Globalization of Education

- Knight (2006) defined globalization as a process that increases "the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders, resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world." (p. 18).

What is Distance?

More than geographical separation

Transactional Distance

psychological and communications space

a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner.
Moore, 1997

Question:

How then do ODL providers ensure the psychological and communications space is "crossed"?

Put it simply, how do ODL providers ensure learners are engaged in their learning?
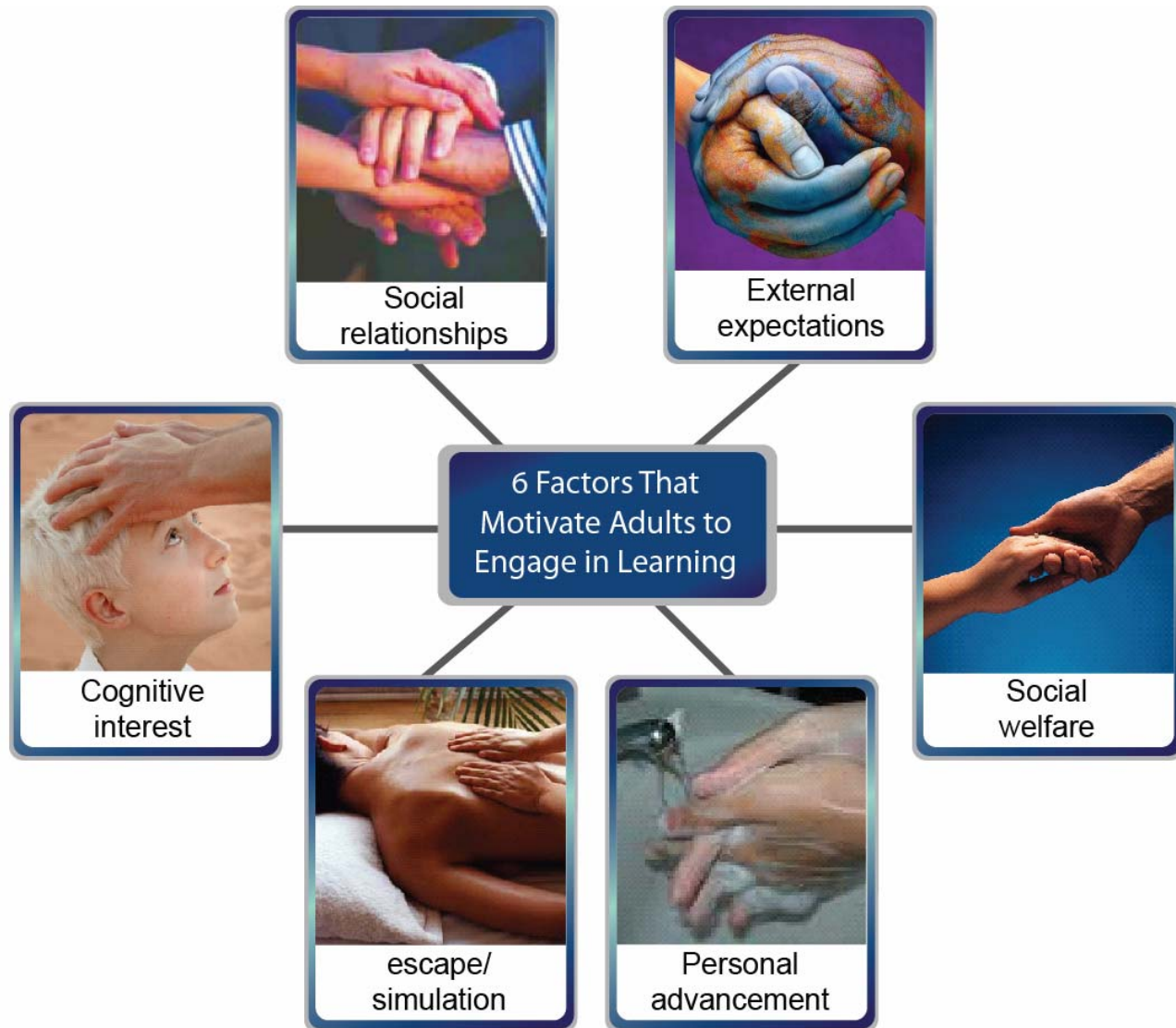
ICT! –The Challenge

with new information communication technologies

the challenge for instructional designers and teachers to get the mix right has greatly intensified

6 Factors That Motivate Adults to Engage in Learning

Social relationships

External expectations

Cognitive interest

6 Factors That Motivate Adults to Engage in Learning

Social welfare

escape/ simulation

Personal advancement

Student Engagement

- Student engagement is now considered **the new benchmark** in distance higher education
- They build knowledge through:
  - challenging
  - authentic
  - multi-disciplinary tasks,
  - collaboration,
  - shared understandings
  - creative application of what is learnt
- Such communities are said to value team work, diversity and multiple perspectives as well as possess team skills.

