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COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING: STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS AND INSIGHTS ABOUT MANAGING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) model is an innovative strategy to be applied in online and hybrid courses. The COIL model presents a great opportunity for college students to learn and relate with international peers in multicultural virtual environments. This paper reviews the existing literature regarding international learning, its benefits and the current trend in higher education. It examines a COIL course design, based on the development of common curricula for a period of five weeks in the Fall semester of 2022, the design of instructional materials to collaborate globally, and team-taught with colleagues from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This paper introduces practices that can be implemented by using a common Learning Management System (LMS), and international networked teaching to help college students increase intercultural and diversity awareness, explore and develop cultural competencies, and gain experience in communication in a global context using a cost-effective pathway. It also discusses challenges, opportunities and limitations, as well as the lessons learned through the process of course development and implementation.

JEL: I230, M140, M160

KEYWORDS: Academic Research, Diversity, and Cross-cultural Management

INTRODUCTION

Around the globe, the demand for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) focuses on internationalizing their curricula (Higher Education Academy, 2014) and assure that their students acquire intercultural capabilities that allow them to act as global citizens and global professionals. Such capabilities include resilience, flexibility, the ability to relate and communicate with global others, and awareness of globalization in the workplace. Besides the strategic statement of HEIs, it is very important that the academy members develop students with the capability for managing inclusion and diversity, and internationalization ambitions. This includes the ways in which international and intercultural dimensions can be integrated into curricula, how staff expertise is steered by faculty, and how individual practices are resourced and supported (Wimpenny, Beelen, & King, 2019). As Leask (2015) contends, internationalization must be an all-embracing institutional approach, reflected in strategy, training, institutional values, and culture. Virtual exchange is an online form of intercultural exchange (European Parliament, 2018) that has been piloted by the European Commission alongside Erasmus mobility programs. Virtual exchange has been defined as "a practice, supported by research, that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education programs or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators" (Evolve 2018). It is based on the assumption that bringing students into contact through structured educational programs

allows them to develop intercultural and linguistic competence as well as a range of soft skills that are key to participating in a globally interdependent world. It is not seen as a replacement for student or youth mobility, but rather as a compliment, since it offers a means of providing intercultural, international experience through sustained online projects in formal or informal educational contexts. In today's global society, higher education institutions are charged with preparing students to be world citizens who possess holistic perspectives on diversity and inclusion. Through communication and idea exchanges, members within the international and multi-disciplinary learning community analyze their own identities, biases, and prejudices, challenge existing perspectives and stereotypes, and reshape their worldviews (Olson, Evans, & Shoenberg, 2007). Despite the benefits of international learning, however, there are many factors that may prevent college students from studying abroad, such as concerns about the cost and resources, work and family obligations, or just the fear of the unknown. The National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA): Association of International Educators (2018) reports that only 1.6 percent of all students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States take part in study abroad programs. Thanks to the development and utilization of new technology, these days, learning does not have to occur within a certain physically bounded classroom. Instead, it can take place anytime, anywhere, and with anyone across disciplines and across nations (Kahn & Agnew, 2017). At the postsecondary level, Pew Research Center reports nearly 100 percent of college students access the Internet (Smith, Rainie, & Zickuhr, 2011). New technology, pedagogy, and methods of teaching provide tools for expanding access to international education. Technology implemented in the educational systems enables, supports and reinforces educational reform, impacts students' academic performance directly (Kreijnsa, van Acker, Vermeulend, & van Buuren, 2014), enhances pedagogical effectiveness, and enriches learning and teaching experiences at local, national, and global levels (Chen, McMurtrey, McCalman, Castillo, & Ligon, 2015).

Technology in education makes it easier to access and manage knowledge, helps develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Alghazo, 2006), and enhances students' technological proficiency and communication competencies (Mac Calluma, Jeffrey, & Kinshuk, 2014). During the Covid-19 outbreak, the technologies that allow digital education became an unavoidable alternative for academic institutions. In this regard, institutions should be aware of their responsibilities in terms of the aspirations of students to provide appropriate services in relation to the normal education period, while upgrading and introducing a new system in which they should not face any barriers (Budur, Demir, & Cura, 2021). As Zhang and Pearlman (2017) affirm, in order to better prepare students to become world citizens and to meet the challenges caused by globalization, many colleges and universities in the United States of America actively seek international partners and offer technology-enhanced collaborative online international learning (COIL) courses. Considering all the benefits of using technology in education, especially during the pandemic and post pandemic periods, when the opportunities for interchanges were blocked, the implementation of an international virtual classroom using the COIL model was an excellent option for developing in the college students the competences for working and managing in global environments.

Along this paper, the authors are sharing the generalities of course design and implementation using the COIL model. The participants are two professors and their students from two HEI, The College of Business and Entrepreneurship at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), and The Faculty of Economy, at the University of Niš, in the United States of America (USA) and the Republic of Serbia, respectively. The development of a common curriculum by the two instructors includes the design of instructional materials to collaborate globally using a common Learning Management System (LMS), individual and teamwork activities with colleagues from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The common course had a length of five weeks and it was implemented on the last five weeks of the fall semester of 2022. The main results presented are the students' perceptions on the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence, and Multiculturalism. Those perceptions were measured by using a survey, once the students completed the five weeks of the common course. It also discusses challenges, opportunities and limitations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COIL courses provide teaching and learning experiences across countries/continents, across disciplines, and often expose participants to different home languages (with English as default) and different cultures using a variety of materials, activities, and assessments. Usually, the two instructors from the partner institutions find mutual interest in topics and develop the assessments and rubrics together. The professors used the same assessment, reviewed all students' work, yet evaluated and graded their own students' work individually. The COIL course instructors could be in the same discipline or in different disciplines. For example, two professors of Special/Inclusive Education in the United States and Brazil offered a COIL course, which explored various topics of special/inclusive education in the two counties (Zhang & Capellini, 2018). At the beginning of their COIL course, Pearlman and Fraile (2018) used "the Iceberg Concept of Culture," adapted from Hall (1977), as an icebreaker activity, asking the students to share their knowledge, or sometimes assumptions, about the culture of their peers in the partner institution. Through discussion, the participating students in U.S. and Netherlands learned about each other and broke down cultural stereotypes. The surface culture is defined as what people face at first when they visit the country, the second layer or shallow culture represents what is acceptable or desired behavior, and the deepest layer includes the unconscious rules invisible for people who are not familiar with the culture (Hall, 1977; Pearlman & Fraile, 2018). This is one example of how COIL could help the development of intercultural competence and communication skills.

