

Chapter 30

Promoting Multiculturalism in Technology Based–Education: A Framework for the Improvement of Compatibility between Educators of Special Groups and their Learners and a Case Study on Educators of Roma in Greece to Prove its Efficiency

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ABSTRACT

In multicultural education and especially in the education of special groups (Roma, immigrants, etc.), the compatibility between educator and learners directly affects the efficiency and the outcome of the educational programs. This chapter presents a framework for the e-education of educators of special groups based on and aiming to improve their compatibility with their learners, code named “the ESG Framework,” as well as a case study on educators of Roma in Greece, through which the efficiency of the ESG Framework was confirmed. The ESG Framework, standing in the crossroads of learning technology, multicultural education, and adults’ education, combines the necessary elements from all these main fields. In each phase of its structure, the ESG Framework provides clear guidelines to be followed by designers, developers, administrators, and instructors for the effective and measurable improvement of compatibility between educators of special groups and their learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Men's activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Men's activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action. It cannot be reduced to either verbalism or activism (Paulo Freire, 1970).

As the world of the 21st century is developing into a multicultural society, more and more educators and learners from different cultural, ethnical, linguistic, and social backgrounds meet and interact in the educational process. In multicultural education, the educator's role and capacity in empowering or disempowering learners has been identified as a major factor in the achievement of equal education prospectives for all learners. This becomes even more important for educators addressing learners belonging in special groups, where lack of compatibility between educator and learner could diminish the above educators' role. In using the term special group we refer to the social group whose characteristics (social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, physical, etc.) cause social exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization, to its members (i.e. immigrants, Roma, repatriated-refugees, prisoners/ex-cons, ex-addicts, persons with special needs) (Pavlis-Korres, 2007, 2009).

On the other hand, as the use of new technologies in education is rapidly increasing and provides education with enormous potential, the use of e-learning technology to deliver personalized educating programs tailored to each educator's needs anywhere, anytime and reducing the cost of the educators' education, is becoming a worldwide standard.

This chapter presents a framework for the optimization of the e-education of educators of special groups based on and aiming to improve their compatibility with their learners, code named "the ESG framework" and a pilot application by which its effectiveness has been consolidated. The ESG framework standing in the crossroads

of learning technology, multicultural education and adults' education, combines the necessary elements from all these main fields.

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN EDUCATOR AND LEARNER

As the notion of compatibility between educator and learners has been introduced as the main core of the whole ESG framework, it has been considered appropriate that it should be elaborated in more detail before the presentation of the ESG framework itself.

Educators are not a homogenous group as they have different social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and physical profiles, which influence their work in the classroom (Banks, 1997; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ndura, 2006). The educational needs of each educator may vary considerably, even if they have a common educational background or they are teaching the same subject. Some researchers (Bennett, 1990; First & Carrera, 1988) have focused on the miscues, which occur between educators and learners based on misinterpretations, and generalizations, made about their respective cultural background.

There are many terms attempting to describe a variety of effective teaching approaches such as: culturally responsive, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally compatible, and culturally relevant. All these terms indicate that educators should be responsive to their learners by incorporating elements of learners' culture into their teaching. In fact, there is general agreement that educators should be responsive to all learners and the learners' social environment (Cooper, 1993; Cruickshank, 1990; Irvine, 2003; Wittrock, 1974). Irvine (2003) refers to the phenomenon of lack of cultural synchronization when the cultures of African Americans and other students of color are different to the culture of the western white teacher and as a result are often disregarded. In other words, educators must be as much compatible

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