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Online course: 'Global Medial' – Global learning through media competence and vice versa

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Abstract

Globalization and digital media have been responsible for societal and educational challenges. There are educational approaches in the field of global learning and media competence that offer options to deal with these challenges. These approaches were combined in a course called 'Global Medial', mainly addressing students of educational subjects (primarily teacher training) at BA/MA level. This course provides online learning-based opportunities for Japanese and German students. With reference to this course, we describe the educational approaches of global learning, media competence and their possible interlinkages. For this description, we use the taxonomy of normative, descriptive and prescriptive. We then outline the first evaluation results of a course that took place in the Autumn term of 2017/2018 and draw conclusions for follow-up courses as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: globalization, digital media, global learning, media competence

Preliminary remarks

The described endeavour results from the cooperation between a researcher from Japan and a researcher from Germany. Having worked together for the past 15 years, they have cooperated fruitfully at various levels of research and teaching in the field of global learning and education for sustainable development. When the German researcher met the Japanese researcher in the field of media education, they decided to create the online course 'Global Medial' (this title stands for global learning and media learning) as an initial module for students of educational subjects (mainly teacher training) at BA/MA level. It was conducted online for the first time in the Autumn term of 2017/2018 at the University of Education, Weingarten, in cooperation with the Faculty of International Studies at Hiroshima City University in Japan (Stratmann *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the course and its reflection on learning and the acquisition of competences bear in mind the questions of teacher professionalization in the field of globalization and the possible role of teachers as agents of change (Pike and Selby, 1988; Goodwin, 2010; Darji and Lang-Wojtasik, 2014; Bourn, 2016). This is the lens through which we reflect on the challenges of medialization as well. Globalization encompasses societal processes beyond the nation state, whereas medialization stands for a permeation of society by digital media. In our understanding, global learning offers options to deal with the challenges of globalization. The development of media competence creates chances to deal with digital media in a globalized world. The

course and its evaluation were facilitated by three professors who engaged the students in a participatory process.

The main part of the course title ('Global Medial') refers to a German expression, combining globalization and digital media as cross-sectional challenges for society and education. The subheading refers to global learning and media competence, as the two educational areas lay claim to dealing with societal challenges in a didactic way. In Baden-Württemberg, the federal state in which Weingarten is situated, the field of global education has become very important. Education for sustainability and education for tolerance and acceptance of diversity, as well as media competence through media education, have become leading perspectives in the federal education plan since 2016 (MfKJS BaWü, 2016). In Japan, both thematic fields are important because of the promotion of global human resources through super global universities (Urabe, 2017, 2018).

The online course was continuously evaluated by the German and Japanese students. For this evaluation, a mixed-method approach was used. Quantitatively, a self-assessment was conducted that used rating scales for competences, self-determination and social embedding. This self-assessment was complemented by a qualitative approach using pre- and post-focus group discussions among the German participants. Through this evaluation, we wanted to know how university students learn and gain competences within a globalized and medialized world. The course was held again in the Autumn term of 2018/2019, in which Chinese students also took part. In future courses, the participation of Indian students is also planned.

With regard to ongoing analysis, we only share our experiences of the first session in this article. We concentrate on the evaluation by the German students and report some observations by our Japanese colleague concerning his students. First, we sketch our understanding of global learning and media competence, and reflect on a possible combination of both approaches under the label 'Global Medial'. Second, we describe the main structure of the online course, deliver a brief insight into the main evaluation results and summarize the learning.

Global learning and media competence: Conceptual framework

To understand our motivation for conducting the described course, it is necessary to lay out our definitions of globalization, global learning (used here as synonymous with global education), as well as digital media and media competence.

Globalization as a challenge to learning: Global learning

In our understanding, global learning is derived from development education and encompasses various concepts at the European level (Hartmeyer and Wegimont, 2016). As most communication in today's society occurs beyond national borders, it becomes obvious that national semantics are changing. Globalization does not stop at a country's border. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015), it is clear that solutions to the world's problems can only be found conjointly (Lang-Wojtasik and Erichsen-Morgenstern, 2019). We have to find shared solutions to peace and non-violence, migration and multiculturalism, development, distribution of wealth, the environment as well as human rights and diversity to ensure human survival (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014a: 6).

