

## Extended Abstract

Education is a socializing agent which initiates children and young people into global society through teaching of norms and values. Education is a vehicle that carries culture and as such, culture is being renewed, modified, and proliferated through education. Education is seen as an important aspect of culture because it influences the shape of culture, which embodies society and technology. The advancement of technology in society and specifically, its infusion in the school curriculum gives shape to education. According to Tayyba, Nosheen, and Muhammad, (2020), information and communication technology at the workplace is designed to help workers and enhance their work productivity as well as increase collaboration among workers. Maximizing cultural heterogeneity in the workplace has become an important issue today to every education stakeholder for educational growth. However, a low level of insight in technology slows down work, unsmooth communication and makes anyone who is backward in the technological know-how in the advanced countries a novice. Increasing globalization requires more interactions among people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. According to Ugochinyere (2020), industrial attachments, study abroad, exchange programs, summer schools, conferences, and group projects have been incorporated into the diverse school curriculums. However, inability to communicate with colleagues at work, using technology could be frustrating and jeopardizing smooth technological interaction. Cabero (2005), Prendes (2010), Romero (2011), and Salinas (2008) pointed to factors like, political, economic, ideological, training, cultural, and psychological are responsible for the technological inadequacies at workplace. Pew, (2003), found that a large percentage of people choose not to go online, because they find the technology to be too frustrating and overwhelming.

The study examined the international perspectives of education in heterogeneous society. Specifically, it focused on exploring education in cultural heterogeneity of experiences and practices in relation to working and communicating with technology. This was with the view to enhancing unity in diversity, moving education forward globally in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Policy formulation and research activities are to meet demands of changing workplaces and to suggest solutions to the challenges posed by new technologies and ways of working. These challenges may be found among the professionals in many different fields, as well as more broadly in local and global communities, and solutions are sought to respond to the challenges presented. The importance attached to research as a tool for sustainable development necessitates that findings are objective. Presently, the push towards increased globalization requires more interaction between people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds and the effects of this call for adequate preparation of learners to fit into the interdependent world. This is necessary so that learners would understand and benefit from the increasing interconnectedness of the world and its sub-systems.

Unguided and unmanaged cultural differences in the workplace may generate an obstacle for achieving organizational goals and disempower individuals. Murrell and Sprinkle (1993), said that frustration with technology can lead to wasted time, changed mood, and affected interaction with colleagues. Cultural issues are vital and are projected to become more important in the future due to increasing differences in the population of the countries of the world, alongside the increasing drive towards globalization. From observations and personal experience, it was discovered that weakness in the knowledge of technology could make it hard moving at the same pace with colleagues who are vast in digital technology. When it comes to online engagements, due to lack of knowledge in machine operation, sending the right information to wrong platform as a result of lack of technical-know-how, spending hours on a laptop on a single issue which couldn't have taken longer time, and the likes. These experiences give set back to school activities and eventually downspin morale/emotion in communication. Thus, some people cannot use computers to reach their goal, low esteems to use computers, or avoidance of computers altogether. The unfortunate scenario in which one cannot flow with colleagues on the high speed of technology creates an inferiority complex, feeling 'not belong' and this technological backwardness could be borne out of 'cultural differences. It is therefore necessary to explore education in cultural heterogeneity of experiences and practices in relation to working and communicating with technology. Conclusion and recommendations were drawn which reflected a changing world and marketplace, with respect to cultural differences. The study reflected expected benefits in the workplace which included enhancing competitive edge, embracing unity in diversity, and increasing work productivity in the global education market.

**Keywords:** Communication, Cultural Heterogeneity, Education, Globalization, International, Technology

# Exploring Education in Cultural Heterogeneity of Experiences and Practices in Relation to Working and Communicating with Technology: An International Perspective



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## Methodology

This poster presents initial findings from a small-scale qualitative study, with a purposive sample of 10 participants from a university in the North West of England: 6 females and 4 males; 7 hold and 3 were currently pursuing a doctorate. Of the participants with a doctorate, 2 were postdoctoral research fellows, 3 lecturers, 1 a senior lecturer, 1 a reader, 1 a head of subject. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews, digitally recorded and transcribed (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The data were analysed inductively, using thematic analysis, where portions of data from the whole dataset (all participants' responses) have been summarised with a statement identifying what the 'unit of data' means or is 'about' (Saldaña, 2021). The initial findings are presented and discussed below.

## Findings

**Thematic analysis Method was used for research data.**

### Demographics

Ten participants constituted the research sample, selected from the school of education, and school of business studies. six were female while four were male. Three were lecturers with PhD, 3 were postdoctoral research fellows, 2 were readers and 2 were PhD students in view. All were academics.

### Theme 1: Comfort and Confidence with Technology

The themes that emerged from responses encompasses feeling at ease with their own devices, their ability to adapt to new technologies when needed, and their experiences in using technology for work and communication.

There was a feeling of increasing competence and comfort with the use of technology based on their exposure and expertise digital devices over the years. Their expression covers how comfortable they felt and their preference for using personal devices, such as laptops and mobile phones. For instance, Participant 1 said, "But when I must use the new laptop and new technologies... I feel nervous, sometimes it creates complexity, so I prefer my own". Participant 2, who stated that, "I'm comfortable adapting to different technologies and using them effectively to accomplish tasks,"

A recurrent theme among the participants was their capacity for technological adaptation. Participant 1 stated that at work "...I use track changes on a Word document we are working on, and she [boss at work] doesn't like that.... I must find another way to use it", another participant said, "I wouldn't say I'm very confident in the use of technology.... but yes, I don't if there's something I don't know, I don't shy away from asking my colleagues.

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### Theme 2: Online Meetings and Communication

The interview responses make it clear that online meetings are frequently held in professional contexts, with many people participating daily for talks, trainings, and collaborations linked to their jobs. For instance, Participant 1 said "Every time, all my meetings with my supervisor must be recorded there... If I have anything to do, it must be recorded on [online doctoral records]". Participant 2 said "I will have positive about working and socialising with people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds than my own... And diverse theories our experiences and broadens our perspectives for professionally and personally".

### Theme 3: Positive Experiences Working with Diverse Groups

Based on the participants' comments, it was evident that cultural diversity and inclusivity are significant workplace factors. Participant 2 said "I will have positive about working and socialising with people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds than my own" [sic]. It can be deduced from the observations that accepting differences in culture broadens one's horizons and cultivates empathy, compassion, and respect for others—all of which are necessary for solid interpersonal bonds. Participant 2 said "I – yeah – I like to work with different ethnic groups or different people from come from different culture". Also, regarding the potential language barrier Participant 7 said that they felt "very comfortable... I am very comfortable. I don't have to speak like the next person to me to be comfortable, comfortable and being confident".

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was found to be useful in the interpretation of the research findings, which emphasises three essential psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—can be used to interpret the thematic analysis of technological acceptance in academic institutions (Davis, 2022). Thus, willingness to learn and demonstrate the needed or acquired technological skills, adaptation to a new situation or environment and readiness to learn, to fit into the new educational system or demands can make one relevant and trendy in the field of academics.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the exploration of online meetings and communication revealed their integral role in professional settings for the participants. In particular, the finding revealed the importance of recording meetings and the opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration. The experiences shared regarding working with diverse groups emphasised the significance of **inclusivity, fostering empathy and expanding perspectives**. Drawing on the SDT, the findings suggest **competence and relatedness** are key drivers for technological acceptance and adaptation. Embracing these principles may enhance the relevance and effectiveness in evolving academic landscapes.