CONVERGENCE

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CONTENTS

Convergence Volume XL (1–2) 2007

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EMERGING ADULT EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES IN AN INTERNATIONAL ON-LINE FORUM

Abstract

It is hoped that the opportunity to engage in dialogue with fellow adult learners from different countries will enable adult learners and educators to become more globalised in their perspectives and to actively take their place in a global society. This article describes a study that explores how an asynchronous internet-based forum encourages emerging adult educators to broaden and deepen their global perspectives. In each of the years 2004, 2005 and 2006, for two weeks almost thirty different students and two professors affiliated in adult education programmes in universities in the United States and Germany participated in an international dialogue. Exchange Structure Analysis was used in analysing the international online forum. The findings for this study indicate (a) the exchange pattern overall and on particular topics; and (b) what topics were of interest to the adult learners. Finally, this study also reveals the particular role of the instructor in facilitating this type of exchange. Implications are suggested for curriculum developers and instructors who are interested in both course development and on-line course management that promotes such globalisation in the twenty-first century. Rapid advances in

communication and transportation technologies strategically connect our lives in a global society; information exchange and expanding knowledge are prominent features. How are adult educators being prepared to work in such a transnational environment? Merriam, Courtenay, and Cervero (2006) argue that adult education needs to create space and listen to other voices, adopt a more critical stance, attend to policy, develop partnerships, and foster collective learning and action in order to become more globalised.

Introduction

Without ongoing dialogue, educators cannot fully understand the context and cultural aspects of adult education in other countries. Even more, in comparative adult education it is argued that 'this understanding reflects back to one's own country: Observations made in a foreign context help to better perceive and understand adult education not only in the other, but also in one's own country' (Reischmann, 2005, 137). Having the opportunity to engage in dialogue with fellow adult learners enables them to become more globalised and to actively take their place in a global society. However, international dialogue has been used rarely in adult education graduate-level classrooms because of limitations of time and place and the inability to have deep discussion in a time-limited environment. The internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) provide ways of connecting individuals and groups. In particular, asynchronous formats, which do not require instructors and students to be involved at the same time, allow people to interact with each other in their own time and place.

Using the internet and e-learning, students in a master's degree or similar graduate adult education programme and their professors at one US university and one in Germany engaged in lively, intense and reflective two-week on-line discussions. This article describes a study that explores how asynchronous CMC encouraged emerging adult educators to broaden and deepen their global perspectives. An analytical process, known as Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA), was applied to understand the on-line discussions and the implications for curriculum, research, policy and practice in countries that cross geographic and cultural boundaries. This study is informative in two significant ways. First, it serves as an assessment of the knowledge and orientation regarding global issues of adult education students, the future leaders in andragogy and lifelong education. Second, it has implications for curriculum developers and instructors who are interested in course development and on-line course management to promote globalisation.

Procedure and purposes of the study

This study explores the nature and content of the asynchronous dialogue between students and faculty affiliated with adult education programmes. The dialogues were held during a two-week period in the years 2004, 2005 and 2006, with two professors and approximately thirty different students each year. In the United States, graduate students were enrolled in an on-line course called Adult Education in the Social Context, and in Germany the students participated in the dialogue outside a formal course offering. In the United States, each student was required to make two substantial queries or posts on adult education in a global context; however, the German students' participation in this dialogue was voluntary. Because these students frequently used the internet during their coursework, internet use was not a barrier to participation. At the German university (Bamberg) an internet forum was set up (http://web.uni-bamberg.de/ppp/andragogik/aktuelles/georgia.htm) which students from both sides could freely access. In each of the forums 250–350 statements were exchanged in the two-week period. There was no given set of questions to the students; the general suggestion was to ask questions students would like to share with other students in the other country.

Specific research questions were: (a) What is the exchange pattern; specifically what roles did students play in these dialogues, and what roles did the instructors play? and (b) What topics were of interest to the adult learners? By analysing the web-based texts posted on the discussion forum website, the authors used unobtrusive measures to conduct this research. Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA) (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001) was used to analyse the online dialogues; ESA tracks the dynamics of which individual holds the initiative in multi-person dialogue situations. Two major literatures will be presented that inform the study: research on CMC as a learning modality, and Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA) as a dialogue analysis strategy.

