



Information about the Newsletter

Do you want to stay informed ? We'll help you with that! This newsletter is a free service of the Virtual Collaboration in European Teacher Education(VCIETE) project and keeps you updated about useful material, research studies and upcoming events. Register by clicking the following link:[Registration newsletter VCIETE](#)

Introducing the Project

In March this year, the project “Virtual Collaboration in European Teacher Education” was launched at the University of Education Freiburg under the direction of Prof. Dr. Vasileios Symeonidis, whose research focuses on teacher education from an international and comparative perspective. The project receives funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in the framework of the programme International Virtual Academic Collaboration (IVAC) 2023.



The project will design, develop and implement virtual exchange (VE) formats in the initial teacher education programmes of the participating higher education institutions, namely the University of Education Freiburg, Germany and the Aix-Marseille University, France. The aim is to enhance student teachers' professional awareness as European teachers, by developing their digital and intercultural skills, as well as their transnational professional attitude.

As part of the project, the course 'International and comparative perspectives on education, teaching and diversity' is offered jointly by both higher education institutions through a VE format. During this course, student teachers have the opportunity to learn and exchange experiences regarding the education systems of their countries and what it means to be a teacher in France, Germany and Europe.

VE as a form of internationalisation at home provides an opportunity to increase teacher access to international learning experiences, but so far it has mainly been studied in the context of foreign languages teacher education. The potential of VEs to develop student teacher competences in other subjects, including educational sciences, remains relatively unknown and understudied so far. Thus, the project aims to open new horizons for studying and reflecting on the potential of VEs to develop students' professional awareness beyond national borders.

As part of the project, Maria Impedovo visited the University of Education Freiburg in April, where she also gave a guest lecture on the topic "Challenges facing teacher education in France and European openings".

The University of Education Freiburg in cooperation with the University of South Dakota – International teaching in practice

On May 17th, a special session of the course “International and comparative perspectives on education, teaching and diversity” took place at the University of Education Freiburg.

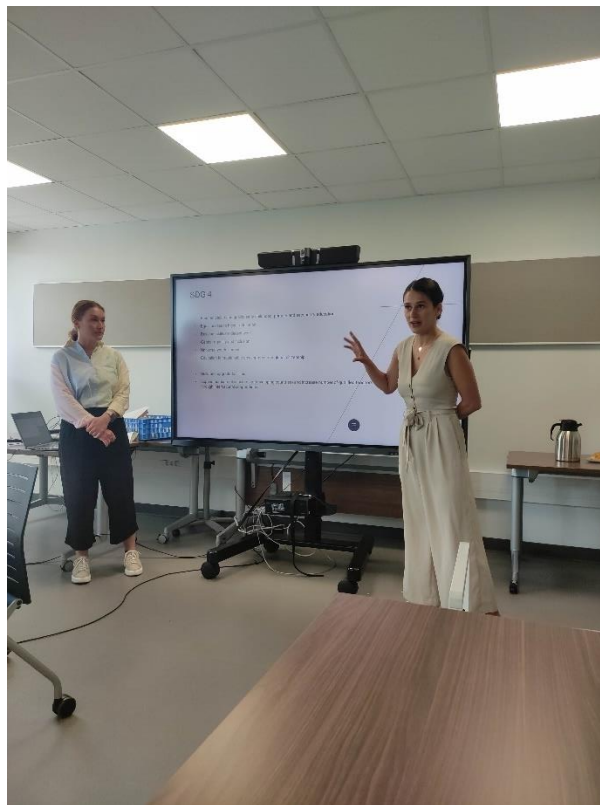
During this joint session, student teachers of the University of Education Freiburg- and South Dakota University student teachers had the chance to present, discuss and learn about the education systems of the US, Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The presentations were followed by roundtable discussions on similarities and differences between the different education systems, as well as lessons learned to improve teacher quality and student learning internationally. The students showed engagement and active participation throughout the session. The presentations were innovative, integrating a variety of digital media such as Padlet, Kahoot and Mentimeter.



Recent Events: Field trip to Marseille

After the completion of the virtual exchange, which took place in May, students and researchers from the University of Education Freiburg and the Aix-Marseille University received the chance to meet and work together in person during a study trip to Marseille, which took place between the 12. and the 16. of June. The study trip was organised by the VCIETE project team and students who participated in the trip received a scholarship from the project. The study group was completed by the PhD-students Saranda Shabanhaxhaj and Ricarda Derler from the University of Graz, who contributed a workshop about the educational systems in Kosovo and Iraq.



