

UMSAEP-UWC Academic Exchange Program Report

2021-2022 Project

July 1, 2022

Submitted by Dr. Alina Slapac

Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Preparation & Leadership

University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)

UWC Host: Dr. Karen Collett

Senior Lecturer Department of Educational Studies

University of Western Cape (UWC)

Title: “Building Students’ Cross-Cultural Competencies Through An Innovative COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) Program Through Action Research in the US and South African Higher –Education Programs”

OUR COLLABORATION:

This collaborative international partnership between Dr. Alina Slapac from the Department of Educator Preparation and Leadership, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), and Dr. Karen Collett from the Department of Educational Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) aimed to address the knowledge gap related to the value and sustainability of COIL programs in teacher development, as well as inform improved practices related to curriculum, faculty and student development. The collaboration has been endorsed and supported through The University of Missouri South African Education Program (UMSAEP) grant received by Dr. Slapac in 2021.

RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The key research goal was to have a better understanding of the influence of Collaborative International Online Learning (COIL) on student and faculty intercultural and global citizenship competence in order to improve and expand current practices. Furthermore, it aimed to research factors at a partnership, faculty and institutional level that support the sustainability of COIL collaborative partnerships.

The intended main objectives were threefold: a) curriculum development, b) scholarship of teaching and learning, and c) the building of critical citizenship.

Specifically, our objectives were to:

- To advance internationalization and global learning in teacher and leadership development through engaging in innovative Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) courses;
- To strengthen our student and staff intercultural competencies and research skills;
- To document and publish our collaboration and the outcomes of the COIL courses engaged in;
- To develop global online teaching and critical citizenship and awareness through collaboration;
- To enhance cultural and linguistic diversity through collaborative learning.

Key Research Questions:

1. In what way do Collaborative International Online Learning (COIL) courses focused on teacher and leadership development influence student, faculty and staff intercultural and global citizenship competence, and how can they be strengthened?
2. What factors at a partnership, faculty and institutional level support the sustainability of COIL collaborations?

Subsidiary Questions

1. How did students experience their intercultural and global citizenship competencies being developed as a result of the COIL course?
2. What aspects of the COIL curriculum and assessment design strengthened student intercultural and global citizenship competencies?

3. How did the participants researchers/lecturers involved in the COIL collaboration experience the development of their intercultural and global citizenship competencies?
4. What did the participant researchers/lecturers' experience of being involved in COIL influence their course curriculum and assessment design?
5. What factors (processes and principles) at a partnership, faculty and institutional level helped to sustain the COIL collaboration?

OUTCOMES:

Dr. Slapac received the UMSAEP grant on September 3rd, 2021. Once we received the grant, we started planning our research collaboration through weekly online meetings via Google Meet or Zoom, and worked on the documents for ethical clearance from the respective Institutional Review Boards. We spent the months of September-November 2021 on preparing the ethical clearance documents, including developing the instruments for data collection and COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) activities. Dr. Slapac was on medical leave in November-December for 5 weeks (the remainder of the UMSL fall semester). Between January 21 and May 25, we continued our online weekly meetings engaging in co-curricular planning and data collection. The 80 student participants of our COIL course were 40 graduate students (inservice teachers) from the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), taking two in-sequence 8-week online action research courses, and 40 undergraduate students (preservice teachers) from University of the Western Cape (UWC), enrolled in an online introduction to education research course. Data were collected for 16 weeks, consisting of one online pre-post survey, one questionnaire, students' individual reflections and assignments, collaborative online activities as well as, ongoing collaborative reflective sessions between the key faculty members engaged in the partnership. Our COIL course provided also opportunities to facilitate the potential for student and faculty intercultural and global citizenship competence and the internationalization of teacher development.

UMSAEP GRANT FUNDS

The UMSAEP grant funds facilitated Dr. Slapac's ability to visit Dr. Collet in Cape Town (South Africa) between May 25 and June 11, 2022. The in-person collaboration was very productive. Below is a summary of activities accomplished during the visit.

Activities and Outcomes During Dr. Alina Slapac's Travel to the Western Cape (May 25-June 11)

School visits:

- May 29: Visit to Modderdam High School - Book Fair - Bonteheuwel Cape Town. Talked to teachers and school principal about their literacy event and learner motivation to read and write. Met with other academics from Stellenbosch University such as Dr. Omar Esau who promoted chess and chess clubs in schools. Dr. Slapac was given a tour of the school and received background information on the school and school community, as well as a short history of the inequality in the educational provision made for learners under the previous apartheid government. The different poverty quintiles of schools in South Africa were explained. Dr. Collett took Dr. Slapac on a brief tour of two other high schools located in affluent middle class suburbs in Cape Town. This contrast showed the inequality in education provision between middle and working class schools, and particularly schools where white middle class children received and continue to receive a privileged educational experience.
- June 1: Visit to Sandalhout Primary school in Delft. The principal is Mr. Owen Williams Dr. Collett's student B. Ed Honors student. He showed us around the school and we also discussed the possibilities of future research collaboration linked to teacher development and the expansion of COIL to collaborations between teachers and schools in the USA and SA.

Meetings with University of the Western Cape Faculty and Dean of College of Education (UWC):

- June 7: Lunch meeting with Dr. Umesh Bawa. The purpose was to further discuss factors at an institutional level that support the Missouri exchange and thus the potential for expanding and sustaining COIL courses.
- June 10: Visit by Prof Slapac to the UWC campus. Prof Luckay for the Department of Educational Studies conducted a short tour for Prof Slapac of the UWC campus and Education Faculty.
- June 10: Lunch meeting with Dean Prof. Govender, Prof. Rodney Udthoff, Prof. Rouaan Maarman, Prof. Melanie Luckay, Prof. De Beer and Dr Collett. The focus of the discussion was on the Missouri / UWC exchange, COIL research update and future research and development plans.