At the same time – at least in Germany and Japan – many educational approaches refer to the respective national context in order to legitimate decisions. This is very

obvious, for example, with regard to international large school assessments like PISA. The 'inter' between nations provides the basis from which to talk about the winning and failing nations within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and its role as a global actor of international development (Bloem, 2016). However, global is different to international. When we talk about 'global', we refer to processes that take place beyond the nation states. From a European point of view, and referring to the ideas of the Enlightenment, one can see the rise of a world society (Luhmann, 1971, 1997) characterized by 'fairly unmanageable social change ... risk and insecurity' (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014b: 53). Understood as a global system, it creates consequences for the functionality and understanding of interaction, organizations, institutions and universalization, as well as implications for reflecting on education and school (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008: 79–156).

Within the normative frame of sustainability and justice, global learning, in this understanding, offers chances to deal with the abovementioned challenges as learning options (Scheunpflug and Schröck, 2002; Bourn, 2014; Lang-Wojtasik and Klemm, 2017). These are described as learning paradoxes (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014b; 2018b). Although the relative character of space, time, facts and social options have been known since at least the European Enlightenment, national semantics have helped find feasible interpretations. This has changed at a time of a growing world society as its unlimited character goes far beyond the nation state.

The semantics of the nation state have offered a feasible reference point since the European Enlightenment for a limitation of possibilities. The actual spatial developments towards a world society appear as a delimitation of this frame. We also notice an emergence of glocalization as a phenomenon (Robertson, 1998). This term describes global and local developments as parallel and interlinked processes. It is also visible that new network structures become increasingly important, beyond the spatial limitations of the nation state (Castells, 1996, 1997). In consequence, the spatial learning paradox could be described as a tension between the openness of world society, on the one hand, and containment or limitations within local contexts, on the other.

The temporal perspective is characterized by detemporalization and describes the 'shrinking of time' (UNDP, 1999: 1) to implement feasible ways to solve the known problems of the world. It also underlines the change in regular communication beyond time zones as a relevant distinction between nation states and associated societies. At the same time, we are witnesses to the acceleration of time and associated social change, with consequences for the legitimation of guiding values between past and future, as well as the meaning and relevance of tradition and modernity. This leads to a temporal learning paradox as a tension between the search for certainty in the present, on the one hand, and a world of growing uncertainty concerning feasible strategies for the future, on the other.

Looking at world society from a factual perspective, we realize that the availability of large amounts of information creates an impression of being overwhelmed. Its growing volume and interrelations lead to a perception of growing complexity (Russell, 1998). As people have to select and legitimate information, despite various options, experiences of contingency are a growing normality. Concerning world problems, people have to act, but they need different options to legitimate their decisions. Here, we see a learning paradox related to fact. People have to find ways to deal with a growing lack of knowledge, as they search for feasible knowledge, for example, concerning the implementation of the SDGs. This includes looking at possible effects and side effects, as well as the growing insecurity of decisions.

From a social perspective, we can see the achievement of individualization as characteristic of the European Enlightenment and as a basis for liberty and equality as normative references for every human being living in the associated democratic society (Luhmann, 2005). The underlying understanding leads to plurality, being visible in the normality of heterogeneous, multiculturalism-based life concepts that create a broad base for relevant values. Social differences are mainly created with regard to privileges, such as having access to resources and the option to participate in society, where differences of class, race, gender, culture and ethnicity are celebrating a bright and irritating resurrection. Thus, the social learning paradox deals with the tension between familiarity and strangeness. This difference is no longer based on geographic but instead on social attributions.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, various approaches to global learning have emerged that have strong roots in development and cosmopolitan education (Scheunpflug, 2017). In the European context, a very useful definition was given in the 2002 Maastricht declaration on global education:

Global Education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the Global Dimensions of Education for Citizenship. (O'Loughlin and Wegimont, 2003: 13)