Computer Mediated Communications (CMC)

CMC generally means to communicate via networked computers (Khine, Yeap, and Lok 2003). To overcome the challenges of distance and time among students in different countries, CMC is useful for international conversations in higher education. Computer conferencing has been widely used in higher education, particularly in situations where time and distance may be problematic (Coffin and Hewings 2005). CMC can be asynchronous or synchronous and can be used for many purposes from administration to gaining knowledge (Naidu and Järvelä 2005). In particular, the asynchronous form allows students to interact with each other beyond class time and gives more opportunities of dialogical intervention (Angeli, Valanides, and Bonk 2003).

Asynchronous CMC is beneficial to adult learners, especially those who need to balance work and family commitments with the demand of continuous learning (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). By using asynchronous CMC, users can post their opinions on new or continuing topics in their own time and other users can read and respond in their time to comments (Naidu and Järvelä 2005).

Because asynchronous CMC has been increasingly used in higher education, much literature exists about its benefits and pitfalls in contrast with traditional classrooms. Lapadat (2002) argues that participation in asynchronous online conferencing motivates students to engage in higher thinking with regard to actively choosing what they want to read. Reading meaningful texts and writing messages in asynchronous conferencing may facilitate the participants' conceptual growth. Surrounding environments or paralinguistic channels such as tone of voice and gesture are not available in CMC, and participants need to provide background information and meaningful messages (Lapadat 2002). Participants in asynchronous conference spend more time thinking, polishing and editing what they want to say than in synchronous conference; therefore, the act of writing in asynchronous conference may enhance thinking ability (Lapadat 2002). In an asynchronous online conference, participants try to write their perspectives clearly because (1) they communicate with real audiences whose feedback is important; (2) people do not want to lose face by writing low-qualifying opinions; and (3) the participants know that audiences will judge their message by criteria for formal academic writing (Lapadat 2002).

However, Angeli, Valanides, and Bonk (2003) found that asynchronous CMC does not necessarily encourage high levels of thinking. They conducted a case study to investigate the extent to which an asynchronous on-line conference facilitates pre-service teachers' communication outside their classroom. The possibility of case-based instruction in on-line conference to foster pre-service teachers' critical thinking skills was examined. They found that the participants' interaction did not involve critical thinking and they only shared subjective and personal experiences. This observation can be confirmed when going through many forums in the internet.

An important issue related to asynchronous CMC in higher education is the instructors' role in affecting the nature and quality of students' interactions. In reviewing 132 articles related to e-learning and CMC interactivity between instructors and students, Bannan-Ritland (2002) found the following research outcomes:

1 peer participation and instructor feedback are perceived as significant elements of interactivity

2 high levels of interaction need to be modelled by the instructor for students
3 the instructor's role is significant in promoting interactivity and indicates a change in role from face-to-face instructional contexts. (p. 172)

These findings revealed that the CMC instructors' roles change from the traditional classroom, and instructors play important roles to encourage students' active participation.

Painter, Coffin, and Hewings (2003) conducted a qualitative study of asynchronous CMC to investigate the effects of different levels of instructor involvement on the students' commitment in the dialogue. This study found that allowing students to engage freely in the discussion did not produce the most favourable result. Looking at three different forms of CMC, the authors found that discussion is richer when the instructor does not participate in the dialogue. Therefore, this study suggested that asynchronous tutorials are more effective when instructors intervene only with well-designed tasks.

