

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Support for Global Project Based Learning: U.S. Teacher

Motivation, Online Training, Virtual Teamwork, Trust and Identity

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The purpose of this study is to increase understanding related to implementation and training for global project-based learning in the U.S. K-12 classrooms and to inform the work of teachers, administrators and trainers as they seek to establish effective teacher professional development, knowledge networking and diffusion of innovation in educational environments. The goals of the study are: to describe the motivational and environmental factors which influence pedagogy choices for a group of teachers, to identify key personal and environmental influences on online teacher training which support or hinder implementation of global project-based learning and to identify the social and cultural characteristics of a group of teachers who have implemented this pedagogy in their U.S. classrooms. The role trust plays, especially related to virtual teamwork and international collaboration, is also examined.

This research, guided by ethnographic research methods and techniques, including archival research, participation, observation, surveys and interviews, provides an in-depth and rich description of the cultural landscape of one group of U.S. K-12 teachers who have been trained for global

project-based learning implementation. The study required that the researcher be personally involved with the community being studied for a two-year time period.

This study informs the work of administrators, educators and virtual team facilitators, as they seek to enhance online community development, virtual teamwork, and trust and support among teachers. The study contributes to the growing field of research related to the intersection of technology and teaching and learning, and the role that culture and community play in social learning in a collaborative culture.

The results of the study indicate:

The importance teachers place on authentic, collaborative learning situations, social connectivity, application of technology and opportunities to cultivate meaningful change in their world;

The benefits of a social support system, horizontal organizational structure, risk-taking opportunities and authentic learning practices for teachers;

The professional development benefits of cross-cultural communication and virtual teamwork;

The specific social and cultural teacher characteristics that most contribute to initializing and sustaining global project based learning;

The importance of shared goals and values with the training and support organization; The benefits of leadership opportunities for teachers; and

The role of trust in pedagogical choices, professional development, international collaboration and organizational structure.