Interdisciplinary COIL courses may inspire and profoundly impact participating students. For example, a professor of Special Education in the United States and a professor of Media and Culture in Sweden offered a COIL course, which focused on the topics of how individuals/groups with disabilities are portrayed in popular media and its impact to the society at large (Zhang & Glimäng, 2018). Technology is a critical component of the COIL course. The instructors from the partner institutions share, explore, discuss, and decide which technology tools are to be used in the course for course delivery, material sharing, collaboration, communication, and assessment. Ideally, the technology tool(s) should be selected for seamless interaction among the participants (Zhang & Glimäng, 2018). A technology-enhanced Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) course could be one cost-effective solution for universities to internationalize curricula, develop new partnerships globally, and provide their students with international learning opportunities and global competencies. COIL courses use technology innovatively to foster collaboration between faculty and students in partner institutions worldwide, and to facilitate student learning (the SUNY COIL Center, n.d.). As campuses systematically update classroom technology to include virtual exchange communication tools, usually, no additional technology is required. Instead, existing hardware and software available on the partner campuses as well as technologies housed in the instructors' and students' homes/dorms are used. Thus, when taking a COIL course, students do not need to make a huge commitment financially or in terms of time, compared to their peers who study abroad (Fowler, Pearlman, LeSavoy, & Hemphill, 2014). Instead, the students take the course in their current institution and use existing networking technology for communication and collaboration, which adds no additional cost (Zhang & Pearlman, 2017).

In addition to synchronous class-to-class video conferencing during face-to-face class time, instructors and students use online collaboration tools existing on partner campuses or available for free. Platforms include but are not limited to CourseSites, Moodle, Blackboard, FeedbackFruits, and Blogger. Examples of online chats and video calls are Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Zoom. Examples of shared workspaces are Blackboard, Google Docs, Google Slides, YouTube, and examples of social media are Facebook and Twitter. Using these platforms, instructors and students share resources and exchange ideas (Andronie, 2014). These varied online collaboration technologies provide options for asynchronous and outside of the scheduled class time use, which help overcome the possible time difference across countries, enhance continuous collaboration at students' own

pace, and develop a learning community (Andronie, 2014). Students in COIL courses get the opportunity to collaborate with peers in the partner institution(s) on one or more projects facilitated by their instructors, through which they increase intercultural and diversity awareness, explore and develop cultural competencies, and gain experience in communication and civil engagement in a global context (Fowler, Pearlman, LeSavoy, & Hemphill, 2014; Zhang & Pearlman, 2017).

The planning and delivery of COIL courses is a process of collaborative team teaching, which requires committed time for the instructors at the partner institutions to co-plan the instruction and assessments. It is a process of giving and taking among team members rather than using the sole direction of a given person. This collaborative process challenges the traditional way of individual planning, delivering the instruction, and assessing student learning. Collaboration is embedded in the curricula with the purpose to enhance student learning and to reach joint course goals. The development and implementation of COIL courses are time-consuming. Furthermore, it is an ongoing process that does not stop at the end of the COIL course. Instead, the instructors at the partner institutions record, analyze, and reflect on the development and implementation of the course and student learning outcomes, identify, and document any gaps between the desired goals and actual outcomes, and discuss the needed changes in curriculum, instructional materials, teaching strategies and assessments for improvement in the next cycle (Fraile, 2018).

The COIL courses offer college students a platform to enhance student-to-student interactions and emphasize experiential and collaborative learning. By using COIL, the students are engaged to learn course content through their own and the other's unique cultural lenses, build knowledge together, and develop diverse personal relationships through negotiation of meaning when working in virtual teams (Fowler, Pearlman, LeSavoy, & Hemphill, 2014). Accordingly, technology-enhanced COIL courses help increase not only intercultural awareness but also online intercultural communicative competence, so that students are better prepared for work and show civil engagement in a global context (Zhang & Pearlman, 2017).
In addition to the benefits to students, technology-enhanced COIL courses offer professional development and opportunities to faculty and staff members through networking and collaboration. It is a cost-effective pathway to internationalize curricula and an avenue to develop new partnerships globally (Fowler, Pearlman, LeSavoy, & Hemphill, 2014).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

During the Spring semester of 2022, two professors, from The College of Business and Entrepreneurship (COBE), The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), USA, and The Faculty of Economy, University of Niš (UNiš), Serbia, were conducting a series of meetings, in order to design a 5-week common course, under the COIL model. The communication formats that professors used the most were video conferences, phone calls and synchronous chat platforms (mainly What´s App). After exploring available options for an LMS platform, Blackboard was designated as a common platform for the design and delivery of the course. The Serbian professor was registered with guest co-instructor permission and her students were registered with guest permission at the beginning of the implementation stage. Instructors decided to designate English as the common language for the course, and the professor at the Faculty of Economics conducted a pre-selection of the students, based on their knowledge of the English language.

The codes and course names that the professors were teaching that Fall were MGMT-3361 Principles of Management and BBSc-4430 Entrepreneurship, both undergraduate programs. The common course name was COIL-Fall2022 Entrepreneurship & Principles of Management. The implementation of the 5-week COIL course was November 7th to December 7th, 2022 and the participants were 47 students from the COBE-UTRGV and 10 students from the Faculty of Economics, UNiš. "Activities points chart", "Grades" and other sections were independent for each class and were defined by each instructor, so there are specific sections of the joint course that apply for UNiš but do not apply for UTRGV students, and vice versa. The prerequisites to participate in this COIL course were to be enrolled in MGMT-3361 Principles of

Management or BBSc-4430 Entrepreneurship, to have at least an intermediate level of English language, and to have a firm wish to collaborate and participate in the frame of diversity and Multiculturalism, under a business college-level approach. Three-course objectives were settled for the COIL joint course: Identify the opportunities and challenges associated with diversity and inclusion and the steps managers and their organizations can take to cultivate diversity and manage globally; implement the best practices to work within multicultural and multilingual teams; and assess the business options to start an enterprise with international partners. The joint course goals were as follows: students will develop intercultural competencies by critically analyzing the effects of stereotyping in the workplace, applying the best practices for effective teamwork, and identifying opportunities and challenges that arise from working with international partners. The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to be reached at the end of this course were: students will be able to develop awareness and understanding of cultural similarities and differences; develop teamwork skills in international and multicultural environments; and identify entrepreneurial opportunities in local and global settings. The programmed activities for the first week were: the COIL Kick-off session on 11/9, which was held in person for the UTRGV students (at 9:30 a.m.), and by Zoom for UNiš students (at 4:30 p.m.); navigate the course; read the course policy; review the counterparty University and College information. During the first and upcoming weeks, the students were encouraged to log into Collaborate Ultra chat and video for meeting their classmates, prior to agreement on a convenient schedule (considering the 7 hours difference due to USA-Serbia time zones), by messaging or emailing their classmates.   The required activities for the second week were to attend classes in person or to connect remotely by Zoom to the lectures programmed on Monday & Wednesday from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. (USA CST) or 4:30 to 5:45 p.m. (Serbia time zone). The optional activities for the students that were not able to attend live or remote lectures were reviewing the "Managing Inclusion and Diversity" slides and/or watching the pre-recorded videos for the weekly materials. The grade-related required assignment for this week was the student participation in the Discussion Board "Managing Inclusion and Diversity".

