COIL BEVI Project Research Plan:
Questions, Analyses, Implications, Applications[1]

Any serious effort to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of virtual learning in general – and Virtual Exchange (VE) / Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in particular – needs to develop and commit to a comprehensive and sustainable research plan. Emergent largely from educational and psychological research and practice for well over 100 years, multiple academic disciplines and professional fields (e.g., assessment theory, practice, and measurement; models of human functioning, learning, growth, and development; program evaluation; research design; statistics; test development and psychometrics) have long grappled with fundamental questions of how to assess complex phenomena and constructs in a reliable, valid, and epistemologically sophisticated manner. The study of VE / COIL is no exception. Because good assessment is good research, anyone seeking to assess the impact of these methodologies and pedagogies should first appreciate that what may seem – on the face of it – to be a relatively straightforward process is anything but. In other words, the very question – Does VE / COIL work? – is highly complex to ask, much less answer. That is because, if we adhere to the highest quality standards of applied assessment research, we must first formulate the most salient questions to ask regarding the practices we seek to evaluate.

In this sense, planning for research is like planning for a trip. Knowing that we cannot know everything before we get started – while also preparing for these unknowns – makes the difference between an enjoyable voyage of discovery and a woeful waste of time. So how can we know what we don't know? From decades of applied assessment researchers who have gone before us, we understand the importance of asking the right questions before we set off on our own journey. Good questions help us plan for our trip and map the right course. Without such preparation, we will not know where we are going, what we will need to get there, or when we have arrived. So, when we think about mapping the terrain – for a serious approach to applied assessment research on VE / COIL and virtual learning in general – what questions should we prioritize to head us in the right directions?

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[1] In addition to other citations and materials related to the COIL BEVI Project (e.g., see https://www.acenet.edu/Pages/Engage/home.aspx; https://www.kansai-u.ac.jp/Kokusai/IIGE/resources/BEVI-COIL.php ; http://www.ibavi.org/index.php), and the 2016 edited volume, *Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: Theory, Research, and Practice* (see https://www.springerpub.com/making-sense-of-beliefs-and-values-9780826104526.html), aspects of this document are based upon the following presentation: Shealy, C.N. & Sternberger, L.G. (2019, October). *Assessing international, multicultural, and transformative learning: Guiding principles and best practices*. Symposium presentation at the JASSO Assessment Seminar, Tokyo, Japan. This presentation and additional information (including further web-based resources) are available at https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/system/files/127495/keynote%E2%91%A1%28Dr.Craig%20Shealy%26Dr.Lee%20Sternberger%29symposium20191004.pdf.

First, and most basically, what do we mean by VE / COIL? Is there more than one version? How are such pedagogies conceptualized, designed, and delivered? How do we account for such conceptual and applied differences? If we're going to conduct high quality applied assessment research – that would be recognized as such by colleagues with expertise in this area – how well are we able to standardize the delivery systems and other conditions that will affect what we measure (e.g., learning, growth, and development from VE / COIL)? How can we use assessment both for purposes of evaluation as well as facilitation of VE / COIL?

Many of the above questions deal implicitly with whether VE / COIL "works." But what does that really mean? By "works," are we referring to knowledge or skill acquisition and expression? Do we mean deeper change, or transformation even, of our students in directions that we – as educators, students, parents, administrators, policy makers, funders – value? How do we assess the dispositions and competencies of those who deliver such methodologies? What about the learners (e.g., what mediates and moderates – influences, shapes, or causes – learning)? How do we differentially and appropriately measure what is perceived and experienced by the learner versus what is evidenced and expressed to the teacher? How do we understand – much less measure – who learners are before, during, and after the learning experience and how such variables influence the processes and outcomes we observe? For example, how do we know what "outcomes" may be accurately attributable to the intervention we deliver (VE / COIL) versus other variables that are, and are not, accounted for in our research design, such as who our learners were before the intervention began and how those variables affected subsequent learning? In short, what are our models of what "learning" actually is and how do we know when it has occurred? More fundamentally, what are our models of who human beings are?

