

## **COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING: A NEW VECTOR IN THE EDUCATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Life in contemporary society is experiencing significant changes due to economic globalization, rapid technological development, the information boom, and a rethinking of the role of knowledge. Economic globalization is inextricably linked to cultural globalization. At the same time, cultural globalization does not mean the leveling of cultures and the unification of meanings. It is a process of convergence, borrowing, and using the experiences of other countries' best practices for the development of one's own culture, resulting in the phenomenon of internationalization, particularly in the internationalization of educational systems.

These trends are especially pronounced in the sphere of higher education (HE), which, being part of society, absorbs all its processes and trends. The role of HE in forming intellectual and human capital for the knowledge society cannot be overstated. These complex processes have actualized the need for internationalizing educational programs in colleges and universities worldwide, including Ukraine, to prepare students for a professional career in an international environment and, consequently, to develop intercultural competences (IC)<sup>1</sup>. Internationalization of HE is already an objective reality, as the global economy requires human resources representing diverse cultures and countries. Living in a global community requires that students' skills and knowledge include "global competence". Note that significant socio-political and cultural means of interaction have traditionally been physical education (PE) and sport. Unsurprisingly, developing students' IC becomes a central task in most PE HE institutions. However, nowadays, training programmes for future PE professionals are often among the least internationalised programmes in higher educational institutions.

The Standards of HE in the field of Education/Pedagogy, specifically for the specialty 017 "Physical Culture and Sport", include the general competence of the "ability to work in an international context". This expands opportunities for the development of specific competences, namely the

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<sup>1</sup> The effectiveness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education / S. Hackett et al. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. 2023. Vol. 20, no. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

“ability for self-education, self-improvement, and self-reflection for successful professionalization in the field of physical culture and sport”. In addition, professional standards define the primary goal of training as equipping individuals with the ability to solve complex specialized tasks and practical problems, which are characterized by complexity and uncertainty, in professional activities within the field of physical education and sport. These documents emphasize the importance of graduates developing moral and ethical values, cognitive and intellectual skills, interpersonal relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, and communication abilities. Intercultural knowledge contributes to the effective socialization of graduates and enhances their competitiveness in the labor market, including in foreign contexts. Therefore, the formation of future specialists' ability to operate in an international context and to act appropriately in any intercultural situation should be based on anticipated needs and opportunities.

Although university curricula aim to develop students' intercultural competence (IC), participation in isolated international projects alone does not guarantee the achievement of this goal. Additional measures and a systematic approach are required to effectively build intercultural skills. Furthermore, while student mobility is a popular tool for the internationalization of education, it is accessible to only a small proportion of students. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vulnerability of this model, highlighting the need for alternative approaches to developing IC in students. With the growing demand for university graduates, and future physical educators with IC, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) courses represent a valuable yet under-researched tool for international engagement <sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the study is to systematize knowledge about the benefits and challenges of collaborative international online learning based on existing practices. Methods include a systematic literature review, data analysis, and theoretical analysis.

Despite the significant importance of previously conducted scientific research, the effective use of COIL in physical education teacher education (PETE) has not been sufficiently studied. The relevance of the proposed research is underscored by a compelling contradiction: the growing availability and opportunities for using high-quality COIL courses for internationalizing education and fostering IC in students contrasted with the current prevalence of traditional educational practices, which may not always be the most effective methods.

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<sup>2</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3. P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

## 1. Theoretical basis and brief description of terms

A key task of HE in physical education and sport in Ukraine is to prepare graduates who are qualified and competitive within the European and global educational landscape. This necessitates internationalization efforts to equip students with the skills needed to address complex professional challenges in a globalized world. Creating a new educational environment that fosters intercultural competence is a crucial step towards achieving this goal, as it enables graduates to effectively work in diverse international communities<sup>3</sup>.

The training of specialists in the field of physical education and sport in Ukraine, in accordance with European standards, is achieved through the modification of educational programs (for all disciplines in the educational cycle at physical education universities) and their integration with digital technologies. On the other hand, the use of modern digital educational resources, new-generation didactic materials, and artificial intelligence in the educational process can help prepare qualified personnel in the field of physical education and sport, providing students with a wide range of modern knowledge about various aspects of educational and training processes, as well as contemporary trends in physical activity for a healthy lifestyle.

