

eLearning for Pluralism: The Culture of eLearning in Building a Knowledge Society

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This paper discusses culture, as a source of conflict than of synergy, how affects the use of elearning for pluralism to build a knowledge society. It also argues that the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede, who demonstrates that there are national and regional cultural groupings that affect the behavior of organizations, are very persistent across time. The main purpose of this paper is to identify, categorize and rank the future priorities and needs for elearning for pluralism. Based on the main purpose of this study, the key concerns are about how elearning for pluralism can cover the challenges with fairness, expectations, respect, and communications; engage the digital citizens in critical civic responsibilities, dynamic academic curriculum plans and powerful social; obtain genuine equal opportunities and democratic participations in building online knowledge; and promote critical communications for elearner-engagements in democratic decision-making. This is quantitative study. The Delphi Study was used to represent a constructive communication device among a group of experts. A total of 28 elearning professionals (14 females and 13 males) were selected and all of them completed all three rounds of the study. These experts discussed top issues and challenges, categories, priorities and needs of elearning for pluralism.

Since the 1990s, with the substantially increasing college enrollment, there is no question that there have been two major shifts in the pattern of traditional higher education: the diverse backgrounds of students, who seek a college education; and inequality of opportunities between students, who will be attending colleges in the future. The higher education institutions,

therefore, must be prepared and found out novel ways to address the miscellaneous challenges this diverse population, and also to provide fair and equal learning opportunities to all students. These higher education organizations should serve members of these oppressed populations (Boyd, 2008) by approaching the pluralistic pedagogical task with a multicultural paradigm, and rethinking radical pedagogical practices with explicating diverse cultural assumptions. Moreover, following the insights of pluralism, this pedagogy must be responsive to the distinguishable cultural needs and viewpoints of these students. On the other hand, yet the pedagogical changes of traditional higher education mean it is now nearly impossible to establish any transformation in the pluralistic policy basis. Today's traditional higher education institutions slightly engage themselves in a commitment to pluralistic curriculum due to their limited human resources (e.g. labor, education, knowledge, skills, profession, experience, etc.) and non-human resources (e.g. capital equipment, buildings, land, tools, licenses, etc.). Besides, learning in these higher education organizations is no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge at the orthodox local colleges (Gerhard, 2000). Learning activities in higher education must "move towards lifelong learning to accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based society" (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p.3).

In this context, any traditional higher education organizations, as highlighted by Boyer and Baptiste (1996), should go beyond changing demographics as well as bring about the emergence of a new individual and a new epoch of globalization featuring new communication technologies with moving away from a generic empowerment approach of individuals to a pluralistic approach. According to Carusi, Dexter, Wegerif and De Laat (2005), elearning can be open to a diversity of different learning approaches, and draw together people from a variety of different backgrounds. Moreover, elearning can provide a crucial and potently groundbreaking medium of enhancing learning experiences within the framework of lifelong learning (Inoue, 2007). The culture of elearning can help higher education adopt more critical attitudes toward the diversity and recognize the diversity of interests. Besides, the plurality of elearning help these organizations take on and qualify *the energetic engagement with diversity, the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference, the encounter of commitments and based on critical dialogues* (The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, 2009).

This approach provides the innovative strategies for a pluralistic knowledge society, foster university-community partnership and cultural awareness, explain multicultural educational policies, and also suggest best practices for implementing an equal access plan at the global level. Moreover, the culture of elearning in higher education can develop culturally respon-

sive, social justice-oriented, critical and creative culture that go beyond power elites' mandates. These political views provide anonymity of characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, identity, religion, socio-economic, status family structure, occupation, age, body shape and size, disability and native language. In short, elearning for pluralism to build a knowledge society in higher education lessens the feeling of discrimination and provides equality, social order and freedom of social interactions and critical communications among learners and faculty.

Purpose

The aim of this paper is to discuss elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society in higher education. In this paper, the author also highlights the electronic aspects, applications and issues surrounding online culture to discuss and analyze cultural effects on the use elearning and its new communication technologies. The focus of this paper is to be on the strategic, and critical as well as cross-cultural required to collaborate and achieve global interactions in the age of a digitally connected 21st century global society. Based on the stated aims of this study, this article will present responses to the following questions, how elearning for pluralism can

1. cover the challenges with fairness, expectations, respect, and communications inspired by the arts and critical dialogues to share power and cultures;
2. engage the digital citizens in critical civic responsibilities, dynamic academic curriculum plans and powerful social actions to understand the possibilities and potentials of democratic decision-making and dialogic leadership;
3. obtain genuine equal opportunities and democratic participations in building online knowledge networks not characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition; and
4. promote critical communication activities for elearner-engagements in democratic decision-making to promote authentic and high quality lifelong learning experiences.

