Book Review

Multicultural Awareness and Technology in Higher Education:
Global Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

This book offers readers an extensive knowledge on the role of technology implementations in higher educational institutions from a multicultural, multilingual perspective. Under the global context, the focus of the authors is to create more effective and efficient teaching and learning with an array of advanced educational technologies, educational models—or instructional design (ID) models— pedagogical, and conceptual frameworks. Regardless of the diverse disciplines and subjects in which particular technologies are applied, the authors seem to present these ID models under the convergence of pedagogy, content, and knowledge. The reader can find the integration of a variety of technologies across disciplines (e.g., Business, Math, Science, English, Education, Information Systems, Human-Computer Interaction, and Telecommunication Engineering, etc.), which explains the multidisciplinary approach held throughout the book. These technologies differ from e-learning to e-course design tools, to online learning, to blended learning, to mobile learning, to social networking, and others.

Topics covered include e-learning tools, e-course (online) design, learning management systems (LMSs), virtual learning groups, blended learning, technology-pedagogy-rich frameworks, Technology-supported instructional design models, Massive open online courses (MOOCs), multiculturalism and e-learning design, intercultural aspect of teaching with authentic, e-learning tools, and multicultural approach to e-learning systems.

Although technology use is not predominantly observed or used as the major factor influencing learners' mobility, learning styles, and preferences in Chapters 3 and 4, almost all 18 chapters in the book were organized in a way that appeal to both teachers and students interested in the use of one specific technology in their instructional practices and learning processes.

Strengths

In this book, by use of virtual, collaborative, online, and blended learning tools, Issa, Isaias, and Kommers (2014) provide a wide range of technologies and diverse means of media through which to enhance teaching and learning practices and support of learning of a diverse range of learners with a constructivist learning approach, combined with other learning theories. Technologies presented throughout the book are driven by certain pedagogical principles and ID models, and readers can find a useful technology tool of their interest and within their expertise as they make effort to enhance their educational technology-rich practices—be this during their teaching or learning.er

Chapter 16 is extremely informative and useful, for it embodies a rich literature review on mobile learning (m-Learning). A quick summary of this chapter can provide solid information to the reader interested in teaching and learning with mobile technologies. Imtinan, Chang, and Issa (2014), in this chapter, present the recent literature review on m-Learning with its characteristics, as well as its challenges. The authors especially focus on the educational potential of utilizing mobile technologies both in the world of academia and for the future of teaching and learning practices, in general. From the authors' viewpoint, although theorization regarding m-Learning is still in progress, by borrowing from the existing conceptualizations and learning theories with the purpose of solidifying its place in the literature, it is not merely a product of the current advancements in information and communications technologies (ICTs). In fact, according to Imtinan et al. (2014), m-Learning rather holds a pedagogical value particularly because of these various conceptual frameworks, instructional design models, and learning pedagogies it draws on. It is clear in this article that mobile technologies enable learners to become more independent and collaboratively engage in the entire learning process. As a comprehensive and one of the most current scholarly works on the role and value of mobile technologies on the learning and teaching process, I find this work in conformity with my dissertation topic. The fact that Imtinan et al. (2014) attempt to redefine the subtle difference between informal and formal learning environments with the major discussion that this type of learning environment allows for mobility for learners anytime and anywhere and yet can still be converged with traditional learning is highly interesting. The authors emphasized that such attempts and arguments on restructuring the current learning environments "may pave the way for education providers to include mobile learning in mainstream education blending with other existing forms of learning" (Imtinan, Chang, & Issa, 2014, p. 329). Thus, the blend of pedagogical and technological aspects of m-Learning coupled with its role to blend into formal learning environments with great flexibility and ubiquity is what the authors describe as the its pivotal characteristic, empowering the entire learning process in a holistic manner.

Weaknesses

Inclusion of Chapter 17, *Interactive Multimedia: Increasing the Study in Primary Education*, in the book, could be questioned. In this chapter, Mussoi, do Amaral, Tarouco, and de Lima (2014) concentrate on whether interactive, multimedia educational materials they propose affect the academic performances of the 5th graders' in Brazil. Given the fact that Issa, Isaias, and Kommers (2014) focus rather on higher education, this specific chapter's position in the book—in terms of the grade level of the study rather than its content or pedagogical value—remains ambiguous.

Chapter 18, which discusses Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), appears to be the only study pertinent to open online courses that contributes to gaining multicultural awareness through online technologies. Because this was a much needed and strong topic regarding the book's content and organization, the authors could have considered adding to the book chapters similar in content. This could have leveraged the effectiveness of the discussions. Specific discussion on MOOCs seems to isolate this particular chapter from the rest of the book, which predominantly focuses on e-learning, online learning, and blended learning design models and learning managements systems in higher education and with a cross-disciplinary approach. It is impressive that the book entails various disciplines ranging from English language learning and teaching to science, technology,

math, social science, business (i.e., e-business), and media competencies. However, discussions on distance learning (DL) are missing in the book.

DL-related chapters included in this publication could have been directly related to scope of the book (i.e., gaining multicultural awareness through technology in higher education from a global perspective). Inclusion of qualitative and/or quantitative research studies on DL could not only have consolidated the relevance of discussions on learning and teaching through technology in higher education, but also optimized seeing things both in a global perspective and in a holistic manner. Addition of research on DL could have greatly contributed to studies on e-learning, online learning, and blended learning already included in the book, leveraging both the content and the pedagogical value of the book.

SUMMARY

This book is a comprehensive work that entails a wide range of independently written and yet coherent chapters, addressing the need for utilizing diverse technologies for diverse learners both from multidisciplinary and multicultural approaches. Characteristics of various e-learning models and tools tailored toward learning of students with multiple social and cultural backgrounds are also provided and challenges addressed. The role of e-learning, blended learning, and mobile learning tools is emphasized in ways that these modes of learning have a great impact on course design, teachers' instructional practices, and students' academic performances. Findings obtained from a number of case studies and quantitative research studies, as well as from empirical research based on faculty's in-class observations and experiences with students utilizing technologies in their learning processes immensely add to the substantive value of the book, enriching its educational content. One particular strength of the book is to help readers gain awareness of and appreciation for the intercultural aspect of technology-driven teaching and learning. Current instructional design models, learning theories, and an array of pedagogical frameworks presented for a diverse range of learners and teachers from multiple subject areas not only support technology-enhanced education from a multicultural, multidisciplinary approach, but provide readers with a rich understanding of the contemporary, digital learning and teaching environments under the global, e-context. Because of its rich content and solid organization, this book is *highly* recommended.

Recommended audience for the text includes teachers and students in higher educational institutions and instructional/course designers who utilize various technologies in specific disciplines and/or subject areas. Second language teachers can especially benefit from the content of this book as far as their educational technology implementations for both classroom teaching and outside of the classroom environment.

Seda Khadimally specializes in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and second language acquisition, with a focus on teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to speakers of other languages. She has designed, delivered, and evaluated instruction, by continuous use of educational technologies for 15 years. She earned her Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate in Boston. She also holds an international diploma in Business Administration at University of California at Berkeley. She earned a certificate on successful completion of the English WIDE World online program developed at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), with specialization in Differentiating Instruction: Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners. Seda additionally holds a Master of Liberal Arts (ALM) degree in Educational Technologies, which she earned at Harvard University. She has currently been working on earning her doctorate (EdD) in Educational Leadership with Specialization in Educational Technology at the School of Advanced Studies (SAS) of University of Phoenix.