

Abstract
Collaboration in Developing On-line Learning between Two Different Countries
A Case Study

Omar Abdull Kareem
Chair: Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas

Collaboration between institutions in distance learning has been practiced for decades at first domestically and now expanding to an international level. Many higher education institutions are also trying to globalize their learning environments through the internationalization process, especially through the curriculum. A review of the extant literature, however, revealed that collaboration efforts are characterized more by infusion of content from one country to another. Collaboration between two different countries, however, is much more meaningful if both parties are equally involved in co-designing, sharing, and implementing such learning experiences. Such a two-way collaboration process is a missing gap in the literature, which the present study has addressed.

This study examined the process of developing a two-way collaborative learning experience between one of the universities in the United States of America and a university in a developing Asian country. The global question that guided this research was: What is involved in the process of developing and designing on-line learning between two different countries; and What are the challenges faced during the process?

The research design was a qualitative case study of a process, based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) classification. A micro monitoring process, complemented by interviews with key individuals, was conducted to collect the data. Different sources of data (Yin, 1984) or triangulation (Kratwohl, 1997) was a strategy used to increase the validity of the study. Through the micro monitoring process, all documents such as e-mails, meeting notes, and personal notes were collected and analyzed. Categorization and coding procedures followed Coffey and Artkinson (1996): that is, coding as a "mixture of data reduction and data complication."

All the data (from interviews and the micro monitoring process) were reported, analyzed, and interpreted from two different but complementary voices: the voice of reporter and the voice of analyst. The voice of reporter revealed a chronology of events and description whereas the analyst interpreted the meaning of the reporter's descriptive portion.

Analysis revealed three major phases that evolved in the process of collaboration: initiation, pre-development, and development. Each phase consisted of several specific activities. The major challenges faced during the process evolved around technical matters. Cultural differences, technical expertise, institutional procedures, financial, and time differences were also a challenge to the process.

This study besides confirming some practices also broadened and deepened the concept of collaboration and internationalizing the curriculum. Moreover, this study was able to recommend the follow up development of a process framework for developing and co-designing a collaborative on-line learning experience that involves two different countries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The past three and half years have been a meaningful experience for me in exploring a new learning territory in a much more global context. For me, completion of this study is actually a beginning of a new journey in my life.

I would like to thank my advisory committee, my family and friends for their continuous commitment and support. Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas, my committee chair offered a wisdom, guidance and encouragement throughout the entire study. Dr. Jimmy Fortune, my research advisor guided me especially on the research methodology. Dr. Linda Morris, Dr. Patrick Carlton and Dr. Inez Giles each contributed an important role in helping me accomplish this research. Also my thanks to Gale Kamen for her continuous external support.

Finally, my appreciation goes to the Ministry of Education Malaysia for the scholarship that made my journey here a reality.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to:

My parents: Late Haji Abdull Kareem and Hajah Fatimah Mohamed

My wife: Fatimah Samsi

My children: Nur Hafizah, Muhammad Faiz, Nur Faizah and Muhammad Ruzaini

for always being there with me and for me throughout the process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgment	iv
Dedication	v
Figures	vi
Tables	vii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
Introduction	1
Background of the Study	4
Conceptual Framework	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Questions Guiding the Research	6
Limitation of the Study	6
Definitions of Terms	6
Significant of the Study	7
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Collaboration	8
Collaboration: The Concept and Purpose	8
Collaboration: The growth in International Practice	10
Internationalizing Higher Education	13
Internationalizing the Curriculum	14
On-line Learning	18
On-line Learning: The Concept and Medium	18
Developing On-line Learning: The Advantages, Constraints, and Cross-Cultural Issues in on-line Learning	19
Developing On-line Learning: The Strategy	23
CHAPTER III: METHOD AND PROCEDURES	
Research Design	25
Selection of the Case and Sample	25
Study Instruments	27
Data Collection Procedures	28
Data Analysis Procedures	29
Methodological Issues	30

CHAPTER IV : FINDINGS

Data Analysis	32
Introduction	32
Research Question 1: (What Involved)	33
Initiation Phase	33
Pre-Development Phase	42
Development Phase	61
Conclusion	71
Research Question 2 (Challenges)	72
Communication and Cultural	73
Development in Technology	74
Expertise (Technical and Curriculum)	75
Institutional Procedures	77
Financial	77
Geographical Location and Time Differences	78
Conclusion	78

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND RECOMENDATION

Summary	79
Reflection	80
Toward the Future	83
Recommendation for the Field of Practice	84
Recommendation for Further Research	85
REFERENCES	88
GLOSARY	92
APPENDICES	94

FIGURES

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

5

TABLES

Table 1: Internationalizing Higher Education: Areas of Focus

53