In the existing literature, a wide range of terms are used to describe student learning with digital technologies: virtual learning, distance learning, e-learning, and web-based learning. However, there is still no common terminology for online interaction between students from different countries, which complicates the comparison and analysis of different initiatives. The terms “collaborative learning”, “virtual exchange”, “online learning”, and “intercultural competence”, while all belonging to the general field of collaborative learning and interaction, have their own specific characteristics and emphases.

Collaborative learning is a broad concept that involves students actively cooperating in groups to achieve personal development and self-education. Rooted in project-based learning, collaborative learning fosters the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities through real-world activities. This collaborative approach, focused on shared goals, helps students learn to work effectively together, respect diverse opinions, take responsibility, accept constructive criticism, utilize small group skills appropriately, engage

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<sup>3</sup> The effectiveness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education / S. Hackett et al. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. 2023. Vol. 20, no. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

in meaningful discussions, assist and share knowledge with peers, and ultimately achieve collective success <sup>4</sup>.

For the purposes of this publication, we define collaborative learning (CL) as an educational approach that organizes group activities within the curriculum. Given the specific nature of the “Physical Education and Sport” field, this innovative technology can provide the necessary conditions to stimulate the cognitive activity of each student in the group, enabling them to understand and apply new didactic material, acquire essential skills and abilities through practical experience.

In recent years, the way educational information is disseminated has changed considerably, transforming both the concept of education and teaching methods. Therefore, a key challenge for cooperation between universities in the field of physical education and sport could be to use resources more efficiently. For example, this could include using common online platforms to develop and deliver courses, seminars, and training; sharing access to scientific libraries and databases containing research and publications on physical education. Additionally, the organization of joint scientific conferences and seminars, as well as the joint development and use of virtual laboratories and simulators for practical training, experiments, and research, will improve the quality of educational programs and contribute to the development of innovative approaches in physical education and sport.

Virtual exchange (VE) refers to educational programs or activities that facilitate meaningful communication and interaction between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or come from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators <sup>5</sup>. Through collaborative virtual exchanges, educators prepare students for their professional futures by engaging them in a global learning community. This allows students to acquire global competencies such as working in multidisciplinary teams, adopting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives, developing critical and creative thinking, and respecting cultural diversity. Just as importantly, it helps them develop skills in understanding and using virtual tools necessary for their future work <sup>6</sup>.

Online learning refers to learning that takes place through web-based services and can be synchronous, asynchronous, or blended. One of the key advantages of online learning is its accessibility and flexibility: users can

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<sup>4</sup> Keay J. Collaborative learning in physical education teachers' early-career professional development. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*. 2006. Vol.11, no. 3. P. 285–305. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408980600986322> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>5</sup> The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange / H. de Wit et al. New York : Routledge, 2023. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447832> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>6</sup> Vahed A. Factors enabling and constraining students' collaborative online international learning experiences. *Learning Environments Research*. 2021. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-021-09390-x> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

access learning materials from any device, whether it be a computer at home or a smartphone in hand, at any convenient time of the day, allowing them to study materials or complete assignments. However, quality online learning in the training of physical education and sport specialists must consider the unique aspects inherent in the intrinsically multifaceted nature of the physical education and sport process <sup>7</sup>. Specifically, the training of these specialists relies on diverse, hands-on, sport-centered learning, where students learn in, through, and about movement. This approach fosters cognitive development and supports the transformative practice of preparing students for their professional roles <sup>8</sup>.

Intercultural competence (IC) can be defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, grounded in intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As recent studies by Hackett et al. (2023) and Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal (2016) demonstrate, internationalization and IC are interconnected<sup>9, 10</sup>. Developed student IC forms a solid foundation for internationalization, while the process of internationalization concurrently promotes the refinement of student IC. The development of intercultural competence involves cultivating future professionals' abilities to understand and be open to different forms of social and cultural diversity. This may include developing self-awareness, open-mindedness, a genuine interest in other cultures, the ability to observe and recognize cultural differences and similarities, the capacity to resist stereotypes and anticipate complexities, and the willingness and ability to adapt their own behavior to interact effectively with other cultures <sup>11</sup>.

