

Globally networked learning: A case study in Turkey and Latin America

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Globally networked learning is a new approach to teaching and learning that brings together geographically distant instructors and students from different lingua-cultural backgrounds to communicate and collaborate through the use of online communication tools sometimes referred to as Web 2.0 tools. (SUNY COIL Center (2014).

This case study uses an extension of this approach and includes a short study abroad component as a way to merge economics/business instruction with e-learning in an international setting that transcends national and cultural barriers. The case study explores the possibilities and challenges of extending this model to other geographical regions like South America and identifies the unique needs and challenges of business/economic students in such areas.

The rapid development of new technologies has revolutionized the delivery of education. Web 2.0 tools offers instructors and students a collaborative and interactive learning environment and with the advent of mobile devices brings a dynamic learning experience anytime, anywhere. (Liu, 2013)

The case study initially discusses the lessons learned from a collaborative online international learning course between students from New York in the U.S. and Eskisehir in Turkey. Business economic students from both institutions signed up for the same online course. As part of the course, students met in Istanbul, visited businesses and multinational corporations for 10 days, and received lectures from corporate leaders about their corporations and their insertion in the global environment. For the rest of the semester students continued online collaboration through the ANGEL learning platform on a team assignment using Web 2.0 tools to prepare an international business plan for a possible business across countries.

Initial results have been very enlightening about the future of collaborative online learning. Students, for example, interacted with each other in discussion forums by sharing their insights into the factors that affect businesses in different regions, such as the challenges posed by

emerging markets and their growing influence in the global scene. They also built a strong rapport among them as a result of their face-to-face interaction. Despite the short nature of the trip students bonded and their level of interaction was heighten by the experience, which improved the quality of their final project. They learned how to communicate across cultures but also in different time zones.

Given the high financial cost of actually moving large groups of students across continents for a long semester or a summer program, we believe that this e-learning modality with an international business study component also provides an economically viable alternative to bridge the gap between the 79 percent of people in the United States that agree that students should have a study abroad experience sometime during college and the 1% of students who actually study abroad each year. This same abroad experience is now being adopted and is a pre-requisite for students' graduation in some Latin America colleges.

This model can be transferred to different geographical locations where a common language (English) can join instructors and students to gain valuable global knowledge and cultural understanding. Collaboration between a professor at SUNY Cortland Business Economic program and USIL Economics program will explore how to use cutting-edge educational technology to replicate a similar collaborative online international learning experience on an LMS platform to join students from New York and Lima-Peru. The unique challenges and context of Peruvian students will be explored to examine the replicability of this experiment.

Educational policy makers should heed the advise from educators to make sure students acquire a global education while also becoming adept at using e-learning technology that allows them to be life-long learners. Apple University (AU) shows this modality is successfully training their employees in many locations around the world effectively making their employees life-long learners.

This is a very unique approach that shows how cutting-edge technology can help prepare students to succeed through greater access to international and cross-cultural knowledge. The model can also be adapted in the corporate world to turn students and workers into life-long learners.

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