

Developing an Empirical Approach for Personalising E-learning:

A Case Study

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Abstract: The focus of this article is placed on e-learning for linking global engagement via international education and student mobility. The goal of this study is to explore e-learning practised in everyday contexts by an individual. The data collected and analysed for this study comes from life history records. This article situates this study in the diverse roles e-learning plays in a teacher educator's research abroad. Approaching e-learning via a diverse e-learner makes it possible to see the role of bilingualism in knowledge production, the enhancement of research capabilities and the achievements of learning goals. It is concluded that the significance of quality e-learning is to ensure that learning objectives are achieved without sacrificing the educational standards.

Key words: e-learning; globalisation; e-learner; higher education

INTRODUCTION

This article will explore the issues of e-learning using life history research method. Specific focus is placed on e-learning for linking global engagement via international education and student mobility. It addresses the question of whether e-learning in which an international teacher educator engages can be usefully understood in terms of globalizing higher education. The data collected and analyzed for this study comes from life history records – diary entries. This article situates this study in terms of the debates about the diverse roles e-learning plays. Following these debates, this article deals with the practices of e-learning engaged by an individual. After the analysis of the evidence comes the discussion about the issues presented in the literature.

E-LEARNING

Electronic learning (e-learning) represents an extension of face-to-face learning which has been defined as:

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a wide set of applications and processes allied to training and learning that includes computer-based learning, online learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. These services can be delivered by a variety of electronic media, including the intranet, internet, interactive TV and satellite (Beamish et al, cited in Mihhailova, 2006, p. 271).

E-learning is not a replication of old instructional delivery in a new medium. It must “capitalise on the new capabilities” that are made available by the technology (Mandinach, 2005, p. 1816).

In so far as location-independence and asynchronicity are no longer distinctive traits of e-learning, it has been possible for electronic learning to be pervasive. It is claimed that telecommunication technology has “shattered the boundaries of educational institutions” (Chen, 2003, p. 37), making possible the formation of regional, national, and even global learning communities. Negroponte (cited in Chen, 2003, p. 37) imagined that studying in the digital age would mean “less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time”. However, every learner is situated in a specific place and time, networking with others who are situated in other places around the world perhaps in different time zones. E-learning can better prepare students for an increasingly global, changing, and complex world, which changes the purpose of education to that of

helping learners communicate with others, find relevant and accurate information for the task at hand, and be co-learners and partners with teachers and peers in diverse settings and learning communities that go beyond school walls (McCombs & Vakili, 2005 p. 1582).

E-learning can be improved if learners have “supportive relationships”, have a sense of “ownership and control” over the learning process, and can learn from each other in “safe and trusting learning environments” (McCombs & Vakili, 2005 p. 1586). Positive impacts of e-learning now make it possible to produce nonlinear learning that connects individual learners beyond traditional boundaries of teachers, students, schools, classrooms, and individual communities. In learner-centered electronic learning environments, all learners have opportunities to connect with each other at personal and academic levels, but to produce diverse learners, they need to experience both quality content and processes. Physical isolation may result in “communication and psychological distancing” (McCombs & Vakili, 2005 p. 1597). However, this can be reduced as e-learning makes use of new technologies to help learners increase networking and collaboration.

E-learning offers the potential for transnational intellectual exchange and the sharing of knowledge among diverse groups. The “credibility, reputation, and survival” of e-learning (Phillips cited in Tham & Werner, 2005, p. 17) results from bringing together technology, educational institutions and students of intellectually diverse backgrounds. Quality e-learning has to ensure that “learning objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively, without sacrificing the standards of the educator and his or her institution” (Tham & Werner, 2005, p. 24). E-learning students spend time reading, writing and researching, but they feel they are isolated from each other. They do not have the chance to “socialise physically” with other classmates, except when they are assigned as a group/team as part of the requirements for assignments in a synchronous (or real-time) environment (Tham & Werner, 2005, p. 19). In addition to the lack of face-to-face interactions with teachers, another weakness of e-learning is the seemingly slow or no feedback relative to the speed of the technology (Mihhailova, 2006). Chen, Bennett and Maton (2008, p. 307) report that e-learning is a supplement but not a replacement of face-to-face teaching and learning, noting that

more than half of Australian universities offered fully online courses, and that among all university subjects, 40% were web-supplemented, 12.5% were web-dependent, and 1.4% were fully online.

