Social and Cultural Factors that Influence the Uptake of E-learning: Case Studies in Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2010
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Siew Mee Barton
30 September 2010
Acknowledgements

I want to thank the many people who have made this PhD possible. Without them, I would likely have never have started and would certainly have never have completed my PhD. I am indebted to them all for their support and goodwill. There as so many people that I need to thank and show my appreciation to that I fear that I may have failed to mention some who should have been named. Where that is the case, I ask them to please forgive me.

I would wish to express my great appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Brian Corbitt, for his numerous invaluable comments, his constructive criticism, support and unfailing encouragement. Much thanks is also due to my co-supervisor, Dr Lemai Nguyen, for her encouragement and support to start this program and then to keep going. Without Dr Nguyen’s confidence in me completing this project, I would likely not have continued. It has been a great privilege, and a humbling experience, for me to be supervised and taught by such remarkable scholars. Although the conclusions, and the undoubted errors, in this thesis are mine, I gratefully acknowledge the freedom and encouragement that Professor Corbitt extended to me to find my own way and the steady help that he has extended in keeping me on that path.

I also wish to record my appreciation to the many people—whom it is not appropriate to name here but are very much remembered—that I interviewed for this study, many of whom were extremely generous in giving of both their valuable time and themselves to share their experiences and insights with me. Without their help, this thesis would literally have not been possible.

I also wish to thank Ms Theresa Chia who lent me her well-trained eyes to carefully read my thesis. Similarly, I am especially thankful to Dr Lisa Lines from Elite
Editing & Tutoring who graciously and expertly edited my thesis (editorial intervention was restricted to Standards D and E of the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*). They saved me from myself on numerous occasions and helped me to express what I was trying to say with clarity that my tangled prose often struggled to find.

I also owe a special debt of gratitude to my mentor and friend, Professor Curtis Bonk, who has supported and encouraged me over the many years of writing-up my thesis and has never stopped believing in me.

My deepest thanks are felt to my family and to my parents, especially my mum whose emotional support and endless confidence in me throughout the course of my life and especially throughout this PhD journey has been a constant source of substance.

To my special darling daughter, Hannah, I owe my utmost gratitude for the patience and pain she bore during the years spent away from her working late in the office or locked away in the study. Thank you Hannah for having faith in me and for regularly encouraging me with words like these: ‘when this is over you’ll have deserved it all. Do not compare yourself with others and doubt yourself—trust me, I know, I’m a hormonal teenager. It’s tough, every bit of it, but keep going regardless of the pain—because of it you are you and have grown to be even more you’.

Last but not least, I owe my deepest thanks to my husband, Greg, for his love, enduring inspiration, understanding and belief in me throughout this challenging time. In this long undertaking, as in all of our adventures together, I have been the beneficiary of Greg’s generosity, intellect and patience.
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List of Definitions and Explanation of Terms

ah beng: ‘a country bumpkin’—used to describe perceived lack of cultural refinement on the part of junior staff or students

akhlak: Ethics

Bağlantı kurmak: Turkish term for personal connections or networks

Bamboo clumps: refers to a small, close group or cluster of other bamboo plants growing together and spread out. In Chinese it refers to symbol of long life.

Drinking cai: refers to relaxed socialising whilst drinking tea in Turkey

e-learning: the use of IT to deliver course material and enhance the learning experience. The term may have different meanings to different people, and it is difficult to find an agreed definition. E-learning may mean a fully online course. For others, it may mean the use of a course management system. E-learning is also known as online learning

fiqh: is Islamic jurisprudence

Guanxi: is a specifically Chinese term for networking and related strong social capital bonds

Hadith: is a prophetic tradition

Karma: is widely used to denote the way a person’s actions determine their destiny—‘as you sow so shall you reap’
Kiasu: the Hokkien term kiasu literally means ‘afraid of losing’ and is widely used in South East Asia to describe self-centred competitive instrumentalist behaviour

kitab kuning: ‘yellow (aged) books’ refers to classical Islamic texts on religious principles and related teachings used in the pesantren curriculum

kyai: religious scholars (ulama) in Indonesia who are heads of pesantren

lian: refers to the confidence of society in a person’s moral character

Losing face: describes what happens when an individual either through their own action or those of people closely related to them fails to meet the essential requirements placed upon them by virtue of social position that they occupies

