

# THE POSSIBILITIES AND CHANCES OF DIGITAL EXCHANGE OF FUTURE TEACHERS

## Conditions for Success of Digital Intercultural Cooperation

### PROJECT: IDEAS

**IDEAS** (Interkulturalität & Diversität erfahren durch Auslandsstudien) is a third party funded project at the Centre for Teacher Training and Educational Research at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena which aims to get students of the teacher training programme in contact with settings of intercultural learning. In doing so IDEAS offers endowed scholarships for studying abroad, intercultural trainings, digital scaffolding of various intercultural encounters, builds a platform for all topics concerning diversity, internationalisation and interculturality in the scope of the teacher training. IDEAS is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.



**Partner Universities & Cooperating Institutions\***: Université de Montréal, Canada; Université de Strasbourg, France; Universidad de Barcelona, Spain; Ivane Javakhišvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; Universitat de Valencia, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina

\*Cooperation differs among the institutions. Due to the war between the Russian Federation and the Ukraine collaborations with the Higher School of Economics, Moscow are not progressing ever since.

### Digital Components of IDEAS

#### Online Seminars

Teacher students were able to participate in seminars from the Higher School of Economics Moscow (Russia), the Université de Montréal (Canada), the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest (Hungary), the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (Argentina), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel) and the University of Limerick (Ireland). From this initiative the partner project PILOTS emerged.

#### Digital Lecture Series Talks for IDEAS

An intellectual platform for topics concerning diversity, inclusion and heterogeneity in and beyond the classroom. Talks of scholars from cooperating institutions around the globe bring topics which might not be part of the regular curriculum into the Jena teacher training.

#### Intercultural Simulation Games

Student teachers from Jena play together with students from international universities in a virtual scenario for developing intercultural skills. A digital accompanying portfolio especially made for future teachers supports the change of perspective and the reflection of the participating student teachers.

#### Language Tandems

During COVID Jena teacher students were able to participate in a language tandem with the Universitat de Valencia, Spain. Spanish students of German as a foreign language and German students of Spanish formed language tandems to practice their skills and hence, were able to get in contact with native speakers across borders.



Intercultural Simulation Game: Jena Teacher Students worked with Students from Paris and Poznan.



### FINDINGS\*

#### Conditions for Success

- Digital tools for collaboration with easy access for all participants
- Motivated, creative, and goal oriented tutors/scholars
- Flexibility of staff and collaborating systems (cf. Volkmann 2021)
  - The administrative systems of both participating institutions need to have a certain degree of flexibility when it comes to enrolment processes, recognition of ECTS, and the legal status of participating students
- Organisational support of the scholars/tutors
- Phases of reflection and meta communication is needed in order to contextualize the experiences made in digital online collaboration
- Long-time collaboration should cover at least an entire module/block of learning
- Short-time collaboration (one to three sessions) may cover parts of teaching within a seminar
  - Short-time collaborations are likely to be viable in terms of effort and output relation
- Openness to the usage of different languages, which can be beneficial for fruitful group dynamics and content learning (cf. Grümpel et al. 2017)

#### Challenges

It is crucial that all participants and tutors need to **have access to the same digital tools**. This might be challenging in online collaboration since each university uses their own systems and providers (cf. Münch-Manková und Müller de Acevedo 2021).

The **legal status** of participating students often remains unclear: student fees, insurances, access to university content and property as well as recognition of credits at their home university often depend on individual solution finding.

**High administrative and organisational obstacles** by institutions overshadow the benefits of digital collaboration. Often the relation between effort and benefit does not seem to be even (cf. O'Dowd 2022).

#### Chances

- Students are highly motivated to engage in international online settings, learn about various cultures, universities, and student life in different countries
- Equal opportunities of participation and thus, more inclusive learning settings
- Online settings of international collaborations can prepare students for going abroad physically
- Improvement of Language Skills
  - Diving into original language settings and lingua franca environments can encourage students to engage in language learning more
  - Using the mother tongue with non-native speakers can rise awareness of obstacles for language learners
  - Can be beneficial for future (language) teaching
- Experiencing different teaching methods and university cultures can show students a variety of methods, which can be beneficial for their own teaching activities
- Participating in self reflection and reflexive viewpoint discussions during digital collaborations can help students contextualise their own positions as future teachers
  - Future teachers may profit from pedagogy-focussed reflection, thus, develop own professionalism as teacher
- Students learn strategies of dealing with indeterminacy competently, hence, know how to act in multiple situations in and out of diverse classrooms
- Long-time collaborations enables intense group work, which can help build connections outside the seminar setting

#### REFERENCES

\*The illustrated findings come from surveys done in both Projects IDEAS & PILOTS by seminar evaluations, quantitative questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and portfolio work accompanying the formats. The findings will be published soon in various articles.

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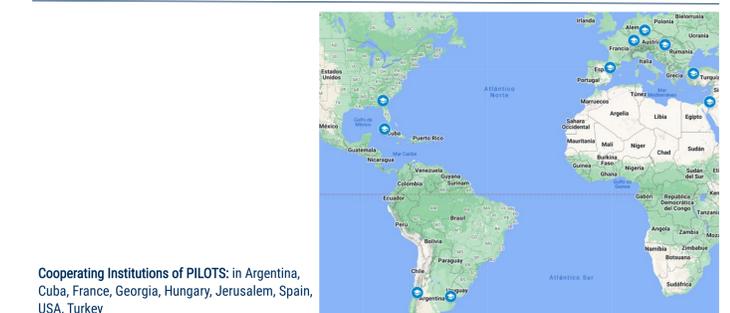


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### PROJECT: PILOTS

**PILOTS** (Partnerschaften International im Lehramt durch Online-Tandem-Seminare) organises and researches joint online seminar sessions of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena with other international partner universities. Tutors at the university of Jena hold classes together with tutors of universities abroad, and students of both universities participate. It is a project of the Centre for Teacher Training and Educational Research. PILOTS started from the initiative of IDEAS to offer seminars abroad during the COVID lockdowns. Once a part from IDEAS, PILOTS now works to expand the range of participating institutions and disciplines in the branch of teacher training.

Goals	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitation of intercultural experience from home by having contact with people from different countries</li> <li>Long-term implementation of digital international tandem seminars</li> <li>Integration of intercultural experience into the university's routines without costly effort</li> <li>Connection of different fields of investigation</li> <li>Change of perspectives through multidisciplinary and interculturality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Searching of appropriate seminar topics and partners</li> <li>Investigation of prerequisites for the success of international digital collaborations</li> <li>Issuance of certificates of participation for tutors and students</li> <li>Solving structural and organisational issues concerning content of the classes and exam requirements</li> <li>Scientific evaluation of the seminar collaborations</li> </ul>
Digitalisation	Internationalisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with new digital tools, experiencing new teaching and learning methods</li> <li>Studying innovative contents and debating exciting subjects from a multidisciplinary perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of authentic intercultural contact from home</li> <li>Collaboration of people from other countries working on joint projects</li> <li>Broadening horizons of cultural and scientific matters</li> </ul>



Cooperating Institutions of PILOTS: in Argentina, Cuba, France, Georgia, Hungary, Jerusalem, Spain, USA, Turkey