The aim of sensitizing people and changing their way of thinking are well-known aspirations of many educational approaches, especially in the context of global learning. At the same time, learning theory informs us about how difficult it is to expect a certain causality of processes, considering what people want to be learned (input) and what is learned (output). This difficulty is characterized as technology deficit (Luhmann and Schorr, 1982) and refers to the rationality and mindset of human beings. In consequence, it might even lead to a rejection of the abovementioned subject areas concerning human survival by some people who are supposed to learn. Therefore, we have to be careful about mixing hope and possibilities. We know from empirical research in global learning that successful learning can be expected if cognition and affection are interlinked, experiences of socialization are given space and the roles of diversity and hierarchies are reflected on critically (Scheunpflug and Uphues, 2010). A well-balanced consideration of knowledge acquisition and attitudes is helpful on the part of the people who are involved in the processes of teaching and learning. This also includes a tolerance from teachers towards the strategies learners use in dealing with these challenges, even if these are incompatible with the preferred strategies of educational approaches. This ensuing tension can be used as a starting point for different learning processes and connected learning arrangements (Asbrand, 2009; Kater-Wettstädt, 2015).

The model of the 'Cross-Curricular Framework for Global Development Education' (*Orientierungsrahmen für den Lernbereich Globale Entwicklung*) published by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) offers valuable information as to how to describe the gain of competences (KMK et al., 2016). The 11 competences are structured within the areas of perception (*Erkennen*), assessment (*Bewerten*) and action (*Handeln*) (Schreiber, 2016). Taking into account the empirical findings and frameworks of approaches, the acquisition of

competences of global learning could be framed didactically in the following four areas:

1. Through global abstraction and local concretion, including balanced affective and cognitive approaches, it seems to be possible to handle the paradoxical tension of global networking (openness) and local anchoring (containment) of space. This should include reflection processes within interactive dialogue and meta-communication on various subjects and strategies.
2. To find a feasible position in the flow of time, sustained deceleration and orientation in the moment (temporal) offer options for a mindful pausing in the present as a counterpoint to the acceleration of social change and perceived shrinking of time. In this way, it can be thought of as a new reference level for legitimated decisions concerning the future that are, at the same time, interlinked with feasible strategies of the past. In this case, intra- and intergenerational dialogue play an important role. Peers discuss possibilities in exchanges with people of other generations. This creates possibilities for learning and ways of dealing with the paradox of certainty and uncertainty.
3. Concerning different cultural contexts, the world can also be perceived in various ways. Hence, focusing on exemplary multiculturalism and future-oriented cross-sectional subjects could offer options to perceive the world through the eyes of the 'other' and to concentrate on selected thematic fields. This seems to be possible through a dialogue on cultural manifestations or other communicative offers. In both of these, people have to deal with (multi)cultural expressions of the world, which offer options to deal with the paradox of knowledge and lack of knowledge in finding solutions to save the planet.
4. Reflecting constructively on hierarchies and roles requires individuals to perceive themselves and others as part of a collectivity. Here, a clear commitment to cooperative plurality and need-oriented action for the benefit of all might help to deal with the paradox of familiarity and strangeness. Through experiences of social acceptance of oneself and others as equal human beings, people can reflect on their own potential and that of others as chances of a global community (Lang-Wojtasik, 2019).

These four steps summarize possible didactic approaches to gain competences that will help deal with the challenges of world society. Furthermore, they offer connections to the debates around digital media and media competence in a globalized world.

Digital media as a challenge to maturity: Media competence

Our understanding of medialization is driven by the perception of the world as a 'global village' (McLuhan, 2011). From today's perspective, there are still many challenges reported for adolescents and adults, especially relating to questions of participatory cultures in this field (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009). While the participatory gap creates unequal access to digital media, the transparency problem informs us of challenges of perceiving the world through media as well as ethics challenges of education and socialization beyond national limitations and the connected roles of people as world citizens.

When it comes to the question of digitization and education, a discrepancy arises. Digital media today infuses all areas of life (Moser 2010; Feierabend *et al.*, 2017), including educational institutions. However, the skills of German pupils in handling digital media are often insufficient for successful participation in the twenty-first-century world (Bos *et al.*, 2014).

There are plenty of models relating to media competence. In the German context, the classic model with international relevance dates back to Baacke (1998). A few years

later, in 2001, 104 of these models were combined by Gapski (see Schiefner, 2011). These models are generally based on theoretical considerations. They name areas of competences that are most important, according to the authors. Thus, such models are well suited as theoretical lenses for the planning of learning offers. Contents and teaching–learning goals can be derived from these.