Khine, Yeap, and Lok (2003) suggest some strategies to encourage CMC students to actively participate in the online dialogue. They found that some students had difficulties following the thread of an extended asynchronous discussion. Also, some participants did not question or gather information while making personal interpretations of others' messages. To overcome these shortcomings, instructors need to articulate the objectives of participation in CMC (Khine, Yeap, and Lok 2003). Instructors need to facilitate ongoing discussion by bringing in new leads to stimulate interaction, focusing the context of the discussion and redirecting the thread (Khine, Yeap, and Lok 2003). Also, instructors need to encourage students to become independent persons who read other's messages before making any comments, who share their knowledge proactively, who ask provocative questions, and who search for materials beyond the textbook (Khine, Yeap, and Lok 2003). Coffin and Hewings (2005) compared student interactivity between two conference groups that used different styles of tutoring. In Group A, the tutor or instructor conducted a simple tutorial with no special guidelines for interaction. In contrast, the Group B tutor conducted an interventionist role and provided students with guidance on how to reply and reflect on others' opinions. The Group B tutor posted four times as many messages as the Group A tutor, students in Group B posted 213 messages (6–36 messages per student) and Group A students posted 80 messages (1–6 messages per student).

Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA)

In order to identify exchange patterns among participants – especially between instructors and students in CMC – it is necessary to analyse the dialogue with

an efficient and reliable tool. The purpose of Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA) is 'capturing the grammar of turns between dialogue participants with the aim of gaining insights into their relative contributions and roles' (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001, 67). ESA was developed to investigate the interaction of roles among participants in CMC, to determine the inclusiveness of the dialogue, to identify who holds the initiative in multi-person dialogues, and to investigate patterns of interaction, particularly the relative level of symmetry among participants' turn taking (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). In ESA, a turn is defined as 'a contribution by a particular participant and is delimited by them starting and stopping speaking' (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001, 67). The exchange is defined as 'the smallest unit of dialogue that can stand alone and still make sense' (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001, 67). The minimal unit of exchange is 'Initiative move' and 'Responding move' (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). Table 1 shows the example of the minimal unit of exchange.

In Table 1, student MM initiates with a question and it is coded as 'Initiate (I)'. 'Initiate' expects a following turn by another participant and it is not expected by the previous turn (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). In Table 1, instructor JR answered the student's question and it is coded as 'Respond (R)'. 'Respond' does not exist at the beginning of an exchange and it does not expect subsequent turns by other participants (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). After the instructor's answer, student MM evaluates the instructor's answer and it is coded as 'Response–Complement (RC)'. On the RC turn, student MM reacquires control of the dialogue (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). RC is optional and it is not predicted by other participants.

Table 1 I-R-RC Sequence

Student MM		**Instructor JR**	
Instructor A: Do they [students in your country] take any particular courses that specifically address environmental, corporate, or civic responsibility?	I		
		R	No, I do not teach them to be responsible. But my faculty and I make clear that we expect professional andragogues to be able to work on morals and responsibilities in their work.
Wonderful answer! Thank you.	RC		

Table 2 The use of reinitiating

Student A		**Instructor B**	My question is:
What role should adult education play in revitalising these communities?	I		
		RI	It's a perfect opportunity for educators to encourage people to understand their options and play a role in facilitating change. Are there changes like this taking place in other countries internationally?
I wonder ... how do you convince a community that change is needed?	I		

Table 2 shows the example of 'Reinitiating (RI)'; RI does not intend to close the current exchange but continue the current exchange (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001); however, RI expects a response by other participants but it is not predicted and non-initial (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). However, Initiates (I) closes the current exchange and starts a new exchange. In Table 2, RI continues the current exchange talking about the role of adult education to revitalise community; RI clarifies the previous question and predicts a following response. In Table 2, the third turn was coded as I because student A changes the exchange that aims to talking about the way of convincing the need of change.

In addition to analysing exchange patterns, ESA also identifies exchange structure roles. If a participant tends to initiate much more often than he or she responds, he or she can be called an 'initiator' (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001); however, the roles of 'initiator' can be an 'inquirer' or 'challenger'. Therefore, in order to identify exchange structure roles in detail, ESA divides exchange roles into six categories (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). Because Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones (2001) did not offer definitions of each category, the researchers define the roles: (1) challenge: to make people think in a different way; (2) clarification: to make an idea clear; (3) feedback: to give a reaction or response to a particular message; (4) inform: to give or impart knowledge of a fact or circumstance; (5) inquiry: to seek or request information or knowledge; and (6) reason: to give a basis or cause.