3Cs of Learning and Web 2.0
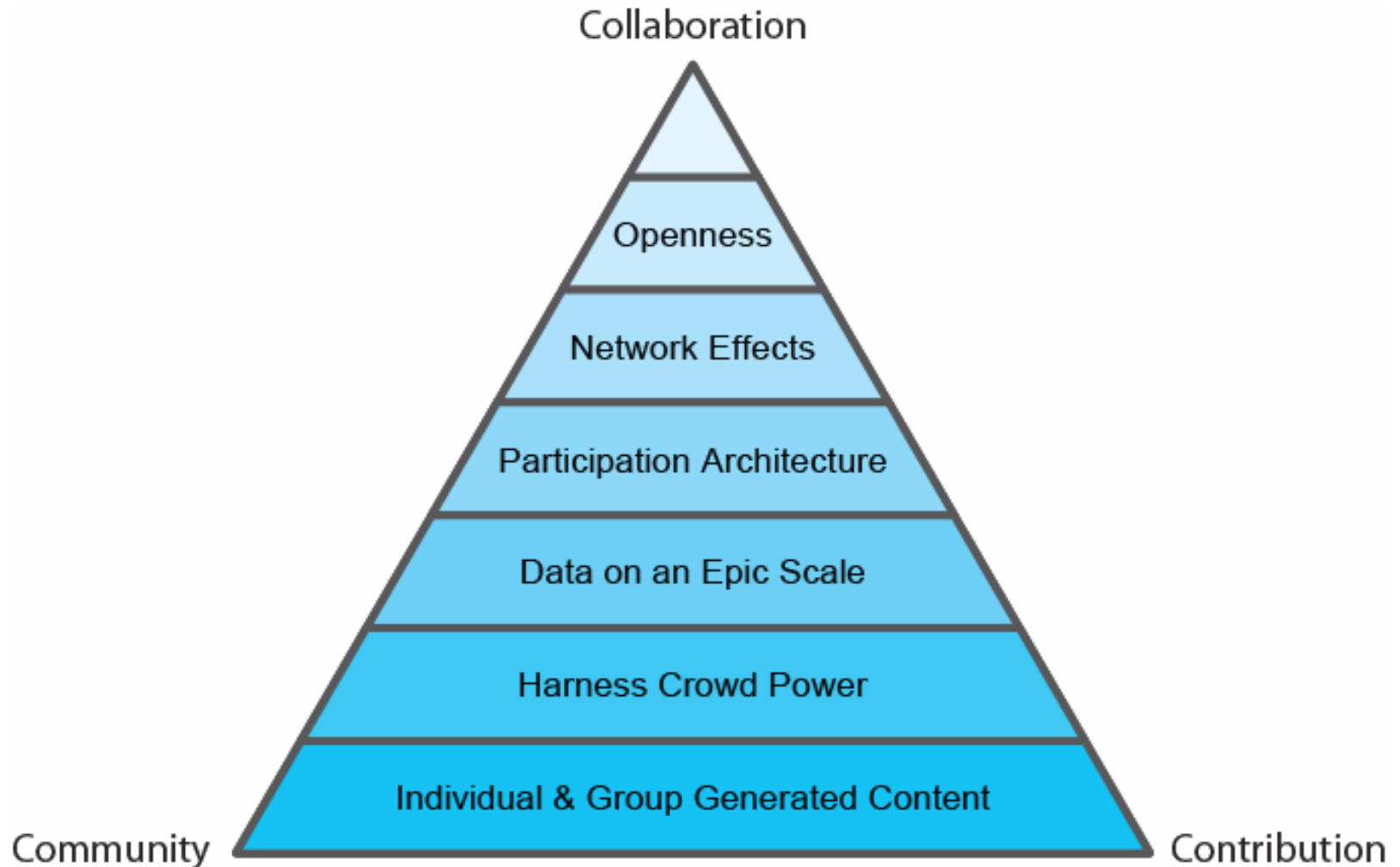
six key ideas of Web 2.0