Besides, the mission of this paper is to integrate collective acts democratically to the fast developing philosophical, historical, political, and socio-culture backgrounds and contexts of elearning. This can bring a community of people together committed to liberatory communication and social justice. Therefore, as mentioned by Preece, Rogers and Sharp (2002), elearning should represent a range of real-life experiences in their community works and critical praxis, including theorists, theater workers, artists and others

committed to transformative pedagogy and social equity. Based on these concerns and also approaches, elearning can help learners and faculty as digital citizens to involve in online culture that there are constitutive of contemporary challenges and tensions in the role of technology for sustainable development around the world. In other words, elearning can promote multicultural ideas and resources on how to work together online and a pluralist online culture. This innovative and creative approach to learning provides diverse people with interactive communication processes related to democratic and multicultural elicit issues, and the international dimensions of the challenges faced by higher education.

As emphasized by Culwin, MacLeod and Lancaster (2001), elearning can be egalitarian and liberating only when it prepares learners and faculty as a member of a knowledge society for fully democratic participation in social life and equal claim o the fruits of economic activity. This paper, therefore, builds a theoretical framework that develops strong the engagements for this knowledge society to their shared responsibilities. Also, the needs and expectations of these people can bring about democratic decision-making for dialogic citizenships play an important role in affecting deep community change. These are crucial concerns to examine their multifaceted responsibilities in building online culture.

Theoretical Background

Bringing theory to practice, the author applies the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede how to provide the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society for elearning pluralism. The cultural dimensions model of Geert Hofstede is a framework, and describes five dimensions of culture (Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede, 2002):

1. power distance (the degree of inequality among people which the population of a country considers as normal);
2. individualism (the extent to which people feel they are supposed to take care for, or to be cared for by themselves, their families or organizations they belong to);
3. gender biases (the extent to which a culture is conducive to dominance, assertiveness and acquisition of things versus a culture which is more conducive to people, feelings and the quality of life);
4. uncertainty avoidance (the degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations); and
5. time orientation (the values oriented towards the future, like saving and persistence versus the values oriented towards the past and present, like respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations).

This framework demonstrates that there are global, national and regional cultural groupings that affect the behavior of organizations, which are very persistent across time. Although culture is an attractive concept to portray the specific preferences (Mamadouh, 1997), not only is global culture a vague concept because of the perplexity between patterns of diverse individual values and collective culture, but also it is the arguable separation between orientations and practices. On the other hand, elearning for pluralism is a dynamic process in which global online users come together to act and decide on issues of mutual interest using shared rules, norms, and structures. eLearning for pluralism is also an open, integrated process, which fosters operational, procedural and cultural collaborations and encourages participants to expand connections beyond typical boundaries and achieve innovative outcomes. Therefore, in favor of Hofstede's dimensions of power distance, individualism, gender bias, uncertainty avoidance and time orientation, in this study, the concept of elearning for pluralism in higher education discusses in terms of arts and critical dialogues, curriculum plans and social actions, equal opportunities and democratic participations, and critical communication activities (Table 1).

There are dedicated a number of researches, which focus on the discerning topics and critics of culture and elearning (Berg, 2000; Burniske and Monke, 2001; Huerta, Ryan, Igbaria, 2003; Kendall, 2003; Rosenberg, 2001; Salmon, 2002; Stephenson, 2001), such as, providing frameworks for planning, delivering and evaluating online contents, discussing the different dimensions and strategies of elearning, providing design strategies for building online communities, etc. However, we need more specific studies, which concentrate on the theoretical and empirical issues about how to design and maintain elearning for pluralism successfully; because higher education institutions should think critically about real-world problems by using multiple ways, collaborating with each other successfully, and respecting others' ideas and values in online milieus. Therefore, as suggested by Howell, William and Lindsay (2003), higher education must be reform-minded individuals, and construct multicultural online learning contexts dealing with real-world problems to help learners and faculty engage in their own learning to accomplish course tasks, improve their critical thinking skills, and share their feelings and ideas successfully.