ESA can be an effective analysis method to identify *who* holds the initiative in a dialogue. In a natural dialogue it is difficult to determine turn boundaries

because *simultaneous* talking or interruptions can occur during natural dialogue (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001); however, in CMC defining a turn is easy because participants post each message in turn. LS investigating the balance of exchange patterns of participants, ESA can identify the inclusiveness of participation among students and instructors.

Findings

This section is divided into two parts: exchange analysis and dialogue issues. Using ESA method, exchange patterns and structure roles of two instructors and students are analysed. Next, we describe prominent themes that students and instructors discussed for the three years under review.

Exchange analysis

The instructors' roles. Given the structure of this forum, 'American students asking questions of the Germans', it is not surprising that Instructor JR (Germany) showed the most active role and was the dominant participant in the dialogue. Overall, JR accounted for 14.8 per cent of all turns (48 turns out of 324) in 2004, 26.9 per cent (57 turns out of 212) in 2005, and 23.6 per cent (56 turns out of 237) in 2006. Among his diverse contribution patterns during each year's discussions, the most prominent pattern that he showed was 'Response', where he answered students' questions while presenting his opinions on discussion topics. He showed 'Response' turns 16 times (33.3 per cent of all his turns) in 2004, 44 times (77.2 per cent of all his turns) in 2005, and 43 turns (76.7 per cent of all his turns) in 2006. In addition, he showed 'Initiate' or 'Reinitiate' turns 30 times (62.5 per cent of all his turns) in 2004, 12 times (21 per cent of all his turns) in 2005, and 13 times (23.2 per cent of all his turns) in 2006. Although Instructor JR showed the most 'Initiate' or 'Reinitiate' turns, he never started any of themes except once in order to mention a technical problem for the discussion web site. Overall analysis of his roles shows that he took the roles of 'informer', 'evaluator (giving feedback)', 'inquirer' and 'challenger'. Among his roles, his challenger role is uniquely evident: 'Hey, you disappoint me! There I wrote a series of arrogant and aggressive statements and no attack back yet??? No holy cows moooooing! No toes stepped? Come on – do you accept everything a professor tells you? (Lorilee, is there a position open at UGA for me? Such nice and friendly students!)'

Instructor JR conducted challenger roles 5 times (remaining participants showed challenger roles 3 times) in 2004 and 7 times in 2006 (remaining discussants conducted challenger roles 5 times). Although other participants hesitated to challenge other discussants, Instructor JR may have challenged students to promote their collaborative learning. During the conversations,

Instructor JR stated, 'I want to provoke you. I want to challenge you. Exchanging with me (an academic teacher) should not leave you there where you are.'

The US Instructor LS also contributed many times each year; she accounted for 5.2 per cent (17 turns out of 324) in 2004, 7.1 per cent (15 turns out of 212) in 2005 and 9.3 per cent (22 turns out of 237) in 2006. Instructor LS did not participate actively like Instructor JR, but she was the second most frequent contributor after Instructor JR in 2005 and 2006 and the sixth in 2004. Unlike Instructor JR, the most dominant discussion pattern of Instructor LS was 'Initiate' or 'Reinitiate'. She tended to ask related questions in the middle of themes to expand knowledge. She showed 'Initiate' 10 times (58.8 per cent of all her turns) in 2004, 'Initiate' or 'Reinitiate' 9 times (60 per cent of all her turns) in 2005, and 'Initiate' or 'Reinitiate' 13 times (59 per cent of all her turns) in 2006. Instructor LS took the roles of 'informer', 'inquirer' and 'evaluator (giving feedback)' but she conducted a 'challenger' role only once in 2006.

In summary, the analysis of the two instructors' Response patterns revealed that they tried to answer students' questions and give information or their opinions on the diverse topics suggested by the student participants. In addition, the instructors' Initiate and Reinitiate turns encouraged student participants to think about related topics and, furthermore, challenged them to think in different ways.