This explosion of e-learning is placing many international students “in an even more foreign learning context: studying online while being on campus in Australia” (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008, p. 307). They prefer to work with native English-speaking students in e-learning groups, so they can “practise their English skills” and learn from “multiple perspectives” (Zhao & McDougall, 2008, p. 71). In addition, they expect to get “not only intellectual but interpersonal connections” from their learning community (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008, p. 320).

Collaboration among research students is important for knowledge production and stimulating learning. E-learning provides them with “greater motivation and opportunity to articulate, discuss, and reflect on their learning strategies and the changes within themselves” (Chen, 2003, p. 36). It is now possible for students to explore research questions in global settings via e-learning networks that offer “meaningful contexts for project-based and problem-based learning” (Levin & others cited in Chen, 2003, p. 37). Networked e-learning is suitable for “dialogic interaction” which allows knowledge to be “socially constructed through interaction with others in various on-line environments” (O’Dowd, 2003, p. 132).

With the rise in the internationalization of higher education (Bradley, 2008) has come “learning globalization” (Mihhailova, 2006) involving the use of electronic multimedia communication across nations. In contrast to some models of e-learning, O’Dowd (2003, p. 120) says students are no longer expected to reject their own intellectual culture and “take on” the target educational culture without questioning. The expectation is that it is “authentic, learner-centered, relevant” to students’ lives, allowing them to “explore their own social and cultural identities” (O’Dowd, 2003, p. 121). One valuable aspect of learning globalization is to have learners reflect on “their own environment and culture by interacting with foreign partners and answering their questions about the home culture” (O’Dowd, 2003, p. 129). The interactions might occur via a range of media, namely audio-conferencing, videoconferencing, email or telephone (Mandinach, 2005). The relationships so developed help students to enhance “intercultural communicative competence [or] highlights the components which required further attention” (O’Dowd, 2003, p. 134). Communicating intercultural comparisons means that

outsiderness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that [a] foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly. A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning (Bakhtin cited in O’Dowd, 2003, p. 129).

The boundaries between formal and informal education are drawn around where and when learning is done: formally in the classroom taught by a teacher, and informally on one’s own, outside the class (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008).

Zhao and McDougall (2008, p. 61) found that international students studying overseas usually had “a positive attitude towards the e-learning courses”, because they think these courses are convenient, flexible, and self-regulated. To international students, the advantages of e-learning are

real participation with peers, focused interactions, fewer language barriers, possibility of arranging personal meetings with group members, ability to work on their own projects and ideas, and increased intellectual interaction with their [local] peers (Zhao & McDougall, 2008, p. 61).

For these students the disadvantages of e-learning included “the restrictions of text-based communication, the frustration of slow or missing responses from their partner, and the time consumed in learning” (Zhao & McDougall, 2008, p. 62). Moreover, some international students disliked e-learning courses due to “the isolation and loneliness of online learning, unconstructive feedback provided by some peers, temporary disappearance of teammates, and a lack of language and cultural exchange” (Zhao & McDougall, 2008, p. 62).

At present, a growing number of students from Asia choose to study overseas. These students value the “temporal and spatial flexibility” of e-learning but see the lack of teacher/student interactions and immediate feedback as “impediments to effective learning” (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008, p. 309). The benefits and challenges of e-learning for international students from Asia derive from “the largely text-based and asynchronous nature of the communication medium” (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008, p. 310). They are also concerned about the “reduced amount of input from the teacher, an absence of direct interactions with the teacher and with fellow students, and a lack of enforcement of learning by the teacher” (Chen, Bennett & Maton, 2008, p. 315).

From the literature reviewed above, it seems evident that e-learning is likely to offer advantages for international students where they promote the crossing of intellectual boundaries between East and West,

North and South, enrich cross-cultural learning experiences and recognise students' bilingual capabilities.

Collaboration among community members is essential to knowledge building. Through enhanced collaboration, learners become involved in learning activities that are associated with a social network, which provides them with greater motivation and opportunity to articulate, discuss, and reflect on their learning strategies and the changes within themselves. The vast potential for extensive collaboration helps to prepare learners for life in the 21st century (Chen, 2003). This is the need for electronic learning activities to be authentic, learner-centred, relevant to students' lives, and also for them to allow students to explore their own social and cultural identities (O'Dowd, 2003).

International students are not isolated individuals acting in a vacuum; they are members of more than one society with more than one language and intellectual inheritance. Their reflections are like facts about the relations of individuals to one another in and across multiple societies. Then how does one design educational systems where technology values, supports and serves diverse learners and learning contexts? How can one make an individual engage in e-learning? In the following section, these issues will be elaborated from different perspectives.

LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH METHOD

Wright (2006) argues that for cultural study researchers in education, one's social difference has meaning for how we position ourselves in relation to the different approaches to research. Many studies have used ethnographic methods to collect and analyze data about international students' everyday e-learning practices (O'Dowd, 2003). For the purpose of the study reported here it is decided to employ a research process that enables the analysis of the diary entries of an international research candidate about his electronic learning.

Life history research method does seem to be particularly useful to those who intend to make sense of topics and issues related to education, such as how individuals talk about and story their experiences and perceptions of the social and cultural contexts to which they are exposed. The key reason for using this research method is that it is the most suitable one, the one most likely to create data which addresses, answers the questions, aims and purposes of a specific enquiry (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

Enthusiasts of life history would argue that this method can be used effectively to provide useful data on practically every social issue and aspect of life. Personal life records do appear to constitute "the perfect form of sociological data" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 21). Every life story is the recording of an individual's life experience. Several life stories taken from the same set of socio-cultural and intellectual relations support and complement each other and make up "a strong body of evidence" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 24). Life history methodology has the potential to "enable 'ordinary' individuals to tell their story, to give their version, to 'name their silent lives'" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 99).

The cross-cultural contact is likely to be carried out in particular time-space settings where the rules of engagement are both flexible and restrictive. A good example from this research is an international research candidate from Asia named Allan, as a diverse learner who has been corresponding over the internet with his family, friends, colleagues and relatives around the world, discussing a range of topics as well as the possibility of helping each other in research. He kept 90 diary entries from April to October, 2008, which recorded his life and study experiences overseas. In an important sense it fits with some fundamental nature based around the desire and capacity to engage with others outside the boundaries of a nation (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009). The purpose of doing this is empirically to investigate ways in which ordinary people engage with e-learning, and to demonstrate e-learning from an individual perspective yet diverse levels. Internet, telecommunications, satellite links and related technologies allow personal relationships to be maintained and for people to keep in touch with home while abroad.

DIVERSE LEARNERS

Globalizing higher education needs diverse people to be engaged in it and produce diverse outcomes. With the diverse engagements, globalization of higher education can be developed in an imaginative and methodologically sophisticated way. Allan himself is taken as a diverse e-learner in this research to explore the diverse means of engaging with e-learning in overseas higher education.

Formal e-learner

E-learning is a new form of teaching and learning which creates new variables, constraints, and issues, making it basically different from face-to-face learning environments. A formal e-learner is defined as one who engages in the delivery of an institution sanctioned courses by electronic means.

Allan, as a formal e-learner, engaged an on-line course prescribed by his University overseas. This course was delivered in English, a global language used for the internationalization of education. However, as a research candidate Allan expected to have formal courses delivered through lectures on education theories and research methodologies as his peers in homeland universities do. This was not the case at his university overseas. He undertook his University's on-line research training course; for him it came close to the formal course he had expected:

I have been here for almost two months, but I haven't had any classroom courses except one on-line course. This e-learning course is not the one I had expected: teaching us theories and knowledge. In fact, it is a course on the research process from the very beginning to the end of our three years' research. It tells us what we should, can and may do, and what rights we have. Of the modules, most of them are very useful to my research, especially the literature review module. (22/04/08)

This formal e-learning involved Allan studying in English topics such as information gathering, information management, intellectual property rights, research collaboration, research impact and getting published. The University's on-line research training course provided Allan with a comprehensive agenda, thus enhancing his research capabilities. His research capacity is extended through global connection.

Corporate e-learner

A corporate e-learner refers to one who deals with unofficial interconnected learning experiences that specifically focus on research education. Interactivity is regarded as one of the key variables in research education. Communication in education has most often emphasized one-way transmission. In the academic situation, there should be interactive transmissions which promote creative thinking.

