Chapter 2
Networked Knowledge Communities in the 21ˢᵗ Century Classroom Practices:
The Internationalization of Nursing Education through a Technology-Enabled Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the emergence and current status of Networked Knowledge Communities (NKCs) in Higher Education in the United Kingdom and, specifically, in the field of nurse and healthcare education. In particular, the chapter focuses on how new technologies can enhance learning and provide opportunities to create online communities at a global level, thereby contributing to the internationalization of curricula and the development of cross-cultural awareness within these communities. The chapter provides a brief overview of what we understand as "internationalization" and "cultural awareness" followed by a critical review of the recent literature debating the pedagogical possibilities and implications of using digital technologies to develop NKCs. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the evidence for the existence of "primitive" NKCs within the curriculum at this point in time and expectations for their emergence in the future, along with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Networked knowledge communities (NKCs) emerging in this pervasive digital era of Web 2.0 and cloud technologies will soon be impacting profoundly on how we teach and how we learn. NKCs have the potential to transform pedagogical practices and how we design and deliver our curriculum moving us towards complex and interweaving, formal and informal, dynamic learning spaces where knowledge is created and shared. As a consequence of these emerging NKCs, the promise of borderless education at a global level is coming into view. NKCs offer healthcare education and practice a range of promises, challenges and new opportunities to harness these non-traditional epistemic spaces (Boulos & Wheeler, 2007) to address current agendas around internationalization and cultural competence.

The focus of this chapter is to explore the findings from a literature review (search strategy can be found in the Additional Reading for this Chapter) on the ways in which new technologies, in what might be described as rudimentary NKCs, have been used to engender curriculum internationalization and cultural awareness in a nurse education context. This will provide evidence to establish the extent to which NKCs exist within Higher Education in the UK, understand the underlying pedagogical principles linked to their success and lessons learned along the way. Although the context for the discussion is mainly within nursing, the debates are relevant to health care and other discipline areas especially those courses leading to a professional as well as an academic award. We begin by stepping back briefly to explain what internationalization and cultural competence might mean and how they can be achieved, before going on to discuss the parts that technology and NKCs might play in facilitating these processes.

BACKGROUND

Internationalization and Cultural Competence

In health care, the internationalization agenda is significant at 3 different levels of global awareness: the 'macro' level of political and educational policies, the 'meso' level of professional expectations and the 'micro' level of improved patient care (Law & Muir, 2006). The need to develop cross-cultural understanding in graduates is enshrined in policies which state that nurses 'must practice in a fair and anti-discriminatory way acknowledging the differences in beliefs and cultural practices of individuals or groups (NMC, 2002), and that nurses must provide appropriate health care for a range of diverse groups and respond to these groups' needs in a culturally proficient manner (NMC, 2004). Cross cultural capability is an important dimension of harmonizing standards to facilitate employment mobility (Baumann & Blythe, 2008), but the need to be 'culturally proficient' in a context of increasing diversity applies to all nurses whether they practice 'at home' or 'abroad'.

In nursing and health care specifically, the personal and professional development of practitioners is in any case seen as part of the process through which better health care outcomes can be provided for patients. Dominant theories of *transcultural* nursing can be traced to the early work of Leininger (1995), although other transcultural models providing systematic approaches to nursing practice have been developed. For example, some nurse educators have found Campinha-Bacote's (2002) model for addressing cultural competence in health care useful in structuring and guiding student learning. This model, which promotes the idea of health care providers seeing themselves as *becoming* rather than being inter/culturally competent requires an examination and *awareness* of one's own cultural and professional background, including a recognition of one's biases, prejudices and assumptions about people who are different;

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