

# INNOVATIVE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATED INTERACTIVE E-LEARNING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

There is a constant challenge for online programs, instructional designers and instructors to tailor eLearning materials for different learning styles. We examined this issue by closely looking at the innovative interactive learning models at the previous AACE Conferences (Son & Goldstone, 2011, Son & Goldstone, 2012, Son & Simonian, 2013, Son & Simonian, 2014). At the current Conference, we will discuss how learner-centered collaborative learning should be designed to improve these models using the example of a global online MBA course at Anaheim University. Using international economics as the subject matter, we will closely examine innovative collaborative learning strategies which are vital in cultivating highly active, engaging and applied learning in global economic classrooms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## KEYWORDS

Collaborative Learning, Integrated Interactive E-Learning, E-learning Paradigm, Pedagogy in International Economic Affairs

## 1. INTRODUCTION

How can we teach rising complex international economic affairs effectively in the 21st century global online classrooms? We need to pursue a new e-learning paradigm to foster learners with innovative and critical global thinking. Fast growing global digital world and rapid progress in multimedia instructional technology are facilitating a significant paradigm shift from traditional learning to learner centered active learning. Active learning paradigm in international economic affairs supports collaborative and engaged learning.

Online international economic curricula should be designed to constantly draw forth active learning feedback to facilitate learner-centered global economic classrooms. As students demand more flexible and responsive digital tools to access their learning materials, global online classrooms have to deliver more learner-friendly complex content effectively. In addition, global economic online programs, instructional designers and instructors ought to tailor eLearning materials for different learning styles. We examined these challenges by closely looking at the innovative interactive learning models at the previous AACE Conferences (Son & Goldstone, 2011, Son & Goldstone, 2012, Son & Simonian, 2013, Son & Simonian, 2014).

At the current Conference, we will discuss how learner-centered collaborative learning should be designed to improve these models. Using international economics as the subject matter, we will closely examine innovative collaborative learning strategies which are vital in cultivating highly active, engaging and applied learning in global economic classrooms in the 21st century.

## 2. NEW PARADIGM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY GLOBAL E-LEARNING

In the evolving complex global environment, international economic affairs are entangled with multi-disciplinary problems. Accordingly, the scope of international economic affairs in the globalization era has to be broadened, and integrated flexible learning needs to be incorporated into student-centered nurturing pedagogy (Giles, 2009). Under this approach, online learners are able to:

- Collaboratively work together to understand the complex international economic affairs using flexible learning tools;
- Understand multi-disciplinary concepts through team online discussions and interactive online exercises;
- Develop collaborative learning through diverse applied e-learning activities; and
- Contribute to the innovative team solutions to multi-faceted global economic problems.

To successfully obtain these learning outcomes, academic institutions have to implement a new paradigm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global e-learning as depicted below. They have to direct global economic online programs, instructional designers and instructors to develop innovative pedagogical techniques under the new paradigm. Active learning paradigm in international economic affairs supports collaborative and engaged learning through case studies, simulations, games, role-playing, policy debates, service learning, study abroad, film, interactive technology, and team discussions (Shaw, 2010). Online instructors need to constantly draw forth learning feedback to facilitate student-centered collaborative learning activities that can really engage and motivate even the most passive learners. This creates the continuous active learning cycle.

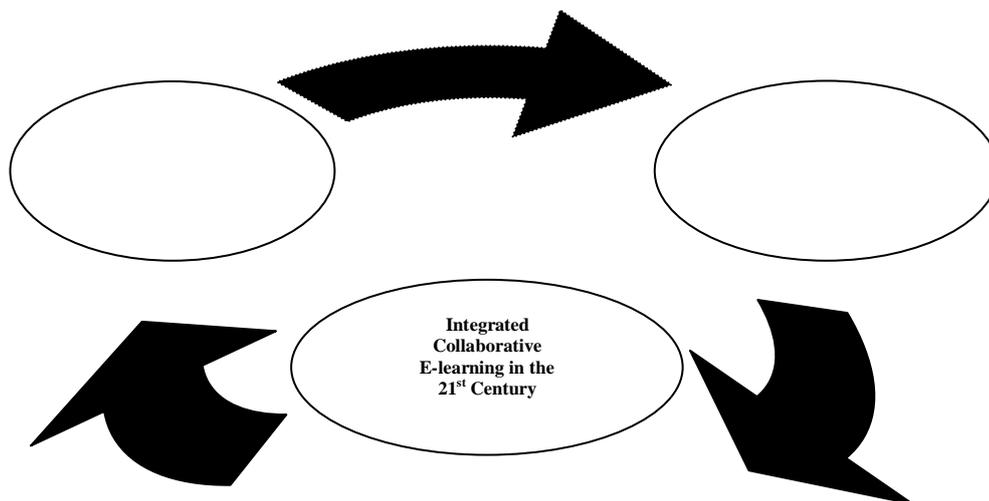


Figure 1. New Paradigm in the 21st Century Global E-Learning

### 2.1 Innovative Flexible Learning Tools in Global Online Classrooms

In the 21st century global classrooms, instructional technology is one of major pedagogical techniques for the active learning. Through flexible interactive tools, active learning encourages engaged learning and critical thinking skills (Giles, 2009). To assist innovative and collaborative lessons, we adopt flexible multimedia learning tools in our international economics class. Our online MBA students who are mostly global business professionals engage in highly interactive lectures, collaborative problem solving, and group project forums through a state-of-the-art customized web-based portal, iPod, streaming video webcast, and video podcasts (Anaheim University, 2015). We help them practice different learning tools flexibly in order to comprehend complex international economic affairs. In real-time online webcam classes, we facilitate innovative and collaborative learning through the latest high definition video webcam technology.