Tsuda and Wyant (2024) emphasize that intercultural competence is a dynamic process, shaped through ongoing dialogue and interaction. It's not a

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<sup>7</sup> Online teaching and learning in physical education teacher education: A mixed studies review of literature / E. M. Murtagh et al. *European Physical Education Review*. 2023. P. 1356336X2311557. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336x231155793> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>8</sup> Collaborative Online Learning across Borders (COLAB): Examining Intercultural Understandings of Preservice Teachers in a Virtual Cross-cultural University-based Program / S. Arndt et al. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. 2021. Vol. 35, no. 2. P. 281–296. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2021.1880994> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>9</sup> The effectiveness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education / S. Hackett et al. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. 2023. Vol. 20, no. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>10</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3. P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

<sup>11</sup> Tsuda E., Wyant J. Integrating an Online International Collaboration Into a Physical Education Teacher Education Program. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*. 2024. Vol. 95, no. 1. P. 28–32. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2023.2269216> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

static concept but evolves throughout a professional career<sup>12</sup>. Beyond mere acknowledgment of cultural diversity, creating conditions for active exchange of experiences and opinions is crucial. Qualities like respect, empathy, and tolerance significantly contribute to successful intercultural interactions<sup>13</sup>.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a technology-enabled virtual exchange approach originated at the State University of New York (SUNY) in 2006, has become a widely adopted tool for internationalizing HE curricula worldwide<sup>14</sup>. The COIL SUNY Center's comprehensive definition, along with insights from Rubin (2017) and De Wit et al. (2023), outlines the key characteristics of COIL<sup>15,16,17</sup>. As a foundational step towards internationalization, COIL typically involves a five-stage process: partner selection, collaborative curriculum development, creating a conducive learning environment, program implementation, and evaluation<sup>18</sup>.

COIL is a technology-enabled educational approach that brings together faculty and students from different institutions in a shared online learning experience, fostering international collaboration<sup>19</sup>,<sup>20</sup>. COIL courses distinguish themselves from traditional online courses by emphasizing collaborative learning for both faculty and students. While traditional courses often focus on transferring knowledge from instructor to student, COIL courses prioritize knowledge acquisition in a multicultural

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<sup>12</sup> Rubin J. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019., 2019. P. 189–199. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254885-15> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>13</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3. P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

<sup>14</sup> State University of New York Collaborative Online International Learning Center. Guide for collaborative online international learning course development. 2017. [http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil_guide.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange / H. de Wit et al. New York : Routledge, 2023. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447832> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>16</sup> Rubin J. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019., 2019. P. 189–199. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254885-15> (date of access: 11.10.2024),.

<sup>17</sup> State University of New York Collaborative Online International Learning Center. Guide for collaborative online international learning course development. 2017. [http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil_guide.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Tsuda E., Wyant J. Integrating an Online International Collaboration Into a Physical Education Teacher Education Program. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*. 2024. Vol. 95, no. 1. P. 28–32. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2023.2269216> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>19</sup> The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange / H. de Wit et al. New York : Routledge, 2023. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447832> (date of access: 11.10.2024),.

<sup>20</sup> State University of New York Collaborative Online International Learning Center. Guide for collaborative online international learning course development. 2017. [http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil_guide.pdf)

environment. By actively sharing experiences and ideas, students in COIL courses can cultivate creativity, critical thinking, and intercultural sensitivity<sup>21</sup>.

Developed by teams of faculty members from partner universities worldwide, COIL courses prioritize experiential and collaborative learning. They transcend national boundaries and linguo-cultural differences, creating authentic, interpersonal, and dynamic learning trajectories within international curricula<sup>22</sup>. Typically, courses are usually taught by two or more faculty members from different partner universities, alternating teaching or simultaneously teaching in tandem, and involving two or more groups of students from the respective universities. COIL courses provide a rich international experience compared to traditional forms of academic mobility and exchange, reducing ethnocentrism and providing students with ample opportunities to develop their intercultural awareness<sup>23, 24, 25</sup>.