Madrasah: an Islamic school

Madrasah Aliah: refers to secular state school program run inside a pesantren

Madrasah Diniyah: refers to religious studies school program run inside a pesantren

Mianzi: refers to the perception of level of prestige

mien-tzu: stands for the achieved that is gained through getting on in life, through success and achievement

migrant coolies refers to manual labourers from Asia, particularly from China and India

miskin: Malay/Indonesian for being impoverished

nahw and saraf: is Arabic grammar

Pesantren: a residential madrasah in Indonesia
**Sillaturrahim:** an Arabic word referring to the maintenance of social networks and social capital through visitation and conversation

**Tafsir:** is Qur’anic exegesis

**Tasawuf:** is Islamic mysticism

**usûl al-fiqh:** is Islamic legal theory

**warnet** (warung internet): Indonesian term for an ‘internet café’
# List of Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABA</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMIK</td>
<td>Akademi Mangemen Informatika and Komputer</td>
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<tr>
<td>APJII</td>
<td>Asosiasi Penyedia Jasa Internet Indonesia</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ATK</td>
<td>Akademi Teknik Komputer</td>
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<td>BDD</td>
<td>Bridging the Digital Divide</td>
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<td>BINUS</td>
<td>Bina Nusantara University</td>
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<td>BLE</td>
<td>blended learning environment</td>
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<td>BLA</td>
<td>blended learning approach</td>
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<td>B2B</td>
<td>business to business</td>
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<td>CAI</td>
<td>computer assisted instruction</td>
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<td>CAL</td>
<td>computer assisted learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>ccTLD</td>
<td>Country Code Top Level Domain</td>
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<td>CFL</td>
<td>Computer-facilitated Learning</td>
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<td>COP</td>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
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<td>CPED</td>
<td>KDU Centre for Professional Education and Development</td>
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<td>CSPP</td>
<td>Computer Systems Policy Project</td>
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<td>DELTT</td>
<td>Distance English Language Teacher Training</td>
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<td>EAECS</td>
<td>Academy of Eskisehir, Economics and Commercial Sciences</td>
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<td>EdNA</td>
<td>Education Network Australia</td>
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<td>EIU</td>
<td>Economist Intelligence Unit</td>
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<td>EO</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial Orientation</td>
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<td>ICIP</td>
<td>International Centre for Islam and Pluralism</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<td>IDNIC</td>
<td>Indonesia Network Information Center</td>
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<td>IIX</td>
<td>Indonesian Internet Exchange</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Instant Messaging</td>
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<td>IPv6</td>
<td>Next-generation Internet Protocol</td>
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<td>ISP</td>
<td>Internet Service Provider</td>
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<td>ITC4D</td>
<td>ICT for Development</td>
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<td>JARING</td>
<td>Joint Advanced Integrated Networking</td>
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<td>KDU</td>
<td>KDU College</td>
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<td>KMDC</td>
<td>KDU Management Development Centre</td>
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<td>LMS</td>
<td>Learning Management Systems</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in Australia</td>
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<td>MCL</td>
<td>BINUS’ Multi Channel Learning</td>
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<td>METEOR</td>
<td>Multimedia Technology Enhancement Operations</td>
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<td>MNE</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MSC</td>
<td>Multimedia Super Corridor</td>
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<td>MyGfL</td>
<td>Malaysia Grid for Learning</td>
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<td>MyICMS 886 Strategy</td>
<td>Malaysian Information, Communication and Multimedia Services 886 Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Agency</td>
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<td>NTU</td>
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<td>NU</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>OEF</td>
<td>Open Education Faculty</td>
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<td>PDI</td>
<td>Power Distance Index</td>
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<td>PPIM</td>
<td>Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat</td>
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<td>Work-based Learning</td>
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<td>YOK</td>
<td>Council of Higher Education</td>
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Abstract

This is a study of the influence of social and cultural factors on the adoption of e-learning in higher education in Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia. Particular attention in each case was given to factors relating to social capital, attitudes and patterns of behavior in leadership, entrepreneurialism, and teaching and to broader sets of attitudes that shape general outlook. A case study approach was chosen in order to enable a richer and more finely grained analysis of the issues. The case studies are based on semi-structured interviews and observations, conducted over several years.