It is essential to grapple with questions like these for two fundamental reasons. First, our answers to such questions reveal what our underlying models are. These models represent our implicit or explicit theories regarding why things are the way they are and what, if anything, should be done about that. Second, our models guide our methods. In other words, the assessment methods we prefer, develop, select, implement, and analyze are directly related to the models (e.g., our versions of reality, epistemological suppositions) that we believe are real or true. As such, we need to ask how ecologically valid our models are (i.e., How well do our models map onto or represent real world complexity as it actually exists insofar as such complexity can be reliably and validly measured?). In short, what we believe we can or cannot measure, and why – our assessment method – tends to be based upon the underlying model we hold to be real or true. As such, what is most important is what we say we can measure, what we say we can't, and why. That is because we may have inadvertently adopted a model as "real" or "true" that is inadequate or even incorrect from an ecologically valid standpoint.[1]

For example, if our model of "student learning" is seen in terms of "knowledge acquisition" or the demonstration of "intercultural sensitivity," how are we operationalizing (i.e., measuring)

such constructs? As if not more important, what are we not measuring that might be even more predictive of learning, growth, and development? Can we really compartmentalize humans or human learning into such unidimensional, isolable, and non-interactive domains? What if our models of what it means to be human recognized – indeed insisted – that we simultaneously measure as much of our complexity and individuality as possible, not picking "winners" in advance (e.g., knowledge acquisition or intercultural competence)?

What if "learning" and "being human" are ineluctably intertwined? Could we assess such dynamic intersectionality? To do so, wouldn't we have to 1) measure multiple domains at the same time (e.g., affect, cognition, culture, context) while 2) taking into account our unique etiologies (e.g., developmental and life history) as well as 3) the formative variables that shape who we say we are (e.g., gender, economics, education, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, politics, etc.) while 4) also evaluating the differential influence of the "interventions" we experience (e.g., courses, experiences, programs, workshops) and the "interveners" (e.g., instructors, directors, leaders) who are trying to compel us to learn, grow, develop, or otherwise change? Can we truly understand and evaluate such obliquely interacting complexities?

Yes. If we have the right models and methods, and know how – and more importantly why – to use them, we can indeed ask and answer such intertwined questions of breadth and depth. It's not easy to do so, but it can be – and has been – done.[1,2,4,5,6,7,8,10] Quite frankly, such questions must be asked and answered if we truly want to understand "what's going on" with VE / COIL or any other intervention that seeks to promote learning, growth, development, and change, as demonstrated by the corollary and well established field of psychotherapy process and outcome research.[2] As important, what happens if we *don't* ask these questions either because we find them too complex or don't even know they are there to be asked? We will measure something other and/or lesser than who we are as learners, for sure, but also as human beings. Our models and methods will not be up to the job. Our maps will miss key features, lack essential detail, or be too small or incomplete to get us where we need to go. Worse, at the end of our journey, we may not even recognize we didn't go anywhere at all. We'll deludedly imagine we saw the whole forest when we only looked at the same old trees.

In short, to engage in a serious effort to understand and evaluate the impact of VE / COIL, it is essential that questions like those described above are asked and answered using models and methods that are up to the task. If one does not appreciate the salience of such questions,

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[2] Decades of research have demonstrated not only that we can measure the effects of various forms of psychotherapeutic intervention, but the complex interactions between different types of interventions and the associated characteristics and behaviors of therapists and clients. In this respect, the vast literature on psychotherapy processes and outcomes offers a compelling model for how the impact of VE, COIL, and virtual learning in generally, may be studied in a comprehensive and sustainable – as well as valid and reliable – manner. Although space limitations and the present focus preclude a literature review, a good initial resource for the interested reader would be the American Psychological Association's Society for the Advancement of Psychotherapy at https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/.

models, and methods, find sophisticated experts who do. Among other competencies (e.g., the inclination to play well with others), such individuals should be demonstrably committed to theoretically grounded, ecologically valid, depth-based, and mixed methods applied assessment research. Otherwise, time, effort, and resources may well be wasted on a well-intentioned but inadequate attempt to ask and answer the questions at hand.[1]

On the basis of the above background and context – and to map the terrain of the COIL BEVI Project (CBP) – our journey will focus on four paths of inquiry, each of which is described next: 1) Student Impact, 2) Faculty Impact, 3) Longitudinal Impact, and 4) Implications and Applications for Programs, Policies, and Practices.

