



Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

# The Link Class Project: Collaborative virtual teams between Peru and The Netherlands



Mariella Olivos Rossini<sup>a,\*</sup>, Sandra Rincón<sup>b</sup>, Anne-Francoise Rutkowski<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Universidad ESAN, Lima, Peru

<sup>b</sup> Tilburg University, The Netherlands

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 22 April 2015

Accepted 25 May 2015

### Keywords:

Internationalization

Virtual classroom

Virtual mobility

Intercultural competence

Information and communication technologies

## ABSTRACT

The Link Class Project presented in this article provides an example of established collaborative group activities to negotiate and build a report together in virtual teams composed of students at Universidad ESAN, Lima (Peru) and Tilburg University, Tilburg (Netherlands). It further analyzes the effects of a campus based internationalization strategy supported by the use of technology.

Based on previous experiences with virtual classrooms, the authors adhere to the ancient Chinese philosopher's, Lao Tzu, quote: «If you tell me, I will listen; if you show me, I will see; but if you let me experience, I will learn».

© 2015 Universidad ESAN. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## Link Class Project: equipos virtuales colaborativos entre Perú y los Países Bajos

## RESUMEN

El *Link Class Project* que se presenta en el siguiente artículo aporta un ejemplo sobre las actividades de un grupo internacional colaborativo en el que los estudiantes deben negociar y desarrollar un reporte conjunto, mediante actividades desarrolladas a través de equipos virtuales entre alumnos de la Universidad ESAN (Lima, Perú) y Tilburg University (Tilburg, Países Bajos). Además, se analizan los efectos de una estrategia de internacionalización *in campus* respaldada por el uso de tecnologías.

Sobre la base de las experiencias previas con clases virtuales, los autores adhieren a la cita del antiguo filósofo chino Lao Tzu: «Si me hablas, escucharé; si me muestras, veré; pero si me permites experimentar, aprenderé».

© 2015 Universidad ESAN. Publicado por Elsevier España, S.L.U. Este es un artículo Open Access bajo la licencia CC BY-NC-ND (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

### Palabras clave:

Internacionalización

Clase virtual

Movilidad virtual

Competencia intercultural

Tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación

## 1. Introduction

As national economies increasingly become more interdependent through globalization, successful interactions are a prerequisite to rip benefits offered by the international market. International trade provides countless interactions among employees of diverse cultures either online as well as face-to-face. According to Lane and Distefano (1992), the skills required to perform effectively in a globalized market depends on the abilities to manage cultural

diversity and to apply intercultural competences in the appropriate context. Intercultural competences have been coined as:

«The basis of intercultural competences is in the attitude of the person interacting with people of another culture and this means a willingness to suspend one's own values, beliefs and behaviors, and an ability to see how they might look from an outsider's perspective». (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, & Méndez, 2004).

Additionally, evidence shows that cross-cultural competences are new attributes required in leading new organizations in the global economy. This new style of management embeds awareness and skills including cosmopolitanism, intercultural communication, cultural sensitivity, acculturation, to name a few (Grahm & Swenson, 2000). These concepts can be pointed as

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [Molivos@esan.edu.pe](mailto:Molivos@esan.edu.pe) (M. Olivos Rossini).

the acquisition of “cross-cultural” or “intercultural” competence, which is perceived as crucial for organizational communications and team management.

Companies as well as organizations are aware of the challenges in handling such cultural diversity. Most companies are already facing the challenges of having teams working across distance. Many have embraced a variety of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to support synchronous and asynchronous working interaction in teams that are distributed over the globe (e.g., video-conferencing, email, social network). Given the need for employees to develop the abilities to manage cultural diversity, higher education has also faced the challenge of how to teach these skills to prepare students for the labor market. The strategic role played by ICTs in “management education” is viewed as a key point to support the internationalization of the campus or what is also known as ‘internationalization at home’. Management education is the field of study and practice crucial in impacting positively the society in our global world (Bush, 2006) while focusing on the aims and operation of educational organization and its influence on the delivery of education. In the last decades, institutions of higher education across the globe have been investing in internationalization precisely to create opportunities for students to acquire cultural diversity. Many universities have embraced technology such as introducing e-learning platform like blackboard technology to support students learning. Virtual teams composed of students from various nationalities have been successfully running for at least two decades (see Rutkowski, Vogel, Bemelmans, & Van Genuchten, 2001). Leidner and Kayworth (2006) reviewed 82 articles from 38 different journals to examine the influence of culture, both national and organizational on the development and use of ICT.