The main purpose of our field trip was to promote intercultural learning and student teachers' professional awareness as European teachers, especially keeping in mind topics of teacher professionalism and teaching in general. Building on the basis that was established through our virtual

exchange, this trip was meant to bring together teacher students and researchers on teaching in order to discuss relevant topics regarding their professional development.

Further goals of our trip were:

- to expand students' understanding of education systems around the world as well as diverse ideas and approaches to education and learning
- to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence and language skills
- to establish a network that exposes teacher students to exchange experiences about their profession and professional realities



The programme in Marseille included educational as well as social and cultural activities. The former were primarily conducted through captivating presentations and workshops conducted by students as well as researchers followed by lively debates. The topics discussed included educational issues in various countries, including Germany, Canada or France to inclusive and equitable quality education in Austria, Kosovo and Iraq or story-telling as an essential skill for teachers in the 21st century. Moreover, students had the chance to visit local schools and gather

valuable insights in the routines, struggles and processes that are characteristic for schools in a highly multicultural city such as Marseille.

The social and cultural activities included playing pétanque as well as visits to the famous MUCEM and the Ile du Frioul, a small island just off the coast of Marseille.



Concluding our report on our trip to Marseille, we would like to share with you the impressions of members of our study group:

The opportunity to experience an education system not from your home country is very rare, especially the chance to visit schools and see classrooms first hand. This trip will stay with me in my memories for a long time to come.

Participating in this global academic exchange program offered an incredible opportunity to be a part of an energetic, dynamic group of people who are passionate, curious, and committed to teaching future generations of world leaders.

The group got on very well together, even though we were of different nationalities and didn't all know each other before the project. On the first day we gave presentations on inclusion at school, AI, teaching French in

Canada... It was very enriching to be able to debate current issues in the field of education.



The exchange to Aix-Marseille Université was both an academic and culturally enriching experience. With the International and comparative perspectives on education, teaching, and diversity course, we had the opportunity to attend AMU to present and engage with presentations on education systems from across the globe, focusing on areas such as the structure, methods, curriculum, and demographic groups. We participated in workshops with AMU academics and PHD students from the Universität Graz, with an interesting focus on education and SDGs. I thoroughly enjoyed the cultural excursions to Mucem and Frioul archipelago, as well as learning how to play pétanque with classmates that became new friends. Overall, the exchange to AMU was an overwhelmingly positive experience.



European teaching collaboration in practice – the opinion of an expert.



Today: Nina Kulovics

Nina Kulovics works at the University of Education Freiburg Freiburg in the field of Foreign language didactics at the interface between FLE (french as a foreign language) and DaF (German as a foreign language). Furthermore, she does research in the field of Language teaching and learning research. In this post, Kulovics writes about a virtual exchange project between Freiburg and Québec in Freiburg.

Virtual exchange between Freiburg and Québec

Following the example of an educational mission based on the recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity (e.g., Council of Europe, 2001), we have set up a virtual exchange (VE) with a professional and intercultural aim between future teachers of L2 French in Freiburg and Québec in fall 2020.

The overall objective was to draw attention to raising awareness in teaching varieties of French, particularly Québec French, in a German school context. The difficulties we have encountered in our VE were logistical (e.g., coordinating different university calendars and time zones, appropriating various digital tools) and intercultural challenges (e.g., unfamiliarity with intercultural partners, their culture and spoken French) which initially arose during the design phase of the VE. We used digital tools (Flipgrid, Teams) strategically in synchronous and asynchronous mode, during planned and impromptu meetings, which helped to overcome these challenges and provide a safe virtual environment. Preliminary analyses suggested that the experience was enriching on both a professional and personal level. The VE allowed students not only to develop a professional posture toward variety teaching, but also to put themselves in a learner's perspective as future teachers. In addition, the authenticity and purpose of the exchange encouraged openness to a plural francophonie and to cross-cultural understanding. The students felt valued and respected in the exchange. The VE has been centrally evaluated by the University of Education Freiburg aiming to increase intercultural competence. Through the close cooperation with the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) Prof. Nina Woll from the University of Québec in Trois-Rivières, as well as Nina Kulovics could take part in a guest lectureship at each other's partner university in 2022. Furthermore, a joint summer school is planned for June 2024 at University of Education Freiburg. This summer school will offer further

research opportunities in intercultural training and exchange between Canadian and German education systems and their stakeholders. We would like to express our gratitude to the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) for their support and funding. Merci, thank you, danke!



Virtual Collaboration in European Teacher Education

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