## 2.2 New Innovative Pedagogical Techniques

Learner-centered nurturing pedagogy in international economic affairs must address the complex and dynamic transformations of global environment. Active learners in international economic affairs need to identify and analyze the impact of various global variables and explore innovative policy ideas. To facilitate these learning outcomes, innovative pedagogical techniques must be incorporated into online economic curricula. In our online economics class, we apply flipped learning pedagogical techniques through asynchronous video lectures and active problem solving activities. Flipped learning combines constructivist learning theory which promotes authentic problem solving and behaviorist learning theory that emphasizes frequent practices (Roach, 2014). Instructors play as active learning facilitators to help students develop cognitive learning and practice experiential applied learning (Ash & Clayton, 2009). Online instructors and active learners have to be active learning partners to keep 'Integrated Collaborative Learning Cycle' (Figure 2) moving forward. We integrate innovative case exercises into interactive and collaborative lessons to deliver integrated learning environment. Our students realize actual roles they collectively play in the international economic affairs. We emphasize collaborative and experiential learning from which active learners gain perspectives toward tightly interwoven global issues, have empathy for others, and develop insights into challenges of others (Gibson & Shaw, 2010).

## 2.3 Integrated Collaborative E-learning in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

To build high order thinking and analytical skills, active learners in international economic affairs need to synthesize multidisciplinary components, to prescribe policy ideas, to predict future policy changes, and to evaluate potential policy outcomes. To fulfill these learning objectives, international economic curricula should adapt the pillars of four vital performing areas - innovative collaborative lessons, flexible multimedia learning tools, customized active learning activities, and integrated learning environment. We present these interwoven vital areas in the integrated collaborative e-learning model as shown in Figure 2.

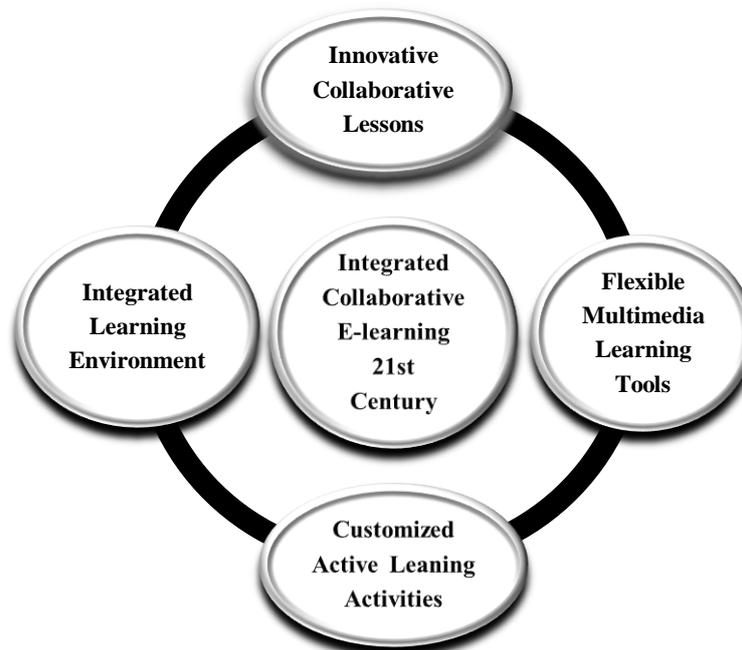


Figure 2. Integrated Collaborative E-learning Model

Integrated collaborative learning in our international economic class require instructors and students to take higher responsibilities towards leaning environment. They commit high levels of learning activity preparation and participation. They collaborate together to ultimately create an integrated learning environment which nurtures engaged, authentic and applied learning process. As we have earlier examined,

collaboration, innovation and creativity are vital components in the 21st century learning paradigm. To enhance these components, we integrate various pedagogical techniques into our customized active learning activities. Flexible multimedia learning tools that are integrated into our innovative collaborative lessons help us foster these activities in the integrated learning environment.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Our students who are global business professionals have tremendously contributed to the building of the integrated learning environment. This is one of the four vital components in the integrated collaborative e-learning model. The integrated collaborative e-learning is nurtured by evolving innovative collaborative lessons, flexible multimedia learning tools, and customized active learning activities. International economic curricula should adapt these four interwoven components to constantly keep 'Integrated Collaborative Learning Cycle' (Figure 2) moving forward. This facilitates learner-centered global economic classroom (Son & Goldstone, 2010).

In the fast moving 21st century global environment, international economics courses require innovative pedagogies and multidisciplinary learning as we examined. Online economic classrooms must apply innovative pedagogical techniques to facilitate student-centered active learning. Active teaching and learning process is facilitated by continuous assessment of learning outcomes in the continuous collaborative learning cycle. We presented innovative collaborative learning strategies to improve our previous integrated e-learning models (Son & Goldstone, 2011, Son & Goldstone, 2012, Son & Simonian, 2013, Son & Simonian, 2014). Significant progress will only occur when all four components in the integrated collaborative e-learning model are leveraged to work together in an integrated manner.

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