On the one side COIL is an innovative approach to teaching and learning that provides students with the opportunity to collaborate, learn and develop IC and cross-cultural awareness by interacting with peers and professors during academic classes internationally using internet tools and innovative online pedagogies<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>. On the other hand, COIL programs are a truly networked model of higher education, typically implemented at partner universities in different countries. These programs often integrate different educational standards, structures, academic calendars, and teaching styles.

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<sup>21</sup> State University of New York Collaborative Online International Learning Center. Guide for collaborative online international learning course development. 2017. [http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil\\_guide.pdf](http://www.ufic.ufl.edu/uap/forms/coil_guide.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Rubin J. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019., 2019. P. 189–199. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254885-15> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>23</sup> The effectiveness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education / S. Hackett et al. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. 2023. Vol. 20, no. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>24</sup> Borger J. G. Getting to the CoRe of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). *Frontiers in Education*. 2022. Vol. 7. URL: <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.987289> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>25</sup> Building Global Relationships: Open Educational Resources and Collaborative Online International Learning Courses / M. J. Orzech et al. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*. 2023. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395231206812> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>26</sup> Rubin J. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019., 2019. P. 189–199. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254885-15> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>27</sup> Building Global Relationships: Open Educational Resources and Collaborative Online International Learning Courses / M. J. Orzech et al. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*. 2023. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395231206812> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>28</sup> Nava-Aguirre K. M., Garcia-Portillo B. I., Lopez-Morales J. S. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL): An Innovative Strategy for Experiential Learning and Internationalization at Home. *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning and Teaching International Business and Management*. Cham, 2019. P. 721–746. URL: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20415-0\\_34](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20415-0_34) (date of access: 11.10.2024).

## **2. The intercultural aspect in the training of physical education specialists: from theory to practice in COIL projects**

Physical education and sport are among the most dynamically developing sectors of the social sphere worldwide. In the context of globalization and intensified migration, many democratic countries, including Ukraine, are grappling with cultural heterogeneity. The European Union's free movement of people has led to a significant influx of refugees and migrants, raising integration challenges.

Physical education and sport play a crucial role in successful integration, promoting health, social adaptation, and intercultural interaction. Preparing professionals to deliver high-quality, dynamic, and diverse educational and recreational programs that cater to the needs of the digital age and evoke positive emotions is essential for the development of this sector.

In educational institutions and organizations related to physical activity and sport, professionals must be equipped to address contemporary challenges and contribute to social inclusion, as education is a key platform for integration<sup>29</sup>. Students often have a limited and stereotypical understanding of intercultural issues due to limited exposure to diverse cultures in their studies, especially in the relatively homogeneous student population of Ukrainian universities.

Modernizing the training of physical education specialists is crucial in this context. Improving the quality of training for future teachers and coaches necessitates actively studying and implementing international experiences, assimilating and integrating knowledge and skills from various regions. Special attention should be given to developing curricula that reflect the cultural diversity of contemporary educational trends and global best practices in physical education and sport.

The core competencies of physical education professionals are designed to respond to the changing face of professional practice and highlight the need to reform curricula to adapt to new challenges and increasingly diverse populations. Accordingly, the training of future physical education professionals should achieve the following learning outcomes:

- the graduate is aware of how his/her own values, attitudes and cultural background influence the education of students;
- the graduate is able to critically reflect on his/her own practice as a physical education teacher, sport coach from the perspective of equality, justice and human rights;
- the graduate is able to perceive the individual participation and learning style of each student in a diverse group of students;

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<sup>29</sup> Tolgfors B. Promoting integration through physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*. 2019. Vol. 25, no. 9. P. 1029–1042. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1687442> (date of access: 11.10.2024).



– the graduate is able to teach physical education and sport in such a way that every student, regardless of his/her abilities and background, has equal opportunities to participate and succeed in physical education.

In addition, the ability to think globally is needed for HE students as one of the most important characteristics and goals of learning, especially in today's rapidly changing society. That is why intercultural competence is no less important and necessary a skill for physical education teachers than knowledge of the technical aspects of sport, since different cultural communities have different ideas about physical activity, sport, body and health. Failure to take these aspects into account can lead to physical education classes being accepted ambiguously or even rejected by students.

