Preface

INTRODUCTION

In the mining industry, geologists typically do not find gemstones like diamonds and sapphires in areas associated with metallic minerals like gold, silver, and copper simply because gemstones do not form in the same geologic environment. However, there are exceptions to that condition when there are tectonic juxtapositions of diverse rock types. Such conditions raise the possibility that they could find both types of commodities at the same time. For example, finding gold also paves the way to the discovery of precious gems.

Such is the condition that led to the development of this book, *Cases on Cultural Implications and Considerations in Online Learning*. The cases were originally compiled as ‘gold’ in their original publications because they offered essential insights into cultural challenges of online learning. Subsequently, upon further exploration, we have discovered that they were also valuable gemstones because they inadvertently addressed multiple critical cultural challenges faced in a global online learning environment. For example, in the chapter, *Developing a Grassroots Cross-Cultural Partnership to Enhance Student Experiences*, the authors’ intent was to reveal how they enhanced the student experience in an online course on how to market environmental products to American versus French consumers. However, in pursuit of that goal, they also revealed a creative technique for globalizing course content so that it was more acceptable to learners across multiple cultures. While the author’s goal in *Integrated Cross-Cultural Virtual Classroom Exchange Program: How Adaptable Public Schools are in Korea and the USA* was to document the benefits of cross-cultural virtual classrooms worldwide for improving intercultural competence, he also revealed institutional barriers and constraints to implementing online learning.

Thus, as you read each of these cases, refer to the section to which they have been assigned: *Cultural Expectations, Cultural Accessibility, Content Globalization, Instructional Globalization,* or *Institutional Globalization,* to discover which gemstones were found with the gold.
SECTION 1: CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

Which topic logically comes first, access or cultural expectations? If access were only related to technological challenges, I would naturally address it first. However, this is not the case. Access to online learning is culture-bound, meaning that you cannot address access until you understand the underlying cultural differences. Thus, it makes more sense to discuss cultural expectations before access because online educators need to understand what expectations they are facing before they can facilitate access. Expectations – of life, work, education, etc. – are rooted in cultural values.

However, even with the best of intentions, (embracing the benefits of providing online courses to globally distributed learners), the cultural expectations of learners will continue to challenge educators. Why?; because online learning is a cultural artifact, imbedded with the preferences and nuances of the ‘designing’ culture. However, the targeted learners often have markedly different expectations with respect to how they are taught and how they learn. Moreover, no approach is wrong, just different. However, if educators, (instructors, instructional designers, and institutions), are unaware that these expectations even exist, they cannot address or accommodate them, and subsequently, they will fail in their efforts to provide global online learning. Moreover, they will fail in a multitude of ways; failing to effectively transfer knowledge and skills to learners; failing to create online learning in resource-effective ways; and failing to preserve the reputation of online institutions by ignoring cultural differences. Let’s look at the examples of cultural expectations in this section. Recognizing and exploring cultural expectations establishes a foundation of understanding upon which you learn how to address and accommodate them, as covered in subsequent sections of the book.

In Designing Culturally Appropriate E-Learning for Learners from an Arabic Background: A Study in the Sultanate of Oman, author Andrea Hall describes how the Sultanate of Oman recognized the benefits of online learning and how this format could be used to address national educational goals. Hall describes how the first iteration of an online course sought to avoid passive learning – a cultural expectation in Oman - by using tools such as discussion forums, chat rooms, wikis, e-portfolios and blogs. These methods represented a significant departure from the lecture format and the traditional roles of learners and instructors in Oman. From the outset of the course, learners expressed discomfort with the social community, the lack of structure, and the lack of obligatory accountability. For example, participants used the forums to post information instead of for reflection and building upon each others’ contributions. In addition, instructors did not use the interactivity functions to augment communicative and collaborative aspects of learning as prescribed; instead, they reverted to traditional didactic approaches. All of these culturally nuanced
factors compromised learning outcomes. Subsequently, armed with the findings of their analysis, the authors redesigned the course to better facilitate the use of the learning tools. Yet, even though there was some improvement in the acceptance of the second iteration of the course, it still fell short of students’ expectations. What does this signify for educators? It signifies that, even when we have recognized and accommodated cultural expectations, they are difficult to affect. It illustrates that the nature of culture – of deeply imbedded, learned behaviors – is a substantial challenge that requires continuous effort and time.

