

Chapter 8

How Technologies Can Localize Learners in Multicultural Space: A Newly Developed “Global Studies” Curriculum

Gilbert Ahamer

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria

ABSTRACT

Technological innovations can be used in many ways to enhance the suitability of global learning. A newly developed online-supported curriculum “Global Studies” takes account of the necessities of interdisciplinary, intercultural and interparadigmatic learning. The history and genesis of such an innovative curriculum is embedded in a national umbrella organisation focusing on development studies. As the interdisciplinary core, a new lecture on the fundamentals of Global Studies has been implemented in 2010/11 that envisions team teaching and interdisciplinary perspectives. The web platform allows students to present their professional views and discuss them in a peer review. Dialogue and discourse are enhanced by repeated change of roles which is enriched by the broad international and intercultural backgrounds of the participating students. Cultures of understanding are generated and widened as a prerequisite for future careers in development cooperation, diplomacy and transnational organisations.

1. UNDERLYING DIDACTICS

The didactic thesis of this paper is that web-supported learning tools (Schwartz et al., 2003) have to *facilitate intercultural understanding*.

This paper’s approach suggests that deeper *dialogue-induced* cognition in Dewey’s sense (Berding, 1999) can enhance interparadigmatic understanding, civilisational evolution and mul-

ticultural education towards democratisation (Purnendu & Tripathi, 2003). In a “learning society”, the integration of views and perspectives constitutes the core of multicultural processes.

Moreover, learning technologies will hopefully contribute to entrepreneurialism (Woods & Woods, 2011), to a learning community (Robertson, 2011), to reflecting on others’ philosophies (Wang, 2011), and finally achieve mutual

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integration of learners' *views* into a consensus. Here the *change of roles* is enabled and prompts learning; this opens up the possibility of using the wide range of game-based learning and role play (Prensky, 2001). Managed learning environments are optimally designed in a way to suit various learner types and may offer opportunities for different personal cognitive and communicative rhythms and patterns (Ahamer, 2010).

Concrete usage of *learning technologies* is a clear function of the *underlying didactic concept*.

Well-coordinated *exchange and mutual approximation of academically substantiated views* is the central didactic-pedagogic task in the area of multiculturally and developmentally oriented interparadigmatic curricula such as "*Global Studies*" described earlier (Karl-Franzens University, 2010; Ahamer et al., 2011).

"*Views on realities*" are the core element of consideration in intercultural and multicultural learning. Figure 1 symbolizes "realities to be learned" by the globe and – in a more differentiated manner – by a Greek temple. The "learning individual" (upright) uses glasses to view realities "through a lens". The usual concept of interdisciplinarity refers to looking at reality through different parts of the lenses, using different rays from the eye onto the world for different scientific disciplines, when staying in this symbolism.

2. INTERDISCIPLINARITY, INTERCULTURALITY AND BEYOND

This paper clearly distinguishes between (1) interdisciplinarity, (2) interculturality and (3) an interperspectivist or interparadigmatic approach.

2.1. Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity here means to look at one complex issue in the world using *different lenses of perception* (traditionally described as "disciplines"). These "disciplinary perspectives" are often associated with different faculties. Hence

it was imperative for the GS initiative to involve members of all university faculties: law, history, economics, sociology, natural sciences, technology (symbolized by the pillars in Figure 1).

2.2. Interculturality

As distinct from interdisciplinarity, interculturality means in this article that different actors most likely have different views regarding the same issue in the world (at left in Figure 2) because they look at it from different standpoints. The framework of Figure 2 goes beyond "truths as such" that would have to be recognised during lectures and repeated "correctly" during exams. What is called for instead is the ability to assess the scope of the area of applicability of competing concepts of understanding.

In a collaborative learning environment – hopefully among students *and* teachers – interculturality means to allow for different views of the "truth" among learners (Cools et al., 2009) who are rooted in different cultural traditions (to varying degrees geographically, religiously, institutionally, socially, corporatively, or individually co-determined) and have different (epistemological) beliefs. This notion of *culture* refers to a "systemic way of perception" and is composed of

Figure 1. Interdisciplinarity means to look through different lenses



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