Taking into account the considerations of Kerres (2017) and Döbeli Honegger (2016), there are two descriptions of how the process can be designed for schools (Stratmann and Müller, 2018). Through these approaches we learn that digital competences are not a fourth culture technique, but that existing culture techniques are already infused by digitization (Kerres, 2017). In consequence, we are dealing with an extension of competences, rather than following an explicit new path. This position has major implications for teaching such competences, i.e. teaching media competences as well as digital competences has to be intensified in regard to the content of school subjects (Kerres, 2017). The latter can be distinguished in three areas of development: application competences; media education; and informatics (Honegger, 2016). Application competences refers to the use of hardware and software. Teaching would concentrate on the handling of concrete programmes as well as include comprehensive knowledge of approaches (Kerres, 2017). Media education focuses on critical and responsible usage of media, and informatics concentrates on building a basic knowledge in this domain (Kerres, 2017). To summarize, media competence describes competence-based acting within a media-penetrated world (Stratmann, 2017). Regarding the development of a world society, media competence deals with various forms of media concerning things, other people and self-use in a mature way (Roth, 1971).

Global Medial learning and/or competences

As mentioned, 'Global Medial' is an artificial term, created by combining the terms 'global learning' and 'media competence'. Both concepts aim at gaining competences to deal with a world of growing complexity, new network structures, ambiguity and accelerated processes. The related insecurities around decision-making and lack of orientation create difficulties in terms of maturity – in the sense of open minds and critical thinking – in dealing with the world as a focus of education. In today's world, this is a challenge for children, young people and adults alike.

Professional educators have to deal with these challenges themselves and, at the same time, create learning opportunities for others. So, we are convinced that students in education should get as many opportunities as possible to develop the skills to deal with these challenges. To do so, an online course seemed to be a feasible option to work conjointly within an international community of students who experience the global village in specific ways.

Societal challenges around globalization and medialization are the starting point for educational approaches like global learning and media competence. Both underline the necessity of dealing with the challenges surrounding gaining competences through learning. For this, maturity seems to be the main factor in fostering the development of individual performance within the context of a broader human collective.

Although both approaches derive from different historical lines, there are interesting parallels of connection and synergies. At the same time, critiques have their place. For example, aspects of ecological sustainability are often neglected within media competence when it comes to the sources of raw material for the construction of digital tools. At the same time, global learning might be more concerned about the ecological problems caused by intensive air travel to realize international exchanges. In addition, the highly praised chances of communication

beyond time and space in global learning often hide the fact of an existing digital divide within world society.

Somehow, the role of digital media and its educational consequences must become part of global learning, as digital–medial communication happens beyond the limitations of space and time. There are consequences for the selection and legitimation of facts as well as the changing perception and meaning of social interaction. At the same time, media competence encompasses the basic assumptions of global learning, as described above.

This leads to didactical questions on teaching–learning processes: What and why should children and adolescents learn? How and where might they be able to learn something about the world society in which they live? Which competences should they learn and why should they be able to do something about globalization and digital media? Both approaches to global learning as well as media competence are based on specific norms that deal with perceived societal challenges and offer feasible ways of fostering the ability to self-organize an individual performance within the context of a broader human collective (Lang-Wojtasik, 2018a).

There are a few conceptual approaches in the German context that try to link global learning and media competence with educational science (Kammerl and Lang-Wojtasik, 2006; Kammerl, 2009, 2017) and geography didactics (Höhnle, 2014; Brendel, 2017). To date, the definition and selection of competencies (DeSeCo) concept, introduced within the PISA process, suggests three fields of competence that are helpful for working on systematic linkages: using tools interactively (for example, language, technology); interacting in heterogeneous groups; and acting autonomously (Rychen, 2003). We are interested in finding feasible options to connect global learning and media competence. We believe that learning is the basis of gaining competences to deal with the challenges of globalization and digital media within a world society.

To do so, we refer to a long-existing, rational teaching–learning research model. This combines the three levels of analysis, orientation and action with the three perspectives of normativity, description and prescription (Klauer, 1973: 70). From the perspective of global learning, this can be strongly connected to the differentiation of perception, assessment and action encompassing 11 specific and reciprocal competence areas (Schreiber, 2016).