This research shows that previously known factors that affect the adoption of e-learning in higher education, namely policy, guidelines, paradigm shifts and pedagogical change are also significant in the contexts of each of the case studies in this research. However, this research shows that the adoption and uptake of e-learning technologies is also strongly shaped by cultural and social factors but not in ways that might first have been expected. It was not so much that there are specific cultural and social factors relating to specific e-learning technologies. Rather, it is that the degree of uptake of these technologies depends on teachers being encouraged, guided and assisted to innovate and adopt new technology. This can only occur when there is sufficient social capital, mediated through appropriate social networks, to build trust, overcome objections and anxieties and generally motivate staff to engage in challenging, time-consuming initiatives in e-learning that generally do not promise immediate rewards.

Certain culture-based issues emerged as important. These included staff mentoring, clustering through ‘bamboo networking’, trust-building and overcoming fear of ‘losing face’ (kiasu), facilitating women to take the initiative and lead, developing sensitivity to cultural differences, encouraging entrepreneurialism and rewarding pioneering endeavours were present in varying degrees across all five case studies.
They were subtle variations on a central theme which was clearly that of the impact of social capital as a driver. It was social capital played out through personal relationships and social networks that most strongly influenced individual teachers and teachers to be sufficiently motivated to add to an already busy schedule by taking on the additional burdens of pioneering e-learning technology and it was those social relationships that provided guidance and ongoing encouragement. As a consequence of these findings, the thesis offers a social capital model of e-learning adoption which suggests that the adoption and uptake of e-learning technologies is strongly shaped by cultural and social factors.
Publications from Thesis

Barton, SM, Corbitt, B & Nguyen, L 2009, Academic social networks affecting the adoption of e-learning in Turkey’, *A special passage through Asia e-learning*, pp. 131–145, Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, Charlottesville, VA.


Barton, SM & Fermelis, J 2007, Teaching effectively for cultural diversity at Deakin: An Online Professional Development Module, Deakin Teaching and Learning Conference 2007, p. 1, Deakin University, Burwood, VIC.


Preface

Like many PhD candidates, I embarked on my research with clear views on what I wanted to research and how I would set about doing it. These views were shaped by professional and personal experiences over the course of my career.

When I commenced my research, I had been working for 12 years as a blended-learning educational designer and developer at Deakin University, a newer Australian university with a strong commitment to distance education. I spent innumerable hours designing course, discussing education policy, debating the merits of various technologies and platforms and working alongside teaching staff gently encouraging them to embrace e-learning. I envisaged my doctoral research revolving around these matters and drilling deep into the policy, pedagogical and technical issues influencing university teachers in their uptake of e-learning.

At the same time, I was very mindful of the influence of culture on teaching and learning styles. I had grown up in an acculturated Chinese family in the far north of peninsula Malaysia and had moved to Australia in 1980, when not yet 20 years old, to complete my education. Contrary to my expectations and intentions, I fell in love with a local Australian engineering student and ended up marrying and settling down in Melbourne. Fortunately for me, my husband left engineering and moved into Asian studies, eventually becoming a professor of Asian politics. Our household and circle of friends, colleagues and acquaintances have always been extremely multicultural, as has been my workplace. These personal environmental factors made me very mindful of the influence of cultural factors on teaching, learning and general teacher behaviour. Consequently, when I first began to think about my research project, I was convinced those cultural factors in the uptake of e-learning were very much under-researched and that this should be at the centre of my thesis research.
I was well accustomed to joining my husband on numerous field and work trips to Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and it seemed sensible that this familiar region should be the location for my case studies.