Table 1
eLearning for Pluralism

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions		Power Distance	Individualism	Gender Biases	Uncertainty Avoidance	Time Orientation
Dynamics of eLearning	Arts and Critical Dialogues	less powerful members expect and accept unequal power distribution within a culture	the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups	the degree to which gender roles are distinct and adhered to within a society	the extent to which the members of a society feel threatened by uncertain and unknown situations	the extent to which long-termism or short-termism appears to be the dominant approach
	Curriculum Plans and Social Actions	have centralized political power and exhibit tall hierarchies in organizations with large differences in salary and status	societies in which the ties between individuals are loose	gender roles overlap, with both men and women valuing 'feminine' qualities	low uncertainty avoidance cultures, where precision and punctuality are less important	long-termism stressing perseverance and being sparing with resources
	Equal Opportunities and Democratic Participations	disappear quickly from traditional cultures, even with powerful global telecommunication systems	societies in which digital citizens from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups	a preference for being busy and being precise and punctual	High uncertainty avoidance scores mean that there is a fear of ambiguous situations	short-termism involving a greater emphasis on quick results
	Critical Communication Activities	view subordinates and supervisors as closer together and more interchangeable, with flatter hierarchies in organizations	digital citizens in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.	global online cultures at the levels of symbols, heroes and rituals, together labeled practices	all sorts of problems for digital citizens in multinational societies in other countries	differences between national cultures based in deep-rooted values, which are largely implicit rather than openly acknowledged

This critical approach encourages not only higher education but also global stakeholders to construct pluralistic and multicultural milieus for everyone. Therefore, these organizations have to rethink about planning multicultural communication activities and gaining knowledge from global

resources. Building a knowledge society via elearning becomes a dynamic social and cultural activity and a goal-oriented process.

Method

The purpose of this study is not only to discuss elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society in higher education, but also to highlight the electronic aspects, applications and issues surrounding online culture to discuss and analyze cultural effects on elearning. To accomplish this, both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were utilized. Moreover, the combination of these methods helps to generate new perspectives and stimulate new directions in the data analysis. The methodology combinations provide data triangulation from a variety of data sources, and also methodological triangulation from multiple methods (Patton, 2002). Despite considerable variance in the application of the technique, the Delphi study methodology was used in this study as a powerful communication device for a group of experts. The Delphi application was utilized to reach decisions from a diverse group of people with different ideas for the solution (Woudenberg, 1991).

A Delphi study was designed to develop the instrument necessary for the survey of elearning for pluralism. The incorporation of the Delphi method in the Internet milieu makes possible a number of significant refinements to elearning for pluralism in higher education. The Delphi method was used to take advantage of the judgments of a group of experts for making decisions, determining needs and priorities, and predicting future needs. It provided an opportunity to obtain diverse opinions from a wide variety of experts across the world. The survey data were grouped according to the four sub-research questions:

How can elearning for pluralism

1. cover the challenges with fairness, expectations, respect, and communications inspired by the arts and critical dialogues;
2. engage these digital citizens in critical civic responsibilities, dynamic academic curriculum plans and powerful social actions;
3. obtain genuine equal opportunities and democratic participations in building online knowledge networks not characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition; and
4. promote critical communication activities for learners and faculty engagements in democratic decision-making to promote authentic and high quality lifelong learning experiences?

As noted by Osborne, Ratcliffe, Collins, Millar and Duschl (2000), the number of rounds for a Delphi study will be determined by how efficiently the panel reaches a consensus. On the other hand, many Delphi studies

confine themselves to three rounds for pragmatic reasons. For reasons of time, a three-round Delphi application was chosen to determine the extent to which consensus exists among experts within the distance education community about future research priorities and the needs to be met by mobile learning technologies.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted online during the 2008-2009 academic year. The researcher sent email messages and a demographic survey to different professional listservs to introduce the study and to ask the digital community whether they would like to participate voluntarily in this research. The process for conducting the study reported here involved an initial gathering of topics of interest to distance education followed by a broad emailed solicitation of nominations of people who would be appropriate participant experts for the study based on the following general criteria:

1. at least five years work experience in the elearning area In higher education,
2. a wide variety of experiences and activities of working in settings where educational service providers are transforming to distance education,
3. knowledge of design and delivery of distance learning courses, and
4. comfort with utilizing new hardware and software tools, and skill in multimedia production

After the steering committee identified potential members for the Delphi panel from the initial pool of nominations, thirty two (32) participants were formally invited to participate; of these, twenty eight (28) agreed to complete the required three rounds of the survey. The researcher assembled an online panel of 28 elearning professionals (14 females and 13 males) from across the world, including online administrators, online communication designers, online content providers, online learners, and online support staff from the broad area of elearning. These expert panelists discussed top issues challenges, categories, priorities and needs for elearning to build a free knowledge society. After the data were collected from the Delphi study, strategic planning around the main concerns identified in the research resulted in a planning document to outline elearning for pluralism in higher education.