In *Collabor8: Online and Blended Cross-Cultural Studios*, author Ian McArthur further underscores the challenge of addressing cultural expectations when The Collabor8 Project (C8) challenged design students from universities and colleges in Australia and China to collaborate online. As in Hall’s case, adapting to the range of issues encountered in collaborative interactions between very different groups of undergraduate and postgraduate art and design students required two iterations of the course to accommodate learners’ expectations. MacArthur illustrates how C8 evolved to integrate blended pedagogical strategies that enabled stronger collaborative relationships to develop and to identify cultural preferences and tendencies regarding the use of media. To address different cultural backgrounds and expectations, McArthur encourages instructional designers to recognize different styles of knowledge production and to present content in the students’ language using culturally inclusive methodologies.

In *Chinese Postgraduate Students Learning Online in New Zealand: Perceptions of Cultural Impact*, Yan Cong and Kerry Earl approach the challenge of recognizing cultural expectations from a different angle. Instead of identifying them ‘post-implementation’, they actively sought the Chinese students’ perceptions of the impact of their culture on their online learning, especially from the perspective of how instructional design supported learning and achievement. In other words, they addressed the expectations directly of the non-designing culture. In their investigation, they uncovered first; the Chinese students’ understanding of online learning; second, their perceptions as to whether their cultures influenced their online learning, and finally, what they recommended to online teachers and students. The first-hand, real-time feedback from these students offered rich insights into their cultural expectations. In addition, the expectations of American students contrasted with those of the Chinese offer the reader insights into how our own cultural expectations can ‘block’ knowledge of others’.

Cultural expectations affect more than how instructional approaches and technological tools are used. In *Incorporating “World View” into the LMS or CMS is Best*, Katherine Watson asserts that cultural expectations – worldviews – affect the design and use of learning and content management systems (LMSs and CMSs, respectively). She effectively illustrates how American-centric systems render sub-
ject matter design and delivery, as well as assignment formulation, scheduling, and grading, difficult for educators with alternate worldviews. She recommends that to resolve these disparities, “…institutional control, identity, and contextualization must be addressed, while unique-to-the subject matter identity and contextualization are also considered.” In many cases, LMSs and CMSs are imposed upon educators and learners; thus, the challenges she describes may be considered ‘unchangeable’ but her proposed modifications extend from temporary ones (can be affected by instructors on a course-by-course basis) to long-term ones (requiring redesign and deployment by developers).

SECTION 2: CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY

Understanding and accepting different cultural expectations are preliminary steps to making online courses more accessible to global audiences. Cultural accessibility encompasses several concepts. First, despite the proliferation of online learning technologies, many learners lack access to them (completely or intermittently) or have no way in which to support the use of certain technologies (like multimedia). In contrast, some technologies, such as mobile phones, have not been used or optimized for suitable locations. Content may also be culturally inaccessible if it is not localized to be relevant and useful to the targeted learners. Localization can encompass language issues (utilizing global English, translation challenges) as well as visual components (images, signs, and symbols). It also encompasses instructional approaches, from the types of activities used to the types of assessments imposed.

