



## ***Designing Globally Networked Learning Environments: Visionary Partnerships, Policies, and Pedagogies***

*Editors*

Doreen Starke-Meyerring  
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### **Methods for Globally Networked Learning Environments as an Emerging Pedagogy: A First Vision**

**J**ohn U. Ogbu wrote in the 1982 that U.S. schools had been created on the model of the 19th-century factory shopfloor—with a manager in front and students working in rows, diligently toiling under supervision. This was no accident, he argued: the United States has dedicated its education system to preparing employees for the workplace. Ogbu's early work problematized vestigial modes of teaching, which he argued remain in the contemporary classroom against even modern employers' needs for collaboration, creativity, and diversity, and he advised that we should seek to rethink our pedagogy in light of this realization. In that context, Doreen Starke-Meyerring and Melanie Wilson's 2008 anthology *Designing Globally Networked Learning Environments: Visionary Partnerships, Policies, and Pedagogies* can be seen as a substantial further corrective to limited traditional educational models, including some common today in business and technical communication courses.

Globally Networked Learning Environments (GNLEs), as defined by the editors, are partnerships that encourage students to collaborate with (and learn about) students in classrooms elsewhere on the planet. This anthology features

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fourteen case studies of such partnerships written by scholars (including several well-known in the technical communication field) who describe their partnerships with sister schools abroad, how they have adjusted their courses to accommodate teleconferencing and asynchronous collaborations, issues which arise in intercultural collaborations, and the revisions to course policies that have emerged as a result of these efforts.

The editors, in their introduction, suggest a number of reasons this sort of pedagogy should be integrated into our curricula. Many of these may appear obvious: increasing globalization has changed the workplaces students will enter after graduation, and many curricula in business and technical communication have done little to educate our students for the scope of this change. But it is also clear that the editors understand how difficult it would be for any instructor to deduce how to create partnerships and update our courses' policies and pedagogies to create GNLEs in our own programs without the benefit of examples. For programs or instructors persuaded by the arguments and case studies listed here, this book provides a dozen diverse examples of how others have attempted to begin such changes in their own programs.

Several of the chapters explore issues that emerge in trans-Atlantic partnerships with European partners, including chapters by TyAnna Herrington, Bruce Maylath et al., Kennon, and Mousten et al., all of which provide examples of these experiences. Other chapters investigate partnerships with schools in Asia—chapters by Rainey et al., and Du-Babcock and Varner both address experience with Chinese universities. A few chapters address collaboration with Central American partnerships; Crabtree et al., Fitch et al., and McCool all speak to experiences with GNLEs between classrooms in the United States, Mexico, and Nicaragua. A few chapters speak to theoretical issues which inhere in any such collaboration, including communication with students for whom English is a second or third language, and reviews of the literature to provide overviews of common issues which emerge in such collaborations.

The chapters provide, once one delves into them, numerous teaching techniques one might employ to create effective change in our courses. Teaching students to learn other languages and to consider their own uses of idiomatic English, incorporating face-to-face meetings among the faculty in the respective programs, discussing educational technologies and planning for their development, use, and future obsolescence, incorporating administrators into curricular planning, negotiating collaborative projects, post-learning reports, and many other techniques are discussed in the chapters, with an apparent forthrightness about which met with greater success than others.

Although the case studies in this volume only discuss partnerships in the northern hemisphere, this is perhaps understandable given arguments such as

Paul Smith's (1997) from *Millennial Dreams* that capitalism has developed in the northern hemisphere to an exclusion of the South. But it seems clear that this anthology does not intentionally exclude such prospects, but instead develops arguments from examples of current collaborations. It seems likely that future collaborations with South America and Africa may well also be possible using the methodologies developed here.

The editors are working diligently to introduce GNLE as an accepted mode of education. The book appears to be an early attempt to define the scope and nature of GNLE theory and practice. Doreen Starke-Meyerring is also editing a special issue of the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* on this topic due in 2010, with additional articles by scholars who work to create and maintain GNLEs. If the editors are successful in their arguments, we can expect to see more research about this pedagogy, and may find the discussion begun with this text quite useful to our research, our classrooms, and our students.

## References

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- Smith, Paul M. (1997). *Millennial Dreams: Contemporary Culture and Capital in the North*. London: Verso.

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