Data Sources

This Delphi study began with a questionnaire developed and revised by the researcher. First, the steering committee brainstormed the major issues, challenges, categories, priorities, and needs for elearning and the culture of

elearning in building a knowledge society. Secondly, the researcher categorized these according to the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede with the theoretical and philosophical foundations of elearning; specific items were then organized into a draft survey instrument. Thirdly, the steering committee reviewed and critiqued the items on the instrument to confirm that the 120 items, along with their sub-topics, reflected the committee's thoughts and ideas about elearning for pluralism. Finally, the feedback from the steering committee helped the researcher form the final shape of the Delphi survey, which had 40 items along with their sub-topics. The survey was posted on a secure Internet website for a small team and for a larger group of experts. At the end of the survey, a series of questions seeking feedback about the survey was posted. After the questionnaire was returned, the researcher analyzed the results. The evaluative portion asked for specific feedback about survey content and layout, as well as elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society. At the end of the evaluation form, a question was added asking if there was anything else they would like to address. Participants were advised to visit the website and complete the survey and the evaluation form. The experts were allowed the opportunity to change their responses based on the results, and these second-round and third-round results were re-evaluated by the researcher. This process was to be continued until a consensus was reached. It would become clear that no consensus was possible.

The first round of the Delphi method asked the participants to respond to 12 specific questions on identifying top issues, challenges, categories, priorities and needs for elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society. The second round used questions developed from responses to the first questionnaire. The participants were asked to rate each statement on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = *very important*, 2 = *important*, 3 = *neither important nor unimportant*, 4 = *unimportant*, and 5 = *very unimportant*) and to optionally comment on each statement. The third round used the same statements as the second round and asked the participants if they would like to modify their answers based on the responses of the other participants.

Analysis

This Delphi study process essentially provided an interactive communication structure between the researcher and experts in elearning in order to identify, categorize, and rank the issues, needs and priorities for elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society. Both qualitative and quantitative questions were asked of the experts, and the information was then analyzed and provided to each person, via further

questions. Their responses were analyzed again, recycled for feedback, and so on until the goal was reached: when a consensus was reached which offered a synthesis and clarity on the question.

The three rounds of the Delphi study were followed in accordance with descriptions provided by Rockwell, Furgason and Marx (2000) as well as Osborne et al. (2000). In the first round of the Delphi panel, the researcher asked each expert to rate each item based on four factors: a) arts and critical dialogues, b) curriculum plans and social actions, c) equal opportunities and democratic participations, and d) critical communication activities. The researcher used a scale of 1-5 for each question (1 = *very important*, 2 = *important*, 3 = *neither important nor unimportant*, 4 = *unimportant*, and 5 = *very unimportant*).

The first round instrument was posted on a web page. All of the panel participants accessed and answered the questionnaire electronically. Twenty-eight panel members participated in the first round. In the second round of the Delphi panel, mean scores were calculated for each item from the first Delphi panel response using a five-point scale (1 = *very important* to 5 = *very unimportant*). For the Delphi panel's second instrument, the mean score was marked on an importance scale for each of the original items; panel members were then asked to rate the accuracy of the mean scores using a three-point scale (1 = *should reflect more importance*, 2 = *is an accurate representation of importance*, and 3 = *should reflect less importance*). From the comments written in on the first round, eight new items were added to the second round questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these items using the same five-point scale (1 = *very important* to 5 = *very unimportant*) employed in the first round instrument. Seventy-two panel members completed the second round instrument. Finally, in the last round of the Delphi study, frequency distributions were calculated for the accuracy ratings given to each of the original items. This meant that scores for the second round were adjusted based on the net difference between the proportions of responses, demonstrating that the item was judged either "*more important*" or "*less important.*" The adjusted means were added to the instrument for a third round. The third round instrument again asked for a rating of the accuracy of the mean scores using a three-point scale (1 = *should reflect more importance*, 2 = *is an accurate representation of importance*, and 3 = *should reflect less importance*).

A principal contribution to the improvement of the quality of the third round results, moreover, improved the understanding of the participants through analysis of subjective judgments to produce a clear presentation of the range of views and considerations (Turoff and Hiltz, 1996); it also detected hidden disagreements and judgmental biases that should be exposed for further clarification, and missing information or cases of ambiguity in interpretation by different participants. Three faculty members who were

experts in elearning coded the participants' response in the reliability check process. The anonymous and iterative nature of this process allowed the participants to submit their diverse opinions and make their critical decisions without meeting in person (Patton, 2002; Turoff and Hiltz, 1996). Finally, this Delphi application generated forecasts (Cornish, 1977) in elearning for pluralism and the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society in higher education; and empowered expeditious understanding on the future consequences of present choices (Amara and Salanik, 1972).

