Chapter X

Building Online Knowledge Societies for Lifelong Learning: The Democratic University-Community Partnerships in Turkey

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Abstract

New communication technologies have the great potential to construct very powerful paradigm shifts that enhance university-community partnerships (UCPs) in Turkey. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to focus on how to build online knowledge networks between university and community for lifelong learning. Further, in this study, the strategies and principles of UCPs based on media richness theory through a critical pedagogy approach is discussed to generate a theoretical framework that provides everyday examples and experiences for probing social justice issues. Online learners can find the diverse resources, multicultural experiences, and egalitarian opportunities that broaden their perspectives via new communication technologies. This chapter therefore concentrates on discussing the characteristics of the UCPs for lifelong learning to build online communities with new communication technologies.

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New communication technologies can provide the vehicles to build a very powerful paradigm shift to enhance the university and community partnerships (UCPs) in Turkey. These technology-based collaborations allow the partners to interact with each other, sharing the global knowledge and resources. While this is unquestionably not a new concept, it is one that needs to be revisited, refreshed, and strengthened as distance education is developing critical concerns for lifelong learning. The UCPs are recognized as an integral part of social justice issues that theories, models, and strategies of online communications must lead these entities to carefully redesign and to revolutionize their new roles in the communication milieux. The standards and rubrics for lifelong learning must direct their partnerships in the milieus as well.

As noted by Baum (2000), universities must be redirecting their social, economical, educational and intellectual resources, facilities, and other assets to benefit their community in many innovative ways for lifelong learning. Basically:

1. UCPs can be deeply engaged in diverse activities to build global knowledge networks effectively.
2. Participations can generate strong theoretical frameworks to bring democratic changes in online communities.
3. Social, cultural, and educational interactions and collaborations between them can provide guidance for the public good.
4. Possibilities, potentials, and implications of moving beyond transmission model of communication can generate social justice issues.
5. Attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of the UCPs can address important cultural and social problems.
6. UCPs can explore how to bring social justice into diverse real-life experiences and build comfort for them.
7. Effective practices can empower democratic intercultural decision making and dialogic leadership between the university and community.

A theoretical framework can provide everyday examples and experiences in Turkey for enhancing the UCPs. Therefore, to build strong online knowledge networks, the main concern of this chapter is to focus on producing explicit definitions for lifelong learners’ roles and understanding their changing responsibilities. The UCPs must be a realistic road map of increasing resources by addressing community problems. This chapter discusses not only strategies and principles, but also pitfalls and barriers for the UCPs in Turkey. This highlights the importance of starting partnerships with certainty about outcomes and resources but maintaining flexibility in process.
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