Research Article

Teaching and learning with EU simulations: Evaluating Model European Union Mainz

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Abstract

'The shift from teaching to learning' describes a new paradigm in pedagogy and didactics. Simulations are said to be an adequate method for this shift, said to achieve several learning outcomes ascribed to the new paradigm. In this paper, we will, first, describe the new paradigm. Second, we will discuss advantages ascribed to simulations. Third, we will describe a simulation practiced in Mainz in the last years, Model European Union Mainz (MEUM). Fourth, we will present some findings of an extensive qualitative and quantitative evaluation which accompanied MEUM. And finally, we will discuss some conclusions for simulating the EU.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

'What I hear, I forget, but what I do, I learn'. These words, ascribed to Confucius 2.500 years ago, describe a (not so) new paradigm in pedagogy, the so-called 'shift from teaching to learning'. Although the quote by Confucius shows that the basic idea is not quite new (if the quote really is from Confucius), the phrase, coined by UNESCO according to Johannes Wildt, had a tremendous success and conquered universities around the world (Wildt 2003). Wildt reports that this shift started in public management departments of universities in the 1990ties, looking for potential for saving money (Wildt 2005). Afterwards, it was turned into a 'new' pedagogical and didactical concept. The core of this new paradigm is active learning. Students shall acquire disciplinary knowledge as well as soft skills through active learning, which corresponds to demands of the Bologna Process. A teaching method which shall fit perfectly to these demands is using simulations, understood as more or less complex roleplays, in classroom.

In this paper, we will, first, describe the new teaching and learning paradigm, discussing bases, relevance and its relation to the demands of the Bologna Process. Second, we will discuss advantages ascribed to simulations. Third, we will describe a simulation practiced in Mainz in the last years, Model European Union Mainz (MEUM). Fourth, we will present some findings of an extensive qualitative and quantitative evaluation which accompanied MEUM. And finally, we will discuss some conclusions for simulating the EU.

THE SHIFT FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING

The 'shift from teaching to learning' is characterized by the following components: a) centered on student learning, b) a changing role of the teacher, c) definition of learning objectives, d) from learning input to output, e) emphasis on organization of learning. The traditional, teacher-centered teaching, practiced ideally in a classical lecture with frontal teaching, is limited. New ways of teaching and engaging students are now en vogue (see on *active learning* Silberman 1996, on teaching politics and international relations Gormley-Heenan & Lightfoot 2012). A study by Stice

showed that students retained 10 per cent of what they read, 20 per cent of what they hear, 50 per cent of what they hear *and* see, 70 per cent of what they say, and 90 per cent of what they do and say (Stice 1987, quoted in Oros 2007). The study was based on ideas from David Kolb about learning types and learning styles, claiming that learning is facilitated in situations where reflection and abstraction follow personal experiences, hence active participation of students increases learning outcomes while traditional forms of learning in which more passive forms like listening are pronounced are less successful (Kolb 1984). Stice got his data from his engineering class, his results are now widely cited and repeated. Critics claim that neither Kolb's theory nor Stice's data are accurately validated (see, e.g., Raymond & Usherwood 2013, Oros 2007). However, the shift from teaching to learning is widely acclaimed.

As a central element, as mentioned above, the "shift" changes the focus from input to output, from the content of teaching to "learning outcomes". This corresponded to demands following the Bologna Process of unifying the European higher education, as it was expressed explicitly at the Bergen-Communiqué (Bergen-Communiqué 2005). At the follow-up process of the Bologna Declaration 1999, European universities have declared at their Convention in Salamanca in March 2001 that:

> European higher education institutions recognise that their students need and demand qualifications which they can use effectively for the purpose of their studies and careers all over Europe. The institutions and their networks and organisations acknowledge their role and responsibility in this regard, and confirm their willingness to organise themselves accordingly within the framework of autonomy (University of Graz 2003).

More than 100 European universities have started a pilot project called 'Tuning educational structures in Europe'. Common points of reference for desired learning outcomes were defined, 'generic competences and skills' as well as 'subject specific competences and skills'. All the competences are listed in table 1.

