



The Future of E-Learning in Global Education: Digital Equity or Digital Divide Through World Cultural Approaches

Shama Naz*

Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

*Corresponding Author: nazsham07@gmail.com

Abstract

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E-learning has emerged as a global trend that could unite nations and borders as a global culture under a single narrative of education. Online learning has both positive and negative impacts on the world’s education in particular and socio-economic systems in general. The study aims to chart the future of e-learning by examining a crucial question: Does e-learning promote digital equity, or does it exacerbate the digital divide? In this context, the current article will assess the validity of e-learning’s claims to ensure digital equity—defined as universal access to digital resources, while also considering the impact of online learning on underdeveloped countries, which has contributed to the digital divide, characterized by unequal access to ICT worldwide. The study will incorporate World Culture Theory to further elucidate our claims, since globalization in culture takes keen interest in global education. Together they connect major sociological frameworks with digital education that illustrate how global modules of knowledge and institutions spread across countries. The first section of this research paper includes a brief history of e-learning and the rationale behind applying World Culture Theory, followed by for and against arguments from digital equity and digital divide. In its concluding section, the study aims to construct a comprehensive narrative that addresses the intersection of digital equity and the digital divide in education, with the potential to transform educational practices.

Keywords: World Culture Theory, E-learning, Digital Equity, Digital Divide, institutional isomorphism

Introduction

The widespread use of the internet and technological advances led to the popularity of E-learning. It refers to learning online through digital technology via the internet. During the COVID-19, e-learning became an essential educational tool to study remotely at home.¹ It is a flexible and cost-effective mode of learning where students can have access to a wide range of courses. “E-Learning promises that it brings powerful new tools for improving competency and capability, speed, and

¹Luis M Dos Santos, “Online Learning after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Learners’ Motivations,” *Frontiers in Education* 7 (2022): 879091, <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.879091> .

performance, whether an organization operates at one geographical location or at many.”² Globalization emerged as a trend during the Industrial revolution where individual and national identities are no longer important as compared to universal humanity.³ The proliferation of technology and advancements in communication have significantly enhanced global interconnectivity. The economic and socio-cultural boundaries are blurred to the extent that it’s become essential to become part of this evolving global culture.⁴ The current paper will incorporate the theoretical approach of Globalization as Culture.

1.1. Historical Background and Rationale of Applying World Culture Theory

World Culture Theory (WCT) is characterized by its open-ended and evolving nature, as it is multifaceted and examines globalization beyond mere economic dimensions. The theory takes into consideration other factors, beyond economics, that influence social behavior, such as politics, social justice, conflicts, social media, migration, and more.⁵ This theory combines Enlightenment ideals such as freedom, equality, and scientific advances to form a wider global perspective that includes international laws, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, global education, global citizenship, etc.⁶ Social science scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists like Roland Robertson (1938-2022), Peter L. Berger (1929-2017), Anthony Giddens (b. 1938), George Ritzer (b. 1940), and Manuel Castells (b. 1942-) are prominent advocates of this theory.

Following metaculture, this theory has introduced another related concept: ‘convergence’. Here, the term ‘convergence’ refers to the homogenization of values, language, policies, philosophy of being and learning, etc., on common grounds.⁷ For instance, English being used as a common global language to communicate across the world, combined medical efforts to treat the COVID-19 pandemic, and capital punishments worldwide are a few examples of the evolving world culture.

WCT is of particular interest in developing global standards for education. It helps to construct a framework and policies that meet the educational demands for people all over the globe regardless of their birth, merit, or status quo.⁸ Through global educational discourse, international conferences and seminars, media, educational professionals participate in carrying the project even further.⁹ Although it fosters multicultural understanding and expands opportunities, WCT tends to impart standardize curriculum and international language (specifically English) that aligns with

²Attila Nagy, “The Impact of E-Learning,” In Peter A. Bruck, and Zeger Karssen and Andrea Buchholz and Ansgar Zerfass, eds. *E-Content: Technologies and Perspectives for the European Market* (Heidelberg, Springer 2005), 79-96.

³Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard, and Risto Rinne, eds., *Reimagining Globalization and Education*, 1st ed (New York: Routledge, 2022), 1.

⁴Robin Shields, *Globalization and International Education* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 52-60.