During the third week, the required activities were to attend classes in person or to connect remotely by Zoom to the lectures programmed on Monday & Wednesday from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. (USA CST) or 4:30 to 5:45 p.m. (Serbia time zone). The optional activities for the students that were not able to attend live or remote lectures were reviewing the "Teamwork" slides and/or watching the pre-recorded videos for the weekly materials. The grade-related required assignment for this week was the student participation in the Discussion Board "Teamwork". The programmed activities for the fourth week were to attend classes in person or to connect remotely by Zoom to the lectures programmed on Monday & Wednesday from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. (USA CST) or 4:30 to 5:45 p.m. (Serbia time zone). The optional activities for the students that were not able to attend live or remote lectures were reviewing the "Entrepreneurship" and "Business Plan" slides and/or watching the pre-recorded videos for the weekly materials. The grade-related required assignments for this week were the student participation in the Wiki (which is a learning tool available on Blackboard that allows simultaneous contributions by different individuals with common access to the group/in-team assignment). An instrument, under the survey modality, was designed for collecting quantitative data from the participant students. The software for writing the survey was Qualtrics, and it was available to the students on the common LMS platform (Blackboard) by clicking on the link that guide them to its electronic version, to be answered online. The survey was answered during the fifth week of the joint course (first week of December 2022).

This survey counts sixty questions organized into six sections. The first section is the consent statement, which allows the participant to know about the survey purpose and description, the survey authors and their contact information, the participants' requirements; and The Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB) research questions authorization. The second section groups 25 demographic items (1-25). The third section focuses on the dimension of managing inclusion and diversity and uses 20 items for gathering the students´ thinking in this regard (26-45). The fourth section includes 8 items to measure the dimension of global competences (46-53). The fifth section measures Multiculturalism (54-59). Lastly, a final open answer question requires to respondents to list up to five words to describe the

course. Creswell (2011) settled that pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute inquiry but are driven to use multiple methods to gather different views and different assumptions when collecting and analyzing data.This study seeks to identify some predictions by analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative date comes from analyzing the students' perceptions on the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence and Multiculturalism, through their answers in the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first section of the survey is the consent statement, which was the filter to continue with the rest of the survey items. In this section will be presented the results for the rest of the survey sections. Under Demographics (items 1-25) are the presented the results for the second survey section. The sections 3 to 5 are showing the results for the Dimensions of managing inclusion and diversity, global competence and Multiculturalism. Finally, a single item section, shows the results for the students' general perception on the COIL course.

<u>Demographics</u>

The survey counts twenty-five demographics items in its second section, and those are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Items in the Survey

1. Please, select your age range.	14. Please, select your general level of proficiency in each of the following languages:
2. What gender do you identify with?	15. Do you have internet (Wi-Fi) service at home?
3. Which of the following describes your ethnicity the most?	16. Do you have internet (data) service on your mobile device (phone)?
4. Where were you born?	17. Which device do you use the most for online classes?
5. Where do you currently reside?	18. Which device do you use the most for online assignments?
6. What is your nationality?	19. What is your cumulative grade point average (GPA)?
7. Do you hold more than one nationality? Please select the option that best fits you.	20. Is it common/expected in the country of your residence to work while studying a college program?
8. What is your current semester standing?	21. Are you currently employed?
9. Which university do you primarily attend?	22. Which statement best describes your current employment status?
10. Are you a first-generation student at university?	23. Have you traveled outside the country of your residence in the last five years?
11. How many siblings do you have?	24. Which country/countries did you visit?
12. What is the highest level of school that someone in your family has completed, or the highest degree that someone in your family has received (including yourself)?	25. Please, indicate the purpose (s) of your previous international travel.
13. What is the primary language (languages) spoken in your household? Check all that apply.	

Authors 'Own Elaboration. This Table Shows the Demographic Items in the Survey.

The total number of students participating in the COIL 5-week course and answering the survey was 57. Since the survey consent statement included the statement "If there is a question that you prefer not to answer, just leave it blank," the students were free to skip some of the answers. The total answers per item and the summary of students' demographics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Students Demographics

Total Number of Students	57			
Enrolled in	UTRGV 82%	UNiš 18%		
Currently Residing in	USA 82%	Serbia 18%		
Current semester standing	Sophomores 18%	Juniors 61%	Seniors 21%	
Gender	Male 43 %	Female 52%	Prefer not to answer 7%	
Age range	18-21 yo 75%	22-25 yo 23%	40-49 yo 2%	
Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino 70%	Caucasian 23%	Serbian 5%	Mix race 2%
Place of birth	USA 73%	Serbia 16%	Mexico 7 %	Argentina 4 %
Language spoken at home	Spanish 48%	English 37%	Serbian 14%	Bilingual E&S 34%
Number of siblings (Mean 2.58)	1-2, 60%	3, 20%	4-5, 13%	6 and more 7%
Highest Degree of Studies in the Students´ Family (including the student him/herself)	Doctorate 7%	Master 19%	Bachelor 18%	Associate 2%
	Certification 4%	Some college 19%	High school 21%	Less than HS 10%
First-generation at university	Yes 60%	No 40%		

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students´ demographics.

The respondents from UTRGV were forty-seven (82%) and the ones from UNiš were ten (18%), and they are residing in the USA and in Serbia with the same percentages, respectively. From these participants, the ones from UTRGV were juniors and seniors, and from UNiš they were all sophomores, due to the upper-level of the Principles of Management and the lower-level of the Entrepreneurship courses in which they were enrolled. Participant students' gender is as follows: twenty-four are male (43%), twenty-nine are female (52%) and four preferred not to answer (7 %). Most of the fifty-seven students responding to this item forty-three (75%) were in the range of 18-21 years old, thirteen (23%) in the range of 22-25 years old, and one student (2%) in the 40-49 range. From 57 participants, forty of the UTRGV identify themselves as Hispanic/Latino, six as Caucasian, and one as mix race; and, from UNiš, seven identify as Caucasian and three as Serbian. From the forty-seven students from UTRGV, forty-one were born in The United States of America, four were born in Mexico (7%), and two were born in Argentina (4%); from UNiš, 9 were born in Serbia and one student did not answer to this item.

From 56 students that answer this item, the primary language spoken at home for the forty-seven students from UTRGV is Spanish with 48%, then English with 37% (35 and 27 students/families, respectively); nine UNiš students' language spoken at home is Serbian with 15%. From the 73 events in this item we can deduct that there is a relevant factor that impact directly and positively to the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence, and Multiculturalism, which is bilingualism. Fifteen families among the forty-seven from UTRGV students spoke either English or Spanish, which means that 34% of the students' families are bilingual. The mean for the number of siblings of 56 respondents for this item is 2.58. Confirming the predictions of the surveyors, the number of siblings for the UNiš students is mostly one, and eventually two; and the number of siblings for the UTRGV students of the sample is much higher. The general distribution is as follows: one sibling (15, 27%), two siblings (18, 33%), three siblings (11, 20%), four siblings (1, 2%), five siblings (6, 11%) and more than five siblings (5, 7%).

