



Chapter V

Intercultural Dimensions in the Information Society: Reflections on Designing and Developing Culturally-Oriented Learning

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Abstract

Nowadays, it is a common ascertainment that information and communication technologies (ICTs) and networked learning are not easy to access for many people in non-Western societies and for those who belong in etho-cultural minority groups. As a result, one of the major drawbacks in networked learning programs is miscommunication amongst culturally-diverse participant users, which, to a great extent, is due to the lack of services that meet the needs of various socio-cultural groups of people. In addition, there is great need for multi-language Web sites (such as educational programmes, curricula, and software) in order to emphasise the importance of culture as a dimension which should be incorporated in modern ICT implementations. A literature review approach is followed so as to review statements and studies in the joint field of ICTs.

Introduction

In the decade of 1995-2005, the rate of investment in *ICTs in different sectors, such as the market economy, healthcare, and education, of the national agenda is considered to be an important indicator of a country's broader economic development and growth.*

Nevertheless, reality shows that *ICTs* not only do not offer the expected outcomes as a tool for the economic growth for all people, but at the same time they exclude access for many people. Especially, they do not meet the needs of many who are settlers of the non-Western world block. As a result, the potential offered by *ICTs*, and specifically the cultural expression through *ICTs*, both emerge as key factors in a global world.

In this direction, numerous studies reveal the impact of culture on *ICTs* development (Boist, 1996; Tan, Wei, Watson, Clapper, & McLean, 1998; Walsham, 1996), the role and consequences of national culture to everyday life (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede & Pedersen, 1999), and the impact of technology and culture in the process and outcomes of different cultural groups towards decision-making in organisations (Calhoun, Teng, & Cheon, 2002).

Taking all the above aspects into consideration, the main objective of this chapter is to highlight intercultural communication and activities as important dimensions in the use of *ICTs* and Web-learning on an equal rights basis for all people, independently of their colour, race, language, social class, and religion. First, the role of culture on *ICTs* and education in general is emphasised, in order to specify the needs that arise in a global society, by making a synthesis of characteristic statements and studies' outcomes which one can read in the relevant literature. Following on, the role of instructional design in the development and promotion of communication, mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding with the aid of *ICTs* is reflected by offering some hints about the development of e-learning addressed to students with different ethno-cultural background, aiming at the construction of a new citizen, the *homo "interculturalis"*.

It is hoped that this contribution will provide brainstorming opportunities for those educators and scholars who make efforts to find ways and tools for overcoming the cultural differences during the educational process with the aid of *ICTs* and bringing people with various ethno-cultural backgrounds and national identities together.

Cultural, Multi-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Global Societies: Theoretical Paradoxes

This section arises from the common belief that throughout the route of mankind's history, culture is functioning as a system of values and norms that serve the society's equilibrium.

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