A qualified educator should seek to employ culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classes to accommodate the needs of a diverse student population. By recognizing and appreciating the values, beliefs, and customs of their students, they can better communicate the benefits of physical activity in an inclusive atmosphere where every student feels valued and welcomed<sup>30, 31</sup>.

Given the preceding discussion, it is feasible to optimize the development of physical education teachers and coaches through formal and informal international online learning. While standardized curricula provide theoretical underpinnings, practical experiences gained from international online exchanges and projects empower future professionals to adapt their knowledge to the cultural nuances of their learners<sup>32, 33</sup>. This emphasizes the need for a more profound comprehension of the characteristics, benefits, and challenges of employing COIL courses to cultivate intercultural competence in the training of physical education specialists.

A review of existing literature and data reveals a dearth of research on COIL programs in the training of physical education and sports teachers. Nonetheless, existing findings indicate that COIL can foster partnerships, enhance students' intercultural competence, provide novel educational and academic experiences for students and faculty, and prepare graduates for

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<sup>30</sup> Tsuda E., Wyant J. Integrating an Online International Collaboration Into a Physical Education Teacher Education Program. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*. 2024. Vol. 95, no. 1. P. 28–32. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2023.2269216> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>31</sup> Tolgfors B. Promoting integration through physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*. 2019. Vol. 25, no. 9. P. 1029–1042. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1687442> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>32</sup> Cushion C. J., Townsend R. C. Technology-enhanced learning in coaching: a review of literature. *Educational Review*. 2018. Vol. 71, no. 5. P. 631–649. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1457010> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>33</sup> Stoszowski J., Collins D. A realist evaluation of the use of Flipgrid to facilitate collaborative online learning and reflection in sport coaching. *Sport, Education and Society*. 2021. P. 1–16. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2021.1952180> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

collaborative work with professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds<sup>34</sup>,<sup>35</sup>,<sup>36</sup>. Effective teamwork in COIL is facilitated by the utilization of various digital tools, enabling the completion of learning tasks that would be unattainable without the use of technology. In essence, by employing digital technologies in transformative ways, students acquire the ability to effectively integrate technology into their future professional settings. Synchronous and asynchronous digital tools allow students to delve deeper into discussions and interact more productively<sup>37</sup>.

Villar-Onrubia and Rajpal (2016) report on the implementation of Online International Learning (OIL) at Coventry University<sup>38</sup>. The university's global engagement center, e-learning department, and leadership at all levels have been instrumental in developing, implementing, and promoting these projects. Additionally, the involvement of external partners and organizations provides financial support and technical assistance. The authors note that the foundation of OIL projects lies in diverse online dialogues between students from different countries, and the COIL framework offers a flexible approach to international collaboration, not limiting the choice of tools or discussion topics.

Instructors and project leaders play a pivotal role in creating a safe and inclusive environment for intercultural interaction. They have the freedom to select the most suitable tools, ranging from basic communication means (email) to more complex platforms (Moodle, social media), both third-party and free (Google, Facebook) as well as commercial (Microsoft). International curricula use English for communication, but sometimes students' English language proficiency determines the choice of tools and interaction formats. This is especially true in non-English-speaking European countries where most students in international classes are non-native English speakers and have varying degrees of proficiency. Students

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<sup>34</sup> Stoszowski J., Collins D. A realist evaluation of the use of Flipgrid to facilitate collaborative online learning and reflection in sport coaching. *Sport, Education and Society*. 2021. P. 1–16. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2021.1952180> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>35</sup> Rethinking Curriculum Internationalization: Virtual Exchange as a Means to Attaining Global Competencies, Developing Critical Thinking, and Experiencing Transformative Learning / L. N. Duffy et al. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*. 2020. P. 1–15. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1937156x.2020.1760749> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>36</sup> Collaborative Online International Learning in Physiology: A Case Study / J. I. Priego-Quesada et al. *Advances in Physiology Education*. 2024. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00034.2024> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>37</sup> Vahed A. Factors enabling and constraining students' collaborative online international learning experiences. *Learning Environments Research*. 2021. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-021-09390-x> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>38</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3, P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

with lower language proficiency or those whose academic traditions differ from British ones often prefer asynchronous forms of communication. Students can discuss academic topics or analyze research articles; the main goal is for participants to interact.