Findings and Discussion

The present study focused on identifying, categorizing, and ranking the needs and priorities for elearning. In addition, the factors necessary to investigate the major issues and challenges identified by elearning professionals over the next ten years were investigated. The findings of the study provide a pragmatic analysis, as well as a discussion of the four main areas discussed by the elearning professionals based on the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede how to provide the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society for elearning pluralism: (a) the major issues and challenges for curriculum plans and social action; (b) the major categories of curriculum plans and social actions; (c) the priorities for equal opportunities and democratic participations; and (d) the major needs for critical communication activities

Arts and Critical Dialogues

The major issues and challenges were those which provided elearning experts with diverse solutions to the future's most pressing dilemmas, problems, or barriers (see Table 2).

To best prepare themselves for different situations of technological, pedagogical, and social management for elearning in higher education, online workers were concerned about three main areas: a) building global online culture via new media should focus on how radical changes are fostered by democratic rules and principles, b) sharing power and culture in various democratic ways, c) transforming the economic and social landscape of elearning for pluralism. These areas are important for elearning experts who need to be progressively more aware of the challenges involved in meeting the needs of multicultural knowledge societies. To make the philosophy of global culture worthwhile, therefore, the culture of elearning for pluralism should cover the organizational features of higher education that affect the process and outcomes of planned change cultural activities among learner and faculty as digital citizens.

Table 2
The Major Issues and Challenges of Arts and Critical Dialogues for
eLearning as Reported by eLearning Experts

How important is it to:	
Very Important (1.0 to 1.49a)	
1.14	build global online culture via new media should focus on how radical changes are fostered by democratic rules and principles
1.25	share power and culture in various democratic ways
1.27	transform the economic and social landscape of elearning for pluralism
1.31	affect the process and outcomes of planned change cultural activities among learner and faculty
1.43	focus on working collaboratively with colleagues and global partners
1.48	emphasize a philosophical, theoretical and political orientation between power and privilege
Quite Important (1.5 to 1.99a)	
1.51	promote excellence through continuous process improvement and the creative pursuit of new ideas and systems in global elearning culture
1.72	translate a theory into practice on complex decision making process in pluralistic way
1.92	propose situate communications in an authentic context
1.96	engage learners in projects designed to be realistic, intriguing and relevant to real life experiences
Somewhat Important (2.0 to 2.49a)	
2.32	give carefully attentions on the self-esteem progress of digital citizens
2.41	engage online participants in collaborative e-activities with others
Neither Important Nor Unimportant (2.5 – 2.99a)	
2.67	transfer gradually more overwhelming amount of knowledge among knowledge societies online
2.75	enhance digital citizen academic achievements
a 1 = Very important 2 = Important 3 = Neither important nor unimportant 4 = Unimportant 5 = Very unimportant	

To make the philosophy of elearning for pluralism worthwhile, higher education should cover the organizational features of online knowledge networks that affect the process and outcomes of planned change cultural activities among digital citizens (Boyd and Meyer, 2001; Conle and et. al., 2007; May, 1999; Neo, 2005; Stevens-Long and Crowell, 2002). The required skills and experiences to construct and support a free milieu, therefore, can focus on working collaboratively with colleagues and global partners in global online culture through elearning. This critical process engage learners and faculty in multicultural projects designed to be realistic, intriguing and relevant to real life experiences. On the other hand, promoting excellence through continuous process improvement and the creative pursuit of new ideas and systems in global online culture should be a model for how

theory can translate into practice on complex decision-making processes to encourage digital citizens' independence in thinking critically in the global elearning context.

Curriculum Plans and Social Actions

The major categories were those that helped to define the important and urgent areas of curriculum plans and social actions for elearning for pluralism (see Table 3). eLearning experts emphasized that the following must become important categories for elearning for pluralism in higher education: a) providing successful activities and agreements for a knowledge society, and b) recognizing the multicultural ethical, legal, and social implications of new developments. Not only are curriculum plans and social actions the familiarities and awareness of facts, truths and information gained through experience, learning and self-contemplation, but also these critical plans and actions mean the confident understanding of a subject, potentially with the ability to utilize it for a specific purpose. eLearning for pluralism, therefore, should generate new forms and tools of gathering data, manipulating and storing knowledge, transforming information, and working together over distance and time to build a knowledge society efficiently, and transfer global knowledge effectively to the new contexts of social justice. Building a knowledge society should be the most important goals of building global culture in higher education.