A corporate e-learning embodies a distinctive feature that traditional learning is less likely to possess, i.e., the potential to exchange global experiences and share knowledge among a diverse group. A corporate e-learner is an individual who is likely to change due to dynamic educational and life experiences. Allan's communication with his research colleagues in India, Japan, the USA and Britain comparing his research education overseas is as important as an interconnected on-line tutorial. He often spoke in his native language via internet telephony with those overseas about what he was learning and researching through the University's electronic facilities:

This morning I talked on Skype with my colleague about my research here and his research in my former university. My research here is making good progress, and his, too. We talked about how to make a concept map. He had no idea of what a concept map was. I showed him the concept map I made and taught him how to make it. We also talked about making research design by using flowchart because it can show the essence of the research and tell the readers the plan and process of the research. It is not only a good means to present more but also an effective way of doing research. (25/08/08)

Allan was surprised when he realized no local research candidates or faculty had talked with him about his research and experiences. Despite their desires international students overseas report little interactions with locals due to differences in educational cultures, language barriers, work/life commitments, or because few are enrolled full-time or are studying on-campus (Singh & Sproats, 2005). This undermines the possibilities international research candidates have for learning with, from and about them. Fortnightly videoconferences organized by Allan's supervisors facilitated such interactions. Along with fellow international research candidates from Asia he engaged in fortnightly seminars with local research candidates at a university several thousand of kilometres away:

We had videoconference fortnightly. The participants from my university were three PhD students from Asia and our supervisor. The participants on the other side are three locals and one Bangladesh research student. We, in turn, made presentations in English at the videoconference about our own research and got feedback or comments from the others. To my surprise, I realized that this was the first time I talked with the locals about my research. I have been here for 6 months and spoke to locals every day (only greetings). No local research students or faculty member talk with me about my research. This videoconference met my expectation. This hi-tech facility is really helpful in learning from each other and getting more information and knowledge. I wonder whether I can do interviews in this way. If possible, this would be effective and efficient for data collection. (27/08/08)

Allan found his supervisors' initiative practices enhanced his research capabilities, especially his agency to pursue the educational goals and career aspirations he has reason to value and advance. Allan did not reduce e-learning to a technological exercise. Like other research candidates, Allan favoured using "ICT to enhance the learning experience and to provide flexibility, [while] face-to-face teaching and learning remains highly valued" (Bradley, 2008). Continuing participation in these videoconferences provided Allan with interested intellectual engagement with local research candidates and faculty. In addition to formal and incorporate e-learning, Allan has also engaged in cosmopolitan e-learning.

Cosmopolitan e-learner

A cosmopolitan e-learner is one who initiated electronic communication with people all over the world who provide support for his well-being and the necessary pastoral care that makes his doctoral studies and research sustainable. Far away from home, Allan worries about those he has left. He talks to his family, friends and master students on Skype, and speaks with his parents and relatives regularly via telephone. Together they reassure each other about their safety, happiness and health. These internet chats ease, if not relieve his qualms, leaving his worry-free time for his study and research:

I have been overseas for almost two months. In addition to worrying about my family, there is another worry, which is about my Master students. They will have their thesis defence soon. As their supervisor, I have to sacrifice my own reading and writing time to read their papers. Thanks to the internet, we can talk on line because I don't want any of them to fail the defence due to my absence. I think that is my responsibility. As long as they ask for help, wherever I am there is no doubt I will immediately do. So recently my thesis progress slows down. (09/05/08)

Allan's e-learning functions ambivalently in his university. While his bilingual capabilities could contribute to globalizing higher education, formally his multi-competence in this regard is given marginal recognition. As an international research candidate Allan develops global e-learning through the University facilities provided to support his studies in English. Allan's bilingual and technological multi-competence enable him to use his university's e-learning platform to maintain and create transnational intellectual connections.

Reflexive e-learner

A reflexive e-learner is one who keeps one's electronic life history records for reflection and possible improvement in the processes of one's studies and research. A relational understanding of global connectivity also points to the importance of another element of cosmopolitan learning: reflexivity. Reflexivity (Beck, 2000) requires people to become self-conscious and knowledgeable about their own perspectives and how it is subject to transformation as a result of its engagement with other cultural trajectories. Reflexive individuals are able to challenge their own taken-for-granted assumptions. Allan's reflexive e-learning involves keeping 90 diary entries in his first seven months after he arrived overseas recording his life experiences and his own self-consciousness and perspectives.

The style of doing a PhD is different. Here we are asked to read and write from the first day. We don't write the thesis in a linear way. We learn research methods from different ways, eg, seminars and workshops. We are trained and equipped with different skills in doing research. In my home country, the case is different. PhD students have classroom courses for at least one year first. Then they devote time to writing thesis. Usually they are required to publish articles in referred journals before the thesis defence. I can not say which is good or right, but each has its unique style. I call one of them Western Style and the other Eastern Style. Each of them has advantages and disadvantages. After I finish my studies here, I may try to combine the two to create a "new" style. (21/06/08)

Allan had worked in a university in Asia, teaching English to English majors and master students for many years. He seldom used acronyms in teaching except for teaching English linguistics, let alone using them in everyday life. He found it was not the case in his university overseas.

