



## **Chapter XIII**

# **Adapting E-Learning Across Cultural Boundaries: A Framework for Quality Learning, Pedagogy, and Interaction**

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### **Abstract**

*The chapter will, first of all, consider the challenges for educational designers of the need to maximise the opportunities of e-learning by enabling learners to participate in learning experiences, activities, and forms of communication that are congruent with their values, belief systems, and styles of learning. Second, by building on extant research and frameworks, the chapter will propose an integrated framework and set of guidelines for the development of quality learning resources for a global community of learners. The chapter makes a case for the internationalisation of learning resources informed by a flexible and pluralistic approach to design, based on the concept of constructive alignment.*

## **Introduction: Challenges and Concerns**

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In higher education, the expansion of cross-border initiatives, a greater push towards internationalisation of services, and a focus on global outreach in terms of curriculum and access have resulted in the adoption of learning technologies to reach diverse learners. Along with these changes, there has been a growing imperative to integrate an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and community service. When universities advertise their intention to internationalise their programs, it most often signals an intent to extend their reach, to create programs of study for a global audience of learners, and to use Web-based learning to enable diverse students to access their offerings online.

The scope and complexity of internationalisation and cross-border educational delivery have brought with them a number of concerns and issues. Global learning opportunities and connectivity provide the impetus to use ICTs to provide a raft of e-learning experiences, improved access, and democratisation. The commoditisation of e-learning, the rapid expansion of interoperability and standardisation of electronic resources and learning objects are combined with calls to ensure quality in content and process (Anderson & Eloumni, 2004; Barbera, 2004). Along with the need to facilitate mobility among students and to ensure international perspectives, collaborative learning efforts, and teamwork, there is also the pressure to preserve cultural diversity and to ensure that educational systems provide appropriate culturally-contextualised and relevant learning experiences.

E-learning opportunities and transnational delivery of education have meant that there is a transnational culturally-diverse student body communicating, interacting, and learning together. There is abundant literature attesting to the influence of culture on learning, attitudes, and styles of learning and thinking (Burbules, 2000; Burbules & Torres, 2000). Some of the challenges that arise for course developers are as follows:

- **Global vs. local perspectives:** Is learning material developed internationally-appropriate for local contexts, pedagogies, and value systems?
- **Adaptation vs. generalised approaches:** Is it possible to produce internationally-useable learning resources that can be used in any context, as opposed to generic materials that are later adapted and customised for local delivery? Which is the best approach?
- **Pedagogical uniformity vs. accommodating cultural diversity:** How do designers avoid the imposition of dominant worldviews or mainstream value systems and culturally-dissonant paradigms of learning, and instead enable learners to access learning resources that are congruent with their values, belief systems, and styles of learning? (McLoughlin, 2000, 2001)

This chapter makes a case for the internationalisation of learning resources informed by a flexible and pluralistic approach to design, as opposed to the localisation of resources, which has now become something of a mantra, often a superficial solution to accommo-

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