⁵Sonia Mehta, “Chapter 2: Theories of Globalization and Their Impacts on Education,” in *Building Trust: Education in Global Perspective* (2018), mlpp.pressbooks.pub, <https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/globaleducation/chapter/big-stories-meta-narratives/>.

⁶Iveta Silova, and William C Brehm, “From Myths to Models: the (re)production of World Culture in Comparative Education,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 13 (1), (2014): 8–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.967483>.

⁷G. E. Fuller, “A Global Convergence against Globalization?” *New Perspectives Quarterly - NPQ*, (2009): 20–32.

⁸Shields, *Globalization and International Education*, 52-60.

⁹Sonia Mehta, “Chapter 2: Theories of Globalization and Their Impacts on Education,” in *Building Trust: Education in Global Perspective*.

the global interests. The core idea is to develop a standardized module of knowledge and education despite different cultures and histories. These models are spread through global rankings and accreditations, professional networks, digital platforms, and international organizations like UNESCO, etc. However, it favors Western epistemology and language for attaining global culture that indirectly undermines local languages and culture, and directly ignores non-Western contributions in knowledge. In addition, there is a strain between acquiring universal values in education at the expense of personal cultural heritage and educational values.

One cannot dismiss the fact that world culture theory is a mixture of Western ideals of capitalism, Enlightenment, and modernity.¹⁰ Critics often believe that this theory is a means to colonize the entire world (be it education, ideologies, perspectives, E-learning or people's minds) upon Eurocentric ideals without even actually colonizing them. According to Samuel P. Huntington, once the Western virus enters a society, it can be dislodged, but it changes the mechanism of a society as a whole.¹¹ In addition, the global culture theory is also criticized because it contributes to the loss of cultural diversity in its endeavor to create a universal global culture. This criticism is often ruled by its proponents, Homi K. Bhabha in particular, that instead of suppressing local cultures, globalization as culture creates a hybrid culture that retains the best of both (local and global) cultures within it.¹² However, this argument cannot intersect with education where Western knowledge is dominant. Recently, the theory has been criticized for its claims of 'universal culture' because it fails to create a connection between its policy and practice, and between global and local norms.¹³

Although the advantages of global educational policies cannot be ignored, however, an utmost care is needed while devising a framework that represents people all over the globe instead of mere Eurocentric narratives.¹⁴ It is both false and arrogant to believe that the developing global culture is in fact Western.¹⁵ Therefore, a potent mixture of both developed nations (Americans, British, etc.) and underdeveloped nations (African, Asians etc.) is essential to establish and implement a strong global narrative for social progress and justice.¹⁶ Only then can people harvest the fruits of world culture, it would remain a redundant theory.

To be brief, WCT advocates equality and sameness, and innately embraces a global perspective and builds their narrative accordingly. As a theory, it seems more plausible and logically consistent than other global theories.

¹⁰Sonia Mehta, "Chapter 2: Theories of Globalization and Their Impacts on Education," in *Building Trust: Education in Global Perspective*.

¹¹Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Penguin, 1996).

¹²Nasrullah Mambrol, "Homi Bhabha's Concept of Hybridity," *Literary Theory and Criticism* (2016), <https://literariness.org/2016/04/08/homi-bhabhas-concept-of-hybridity>.

¹³Iveta Silova, and William C Brehm, "From Myths to Models: the (re)production of World Culture in Comparative Education."

¹⁴Stephan Carney, Jeremy Rappleye, and Iveta Silova, "Between Faith and Science: World Culture Theory and Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review*, 56 (3), (2012): 366–393, <https://doi.org/10.1086/665708>; Mehran Kamrava, *Cultural Politics in the Third World* (Routledge, 2002).

¹⁵Samuel P. Huntington, "The West: Unique, Not Universal." *Foreign Affairs* 75 (6), (1996): 28-46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20047828>.

¹⁶Keita Takayama, "Provincialising the World Culture Theory Debate: Critical Insights from a Margin," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 13 (1), (2014): 34–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.967485>

2. The Advent of E-Learning

The process of learning dates back to antiquity. For a long time, education has been sought in traditional classrooms [a teaching system where the teacher imparts and regulates the knowledge flow].¹⁷ Gradually, the educational paradigm is shifting towards distance learning for adults and members of society who are unable to attend regular classes in schools, colleges, and universities.¹⁸ E-learning is promoted worldwide because it is considered globally legitimate, efficient, easily accessible, and progressive.

