

Chapter 61

Culture and Motivation in Globalized Open and Distance Learning Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Culture, globalization, and evolution in information and communication technologies are three of the many factors that sway open and distance education phenomenon throughout the world. Within this field, motivation issues are regarded as the prime movers behind cultural differences. This chapter examines culture and motivation in globalized online learning spaces and their effects on learners' motivation. After exploring and explaining culture, globalization, and motivation issues, implications for designing motivational strategies for culturally diverse online learners based on Keller's ARCS-V motivation design model are presented. Further, recommendations and future research directions are proposed. Lastly, this chapter focuses on the multicultural nature of open and distance learning spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and evolution in information and communication technologies are important factors that sway open and distance education phenomena throughout the world. The development and proliferation of the global open and distance education market has enabled distance course providers and distance educators to reconsider concepts of cultural issues within the teaching and learning processes (Goodfel-

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low & Lamy, 2009; Gunawardena, 2013, 2014a; Wong, 2007; Zawacki-Richter, 2009). Based on a broad literature review and Delphi study of research, Zawacki-Richter (2009) developed a classification of research areas in the open and distance education field and identified the most neglected research areas. The author noted that globalization of education and cross-cultural issues are two of the highest priority areas that need exploration in open and distance education. He also emphasized that the function of culture and cultural differences in global open and distance learning spaces should receive much more attention. However, although the globalization of the teaching and learning processes and cultural issues are beginning to be taken into account in education areas, there are few studies in this area (Gunawardena, 2013, 2014a; Uzuner, 2009; Zawacki-Richter & Anderson, 2014).

A global need for higher education and swift developments in information and communication technologies have increased the popularity of open and distance education worldwide (Alalshaikh, 2015; Boubsil & Carabajal, 2009; Lim, 2004). As a result, in parallel to these developments mega universities, known as online distance universities with total enrolments of 100,000 learners or above, have been opened in nearly all continents around. However, Ess (2009) stated that “culture interacts with online learning in a range of ways” (p.20). So, by not taking online learners’ cultures into account, the learners’ motivation and persistence levels may be negatively affected (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). Thus, open and distance learning spaces are especially one of the areas required to focus on both motivational and instructional effects on learners. Both motivational and instructional issues require the designers to consider learners’ goals and capacities in concert with cultural and environmental factors that affect the learners’ attitudes and performance (Keller, 2010). Thus, more comprehensive frameworks of culture are needed to build an understanding of the interaction between culture and motivational issues and understand the concept of culture better as it has a fundamental and formidable role in open and distance learning spaces (Ess, 2009).

Like culture “a person’s motivation is itself multidimensional” (Keller, 2010, p. 35) and important in all learning settings, because when learners come to the learning environment they bring their cultural characteristics with them. At this point in open and distance learning settings, culture influences learners’ communication, perception, and learning processes (Goodfellow & Lamy, 2009; Gunawardena, 2014a, 2014b; Gunawardena, Alami, Jayatilleke & Bouacharine, 2009; Gunawardena, Wilson & Nolla, 2003; Jung & Gunawardena, 2014). When teachers try to enhance and maintain online learners’ motivation, they enter into the communication process that is mediated by online mediums. This leads to the question of ‘How do teachers or instructional designers arrange culturally responsive motivational strategies in online learning environments such as massive open online courses (aka MOOCs)? However, according to King and McInerney (2014) “culture plays an important role in students’ motivation in school but prominent motivation theories have relegated it to the sidelines” (p.194). So culture and motivation in online education remain to be two areas that require further emphasis.

As Gunawardena (2014a) stated, “globalization needs to be understood through the lens of culture and cultural identity” (p. 78). However, culture is a complicated issue consisting of many interrelated macro, meso, and micro concepts, features, and values. The concept of culture has also been receiving heightened attention from researchers with the high speed of globalization together with information and communication technologies. Since globalization is communicated through culture, and since culture is not separated from communication, it is understandable that communication is at the heart of these two concepts. Moreover, the cultural communication context is thought to influence motivation (Guay, 2016). Because of these reasons, the present study focused on two prominent perspectives on culture in open and distance learning spaces: Hall’s classification of high-context and low-context communica-

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