One of the typical characteristics of local people is that they use acronyms frequently. People like to use it very much, especially in academia. We can also see them in the advertisements on TV. If you are not familiar with them, you are totally at a loss, so you have to learn them from time to time. This makes me conscious of my 'otherness' and adds to my feelings of difficulty in communication and understanding. It is convenient for the users, but not for the readers, in particular, for us 'otherness'. Since I am in this environment and culture, I have to learn to adapt to it. It is interesting, yet difficult. (08/07/08)

Allan's global communication and parochial reflection have been incorporated into his studies overseas, helping him to critically reflect on what and how he is learning and researching, and exchanging ideas and experiences about research and being a researcher.

DISCUSSION

The evidence analyzed above indicates that the internationalization of research education has a role to play in helping research candidates to realize global intellectual connectivity through dynamics of bi- or multilingualism. Research and research education are not only experienced differently, but are also interpreted differently in different contexts. Thus, e-learning needs to be re-thought with greater attention to learning about and through intellectual connectivity and the need for knowledge exchange. E-learning does deliver an "internationalist political education evoking models of mobile, reciprocal interconnectedness" (Brennan, 1997).

If formal e-learning is to be about global intellectual connectivity it will have to demonstrate the potential to help international research candidates position knowledge from their homeland as part of their research and research education. E-learning has yet to realize its objective, let alone develop different perspectives on knowing and interacting with others within the changing context of the knowledge exchange that might be produced by "global flows and networks" of international research candidates (Rizvi, 2009). E-learning has to offer new ways of learning about other cultures and

knowledge exchange. It also has to be developed much further to create the intellectual skills needed to create knowledge about others and use it to engage with them.

Electronic learning invites ongoing self-reflections about loneliness while engaged with others in the world. What these prescriptions for cosmopolitan learning lack is attention to subjectivity and its cultivation through education. High technology has enabled researchers living in different countries to become more intellectually inter-connected than ever before. Even if many researchers are not able to travel extensively, they are constantly in touch with friends and colleagues who live and work around the world.

E-learning as defined by Mihhailova (2006) entails a broad range of applications and processes involving ever-advancing information and communication technologies. From Allan's learning experiences this definition of e-learning is limited by its techno-centrism, ignoring important dimensions of languages, cultures and knowledge of e-learners. While e-learning is emerging, it is not the case that these are location-independent even though they may be synchronous or asynchronous. One disadvantage of asynchronous e-learning for Allan is that students and colleagues do not respond immediately, but his external global contacts over time allow him to develop richer, intellectual conversations.

As a doctoral candidate and diverse e-learner, Allan can choose mutually convenient time and place for engaging global e-learning and research. Negroponte (cited in Chen, 2003, p. 37) imagined that living in a digital age would mean "less and less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time". However, Allan is situated in a specific place and time, and he connects himself globally to learners, mentors or teachers who are also situated in particular places, albeit in the same or different time zones.

The suggestion by Chen (2003, p. 37) that telecommunication technology has shattered the time and space boundaries of traditional educational institutions is an over-statement. For Allan, e-learning makes it possible for him to remain connected to his home educational culture and its intellectual projects via the particular technologies sanctioned him by University's internet management systems. This provides a stimulus for negotiating his own intellectual resources to use in his studies abroad. E-learning offers him opportunities to share Western and Eastern knowledge among various groups, such as other research candidates studying at various universities overseas, research candidates and colleagues in Asia, and colleagues in other Western nations.

International education situates Allan in a global setting, but in these e-learning environments Allan is not detached from other researchers and mentors. While there is a lack of physical socialization, he does have face-to-face communication, both visual and auditory. He has as much face-to-face communication with his peers and mentors in Asia as overseas. This is made possible by high technology and motivation of interconnectedness. E-learning is particularly important for his overseas studies. He uses the global e-learning to learn at his own pace and to express himself at will. The corporate e-learning is used to discuss issues with his fellow researchers during videoconferencing forums, which are scheduled at regular times and conducted in the same locations. This e-learning provides Allan with a valuable stimulus to express, discuss, and contemplate what he is learning, the strategies he is using and the progress he is making. This form of e-learning also offers Allan a meaningful context for his research education. On-line discussions allow Allan and fellow researchers to express their ideas, to clarify and redefine them through immediate feedback, and to consider each other's perspectives.