I.   Student Impact and the COIL BEVI Project

From the standpoint of the COIL BEVI Project, an overarching question has to do with the fundamental impact of COIL, and other approaches to VE, on student learning, growth, and development. From the perspective of multiple stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, administrators, parents, funders, policy makers), the question of "whether COIL works" is at the heart of the matter and integral to the interests of international leaders in VE / COIL, and partners in this CBP Research Plan, including the American Council on Education, Class2Class Institute for Innovative Global Education, International Beliefs and Values Institute, and SUNY COIL Center. However, as also noted above, to answer this essential question, we must measure and account for many interacting variables that may mediate or moderate (i.e., influence, shape, or cause) these outcomes, including student and instructor characteristics as well as the design and delivery of COIL / VE experiences and the virtual platform itself.

For example, as with study abroad, and based upon real world experience, there is reason to believe that the degree to which COIL intentionally helps students make sense of their interactions, encounters, and experiences – "facilitated reflection" from the standpoint of the SUNY COIL Center – may profoundly influence the impact of COIL. However, we presently lack sufficient data regarding this contention in relation to VE / COIL or what the attendant best practices might be (e.g., Does the presence or absence of facilitated reflection differentially influence the impact of COIL?). Likewise, our experience is that faculty differ substantially in their ability or willingness to incorporate or engage in facilitated reflection in their classes. Is that contention correct and to what degree? By extension, could we gather data to help us identify "best practices" for training and delivery of facilitated reflection? As another example, we also need to understand the role of technology in COIL-based learning, growth, and development in general. For example, what effects are there of the common "virtual platform" we adopt for VE / COIL (i.e., the system that "holds" and "facilitates" the COIL / VE experience in general and related course processes and outcomes), which is Class2Class for the CBP?

On the one hand, we know from research on international, multicultural, and transformative learning that the following "7Ds" appear to be empirically associated with "who learns what and why, and under what circumstances":

> **1. duration** (i.e., how long an international, multicultural, or transformative education experience occurs); **2. difference** (i.e., how different the experience is from what the "self" of the experiencer is accustomed); **3. depth** (i.e., what the capacity of the learner is to experience all that the intervention is able to convey); **4. determine** (i.e., through formal and informal assessment, how well the intervener understands his/her audience); **5. design** (i.e., based upon knowledge of the audience and careful deliberation and development, what the quality of the intervention is); **6. deliver** (i.e., how well the intervener can fulfill the transformative potential of the intervention); and **7. debrief** (i.e., before, during, and after the intervention, how deeply the intervener assesses the nature of the learning experience, and uses such feedback to improve planned, current, and future interventions) (Wandschneider et al., 2015, pp. 217 – 218).[3]

There is no reason to believe that these same variables wouldn't also differentially impact the effectiveness of VE / COIL, which also fall within the purview of international, multicultural, and transformative learning. However, data supporting this supposition are limited. Moreover, when an intervention variable like "facilitated reflection" is included in the mix (which would appear to fall under the "design," "deliver," and "debrief" Ds as noted above, but potentially could interface with all 7Ds), we have the makings of a true CBP study that would be of demonstrable relevance to VE / COIL scholars, educators, students, practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and funders as well as the field of virtual learning in general.

