Cross-cultural transfer of learning materials for a Journalism course at a Higher Education Institution

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SUMMARY

This study reflects on an outreach initiative between two differing tertiary cultures established on different continents. The aim is to develop an understanding of what happens when a prestigious American university and a South African Higher Education Institution meet around a computer-mediated situation. Various inter-relating aspects such as cooperation and cooperative learning, educational technology, Higher Educational Institutions, globalisation, the international Digital Divide, cultural diversity, commonalities, cultural differences, an international learning programme, and power relations in international partnerships are explored. The effect of technology on education is that information is no longer restricted to a single geographical setting, instead it has expanded and became a dynamic international driving force. Increasing educational needs compel Higher Education Institutions to provide in these needs and to adapt to a more flexible learning style. Globalisation causes the world to get smaller, compressed, interconnected and resulted in a world that is in effect flat. Information communication technologies are changing the world. On the one hand the Internet promotes communication and freedom but on the other hand causes uneven development all over the globe. The Digital Divide pertains to the divide between the global well-resourced learners and the local under-resourced learners. Cultural differences between nations and organisations can be interpreted against the background of different models of cultural dimensions. The focus of the study is to explore the effect of commonalities and cultural differences on cooperative learning at organisational level. Power relations between international partners were challenging and resulted in conflict and differences of opinion.

The project started with the University of Pretoria's visit to Stanford University in November 2004. The preparation, organisation and planning phases continued through 2005. The ELISA project was intended as a three-year intervention from 2006 through 2008. The first year was supposed to be a pilot phase to gather and provide information for use in the second and third years. This study pertains to the pilot phase which started in February 2006 until June 2006. It was successfully completed and achieved a 93% success rate. However, in September 2006 Stanford unexpectedly informed the South African partners that the project would be discontinued due to several reasons. Their objections related to the lack of visible progress regarding content scheduling, media production, course logistics, and research practicalities. Although there were accommodating personalities among the project leaders on both sides interpersonal conflict between the remaining project leaders developed. The partners on both sides could not generate sufficient commonality regarding the need to continue. The situation was worsened by the fact that the initial rationale for the project lacked shared motivation among the project leaders on both sides. It is suggested that more research be conducted to explore possible differences of opinion and undercurrents among project leaders throughout the project, and to scrutinize the initial rationale as well as curriculum issues in good time, and to investigate the role of
power relations between international partners that are funded by international grants, and the effect of these power relations on the learning experiences of the students involved.

Key words: cooperation, cooperative learning, educational technology, Higher Education Institutions, globalisation, Digital Divide, cultural diversity, educational needs, commonalities, contextualization, power relations.
# CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction........................................................................................................................ 1

1  Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 1

2  Background ................................................................................................................................... 1

3  Theory and methodology ............................................................................................................. 2

4  Method ........................................................................................................................................... 5

5  Interpretation ................................................................................................................................... 6

6  Cultural limitations ................................................................................................................................. 6

7  Rationale ........................................................................................................................................ 7

8  Research problem ................................................................................................................................. 9

8.1  Research question ............................................................................................................................ 9

8.2  Central question ............................................................................................................................... 9

8.2.1  What happens when an international learning module, compiled by an American university is adapted for a South African HEI, and implemented in a computer-mediated context? ............... 9

8.3  Critical questions ............................................................................................................................. 9

8.3.1  What dialogue emerges and why does it emerge? ................................................................. 9

8.3.2  How and why is shared meaning created and why is it created? ........................................... 9

8.3.3  How do we deal with cultural differences? ............................................................................. 9

8.3.4  Which aspects of the process work well and why and how can they be improved to compensate for those that do not work well? ......................................................................................... 9

8.3.5  Which aspects do not work well and why and how can they be improved? .............................. 9

9  Literature study ............................................................................................................................... 9

9.1  Educational technology .................................................................................................................. 10

9.2  Higher Education Institutions ...................................................................................................... 10

9.3  International learning programme ............................................................................................... 11

9.4  Globalisation ................................................................................................................................ 11

9.5  Digital Divide ............................................................................................................................... 12

9.6  Cultural differences ....................................................................................................................... 13

9.6.1  The effect of cultural differences and dynamics for the social context in South Africa ......... 15

9.6.2  The implication of cultural differences in terms of this study ................................................. 15
Chapter 2: Literature study

1 Introduction

2 What happens when an international learning module, compiled by an American University is adapted for a South African HEI, and implemented in a computer-mediated context?