Although the construction of curriculum plans requires more than collecting, acquiring and transmitting large amounts of information, data and experience, multicultural knowledge should emerge from the diverse interactions of body, mind and soul by emerging from understanding the global word. Besides, as critically pointed out by Beaudoin (2003), social actions are very crucial for higher education to tie the individual self to collective responsibilities due to remarkable advances in elearning for pluralism. In this context, the cutting-edge technologies can build a powerful multicultural network to share and exchange knowledge worldwide for the prosperity and well-being of its members by using an electronic network to send and receive information across multicultural locations, devices and business services.

Table 3
The Major Categories of Curriculum Plans and Social Actions
for eLearning as Reported by eLearning Experts

How important is it to:	
Very Important (1.00 to 1.49a)	
1.35	provide successful activities and agreements for a knowledge society
1.36	recognize the multicultural ethical, legal, and social implications of new developments
1.38	provide a general orientation and overview of global culture
1.39	provide multicultural insights into cultural differences to accomplish innovative levels of interactivity among people and communities online
1.49	demonstrate the functional interactive communications across disciplines, languages and cultures
Quite Important (1.500 to 1.999a)	
1.87	advance their extensive productivity, social opportunities and intellectual potentials through more focused advance strategies
Somewhat Important (2.000 to 2.499a)	
2.42	represent more well-planned and selective ways of looking for flexibility, value and beneficial arrangements
Neither Important Nor Unimportant (2.500 – 2.999a)	
2.76	interactive asynchronous communications
a 1 = Very important 2 = Important 3 = Neither important nor unimportant 4 = Unimportant 5 = Very unimportant	

Equal Opportunities and Democratic Participations

The major priorities were those that relate to how higher education programs are delivered via elearning for pluralism as follows: a) exploring how a community of digital citizens committed to social justice generates, b) negotiating and make sense of their social experiences in the online world, and c) representing a range of experience in their community work and critical praxis, as theorists, educators, theater workers, artists and others committed to transformative pedagogy and social equity (see Table 4). In this case, priority should be given to multicultural strategies, which are completely in accord with global agreements on equality and diversity issues.

Table 4
The Major Priorities of Equal Opportunities and Democratic Participations for eLearning as Reported by eLearning Experts

How important is it to:	
Very Important (1.00 to 1.49a)	
1.23	explore how a community of digital citizens committed to social justice generates
1.25	negotiate and make sense of their social experiences in the online world
1.31	represent a range of experience in their community work and critical praxis, as theorists, educators, theater workers, artists and others committed to transformative pedagogy and social equity
1.37	discover new plans for political resistance and power elites
1.38	make multicultural points of agreement and disagreement explicit that order their citizens' perspective
1.39	state the existence of new and potential interesting subjects of interest for collective actions
1.45	promote diversity in a knowledge society including various interest groups to use multicultural resources
1.48	make fundamental changes in online citizens' main concerns according to the struggles between capitalist hegemony and its democratic challengers
Quite Important (1.50 to 1.99a)	
1.79	realize the existence of new, potentially interesting subjects of interest for collective actions
1.81	shape the online public policy by involving efforts from a wide range of challenging social groups
1.88	investigate a cost model for infrastructure, technology and services?
Somewhat Important (2.00 to 2.49a)	
2.13	respect individual differences, online communities with the ideas of multicultural strategies
2.25	equip with high-tech systems and new visions of global online societies for supporting their citizens
Neither Important Nor Unimportant (2.50 – 2.99a)	
2.78	discover new plans for political resistance and power elites
2.81	go beyond the traditional culture that promote inclusive communications online
a 1 = Very important 2 = Important 3 = Neither important nor unimportant 4 = Unimportant 5 = Very unimportant	

eLearning for pluralism, therefore, is not only a activist processes but also a complex decision making progression in culturally diverse digital milieus (Gladwell, 2005; Porter, 2004; Panda, 2006; Sheets, 2005). Global online culture through this critical process should expose on online critical dialogues that deepen our awareness of innate social and cultural biases, stereotypes and prejudices, and challenges the social construction of dominant elite and social inequalities in online collective activities. Therefore,

learners and faculty in higher education should be educational activists from universities, community colleges, K-12 schools and the wider community. Also, these people should focus on critical communication approaches for global culture. Moreover, as pointed out Spring (1999), these learners and faculty should develop culturally responsive, social justice-oriented, critical and creative communication plans that go beyond elite power mandates. In this context, critical progress ties these persons as digital citizens' own well-examined experiences of race, racism, and whiteness to practical and essential concerns with social justice and the dismantling of racism and its supremacy within the online milieus. eLearning for pluralism, therefore, should develop practical cultural responses to the impact of race and diversity on digital citizens' consciousness and practices, and on the associated online experiences.