The authors report that project leaders are often motivated by a desire to innovate and expand international collaboration. For students, key motivations include the opportunity to gain international experience and new knowledge. Projects can be implemented based on formal agreements or direct contacts between participants, as OIL is part of the university's strategy to expand students' international experience<sup>39</sup>.

Duffy et al. (2022) conducted an in-depth study of virtual student exchange as a means of achieving global competencies, developing critical thinking, and fostering transformative learning experiences for undergraduate students in the United States and Thailand, within the framework of international collaborative online learning<sup>40</sup>. The project aimed to bring together future physical education specialists to promote social change through adaptive sports, discussing issues of disability and inclusivity, supporting and accepting people with disabilities, and overall expanding opportunities for the development of adaptive, inclusive sports. To stimulate intercultural dialogue between students from the United States and Thailand, an experiment was conducted involving a series of paired tasks. Students were given assignments in both English and Thai to provide the necessary conditions and create a conducive environment for intercultural communication. For instance, one task aimed to establish personal connections between students by exploring each other's biographies, laying the groundwork for further collaboration. The next task, designed to develop intercultural dialogue skills and the ability to work on complex specific tasks, focused on a specially selected topic: disability and inclusivity in sports. Students were asked to discuss the topic and prepare a joint document reflecting their collective opinion.

The authors identified several unique features of the experiment: the lack of a rigid protocol for student selection, encouragement of initiative and a creative approach to tasks, and a gradual increase in task complexity, which led to the gradual development of intercultural competencies and a focus on intercultural dialogue to find common ground. The use of two languages

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<sup>39</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3. P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

<sup>40</sup> Rethinking Curriculum Internationalization: Virtual Exchange as a Means to Attaining Global Competencies, Developing Critical Thinking, and Experiencing Transformative Learning / L. N. Duffy et al. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*. 2020. P. 1–15. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1937156x.2020.1760749> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

(English and Thai) created an equal environment for communication, and paired tasks effectively stimulated intercultural interaction. Despite some organizational difficulties and language barriers, students successfully interacted thanks to carefully prepared materials and support from teachers, allowing participants from different cultures to prepare themselves for future professional activities, demonstrating the effectiveness of virtual exchange as a tool for developing intercultural cooperation and promoting inclusive sports<sup>41</sup>.

Priego-Quesada et al. (2024) highlight a COIL project titled “Business Entrepreneurship for Sports Technology Transfer” (BESTT), whose context can be adapted for other similar initiatives. In the BESTT project proposed by the authors, students were tasked with conceiving and developing a technological service or company that leverages physiology and biomechanics theory to assess athletic performance or physical exercise<sup>42</sup>. The BESTT program was grounded in two main principles: intensive online learning and teamwork. Students from Universitat de Valencia, Spain, Universidade Federal do Pampa, Brazil, and Technische Universitat Chemnitz, Germany participated in online sessions dedicated to entrepreneurship, innovation, and product development. Subsequently, participants, organized into multidisciplinary teams (physical therapy, sports engineering, kinesiology), under the guidance of experienced mentors in physiology and biomechanics, combined online meetings and independent work to develop practical solutions for the sports industry based on the principles of biomechanics and physiology. This allowed them not only to acquire fundamental knowledge but also to apply it in practice. By working in international teams on real-world projects, participants developed skills in entrepreneurship, marketing, and communication. Experienced mentors conducted thematic workshops for students at each stage of the project to broaden their horizons. The projects presented by the teams focused on such important aspects: human physiological processes (aging, muscle function, cardiovascular system, thermoregulation, pain and recovery); digital technologies (wearable devices, virtual reality, artificial intelligence); and

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<sup>41</sup> Rethinking Curriculum Internationalization: Virtual Exchange as a Means to Attaining Global Competencies, Developing Critical Thinking, and Experiencing Transformative Learning / L. N. Duffy et al. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*. 2020. P. 1–15. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1937156x.2020.1760749> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>42</sup> Collaborative Online International Learning in Physiology: A Case Study / J. I. Priego-Quesada et al. *Advances in Physiology Education*. 2024. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00034.2024> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

social impact (improving athletic performance, human health, injury prevention, and rehabilitation)<sup>43</sup>.