Table 1: Tuning Project: Competences and skills

Generic competences and skills *- highly important*	• Capacity for analysis and synthesis • Capacity to learn • Problem solving • Capacity to apply knowledge in practice • Capacity to adapt to new situations • Focus on concern for quality • Information management • Ability to work autonomous • Teamwork • Basic knowledge • Will to succeed

Table 1 (continued): Tuning Project: Competences and skills

Generic competences and skills - *less important*	• Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries • Appreciation of diversity and multicultural environment • Ability to work in an international • Context • Leadership • Research skills • Project design and management • Knowledge of a second language • Communicate with experts in other fields • Ability to work interdisciplinary
Subject specific competences and skills - *First cycle*	• Show familiarity with the foundation and history of his/her major (discipline) • Communicate obtained basic knowledge in a coherent way • Place new information and interpretation in its context • Show understanding of the overall structure of the discipline and the connection between its sub-disciplines • Show understanding and implement the methods of critical analysis and development of theories
Subject specific competences and skills - *Second cycle*	• Have a good command of a specialised field within the discipline at an advanced level • Be able to follow critically and interpret the newest development in theory and practice • Have sufficient competence in the techniques of independent research and be able to interpret the results at an advanced level • Be able to make an original, albeit limited, contribution within the canons of the discipline, e.g. final thesis • Show originality and creativity with regard to the handling of the discipline • Have developed competence at a professional level

Source: University of Graz 2003, Wildt 2003

All this new learning objectives transcended traditional learning objectives, which were mainly concentrated on teaching knowledge. In the course of the Bologna reforms, inventing new modularized study structures (and in Germany especially Bachelor and Master degrees), these new objectives were integrated in curricular norms. Interestingly, the results of the Tuning project and the Bologna reforms coincide with the recent debate in German didactics of politics (Didaktik der Politischen Bildung). According to didactics, the aim of modern university teaching should be to impart knowledge; methodological, social and civic competences in four dimensions (see Detjen et al. 2012; Manzel 2012; Massing 2012): a) Disciplinary expertise, b) Ability to judge, c) Capacity to act, d) Political attitude, general interest and motivation.

The capacity to act includes *expressis verbis* communicative capacities like articulation, argumentation, negotiation and decision competence. Such 'political eloquence' (Detjen 2012) is not only relevant in educational contexts of political science, but for citizens in general. Disciplinary expertise corresponds to the subject specific competences, the list of methodological, social and civic competences correspond to the generic competences and skills.

Obviously, the new didactical paradigm is quite demanding, not only for students, who shall be more active than ever and shall acquire a lot of competences, but especially for teachers, who often have to change their role and their self-understanding. Traditionally, teachers were experts telling students about their knowledge. 'Professor' comes from the Latin word *profateri*, which means publicly proclaiming information and knowledge. The shift from teaching to learning implies a shift of the role of a teacher towards an activator, moderator and promoter of learning processes. The quote 'From the sage on the stage to the guide on the side' illustrates this change nicely (see King 1993).

SIMULATIONS, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Simulations and role plays (here used synonymously) have become more and more popular in Social and Political Sciences, especially International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, a quarterly journal devoted to pedagogical and didactical aspects of IR, hardly publishes any issue without an article about simulations (see e.g. Taylor 2012, Crossley-Frolick 2010, Van Dyke et al. 2000, Zeff 2003 or Switky 2004, Guasti, Muno & Niemann forthcoming, as an early contribution to the debate on simulations see Stoil & Lester 1979). The Journal of Political Science Education devoted a special issue in 2013 on simulations (JPSE 2013). Practiced in the U.S. for decades already, they are quite new in German contexts. Germany seems to be a developing country concerning simulations. Several universities, like Frankfurt/Main, Tübingen or Erfurt, participate at Model United Nations (MUN). But MUNs are rarely embedded in curricula, usually they are offered as special and additional events for voluntarily participating students. Apart from MUN, some universities practice small-scale simulations in IR-seminars. At Bochum, WTO-negotiations were offered several times as a seminar (see Schirm et al. 2010: 2011). However, as said, while simulations are widely practiced in the U.S., they are rather exemption than rule in German Political Science faculties. This is surprising, because didactics claim that simulations correspond fully to demands in new didactics and pedagogy, especially the shift from teaching to learning.