In the case by Pauline Hope Cheong and Judith N. Martin, *Cultural Implications of E-Learning Access and Divides: Teaching an Intercultural Communication Course Online*, in addition to focusing on how to effectively provide an intercultural communications online, they illustrate how they surmounted the multifaceted barriers to course access. You should ask: What characteristics or situations prevent learners from accessing an online course? Instinctively, most people would offer responses related to the technologies themselves, the ‘digital divide’ that can be created by lack of technologies or infrastructure. However, the barriers identified by these authors are characterized as technocapital, such as mental access (what motivates learners), how materials are accessed, what skills are needed to access courses, and usage characteristics. Rohas, Straubhaar, Roychowdhury, and Okur,(2004) describe technocapital as “a specific form of cultural capital encompassing the acquired knowledge, skills, and dispositions to use information technologies (personal computers plus the Internet) in ways that are considered personally empowering or useful (p. 115).” With respect to mental access and motivation, for example, the authors ask how courses could be altered to meet the challenges of students’ various learning styles
and culture-specific communication styles. How can universities ensure that students can have equitable access to materials, via hardware and software? Research also shows that considerable variance exists in the way and time in which individuals access and find information. A lack of technical skills and assistance has been noted as a barrier to persistence in online courses. This case offers a deeper reflection on what characteristics the term ‘access’ truly comprises in online learning.

In *Blended Learning Internationalization from the Commonwealth: An Australian and Canadian Collaborative Case Study* by Shelley Kinash and Susan Crichton, the authors discuss how blended learning can address the multitude of factors that make online learning culturally inaccessible. According to their experiences, these problems tend to be exacerbated by the fact that universities are not using “culturally inclusive teaching and assessment strategies.” The case focuses on the four pedagogic areas identified by De Vita (2007): Communications, with a particular focus on language difficulties; academic skills; teaching and learning stance, and; constructivism. For example, barriers to effective intercultural communication included stereotyping, language fatigue (for both second-language speakers and listeners) and misunderstandings due to the unqualified use of colloquialisms, idiomatic expressions and analogies. They found cross-cultural awareness gaps in approaches to essay writing. There were cultural clashes between learning and teaching styles, exemplified by issues such as the reluctance by some international students to participate in collaborative and student-centered activities. In addition, there were transitional difficulties for students moving from dependence on rote learning to autonomous learning skills. In the case, the authors illustrate how two universities facilitated culturally accessible teaching and learning of international students through blended learning.

Author Gemma Baltazar, in *Developing an E-Learning Course for a Global Legal Firm*, describes the considerations, challenges, and lessons learned in developing an online course for a global legal firm. The firm’s risk management course needed to accommodate lawyers speaking more than 75 languages (i.e., many of them were non-native English speakers), belonging to a variety industry groups, with different local laws and legal environments, and coming from various cultural backgrounds. Noting that research identifies accessibility as one of the top motivating factors for effective elearning, Baltazar describes how the project was managed to accommodate overall end users’ learning experience, including: accessing the course online, speed of load, performance of the technology, and obtaining adequate and timely user support when needed. For example, she describes steps taken by the firm to avoid the frustrations arising from problems such as buttons or links not working, pages loading slowly (or not at all), computer hardware not meeting requirements of the program, and so forth. In addition, the firm took concrete steps to avoid frustrations related to not knowing who to ask for help, lack of motivation due to lack of
interactivity, and language usage (British versus American English). Readers will benefit from reviewing the challenges faced by a corporation, how they creatively addressed them, and the project management required to facilitate the development of accessible online learning.

Ray Archee and Myra Gurney, in *Integrating Culture with E-Learning Management System Design*, describe ways in which the asynchronous learning platform, WebCT, is culturally inaccessible. They state that “[t]he evolution of the Web from a text-based medium to an interactive, multimedia platform has created the need to consider the audience of websites in more sophisticated and nuanced ways.”