2.1 The International Digital Divide

2.1.1 The north–south phenomenon

2.1.2 The Digital Divide in context and the Internet

2.1.3 Factors contributing to the Digital Divide

2.1.3.1 Income differentials

2.1.3.2 Telecommunication infrastructure

2.1.3.3 Geographic barriers

2.1.3.4 Human capital

2.1.3.4.1 Literacy

2.1.3.4.2 Language

2.1.3.4.3 Culture

2.1.4 The paradox of the Digital Divide

2.1.5 Commonalities and differences

2.2 How to bridge the Digital Divide

Chapter 2: Literature study
2.2.1 Economic development and growth ................................................................................. 45
2.2.2 Human capital investment ............................................................................................... 47
2.2.3.1 Internet literacy ........................................................................................................... 47
2.2.3.2 Internet access ............................................................................................................ 49
2.2.3 Technology diffusion ......................................................................................................... 52
2.2.4 Telecommunication infrastructure .................................................................................. 53

3 Higher Education Institutions .............................................................................................. 54

4 The role of technology .......................................................................................................... 56

5 What dialogue emerges and why does it emerge? ................................................................. 59

6 How is shared meaning created and why is it created? ......................................................... 61

7 How do we deal with cultural differences? ........................................................................... 64

8 Critical analysis ..................................................................................................................... 68

8.1 Direction of funds ............................................................................................................... 68

8.2 Interpersonal differences.................................................................................................... 70

8.3 Curriculum innovation and contextualization ................................................................... 70

9 Which aspects of the process worked well and why and how can they be improved to compensate for those that did not work well? ........................................................................... 71

9.1 National ownership ............................................................................................................ 71

9.2 Combination of course material ......................................................................................... 72

9.3 Critical thinking skills and dispositions ........................................................................... 72

9.4 Internet use ........................................................................................................................ 73

9.5 Feedback and motivation .................................................................................................. 74

10 Which aspects did not work well and why and how can they be improved? ........................ 74

10.1 Initial agreement with the University of Limpopo ............................................................ 74

10.2 Unequal power relations .................................................................................................. 75

10.3 Dismantling of prejudice ................................................................................................ 75

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design ........................................................................ 76
Chapter 4: Findings and results ........................................................................................................ 96

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 96

2 What happens when an international learning module, compiled by an American University is adapted for a South African HEI, and implemented in a computer-mediated context? ........................................................................................................ 96

2.1 The International Digital Divide .................................................................................................. 97
  2.1.1 The north–south phenomenon ............................................................................................... 97
  2.1.2 Digital Divides within ......................................................................................................... 99
  2.1.3 Factors contributing to the Digital Divide ........................................................................... 100
    2.1.3.1 Insufficient telecommunication infrastructure ................................................................. 101
    2.1.3.2 Geographic barriers ......................................................................................................... 101
    2.1.3.3 Literacy .......................................................................................................................... 101
    2.1.3.4 Language ....................................................................................................................... 102
    2.1.3.5 Culture ........................................................................................................................... 102
    2.1.3.6 Commonalities and differences ..................................................................................... 103

2.2 Initiatives to bridge the Digital Divide ..................................................................................... 103
  2.2.1 Economic development and growth ................................................................................... 103
  2.2.2 Human capital investment .................................................................................................. 104
  2.2.3 Internet literacy ................................................................................................................... 105
  2.2.4 Internet access ................................................................................................................... 105
  2.2.5 Telecommunication infrastructure ...................................................................................... 106

3 Higher Education Institutions .................................................................................................. 106

4 The role of technology ................................................................................................................. 107
  4.1 Cognitive divide ........................................................................................................................ 112

5 What dialogue emerges and why does it emerge? .................................................................... 112

6 How is shared meaning created and why is it created? ............................................................ 115
  6.1 Goals, adversaries and incentives .......................................................................................... 115
  6.2 Motivation .................................................................................................................................. 117
  6.3 Cooperation and cooperative learning ................................................................................... 118
  6.4 Competition ............................................................................................................................... 120
  6.5 Recognition ............................................................................................................................... 121
  6.6 Interdependence ....................................................................................................................... 121

7 How do we deal with cultural differences? ................................................................................... 122

8 Which aspects of the programme worked well and why and how can they be improved to compensate for those that did not work well? .............................................................................. 124
8.1 Blended learning method ......................................................................................................... 124
8.2 Content and workload .............................................................................................................. 124
8.3 Critical thinking skills and dispositions ................................................................................. 125
8.4 Internet use ................................................................................................................................ 125
8.5 Feedback and motivation ......................................................................................................... 125
8.6 Components of CAI .................................................................................................................. 126
  8.6.1 Instructional adequacy .............................................................................................................. 126
  8.6.2 Cosmetic adequacy .................................................................................................................. 132
  8.6.3 Program adequacy .................................................................................................................... 135
  8.6.4 Curriculum adequacy .............................................................................................................. 139
9 Which aspects did not work well and why and how can they be improved? ........................................ 141
9.1 Combination of course material .............................................................................................. 141
9.2 Workload .................................................................................................................................... 141
9.3 WebCT6 ...................................................................................................................................... 142
9.4 Schedule .................................................................................................................................... 142
9.5 Internet use ................................................................................................................................ 142
9.6 Components of CAI .................................................................................................................. 143
10 Reasons for the discontinuation of the project ........................................................................... 143