As a final example of needed research on student learning, from the standpoint of the SUNY COIL Center, it is important to understand how the anticipation of VE / COIL may affect student readiness for, engagement in, and satisfaction from such learning experiences. That is because students who participate in study abroad are

> …doing so with at least some degree of forethought and voluntary participation, regardless of their motivation. But COIL collaborations can either be known to students before they sign up for the class or can be a surprise that they learn about when they get the syllabus. So there may or may not be any element of voluntary participation. Does this have an impact on outcomes?[3]

From the standpoint of the 7Ds, these important "priming" and "metacognitive" considerations would be considered part of the "before" dimension of debriefing (i.e., "pre-briefing). In fact, considerable evidence suggests that students are better able to benefit from and engage with

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[3] ML. Forward, personal communication, October 22, 2020.

learning processes when they know why they are learning what they are learning and have a sense of agency regarding their participation (e.g., they experience themselves as helping to shape the learning experience, which COIL certainly can, and arguably should, do).[4] However, more research is needed to understand better whether, how, and for whom such "pre-briefing" impacts the processes and outcomes of VE / COIL learning.

In short, to understand the true impact of VE / COIL (or any other approach to virtual learning), our assessment methodologies and research designs must be able to operationalize and analyze multiple interacting variables, not just a few that may intuitively seem most salient. At our present state of knowledge, as emphasized throughout this CBP Research Plan, VE / COIL studies that do not account for such complexities (e.g., focus on only a few relevant variables, don't assess in a comprehensive and mixed methods manner) may waste time and resources because such real world complexities are not sufficiently accounted for in matters of assessment and research design conceptualization, design, delivery, and analysis. Such assessment research will not be sufficiently illuminating since too many variables were not examined simultaneously, which means far too much residual or error variance will remain. As such, the COIL BEVI Project not only examines numerous and interacting processes and outcomes of learning, growth, and development through comprehensive, depth-based, and mixed methods assessment, but also interventions like "reflective facilitation" and our "virtual platform" to determine the differential impact of such pedagogies and methodologies and identify theoretically grounded and empirically supported best practices.

II.   Faculty Impact and the COIL BEVI Project

One of the most understudied components of international, multicultural, and transformative learning – including VE / COIL – is the role and impact of faculty. On the one hand, a vast literature exists regarding the "ingredients" of effective teaching and learning (e.g., Melguizo & Coates, 2017; Nortvig et al., 2018; Sorcinelli, 1991; Stronge et al., 2011; Wandschneider et al., 2015).[5] In fact, some scholars have contended that "the most critical investment we can make is

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[4] Although there are many relevant resources in this regard, the Center for Teaching and Learning at IUPUI offers an excellent point of entry: https://ctl.iupui.edu/Resources/Classroom-Management/Tips-for-Getting-Students-to-Prepare

[5] Extensive literatures exist regarding teacher effectiveness and student learning, which far exceed the purpose of the document. References noted here include:

Melguizo, T., & Coates, H. (2017). The value of assessing higher education student learning outcomes. AERA Open, 3(3), 1-2.

Nortvig, A., Petersen, A. K., & Balle, S. (2018). A literature review of the factors influencing E-learning and blended learning in relation to learning outcome, student satisfaction and engagement: *EJEL. Electronic Journal of E-Learning, 16*(1), 46-55.

Sorcinelli, M.D. (1991). Research findings on the seven principles. In A.W. Chickering & Z.F. Gamson (Eds.) *Applying the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education* (pp. 13-25). New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

in well-qualified, caring, and committed teachers" (Stronge et al., 2011, p. 351). That said, from a research standpoint, there are numerous complexities inherent in trying to tease out what teaching variables are associated with what learning outcomes, a situation that is further compounded within the realm of learning in general and VE / COIL learning in particular. That is because new sources of variance are inevitably introduced by such context, setting, and process-based variables. We know, for example, both anecdotally (e.g., through participation in classroom-based and annual reviews of teaching effectiveness) and empirically (e.g., by reviewing student learning outcomes) that all educators are not equal.