In their research, they asked students to comment on their preferences for three uniquely different WebCT pages intentionally designed with near-identical content. In contrast to what most Americans might expect, the students showed a definite preference for sparse, menu-driven webpages as opposed to a colorful, congested, all-in-one interfaces, or the bare-bones WebCT interface. In addition, the majority of the sites sampled used WebCT primarily for posting course material, with a minority using the interactive capabilities of discussion boards, drop boxes or online assessment. This finding is indicative of both the limitations of the WebCT interface as well as the limitations of the technical web skills of the academic staff, both representing implications for the issue of cultural accessibility. The authors argue that template-driven web portals like WebCT are culturally one-dimensional and that the architecture, the tools and the interface tend to reflect the orientation of the culture (usually Western) that has developed and marketed them. In conclusion, Archee and Gurney describe five ‘lessons learned,’ addressing the design and functions of the WebCT system itself, as well as how universities and instructors use its functions. For any organization contemplating a singular web-based solution for multinational audiences, this chapter is a must-read because many factors related to culture could restrict accessibility.

**SECTION 3: CONTENT GLOBALIZATION**

Given that learners and instructors come from different cultural backgrounds, we might suspect that not all course content may be relevant in all environments. In contrast, we also make assumptions that certain content is understandable and relevant to all learners. How can we identify ‘inappropriate’ content and adapt it to suit the needs of our targeted learners? Typically, to globalize content, course developers rely upon localization techniques. What is localization? For online learning, localization represents more than translating words and using appropriate images; instead, it’s creating culturally appropriate content and using culturally preferred instructional techniques. This section discusses content localization; in the subsequent one, instructional approaches.
Content localization is important because it shows learners that you are aware of their unique environments and context. For example, U.S. laws on disabilities will not be relevant in India. In a case study on the ethics of giving and receiving business gifts, an image of a bottle of wine would be irrelevant in an Arab culture. Even language needs to be localized (spelling localised?). For example, many American business terms, such as ‘the bottom line,’ have no meaning in other cultures. In addition, they create costly translation challenges. Almost all courses designed by one culture and destined to use in another require some level of localization. However, before submitting our courses to localization experts, we can take action as instructors or course designers to globalize the content. In this section, in the course of designing effective instructional strategies, the authors also discovered multiple ways in which to globalize their content. In other words, the same techniques they used to instruct could serve to localize course content!

Not surprisingly, for-profit companies have used localization in advance of educational institutions, primarily because it was a business and marketing decision. Thus, we can extrapolate their experiences to our needs. In Developing a Grassroots Cross-Cultural Partnership to Enhance Student Experiences, the authors Iryna Pentina and Veronique Guilloux reveal how students collaborated to globalize their marketing content so that it would appeal to two different cultural groups, Americans and French. While the authors focused on how they used problem-based learning and team collaboration to sell environmental products and services across two cultures, what they also revealed was an excellent approach to discovering: First, how content might vary across cultures; and subsequently, how to localize it. In their approach, learners identified their assumptions about what would appeal to both groups and then, by addressing the different cultural values, adapted the content to suit learner expectations. For example, Americans were more interested in how a product saved them money, gas, or other resources; whereas, the French were more interested in how the products saved the planet or contributed to the beauty of their country. Thus, this case reveals how the targeted learners themselves assisted with content localization.

In Cultural Adaptation of E-Learning Courseware: An Ethics & Compliance Example by Randall Stieghorst and Andrea Edmundson, the authors provide very explicit examples of how they globalized the content of self-paced online courses by focusing on content integrity, values integrity, contextualization, modified language, and appropriate multimedia and images (actual and metaphoric). They illustrate ways in which they identified what content required cultural adaptation and how they accomplished it via systematic analysis and research. Moreover, they stress the importance of including end-users (targeted learners) in confirming and testing their proposed modifications. Lastly, they recommend changes to the instructional design and development processes for online courses, including the training of
production staff (instructional designers, scriptwriters, multimedia experts, graphic designers, etc.), so that cultural adaptation (localization) becomes a systematized process and not a post-development course revision (the latter being more expensive and time consuming). For you as the reader, the systematic approach (the Cultural Adaptation Process Model) allows you to localize course content even when you are uninformed about cultural differences.

