**Global Educational Challenges and eLearning**

I have spent most of my working life in international settings. When I return to teaching or training I hope to again work amongst diverse cultural groups. I am interested in developing learning environments that incorporate technology and access to the wealth of information now available through the Internet. This module has allowed me to research, discuss and reflect on issues that I, and other educators, face in global education today. In particular, I am interested in how cultural dimensions affect the design and delivery of eLearning.

**The Individual vs. the Group**

Our world is becoming more multi-cultural and it is the responsibility of educators to address this change. Edmundson ([2005](#_ENREF_1)) has found that most eLearning courses are designed in Western cultures yet the largest and fastest-growing consumer groups live in Eastern cultures. I pondered the cultural appropriateness of Darran’s comment that “we are now empowering students, from an early age, to be aware of their learning and to set individual learning goals” ([Ingram, 2011, September 20](#_ENREF_2)). One benefit of online learning that I see is that provisions can be made for more individual learning approaches. However, this can be seen as a Western approach to learning in that the individual takes priority over the group. Edmundson (2005) describes the difference between an individualistic culture where members value personal achievement and responsibility and the communitarian society where the achievement of group goals is valued. In my experience of teaching in multi-cultural groups, I have noticed that a group or individualistic approach to learning determines students approach to problem solving, creativity and the ways that students collaborate with others. There are many differences between Western and Eastern cultures in regards to how people communicate, how people perceive time, or how people view themselves as part of the larger society ([2005](#_ENREF_1)). Educators need to have a good understanding of the cultural perceptions of the students that they teach.

**Learning vs. Testing**

Assessment is taking on a new dimension in that it now involves not just formal but informal ways to measure the learning process. Peer and self reflection is now built into the learning design of face-to-face and online learning environments. In my experience of teaching in multi-cultural settings the form of assessment has been a point of disagreement amongst teachers and parents. Luchen ([Xia, 2011, September 21](#_ENREF_5)) provided a good example of this in her response:

Most of the Chinese people take e-learning as an inferior way to learn and the certificate gained by online course as not that valuable one. The whole education system is highly test-oriented. The nature of constructivism, which is the fundamental theory for effective online learning, is contradictory with the government’s policy.

Global eLearning implies that learning and the ways that assessment is integrated into learning will become unified in the world. I am still pondering how this will play out in the years ahead. I question whether eLearning courses designed in Western cultures are equally as effective when used in an Eastern culture. I agree with Edmundson (2005) that educational practitioners need to apply the concepts of cross-cultural dimensions to instructional design. I need to continue in my research to learn how to do this effectively in an online environment.

**Glo*c*alization**

Our world is becoming more global, even our face-to-face classrooms are becoming more multi-cultural. In my experience of teaching in diverse cultural settings, I have found that students learn to respect the diversity that exists among people. The virtual world provides amazing opportunities for people from differing cultures to collaborate, share expertise and knowledge, and learn from each other ([Taylor, 2011, September 17](#_ENREF_3)). In reading Wellburn and Claeys’ ([2004](#_ENREF_4)) article on the globalized world I was introduced to the word ‘glocalization’ which refers to incorporating learning materials from both the local community and the vast collection of online sources. In my teaching in multi-cultural settings I have always tried to get students to apply their knowledge and understanding of their home culture to the topics studied and to share this with other learners. When I return to teaching, the challenge will be to ensure that I continue to do this and develop new ways to incorporate local and global aspects of knowledge to learners in blended and online learning environments.

***References***

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