Are universities really exploiting the benefits of ICTs properly for the students? Most of the current research on management of education and ICTs focuses on elaborating online courses, video lectures and online syllabus. However, not much attention has been given to the interaction among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The academic literature has primarily focused on understanding the process of developing virtual teams; class curricula and online assessment method (see Ubell, 2010 for a detailed overview). While in an educational context, using synchronous technologies such as video conference has demonstrated to be efficient in learning about each other’s cultures, not much is known about the development of intercultural competences in the context of “at home”.

Jane Knight reported that the concept of “at home” has been developed as the result of a greater focus on international mobility and its limitation. “Internationalization at home” gives greater prominence to campus-based elements such as the intercultural and international dimension in teaching, learning, research, extra-curricular activities, and relationships with local cultural, as well as the integration of foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities (Knight, 2008). The author defined internationalization “as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education” (Knight, 2008). Although the study abroad programs have mostly facilitated this international dimension in the curriculum, the reality is that only a minimal percentage of students participate in such programs. The cost is particularly high, and requires extra funding. Technology tools provide channels of communication becoming an important resource resolving, in the short-term, the limitations associated with restrictions for international mobility or participating in exchange programs (Olivos, 2014). The latest EUROSTUDENT report (Macready & Tucker, 2011) stated that there were five main reasons why the students will not study abroad: financial insecurities (57%); insufficient support of mobility in the home country (49%); lack of individual motivation

(48%); insufficient support of mobility in the host country (24%); and lack of language competency (23%).

Institutions of higher education in developing countries are also confronted with similar challenges as in developed regions. One of these challenges is the adoption of internationalization strategies with its high costs. As new technological developments are creating conditions where intercultural learning can take place in the classroom, universities in these countries are also exploring these opportunities. Thus, the need to innovate in education by offering students another perspective on the new sociocultural and technological requirements of a globalized world has led to the development of a new kind of education, for example virtual classrooms at Tilburg University (Rutkowski, Vogel, Van Genuchten, Bemelmans, & Favier, 2002). Furthermore, the “class link” project in Peru has offered best practices regarding the importance of managing time, team process as well as the capacity to select the technology to fit task that team of students can apply in order to improve students learning experience.

In this article we present the exploratory lesson learned from an educational project “class link” in learning cultural competence using virtual experience. When looking at the broader picture, we speculate that it is possible for students to learn those skills from a distance. While the benefit maybe different than for those experiencing the cultural clash when travelling abroad, virtual experience should support “cultural awareness” and benefit to those students who cannot experience travelling because of the high cost of study abroad programs.

## 2. Case study: The adoption of “internationalization at home” using virtual classroom: The Link Class Project (Peru and Netherlands)

The Link Class project is a course designed to relate cross-cultural theories with management science. The aim of the course is to offer students the opportunity to understand, explore and appreciate the nature of cultural diversity, national and cultural differences by providing a direct international experience in a virtual collaborative learning environment with students and faculty from other countries.

Learning objectives of the course are to build the soft skills necessary to work in a virtual collaborative environment and to acquire key cultural and cross-cultural competences as well as to understand cultural systems and their implications for international business. The course methodology consists of prior lectures in local classes and then active interaction among the students as they link through videoconference. The concepts about Culture and Stereotypes, Intercultural Management, Leadership across Cultures, Marketing Globally presented in class material are composed mainly of conceptual papers, cases and role-plays that relate to culture theory and its application in management.

The students in both locations are organized by the lecturers in international teams composed of 4-6 students depending of the size of the class. Lecturers agree on the groups’ schedules and session’s agenda while asking teams to present on selected topics and tasks. A typical first session consists on a warm-up round for students to start communicating and introduce themselves.

After the video conferencing class, the teams using mainly social media prepare presentations, as well as follow-up discussions and negotiations of tasks and activities. Students have to handle project management form and agree on deadlines and times to deliver assignments that can include either an ethnographic report of the two cultures interacting in class, a case study to team discussion, an international marketing project, or a survey report on comparison of cultures.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1025176>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1025176>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)