Authors Caroline M. Crawford and Ruth Gannon Cook have researched and published many articles on semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior; the analysis of systems of communication, as language, gestures, or clothing (www.dictionary.com). In *Culturally Significant Signs, Symbols, and Philosophical Belief Systems within E-Learning Environments*, they illustrate the “students’ inability to succeed in taking an online course, in learning how to navigate the course, and in getting used to the isolation of online courses” because courses lacked culturally recognized signs and symbols. The goal of their study was to see if the inclusion of semiotic tools, signs, symbols, stories, and tools would support learners’ understanding of the subject matter. In addition, they explored whether semiotic tools helped students feel more comfortable and subsequently, whether that comfort helped them to persist in completing assignments and finishing the course. The findings of the student feedback revealed that, while students participated in the primarily text-based online courses, they seemed to prefer the course modules embedded with signs, symbols, and narrative. In their list of “lessons learned,” the authors stated that semiotics affected the online environment more than they previously considered. They recommend that educators recognize the benefits of scaffolding learning with semiotic tools as illustrated in their case study.

**SECTION 4: INSTRUCTIONAL GLOBALIZATION**

Across cultures, learners – and instructors - have preferred approaches to learning and teaching, different learning styles, and unique teacher-student role models. These culturally embedded characteristic influence how teachers and students interact and how students interact with each other. For example, in hierarchical cultures such as many Asian cultures, the instructor is the ‘expert’ and students expect to learn from the expert, not their colleagues. They tend to learn from lecture and rote memorization. They typically do not question the ‘expert’ nor challenge any teachings. In contrast, American instructors often assume the role of ‘facilitator’ and expect students to learn from research, collaboration, interaction with each other, and application of learning to real world situations. Facilitators expect and welcome questions and challenges. Thus, you can see why it would be important to have a repertoire of instructional techniques that benefit – and are accepted by – multicult-
tural audiences. In these chapters, authors address instructional approaches such as problem-based learning, virtual role-play (including virtual learning environments or VLEs and synthetic characters), and simpler techniques such as mentoring via email: How they work (or not) across cultures and how they can be adapted to be effective for targeted learners.

As was done in the chapter on content globalization (Developing a Grassroots Cross-Cultural Partnership to Enhance Student Experiences), authors Nicholas Bowskill and David McConnell use feedback and cultural assumptions provided by the learners themselves to localize their online course. In Collaborative Reflection in Globally Distributed Inter-Cultural Course Teams, they illustrate how they used the technique of reflective writing – using shared online journals – to help course tutors from the United Kingdom and China to overcome cultural differences in their approaches to teaching. According to research, using collaborative reflection techniques helps people to detect different perspectives of a topic while providing a system of checks and balances on one’s private views. In this course, using the shared online journal helped tutors improve their knowledge of local and global teaching practices and showed them how to deliver learning and teaching with people from other cultures, not to them. Thus, in addition to their own professional development – a better understanding of another culture- they also discovered very authentic ways in which to globalize their instructional approaches.

