Preface

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Many stakeholders have been promoting globalization and transnational collaboration among researchers and students for many years. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, digital literacy became crucial and was further developed to provide more, if not new, answers to the emerging challenges. Thus, virtual mobility became of paramount importance for higher education to respond to the new demands and conditions of the pandemic.

In 2020, an international research and teaching collaboration project, »Digital and International Virtual Academic Cooperation« (DIVA), was launched to promote the virtual mobility of students through blended mobility and blended learning.[1] Scholars from the participating universities in Israel, Australia, and Germany collaborated to focus on intercultural learning and online collaboration. In particular, teaching formats such as digital learning, peer learning, virtual cooperation formats for students and teachers, etc., were used and established. Based on the results of this project, this book discusses how such arrangements can be used in university teaching, how digital teaching can be theorized and conceptualized, and what potential it provides for future teaching in higher education after the pandemic. Our findings comprise an in-depth look at how global collaboration became intercultural learning for both students and faculty.

It has often been suggested that valuable lessons in digital citizenship were fostered during the pandemic. In particular, digital tools and skills were used in many ways (Schwab et al., 2022). So far, much has been written about the concrete practices, issues, process formations, limitations, and constraints – and the evidence-based consequences for further digital teaching in (higher) education (e.g., among many others Anthonysamy et al., 2021;

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Böhmer et al., 2022; Petronzi & Petronzi, 2021; Waldman et al., 2019). Our book builds on these findings, reporting data and perspectives from our trilateral collaborative project on intercultural awareness in teacher education for global digital citizenship. We highlight conceptualizations of cultural differences, language competence, and social constraints on access, pedagogical practices, and consequences in emerging student-teacher collaborations. In pursuance of these goals, various theoretical underpinnings are discussed, empirical findings are presented, and various cultural, linguistic, and social differences are examined.

A coherent body of theory on digital teaching, its outcomes, and possibilities is still lacking to reflect the findings and structural foundations of the project. Thus, our book presents teaching and research findings to further contribute to a theory of digital teaching. We present and discuss our empirical findings, integrate them into existing theoretical frameworks, and enquire into conceptual consequences for teaching, research, and educational policy. In doing this, we provide practical insights into the processes, efforts, and factors that support digital teaching and learning. We take account of the different perspectives of the participating national education systems, but also consider those of other status groups such as scholars and students. In this way, we provide a multi-perspective view of what has happened, what has worked well and what has not, and how further approaches might be discussed. We also discuss misleading steps and concepts to better understand digital processes in higher education.

Thus, we aim to provide further insights into learning for post-pandemic teaching, such as those involving concepts of distance and/or blended learning and multi-perspective approaches to learning environments. We aim also to provide university teachers with better knowledge about learning for international collaboration, such as that relating to cultural ties, language ties and limitations, and social aspects of access and segregation in higher education. In promoting understanding of these aspects, our volume presents insights into learning in formal and informal teaching and learning settings.

All in all, our volume combines many different approaches and shows a great number of the relevant aspects of our project – and in the field of digital learning does so with respect to varying cultural foundations. We present papers that reflect on conceptualizations of communication (Albers et al.), cultural competence (Mason et al.) and culturally informed reflections on power for the »new normal« of digital teaching (Bolaji) as well as embodiment (Böhmer) as challenges for digital teaching in general. Our volume also refers to em-

pirical findings on inter- and transcultural Experiences (Topaz et al.) and on telecollaboration (Meier), learning experiences in higher education (Krüger), and with peers in digital settings (Tripura Sundari & Wang). In this vein, the papers presented here provide helpful insights into the following aspects:

In the first contribution to this anthology, *Stine Albers*, *Bettina Blanck*, *Sarah Gaubitz*, *Viktoria Rieber*, and *Anja Vocilka* ask: How can concepts unfold in digital teaching and learning structures in the field of higher education? And what potential do creative debates have in the field of conceptual clarification work in teaching and learning? The authors consider these and other questions in their contribution »Working on Concepts as an Element of Communication and Starting Point for Research-based Learning in Higher Education«.