The ease of Allan's e-learning provides an important bilingual dimension to his learning experiences. Allan no longer feels the pressure to reject or ignore his own intellectual culture and to accept without questioning Western educational culture as the basis for his international education. This is more than the cultural issues acknowledged by O'Dowd (2003). For Allan, e-learning is very learner-centred, being closely related to his life as a student and allowing him to express and investigate possibilities for blending the concepts of his native language into his research overseas. One of the many valuable aspects of e-learning for Allan is that it allows him to develop and gain recognition for his bilingual capabilities by communicating with those foreign to his local context that enables him to display knowledge from his homeland. Allan is able to reveal his knowledge of the philosophy and literature of his home country to the eyes of this foreign educational culture.

Allan uses the corporate e-learning as a forum to express his own intellectual identity, to demonstrate concepts from his home educational culture, to test and develop ideas drawn from Western educational culture, and to build up his knowledge of intercultural e-learning. This is not formally recognized or encouraged in the University's formal e-learning environment. The different relationships developed during the global e-learning exchanges are conducive to the development of Allan's intercultural communicative competence. He is developing the capability to take up the challenge of explaining and blending Eastern and Western intellectual concepts and their significance. Allan's reflexive e-learning presents his personal and emotional engagement in e-learning and his rethinking of the issues he encountered in his studies and research abroad.

Research education via e-learning enhances Allan's capabilities as an international researcher capable of knowledge building, and enables him to progress towards his chosen work/life goals. These tend to be multiple, contradictory and thus open-ended. It is helping Allan to develop a framework within which he can engage in high quality research education, build up knowledge for his future work and develop the skills he needs for a career overseas, homeland or elsewhere. E-learning is integral to his work-related research education. As an international research candidate he benefits much from technology-mediated knowledge construction and collaborative learning.

Allan also gained several benefits from his life history research. His self-reflections on his daily life deal with his lived experience; his understanding of a new research environment and Western educational culture, and his prior, current and future education, research and career. The self-reflections enable Allan to retrospectively examine his own experiences of education by collecting, analyzing, comparing and interpreting this evidence. This has led Allan to a more considered, better informed view of what he is doing to link intellectual projects overseas and his homeland, and what he might do in the future with his own students. Life history research gives Allan a voice and research skills, helping him to link theory and practice via evidence, and to make both of them clearer, more accessible, and more meaningful. This provided practical techniques for exploring the intellectual connections between Allan's e-learning and larger social events, making explicit his links as an individual to global events.

This account of Allan's scholarly life connects his transition from a teacher in Asia to a research candidate in a Western country. The journal entries recorded his conversion from a native to a foreigner; from a teacher of English as a foreign language to a bilingual researcher. His experiences of formal, corporate, cosmopolitan and reflexive e-learning play a vital role in the transitions in Allan's intellectual and research life. His journal entries mediated important events happened in his home country. He increased his bilingual proficiency by improving his advanced academic knowledge in – and of - English and his native language. Like local students and faculty, Allan's life as a researcher is embedded in relationships with family and colleagues that span across nations and time-zones. His interactions with these individuals and their intellectual worlds via diverse e-learning span his lifetime.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the ordinary practices, norms and discourses have been explored, associated with "thinking and feeling cosmopolitan", but the ways of "being cosmopolitan against theoretical literatures" have also been investigated (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009, p. 100). In terms of what these daily practices have told us about forms of ordinary cosmopolitanism, we may see that cosmopolitanism can not be a perfect social system realized in a short time. It is only a possibility shaped and reshaped by individuals' everyday attitudes and beliefs about the ideas and problems related to globalization. Thus, as Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis (2009, p. 123) state that "it is wise to work from the principle that the extent of such cosmopolitan change, its degree and ultimate effects, are something of an open and ongoing question" (Kendall, Woodward & Skrbis, 2009, p. 123)

This paper has examined the diverse roles e-learning play in an international research candidate's research abroad. To Allan, e-learning plays an important role in his research education overseas which will benefit his future career. The heart of quality e-learning is to ensure that "learning objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively, without sacrificing the standards of the educator and his or her

institution” (Tham & Werner, 2005, p. 24). Approaching e-learning via a diverse e-learner makes it possible to see the role of bilingualism in knowledge production and the enhancement of research capabilities in a global setting, and the achievements of learning goals. Students today are exposed to different learning environments to gain the maximum value in learning. Institutions of higher education need to be aware of the different learning means used by students and the effects these have. For further research, interviews with the informant will be conducted to clear the problems of subjectivity and self-indulgence attributed to life history research.

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