Using Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) for Global Curriculum Inquiry: A Case Study in Hong Kong

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Abstract: This poster aims at presenting the findings of a case study of a group of student teachers using online discussion as a form of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) in doing inquiry projects in collaboration with prospective teachers from Spain and experienced teachers from Canada. Data was collected from individual and focus group interviews, as supplemented with online discussion threads. Findings evidenced the processes and potentials of global curriculum inquiry using online discussion in developing student teachers' global citizenship. Implications about the use of online discussion for supporting the development of global citizenship in teacher education as well as future research directions are then discussed.

Introduction

There have been increasing attentions to the needs of educating global citizenship in teacher professional development in contributing to the sustainable development of the global world (Goodfellow, Lea, Gonzalez, & Mason, 2001). In this connection, the recent *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Education 2030* initiated by the UNESCO (UNESCO, 2017), developing global citizenship is one of the Sustainable Development Goals which calls for embedding global citizenship themes and concepts within all areas of learning and teaching. Different local and international scholars found that teachers' awareness of global citizenship are narrow and insufficiently prepared (Lee & Leung, 2006; Groves & O'Connor, 2017).

One of the potential ways in attaining the goal of developing student teachers' global citizenship is the use of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) technologies, which can facilitate the socio-cognitive processes of learning (i.e. working in groups) through social interaction with the support of a computer or the internet that connects and engages people in sharing and creating knowledge through scaffolding dialogues across multi-cultural regions (Sorensen, 2008) whilst it. Evidence showed that the applications of CSCL (e.g. He & Huang, 2017) enable the effectiveness of learning and teaching. A few scholars (e.g. Sorensen, 2008) discussed and evidenced how CSCL technologies may help the development of global citizenship but these studies were not conducted in teacher education settings. Meanwhile, to our knowledge, how CSCL may help develop global citizenship of student teachers (teachers) is seldom explored and documented from an Asian perspective. Therefore, the aim of the case study is to explore how online discussion as a form of CSCL facilitate the development of student teachers' awareness of global citizenship through real experiences in interacting with others around the world, with the key research question, *How do student teachers perceive and experience the use of online discussion for developing global citizenship? What motivates student teachers to get engaged in online discussion with 'others'? What do they learn from 'others'?*.

Context of the study

The case study was based on a global curricular inquiry project that occurred in a postgraduate diploma of education (PGDE) programme in a public university in Hong Kong. The overarching objectives of the project are: (a) to develop student teachers' awareness of global citizenship through engaging in online discussion with their "global peers" (i.e. a group of 18 student teachers from a university in Spain and two experienced teachers from Canada), and (b) to enable student teachers to interact with their "global peers" and engage in online dialogue around curricular issues. Participating student teachers worked in groups to initiate and compromise curriculum-related inquiry topics for collaborative discussion on an online discussion platform (i.e. Weebly – an online blogging system), where experienced teachers from Canada and student teachers from Spain engaged in the online discussion with the local Hong Kong student teachers. At the end of the online discussion, student teachers presented their findings and reflections based on the global curricular inquiry projects.

Data collection and analysis

Using a qualitative approach, multiple sources of data were collected from a purposive sample of six informants (four females and two males). Data included individual and focus group interviews, as supplemented with discussion threads on the online discussion platform. During the process of interviewing, the researcher showed the online discussion platform for assisting participants to elicit thoughts and reflect upon experiences. Thematic analysis was done to search for the patterns and themes as emerged from the qualitative datasets.

Key findings (1): Fostering deep learning processes

Interaction with peers locally and inter-culturally plays a vital role in driving the participants' motives in engaging in online discussion. For example, this student teacher mentioned,

> I think Spanish students are really very serious in participating in the discussion. This really motivates us much more. This encourages us to think and respond to them as they are so devoted and responded to us, we also had to be whole-hearted and continue the discussion together. (Student K1, PGDE Year 1)

Apart from interactivity of online discussion, the quality of the interaction also helps ignite the participants' willingness to participate in the online discussion.

> I think my motivation is based on Spanish students' responses because Spanish students responded to us in very details… very long and precise. … if we can know how many students exist there, that will even be better. (Student I2, PGDE Year 1)

Key finding (2): Reflecting on different learning issues

The participants realized that learning can be globally emerged and collaborative across different countries. They expressed that they knew more about the global world and discovered the differences in how to learn in difficult cultural contexts. One of the participants shared that,

> They [Spanish students] were really serious. Theirs was very informative. … At the end that was quite good, we understood what exactly Spanish were doing was quite different. … for example, in our topic about tutorial class, because attending tutorial classes is very popular, so we would like to know about how Spanish side looks like. (Student K1, PGDE Year 1)

The kind of global learning apparently was beneficial to teacher preparation. One participant concluded her learning experience in this way, saying that,

> When doing discussion, there are many insights, or seeing more things, and some viewpoints are different, then that actually can exchange different points of view, that's good for my own learning and I can get prepared for my future teaching career as I know more about what other countries are doing in curriculum and this experience makes me know how to use technologies for learning and teaching. (Student K2, PGDE Year 1)

Conclusion and implications

This case study explored how the use of online discussion as a form of CSCL was perceived and experienced by student teachers to inquire curricular issues through collaborating with Spanish student teachers and Canadian teachers. Implications about the development of global curricular inquiry in teacher education as well as future research directions are discussed.

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