Chapter 5: Conclusions .................................................................................................................. 145
1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 145
2 Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 145
3 Discussion ....................................................................................................................................... 154
  3.1 Methodological reflection .......................................................................................................... 154
  3.2 Substantive reflection .................................................................................................................. 157
    3.2.1 Valuable learning experience .............................................................................................. 157
    3.2.2 Computer-generated documents ......................................................................................... 157
    3.2.3 Critical thinking skills and dispositions .............................................................................. 158
    3.2.4 International collaboration ................................................................................................. 159
    3.2.5 The use of technology ....................................................................................................... 159
    3.2.6 Certification ....................................................................................................................... 160
  3.3 Scientific reflection ..................................................................................................................... 161
List of Tables

Table 1: Symbolisation of Greek Gods.................................................................................................. 17
Table 2: ELISA project role players..................................................................................................... 21
Table 3: Foreign direct investment during 1994 – 2000........................................................................ 32
Table 4: Telkom ADSL connectivity ...................................................................................................... 35
Table 5: Telkom ADSL modems ........................................................................................................... 36
Table 6: Statistics for South Africa’s mobile phones: 30 June 2008 to 31 March 2009 .................... 37
Table 7: World Internet Users and Population Statistics – December 2007......................................... 39
Table 8: Human capital disparities ........................................................................................................ 41
Table 9: World Internet Users – December 2007 ................................................................................. 49
Table 10: Telkom’s monthly fee ............................................................................................................ 51
Table 11: Semicolonial and partnership models of research in developing countries ....................... 61
Table 12: Contact sessions ................................................................................................................... 79
Table 13: Suggested lectures ................................................................................................................ 86
Table 14: Data collection instruments .................................................................................................. 89
Table 15: i-mate program functions .................................................................................................... 109
Table 16: Navigation keys .................................................................................................................... 127
Table 17: Scales ................................................................................................................................ 137
Table 18: Scores ................................................................................................................................ 138
List of Figures

Figure 1: Theoretical framework ............................................................................................................. 3
Figure 2: Digital Divide ......................................................................................................................... 12
Figure 3: Foreign direct investment ...................................................................................................... 33
Figure 4: World Internet Users – December 2007 ............................................................................... 39
Figure 5: The Internet Access Rainbow ................................................................................................. 1
Figure 6: Percentage distribution of learners in the education system in 2006 .................................. 56
List of Annexes

Annexe A: Interview with a Director of the FSIIS ................................................................. 166
Annexe B: Interview with the Stanford team leader ............................................................... 169
Annexe C: Interview with the first teaching assistant .......................................................... 177
Annexe D: Interview with the Co-director of the FSIIS ....................................................... 182
Annexe E: Interview with the UP team leader ................................................................. 186
Annexe F: Interview with the general support and administrative assistant ....................... 189
Annexe G: Discussion with the second teaching assistant .................................................. 191
Annexe H: Focus-group interview ....................................................................................... 194
Annexe I: Letter of informed consent .................................................................................. 209
Annexe J: Request to the Whitehead Foundation ................................................................. 211
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADDIE</td>
<td>Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADSL</td>
<td>Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired immune deficiency syndrome</td>
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<td>AMD</td>
<td>Advanced Micro Devices</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>Automatic teller machine</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Africa Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWF</td>
<td>African Wildlife Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAI</td>
<td>Computer Assisted Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>CESP</td>
<td>Center for Environmental Science and Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>Compact Disc Read Only Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Communication technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Communication Technology Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital video disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELISA</td>
<td>E-learning Initiative in South Africa</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further education and training</td>
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<tr>
<td>FISAC</td>
<td>Fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSI</td>
<td>Freeman Spogli Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSIIS</td>
<td>Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMT</td>
<td>Greenwich Mean Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>International Business Machines</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICASA</td>
<td>Independent Communications Authority of South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDL</td>
<td>International Distance Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDV</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Internet Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISDN</td>
<td>Integrated services digital network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information telecommunication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWS</td>
<td>Internet World Stats</td>
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<tr>
<td>KFC</td>
<td>Kentucky Fried Chicken</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTO</td>
<td>Long Term Orientation</td>
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<td>MAS</td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PDA</td>
<td>Personal digital assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDI</td>
<td>Power Distance Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return on investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SANLS</td>
<td>South African National Language Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCIL</td>
<td>Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNO</td>
<td>Second national operator</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Sahara Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>STHC</td>
<td>Scientific and technical human capital</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUIOP</td>
<td>Stanford University International Outreach Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNO</td>
<td>Third national operator</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUT</td>
<td>Tshwane University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>University of Pretoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAI</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UL</td>
<td>University of Limpopo</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>The joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United National Environment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO/COL</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>University of Pretoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Uniform Resource Locator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>University of the Western Cape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WiFi</td>
<td>Wireless Fidelity</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRI</td>
<td>World Resources Institute</td>
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