Measuring Student Engagement

- Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used
- A well-established questionnaire widely used in the United States of America is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- The five dimensions of student engagement measured are:
  - The level of academic challenge
  - Student/faculty interaction
  - Active and collaborative learning
  - Enriching educational experiences
  - Supportive campus environment

Study on Learner Engagement

- Objective of Study:
  - The objective of this study was to describe and examine how learners in OUM's pioneer pure online cross-border program were engaged in learning based on the five dimensions outlined in the NSSE.

- Data Collection :
  - Feedback was obtained from 18 active learners using an online survey as well as through personal communication.

- For the purpose of this article, open-ended responses related to the following were used:
  - Learners' perception of the challenges they faced in pursuing the program
  - Their learning experience in the three courses

Finding 1: **Why Learners Chose to Enroll in the Program**

- 5 learners cited work-related reasons :
  - "is in line with my working now on the open and distance learning. In (my country) IDT expert is still limited. So this could be the opportunities for future on career (*sic*)";
  - "To further my knowledge and skills in IDT as to improve my present job/roles as ID/Trainer/Training Evaluation";
  - "I am in training and I would like to fully improve and better design our training and development program";
  - "Need knowledge and skills, in ID and technology as I work for a distance education institution in instructional materials design and development …"; and
  - "I choose this course to acquire IDT skills which are highly needed in my institution. Besides I need these skills for my future career. I am intending to make a career in the field of instructional design and technology".

Finding 1

- Another similar response was s/he wanted to learn and experience appropriate technologies that can reach out to and educate both urban and rural communities.

- Yet another learner was enticed by the fact that the program was fully online and that "the faculty members and students are global", and that s/he was excited by the courses offered.

Finding 2 : Level of Academic Challenge

- The findings showed there was optimal level of academic engagement.

- "I am sufficiently challenged because the course has pulled so much out of me and drove me to want to pursue more information on subject matters";

- "I had some background knowledge in IDT and felt it was going to be an easy work through with the MIDT program. However I am impressed with the challenge because I am learning a lot from this program. I am convinced that by the time I complete this program, I will sure be a real professional. I like the challenge because it makes me work harder".

Finding 2

- Some responses indicated some learners may have found the program more challenging than expected at some point or other. This is seen from the following comments:

- "The course does test me. But (it) is not to such an extent that I cannot cope. Planning, patience and perseverance helped me";

- "The courses in the program are all new to me in terms of knowledge and work experience. It is very challenging and needs extra effort to keep up. However, at the end, it is very satisfying";

- "I was at one point overwhelmed by the wealth of information. It was really hard for me to organize the information"; and

- "The course is a "little' too intensive for people who lead a busy life".

Finding 3 : **Learner/Facilitator Interaction**

- Excerpts from some learners' comments area as follows:
- "The feedback was very supportive and constructive";
- "The tasks were very meaningful yet simply designed… It is good that they were given to us in a variety of ways. The discussions were very thorough and peer feedback amazing";
- "Amazing experience. The facilitator (Dr. A) was pervasive, ubiquitous and omnipresent. I truly felt that he was next to me smiling, concentrating hard and frowning at what we posted and that is the ultimate compliment. It was like first grade class again where we worked hard to please him and felt down when we could not. Whether it was a simple task or a complex task, it sounded very easy when we saw it through his eyes"

Finding 3

- Some indications on the lack of feedback is however also present. It appears some learners were not satisfied with feedback to assignments and although this course was at a master's level, at least one learner felt the need for constant feedback from none other than the facilitators themselves. This is inferred from the following comments:

- "In two of the courses it (feedback) was not always given/provided and that left some queries unanswered. However, when it was provided it was superb!";

- " … I missed the insightful and informed opinions of (Dr. B) at quite some instances"; and

- "The only complaint I have is the delay in giving feedback to assignment submitted by students. This has made most students not to keep track with (*sic*) their performance".

Finding 4 : **Active and Collaborative Learning**

- Active participation and collaboration among fellow learners could be found in the forum discussions as well as the final assignment which required learners to use and link all three courses together into one task.

