

01 - 02. July 2019: Didaktik-Forum 2019

Motivating & Teaching Diverse Study Groups – Sharing Teaching Experience

Hands-on Experience: 1 July 09:45 - 11:30

International Project Work with Students

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schrader, Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

Already twice students of the course Telemedicine in Bachelor and eHealth in Master have conducted international projects in Cameroon and Kenya. The Cameroon project ENIC (Educational and Nursing Informatics for Cameroon) had a focus on the development of an IT infrastructure concept with the integration of eLearning for schools in the diocese of Buea. The object of the Kenya project (Telemedicine for Cameroon) was the development of a telemedicine concept for the Kakamega region.

Both projects had in common that social, structural, and organizational questions had to be examined and evaluated in addition to the solution of technical problems. The results of the projects were discussed with the local partners. Further implementation strategies were then planned. In the case of Cameroon, prototypical implementations of a shared content concept were implemented, and the development of a self-sufficient mini-server that could cope with the severe conditions on site was started.

Project-based teaching is now an established instrument in teaching. It is based on the concept of problem-oriented learning, where students define their own learning goals based on a specific problem constellation. The High-Quality Project Based Learning Initiative published six essential characteristics of project-based teaching: intellectual challenge and accomplishment, authenticity, public product, collaboration, project management, and reflection. The terms critical, systems, and creative thinking are also used in connection with PBL. This teaching concept raises the question of how structured knowledge and explorative learning can be combined. International student projects contain particular challenges for all involved persons. Organizational, intercultural, structural, and not least financial problems have to be solved. The considerable risks of such a project, the risk of failure, make integrated risk management essential: Risks must be identified early, measures planned, and alternatives considered. Nevertheless, a lot can also be learned from a failed project through analysis and reflection.

The international telemedicine and eHealth projects had a duration of one semester and included a one-week trip to Cameroon and Kenya. Before the start of the semester, the project initiation phase took place: the objectives were defined with local partners and the boundary conditions discussed. The financial aspects have been clarified. Our university covers the travel costs of the students, and the partners pay the costs on site (transport and accommodation). (Many thanks for that support!)

The individual project itself can be roughly divided into three major phases: Preparation, travel, and review with concept writing. The students are responsible for all content and knowledge questions. The professor's role is comparable with a coach: take care of the direction and depth of analysis and preparation process. During the visit, usually, many meetings take place with various stakeholders related to the project goals. The professor's role is now the moderator's role. On each evening, a day review meeting took place, collecting, discussing, and summarizing all material and results. After the visit, the concept writing starts. The end, all stakeholders get the final concept and can give feedback.

The implementation of such international projects is costly - both in terms of costs and time. However, the results are convincing: the students learn to move in an international context, to ask questions openly, to communicate, and to get to know other living conditions and problems. The students undergo an observable maturation process. The third international project will start soon!