Other factor that was predicted by the surveyors, and then confirmed by data is the students' family education level. The maximum level of school among the UNiš students' family is proportionally higher than the UTRGV students' family, since most of them count Bachelor and higher degrees. The general distribution (including the student itself in this factor) is as follows: four with a Doctoral degree (7%), eleven with a Master's degree (19%), ten with a Bachelor's degree (18%), one with an Associate degree (2%), two with a Career Certification (4%), eleven with some college but no degree (19%), twelve with High school diploma o GDE (21%), three with less than High School (5%), and three with Middle School (5%). In sum, Thirty-four students, mostly the ones for UTRGV are first-generation at the university level (60%), and twenty-three (40%) are not first-gens. Many of the students did not answered item 19, What is

your cumulative grade point average (GPA)? Surveyors do not know what the reason was, but a possible one may be that students prefer to keep it confidential. With regard to employment, Table X shows that from the 57 students, forty-seven from UTRGV and two from UNiš (86%) affirm that in their country of residency is common (expected) to work while studying a college program, while eight students (14%) said that it is not. Their current employment status is thirty-one UTRGV students working (54%) and twenty-six not working (46%). Of these students, twenty-six (46%) are working paid employees, five (9%) are self-employed, eleven (19%) are unemployed (looking for a job), and fifteen (26%) are not working (not looking for work). Table 3 shows Students Employment Status.

Table 3: Students Employment Status

Common/Expected to Work in Their Country	Yes 86%	No 14%
Working 54%	Employed 46%	Self-employed 9%
Not working 46%	Unemployed 19 %	Not searching 26%

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students´ employment status to the moment of the survey application.

From this data, we are confirming that the factor of employment status among college students is directly dependent of the country's culture. While in the USA is common to hold a part-time or full time job parallel to the college studies, in Serbia, as in most European countries, college students dedicate their time and efforts to fulfill the school tasks, besides the fact that government and private business do not consider to offer part-time job for college students as a regular practice. From those gatherings we can predict, but not confirm, that besides the countries culture and regulations, other factors are influencing employment rate. The *a priori* assumption is that the *unemployed* and *not searching employment* status among the UNiš students due to two factors. First indirect factor is the reduce number of siblings (mainly one sibling per student). The second indirect factor may due to the higher level of education among their family members (generally parents). Then a third direct factor that come with a higher education is a higher level of gross annual income per family, which derives in a higher income per family member (especially if we consider that families are formed by the student and one sibling to make a maximum of four members per family). Then the family behavior may be the financial support of the UNiš students, until they complete their college program. In terms of accessibility to internet and electronic devices, the data analysis shows that out of 57 students, fifty-five (96%) have internet (Wi-Fi) service at home, and fifty-six (98%) reported that they have internet (data) service on their mobile device (phone/tablet). The device that is most used for online assignments is their own computer (54 students, 95%), then borrowed or shared computer (1 student, 2%), and finally, their own smartphone (2 students, 4%). It all means that most of them have the proper conditions and equipment for holding online classes and working on their online assignments out of campus with no additional cost. Only two students, from the UTRGV, reported a lack of internet access at home, and one of them reported lack of mobile Wi-Fi. Table 4 shows the students accessibility to internet and electronic devices.

Table 4: Students Accessibility to Internet and Usage of Electronic Devices

Internet Service at Home	Yes 96%	No 4%	
Internet (data) service on mobile devices	Yes 98%	No 2%	
Most used device for online classes	Own computer 93%	Borrowed/shared computer 2%	Own smartphone 4%

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students´ accessibility to internet and usage of electronic devices.

When analyzing the traveling abroad within the last five years, twenty-three (40%) students reported not traveling abroad in the last five years, while thirty-four students have traveled in the same period (60%). Of this 60%, twelve were family-related trips (33%), one a job-related trip (3%), twenty-one for tourism (58%), one for a school-related trip (3%), and one for other purpose travel (3%). From a list of 196

countries, 70 visits to the following countries were reported: twenty-two visits to Mexico; five visits to Greece; four visits to France and Spain; three visits to Italy; two visits to Austria, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Jamaica, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and United States of America; and one visit to Bahamas, Bulgaria, Japan, Israel, Honduras, Portugal, Turkey, North Macedonia, Switzerland, and Sweden. It is worthy to say that UNiš students made most of their trips to European countries and the only trip to USA, and UTRGV students made most of their trips to Mexico and the rest of the countries in the American Continent. From the 70 trips, the ten UNiš students made thirty-five (47%), while the twenty-four UTRGV students did the rest of the trips (53%).

These higher numbers of trips by the UNiš students in proportion to the ones from UTRGV may be due to the financial situation of their families (fewer members per family, higher gross annual income per family member). Two more factors may be influencing positively the number of trips among UNiš students. First, the distances from Serbia to many of the European countries are accessible in terms of costs and time, and can be made by car, train and bus. Secondly, the abolishment of passport and all other types of border control once the travelers are in the Schengen area, as well as the usage of an uniform currency for all transactions. A possible negative factor that may be avoiding UTRGV students for making trips abroad is the migratory status of the ones that do not hold the American citizenship and do not count with a visa that allow them to reside and live in the USA legally. It is well known that some of the students in the USA are under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and even when they are protected for living, studying and working in the USA, if they leave the country for any reason, they loss the DACA condition and cannot come back to their home in the States. In order to protect the confidentiality of students' migratory status, not any question in this regard was included in the survey. Table 5 summarizes the results of the students' trips to abroad in the last five years.

Table 5: Students Traveling Abroad in the Last Five Years

Traveling Abroad	Yes 60% (70 Visits)	No 40%	Number of Events Per Listed Country	Total (70 Visits)
Students participation in trips	24 UTRGV 53% 10 UNiš 47%	23 UTRGV		
Tourism	58%			
Family related trips	33%			
Job related trips	3%			
School related trips	3%			
Other purpose travel	3%			
Mexico			22	22
Greece			5	5
France and Spain			4	8
Italy			3	3
Austria, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Jamaica, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and United States of America			2	22
Bahamas, Bulgaria, Japan, Israel, Honduras, Portugal, Turkey, North Macedonia, Switzerland, and Sweden			1	10

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the percentage of students traveling abroad in the last five years, the purpose of their trips, the countries visited, and the events per country.

