

International Leadership for Educational Technology: A Transatlantic Bridge for Doctoral Studies

Niki Davis, Iowa State University & London University Institute of Education
Andrew Brown, London University Institute of Education
Kara Dawson, University of Florida
Elsebeth Sorenson, Aalborg University, Denmark
Jose Luis Rodriguez, University of Barcelona, Spain
Glen Bull & Zahrl Shoeny, University of Virginia
Christina Preston, MirandaNet & London University Institute of Education
Victor Udin, Iowa State University

Abstract

Leaders in education in universities, schools and services to education and vocational training, are challenged in their leadership of new technology. This round table aims to raise awareness of the efforts of 3 European and 3 USA graduate programs of technology in education and teacher education, who are prepared to revitalize leadership through sharing of their graduate communities through a project recently funded by the European Commission and the US Department of Education.

The ILET project aims to permit experts in multimedia, cultural studies, and distance education to develop a certificate in *Intercultural Educational Technology* within Ph.D. programs of the six partner universities. The planned components of the certificate are: comparative study of educational technology systems, policies, and applications; language and cultural learning activities before, during, and following a semester of study abroad; project work and/or internships that require application of theories and technological skills to real life challenges of digital and cultural divides; and an intensive international course at the major professional conference to induct students into the international professional community. An Intensive International Course may bring together students and faculty and incorporate study and reciprocal mentoring in future Society of IT for Teacher Education conferences.

The project will enable our multi-disciplinary consortium to educate a new cadre of leaders with experience in today's global context, while taking care to include both sides of the digital divide plus commercial partners. Student selection will positively discriminate to redress inequalities of the digital divide. In addition, students will be encouraged and supported to undertake project work on related issues of national and international importance for agencies such as UNESCO. Exchanges of faculty and staff aim to ensure coherence in curriculum, assessment and support services. Preliminary exchanges and research indicate promising flexibility with innovative web-based learning strategies (see for example Davis, 1999; Bronack Kilblane, Herbert & McNergeny, 1999); and Davis, Nilakanta & Li, 2001).

The consortium is committed to creation of a prestigious knowledgeable community of alumni who value their continued collaboration with faculty and students in an online learning environment that Oracle has created for learners across the UK, USA and beyond. The Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona 2004 will showcase the global service of this project

worldwide. This transatlantic project is potentially the first stage in an ongoing global program with additional partners and students.

The Round Table Agenda

The 3 collaborating universities in the USA (Iowa State University, University of Virginia and University of Florida) and their 3 partner universities in Europe (University of London Institute of Education, Aalborg University in Denmark and University of Barcelona in Spain) already recognize that there will be many challenges in this collaboration. Obvious issues of the Danish and Spanish languages are accompanied by additional less obvious language challenges: English misunderstandings between the UK and USA and the need to value minority languages of Danish and Catalan. The local cultural differences provide an exciting and challenging mix for faculty and graduate students who will travel, and they will also be visible online. Cultural differences in academic structures and organizational behavior have already been raised in pilot activities. Memoranda of Understanding will be developed to clarify the collaborative activities and mutual support. Selected MOU and other guiding documents will be shared with the round table for review and comment.

The development of a learning community across universities has been the focus of graduate work and pilot activities between several partners, particularly Iowa State, London Aalborg and Virginia (Davis et al, 2001; Sorensen & Tackle, 2001). Other partners include the educational community of leaders in information technology in education who have been creating a learning community and mentoring resource for others called MirandaNet, founded and led by Christina Preston, with support from many organizations including Oracle (Preston, 2000). Examples of the artifacts, environments and associated research will be available for review to stimulate discussion.

Thirty students and twelve staff will study abroad and collaborate with many more in the project's innovative web-based learning environments, supported by professional communities and commercial experts. Significant challenges are expected in recruiting students and faculty to work abroad for a semester and to become comfortable in foreign and international learning environments.

The project aims to broaden the impact of the EC and US cooperation by 'training the trainers' of faculty involved in open and distance learning. While many graduate students in the USA do become future faculty, the lack of turnover in Europe provides additional challenges for that continent. Managing extension of collaboration and dissemination of the project may also prove challenging, but the partners are committed to this and the round table will provide a means to listen to our future audience at an early stage, because the three year project commenced in October 2001.

The round table aims to promote discussion of travel, both real and virtual, and collaboration between programs and institutions in a way that promotes international and inter-cultural education.