Creating Connections

Cultural Perspectives and Student Engagement in the Online World

Derek Snyder
Instructor
UHMC English
dsnyder@hawaii.edu

Stephen Fox, Ph.D.
Lecturer
UHMC Psychology
foxs@hawaii.edu

Kealiʻi Z. Ballao
Academic Support
UHMC Learning Center
ballao@hawaii.edu
What is culture?
What is culture?

- Behaviors?
- Beliefs?
- Cuisine?
- Music?
What is culture?

Cultures are constellations of thought and behavior

Characteristic of a particular group of people

Transmitted non-genetically (e.g. by social learning)

Surviving for an extended period of time,

By which meanings & identities are created & shared
Culture and education

- Classrooms are settings for cultural activity
  - Beliefs about how & why education happens
  - Behavioral norms
  - These are really old
Culture and education

Socrates & the Greek style

Confucius-
  • Civil service examination- 140 BC to late 1800s.

Université de Paris, est 1190
  • Professors & students
  • Funny hats

Yeshiva- Jewish learning institution
  • Dates to at least 3rd century
Culture and education

Many other cultures had formalized education

This includes Polynesians

- e.g. Māori and *whare wananga* (White, 2001)

But UH and current online practice are very Western in style (and that’s a problem)
Culture and education

We have literal centuries invested in this model

What does it entail?

- A place, e.g. classroom
- A group of students
- A pedagogue
  - Hierarchically distant from the students
Culture and education

Classrooms are cultural settings, right?

- Behavioral norms
- Shared cognitions
- Belief systems
Dimensions of culture

Vertical (Hierarchic)

Collectivist

Horizontal (Egalitarian)

Individualist

Japan

US

Ituri Pygmies

Sweden

Individualist
Culture and education

Classrooms are cultural settings, right?

- Vertical-Horizontal dimension
  - Power difference between instructor and student
- F2F & online differ on this dimension
Cyberculture

A shared community with norms, morals, values, beliefs, and artifacts facilitated by the Internet.

Internet User Intentions

Professional and Educational Development

Self-Expression

Entrepreneurship
Internet User Intentions

Individual Contributions
Socio-Political Participation
Anonymity
**Educational Intentions of the Internet**

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Distance Learning & Teaching

- Teacher
- Student
- Community
- Content
Transition to Teaching “Online”

- Different skill set is needed
- Training essential
- Time-intensive
- Difficult to do well
- Paradigm shift involved
Power of Intention

- Dynamic and interactive online classroom environment is not the default
- Instructor’s role in establishing cultural expectations in the online classroom
- Importance of early orientation and acculturation activities
- Ongoing teacher presence in the online realm
Building the Foundation

- Establishing routine and regularity in the classroom
- Consistent and predictable schedules for entire semester (time and place)
- Interaction expectations (response time and methodology)
Individualism-Collectivism

- Polynesian and Asian cultures tend to be collectivist
- Polynesian are most collective ethnic group in the literature
- Hawaii is most collective state
Teacher – Content Relationship

Clearly Defined Goals

Individual Learning vs. Cooperative Learning

Flexible Adaptive Content
Teacher - Content

- Reverse Engineering
- From course outline to course assignments
- Scaffolding to support successful completion of course assignments
- Diversity of approach in content delivery
Teacher – Student Relationship

Omniscient, Advisor, Tutor, Moderator, Coach
“I am a real person on the other side of the computer who cares about your success.”

Teacher – Student

- Begin early – before semester
- Contact in various modes (message, video, phone, chat)
- Rapport building intent
- Regular intervals
- Ongoing through semester
Teacher – Community Relationship

Guiding Learning
Supporting Self-Regulated Learning

Encouraging Collaboration
Technical Support and Resources
Teacher - Community

- Active lead student role in Discussion Forums
- Peer Review activities in content areas
- User friendly access to resources and external support services
Student – Content Relationship

Surface vs. In-Depth Orientated Learning
Student - Content

- Online reading different from traditional “book reading”
- Interaction with content
- Multiple modes
- Universal Design
- Student-Centered Opportunities
Bridging theory to classroom

‘Ohana –

- Hawaiian collective concept
- Egalitarian = low hierarchic distance
Bridging theory to classroom

‘Ohana –

• Connectedness is a primary indicator for health

• Also maintains engagement
Student – Community Relationship

Visitor, Novice, Experts, Regulars
Student - Community

- Establishing and maintaining the interconnectedness of students
- Be explicit about community expectations
- Netiquette concerns
- Role of informal discussion opportunities
The chat

- Weekly required chat
- Points for “participation”
- It’s a ritual
  - Involves repeated processes & motifs
Content – Community Relationship

Informal Exchange
Cooperation
Goal Centered Collaboration
Content - Community

- Jigsaw Approaches
- Designing community building approaches to learning content
- Involving negotiation of meaning and interpretation
- Empowering student voice
Keys to Successful Transition

- Professional Development
- Pedagogical and Technical Training
- Peer Mentors
- Ongoing Instructional Design Support
We Are All Distance Teachers