The students' roles. Although students in the United States were asked to post two questions by the instructor and students in Germany participated in the dialogue voluntarily, on average each student who participated in the dialogue in Germany and the United States participated in the discussions about five times each year. The average of turns that each student contributed in 2004 was 5.22 in 2004, 5.75 in 2005 and 5.13 in 2006. If we consider that the length of the discussion is only two weeks, this result revealed that asynchronous CMC is an effective method of dialogue among international students. For three years, students in both countries posted their opinions or questions five times and took the opportunity to react to other students' diverse postings.

Noticeably, there were important differential participation patterns between the American and German students. On average over the three years, students in the United States contributed 59 per cent of all turns. Two reasons explain this difference: participation by US students was a required class assignment and discussion participation of German students was voluntary; and English was the language of the discussion, limiting some German students' participation.

An additional dynamic became evident. After the starting date of a forum a high number of questions came from the American side. The German professor

(JR) commented, 'Immediately 20 to 30 questions came up – I felt overwhelmed and could not answer all at the same time.' What immediately became apparent was that the American students used this forum to communicate *within* their group. This became an important unintended outcome of the forum.

The analysis of the forums found that each student conducted Initiate or Reinitiate patterns about two or three times and showed Respond pattern about two times each year. On average students in both countries showed Initiate or Reinitiate patterns 3.16 times and the Respond pattern 1.96 times in 2004, Initiate or Reinitiate patterns 3.04 times and the Respond pattern 2.67 times in 2005, and Initiate or Reinitiate patterns 2.26 times and the Respond pattern 2.84 times in 2006. These findings indicate that each of the participating students held the initiative two or three times in each year's discussion. The international dialogue using asynchronous CMC was a medium in which each student could control the dialogue pattern as well as respond to others' opinions. The two most frequent roles that students in both countries conducted were Inquiry and Feedback. However, students were reluctant to conduct Challenge roles, with at most four students taking on Challenge roles in 2006.

Dialogue issues

Students and instructors in both countries participated in 69 themes during the dialogue. Although the American students were, for the most part, beginners in the discipline of andragogy and online instruction, while the German students had at least three years of full-time (undergraduate) face-to-face-study in pedagogy and andragogy, the discussion overall was one of keen curiosity about priorities, pedagogy, politics and roles in the field and practice of adult education. Analysis revealed three prominent themes related to adult education: issues in the field of adult education in a global context, contextual differences in both countries, and using technologies in the adult education field.

Issues in adult education in global society. Participants talked about issues and barriers to global adult education and suggested desirable attitudes. Cultural differences and language barriers were identified as the most prominent challenges and participants discussed the role of developed countries in global learning. Some argued that developed countries such as the United States should not force other countries to abandon their own cultures, expressing concern that this could be a form of colonialism. An American student remarked, 'Most Americans think very little about the rest of the world ... I am not saying that exploitation does not happen, but most Americans do not think we are exploiting other countries.' A German student said, 'as long as we respect each others' cultural background and know about the differences of our cultures, I believe we can communicate and learn from and among nations'.

Participants agreed that educational activities could not be apolitical because education is always concerned with change. Instructor JR said, '... *all* learning encompasses learning beyond the content level ... there is always value learning, behaviour learning, social learning ... having more or less influence on the world'. In responding to Instructor JR, an American student replied, 'My view of adult education is to provide individuals with a means to improve themselves, thereby improving society. So, as you said, some would view this as "political" since it seeks to make a change.'

Contextual difference. Participants discussed differences in adult education between the two countries. Students in the United States showed interest in knowing the range of adult education in Germany, including alternative types of high-school diplomas, vocational training and apprenticeships, military education, second-career education and workplace learning. Students in Germany showed their interest in the contents of classes in colleges in the United States, the effectiveness of on-line classes, and common fields of work for adult educators in the country.