For instance, in the realm of international, multicultural, and transformative learning, evidence indicates that faculty who are assigned to teach the same courses to undergraduate students (e.g., on intercultural competence) may evince significantly different learning outcomes for students who, for all intents and purposes, are randomly assigned to such "identical classes." In other words, in pre-post studies (Time 1 assessment occurring at the beginning of the course and Time 2 assessment occurring at the end of the course) students with Instructor A may show deeply different outcomes on variables designed to measure international learning than students who ostensibly are taking the same course with Instructor B. The most parsimonious explanation for such findings (since students were more or less randomly assigned to each course) are differences among the styles and effectiveness of the course instructors who are "supposed to be" teaching the "same" required course. If appropriately reviewed and presented, such data should be used to promote constructive self-reflection and pedagogical refinements which are more likely to achieve course objectives in the future (e.g., Wandschneider et al., 2015).[3]

At another level, there are real questions about how the very act of teaching such pedagogies may be influenced by the characteristics and skills of the faculty members engaged in VE / COIL as well as whether they are impacted (positively, negatively, or not at all) by such engagement. For example, from the standpoint of the SUNY COIL Center, salient questions in this regard include (but are not limited to):

- Does COIL training shift faculty members' openness to new ideas and/or to considering multiple perspectives?
- Does COIL increase the degree to which faculty are globally aware?
- Does repeated COIL collaborations with the same partner/country or with different partners/countries amplify impacts?

Stronge, J., Ward, T., & Grant, L. (2011). What makes good teachers good? A cross-case analysis of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(4), 339-355.

Wandschneider, E., Pysarchik, D., Sternberger, L., Ma, W., Acheson, K., Baltensperger, B., Good, R., Brubaker, B., Baldwin, T., Nishitani, H., Wang, F., Reisweber, J., Hart, V. (2015). The Forum BEVI Project: Applications and implications for international, multicultural, and transformative learning. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 25*, 150-228.

- Are changes constant over time?
- Do changes in faculty result in changes to institutional culture?
- Are there measurable interactions between faculty and institutional commitments to VE / COIL (e.g., greater faculty and/or institutional commitment leading to more VE / COIL and vice versa)?

In short, we will not sufficiently be able to understand or evaluate the impact of VE / COIL on student learning, growth, development – or other salient short- and long-term variables (e.g., learning satisfaction, worldview shift, internationalization effectiveness, occupational preference, employment success, overall impact of higher education) – if the roles and contributions of teaching faculty are not also investigated.

III.   Longitudinal Impact and the COIL BEVI Project

In many ways, the "holy grail" of VE / COIL evaluation has to do with the long-term impacts of such pedagogies on student learning, growth, development, and related "real world" outcomes. There are many research questions to consider in this regard. For example, how do we understand – and how do we assess – the relative influence of VE / COIL over time? Does "more" VE / COIL result in "more" change in directions that we (as educators, students, parents, administrators, policy makers, funders) would deem valuable (e.g., greater openness to self, others, and the world at large)? Can we examine both aggregate findings in this regard (i.e., for groups as a whole) while also accounting for within-group variability, since abundance evidence suggests we must not assume that learners are the same before, during, and after the learning experience? What might the association be between VE / COIL and longer-term outcomes? For instance, is there evidence that participating in VE / COIL actually influences fundamental outcome variables over time such as how individuals experience self, others, and the larger world, the types of careers that are pursued, or the acquisition of competencies or cultivation of dispositions that are valued by employers and/or in a relational context (e.g., interpersonal skills, emotional capacity, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity)?

From related work on questions like these in an international, multicultural, and transformative learning context, we do have evidence not only that measurable and durable T1 / T2 change occurs as a result of exposure to such high impact educational practices. We also can see that such changes often occur differentially, which means that we must include, but go far beyond, aggregated (i.e., average) pre-post assessment. To take just one example, cross-sectional and longitudinal BEVI research in the MENA region (e.g., Middle East and North Africa) across three separate annual cohorts of young people revealed striking outcome patterns. Specifically, in a leadership development program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, a majority of young people form the MENA region showed T1 / T2 changes that presumably were in directions that were valued by program directors. However, a substantial minority of the same

students showed changes in the opposite direction (e.g., becoming less open and more rigid regarding their own beliefs and processes and less curious about others), findings that interestingly were more pronounced at times for female participants (Giesing, 2017).[6]