A Multidisciplinary Project Integrating Marketing Research, Art, and Spanish Language for Social Sciences by Manuel Cuadrado-García, Maria-Eugenia Ruiz-Molina, and Lourdes Hernández-Martín is another example of how marketing courses and/or research can lead educators to a better understanding of the need for globalized instructional techniques. While challenged with conducting a complex project for a marketing course, the authors report on the benefits of using problem-based learning to motivate students and to improve involvement and performance online. “Problem-based learning [is] an instructional learner-centered approach that empowers learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem.” In the online course, students from two universities (in Spain and the United Kingdom) participated in an interdisciplinary project based on a real decision-making process. The project had positive effects on students’ motivation, involvement and performance because of the approaches used in the project. The results illustrated that, even if there were low extrinsic reward for project participation, students became actively involved in the problem-based situations because they perceived them as exciting, challenging and useful for solving a real-world problem. Via cooperative activities, the students not only benefitted directly (by achieving the desired learning objectives), they benefitted indirectly by improving their language skills.
To date, few online courses for adults use techniques such as virtual role-playing. In fact, research may prove that it’s an instructional technique better assimilated by younger learners, but that remains to be evidenced. In *ORIENT: The Intercultural Empathy through Virtual Role-Play*, the authors (Enz, Zoll, Vanninim, Lim, Schneider, Hall, Paiva, and Aylett) illustrate how virtual learning environments (VLEs) increased opportunities for practice, exploration, experimentation, and construction in a safe learning environment in an online course for 12-14 year olds. Noting the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between virtual worlds and the effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge acquisition, the authors worked on the premise that, once a positive relationship is established between the “agent” (like an avatar) and learner, motivation and interest would be enhanced, and in fact, their study illustrated the development of such relationships. However, they felt that to be more effective, the VLEs required some sort of reflective activity in order to reinforce and imbed the experience in the learners’ minds. In addition, the authors learned that while integrating multiple technologies such as mobile phones and WII to create the VLEs had positive rewards, the techniques themselves required too much focus on the mechanics (more than most instructors would be willing to accept).

*Learning in Cross-Cultural Online MBA Courses: Perceptions of Chinese Students* by Xiaojing Liu and Richard J. Magjuka is valuable to the reader because it offers not only candid feedback from students (the non-dominant culture, Chinese) in the online course, but their recommendations on how to improve the online course by removing perceived cultural barriers. The authors wanted to explore and identify cultural barriers that could affect the performance and satisfaction of the international students (Chinese) in an America (dominant culture) course. A feeling of ‘cultural discontinuity’ (defined as “a lack of contextual match between the conditions of learning and a learner’s socio-cultural experiences” by Wilson, 2001) led students to feel discombobulated and ineffective in this culturally different situation. In particular, they commented on course aspects of time management, time zone differences, language, case-based instruction, collaboration, instructional design, academic conduct, instructional scaffolding, and academic integrity. Time-related challenges are not a surprise, yet the students felt that instructors could do more to accommodate the differences. In addition, language issues were expected, yet, instructors did little to accommodate the needs of non-native English speakers. (Instructors erroneously tend to assume that ‘English speaking’ means that Chinese students used American English as adeptly as their American counterparts did.) Particularly useful to you the reader are the students’ comments on instructional techniques, which tend to contrast significantly from what Chinese students experience in their own country. Lastly, the comments related to academic integrity raised definite cultural differences in which one cultures’ concept of plagiarism was different from another’s.
SECTION 5: INSTITUTIONAL GLOBALIZATION

Even before courses can be built or placed online, the institutions offering these courses need to be prepared for the global, multicultural environment into which they are about to enter. However, too many institutions make the mistake of ignoring key factors of success and in particular, dismissing the inevitable cultural differences associated with global online courses. In this section, we present two cases, from very different parts of the world (the U.S., Korea), that illustrate what educational institutions need to consider before they globalize their courses or curricula because, across cultures, they will encounter significant differences in policies, infrastructure, laws, missions, and other high level differences that should be addressed at the organizational level.