From the perspective of teaching–learning research, the three main approaches that lead to interconnected perspectives are normative, prescriptive and descriptive (Klauer and Leutner, 2012: 17; see also Figure 1). The normative perspective deals with the kind of norms and values that exist in a specific societal context to offer positionality through orientation. This approach is important for those involved and their perception of world reality. Norms and values form the basis for the ‘what’ and ‘how’ to learn. They legitimate the selection of learning content (curriculum) and methods of teaching–learning processes in connection with the description of teaching–learning research (analysis) and educational theory. In this way, the main goals of educational processes can be understood as a unity of abilities for solidarity, self- and co-determination (Klafki, 1981). The descriptive perspective deals with perceived reality (informed by set norms and values) in an analytic way. More correctly, it should be called ‘descriptive explaining’ (Klauer and Leutner, 2012). By combining description and explanation, it is possible to formulate predictions (*Vorhersagen*).

The prescriptive perspective informs us about what has to be done to deal with specific tasks and to achieve specific aims (action). Its educational importance concerns diagnostics for preventative action, therefore it is an instructive approach.

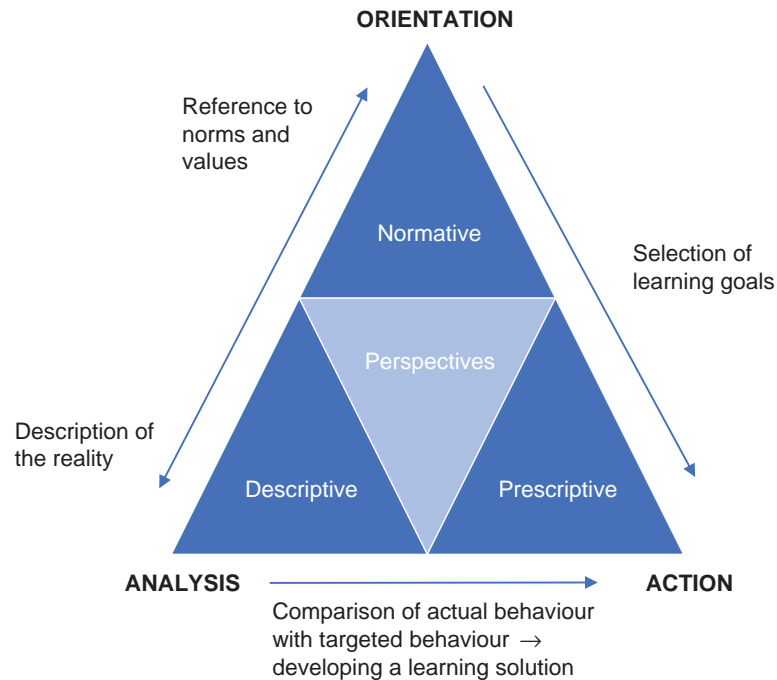


Figure 1: Levels of analysis and reflection (based on Klauer, 1973)

It encompasses all options of action knowledge (*Handlungswissen*). Prescription and following action are possible on the basis of description, explanation (analysis) and normative orientation.

In this way, the analysis of a globalized and medialized world is the starting point from which to develop feasible teaching–learning processes. Comparing actual and targeted behaviour creates options of proven and alternative ways to support learning processes through specific arrangements. How does that help us to understand the possible links between media competence and global learning under the label ‘Global Medial’? The understanding of media competence as a critical reflexive way to deal with the media-penetrated world and the framing principles of sustainability and justice within global learning might offer orientation and are primarily based on normative decisions. All this is based on a prospective view of drafts of a future way of living. Here, the central questions would be: How do we want to live in the future? What are the norms and which of these norms are collectively shared in a value-pluralistic society? These questions deal with the role and options of a mature, critical person who is concerned with the risks associated with the societal changes of globalization (Beck, 1986) and digital media as entertainment (Postman, 1988). There is a debate on balancing education between an offer of self-determination and uncontrolled digitization (Simanowski, 2018). In this way, both global learning and media competence must be strongly based on learning and education theory (Jörissen and Marotzki, 2009: 30ff.; Scheunpflug, 2011).