Simulations are more or less complex role plays functioning as models for an even more complex reality (see for the German debate Detjen 2007: 373f., Giesecke 2000: 184f., Herz & Blätte 2000, Massing 2003, Scholz 2003). Reducing the complexity of reality to an understandable and controllable model, students have to act as realistic as possible, they have to negotiate, argue, debate or decide, depending on the simulation. Through a formalized process with certain defined roles which have to be performed by students, patterns of the real processes of politics or the functioning of real political organizations are reproduced. Through this, learning takes place at

several levels. First, there is a content level which corresponds to the subject specific competences or the disciplinary expertise. Students learn about structures, actors, policies and processes of politics. At a second level, learning outcomes are creativity, methodological skills, social and communicative competences, which corresponds to the generic competences and social and communicative skills mentioned above. Crossley-Frolick mentioned seven learning objectives which simulations can achieve (Crossley-Frolick 2010):

- High level of student engagement

- Through a practical grasp theories are "demystified"

- Prackktical, familiar topics can be explored

- Assumptions of "easy negotiations" are questioned when students have to make decisions on their own

- Working with primary documents makes students learn about "official language"

- Communication skills are practiced and developed

- Simulations provide an enjoyable teaching method to students for pedagogical ends.

Schirm, Smejkalova and Rötzmeier (2011: 651) from the University of Bochum emphasize the practice aspect and the generic competences: "Simulations differ to most other seminars insofar as knowledge and analytical competences are not only acquired but subsequent are practiced and through this intensified. Additionally, in simulated negotiations a range of further skills and competences have to be practiced…". Which knowledge specifically is acquired and which generic competences are practiced specifically depends on the institutional design of specific simulations, but in general, the claim is held that simulations fit very well into the demands of new didactical approaches. However, as many observers note, many of the arguments in favor of simulations are based rather on anecdotal evidence than systematic evaluations (see, e.g. Raymond & Usherwood 2013). In the following, we will present a simulation we developed at the University of Mainz, Model European Union Mainz (MEUM).

MODEL EUROPEAN UNION MAINZ

Simulating the EU is not yet as common as simulating for example the United Nations within the MUN concept, despite the ever growing importance of the EU in today's politics (see e.g. Bergmann 2015; Weidenfeld 2011; Schmidt & Schünemann 2009, Guasti, Muno & Niemann forthcoming). Around 80 percent of German legislation is made in Brussels and Strasbourg nowadays, the parliament in Berlin just accepts and acknowledges (Sturm & Pehle 2012: 26). Therefore, this kind of simulation triggers student's attention in a special way. This is why we decided to run a teaching project to discover the possibilities and boundaries of simulations as a teaching method. MEUM was born as a student initiative in 2010, but its integration in the political science department's curriculum as a seminar began in 2011 within the framework of a teaching project supported by the University of Mainz. Since then, its status as a regular seminar has opened up the possibility of evaluating this new teaching method against its more traditional counterparts.

Figure 1: MEUM 2014 (Source: MEUM)

MEUM simulates the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) of the European Union. Participants therefore take on the role of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) or Ministers in the Council of the European Union. They are assigned specific real political positions (country and faction for MEPs) which they have to represent during the whole simulation. Observing and commenting on the ongoing procedure are participants working as journalists, representing also the "public opinion". The simulation requires participants to find compromise through negotiation and in the end possibly pass new legislation. The whole procedure is therefore based on real legislative proposals issued by the commission.

MEUM is hosted not only by the political science department, but in cooperation with two student organizations, AEGEE Mainz/Wiesbaden and BETA.[1] This cooperation allows for an extensive social program accompanying the three days of simulation and also the inclusion of external participants. Therefore, MEUM consists of about 70 to 90 participants each year, divided fifty-fifty between regular students in the seminar and international students which are eligible to apply through an open selection process.