Electronic learning (or e-learning) can be traced back to the last five decades— where its pace increased gradually with the technological advances and rapid spread of the internet and personal computers. Between 1960 and 1970, online learning was initiated for computer-based training (CBT); while open universities offering long-distance courses to educate students in remote areas.¹⁹ During the 1980s, multimedia and other related programs further refined the techniques of e-learning. The 1990s were a revolutionary point break for online learning when people started adopting personal computers (PC) and internet connections. World Wide Web, Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), and Learning Management Systems (LMS) provided web-based content online to meet educational needs.²⁰ There was a visible paradigm shift in knowledge that also created a disparity between private and public sector institutes. Unfortunately, we can't explore that area in detail due to the limited scope of this paper.

Private and public sector universities, institutes, corporations, and the government started to invest and develop online learning in the early 2000s.²¹ By 2010, millions of students could gain access to courses online through open educational resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOCs); Khan Academy, Coursera, Udemy, edX, etc. gained recognition during this time. Subsequently, the easy availability of social media android phones gave rise to mobile learning (m-learning) and micro learning that provides bite-sized information readily to the students.

Finally, e-learning was adopted worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic, so that education and work life can be continued during the time of crisis.²² People in the developing and underdeveloped nations were forced to adopt e-learning, who were reluctant to opt it before COVID-19.²³ As a whole, online learning is evolving along with the pedagogical shifts in

¹⁷“Traditional Classroom Definition and Meaning,” (n.d.), *Top Hat*, <https://tophat.com/glossary/t/traditional-classroom/>.

¹⁸Falih M. Alsaaty, Ella Carter, David Abrahams, Faleh Alshameri. “Traditional Versus Online Learning in Institutions of Higher Education: Minority Business Students’ Perceptions,” *Business and Management Research* 5 (2), (2016), <https://doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v5n2p31>.

¹⁹Attila Nagy, “The Impact of E-Learning,” in *E-Content: Technologies and Perspectives for the European Market*, 79-96.

²⁰Christopher Pappas, “Are Adults Thriving in Virtual Education?” 17 Mar 2024, *eLearning Industry*, <https://elearningindustry.com/are-adults-thriving-in-virtual-education>; David Bennet, “The Future of eLearning: Emerging Technologies and Trends to Watch,” *eLearning Industry*, March 10, 2023, <https://elearningindustry.com/the-future-of-elearning-emerging-technologies-and-trends-to-watch>.

²¹Attila Nagy, “The Impact of E-Learning,” In *Technologies and Perspectives for the European Market*, 79-96.

²²Luis M Dos Santos, “Online Learning after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Learners’ Motivations.”

²³Luis M Dos Santos, “Online Learning after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Learners’ Motivations.”; Puruash Chaudhary, “Learning in Crisis,” *Aurora Magazine*, 4 Mar 2024, <https://aurora.dawn.com/news/1145039/learning-in-crisis>

technology that should promote creativity and constant error-elimination.²⁴ It provides a platform for all students to acquire and develop lifelong learning skills, as the possibilities of online learning are unimaginable. One can take online professional courses, skill-based courses, language, coding, etc. The perspective of formal education is altered due to the endless possibilities offered by e-learning.²⁵ Specified apps are available for E-learning, such as Khan Academy, Coursera, Udemy, edX, LinkedIn, which provides online courses from universities and other educational institutes; Duolingo app, Memrise, Rosetta Stone are language-learning apps; and Code Academy offers coding lessons to comprehend programs like Python, JavaScript, HTML/CSS, etc.

In the last decade collaborative efforts of Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine algorithms gave rise to new e-learning trends that includes: mobile learning (that enables learner to access information instantly via mobiles and tablets), gamification (learning based on game-designed principles of awarding grade points etc. to motivate students), micro-learning (learning courses in bite-size format to easily grasp it), social learning (that involves international collaboration of educational organizations) etc.²⁶ However, this automated version of learning is still under scrutiny as to whether its merits outweigh its demerits or vice versa.

3. Digital Equity_ Positive Outcomes of E-Learning

Online learning is advantageous for various reasons. It is flexible in relation to time and location; can be accessed easily; and it is cost-effective as most courses are either free of charge or their fee is negligible as compared to regular institutes.²⁷ Moreover, it enhanced personal learning experience and creates customize learning environment as the learner could educate himself at one's own pace and ability to grasp concepts.²⁸ This would be impossible in a formal or traditional educational system.