From an educational point of view, this leads to the ‘what’ (legitimated content) and ‘how’ (methodical ways) of teaching and learning processes. If maturity is an accepted norm, we can ask whether a child who increasingly plays digital games is acting in a self-determined way, or if the child is driven by the game itself and are not able to act independently. To search for feasible and successful teaching and learning processes, analytical approaches are necessary to describe, explain and understand. In global learning, this is a theoretical and empirical understanding of how people deal with the challenges of world society and the connected learning paradoxes;

i.e. openness and containment (spatial), certainty and uncertainty (temporal), knowledge and the lack of knowledge (factual) as well as familiarity and strangeness (social). Here we can see an interesting link to media competence (Stratmann, 2017). It might be an option to combine the vision of cosmopolitanism to the perception of a 'glocal village', where communication happens mainly through digital media. We could ask how the glocal interconnection affects personal and societal developments (spatial). To deal with the growth of accessible information through digital media, the necessity of connecting media criticism to historic–systematic knowledge becomes extremely important (factual). It is necessary to be clear about the processes of digital media-based socialization concerning individual people as well as their collective and related heterogeneous life contexts (social). Finally, there are questions on growing digitization, algorithmization, networking and sensorization (Gapski, 2016) as important parts of accelerating social change (temporal).

To create adequate learning arrangements and environments for action, the results of analysis in empirical and theoretical research have to be compared with underlying norms. The central question is: Do the normative-based aims of sustainability, justice and critical thinking fit with the findings of existing research concerning behaviour within observed and explained teaching–learning processes? Talking about action leads to the paradox of the necessity and impossibility of planning successful lessons. A prescriptive perspective here might set a frame of didactical decisions, based on norms and descriptions. Such a didactic concept was described above as a suggestion from the field of global learning and offers many links for innovative approaches to media competence. It encompasses spatial, temporal, factual and social aspects. The first didactic approach is global abstraction and local concretion (dealing with openness and containment) to create space for critical reflection on medialization and globalization concerning chances and limitations. Sustained deceleration and orientation in the moment (dealing with certainty and uncertainty) might create present positions (temporal) to deal with the various transformation processes (accelerating social change) and their effects on people and society. That includes peer-oriented and intergenerational dialogues in both physical and virtual settings to open new horizons of interlinked understanding and meta-reflection. The fact-based option of exemplary multiculturalism and future-oriented cross-sectional subjects (dealing with knowledge and lack of knowledge) offers possibilities of perspective change in perceiving and relating to a constantly increasing amount of information. Digital media offers access to variations in the quality of information and culturally-based views of the world. That helps the debate on feasible solutions for saving the planet through virtual classrooms and encompasses most of the existing options. The joint commitment to cooperative plurality and a need-oriented action for the benefit of all (social) provides a way to deal with the learning paradox of familiarity and strangeness. Here, digital media offers virtual options beyond concrete interaction to reflect existing roles, hierarchies and options for equal participation. The given and respected heterogeneity of people involved, and their needs, offers challenging options beyond simply confronting conflicts.

Experiences of an online-based course attended by Japanese and German students

To underline the pioneering nature of the whole endeavour, the challenges, concepts and interlinkages were decided upon before developing the course and evolved further after interaction with the students in a reciprocal process.

Thematic focus and structure of the course

The course aimed at connecting global learning and media competence beyond national borders, within an online-based teaching and learning setting, to learn about the orientation opportunities for the participants through participatory learning. The facilitating professors wanted to gain knowledge of the connection between these two fields, as well as the promotion and limitations of creating competences in them, through an exclusively online-based course (via Adobe Connect).

The ten German participants (two male and eight female) were at the end of BA or beginning of MA level in educational studies. The seven Japanese participants (one male and six female) were BA students with reasonable German-language capabilities from various fields within the faculty of international studies. As the Japanese students were able to speak German, this was the main language of exchange. English, as the second language for all students from both countries, was also used. The German participants only met online, whereas the Japanese participants met in one room for synchronous phases and connected individually with their German counterparts.

It was possible to create three international teams (German/Japanese) in four/two, two/three and four/two groups. Synchronous meetings were held from 8.20am–9.50am German time or 4.20pm–5.50pm Japanese time. Asynchronous communication between the international teams was achieved through WhatsApp, LINE (a Japanese variety of WhatsApp) and Skype. Preparations for the sessions could be done individually using a learning platform based at the University of Education, Weingarten, where all participants were logged in.