In January 2005, my husband and I commenced a year of sabbatical and long service leave in Indonesia, Singapore and Turkey. I had already commenced some preliminary fieldwork in Malaysia and Singapore. I had not initially reckoned on adding Turkey to my list of field locations but was pleasantly surprised to discover just how advanced Turkey was in e-learning and how open teaching colleagues were to my inquiries.

During the course of our fieldwork in 2005, my husband was offered a position in the United States and in January 2006, we relocated to Hawaii. I worked at the University of Hawaii in 2006 and early 2007 as an Academic and Educational Designer. When my husband was made an unexpected offer to move back to Melbourne, I was offered a teaching position at Deakin University teaching in the Business Faculty.

Over the past three years, I have coordinated and taught in a large highly diverse group of students and diverse group of teaching staff. This experience being on the ‘other side’ of the professional staff/teaching staff divide has brought home to me a greater awareness of the time pressures on teaching staff and the many reasons that they have for not taking on e-learning development.

At the same time, once I had commenced my fieldwork interviews in late 2004, and as I continued my data collection over the following five years, I discovered that the most interesting issues that repeatedly arose in my field discussion had to do with motivation, encouragement, mentoring, social capital and social networks. It was not that policy, pedagogy and technology was not important, it was just that these matters seemed much less influential than I had previously assumed and that culturally mediated social capital was much more influential than I had first thought.
The upshot of all of this is that research for this thesis evolved, developed and moved in a somewhat different direction to my best-laid plans at the outset. In time, I did not come to understand that this was a problem nor was it particularly unusual.

As I learnt more about social-science research and the value of an ethnographic approach, I came to understand that not only was serendipity a respectable friend it was also a tremendously valuable aid to research.

Serendipity. Look for something, find something else, and realize that what you've found is more suited to your needs than what you thought you were looking for.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Scope of this Research

This thesis is a case study-based qualitative study of the influence of social and cultural factors on attitudes and behaviour of tertiary education teachers in their adoption of e-learning technologies. It examines both the experiences and outlooks of the subjects interviewed and their broader professional community within their fields of influence.

The case studies are drawn from several tertiary institutions with a strong commitment to blended learning in each of four different Asian countries with a set of concluding case studies drawn from one university with a long history of blended learning in Australia. Three of the four Asian nations are in South East Asia and are contiguous with each other: Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. These three countries share much in common, including common languages, and overlapping histories. In each of these three countries, ethnic Chinese professionals play a key role in education but work alongside colleagues from other ethnic communities. In each nation, there is considerable ethnic and cultural diversity, and this has considerable influence on the teaching and learning environment. Given that many common features and common cultural elements, it might be thought that there would be relatively little variance between these three South East Asian nations. However, the findings of the case studies suggest that there are important differences and that collectively these differences give each national context a unique signature.

These three contiguous South East Asian nations were chosen because they are actively engaged in the adoption of e-learning and, whilst broadly comparable at a number of levels, have contrasting circumstances that make for interesting comparisons. Other factors shaping this choice included language skills, cultural familiarity and other personal factors, as the researcher grew up in Malaysia and had spent extensive periods in Singapore and Indonesia. The opportunity to spend a
prolonged period in Turkey, subsequent engagement with the e-learning fraternity there, and the discovery of many interesting parallels with South East Asia, led to the inclusion of Turkey in the comparative study.

Turkey is often overlooked in discussions of Asia, lying as it does midway between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Nevertheless, there is within Turkey a sense of connection with Asia and culturally Turks displayed many qualities that support this sense of connection with Asia. There has been relatively little direct contact between Turkey and South East Asia but there are some common elements such as a cultural expression of Islamic identity and practice that is strongly shaped by Persian thought as is marked by strong elements of Sufism and the general commitment to a live-and-let-live tolerance. During the Ottoman period, Anatolia, the heart of modern Turkey, was home to numerous highly plural urban populations. Much of that pluralism and diversity disappeared in the first decades of the twentieth century as the Ottoman Empire concluded and millions of people across the great cities of the Middle East were forced to migrate. Notwithstanding this profound change, Turkish society continues to be marked by pluralism even if it appears remarkably homogeneous in religious and linguistic terms. This means that Turkish educators are working in an environment that is much more diverse than might first be thought and that shares much in common with the rapidly urbanising and modernising societies of South East Asia. Significantly, for a number of reasons, not the least of them being a challenging topography and a general commitment to modernise, Turkey is home to some of the most ambitious e-learning programs found anywhere in the world.