Presentations development and Writing Retreat:

Professional Learning Community (PLC)



- June 7 (virtual): Dr. Collett introduced Dr. Slapac to her colleagues in the Department of Education Studies through an online meeting. Dr. Slapac explained the goals and outcomes of their COIL collaboration, and future collaborative research plans. Colleagues who were interested in COIL and future collaboration were invited to make contact.
- June 8 & 9: Writing retreat (small grant fund received by Dr. Collett from the UWC UCDG Funding grant) at Zewenwacht Wine Estate and Conference Centre. We engaged in a collaborative reflection on the two COIL pilot initiatives by lecturers from UWC and UMSL and Oslo Met University. We worked on a collaborative book chapter proposal and on an upcoming online presentation for UWC faculty and staff on July 26. We also discussed future collaborations. Please see our 2-day writing retreat program below.

ATTENDANCE LIST

- Participants who attended COIL Workshop and writing retreat: Dr. Karen Collett, Dr. Francis Wessels (Department of Educational Studies); Gasant Gamiet (SSME); Nomhlanha Shandu-Omukunyi (English Department) from UWC and Dr. Alina Slapac from UMSL; online link to Hege Knudsmoen Attended both days.

- *Education Faculty Colleagues will attend the presentation and discussion by Dr Collett and Dr. Slapac, Dr. Wessels, Mr. Gamiet and Hege Knusmoen on the 26th of July 2022.

PROGRAM

UWC EDUCATION FACULTY COIL WORKSHOP AND WRITING RETREAT

June 8 & 9 2022

Day 1 8th June 2022 - (5 participants)

10 am	Arrival at conference center and individual writing on academic literacies papers
Housekeeping	Coffee and tea served and reminder of COVID-19 protocols.
experiences	Introduction to participants and program and sharing of COIL pilot experiences
key learnings).	Hege Knudsmoen 10 to 11 online - COIL pilot (Institutional support and key learnings).
1 pm to 2 pm	Data gathering COIL PLC group (Oslo Met and UWC/UMSL Online link to Oslo Met Hege) Coffee and check in at 11h00
2 pm to 3 pm	Lunch and sharing of COIL reflections.
5 pm to 8 pm	Planning for COIL pilots 2022
8 pm to late	Hege planning OsloMet 3pm to 4 (Action Research and Coil)
	Walk, talk, write and dinner together at 7 to 8
	Write, read, imagine.

- Participants confirmed: K Collett, A. Slapac, G Gamiet, F Wessel, N Shandu-Omukunye (residential at Zevenwacht to maximize writing time)

Day 2 9 June 2022 - (5 participants)

- 8:30 am to 9 am Arrival, welcome with coffee. Introductions to participants, program and COVID-19 protocols.
- 9 am to 10 am Introduction to the program, housekeeping and intention for the day. Coffee and tea served on arrival, check in and program review. Reflection on the COIL pilot program in 2022 continued. Sharing of initial research findings from the data 2 pilots -
- 10 am to 12 noon Working on data analysis - Working tea (11 – 11:30)
- 1 pm-2 pm Lunch & discussion/reflection - COVID-19 protocols.
Writing by core group.
- 2 pm-4 pm Development of Presentation to Faculty members in July.
- 4 30 pm Tea, closure and word of thanks, ends at 5 pm.

OTHER OUTCOMES:

- **Chapter proposal** submitted "*Teacher Educator Reflections on Social Justice Pedagogy on Two Pilot Studies on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) across Three Higher Education Institutions (American, Norwegian and South African)*". The chapter proposal was accepted for the upcoming book, "Handbook of Research on Advancing Equity and Inclusion through Educational Technology" to be published by IGI Global in 2023. Our chapter will address issues related to equity and social justice in our design and implementation of two COIL pilot courses. Using the three dimensions of Fraser's (2008, 2009) social justice and participatory parity (namely, the economic, the cultural and the political), we will explore with examples the implications of the social justice pedagogy within the COIL pilot courses. Within these dimensions, we aim to reflect on technological access, time and culture (social norms, language and context).

Authors: Alina Slapac, Karen Collett, Frances Wessels, Gasant Gamiet, Nonhlanhla Shandu-Omukunyi & Hege Knudsmoen.

- Dr. Slapac and Dr. Collet also submitted two conference presentations on their collaborative work for Hawaii International Conference in Education (January 3-6, 2023).

- Dr. Slapac and Dr. Collet are also planning to submit online blog entries for UMSL and UWC on their collaboration and value of COIL.

APPRECIATION:

Drs. Alina Slapac & Karen Collett would like to express their thanks for the support offered by the UMSAEP UMSL-UWC Academic Exchange Program. While the COIL project development and the implementation was online, it was extremely valuable to meet in person to analyze the data, reflect on our collaborations and outcomes, be engaged with the professional community from Cape Town and connect with each other in person. We are planning to continue our partnership and we are looking forward to presenting and publishing about our work on collaborative international learning, equity and access. We are also looking forward to supporting other faculty interested in COIL projects at our institutions and providing professional development in the future. Our work will continue to expand into other projects, with focus on teacher and curriculum development and sustainable partnerships at faculty and institutional levels.