The structure of the course consisted of different units with varying inputs from the teachers in Germany and Japan, and provided online material (on an e-learning platform), asynchronous phases of learning and preparation of group inputs, and synchronous online meetings for questions and online conferences. All participants met online at least every two weeks (see Figure 2).

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed		
Online: Provision of new teaching content																										
Asynchronous learning phase																										
Synchronous learning phase																										
Online conference																										

Figure 2: Elements of the different units

The course addressed various target areas. The focus was on the processes involved in skills acquisition to deal with the challenges of globalization, medialization and digitization. Furthermore, there were approaches to find associated learning arrangements that would make performance visible. These steps were designed to lead to an understanding of possible linkages and future perspectives of educational processes. The students had to work on the following aspects of global learning:

- understanding the importance of globalization and our development towards a world society, and link this to their own worldviews as well as to learning options and contexts

- discussing the theoretical foundations of the interdisciplinary field of discourse, understanding current conceptual approaches and competence debates and relating these to their own questions on the types of learning activities used
- getting to know fields of action beyond their own context of action, linking them to their own activities and debating the educational relevance of the topic.

Within the framework of media literacy, the focus was on the development of competences in relation to oneself (self reference), to others (social reference) and on things (material reference). Students had to:

- explain the importance of media literacy in a society permeated by (digital) media, and move confidently in their media environment and shape it so that their needs were met (material reference)
- explain the influence of media on the communication process and design media-mediated communication processes according to their requirements (social reference)
- explain the influence of media on the socialization process and then reflect on their own media environment as well as selecting and using (digital) media for their own personality development (self reference).

Media education and global learning were found to be related by finding parallels between and delimiting the two approaches from theoretical, practical and conceptual perspectives. Moreover, the students had to develop ideas for furthering the development of the interdisciplinary field.

Data-based experiences

The self-determination theory of motivation served as theoretical framework of the evaluation (Deci and Ryan, 1993). Quantitatively, we asked the students to assess to what extent they experienced themselves as competent, self-determined and socially involved in the teaching–learning activities. After each unit, the students had the opportunity to rate 13 statements – 3 on texts, 3 about the video, 4 concerning the learning tasks and 3 on cooperation – using a rating scale (from 1/ not at all to 5/completely correct). In terms of these three dimensions, the event was rated well by the students. For the statements to the texts, an arithmetic mean of 4.07 results for all bars is obtained, 4.29 for the videos, 4.18 for the learning and 3.85 for the cooperation.

It was evident that all students were very enthusiastic about the event. In the groups, there was a basic emotional attachment to the ‘we’, indicating a sense of group cohesion. Within these developed shared roles, structures and norms, there was no drop out. The quality of the presentations largely met the staff’s expectations. In the discussions, the German students dominated. That was confirmed in the feedback and was attributed to linguistic challenges.

All participating students in Germany and Japan had basic experience with digital tools, but not with online learning courses. The online course was compulsory for the German students and an extra-curricular for the Japanese students. The German students could include this course as part of a formal assessed module within their teacher training studies (BA/MA) and/or MA studies.

The Japanese colleague evaluated the course himself by interviewing selected students (Urabe, 2018). He concluded that the Japanese students had a very different understanding of globalization, internationalization and global learning compared to their German counterparts. Whereas global learning in Germany is mainly discussed in

terms of critical views and attitudes as world citizens, the Japanese students thought of it more as a tool for economic cooperation.

In the beginning, the Japanese students found it difficult to understand why they should participate in a specific course on global learning. As part of an international faculty, they follow interdisciplinary approaches to international questions of human and social sciences. They widened their competences by connecting global learning to sustainability and justice through their participation in the course.

For the Japanese students, media competence seemed to be related mainly to the use of digital tools. Through the course, they began to understand that competence encompasses much more, including a critical reflection on the use of and participation through digital media based on a level of maturity.