The case studies from these four nations are treated in four separate chapters. The fifth chapter (case study) deals with the stories from Deakin University in Australia, the researcher’s home institution. The stories in this Australian chapter stand apart from those in the preceding four chapters for a number of reasons. The Australian chapter serves as a summary chapter for the entire study dealing as it does with a highly diverse cultural environment with teachers and students drawn from a variety of Asian and non-Asian backgrounds.
The case studies are based upon semi-structured interviews and observations over several years. The case study approach was chosen in order to enable a richer and more finely grained analysis of the issues. Much of the case study data is presented in the form of a series of vignettes from the case studies. This is done in order to enable detailed and to capture texture. Nevertheless, the volume of data collected far exceeds the space available here to present all of it as a series of vignettes. Instead, the concluding sections of each chapter draw out the findings from across the case studies in each nation, synthetically interpreting and extrapolating from this material to produce approximate assessments of the relative weightings of various cultural, attitudinal and behavioural factors germane to each national environment. These findings are presented in the same matrix for each of the five chapters in order to allow broad comparisons. Needless to say, they are primarily reporting the findings of the specific case studies rather than attempting to produce comprehensive national surveys.

This study draws upon a wide range of research and theoretical writings, including Hofstede, (2005), Hampden-Turner (2000) and Trompenaars (1998), about cultural factors, specifically those relating to teaching and learning and of particular relevance in a multicultural blended learning environment (BLE). At the same time, it seeks to avoid narrow and simplistic national stereotypes based on an essentialist reading of national cultures. In this respect, the study takes an ethnographic approach that presents observations from particular settings and case studies and seeks to reflect upon them in a way that allows a degree of generalisation in comparison without claiming to have captured comprehensive and universal findings about regional or national behaviour.

The particular concern of each of the case studies is to understand how individual tertiary teachers make choices about using e-learning and blended learning technology to innovate and generally improve the teaching learning experience for the students. Consequently, the case studies are particularly concerned with pioneering educators who have struggled with various obstacles and setbacks over many years to develop the delivery of blended learning in a way that they feel best suits their environment. Therefore, the case studies are concerned with a broad range
of factors that motivate and shape the adoption and adaptation of blended learning techniques and technology, and also the reproduction of these techniques and uses of technology by other educators in response to the work of pioneers.

This study is not primarily concerned with matters of technology or pedagogy per se but rather with innovative individuals working in e-learning and BLEs where tertiary education is rapidly expanding and resources are constrained. The fifth case study chapter dealing with educators from Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, draws together the observations from the earlier chapters and seeks to make sense of what they mean for teachers working outside of Asia but who are nevertheless teaching in a classroom environment that is substantially shaped by Asian cultural factors.

Being based on specific case studies, this research attempts to find a way of understanding and describing relevant social and cultural factors shaping the uptake of e-learning technologies and methods in Asian environments in a way that avoids simplistic essentialising but nevertheless draws a broad picture that enables comparison between national environments. It seeks to identify cultural signatures—distinct groupings of cultural factors where the relative weighting of individual factors collectively represent a distinctive signature in the manner of a fingerprint or, more accurately, of a DNA gene sequence. Whilst the limits of this study mean that such signatures cannot be regarded as absolutely and comprehensively indicative of their national environments, they nevertheless serve as a useful starting point to understanding the influence on culture on the behaviour of teachers particularly when it comes to pioneering in the field of e-learning and blended learning.

To this end, particular attention is given to factors relating to social capital, attitudes and patterns of behaviour in leadership, entrepreneurialism, and teaching and to broader sets of attitudes that shape general outlook. This is performed with the expectation that whilst each of the national environments will display many commonalities, the relative weightings of individual factors will vary in significant ways such that certain overarching concerns relevant to each national environment can be identified.
1.2 Research Question

This thesis argues that social and cultural factors have a significant impact on the adoption of e-learning technologies. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question:

- Why, and in what ways, do social and cultural factors influence the uptake of e-learning by teachers?