- The following excerpts provide evidence of such a practice:

- "I liked the forum discussions and interactions because it created a platform and environment of collaborative work which acted as a motivator and provided so much structure to knowledge and learning";

- "(Some course facilitators) decentralized some forums to some colleagues who had some experience in the subject matter and this caused many more students to feel very free in contributing which was a very good idea"; and

- "The discussions among the members was stupendous (*sic*). So much discussed among the peers… mostly the discussions came in thick and fast and took us on to the next level".

Finding 5 : **Enriching Educational Experiences**

- The learners' learning opportunities were augmented in many ways. The most eminent aspects were the integration and application of knowledge and skills learnt and the effective use of appropriate ICTs in communicating content, as may be gathered from the comments below:

- "(The) course equipped me with necessary approaches and tools to be effective in my job";

- "Revised my research skills and apply them to the design of educational technology. Excited to discover that traditional research methods and designs are cross transferrable to educational technology, with some benefits and limitations";

- "The constructivist activities challenge me to demonstrate internalization of content through applying knowledge to solve authentic work based challenges";

Finding 5

- "Course quite enlightening through compelling me to apply theory to my practice as an ID practitioner (*sic*)"; and

- "… this course too was very interesting especially with learning tools like YouTube. Watching a video about a course is more motivating that reading through a chunk of materials".

- "(The blog) provides access to articles, video presentations about various learning theories that guide instruction in an accessible & interesting manner";

- "This blog has everything that students of the MIDT program need to assist them with the course content. It is beautifully put together and user friendly"; and

- "The blog provided other integrated links that guided our navigation online as we browse through the numerous resources thus saving time".

Finding 5

- The novelty of this pioneer program which saw active participation of learners from 12 countries also provided learners a unique learning experience. The excitement and pure amazement among learners that such a program could be offered, giving cross-border education a new frontier and meaning was also present. The following remarks offer a snippet of the enriching educational experience created:

- "I was very excited every time a new topic was introduced. It was a whole new world of knowledge and experience to me. I enjoyed every second of it, even though I was having every tough time initially to understand what the subjects were all about and to allocate time for study. My overall feeling is: Every time I logon to the LMS, it is like entering a global classroom";

- "Believe or not, on last two days (of the first semester), all of us from 13 countries in the same moment, together work with computer with the same "web", the same project, same keep silent (*sic*) for 1 hour 30 minutes" (commenting on the final examinations that was held online at the same time across the world, albeit in different time zones).

Finding 6 : **Supportive Campus Environment**

- In this program, availability of academic support and close relationships were developed in the process of learning.   This was seen as a helpful factor that contributed towards learner engagement. Related comments are as follows:

- "There was a mix of different methods and facilitators and in the proper order too from what we know to what we needed to know… It was a wonderful experience. The way (Dr. A) held everything together was wonderful";

Finding 6

- "The facilitator give his best support with professional approach (*sic*), so I can follow the course step by step";

- "Dr. C provided the much needed support to the students. This was very helpful";

- "Superb! (Dr. A) had been very supportive and careful of everybody's needs in terms of task design and detailed, thorough and prompt feedback. The flexibility in assignment submission and his trust in us that we will do them is amazing. I really appreciate the way he chunked the tasks and scaffolded them! A rewarding learning experience indeed";

Finding 6

- "I couldn't think before that an online course could create such a powerful bondage between facilitators and learners. (The facilitators) were so amiable, supportive, encouraging and warm to all of us… And I just cannot forget my fellow learners who instantly stood by us in any problem. It seems we have formed a family with all our instructors and friends";

- "The peer support has been tremendous"; and

- "Thanks must go to all the hard working technical staff of Dr. B and the supporting professors of whom I have grown to know in a very special and pleasant way".

Conclusion

- Clearly, as ICT tools advance at an amazing speed with improved capacities and functions in reduced sizes, so too will new models of cross-border educational programs develop with greater capacities and functions, reducing transactional distances, in terms of geographical, time, psychological and communication spaces.

- A whole new meaning of cross-border higher education has emerged:
  - learners and facilitators from different countries are able to cross geographical borders right where they are and attend classes in cyberspace where time and space do not constrain teaching and learning opportunities.

- Surely this is the way forward for the promotion for greater access, equity and excellence in education.