Other studies have indicated that from a longitudinal standpoint, we have to go beyond T1 / T2 analyses, since measurable changes at T2 (i.e., the end of a course, study abroad, or other learning experience) may move in directions that are "undesirable" (e.g., students becoming less culturally open than they were before the experience) only to rebound substantially in subsequent months at T3 assessment, to the point that we are seeing the kinds of changes we would in fact want over time (e.g., greater critical thinking, openness to self and other, emotional capacity) (Wandschneider et al., 2015).[3] Relatedly, from a longitudinal standpoint, considerable evidence suggests that we may well be able to predict student learning, growth, and development outcomes months or years later – and even before the learning experience begins – by sufficiently accounting for self and identity structures (e.g., life history and demographics, attributional tendencies, emotional capacity, beliefs about gender, politics, culture, religions) that are empirically evident in advance of the learning experience (e.g., Wang et al., 2020).[7]

Overall, research of this nature – which accounts for complex and interacting processes and outcomes over time as well as within-group variance – is necessary to demonstrate the impact of any experience designed to facilitate learning, growth, and development, including, but not limited to, VE / COIL. As such, the COIL BEVI Project includes a strong commitment to longitudinal applied assessment research, which is by definition, more likely to result in findings that are stable and ecologically valid over time.

4.   Implications and Applications for Programs, Policies, and Practices

As may be evident by now, the kinds of questions the COIL BEVI Project is pursuing are designed to provide actionable findings that scholars, educators, administrators, funders, and policy makers may use in the "real world" of Virtual Exchange, Collaborative Online International Learning, and virtual learning in general. Although valued space is deliberately set aside in the CBP for "basic research" that is simply exploratory (e.g., trying to understand complex interactions among educators and learners), we ultimately wish to develop best practices as well as actionable findings and recommendations that are demonstrably useful to VE / COIL stakeholders. In this regard, the CBP is deliberately built upon the Forum BEVI Project,

[6] Giesing, Whitney, "MEPI, BEVI, and EI leadership: Implications and applications for global leadership assessment and development" (2017). *Dissertations, 2014-2019*. 160. Retrieved from https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/diss201019/160/.

[7] Wang F., Pait K., Acheson K., Sternberger L., Staton R., Shealy C.N. (2020) Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory Assessment of Global Identity: Implications and Applications for International, Cross-Cultural and Transformative Learning. In: Frawley J., Russell G., Sherwood J. (eds) *Cultural Competence and the Higher Education Sector*. Springer, Singapore. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-15-5362-2_6

a six-year initiative involving around 20 colleges and universities in the United States and internationally. This endeavor resulted in 15 implications and applications for evaluating and facilitating international, multicultural, and transformative learning, lessons that have provided considerable guidance to the structure and process of the COIL BEVI Project.

Such implications and applications extend beyond the particulars of specific VE / COIL courses to big picture questions of how educational content and processes can and should be delivered in a world that is increasingly interconnected and subject to local and global phenomena like the coronavirus pandemic. For example, online learning may be derogated as inadequate, boring, or "less than" in person learning. Is such an anecdotal contention empirically supported, and if so, to what degree, for whom, and under what circumstances? In contrast, could virtual approaches to learning – such as VE / COIL – be as or even more stimulating and relevant, or even "high impact," than traditional learning environments? These are substantive questions, not only since virtual learning is expanding rapidly, but because the vast majority of students will never have the opportunity to study abroad. In short, for many reasons (e.g., diversity, equity, inclusion, internationalization), we need to understand much better how to "do" VE / COIL in a way that is experienced not only as effective but is demonstrably impactful over the short- and long-term.

More specifically, what can we learn through such research about the applicability of the "7Ds" of change to VE / COIL (Wandschneider et al., 2015)?[3] Practically, we need to ascertain whether, to what degree, for whom, and under what circumstances participation in VE / COIL is associated with learning, growth, and development as well as longer-term outcomes (e.g., employment). Related matters include the evaluation of how VE / COIL actually is delivered, not only in terms of pedagogy, but the systems that are used to host or facilitate these experiences such as Class2Class, the virtual platform we are using for the CBP. Among other questions, we want to understand how such a common system is experienced, what works best, what could be improved, and why?