To the question "Do you hold more than one nationality?" from fifty-six answers, twenty-six students are Mexican-American (46%), two students (4%) have more than one nationality (Italian and Brazilian) and twenty-eight (50%) hold one nationality. The mean for the number of nationalities is 1.57, and the individuals holding more than nationality are all UTRGV students, which means that 60% out of the UTRGV students hold more than one nationality. Table 6 summarizes the percentage of students' with one

and more nationalities. It is said that when an individual hold more than one nationality, the factors that determine Multiculturalism and bilingualism may be much higher than in individuals with only one nationality.

Table 6: Students Nationality(ies)

Students Holding One Nationality	50%
Students holding Two Nationalities (Mexican-American)	46%
Two nationalities different from Mexican-American	4%
UNiš students holding one nationality	100%
UTRGV students holding more than one nationality	60%

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students´ nationality (ies).

In regard the languages spoken and level of proficiency, Table 7 shows the results of the student's level of proficiency in English, Spanish, Serbian, German French, Portuguese, Russian, Korean and Chinese. The item included the option for reporting three additional languages not listed in the survey. Only three students reported an intermediate level in other languages but they did not specify which ones. It is important to mention that the number of answers per language varied, and not all students answered for each language on the list. The column labeled TOTAL indicates the number of observations per language. The levels of dominium are native, proficient, intermediate, basic, and none. It is worthy to mention that from the 47 students enrolled at UTRGV, thirty-four are native speakers of English, and thirteen are native of Spanish language and proficient in English; three students from this group are native of both, English and Spanish languages. From the ten students enrolled in UNiš, four are proficient in English and six are in the intermediate level. Proportionally, the students from UNiš have knowledge of a higher number of foreigner languages compared with the UTRGV students. Besides English, they have intermediate and basic knowledge of Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, Russian and Korean languages, with at least 18 events. These results may be due to the fact that UNiš students and their families are giving more weight to the competence of communication in more than one language and parents may be supporting financially their student to afford foreigner languages classes. For both students groups the communication competence, due to the number and dominium of languages that they speak, is high. This competence allows them to communicate with a greater number of individuals in academic, labor and personal environments, with direct and indirect impacts on the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence, and Multiculturalism that are discussed in next paragraphs.

Table 7: Languages Spoken by the Students and Their Level of Proficiency

Language	Native Speaker	Proficient	Intermediate	Basic	None	Total Answers
English	34	17	6			57
Spanish	26	11	7	6	7	57
Serbian	10	0	0	0	28	38
German	0	0	2	2	32	36
French	0	0	4	6	28	38
Portuguese	1		1	3	31	36
Russian	0	0	0	2	35	37
Korean	0	0	0	4	33	37
Chinese	0	0	0	0	36	36
Other	0	0	3	0	0	3

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the languages spoken by the students in the joint COIL course. The first column, labeled with "languages" heads the options for the languages that the students spoke, including a row for another language not listed there. The second to fifth columns indicate the level of proficiency for each language. The column labeled Total indicates the number of observations per language.

The Inclusion and Diversity Dimension

The dimension of Managing Inclusion and Diversity includes twenty items. By using a 5-Likert scale, students were invited to indicate the degree of agreement/disagreement (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree) with the 20 statements (26-45), regarding their views on managing a diverse workforce. The results are shown in Table 8. Then the results are commented in the following paragraphs from higher to lower agreement degree.

Table 8: Students' Perceptions About the Inclusion and Diversity Dimension

Item Number	Item (Notice That Sentences May Be Affirming or Denying a Believe)	Total Answers	Strongly Disagree and Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree	
			Answers	%	Answers	%
26	I think that diversity today refers to far more than skin color and gender and includes differences in religious affiliation, age, disability status, military experience, sexual orientation, economic class, educational level, and lifestyle, as well as gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality	57			50	88
27	I believe that recognizing religious holidays, differing modes of dress, and dietary restrictions, as well as accommodating the needs of individuals with disabilities are all efforts to cultivate a diverse workforce	57			52	91
28	I value pluralistic and multicultural organizations because they use an affirmative action approach in order to hire and train a diverse workforce	56			51	84
29	I think that diversity training is not significant to increase recognition of the meaning and importance of valuing diversity	56	33	59		
30	I consider that stereotyping is acceptable when managing a diversified workforce	57	37	65		
31	Companies with a reputation for providing opportunities for diverse employees are most likely to have a disadvantage in the labor market	56	28	50		
32	It is ok if, in my firm, women still earn less, on average, than men, especially younger women	57	41	72		
33	Sexual harassment should be tolerated in the workplace under specific circumstances	57	49	86		
34	I believe that successfully managing diversity requires a corporate culture that tolerates many different styles and approaches	57			47	82
35	I believe that a diverse workforce provides greater knowledge of diverse markets and can design products and marketing campaigns to meet consumers' needs, locally, nationally, and internationally	57			47	82
36	Organizations should not hire mentally and physically disabled people	57	35	62		
37	I would be happy to manage multicultural organizations by fully integrating minority group members because I value diversity	57			46	82
38	Judging foreign people by the standards of one's own culture is ok because one's own standards are superior	56	43	77		
39	I would like to work as a parent-country national at a foreign subsidiary	54			22	41
40	I believe that most people, independent of their cultural background, embrace the same core values: compassion, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others	57			39	68
41	I believe it is needed to identify, establish, and enforce ethical standards everywhere I do business	57			45	79
42	I define myself as an individual with traits of sensitivity to cultural differences, business knowledge, risk-taking, cultural adventurousness, and flexibility	57			41	72
43	I support affirmative action programs to correct the exclusion of women and minorities from the business world	57			39	68
44	I believe can influence cultural diversity within an organization through my managerial style	56			43	77
45	I feel comfortable managing/working with people from different cultural backgrounds	57			49	86

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students perceptions on the 20 items that measure the Inclusion and Diversity Dimension.

First are presented the results for thirteen of the twenty items that conform the inclusion and diversity dimension. By selecting a higher degree of agreement on each of them, the students are perceived with a higher competence for managing inclusion and diversity in the workplace. For item 27, 91% of the students *believe that recognizing religious holidays, differing modes of dress, and dietary restrictions, as well as accommodating the needs of individuals with disabilities are all efforts to cultivate a diverse workforce.* These answers set up that they value diversity and they are ready for considering others in the workplace while providing accommodations. For item 26, 88% of the students agree with the statement *diversity today refers to far more than skin color and gender and includes differences in religious affiliation, age, disability status, military experience, sexual orientation, economic class, educational level, and lifestyle, as well as gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality.* This confirms that most of them have understand and value the concept of diversity, and recognize it is crucial to work and manage human resources in organizations. For item 45, 86% of the students *feel comfortable managing/working with people from different cultural backgrounds.* This affirmation means that managing and working with diverse individuals (different from themselves) is expected, and that including them in the workplace activities along the different organizational levels must be a common practice.