Qualitative data about the experiences of the German students with digital media, globalization and learning were collected at the beginning and at the end of the course as part of a group discussion. The analysis is still in process and focuses on a reconstructive methodological approach (Bohnsack, 2014). The group discussions were conducted by the two professors, facilitating as researchers. The first group discussion took place a week after the first online session. In the first round, ten students based in Germany were present (eight males and two females, aged 21 to 32). Eight were teacher training students (both primary and secondary school) and two were MA students (German as a foreign language). One of the teacher training students came from Hiroshima as part of her exchange semester. The second group discussion took place a week before the end of the semester and consisted of six students (two males and four females), again based in Germany. Both discussions lasted approximately 70 minutes. The initial question for the narration process in both sessions was: What kind of experiences do you have concerning globalization, digital media and learning?

As a thematic summary of the first group discussion, it is clear that the debates concentrate on the students' experiences with digital media in their personal lives (for example, as a normal part of communication – intergenerational when concerning parents) and in schools as well as options to use digital media in teaching (school and university). Globalization is neglected and seems to only be a phenomenon of a digitized world society.

Although the majority of the group have less experience with digital media in school, in terms of using digital learning programmes, it became increasingly clear that the use of digital media is included as part of the professionalization of teaching. This as part of their internships is discussed further in their own study time. The students talk about chances and limitations of access to digital media for economic reasons. They discuss options to use digital media as an exchange instrument beyond national borders (newsgroups, electronic discussion groups, social media) and are aware of the risks as well (cyber-mobbing or the accurate fitting of profiles created by Google). They discuss changes in the motor function of children and young people as a side effect of overconsuming digital media. At the same time, they are aware of the didactical options concerning online-based acquisition and self-directed learning of languages.

The thematic summary of the second group discussion shows a deeper interest from students in globalization as a phenomenon in their own lives, work and education. The students refer to the terminology introduced during the course (for example, glocalization, new networks, world society) and reflect on the global interconnectedness of poverty and wealth, the environment, global warming and climate change as well as refugees, war and weapon production. All these themes are starting points of virtual group work, with concrete consequences for acting or non-acting. The group debates in particular the necessities of empathetic interaction and feasible strategies

of change concerning a sustainable and just future. Besides some critical reflection on the 'digital footprint', debates concerning digital media focus mainly on the handling and technical challenges within the group work and communication. The participants wonder whether technical problems are reported more by the Japanese participants, as the German students expect them to be more experienced. Furthermore, they debate language problems, especially concerning the abilities of the Japanese students in relation to increasing requirements from session to session. They highlight the positive opportunities of media-based international exchange, despite the time gap of eight hours, and report about different learning approaches in a Japanese–German comparison. There are very few attempts to transfer understanding of the subjects debated, concerning individual and collective learning, to didactical decisions in school.

Lessons learned and research perspectives

The issues reported above are still being analysed. Hence, this article can only give a glimpse of the debates in order to provide lessons learned in the three directions. It is clear that globalization, digital media and their connection as societal challenges are important learning opportunities for students in Japan and Germany. Beyond the technical challenges, the chance to work online in international groups seems to be a feasible way of bringing people together and fostering their dialogical abilities. The approaches that work in the context of a university seem to offer potential options for approaches within schools. The impressions of the first online course show that the acquisition of competences has taken place, with a focus on reflexive aspects of students' own actions in an increasingly confusing world.

The project largely broke new ground in terms of content and methodology. The two fields of educational reflection and action regarding media education and global learning were brought together systematically. Innovative aspects of the new discourse were taken up and embedded in the conceptual setting of the students' virtual learning environments. Didactically, we want to underline that it was possible to offer a glocal (global and local) frame of abstraction combined with practical options for implementation. Cognitive and affective approaches were taken and helped to balance out the common learning possibilities (spatial). The online group work in particular encouraged the students to decelerate together and find options to position themselves in a reflexive way. This offered periods of common reflection for new orientation (temporal). Examples of various cultural contexts were used and combined with cross-sectional subjects concerning future orientation (factual). Finally, cooperation was the basis of the common work within a pluralistic group of various life concepts. It is also clear that participants from very different places within world society tried to offer dialogical options to fulfil most of their needs in dealing with the different challenges of the given field (social).

From this point of view, various empirical research interests can be generated. We are particularly interested in how globally-oriented media literacy develops in the intercontinental and intercultural context, and what significance this has in attitudes towards virtual–physical space.

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