As another practical matter, consider the reality that many institutions, and countries, are seeking to inculcate language competencies in their students in order to bolster social and economic development and ties internationally. These pragmatic realities are often highly prioritized nationally, with associated policy and funding implications. In Japan, for example, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has allocated vast sums to the goal of greater English acquisition by young people. It seems of great practical significance, therefore, that findings from a research and assessment study aligned with the COIL BEVI Project indicates that this goal will not be accomplished merely by adopting a "more is better" approach (i.e., allocating more time to English instruction). In fact, from an evidence-based perspective, data suggest that English acquisition is strongly mediated and moderated by the kinds of professional fields that students are pursuing, which interact further with fundamental attributional, emotional, and historical experiences and dispositions that incline students toward,

or against, the acquisition of English competencies (Nishitani, 2020).[8] Without having a theoretically grounded and empirically supported model and method to illuminate these underlying processes, money and other resources may simply be "thrown at the problem" without any understanding of "who learns what and why, and under what circumstances."

Relatedly and by extension, considerable evidence suggests that our entire concept of "learning" – to the degree it is defined in terms of the acquisition and demonstration of knowledge and skills – needs to be fundamentally reconceptualized. That is because knowledge and skills are necessary, but are by no means sufficient, to comprehend and envision solutions to the "wicked problems" of our day. These challenges (e.g., conflict resolution, global education, human rights, religious and cultural understanding, sustainability) require us to "cultivate the capacity to care" – to comprehend, believe in, feel, value, advocate for – solutions to problems that affect us most of all (Bhuyan et al., 2012).[9] As the eminent psychologist Robert Sternberg has observed:

> In educating our children, we as a society put great emphasis on knowledge and abstract analytical thinking. Our instruction and even our assessments, including standardized tests, weigh these factors heavily. But if you look at what moves a society and changes it, you don't find knowledge and abstract thinking having much to do with it. Rather, you find that societies move forward, and too often, backward, on the basis of the beliefs and values of their citizens and their leaders.[10]

Indeed, some evidence suggests that the more we prize our vaunted knowledge (e.g., as educators) – essential though it is – the less accessible we actually may be or become to our deepest feelings, needs, and experiences (i.e., Basic Openness on the BEVI). Such findings provide intriguing points to ponder regarding the potential impact of high levels of higher education.

What are the potential implications and applications from this perspective for the COIL BEVI Project? On the one hand, it would be helpful if we able empirically to operationalize what is meant by big picture constructs like "transformative," "engaged," and "high impact" learning, and indeed, research efforts aligned with the CBP are already underway (Acheson et al., 2020).[11] Toward such means and ends, what might we learn about cultivating the capacity to care through COIL and other approaches to VE as well as online learning in general? Such insight matters for many reasons, including the reality that we will never be able to send all students to study abroad

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[8] Nishitani, H. (January 2, 2020). English education reform-based on EBPM (Evidence-Based Policy Making). Retrieved from https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/english-education-reform/79823/.

[9] Shealy, C.N., Bhuyan, D., & Sternberger, L.G. (2012). Cultivating the capacity to care in children and Youth: Implications from EI Theory, EI Self, and BEVI. In U. Nayar (Ed.), *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* (pp. 240-255). New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.

[10] Quotation retrieved from https://www.springerpub.com/making-sense-of-beliefs-and-values-9780826104526.html

[11] Acheson, K., Dirkx, J., & Shealy, C. (2020). Assessing transformative learning. In E. Kostara, A. Gavrielatos, and D. Loads (Eds.), *Transformative learning theory and praxis: New perspectives and possibilities.* Taylor & Francis.

so that international learning is also transformative learning, a paradigm that is core to the CBP. Even if we could, it would not be sustainable (e.g., economically, environmentally) to do so. Moreover, virtual learning is not only here to stay, post-pandemic, but already was a vibrant component of international education, a reality that will become ineluctable as the world becomes more interconnected with each passing year.