This will be answered in case studies undertaken in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia. As prior research suggests that the motivation and encouragement of teaching staff represent key issues in determining the extent and degree of success in adoption of e-learning technology, particular attention is given to the ways in which cultural and social factors bear on these issues. These four Asian nations were chosen for a variety of factors outlined in the previous section, not the least being the similarity of their circumstances and common cultural factors with respect to the adoption of e-learning. The researcher drew directly on her long experience with the development of e-learning in the culturally diverse context of Australian universities to analyse the findings from the Asian case studies and cross-check them with the Australian experience in order to understand the influence of cultural and social factors on the individual and collective experiences of teachers.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis contains nine chapters in total. The following chapters are summarised briefly in this section.

**Chapter Two:** One persistent problem in assessing the uptake of e-learning in universities is that there are very few studies about how cultural and social factors influence the adoption of e-learning. This chapter reviews the current state of critical literature in this area.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter discusses the study’s methodological framework and research design. In it, the content and layout of the interviews are described together with the analysis of the interviews and observation process.
Chapter Four: This chapter discusses the Malaysian case study. One of the dominant themes that emerge from the Malaysian case study is that of the importance of social networks and mentor relations in encouraging junior teachers to move forward in the field. A second and related theme that emerges in is the key role played by female teachers in pioneering innovative new approaches to e-learning. This chapter contains four case studies that explicitly focus on female teachers. The decision to have such a strong focus on female teachers was made based on the findings of background research indicating that pioneering female teachers represent an important feature of e-learning development in Malaysia.

Chapter Five: This chapter examines Indonesia and pays particular attention to traditional Islamic schools in Indonesia known in Java as a pesantren but elsewhere in the Muslim world as a madrasah. This approach was chosen because the contrast between the largely rural, largely poor, and overwhelmingly conservative nature of these traditional religious institutions and the technology of e-learning with its great capacity to produce and enhance new social networks and new opportunities for learning is very striking.

Chapter Six: This chapter examines e-learning in Turkey. As with the previous two chapters, the focus hinges on the experience of individual educators. The teachers in this case study are working in tertiary education environment in which the importance of distance learning, and more recently of e-learning, is well understood and is institutionally supported. Here, the focus is on how individual teachers decide to undertake new initiatives and form decisions about what approaches to take in the area of e-learning. One of the key findings is of the importance of strong social networks, a finding that parallels that of the Malaysian case study. However, the particular element that stands out in the Turkey case study is the importance of building trust. It documents the considerable investment made by teachers in building relations with their colleagues and collaborators in order to secure the advancement of new projects and ensure that they are well received and supported.
Chapter Seven: This chapter is a case study of e-learning in Singapore. What is interesting about this case study is that in many respects it represents a mirror image of the Turkish case study. Singapore is a relatively small and wealthy nation that arguably has no pressing need for e-learning or for distance education but nevertheless is drawn to it for reasons of prestige and a desire to be seen at the cutting edge of information technology development and application. In Singapore, trust and social capital also very important elements but they often act in a somewhat reverse fashion to that which occurs in Turkey. One of the key cultural traits seen in the Singapore environment is risk aversion and the tendency not to try new things out of an anxiety about the failure. Specifically, it is generally understood in Singapore to revolve around concerns about loss of face. The Hokkien term kiasu is commonly referred to as summing up this dynamic and this term is often translated into English as ‘fear of losing’.

Chapter Eight: This chapter represents the final case study and focuses on the Australian tertiary environment. In many respects, this represents the most complex case study as although there is a dominant cultural background to Australian society and Australian tertiary institutions the individuals involved in the case studies come from a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds in a pattern that is increasingly typical of modern professional groups in Australia.

This Australian case study deals with a complex cultural environment that can be described as representing a blending of cultures. Teachers working in this environment are challenged to harness the flexible potential of e-learning technologies in an innovative approach of mixing and matching various elements: an approach that can be called blended learning.