For item 28, 84% of the students *value pluralistic and multicultural organizations because they use an affirmative action approach in order to hire and train a diverse workforce*, showing that they have an understanding of the legislation, and are ready to comply with the requirements that apply to the human resources processes. For item 34, 82% of the students *believe that successfully managing diversity requires a corporate culture that tolerates many different styles and approaches.* These answers show that the students are or will be contributing to create a corporate diversity approach in the workplace. For item 35, 82% of the students *believe that a diverse workforce provides greater knowledge of diverse markets and can design products and marketing campaigns to meet consumers' needs, locally, nationally, and internationally.* This result support the thought that students are ready to leverage the organizations functions by hiring a diverse workforce, according to the firm needs.

For item 37, 82% of the students *would be happy to manage multicultural organizations by fully integrating minority group members because they value diversity.* Students' answers confirm that they are willing to manage under the diversity and inclusion approaches in the workplace. For item 41, 79% of the students *believe it is needed to identify, establish, and enforce ethical standards everywhere they do business.* This result confirms that the students believe that the settlement and observation of codes of ethics, independently of the country of origin and country of application, is necessary in the workplace. For item 44, 77% of the students *believe can influence cultural diversity within an organization through their managerial style.* The students in the sample are willing to improve the diversity and inclusion practices in the workplace, by applying what they have been learning in the school as well as their work experiences.

For item 42, 72% of the students *define themselves as individuals with traits of sensitivity to cultural differences, business knowledge, risk-taking, cultural adventurousness, and flexibility.* The students perceptions on this regard is their awareness and readiness for working and managing in global environments. For item 40, 68% of students *believe that most people, independent of their cultural background, embrace the same core values: compassion, fairness, honesty, responsibility and respect for others.* Even when this item ranked with a lower percentage of agreement than the previous, it is interpreted as the students' readiness for showing respect to individuals with a different cultural background and beliefs; but the lower rate of agreement may be due to the lack of confidence that others will present a behavior framed by the statement. For item 43, 68% of the students *support affirmative action programs to correct the exclusion of women and minorities from the business world.* Comparing with the previous, this item has a lower degree of agreement and it may due to the lack of awareness, in some of the students, of the exclusion of minorities in the workplace. Most of the students that marked different from strongly agree and somewhat agree with this statement are from the UNiš, and it may due to the fact that the Serbian population belong to a very compact ethnical group were the concept of minority groups (besides women)

almost do not exist. For item 39, out of 57 participants 54 students answered to the statement *I would like to work as a parent-country national at a foreign subsidiary*, and only 22 of them (41%) agree with it. These results show that even when the students embrace diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and they feel ready to work and manage people from diverse backgrounds, most of them prefer to work in their country.

In this section are presented the results for rest of the twenty items that conform the inclusion and diversity dimension. By selecting a lower degree of agreement on each of them, the students are perceived with a higher competence for managing inclusion and diversity in the workplace. For item 33, 86% of the students disagree with the statement *Sexual harassment should be tolerated in the workplace under specific circumstances*. The answers to this item settled out that most of the students reject any practices of sexual harassment in the workplace. For item 38, 77% of the students disagree with the statement *Judging foreign people by the standards of one's own culture is ok because one's own standards are superior*. This percentage is interpreted as the awareness of others culture and the respect of others practices and behaviors, which may be applied in the workplace. For item 32, 72% of the students disagree with the statement *It is ok if, in my firm, women still earn less, on average, than men, especially younger women*. The answers in this item show the students' knowledge of the inclusion practices in the workplace and the lack of is application when excluding women and minority group members from equal employment opportunities.

For item 30, 65% of the students disagree (37) with the statement *I consider that stereotyping is acceptable when managing a diversified workforce*. The answers to this item show that 20 students are indifferent or accept stereotyping as a normal practice in the workplace. For item 36, 62% of the students (35) disagree with the statement *Organizations should not hire mentally and physically disabled people*. These answers reveal that 22 students are indifferent or accept as a normal practice the exclusion of people with disabilities from the workplace. For item 29, 59% of the students disagree (33) with the statement *I think that diversity training is not significant to increase recognition of the meaning and importance of valuing diversity*. These answers reveal that 23 students do not recognize diversity training as a human resource tool for leveraging awareness and valuing diversity in the workplace. For item 31, 50% of the students disagree (28) with the statement *Companies with a reputation for providing opportunities for diverse employees are most likely to have a disadvantage in the labor market,* out of 56 students, 28 strongly disagree and somewhat disagree, with 50%. These answers reveal that 28 students consider that by providing opportunities to diverse employees in the labor markets do not bring any reputation to the firm, and even it may be implicit that they consider it is not determinant for choosing that organization as a good place to work.

The Global Competence Dimension

The Global competence dimension is measured through eight items. By using the 5-Likert scale (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree), students indicated their degree of agreement/disagreement with the statements, regarding their abilities to function in the world of the world. The results are shown in Table 9. Then the results are commented in the following paragraphs from higher to lower agreement degree.

Table 9: Students' Perceptions About the Global Competence Dimension

Item Number	Item	Total Answers	Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree	
			Answers	%
46	I am confident that I can thrive in any culture or country	57		
47	I unconsciously adapt my behavior and mannerism when I am interacting with people of other cultures	57	49	86
48	I often adapt my communication style to other people's cultural backgrounds	57	50	89
49	I am able to communicate in different ways with people from different cultures	57	46	81
50	I am informed of current issues that impact international relations	37	37	66
51	I am fluent in more than one language	57	45	79
52	I welcome working with people who have different cultural values from mine	57	52	91
53	I am able to mediate interactions between people of different cultures by helping them understand each other's values and practices	57	42	74

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students perception on the Global Competence Dimension.

First are presented the results for thirteen of the twenty items that conform the inclusion and diversity dimension. By selecting a higher degree of agreement on each of them, the students are perceived with a higher competence for managing inclusion and diversity in the workplace. For item 46, out of 57 students, 86% of them agree that *they are confident that they can thrive in any culture or country*. For item 47, out of 57 students, 89% of them agree that *they unconsciously adapt their behavior and mannerism when they are interacting with people of other cultures*. For item 48, out of 57 students, 81% of them agree that *they often adapt their communication style to other people's cultural backgrounds*. For item 49, out of 57 students, 82% of them agree that *they are able to communicate in different ways with people from different cultures*. For item 50, out of 56 students, 66% of them agree that *they are informed of current issues that impact international relations*. For item 51, 79% of the students agree that *they are fluent in more than one language*, out of 57 students, 45 strongly agree and somewhat agree, with 79%. For item 52, out of 57 students, 91% of them agree that *they welcome working with people who have different cultural values from them*. For item 53, out of 57 students, 74% of them agree that *they are able to mediate interactions between people of different cultures by helping them understand each other's values and practices*.

The Multiculturalism Dimension

The Multiculturalism dimension is measured through five items and the 5-Likert scale (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree). The results on regard the degree of acculturation abilities in the students are shown in Table 10, and then commented in next paragraphs.