Out of this basic concept derive three general advantages. First the improvement of language skills: The international setting requires regular students to speak English, to represent their assigned position as well as negotiate in a foreign language and act on it. This serves as a vital preparation for

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[1] AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe or European Students Forum) is the biggest non-subject bound Students organisation in Europe, BETA (Bringing Europeans Together Association) is a europewide non-profit association, established in 2008 in Mainz and with about 250 members today. BETA runs EU-simulations in the EP in Strasbourg (about 200 participants) and supports smaller simulations (MEUs) all over Europe. The first one was MEUM in 2010, since similar MEUs developed for example in Granada, Belgrade and Crete.

an internationalized job market. Second, the atmosphere makes the experience more realistic, as the EU is per definition an intercultural, multinational working environment. These two aspects together with the social program achieve a third advantage: the enhancement of intercultural skills. But how are the two educational objectives (enhancing subject specific and generic competences) mentioned before achieved under this framework?

The first one, expertise in the content of the simulation, mainly develops through intensive preparation. Together with their assigned role participants receive a Preparation Guide, containing a short introduction into the European decision-making process, especially the OLP and the topics of the two legislative proposals debated. These topical introductions outline the problem, thereby serving as a starting point for the participant's own research on their role's perspective. Furthermore, the package includes descriptions of all roles inside the simulation as well as the Rules of Procedure and the rough course of the simulation.

To make sure participants prepare adequately for MEUM, preparation is divided for external and internal students. The main preparation for external students takes place in an Online-Forum on MEUM's webpage, where participants can exchange first personal details and later on write position papers for the EP factions. It is vital to ensure the preparation on this platform works by assigning tutors to accompany participants via the forum and pointing out the importance of adherence to set deadlines to hand in the personal position papers or the faction position papers. In those, each participant sums up his role's position to facilitate information exchange, coalition building and deliberation in advance of the actual start of the simulation.

Internal participants, additionally, have a special preparation in an accompanying seminar which provides time and space for discussion of the topics and more theoretical background in relation to current EU research. Furthermore, a 'real world' insight into the EU is given, for example actual MEPs or staff members of the delegation of Rhineland-Palatinate to the EU, or even the minister of Rhineland-Palatinate for European Affairs presented their views of EU. This opened the possibility for students to exchange directly with practitioners and, through this, grasp the EU in the most direct sense possible.

Both, internal as well as external participants, have to prepare extensively their positions on their own, writing preparatory position papers. The second objectives, generic competences, are met together in the course of the simulation. MEUM simulates the OLP after the changes with the treaty of Lisbon. In this procedure, the European Commission proposes new legislation to the two legislative chambers, the Council of the European Union (short: Council) and the EP. Both discuss and amend the proposal which is signed into law after successful adoption in both bodies.

The two proposals are real proposals issued by the Commission and selected by the organizing team to further participant's understanding of real legal texts issued by the EU. But for the sake of debate there are two criteria which need to be met. The proposal should have a readable length and shouldn't be too technical or difficult. Participants need to find a direct relationship with the topics discussed. For this reasons the selection of the chemical directive REACH was dismissed once, as it is based extensively on chemical specifications and basically impossible to understand for an average educated person. The most important point though is the topic to provide enough controversy to allow for debate and not to be entirely outdated. One example discussed at several MEUMs was the return of illegal staying immigrants under the Returns Directive, which opens up several differing positions both between EP factions and Member States through the degree to which they are concerned by the cause of immigrants influx.

Apart of these selection criteria, the learning effects for participants mainly derive from the experience itself. The simulation takes place during three days in which two proposals are debated

separately in the bodies and are exchanged after amendment. The following table shows the steps of MEUM.