»Problematising ›Cultural Competence‹ in the Digital Environment«, *Jon Mason*, *Karen Cieri*, & *Chris Spurr* address an identified terminology problem of the term »cultural competence« in the research literature in the context of the rapidly evolving digital teaching and learning environment in the 21st century. In their article, they do not restrict themselves to the problematisation of prevailing culturally specific terms and definitions, but elaborate an alternative terminology that could guide future dialogues. The focus on »intercultural responsiveness« is a promising first step.

Although it seems that the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have become an issue of the past, they nonetheless changed much of the reality in university teacher education institutions semi-permanently into a »new normal«. *Stephen D. Bolaji* shows in his contribution »Digitocracy in the New Normal: Rethinking the Learning Spaces in Higher Education« that this new normal is permeated by the approach of digitocracy. Against this backdrop, the author argues that the new normal should be understood as a challenge that needs to be considered in the higher education system – and in the social, intercultural and academic structures there.

Entitled »Digital Bodies – On Signification, Learning, and Embodiment in Digital Teaching«, *Anselm Böhmer*'s paper addresses questions about the bodily »habitus« in the context of culturalisation and digitalisation. More specifically, he relates the concept of embodiment – that is, the performance that requires a body – to the learning and teaching digital body. This critical reflection leads him to the challenging question of how future – digital – higher education could be conceived.

Beverley Topaz, *Tina Waldman* and *Götz Schwab*, look at the DIVA project mentioned above from a different perspective. In their chapter entitled »Inter-and Transcultural Experience among Future Foreign Language Educators:

International Virtual Exchange between Teacher Training Institutions«, they provide insight into their – data-based – experiences in areas of virtual exchange and inter- and transcultural learning. They not only illustrate that prospective foreign language teachers – despite various challenges – develop a collective professional identity across national borders, but also outline a newly developed more inclusive pedagogy.

The digital university reality during the COVID-19 pandemic is also relevant for *Svenja Meier*'s contribution. In her article »Personal Interlocution in Telecollaboration: Cultural Discourse Analysis of German and Israeli Teachers in Training« she deals with the individual narratives and representations of international student teachers in digital space. To do this, she chooses the approach of cultural discourse analysis, which she applies to analyse students' self-disclosures – that were recorded as part of the international project DIVA. Among other things, she shows that access to personal narratives – especially in a telecollaborative teaching and learning environment – can be a possible way to address and understand discourses in the context of culture and language.

Michael Krüger's chapter »Sense-making in the production process of online learning materials« highlights challenges and opportunities that have emerged in the IDEN (International Digital Education Network) project, a further research endeavour closely connected to DIVA. He thus provides important insights into a collaboratively developed asynchronous online learning model, which at its core represents a production process that both relieves lecturers partly of their customary burdens and enriches students.

This anthology is rounded off by a collaborative chapter by two participating students, thus creating a deliberate and important conclusion. The two contributions »A world of tomorrow. The perspectives of online learners on digital teaching and learning« by *Lalitha Tripura Sundari* and »How to facilitate peer interactions in virtual intercultural learning: an example in the DIVA project« by *Xirui Wang* are framed and contextualised by *Anselm Böhmer*. The reflections of both students provide an opportunity to look at the DIVA project in particular and digital higher education in intercultural cooperation in general from a student perspective, to evaluate it and to make it fruitful for future international projects.

In summary, we can say that this volume presents new insights into a field that has already been the subject of research for a considerable time. These are insights that became unexpectedly important during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also go beyond the scope of this book in pertaining to new chal-

lenges such as AI tools and the learning environments they create. However, despite all the technological progress and development, global education will always have to deal with the diversity of learners – in many different aspects: culture, class, gender, language, migration, age, and numerous others. For all of them, it is important to use the learning outcomes presented here in the different contributions: how to understand diversity, how to work together, and how to learn in collaborative settings. As editors, we hope to contribute our share to the field by publishing this volume, which presents so many and such deep experiences and reflections.

Finally, we would like to say a heartfelt »thank you« to all the authors who did their best to present their expertise, deal with so many challenges of time, workload, and much more, and make it possible for us to compile this inspiring volume. We would also like to extend our deepest thanks to Hilal Sahin, the student assistant who worked hard on the manuscripts, and to the publisher who made it possible to present the rich fruits of our collaboration in this form.

May every reader experience at least as much joy and inspiration from the book as we had while working on it.

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