Within the framework of international cooperation, professors from Irish and American universities developed and implemented a COIL exchange program in health psychology. The project involved third and fourth-year undergraduate psychology students from Ireland and students from various majors in the United States (approximately 35 and 20 people, respectively)<sup>44</sup>. The goal of the COIL project proposed by Niamh M. Higgins and Lisa B. Smith (2023) was to develop students' global understanding of health-related behaviors, improve intercultural communication, and enhance digital literacy. To achieve this goal, the COIL course, developed in accordance with SUNY COIL recommendations, was integrated into a health psychology module, providing students with the opportunity to exchange experiences, explore different cultural perspectives, and apply theoretical knowledge in practice. As learning outcomes, the authors identified: the development of critical thinking and intercultural competence; the application of health behavior theories to real-world situations; the mastery of digital tools for collaboration, and the improvement of written and oral communication skills<sup>45</sup>.

The administrations of both universities coordinated the project, and the faculty underwent special training, which played a decisive role in the project's success. At the initial stage, a detailed project schedule was agreed upon, taking into account the difference in the start dates of semesters at the participating universities, which allowed for effective planning of meetings, creation of joint learning materials, and organization of the learning process for students. In the American university, the module was implemented entirely online on the Moodle platform, while in the Irish university, it was taught traditionally in a classroom. Irish colleagues provided detailed instructions and technical support to American students, which allowed for their successful integration into the new educational environment. Despite some initial difficulties, most students from the United States successfully mastered Moodle and completed all assignments. Providing technical support and flexibility in completing assignments helped to overcome language and technical barriers, and the Moodle platform proved its effectiveness as a tool for international collaboration.

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<sup>43</sup> Collaborative Online International Learning in Physiology: A Case Study / J. I. Priego-Quesada et al. *Advances in Physiology Education*. 2024. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00034.2024> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>44</sup> Higgins N. M., Smith L. B. An introduction to local and global health behaviors using a Collaborative Online International Learning exchange. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*. 2023. Vol. 6. P. 12–23. URL: <https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.6.38839> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>45</sup> Higgins N. M., Smith L. B. An introduction to local and global health behaviors using a Collaborative Online International Learning exchange. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*. 2023. Vol. 6. P. 12–23. URL: <https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.6.38839> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

The COIL exchange included a series of small assignments and synchronous online meetings, which were mandatory for all students. Completing initial, simple tasks, such as recording short videos about themselves and their interests, helped students familiarize themselves with the Moodle platform and begin interacting. The first online meeting allowed students to get to know each other personally and discuss cooperation rules. Group work was then conducted to help students develop intercultural communication skills. Next, students independently searched for research articles on the topic of health behavior and discussed their findings in an online forum. The assignments became increasingly complex as the course progressed, and the combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities allowed students to work both independently and in groups, both orally and in writing. In the second online meeting, students evaluated health information materials from Ireland and the United States, discussing their effectiveness and cultural features. Then they independently created their own information materials on this topic. The third meeting was devoted to the presentation of student projects. Students shared their results and discussed what they learned from the project. As a homework assignment, students wrote an essay about their experience of participating in COIL.

The authors note that most students were actively involved in the first tasks, such as recording videos and discussing articles, however, a decrease in participation in subsequent sessions was noted. Nevertheless, all students completed the final written assignment – a reflection on their experience. The authors see the possible reasons for the decrease in participation as an increased workload at the end of the semester, insufficient motivation for participation in presentations, feelings of anxiety before speaking, and fatigue from the online format<sup>46</sup>.