Through discussion, students became aware of many differences in the naming, study and practice of adult education in the United States and Germany and other European countries. An American student remarked, 'I caught a glimpse of what it means to live in a German culture ... Many thanks for the opportunity to share our ideas and thoughts about living and learning in our different cultures.' This online forum enabled students to recognise their taken-for-granted assumptions. An American student added, 'I think sometimes we think are all looking through the same lens. It is very educational to see how other countries are learning.' Another explained, 'How interesting! I guess it was just my cultural assumption that your [German] adults would be like our adults.'

On-line learning in adult education. The participants had lively exchanges about their experiences with technology-enhanced learning and technology's influence on adult education. This discussion certainly was strengthened by the fact that the American students came from a blended or on-line programme, while the German students came from face-to-face study. Students concluded that although technology become an essential part of adult education, attention to human interaction is important. Participants worried that missing personal face-to-face contact may make students lose their motivation to learn and it might be a limitation of technology in the adult education field. However, they agreed that internet-based formal learning can be an effective means of giving students access to diverse topics in a short time, especially in a global society, but using technologies is currently limited to those who have access to affordable technology and those who live in developed countries with stable infrastructures. A common theme was the emphasis on self-discipline and self-

motivation to help adult learners succeed in courses without others' assistance.

Discussion and implications

This study analysed two weeks of international asynchronous CMC among students and professors in adult education in Germany and the United States during the three years 2003–2006. Applying ESA to asynchronous CMC among participants makes it possible to compare dialogue patterns and roles. Researchers found inclusiveness among students and instructors and the most impressive result is that students hold the initiative during the discussion. The level of students' turn-taking (an average of 71 per cent over the three years) compared to the level of instructors' turn-taking (an average of 28.8 per cent) showed that students carried the discussion more than instructors. In the traditional classroom, instructors may account for as much as 80 per cent of the total talk (Kneser, Pilkington, and Treasure-Jones 2001). The number of students' Initiate turns (an average of 86 turns) compared to instructors' Initiate turns (average 32.6 turns) indicates that students actively participated in discussions. These results may illustrate that characteristics of asynchronous CMC that give students more time to think about others' opinions and to express their own thoughts may encourage them to participate more actively (Lapadat 2002).

In addition to this study showing that asynchronous CMC is an effective discussion and learning tool generally, it also revealed that it can be a tool to enable sharing among students in the same course. In one of the years under investigation there were six international students in the United States, from Africa, Asia and South America, and these students presented their countries' contexts and their opinions on the field of adult education.

This study also found that the instructors' role is important among international students (Coffin and Hewings 2005). Although instructors accounted for 27.5 per cent of overall turn-taking, their participation was essential for overall exchanges among participants. Among 20 themes with more than 5 turns (the average number of turns in themes is 4.8); only 4 themes did not contain instructors' contributions. These results may show that instructors' participation facilitates students' exchanges. Instructor JR showed the most number of turn-taking: responding to questions and providing feedback, but importantly, challenging students to respond to others' opinions in different ways. Since students in this study were reluctant to challenge other participants, such instructor facilitation was helpful. Coffin and Hewings (2005) suggested asking students to post a critique of arguments as a possible strategy to encourage them to challenge other discussants. They also recommend encouraging students to challenge authority and established ideas rather than personal opinions of peers as an alternative. Future research might explore what makes participants hesitant to engage in certain topics.

The analysis of dialogic contents illustrated the area of greatest interest to emergent adult educators in both countries. Researchers found that in a global society adult educators need to recognise cultural differences that may reveal motivations and expectations towards adult learning. Although adult educators have opportunities to work with students and educators from different countries, it is not easy to find courses or seminars dealing with how to work with cultural differences. The importance of language in international adult education was also reinforced, with participants agreeing that language could be a significant barrier. Some German students felt they did not speak enough English and did not dare to participate in this dialogue; to promote international dialogue through asynchronous CMC some web-based translators or translation mechanism should be made available for participants' use.

Embedded in the conversations were frequent indications that the cross-cultural discussions were 'eye-opening' for students and confirmed the value of such dialogue to identify issues and foster critical reflection and discourse. An American student said, 'This is an eye-opening experience for me. It also shows how the main issues concerning global adult education can be so different from here in the US.' The dialogues offer a glimpse into the perspectives of adults studying to be professionals in this field and, therefore, uncover important implications for those preparing and promoting professionalism in adult education.

