

## Chapter 5

# Transnational Distance Learning: A Student Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes the online educational experiences of students in both emerging and developed countries around the world. The authors are from France, Japan, India, Cyprus, Canada, the United States, and Fiji. This cross-section was chosen to present a global view of student needs for transnational education. The chapter presents personal vignettes of the online educational experiences, as well as the authors' views of student needs in the future. The authors also describe how they used technology to coordinate writing this chapter from six countries around the world.*

### INTRODUCTION

Crossing the geographic boundaries of a nation virtually to learn something new is what transnational learning is all about. Throughout the globe, across the countries there is a huge diversity not only in culture but also in education and learning. A course available in one country may not necessarily be available in another country, and

it is not always feasible to hop around different countries and places to study it. If the same quality of education can be provided without leaving one's comfort zone, then what is the purpose of settling for a regular, domestic course? From here starts the journey of transnational learning.

With the journey of Distance Learning, learner environments can change dramatically. In transnational settings, with different cultures,

languages, and even ideas about what constitutes education, this change can be amplified to great degrees. Seven transnational students from around the world were asked to explain their stories and synthesize them in this chapter. These case studies paint a picture of the variety and similarities of studying across countries and cultures, showing how vastly different learner experiences can be, yet how education can exist in many contexts and under many different conditions. These seven case studies bring the focus of transnational study to the learner's perspective. This chapter itself also illustrates the mechanics of how students from across the globe can work together in creating and learning from each other, regardless of distance. The chapter was constructed as a global team, to highlight for the reader the individual transnational learner environments.

As shown in Figure 1, the student authors were selected from all over the world. Each author has their own respective learning background and field of study, making the chapter diverse and valuable. The chapter consists of the student sections. The authors composed their section show-

ing their own experience through transnational learning and, thanks to file sharing, were able to initiate working together without much concern for distance. As our individual stories formed, we were able to discuss with each other how to enhance the chapter and complete the introduction and conclusion via Skype and email. Even real world considerations like personal vacations did not limit the completion of this chapter. The method used to create the chapter shows how to work with distance learning, and it can be useful for transnational educators too.

This chapter explores several prominent and recurring themes in distance learning as experienced by the seven co-authors through their learning experiences. Some of the prominent themes that will be explored are the flexibility that online learning provides to learners; its convenience over traditional classrooms; the sense of connectedness and the use of social networks to create a sense of connectedness. It also explores pivotal notions such as the cost effectiveness of online learning, quality when compared to traditional learning methods, and the opportunities

*Figure 1. The student authors in this chapter used DropBox, Skype, and email to coordinate their writing*



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