E-learning also helps students who fear judgment. In a traditional class environment, one may be uneasy responding to tests or exams due to fear of failure. So, in virtual classrooms (an online teaching environment where the educator and student can have live correspondence), students can perform more creatively and freely.²⁹

E-learning not only caters larger group of pupils on an international level. But also links people all over the globe through institutional isomorphism, leading the world towards a global culture and legitimacy.³⁰ E-learning makes students more engaged due to the multitude of teaching techniques.³¹ E.g. multimedia tools can provide content with pictures, sounds, videos, and case

²⁴Joanna Swann, "Learning: An Evolutionary Analysis," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41 (3), (2009): 256–269, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00410.x>.

²⁵Swann, "Learning: An Evolutionary Analysis," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41 (3), (2009): 256–269.

²⁶David Bennet, "The Future of eLearning: Emerging Technologies and Trends to Watch."

²⁷Emily Gore, "Why eLearning Works: Benefits of eLearning," *ELM Learning*, February 29, 2024, <https://elmllearning.com/blog/benefits-of-elearning> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2024].

²⁸Attila Nagy, "The Impact of E-Learning," In *Technologies and Perspectives for the European Market*, 79-96.

²⁹S. Bernazzani, "What Is a Virtual Classroom?" *resources.owllabs.com*, n.d., <https://resources.owllabs.com/blog/virtual-classroom>.

³⁰Shields, *Globalization and International Education*, 56.

³¹Attila Nagy, "The Impact of E-Learning," In *Technologies and Perspectives for the European Market*, 79-96.

reports all under one roof.³² Research data has shown that sensory engagement makes students memorize a concept more easily.³³

4. Digital Divide_ Concerns of E-Learning

E-learning may be disadvantageous for those who are introverted or people who are not able to communicate with others, as it lacks face-to-face interactions. This may cause career barriers in the future for such people, as these self-taught students were unable to learn how to interact and work as a team.³⁴ Moreover, online learning requires a lot of self-discipline and motivation to continue studies as students often need a typical classroom environment: pressure, reward, and punishment to keep studying.³⁵ Hence, if any student is lousy, it's rather difficult for such students to complete their course.³⁶

Although positive e-learning may sound, it remains ineffective for first-handed practical tutorials, e.g. lab works, art and craft works, etc. We may find video tutorials on them, yet it lacks practical experience.³⁷ Therefore, relying solely on e-learning without face-to-face guidance could be detrimental for students.³⁸

Additionally, High-speed internet is the chief component in acquiring e-learning. Hence, the provision of technology across remote areas would be challenging. Nations all over the world are trying to attain this digital equity where everyone can have access to digital resources.³⁹ Parallel to this, the inability to understand online platforms and management software can also make e-learning difficult. Due to certain technological barriers, E-learning can increase educational disparities for developed and underdeveloped nations.⁴⁰ Similarly, digital literacy can also increase this imbalance as older people or adult pupils from extremely remote areas may not know the basic tools or technology to fully grasp the course they are interested in. This lack of prior knowledge can disrupt the entire experience of e-learning.⁴¹

³²Emily Gore, "Why eLearning Works: Benefits of eLearning," *ELM Learning*, February 29, 2024, <https://elmllearning.com/blog/benefits-of-elearning> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2024].

³³Gore, "Why eLearning Works: Benefits of eLearning."

³⁴Andi Wahyu Irawan, Dwisona Dwisona and Mardi Lestari, "Psychological Impacts of Students on Online Learning during the Pandemic COVID-19," *KONSELI: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling (E-Journal)* 7 (1), (2020): 53–60, <https://doi.org/10.24042/kons.v7i1.6389>.

³⁵Emad Mushtaha, Saleh Abu Dabous, Imad Alsyouf, Amr Ahmed, and Naglaa Raafat Abdraboh, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning and Teaching at Engineering and Theoretical Colleges during the Pandemic," *Ain Shams Engineering Journal* 13 (6), (2022): 101770, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2022.101770>.

³⁶Elena Makarova, "Effectiveness of Traditional and Online Learning: Comparative Analysis from the Student Perspective," *SHS Web of Conferences* 99, (2021): 01019, <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20219901019>.