This can inform new models and approaches, as mentioned by Ganske (2005), Kumashiro (2004), Perrons (2004), and Vincent (2003) to diversity communications, to develop critical and creative pedagogical responses. Interrupting current one-size-fits-all educational mandates and the reproduction of power and privilege in and beyond the traditional higher education culture should provide diverse perspectives that acknowledge digital citizens own multiple and sometimes contradictory race, ethnic, class, gender, sexual, and ability experiences that points of tension and propel progress.

Critical Communication Activities

The major research needs indicate that online workers should be provided with the tools necessary to facilitate the design and delivery of distance programs are as follows: a) building a powerful knowledge network, which is relatively flexible, open and egalitarian, b) supporting digital citizens and society partnerships based on the sound principles of communication theories, c) being concerned with the development of the whole collaborative interactions within digital multicultural knowledge-based societies, and d) deliver global knowledge by promoting the democratic principles of social justice around the world (see Table 5).

Critical communication practices have great significance to emerge in sharing knowledge online, and having profound effects on critical thinking ((Herrmann and et. al., 1999; Picciano, 2002). Unlike knowledge sharing in traditional higher education milieus, online knowledge sharing to build powerful networks is relatively flexible, open and egalitarian that has instituted fundamentals changes in collective communication actions (Moore and Tait, 2002; Moore and Kearsley, 2005). These reform movements progressively support digital citizens and society partnerships based on the sound principles of communication theories. These improvements, therefore, must be concerned with the development of the whole collaborative interactions within digital multicultural knowledge-based societies (Scardamalia, 2003).

Global online culture, therefore, has a radical potential to deliver global knowledge by promoting the democratic principles of social justice around the world.

Table 5
The Major Needs of Critical Communication Activities for eLearning
as Reported by eLearning Experts

How important is it to:	
Very Important (1.00 to 1.49a)	
1.12	build a powerful knowledge network, which is relatively flexible, open and egalitarian
1.23	support digital citizens and society partnerships based on the sound principles of communication theories
1.25	be concerned with the development of the whole collaborative interactions within digital multicultural knowledge-based societies
1.25	deliver global knowledge by promoting the democratic principles of social justice around the world
1.32	become a consequence of the philosophy of dynamic and democratic lifelong learning
1.37	generate logical online possibilities and flexible contents
1.41	build appropriate flexible lifelong contents for digital citizens
1.42	focus on methods, techniques and principles as well as barriers to share and exchange knowledge in online communications
1.43	be capable of designing and maintaining effective culture to provide these citizens with flexible collaboration contents
Quite Important (1.50 to 1.99a)	
1.61	help learners and faculty become engaged citizens, informed individuals and dynamic members
1.62	provide invaluable information about the changing and evolving needs and benefits of lifelong learners
1.85	concern a structured way to improve digital citizens' communication styles and abilities to look at practices and learn from evidences with reducing reliance on trial and error
1.86	have reflective effects on building global online culture
1.87	support digital citizens based on the sound principles of communication theories
1.97	be concerned with the development of the whole collaborative interactions within digital multicultural knowledge-based societies
1.98	deliver global knowledge by promoting the democratic principles of social justice around the world
Somewhat Important (2.00 to 2.49a)	
2.43	focus on the complex communication problems with the unique answers of learners and faculty in their knowledge societies
Neither Important Nor Unimportant (2.50 – 2.99a)	
2.69	provide a dialogical support for the design and development of effective elearning designs for a knowledge society to share knowledge in their place and pace
a Scale: 1 = Very important 2 = Important 3 = Neither important nor unimportant 4 = Unimportant 5 = Very unimportant	