Recent studies have highlighted the identified challenges faced by faculty and university administrative staff in developing, planning, organizing, and teaching COIL. Some difficulties that may arise for students when participating in COIL courses have been identified, namely instability of Internet connections and problems of adaptation to a virtual learning environment, difficulties in overcoming the language barrier, and time differences complicating interaction<sup>47</sup>. Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal (2016) highlight certain drawbacks and limitations in the implementation of COIL projects. Not all students, for various reasons, have equal opportunities to

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<sup>46</sup> Higgins N. M., Smith L. B. An introduction to local and global health behaviors using a Collaborative Online International Learning exchange. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*. 2023. Vol. 6. P. 12–23. URL: <https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.6.38839> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

<sup>47</sup> The effectiveness of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education / S. Hackett et al. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*. 2023. Vol. 20, no. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3> (date of access: 11.10.2024).

participate in COIL projects. For students who do not have a high level of English proficiency, participation in OIL projects can be difficult, and they may feel insecure within the projects. It is also likely that there is a risk that OIL projects may contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes and inequality between cultures<sup>48</sup>.

Summarizing the above, we can formulate some general recommendations for organizing optimal COIL projects:

- The projects being developed should be based on flexible modular program elements that allow students to choose study areas in accordance with their interests and needs, taking into account individual educational trajectories, levels of preparation, and experiences of each participant. It is also essential to consider the cultural characteristics of students when creating tasks and materials, as well as when organizing communication. COIL projects should be adapted to the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities or insufficient language proficiency, to create an inclusive learning environment.

- Ongoing technological support is necessary for COIL projects, utilizing a variety of digital tools such as video conferencing, collaboration, and content creation platforms. Consider their functionality and accessibility. Initial training on these tools is recommended to ensure effective interaction and access to necessary technical resources for all participants.

- To systematically develop intercultural competence, incorporate specific modules into the curriculum that focus on intercultural communication skills. Activities like role-playing, debates, and case analysis can be effective. Regular feedback on intercultural competence development is also crucial.

- A comprehensive evaluation of project effectiveness should include surveys, observations, analysis of student work, and portfolios. This fosters critical thinking, reflection, and self-assessment. Comparing COIL project results with traditional teaching methods can help identify advantages and disadvantages.

- Establishing online platforms, knowledge bases, and regular online meetings enables COIL project participants to exchange experiences, discuss results, and maintain collaboration beyond project completion. Jointly creating educational materials and forming university consortia can expand partner networks and facilitate large-scale COIL projects that promote experience exchange and quality education.

- To ensure the sustainable development of COIL projects, actively seek grants and other funding sources, and develop a long-term funding

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<sup>48</sup> Villar-Onrubia D., Rajpal B. Online international learning. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*. 2015. Vol. 20, no. 2-3, P. 75–82. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2015.1067652> (date of access: 11.10.2024)

strategy. Additionally, COIL projects should address pressing social issues and contribute to sustainable development goals, fostering positive social change.

## **CONCLUSION**

A comprehensive review of the critical role of internationalization and intercultural competence in preparing physical education and sports specialists for a globalized world highlights the need for integrating digital technologies and creating collaborative learning environments to achieve these goals. Various concepts related to online learning, intercultural competence, and COIL projects have been explored. It has been found that internationalization is crucial in preparing graduates for a globalized world and requires the development of intercultural competence and global skills.

The integration of digital resources into physical education and sports education can improve the learning process and prepare students for the digital age, while the development and implementation of COIL projects promote collaboration, intercultural competence, and critical thinking skills. The search for effective tools and methods for developing intercultural competence is of particular importance for effective communication and collaboration in various settings. However, the implementation of COIL projects may face challenges such as language barriers, technological limitations, and cultural differences. Nevertheless, these projects offer significant opportunities for students to develop valuable skills and experiences.

Future research should focus on continuing comparative studies of COIL projects in various contexts to identify best practices and challenges, as well as studying the long-term impact of COIL projects on students' intercultural competence, career outcomes, and global citizenship.

## **SUMMARY**

The internationalization of higher education is an objective reality, and IC is crucial for future professionals. Collaborative Online International Learning courses offer an innovative approach to learning, allowing students from different countries to interact online, engage in dialogue, solve common tasks related to mastering course content. The application of COIL for physical education teacher education remains less studied, the research will be practically significant for improving the quality of training of future PETE teachers to work in the international environment. The purpose and objectives of the study are to investigate the practical implementation experience of joint international online learning courses, assess their potential for fostering the development of IC from the perspectives of both lecturers and students and identify the optimal conditions for integrating



COIL into the educational process of students in specialized universities to cultivate intercultural competence among future PE teachers.

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