³⁷Emad Mushtaha, Saleh Abu Dabous, Imad Alsyouf, Amr Ahmed, and Naglaa Raafat Abdraboh, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning and Teaching at Engineering and Theoretical Colleges during the Pandemic."

³⁸Falih M. Alsaaty, Ella Carter, David Abrahams, Faleh Alshameri. "Traditional Versus Online Learning in Institutions of Higher Education: Minority Business Students' Perceptions."

³⁹Shields, *Globalization and International Education*, 58.

⁴⁰Irawan, Dwisona Dwisona, and Mardi Lestari, "Psychological Impacts of Students on Online Learning during the Pandemic COVID-19."

⁴¹Christopher Pappas, "Are Adults Thriving in Virtual Education?" 17 Mar 2024, *eLearning Industry*, <https://elearningindustry.com/are-adults-thriving-in-virtual-education> [Accessed 17 October, 2024].

E-learning also poses quality concerns as many courses can be outdated, poorly presented, or inaccurate. It's difficult for a beginner to discern whether the particular course is valid or not.⁴² The credibility of online learning is also questioned by Stephen Downes that e-learning is offering more of a platform for content-authoring tools like blogging instead of being used as a learning medium.⁴³

Additionally, studies have shown that children who are indulged in electronic media and gadgets become more aggressive and suffer other behavioral disorders due to exposure to increased stimulus engagement.⁴⁴ Keeping children away from smartphones and tablets was already difficult for parents, but e-learning has legitimized children's usage of gadgets, making them even more addicted to them than ever before.⁴⁵ Overcoming this challenge and reconciling with e-learning will take a lot more research in the near future.

E-learning can also be seen as an emerging global trend within the context of World Culture theory, since it is a platform that can readily transform a universal global educational system. This is because the technology, social media, e-learning modules, and management software are interconnected all across the globe.⁴⁶ Moreover, in virtual classes, students from different countries brought different ideologies, ethnicities, and culture on the table.⁴⁷ This intermix signifies the world culture theory motive to attain a global culture.

Just like the critique on 'convergence' of World Culture Theory, e-learning can also lead to a certain tension between standardization and localization.⁴⁸ Indeed, online learning is replacing the formal or traditional educational system.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it creates a hybrid culture or standard hybrid educational module that undermines local languages, culture, and educational systems.⁵⁰ For instance, e-learning redefines terms like transgender, fundamentalism, and extremism that influence readers mind building an anti-Muslim narrative; likewise, the English language has replaced local languages, etc.⁵¹ This hybrid e-learning content could be problematic and hard to

⁴²Fadzlina Ahmadon, Hajar Izzati Mohd Ghazalli, and Hazlifah Mohd Rusli. "Studying during Pandemic: A Review of Issues from Online Learning in the Middle of COVID-19," *6th International Conference on Interactive Digital Media (ICIDM)*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICIDM51048.2020.9339644>, <https://www.sci-hub.box/10.1109/icidm51048.2020.9339644>

⁴³Stephan Downes, "E-Learning 2.0," *eLearn*, 2005 (10), (2005): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1145/1104966.1104968>.

⁴⁴S. Nadar, "A Study on Impact of Electronic Gadgets on Children's Behavior with Reference to Primary and Secondary School Children," *Concept: Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal* 3 (3), (2018): 209–215.

⁴⁵Nadar, "A Study on Impact of Electronic Gadgets on Children's Behavior with Reference to Primary and Secondary School Children."

⁴⁶Shields, *Globalization and International Education*, 2013.

⁴⁷Bernazzani, "What Is a Virtual Classroom?" *resources.owllabs.com*, n.d.; David Catterick, "Do the Philosophical Foundation of Online Learning Disadvantages Non-western Students?" (eds.), Andrea Edmundson (Hershey, PA: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2007), 116-129, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-301-2.ch007>

⁴⁸Patrick Dunn, and Alessandra Marinetti, "Beyond Localization: Effective Learning Strategies for Cross-Culture E-learning," In *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, (eds.), Andrea Edmundson, (Hershey, PA: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2007), 255-264, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-301-2.ch015>

⁴⁹Adrian Kirkwood, "E-Learning: You Don't Always Get What You Hope for," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 18 (2), (2009): 107–121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759390902992576>

⁵⁰Falih M. Alsaaty, Ella Carter, David Abrahams, Faleh Alshameri, "Traditional Versus Online Learning in Institutions of Higher Education: Minority Business Students' Perceptions."

