Globalization of Education V

Focus Symposium

on

The Global Open University of IIAS as a Conduit for an Internet-Based Ph. D. Program

Organized by
Winfried Karl Rudloff
Governors State University
University Park, Illinois, USA

As part of

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We define Interactive Classroom as having manifold configurations. In its original meaning it is certainly interactive when the teacher and the students cooperate in a normal classroom setting. On the other hand, high technology has provided us with the tools to reach beyond the confines of a classroom.

On a regional basis, the electronic interactive classroom allows us to connect to other universities, colleges and organizations, thus expanding our audience through the capacity of video conferencing.

Yet, it is the Internet that has opened up the potential of a Global Classroom through the technologies of hypertext, hypermedia, and multimedia, whereby hypertext and hyperlinks are the tools that connect the content of our ideas and make it palatable to all of our senses through hyper- and multimedia. A picture is worth a thousand words and moving pictures and sound excites our senses in a powerful way. But it is interaction that forces us to learn more aggressively and acquire knowledge more permanently.

The question then arises, will knowledge be commercialized or will it be a free for all? Will it lead to global cooperation or global competition? MERLOT seems to answer to both: It is cooperative and free for all in that knowledge is freely accessible. It is competitive by way of peer review that checks on the quality of our contributions. However, it is still a passive way of learning in most cases, and active interaction with the authors and their teaching materials could make it more effective. Thus, the ideal configuration for an Interactive Electronic Classroom in a Global Environment would be as we describe for our course in Artificial Intelligence (Fig. 1).

This symposium is again designed to provide a forum for discussions directed towards a world-wide educational network, its scholarly and scientific possibilities and its potential political pitfalls. While commercial
organizations have already taken advantage of the Internet for global expansion, educational institutions have still to define their mission on a global basis. The primary purpose of world-wide education appears to be commercial as well, yet the scholarly content is mostly provincial and lacks the vision of global social and cultural responsibility.

Traditional higher education with in-class teaching and learning is essentially local whereby professors and students are in direct contact with each other. In the past, teaching was intimately connected to scientific research and other scholarly endeavors. Universities were often created on private initiatives with faculty being involved in both, academic as well as administrative functions. Eventually, administrative functions were separated from those of scientific research and teaching. As the size of teaching institutions grew, so did the bureaucracy of their administrations. In the United States, many universities are state-run and as such, dependent on the whims of politicians who more often than not know nothing about the educational process. Organizational and educational decisions are generally made by decree of management rather than by consent with faculty and students.

In contrast, our vision of a Virtual Global University as part of IIAS should be organized along the lines of a one-to-one faculty-student relationship. Curricula should be designed that are flexible and that should be able to accommodate students from around the world. Selection criteria should not necessarily be based on paper credentials but mostly on common interest between faculty and student. Minimal bureaucracy should be a major goal where much of the scientific correspondence is directly between faculty and student.

By its very virtual nature, the global university should be a distributed organization since our potential faculty and students can be continents apart but connected through the instant facility of the Internet. Minimal centralization may, however, be required to coordinate the process of matching faculty with students depending on common research interest. Also, the finance structure may have to be centralized.

We suggest again the following general topics for this symposium:

- Globalization of education: could it lead to democratic enlightenment or misused for fanatic indoctrination?
- The psychological effects of new technologies on education.
- Knowledge transfer in a global educational system and potential impact on the diversity of cultures.
  - Global education in social context.
  - Solutions to global problems through world-wide education
  - Legal aspects of a global educational network.
- The potential impact of world-wide education on political systems.
- Can global learning lead from a culture of war to a culture of peace?

We welcome contributions in these areas of potential significance to international education. Other areas can be suggested.

Please, send an abstract of your intended active participation by March 15, 2007 to:

Prof. Winfried Karl Rudloff, PhD. and/or to: Prof. George E. Lasker, PH.D.
College of Arts and Sciences
Governors State University
1 University Parkway
University Park, Illinois 60466, USA
E-mail: w-rudloff@govst.edu
The International Institute for Advanced Studies
in Systems Research and Cybernetics (IIAS)
P. O. Box 3010
Tecumseh, Ontario N9N 2M3, Canada
E-mail: lasker@uwindsor.ca

Website: http://www.iias.edu