In this case, Integrated Cross-Cultural Virtual Classroom Exchange Program: How Adaptable Public Schools are in Korea and the USA, the author Eunhee Jung O’Neill describes the barriers and constraints to implementing the International Virtual Elementary Classroom Activities (IVECA). IVECA is an online classroom exchange program where K-12 school students in the United States and Korea shared their thoughts and ideas through a web based, course management system (CMS). The goal of the researcher was ultimately to document the benefits of cross-cultural virtual classrooms worldwide for improving intercultural competence. O’Neill identified three types of barriers to this goal: Technological, pedagogical, and organizational (see Figure 1). The technological and pedagogical barriers were similar to those discussed in previous chapters; however, this case offers unique insights into organizational barriers – some predictable; others surprising. For example, the two country’s public schools systems differed significantly; the American model being decentralized in contrast to Korea’s very centralized one. In addition, school policies on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) were incompatible. (Interestingly, the Korean policies assured that ICT usage and infrastructure was standardized in the public schools; whereas, in the US, each school was equipped differently and had different resources available to them.) Predictable barriers were different classroom management styles, school schedules, teacher availability. Less predictable were the different paces at the schools, school goals, the ICT literacy level of teachers, and so forth. For example, the American schools’ goals were to facilitate students’ achievement (test scores) and to conform to the NCLB Act regulations (No Child Left Behind). This mission conflicted with the typical Asian goal of educating students to better everyone’s life. A figure from the case illustrates the barriers addressed in IVECA via communication and sharing and understanding one another’s values.
In addition, some barriers were local (i.e., within participating schools, infrastructure, ICT competency, etc.). The author concludes with recommendations on globalizing online courses that are relevant to any globalizing institution.

As evident from the discussion thus far, ICTs are necessary for the realization of wider access to global online courses. However, given the infrastructure and limited or inequitable capacities (human, technical, and organizational) across the globe, the realization of international collaboration in ICT-use will remain a challenge for a considerable time into the future. In this final chapter, *International Collaboration in Distance Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends, Trials and Tomorrow’s Thrusts* by Gbolagade Adekanmbi and Bopelo Boitshwarelo, the authors talk about the ‘digital divide’ in African countries, particularly in tertiary education. “Digital divide refers to the gaps between individuals, communities and nations in their capacity to utilize, and the extent to which they have access to or own various forms of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This also refers to imbalances which occur as a result of the availability or non-availability of resources or skills which individuals require to operate new technologies.” In Africa, the absence of technology policies in many countries is a major hindrance to online education. Developing such policies could help identify resources (and resource gaps), users, and opportunities for collaboration (internationally and globally). Subsequently, the creation, adoption, and sharing of policies could further educational and economic goals. As the author illustrates, certain global ‘movements’ (The Millennium Development Goals, the African Virtual University, etc.) are playing positive roles in increasing access to online learning; however, more concerted efforts are needed to truly globalize online learning for all countries. Read this chapter as a treatise on the international collaboration that is required for success globalization of education.

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**Figure 1. Barriers of cross-cultural virtual classrooms for improving intercultural competence**

![Diagram showing barriers of cross-cultural virtual classrooms](image-url)
CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, these cases were originally compiled as ‘gold’ in their original publications because they offered essential insights into cultural challenges of online learning. Subsequently, upon further exploration, we discovered that they are also valuable gemstones because they addressed other cultural implications and considerations in online learning. For example, many of the online courses discussed in these cases were designed to teach intercultural skills; however, they also introduced ways to address cultural expectations, improve course accessibility, and globalize course content and instructional approaches. In addition, in the process of implementing these courses, the researchers discovered that often their organizations needed ‘globalization’ as well, to prepare them for online course delivery.

Across the chapters, the targeted audiences varied greatly: Youth and adults; University, corporate, and public versus private schools; and economically advantaged or disadvantaged. Course content and purpose varied greatly, as well: Art, marketing, communications, interculturalism, law, and so forth. Nonetheless, what did not vary was that all of the cases illustrated ways in which to reach and engage learners across cultures by using online learning that accommodates cultural differences and preferences. For example:

  Motivation was typically increased by:

  • Enhanced experiences
  • Active involvement
  • Real world applications

  Courses often addressed the preferences of non-traditional learners.

  Courses provided for the tangential development of skills:

  • Improved language capacity
  • Increased computer competence
  • Richer cross-cultural knowledge and skill
  • Use of new resources, techniques, and technologies

  Courses identified differences in values and perceptions manifested in content (i.e., environmental concerns of U.S. and French) and approaches to learning (group collaboration versus instructor-led)

  I think you’ll agree that the original gold in these cases paved the way to the discovery of these precious gems. I’ve given you a map - Enjoy the mining!