Table 2: MEUM schedule

Step	Proposal I	Proposal II
1	Commission introduces proposal to EP	Commission introduces proposal to Council
2	EP debates proposal, prepares and adopts amendments	Council debates proposal, prepares and adopts amendments
3	EP Representatives present amended version to the Council	Council Representatives present amended version to the EP
4	Council debates amended proposal, prepares and adopts amendments	EP debates amended proposal, prepares and adopts amendments
5	Council Representatives present amended version to the EP	EP Representatives present amended version to the Council
6	Debate and final voting in the EP: EP either accepts or rejects version of proposal as amended by the Council	Debate and final voting in the Council: Council either accepts or rejects version of proposal as amended by the EP

At the core of the simulation is the idea that both legislative proposals are being discussed at the same time. The procedure begins by the simultaneous introduction of proposal one to the EP and proposal two to the Council by the Commission. The Commissioners are well prepared and chosen students who have to explain the proposal. In the course of the simulation the proposals are being exchanged several times between the EP and the Council with both institutions having the chance to pass amendments to the texts of the Commission

The setting is as professional as possible, with representative premises and an obligatory Business Dresscode as well as the strict adherence to the Rules of Procedure. For all participants, preparing workshops on the first day of MEUM introduce the Rules of Procedure in a short 'Mock Simulation' to provide an opportunity for participants to try out these quite complex rules in a relaxed atmosphere. These rules of procedure foster a professional and fruitful atmosphere through structuring debates and the rights to speak, specifying language and emphasizing rule of order by imitating parliamentary rules of procedure.

The atmosphere is further influenced by the facilitation of debate by the presidency, or chairs, which stays neutral during debate and maintains order in the bodies. The legislative proposals are introduced by a commissioner who serves also as point of contact for arising legal questions. Therefore the responsible persons for both roles need to be selected carefully and well prepared.

Inside the framework, participants are free to vote upon a temporary adjournment of formal debate for informal discussions and the timetable sets additional breaks for coffee or lunch. These breaks, as well as the evening social program, are of great importance to a successful simulation. They serve as space for participants to mingle with colleagues from the two bodies to deliberate and negotiate on amendments to the current texts or voting positions. This opportunity of informal exchange is vital for the course of decision-making and teaches the most about daily life of politicians.

Participants learn about the procedures on the European level and experience the difficulties of negotiations first hand. In the process, they re-evaluate their political attitude towards the EU. Political motivation however mainly develops through the social enactment with and in the diversity of participants and their cultures. This European experience stimulates their motivation to get actively involved in European initiatives and boosts their support for European integration.

EVALUATION OF MEUM

The simulation was accompanied by an extensive evaluation and feedback process. First, we carried out online inquiries, before and after the simulations in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. Second, we gathered written reports in which the students had to reflect on their roles and their activities as well as on the simulation in general. Third, we conducted interviews with some of the participants. And fourth, we held a focus-group discussion after the simulation as a feedback with some students.[2] Using these methods, we set out to asses the results of MEUM. Additionally, the data enabled empirical probing of the requirements of didactical reflection according to new developments in didactics (see Manzel 2012).

We start by presenting the findings from the online inquiries and the respective supplementary results from qualitative methods. Subsequently, we highlight some aspects not covered in the surveys, as they only came up during the open qualitative feedbacks.

Table 3 gives an overview on the general disciplinary learning outcome. Almost 90 percent of respondents claim to know more about the EU through the simulation. As table 4 shows, the students did not only learn about the ordinary legislative procedure, but also about the institutions and policies of the EU. Less consideration was given to the history and theories of European integration, aspects which hence need to be covered during preparation in the run-up to the simulation itself.

Table 3: General disciplinary knowledge

MEUM has improved my knowledge of the EU in general		
	Count	Percentage
Completely disagree	3	2.11%
Disagree	4	2.82%
Neither agree nor disagree	12	8.45%
Agree	64	45.07%
Completely agree	59	41.55%

Aggregated responses from MEUM 2011, 2013, 2014, 142 respondents

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[2] Data collection with methods three and four was conducted in 2013.