⁵¹Dunn, and Alessandra Marinetti, "Beyond Localization: Effective Learning Strategies for Cross-Culture E-learning," In *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, 255-264.

resolve in the near future.⁵² Despite sharing common human rights, people also have different value systems that may clash with a single global educational system.⁵³ E-learning may find resistance in scenarios where it clashes with the belief system of a particular group, culture, or religion.⁵⁴

5. Impact of E-learning: A Global Perspective to Revolutionize Education

Throughout history, education has been widely recognized as a fundamental catalyst for developing nations and country. Indeed, e-learning has revolutionized education and opened a way to seek and explore new paradigms of knowledge and pedagogy to meet the demands of the modern world.⁵⁵ Due to advanced technology and unlimited economic resources, the developed countries (like America, China, Britain, the Middle East, and European countries, etc.) are already enjoying the benefits of e-learning, generating more profit and power worldwide. However, this also favors them to influence and transform a global perspective as per their own narrative, where any other perspective is considered orthodox, fundamentalist, or extremist. Thus, superpowers are in a position to use e-learning as an educational tool for their personal means.⁵⁶

Whereas, E-learning can prove to bring positive outcomes in the field of education for developing countries (like India, Bangladesh, Korea, etc.) in regard to economic prosperity, technological advances, and improved career opportunities. With little effort and investment, they can overcome the disadvantages of online learning and may reap its full benefits.⁵⁷

As mentioned earlier, underdeveloped countries (Nepal, Pakistan, Africa, etc.) that lack in digital literacy and technology accessibility can barely attain positive outcomes of e-learning.⁵⁸ They will be more sensitive to being the target victims of developed countries who will try to dominate them and use them for their personal means.⁵⁹

Consequently, e-learning can create a digital divide due to the aforementioned reasons, ranging from technological barriers, infrastructures, to cultural resistance.⁶⁰ This digital divide

⁵²Kirkwood, "E-Learning: You Don't Always Get What You Hope for," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 18 (2), (2009): 107–121.

⁵³Catterick, "Do the Philosophical Foundation of Online Learning Disadvantages Non-western Students?" In: A. Edmundson, ed. *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, 116-129.

⁵⁴Kirkwood, "E-Learning: You Don't Always Get What You Hope for," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 18 (2), (2009): 107–121.

⁵⁵Mushtaha, Saleh Abu Dabous, Imad Alsyouf, Amr Ahmed, and Naglaa Raafat Abdraboh, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning and Teaching at Engineering and Theoretical Colleges during the Pandemic."

⁵⁶Bolanle A Olaniran, "Challenges to Implement E-learning in Lesser Developed Countries," In *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, edited by Andrea Edmundson (Hershey, PA: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2007), 18-34, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-301-2.ch002>

⁵⁷Olaniran, "Challenges to Implement E-learning in Lesser Developed Countries," In *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, 18-34.

⁵⁸Christopher Pappas, "The Evolution of Education: From Chalkboards to Touch Screens," 13 Mar 2024, *eLearning Industry*, <https://elearningindustry.com/the-evolution-of-education-from-chalkboards-to-touch-screens> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2024].

⁵⁹Olaniran, "Challenges to Implement E-learning in Lesser Developed Countries," In *Globalized e-learning Cultural Challenges*, 18-34.

⁶⁰Irawan, Dwisona Dwisona, and Mardi Lestari, "Psychological Impacts of Students on Online Learning during the Pandemic COVID-19."

will further divide the world into a class system where affluent and developed countries could have more resources, technology, and power to shape the world as per their liking.⁶¹ Globalization would only be an altered name for westernization, where the future of the marginalized nations is doomed. There remains a possibility of a digital war in the near future.⁶² Digital war refers to “non-physical attacks on information, information processes, and information infrastructure that compromise, alter, damage, disrupt, or destroy information and/or delay, confuse, deceive, and disrupt information processing and decision making.”⁶³ Nonetheless, the future remains unpredictable until the concerns to provide equal resources (both educational and digital) in obtaining E-learning worldwide are properly addressed.⁶⁴

6. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, e-learning has transformed the concept of education and learning for everyone, be it learners, educators, or organizations at a global level.⁶⁵ Indeed, we cannot resort to the traditional mode of teaching and learning, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.⁶⁶ The entire world has been introduced to e-learning virtual classrooms and is well aware of its hidden benefits.⁶⁷ Every nation is making a step towards e-learning, depending on its resources.⁶⁸ However, there remains a challenge for policymakers, technology developers, and educators to seek an inclusive online learning experience for all learners, irrespective of their age groups and technological barriers.⁶⁹

The future of e-learning correlates with World Culture theory; therefore, if WCT is exposed to criticism, the same goes for the outcomes of e-learning. So, the chief motto of e-learning should be to avoid falling into the pit of prioritizing a single worldview of any particular nation, group, or religion.⁷⁰ Currently, humans are living in a world where living and learning are submerged into each other.⁷¹ Globalization as culture or any emerging global trend (particularly e-learning) will fail by default if it fails to integrate tenets of all cultures and nations effectively.⁷²

On the contrary, studies have shown that e-learning does not necessitate improvement in education by default.⁷³ It takes way more than merely introducing digital resources in the domain of education to improve its innate quality.⁷⁴ Traditional paradigms of knowledge cannot be

⁶¹Shields, *Globalization and International Education*, 59.

⁶²David S. Alberts, “Digital War,” In *Defensive Information Warfare* (NDU Press Book, 1996), <https://irp.fas.org/threat/cyber/docs/diw/ch4.html> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2024].

⁶³Alberts, “Digital War,” In *Defensive Information Warfare*.

⁶⁴Shields, *Globalization and International Education*.

⁶⁵Mushtaha, Saleh Abu Dabous, Imad Alsyouf, Amr Ahmed, and Naglaa Raafat Abdraboh, “The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning and Teaching at Engineering and Theoretical Colleges during the Pandemic.”

⁶⁶Luis M Dos Santos, “Online Learning after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Learners’ Motivations.”

⁶⁷David Bennet, “The Future of eLearning: Emerging Technologies and Trends to Watch.”

⁶⁸Shields, *Globalization and International Education*.

⁶⁹Ahmadon, Hajar Izzati Mohd Ghazalli, and Hazlifah Mohd Rusli, “Studying during Pandemic: A Review of Issues from Online Learning in the Middle of COVID-19.”

⁷⁰Takayama, “Provincialising the World Culture Theory Debate: Critical Insights from a Margin.”

⁷¹Stephan Downes, “E-Learning 2.0,” *eLearn*, 2005 (10), <https://doi.org/10.1145/1104966.1104968>.

⁷²Carney, Jeremy Rappleye, and Iveta Silova, “Between Faith and Science: World Culture Theory and Comparative Education,” *Comparative Education Review* 56 (3), (2012): 366–393, <https://doi.org/10.1086/665708>

⁷³Kirkwood, “E-Learning: You Don’t Always Get What You Hope for,” *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 18 (2), (2009): 107–121.

⁷⁴Falih M. Alsaaty, Ella Carter, David Abrahams, Faleh Alshameri, “Traditional Versus Online Learning in Institutions of Higher Education: Minority Business Students’ Perceptions.”

completely ignored in implementing e-learning.⁷⁵ Although the post-COVID-19 period shows how resourceful and beneficial e-learning could be amidst crisis⁷⁶; its future remains unpredictable and unknown.⁷⁷ So, a combination of both e-learning and face-to-face learning is required to reap the full benefits of learning.⁷⁸

Currently, e-learning promises positive outcomes and plans for the future that promote digital equity with respect to access to education for all. Yet, one cannot disregard the apparent digital divide worldwide due to disparities in digital and educational resources.⁷⁹ Until one outweighs the other, it is rather difficult to choose a stance as to whether e-learning is promoting digital equity or exacerbating the digital divide. Moreover, the adverse effect of AI and outcomes of e-learning are blurred at this stage and would only become transparent in the coming future, probably ten years from now.⁸⁰ Lastly, if e-learning is combined with the traditional method of teachings it would be more fruitful than relying on either of them alone.⁸¹ Perhaps the combination can help maintain a balance between digital equity and the digital divide by addressing systematic inequalities and prioritizing inclusive pedagogy.

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Shama Naz is the sole author of this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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⁷⁶Puruesh Chaudhary, "Learning in Crisis."

⁷⁷Downes, "E-Learning 2.0."

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