Global Studies create knowledge alliances

Article Type: Guest editorial From: Multicultural Education & Technology Journal, Volume 6, Issue 3

This special issue results from procedures developed during an Austrian nation-wide workshop “What knowledge for development? Transdisciplinary approaches to global change” on January 13, 2012 in Graz, Austria[1]. The meeting comprised three tracks[2] which are all reflected by this present special issue of METJ:

1. Presentation of the new multicultural and developmental Master’s curriculum “Global Studies” (GS) to the Austrian public; its main course is attended by 200 students annually. Statements and standpoints of student representatives, the historical founder of the initiatives, of members of the curricula commission and cooperating institutes drew a picture of genesis and aims of this initiative that addresses the complexities of cultural diversity and embarks on inclusive education for peaceful and sustainable management of global change. The motto of Global Studies is: “pedagogy of equity in discourse”.

2. Presentation of the completed pan-Austrian project on “network of developmental research” (EnFoNet[3]) designed to map the hundreds of actors in diverse institutions with a target to foster their collaboration across multiple cultures of scientific, political and practical emphases. This study has used guided interviews, statistical analyses of publications and answers to questionnaires to draw a landscape of well-structured “knowledge alliances”, interwoven into the social fabric of universities, institutions and transnational communities tackling the most significant socio-economic challenges of this decade.

3. Presentation of concrete multicultural and educational projects and public pre-review discussion of submissions to METJ. The first “Global Studies” alumni and elected student representatives reflected targets of the curriculum and day-to-day practice with a view to future improvements of this unique Master’s program that might serve as a template for similar worldwide initiatives. The concrete formation of “knowledge alliances” for the target of inclusive education in a Viennese, Serbian and Turkish school proved the enormous potential of addressing exclusion and inequality through inclusion and pedagogic innovation.

In the articles in this special issue, Lena Bader and Victoria Zotter analyse managed learning environments meeting the learning styles of the first multiethnic and multidisciplinary cohort of GS students; Andreas Novy studies the socio-cultural impact of international education on understanding multicultural behaviour in the context of teacher-learner equity. Rosa Enn inquires how autochthonous learners may collaborate more effectively across ethnic, cultural and linguistic lines to secure their human rights and develop economically, socially and environmentally compatible living in a multilingual environment; Salifu Mahama Kantafe analyses the effects of unequal access to knowledge with a view to desired empowerment facilitating inclusive living across cultural and linguistic lines. The last author assesses the usability and practicability of peer-to-peer technologies for supporting a conversation and review process through web technologies across cultures of understanding and often segregated disciplinary languages.
Figure 1 This special issue visualises “Global Studies creating knowledge alliances”, here using Google Earth technology highlighting the locations of the contributions, including maps and logos taken from the articles of this special issue.

The map taken from Google Earth (Figure 1) visualises these landscapes of multiparadigmatic understanding revolving as maps around the geographic locations of the narrated case studies.

May the readers of this issue undertake their own global journey across a universe of paradigms and ally them to global knowledge.

Notes

1. Invitation in German at: www.uni-graz.at/globalstudies/deposit/Einladung&Programm_Entwicklungsforschung-Graz_13.0112.pdf. Organised by the Austrian Research Foundation for International Development (ÖFSE), the Commission for Development Studies at the OeAD (KEF) and Global Studies at Graz University.

2. Protocol in German on the site of the "dialogue group" at: www.entwicklungsforschung.at/ueberuns/publikationen.htm

3. Description at: www.entwicklungsforschung.at/aktuelles/projekte.htm

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