Table 4: Specific disciplinary knowledge

MEUM has improved my knowledge of the EU especially in the following area…		
	Count	Percentage
structures and institutions (1)	88	26.11%
decision-making (2)	129	38.28%
policies (3)	87	25.82%
history and development (4)	10	2.97%
theories of integration (5)	23	6.82%

Aggregated responses from MEUM 2011, 2013, 2014, multiple mentions possible

Regarding subject-specific knowledge, the qualitative feedbacks highlighted one additional aspect. Participants were surprised about the role informal debates and deals take on during the proceedings. Many would have never judged it to be that important but the students stick to their roles even at the social parts, prolonging the simulation long after the end of the "official" schedule, as one of the written feedbacks points out:

> "The most interesting experience for me was lobbying and back-door diplomacy. It was really a challenging experience, which I enjoyed a lot. Sitting together with people till late nights and keep on negotiating with them was simply a classical experience for me."

Together with the internalization of roles described later on in this part, this "hands on" impression could explain the frequency difference in survey findings between learning effects in decision making and policies/structures and institutions. Acting as decision-makers themselves, participants gained a deeper understanding of actual *processes* in EU institutions than of content and *de jure* structures.

Next to subject specific competences, we asked about the generic competences or soft skills. More than 80 percent of the participants thought they had improved their soft skills through the simulation, as depicted in table 5.

Table 5: Generic competences in general

MEUM helped to improve my soft skills in general		
	Count	Percentage
Completely disagree	3	2.11%
Disagree	5	3.52%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	11.27%
Agree	69	48.59%
Completely agree	49	34.51%

Aggregated responses from MEUM 2011, 2013, 2014, 142 respondents

Table 6 shows relatively equal shares of (perceived) improvement in different relevant soft skills throughout the years. It is notable here that the composition and size of the participants' pool is of high relevance for the overall, average shares between categories. During MEUM 2011, participants came from relatively homogenous backgrounds, namely mainly from EU countries. In 2014, a large group of non-european students took part, which resulted in comparably high values on the 'intercultural skills' category. Similarly, in 2014 the number of participants was more than double than in 2011. Hence, for example factions in the European Parliament grew in size and considerably more 'teamwork' was needed for effective negotiations. These differences between the years account for overall equal shares in the aggregated data. However, one should not miss these important aspects, which bear particular relevance when designing simulations for certain didactical purposes.

Table 6: Specific generic competences

MEUM has improved my soft skills especially in the following area…		
	Count	Percentage
English language skills (1)	84	25.00%
Intercultural skills (2)	74	22.02%
Rhetorical skills/debating (3)	94	27.98%
Teamwork (4)	84	25.00%
Total	336	100.00%

Aggregated responses from MEUM 2011, 2013, 2014, multiple mentions possible

An interesting aspect we discovered during the qualitative evaluation of MEUM 2013 was a gap between experienced participants and less experienced ones. This was mentioned several times and also confirmed in the most recent survey following MEUM 2014, which quantitatively covered this aspect for the first time. Out of 31 experienced participants, all but one found their previous experience to be an advantage (table 7). Besides the data, the gap is also recognizable during the course of the simulation. More experienced participants directly use the opportunity to work on negotiations and proposals from the start, whereas less experienced participants need to familiarize with the formal situation first. As one of the interviewees stated:

"Previous experience was the main difference between those who participated successfully [inside the simulation, e.g. presenting their points and arguments], with more engagement and those who rather stayed in the background. If I'd have had some experience this would have been completely different for me. But I gained experience throughout the simulation so towards the end this was different."

The factor of previous experience plays a particular role regarding the procedure of the simulation, but previous knowledge about the EU takes some weight too, as it facilitates the personal preparation of participants for their role, for example how to find information about specific country or party positions.

These aspects emphasize the importance of preparation, not only on the subject, i.e. the EU, but also on topics like delivering speeches or how to work within the Rules of Procedure as well as the need for assistance during the preparation phase for 'newcomers'. Despite differing levels of experience, all respondents in the qualitative evaluation concluded they had learned a lot and improved their communicative skills and political judgment about political processes. The degree of soft-skill-improvement depends on the personal involvement though, which is highly dependent on the personal experience with simulations. In general, the participants supported the positive image we gained from the survey, as the following quote shows, which is representative for many similar statements:

"The simulation made me know how to communicate in a highly professional setting, especially when people are representing different cultures and regions."