As a medium of knowledge generation and knowledge transfer, results of this study indicate the merits of including such a dialogue as a part of formal adult education coursework. When planning such dialogue, it should be based on this study's results that learning takes place through student-identified topics and student-initiated and facilitated dialogue on these topics. But programme design should also consider, as this research has shown, that course instructors have a key role to play in acting as provocateurs and challengers of assumptions and existing worldviews. Where the pattern of this study's dialogues was to cover many diverse topics, other programme design implications could include limiting the number of topics, or having special topic discussions to achieve more substantive interactions (e.g. andragogy and HIV/AIDS, or adult education and immigration). Additionally, the major themes identified over three years of discussion indicate those topics for which more in-depth coursework could be offered.

This study raises areas for future investigation. One cluster of research questions has to do with studying the limits of learning through CMC, another has to do with investigating CMC through the lens of transfer of learning (Holton and Baldwin 2003) and learning communities (Desikan and Sandmann 2007). Yet another set of questions has to be with student preparation for participating in such dialogues and with harvesting the learning after the

dialogue.

This study shows that asynchronous CMC, using an inexpensive and simple instrument as an internet forum, was an effective discussion and learning tool to transcend time and cross geographic and cultural boundaries. However, it was an ad hoc initiative of two collaborating professors without extensive planning. Perhaps it was its spontaneity that made it so effective. Further offerings and explorations of expansion could be considered, with sponsorship by other adult education academic units or by adult education professional associations. Intentional and systematic preparation of adult educators for a global context should be addressed and financially supported. Continuing to hold and analyse cross-cultural discussions among future adult educators will allow us to explore significant global issues and prepare tomorrow's professionals for change in the global arena of adult education. Despite differences, emergent adult educators in diverse countries can find common goals, as one student reflected, 'Although there are some cultural differences between us, I think we are all in it for the same reason ... to become better educators and to hopefully make an impact on our respective societies and communities.'

Lorilee Sandmann and Jost Reischmann both have had extensive university teaching experience and leadership roles in adult education and andragogy. Dr Sandmann was president of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education and Dr Reischmann is the founder and president of the International Society for Comparative Adult Education. They have teamed up to hold the international on-line forum addressed in this article. Youngsek Kim, himself an international student from South Korea who will receive his doctoral degree from the University of Georgia in May 2008, conducted the data analysis for this study. Email<sandmann @uga.edu><jost.reischmann@uni-bamberg.de><youngsek@uga.edu>

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Spanish Abstract

EXPERIENCIAS DE EDUCADORES/AS DE PERSONAS ADULTAS EMERGENTES EN UN FORO INTERNACIONAL EN LÍNEA

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Tener la oportunidad de entablar un diálogo con compañeros estudiantes adultos de diferentes países brinda la esperanza de que estudiantes adultos y educadores/as puedan globalizar más sus puntos de vista y ocupar sus lugares activamente en una sociedad global. Este artículo describe un estudio que explora cómo un foro asíncrono basado en Internet estimula a educadores/as de personas adultas emergentes a ampliar y profundizar sus puntos de vista globales. En 2004, 2005 y 2006, durante dos semanas cada año, aproximadamente treinta estudiantes diferentes y dos profesores/as adheridos/as a programas de educación para personas adultas en una universidad en los Estados Unidos y en Alemania participaron en un diálogo internacional. Se utilizó el Análisis de Estructura de Intercambio para analizar el foro internacional en línea. Los resultados de este estudio indican (a) el patrón de intercambio global y sobre temas particulares, (b) cuáles fueron los temas de interés para los estudiantes adultos. Por último, este estudio también muestra el papel particular del/de la docente en facilitar este tipo de intercambio. Se indican implicaciones para los creadores de programas de estudio y los docentes interesados tanto en el desarrollo del curso como en la gestión del curso en línea que promueve esta globalización.

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