Table 10: Students' Perceptions About the Multiculturalism Dimension

Item Number	Item	Total Answers	Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree	
			Answers	%
54	I see myself as a bicultural individual	55	38	69
55	I have had significant exposure to two different cultures	57	43	75
56	I have internalized both the cultures in which I have lived	56	37	66
57	I speak fluently both the languages of my native country and that of my current country of domicile	57	37	65
58	I understand people in this culture as much as those in my home country	37	43	75
59	I value biculturality, biliteracy, and bilingualism	57	48	84

Authors 'own elaboration. This table shows the students perception on the Multiculturalism Dimension.

For item 54, 69% of the students, all from UTRGV (38 out of 47), *see themselves as bicultural individuals*.

For item 55, 75% of the students, all from UTRGV (43 out of 47), affirm that *they have had significant exposure to two different cultures*.

For item 56, 66% of the students, all from UTRGV (37 out of 47), affirm that *they have internalized both the cultures in which they have lived*.

For item 57, 65% of the students, all from UTRGV (37 out of 47), affirm that *they speak fluently both the languages of my native country and that of my current country of domicile*.

For item 58, 75% of the students, all from UTRGV (43 out of 47), affirm that *they understand people in this culture as much as those in my home country*.

For item 59, 84% of the students affirm that *they value biculturality, biliteracy, and bilingualism*.

It is relevant to comment that none of the UNiš students' agrees with items 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58, but most of them agree with item 59. This result was expected, since those students have almost null contact with people from another background, culture and language on daily basis in the place where they reside. In another hand, the UTRGV students have more exposure to the factors that compose the Multiculturalism Dimension. UTRGV students reside in the Rio Grande Valley area, which is a Texan borderland with Mexico, and this fact has direct influence on the population living there. As we mention in the demographics section, 60% of the UTRGV students hold more than one nationality, mainly the Mexican-American. Besides, the primary language spoken at home by those students is Spanish with 48%, then English with 37% (35 and 27 students' families, respectively). This intersection shows that fifteen families, among the 47 from UTRGV students, speak either English or Spanish, which means that 34% of the students' families are bilingual. These data are direct indicators of multiculturalism.

Finally, in the item number 60, the students were describing their experiences by participating in the COIL course using a maximum of five words. Here are shown some of the students insights: Meaningful, and important for future work. Interesting, exciting, informative, and interactive. Innovative, satisfied, and superior. Fun, informative, thoughtful, planned, and educational. Organized, informative, and helpful. Diversity, styles, inclusion, culture, and humans. Great class worth taking. Exciting, informative, comfortable, fun, and nice. Insightful, new ideas, oriented knowledge, and gain eye-opener. Diverse, informative, experiential, fun, and thorough. Exciting, knowledge, culture, teamwork, and opportunity. New and out of our comfort zone. Fun, good, and interesting. Great, informative, and different. Exciting, knowledgeable, interesting, motivating, and healthy. Different, new, challenging, and cool. Learning about

the management world. Exchange of experience and knowledge, and new friends. Interesting, educational, challenging, informational, and understandable. Helpful, eye-opening, and intriguing. New understanding, managing ready, and diversity knowledge. Diversity, understanding, and care for people. Understanding how to manage people from different cultures or backgrounds. Informative, great, and eye-opening. Strength in learning about new cultures and how to interact with them. Successful experience getting to work with students in a foreign country. Interesting, Collaboration, Learning, Communication, Intercultural. It was a great experience I learned a lot. Interesting, adventuring, fun, informative, and outstanding. It has helped me gain experience in working with people with different cultural views and practices. Fun, exciting, new, different, opportunity. Straightforward, welcoming, fun, educating, and exciting.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The goal of this paper is to present a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) course, based on the design of common curricula, using a Learning Management System (LMS). Along this document were detailed instructional materials to collaborate with international classmates, team-taught activities to create awareness from diverse cultural and to explore international entrepreneurship opportunities, in a multicultural academic environment The main results presented are the students' perceptions on the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence, and multiculturalism. Those perceptions were measured by using a survey, once the students completed the five weeks of the common course. It also discusses challenges, opportunities and limitations. On regards data and methodology, this research was conducted in the spring semester of 2022 by the authors of this paper. The implementation of the 5-week COIL course was November 7th to December 7th, 2022 and the participants were 47 students from the COBE-UTRGV and 10 students from the Faculty of Economics, UNiš. An instrument, under the survey modality, was designed for collecting quantitative data from the participant students, during the fifth week of the joint course. This survey counts sixty questions organized into six sections: the consent statement, demographics, the dimension of managing inclusion and diversity, the dimension of global competences, the dimension of multiculturalism, and a final open answer question. The most relevant findings of this research are presented under the three core dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence and multiculturalism. The general perceptions of the students by living the experience of a COIL course are settled out in the last section of the conclusions.

The Inclusion and Diversity Dimension Results

The students have a high degree of agreement, ranging from 91% to 72%, on regard the inclusion and diversity statement. Their answers confirm that: they value diversity and are ready for considering others in the workplace while providing accommodations; most of them value diversity as a crucial piece to work and manage human resources in organizations; they are ready to work with individuals different from themselves; they are expecting to design inclusion practices in the workplace. They are aware of the local and international legislations, and are ready to comply with the requirements that apply to the human resources processes. They are willing to create a corporate diversity approach in the workplace. They are ready to leverage the organizations functions by hiring a diverse workforce, according to the firm needs. They believe that the settlement and observation of codes of ethics, independently of the country of origin and country of application, is necessary in the workplace. They are willing to improve the diversity and inclusion practices in the workplace, by applying what they have been learning in the school and the workplace. They are aware and ready for working and managing in global environments.

Even when the students are ready for showing respect to individuals with a different cultural background and beliefs, they rated with an agreement of 68% when considering the degree that another individuals will embrace the same core values of compassion, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. This result may be due to the lack of confidence that others will present a behavior framed by the statement. Same level of agreement was assigned to the idea of supporting affirmative action programs to correct the

exclusion of minorities from the business world. Most of the students that marked different from strongly agree and somewhat agree with this statement are from the UNiš, and it may due to the fact that the Serbian population belong to a very compact ethnical group were the concept of minority groups (besides women) almost do not exist. Since only 22 students would like to work as a parent-country national at a foreigner subsidiary (even when the previous results confirm that they embrace diversity and inclusion in the workplace and feel ready to work and manage people from diverse backgrounds), this response shows that most of them prefer to work in their country of residence.

On regard the disagree perceptions of the students (in the range of 86% to 72%), due to the construction of the items, it was found that most of the students reject any practices of sexual harassment in the workplace, the practice of own culture superiority, and the lack of equal employment opportunity practices. It was also found that a 65% to 62% of the students do not accept stereotyping when managing a diversified workforce, and discrimination of disabled people from the workplace opportunities; but still 20 to 22 of them are indifferent or accept them as normal practices. Finally, 59% to 50% of the students disagree with the lower significance of diversity training as a valuing diversity practice, and the disadvantage that bring the opportunities for diverse employees in the labor market. More efforts need to be done to increase the awareness of the 23 and 28 students that do not recognize diversity training as a human resource tool for leveraging awareness and valuing diversity in the workplace, neither for bringing a positive reputation to the firms with those practices.