Table 7: Impact of previous experience with simulations

In case you participated in previous simulations before MEUM 2014, do you feel your previous experience was an advantage for your participation in MEUM?		
	Count	Percentage
Yes, very much (1)	18	26.47%
Yes, to some extent. (2)	12	17.65%
Don't know. (3)	0	0.00%
No, not much. (4)	1	0.01%
No, not at all. (5)	0	0.00%
MEUM was my first simulation. (6)	37	54.41%

MEUM 2014, 68 respondents

Additionally, the general interest in European politics was stimulated, one important aspect of the German political didactics demand. Again, almost 90 percent of the respondents agreed (table 8). Furthermore, many participants voiced a strong motivation to get actively involved themselves, for example in European student activities or alike. Their 'ties with Europe' strengthened through the experience, mainly due to the participants from diverse countries. One interview summarizes these in short:

"I just enjoyed the diversity of different countries and cultures and positions that we had here. Despite all those differences sitting together and actually achieving such a sophisticated political reform is something I find it absolutely fascinating. It confirmed my conviction that in general more Europe is the way forward."

This also ties in with the results on soft-skill improvement. Students overcame cultural differences and language barriers in order to work together.

Table 8: Interest in EU

MEUM has increased my interest in European politics		
	Count	Percentage
completely disagree	2	1.43%
disagree	4	2.86%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	7.86%
Agree	64	45.71%
completely agree	59	42.14%

Agreggated responses from MEUM 2011, 2013, 2014, 140 respondents

In general terms the feedback was very positive. More than 90 percent of participants answered that MEUM was a success, a number which is constantly found in all waves of the survey.[3] In 2011 and 2012, as seen in table 9, almost all of the respondents answered positively when asked about their perception. In 2012, all respondents enjoyed simulating politics. Only the tight time schedule was criticized by some students.

Table 9: General Feedback

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
MEUM 2011/2012 was a success	69	27	1	0	3
I enjoyed simulating politics	70	30	0	0	0
Good balance between social programme and simulation	45	48	8	0	0
Wish I had more free time on my own	3	10	35	50	3
Simulation was well organized	65	35	0	0	0

All values in percentages. First row: Aggregated response MEUM 2011, 2012, 89 respondents. All others: MEUM 2012, 42 respondents.

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[3] In order to ensure methodical coherence we only depict aggregated data from MEUM 2011 and 2012, as they used the same statement to assess the success of the simulation. MEUM 2013 and 2014 surveys rather asked for "satisfaction" on a one to ten scale, showing also high values. Therefore, the results are equally interpretable but it is not possible to aggregate them in a simple way. The other categories were only assessed in 2012.

As shown above, there was a clear benefit from the use of qualitative methods. It resulted in a more comprehensive evaluation of the learning outcomes. All in all, the qualitative responses supported the survey findings, but added some additional points and perspectives to the picture. In the following we describe some factors not connected to the theory deduced aspects covered by the online inquiries. One of the main factors for the success of the simulation is the realistic atmosphere which contributes in large part to the internalization of participant's roles. Participants start to 'think as ministers, MEPs or journalists':

"The whole simulation process was very professional. I felt that I was really in an official meeting of European parliament. It will be a memorable simulation in my life because I saw the total activities of European parliament very practically which I couldn't achieved from bookish knowledge."

Some participants were also strongly engaged emotionally, as one participant mentioned in the focus-group: 'I was really, honestly sad when first my amendment and in the end the whole directive failed, as I thought we found a satisfying compromise, which turned out not to be entirely true'. Others added points as feeling 'nostalgic' when returning to their daily study routine after MEUM and would have preferred to sit in the EP or Council again. This great emotional involvement was not clearly discovered in the surveys and seems to distinguish the simulation method from other forms of teaching. While instruction in the sense of teaching and learning subject specific competences might also be achieved through a traditional lecture or seminar, this emotional aspect deserves more attention in future evaluations.

