many different and sustainable ways for further forms of transnational collaboration.

7.   Concluding reflections

We have titled this paper 'getting curious and gaining knowledge', and in the end we can draw a positive conclusion: the new learning experience in teacher education initiated by proPIC was an enrichment for teachers and learners and associated with a clear increase in knowledge for all involved. At the same time, we have found that transnational collaboration is very demanding in practical implementation. The framework of the study programme developed by proPIC gave us the opportunity to prove the practicality of the concept and to show not only that it can work, but also how it can work and what can be done to improve it. Thinking beyond proPIC, we would perhaps identify the organisational and financial burden (especially for the students) as the biggest problem with a lasting impact. The financial protection provided by an Erasmus+ project offered an exceptionally protected space here. In this context, it was very encouraging to learn that important focal points of foreign

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18. https://youtu.be/A5LmB4LGI0Q

language didactics, such as intercultural learning and digitalisation, could be strengthened within the framework of transnational collaboration and that the use of new technologies proved to be particularly efficient in this context. In the cooperation of different institutions with different expertise, there was also a good opportunity for the students to realise research-oriented learning. In this sense, the concept of internationalisation provides essential impulses for more curiosity, motivation, inquisitiveness, commitment, competence development, and communication skills. And last but not least, important learning and knowledge contents are addressed which, in a positive sense, go beyond the basic subject didactic knowledge of the foreign language learners and lead them to reflect critically on their (later) professional activities in a sustainable way. All in all, transnational collaboration as part of a study programme thus makes an important contribution to CPD for student teachers.

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