The Global Competence Dimension Results

The students have a high degree of agreement, ranging from 91% to 79%, on regard the global competence dimension. Their answers confirm that they perceive themselves as individuals able to welcome working with people who have different cultural values from them. They consider are able to communicate in different ways and often adapt their communication style, behavior and mannerism when they are interacting with people of other cultures. They are fluent in more than one language and are able to mediate interactions between people of different cultures by helping them understand each other's values and practices. They are confident that can thrive in any culture or country. Even though many of them (37, out of 56 students) agree on the statement that they are informed of current issues that impact international relations, 66% is a lower rate of agreement compared with the rest of the items in this dimension. This result means that their perception is that there are lacking of enough and relevant information for managing international relations.

The Multiculturalism Dimension Results

On regard the multiculturalism dimension, the UTRGV students have more exposure to the factors that compose the it. UTRGV students reside in the Rio Grande Valley area, which is a Texan borderland with Mexico, and this fact has direct influence on the population living there. As we mention in the demographics section, 60% of the UTRGV students hold more than one nationality, mainly the Mexican-American. Besides, the primary language spoken at home by those students is Spanish with 48%, then English with 37% (35 and 27 students' families, respectively). This intersection shows that fifteen families, among the 47 from UTRGV students, speak either English or Spanish, which means that 34% of the students' families are bilingual. Besides, they have internalized both the cultures in which they have lived and they understand people from both of them. These data are direct indicators of a high competence on the multiculturalism dimension. It is relevant to comment that none of the UNiš students' agrees with items 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58, but most of them (89%) agree with item 59 by considering themselves as individuals that value biculturalism, biliteracy, and bilingualism. This result was expected, since those students have almost null contact with people from another background, culture and language on daily basis, in the place where they reside.

Students General Perceptions

The general perceptions of the students, after sharing a five-week course under the COIL model, can be summarized by next insights. It was a great experience; I learned a lot. This course allows me an exchange of experience and knowledge, while making new friends. By taking this course, I got a broader understanding about how to manage people from different cultures or backgrounds. It has helped me gain experience in working with people with different cultural views and practices. I was learning about the management world. This course strength my knowledge about new cultures and how interact with them. It has been a successful experience getting to work with students from a foreign country.

Implications of Findings for Educators

After teaching and exploring the students' perceptions on regard the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence, and multiculturalism, we can agree with Helm (2019), on regard the findings for educators: virtual exchange is an alternative application of communication technologies to foster the building of positive relationships across cultures and engagement with people from a wide range of backgrounds. We confirmed that a virtual course under the COIL model is also viewed by the students as a way of developing transversal competences such as intercultural communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and use of foreign languages, which are seen to be fundamental for their current and future professional activity. As evidenced in the results, this Collaborative Online International Learning course helped to promote students learning across a multi-faceted skillset including respect, self-awareness, critical cultural adaptation and relationship building. The most relevant findings include how the students' experience under a COIL course impact their intercultural sensitivity within their disciplinary practices through the promotion of peers' cultural approaches and epistemic knowledge, through a process of discovery and adaptation. As Shulteis (et. al., 2015), we also found that by incorporating the development of technology and the strengthening of international collaboration and connectivity, COIL has become a valuable approach to pedagogy as part of internationalizing the curriculum, with scope for diversity of practices across all subjects. Definitively, we can conclude that a COIL course is a cost-effective solution for universities to internationalize curricula. By designing and teaching a COIL course, educators are preparing their students with the transversal competences that allow them to insert successfully in real-industry settings local and in international environments. A well-designed COIL course develops and increases the students' sensitivity and awareness of different intercultural contexts, develops new partnerships globally and provides the students with international learning opportunities and global competencies.

Challenges and Limitations

Even though the multiple benefits of a COIL course, it is fair to comment about the challenges that it involves, at least from the authors perspective. Since the COIL courses do not come by institutional efforts, it is up to the faculty to conduct it or not. It is also important to point out the lack of pedagogical and instructional support, as well as the technological professional development and the administrative and IT support, for the faculty interested in designing and conducting it. An important challenge for the faculties was to find an their international partner interested in this joint project. One more challenge was the difference of time zone in which the institutions are located. Due to the difference of 7 hours most of the meetings that faculties held, for planning and conducting the course were out of their working hours. Then this issue was extended to the lectures schedule and common working time for the students. The latest time for starting the lectures in the United States of America was 9:30 a.m. Central Standard Time (CST),, while for the students in UNiš, it was 4:30 p.m. Since the course was taught during the fall semester, when the lectures ended after one hour and fifteen minutes, it was 10:45 a.m. for the UTRGV students, but it was 5:45 p.m. for the UNiš students. The implications of the time zone differences make that the UNiš students delay their regular schedule for leaving the campus, under the weather from the geographical zone were

UNiš is located (rain, cold and loss of daylight after 4 p.m.). Other challenges were languages (English/Serbian), institutional cultures and expectations, semester periods, course contents (Entrepreneurship and Principles of Management), methods for learning, assessment, learning management systems, quality assurance systems, issues of technology, and lack of technical and administrative support. Even though the virtual classroom was not easy to manage, once it was designed and implemented, the semester finished successfully for both partners.

After this experience we agree with Zhang & Pearlman (2017) when they affirm that possible challenges to the success of COIL courses are lack of understanding and support, time, technology, funding, promotions, and resources in general. Thus, it is essential for the administrators to support and recognize the work of the participants. It is also worthwhile for higher education institutions to explore the possibilities for overcoming the challenges and offering faculty and students collaborative online international course experiences. In terms of technology, the main obstacle of a COIL course is the exclusion of those individuals with no access to computational equipment and appropriate internet. In addition, the Learning Management System (LMS) of an institution plays an important role in designing, conducting and participating in a COIL course. Since the institutions may have different LMS, or even may have not any LMS, this resource, its characteristic and authorization of usage by external professor and students may be a limitation for the joint course.

Future Research

As we settled in the data and methodology section, this quantitative research purpose was to bring out the students' perceptions, on the dimensions of inclusion and diversity, global competence and Multiculturalism, through their answers in the survey, but through the course, we gathered qualitative data that should be subject of study. The qualitative data is the result of a simple observation of the student's interactions with their peers in online sets, mainly by their comments on the discussion boards, their inputs in their collaborative (in teams) final assignment, their comments on the closing session, and their anonymous post on the institutional course evaluations. This qualitative information was gathered with the students' acknowledgment and authorization for been used in a future stage of this research.

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