Some participants even reassessed their personal career path, either considering a career in politics again or dismissing the profession of a journalist as a viable career option. Reflection in general was a main aspect during all three qualitative methods. Participants rethought their own enactment and the political processes they experienced firsthand. The majority evaluated the process in positive terms, from simple comprehension for the difficulties in a complicated environment of decision-making to the general statement:

"The simulation showed that democracy might be expensive, but genuinely valuable, because every opinion can make itself heard."

All in all, all participants judged the simulation to be more instructive than their everyday studies and stressed the learning outcomes on different levels, as this final quote shows:

"It was a great opportunity to learn a lot in only a few days about the European Union, its institutions and their decision-making process. Based on the fact that it was not a normal lecture about these topics, but rather a simulation where we participated actively, the learning affect was bigger and I will remember it longer. It was a great experience."

CONCLUSION

As seen in the evaluations, the online-survey as well as in qualitative interviews, written feedbacks and the focus-group-discussion, Model European Union Mainz is quite successful. Subject specific knowledge about the EU is acquired, especially about the decision-making process of European legislation, but also knowledge about institutions and policies. However, due to the institutional design and the focus of the simulation, learning about the history of European integration and integration theories is limited. This drawback should be compensated in the preparation surrounding the simulation.

But disciplinary knowledge in general can also be learned in traditional forms of teaching like lectures. There is no real evidence that simulations are better in that sense. In order to analyze that, control-groups have to be included in assessments. We tried this in the 2013 survey, but in the lecture and seminars on international relations, the EU was not in the focus, so the results are not comparable. Although perhaps not yet proven with convincing evidence, as Raymond and Usherwood show, the students esteem simulations clearly and claim themselves that they have learned more than in usual lectures and seminars, which in itself is an argument in favor of simulations. Here, the relationship between emotions and learning in simulations should be subject to further scrutiny, as also our evidence shows (see Jones & Bursens forthcoming on affective learning).

Additionally, the activating advantage of a simulation has to be stressed. Students do not only acquire disciplinary knowledge but also practice several soft skills or generic competences. Although this is also possible in traditional forms of teaching, the use of soft skills in a lecture is quite limited. In a simulation, the students are highly active, they really immerse in their roles, as the emotional involvement indicates. As ministers and parliamentarians, the participants have to develop own positions towards relevant political problems, they have to argue and defend their positions, they have to negotiate in order to find allies and majorities, and finally, they have to compromise in order to come to come to a decision (or they have to decide not to compromise, which is open to their choice). Learning theory assumes that this active learning leads to better learning outcomes. Although this is not really clear, the students enjoy the simulations and esteem the possibility of active participation, as all evaluations clearly showed, which also is an argument in itself.

Additionally, simulations correspond better to the demands in new Bologna-curricular and new approaches of didactics as they fit very well into the 'shift from teaching to learning'. These advantages of a simulation depend, of course, on the design of the simulation. As shown, an intensive preparation of the participants is essential, especially for students who are not familiar with simulations.

But this leads to a big problem inherent in simulations, not yet addressed: the problem of resources. Simulations, especially when combined with intensive preparation and evaluation, are very demanding for teachers. Although their role during the simulation is quite limited (at best, the teacher can relax and let the simulation go), beforehand and after the simulation a lot of work has to be done. In the case of MEUM, the financial support of University of Mainz and the cooperation with voluntary student groups (AEGEE and BETA) have helped to organize a large-scale simulation with international participants and an accompanying social program. In general, there are two possibilities: either universities support efforts like simulations with special support, e.g. additional financial resources for tutors or a reduced teaching load, or we follow Rebecca Glazier's recent advice 'Running simulations without ruining your life' and incorporate easy, small-scale simulations into seminars (Glazier 2011). In any case, we should use simulations. They offer a valuable tool for good learning outcomes, but especially, simulations undeniably provide an enjoyable teaching method to students for pedagogical ends in Crossley-Frolick's sense.

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