From the COIL BEVI Project, what might we learn about learning, both in terms of knowledge and skills as well as these transformative levels – how to cultivate the capacity to care – through VE / COIL and other forms of virtual education? How could we translate what we discover not only into accessible findings but practices and pedagogies that meet the needs of our age, to transform students of all ages through virtual learning that is demonstrably deep and effective? Could other virtual technologies and modalities – such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), or augmented reality (AR) – be productively incorporated into VE / COIL and the CBP? By examining the complex interactions within and between teachers and learners, engaging each other in the virtual world, can we illuminate what works, what doesn't, and why, for whom, and under what circumstances? In many ways, the ultimate goal of the COIL BEVI Project is to derive actionable answers to questions like these.

In pursuit of such means and ends, CBP educators, scholars, practitioners, and leaders must remain mindful of a number of real world parameters and practical next steps. **First,** questions of this scope and nature are vast, and no initiative – including the COIL BEVI Project – is likely to answer all of them in a definitive manner, particularly over the short-term. **Second** and relatedly, this process will take time. For example, the Forum BEVI Project, upon which the CBP is built as noted above, took six years to complete, so patience and humor will be valued virtues. **Third,** the CBP endeavor will expand. Although beginning with institutional and organizational partnerships between Japan and the United States, we are including other countries, cultures, and contexts in the CBP. **Fourth,** our work will be dynamic and organic; we will learn how best to do it through real world experience. We already are via a burgeoning empirical basis for determining what effective – versus ineffective or merely adequate – VE / COIL looks like. **Fifth** and finally, we also will need to be persistent and systematic, with fidelity to the adage that practice makes perfect. For example, country-to-country VE / COIL partnerships begun in 2020 should plan to be repeated across at least two successive academic years, and ideally, for the foreseeable future in order to ensure continuity, ask questions and pursue answers that are programmatically and institutionally relevant, while learning from each other, disseminating findings, and developing best practices that are of demonstrable value to the larger field. Toward such means and ends, and based upon its "Consultancy Model and Collaborative Approach," the CBP Steering Committee strives to cultivate a vibrant community of inquiry and practice in which all participants feel and see that they have a stake in what is discovered, accomplished, and produced over time (e.g., through meaningful educational, scholarly, and professional activities and collaborations).

In the final analysis, globalization in general, and global education in particular, represent a gestalt of systems and forces that can be a source of generative human transformation, both locally and globally. We need such transformation to tackle the most pressing issues of our day, from climate change and calls for justice to a reimagined world at the level of gender, ethnicity, education, nationality, and class, among other formative variables that shape us as humans. As may be evident by now, from the standpoint of implications and applications, the work of the CBP extends far beyond questions of whether VE and COIL are effective. As important as such questions are, they emerge from, and are grounded in, the missions, visions, and values of our partner institutions and organizations, expressed through initiatives like the American Council on Education's VE/COIL Transformation Lab, the Applied Global Studies program, the Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self Summit Series, the IIGE Global Network, the ImmerseU learning system, and the SUNY Center COIL Global Network. Although these and synergic initiatives are all about improving global education as well as VE / COIL, they also are part of the solution to the "wicked problems" before us, exemplified by the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs.

Ultimately, we want to know how best to evaluate and facilitate learning, growth, and development in young people to be sure, but in all of us, in order to cultivate a more attuned, aware, caring, and sustainable citizenry that can comprehend and address the most vexing issues before us. In short, we seek to provide findings and practices that are relevant to virtual learning in general, and VE / COIL in particular, regarding how such pedagogies, methodologies, and technologies can best address the biggest challenges we face as a species, reanimating the very purpose of education along the way. It is in that spirit that we invite other stakeholders who have an interest in such work – both within and outside of the academy – to bring your interests and expertise to the CBP table just as we are glad to partner with you on allied activities and initiatives. There is much work to be done, and we are a community that values and welcomes collaboration.