These location independent communication opportunities become a consequence of the philosophy of dynamic and democratic lifelong learning. Therefore, elearning for pluralism is a powerful medium to generate logical online possibilities and flexible contents. In order to build appropriate flexible lifelong contents for digital citizens, elearning for pluralism should focus on methods, techniques and principles as well as barriers to share and exchange knowledge in online communications. According to the philosophy of lifelong learning (Daniel, D'Antoni, Uvaliæ-Trumbiæ, and West, 2005; Powazek, 2002; Scardamalia, 2003), critical communication practices can be capable of designing and maintaining effective culture to provide these citizens with flexible collaboration contents. Besides, global culture can be able to help learners and faculty become engaged citizens, informed individuals and dynamic members in their online society to improve their communication styles and abilities with each other. However, there are limited researches and theoretical articles about critical communication practices to assist lifelong learning with real life experiences. Therefore, the culture of elearning in building a knowledge society should bring a new ground by addressing key questions about how to improve the diverse communications and multicultural interactions as well as online authentic experiences are associated with the changing and evolving needs and benefits of lifelong learners. Duffy and Kirkley (2004), Porter (2004), Rosenberg, (2001), Sheets, (2005), and Scardamalia (2003), culture addresses the specific communication problems. Distance communication designers, policymakers, and scholars can concern a structured way to improve digital citizens' communication styles and abilities to look at practices and learn from evidences with reducing reliance on trial and error. Finally, culture helps online individuals rethink traditional communications and be aware of the communicational strengths and limitations of a knowledge society. Flexible contents are an approach to new media which offer digital citizens choice in what to communicate, how it is interacted and collaborated, and when and where learning happens. Moreover, these contents provide a dialogical support for the design and development of effective elearning designs for online community to share knowledge in their place and pace. To increase flexibility in a knowledge society, digital citizens seek to increase the choice of professionals and community in one or more of these aspects of critical communication activities. These actions refer to both a multicultural philosophy and a set of techniques for flexible delivery, access and communication.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this study is to discuss how culture affects elearning for pluralism to build a knowledge society in higher education. Like traditional higher education milieus, elearning for pluralism, therefore, are

strongly related to the design models and strategies of constructing global online culture (Salmon, 2002; Torres, 1998; Williams, 2003). Therefore, e-learning in higher education carefully redesign and revolutionize their new roles in multicultural online milieus together. These organizations should help learners and faculty learn how to discover new communication technologies and their relationships to societal and educational change; focus on working collaboratively with each other regularly to promote excellence through continuous process improvement and the creative pursuit of new ideas and systems; plan, manage and lead effectively in professional development and lifelong learning endeavors to construct knowledge networks, and investigate the relationship between culture and new media to build democratic and multicultural knowledge networks.

Building global culture through elearning can help learners and faculty as digital citizens actively engage in their communication progresses. This process, also, helps these people to effectively transfer their knowledge to new contexts. As a result, online participants can improve their complex critical thinking skills to create, produce or demonstrate their knowledge. Moreover, these digital citizens can involve innovation in assessment to meet their changing needs and to realize new opportunities for sharing knowledge online. As discussed by Stephenson (2001), and Yang and Cornelious (2005), online societies, a type of micro-society where digital citizens work and live together on a daily basis, with certain rules and understandings about what is acceptable and what is not. The idea of building a knowledge society having a culture developed from the work of Hofstede on national cultures can focus on multicultural approaches of understanding global culture in different contexts.

To emphasize global online cultures, the needs and interests of learners and faculty, thereby provide diverse potentials to focus on the development of an enthusiasm for participation in an online community. In addition, the place of multicultural content designs for elearning can be examined in relation to the face-to-face, distance and open models of communications. The processes involved in the design, development, delivery, evaluation, improvement and management of new media can be explored to take the multicultural chances to develop the higher-level thinking skills needed to share knowledge online. To provide real life examples for digital citizens constructs flexible communication contents by enhancing the network-based technologies. Developing a critical understanding shows the needs, expectations and strengths of learners and faculty in higher education as they interact with global online culture regarding their academic and social progress in elearning milieus. In this context, also, global online culture can support how new media can fit into digital societies. The availability of these

cutting-edge technologies is crucial for not only digital citizens but also scholars, professionals and policymakers to make decisions for enhancing multicultural interactions about how they can provide flexible communication settings for diverse people.

To better understand and construct a free knowledge society for diverse learners should focus on the pluralistic strategies of elearning. These strategies can help learners and faculty interact wisely with all knowledge sources from around the world by dealing with the challenge to accomplish access and equity issues by integrating digital technologies with increasing knowledge qualities and quantities. Moreover, these strategies can appreciate the various learning needs and expectations of multicultural groups around the globe. Therefore, higher education can progress generative enlightenments to produce multicultural e-contents based on the philosophy of democratic education. In this context, these institutions can impact on delivering multicultural knowledge networks with interactive communication models and approaches as well as have the enormous potential to advance the issues of justice, equity and human rights.

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