Chapter Nine: This chapter reviews key findings from each of the five case studies and identifies similarities and differences before drawing out implications for understanding the significance of social networks and social capital.
Chapter Two: Social and Cultural Factors that Influence the Uptake of E-learning: A Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores pertinent current research and theoretical literature to inform the approach taken in this study and to provide an interpretative lens with which to analyse data collected in the study. It will review existing scholarly literature beginning with an understanding of what factors influence the uptake of technology.

This thesis focuses on understanding the factors that have influenced the adoption e-learning technology. There is significant research in the area of e-learning and the chapter will begin by reviewing what is understood about how e-learning evolves out of the practice of teaching and learning. The later part of this chapter is concerned with reviewing what is understood about the sort of cultural and social factors that are likely to influence the uptake of e-learning.

Technology affects challenges and enables teaching and learning as well as related organisational structures. The dramatic rise in the use of new technologies is viewed by many researchers (Bates 1997; Collis & Moonen 2001) as having a critical impact on the nature of education and the nature of universities. Berge (1998) highlights the need for change and calls for the ‘serious re-engineering’ of higher education structures and policies, or higher education working hard at the wrong thing, like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic (Berge 1998, p. 6). With the advent of any new paradigm of information dissemination, experts predict that new disruptive technology will lead to significant impact on the learning (Sonwalkar 2008). Sonwalkar also argues that every generation of technology has made some impact but most often the promise is oversold and educational impacts are rather modest.
Bates (1997a) recommends 12 organisational strategies to re-organise, re-structure or re-engineer the university to ensure that universities achieve cost effectiveness from the application of new technologies: having vision for teaching and learning; funding re-allocation; strategies for inclusion; technology infrastructure; people infrastructure; student computer access; new technology models; faculty agreement and training; project management; new organisational structures; collaboration and consortia; and need for systematic research and evaluation into the use of new technologies.

E-learning technology, as the term is commonly used, is not a product per se, but an overall integration of theory and practice of design, develop, utilise, manage, and evaluate instructions. E-learning technology incorporates the integration of computer technology, computer assisted instruction (CAI), or computer assisted learning (CAL), and the development of mainframe systems. The development of e-learning only commenced once suitably programmable and affordable computers became widely available in the 1970s and 1980s.

The wide-scale deployment of practicable mainframe computers began around 1960 with ‘third generation’ computers using integrated circuits. But it was only in the late 1970s that the success of personal microcomputers had encouraged the development of tools and applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, graphics packages, database management, and telecommunications packages. The production of hypertext and multimedia education programs began in the mid-1980s. During the early 1990s, web technology emerged with the establishment of local and wide area networks that encouraged the development of more new tools for connecting students and faculty and the access of online material via the use of web technology.

2.2 E-learning as a Technology

According to Boezerooij (2006), the term e-learning can have different meanings to different people, and it is difficult to find a shared definition. Definitions range from the simple use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education
and training (also known as Technology Enhanced Learning [TEL]) to a focus on educational delivery and support for higher education processes, such as the following from Oblinger and Hawkins (2005, p. 15): ‘e-Learning may mean a fully online course. For others, it may mean the use of a course management system’.

Jenkins and Hanson (2003) argue that e-learning is best defined as ‘learning facilitated and supported through the utilisation of ICTs.’ In other words e-learning involves the use of ICTs (for example, internet, computer, telephone, radio, video, and others) to support teaching and learning activities. The development of e-learning accelerated during the 1990s and by the beginning of the new century a growing number of public and private universities around the world were employing e-learning methodologies either to offer teacher programs via distance or to support their full-time on-campus learners (OUM 2004).

Following the 1993 introduction of Mosaic, the first popular graphical web browser, e-learning began to be increasingly conflated with online learning. An e-learning system can be developed in various ways, which depend on the requirements of the higher education institution. E-learning in some higher education institutions is largely limited to the delivery of course material through the web. Some institutions have implemented an integral framework for their e-learning system to be used for regular students and distance students. In most modern universities students can now use technology to receive class notes or information, take assessments, and communicate whenever and wherever the need arises.

The definition of e-learning employed in this study is a relatively simple one: e-learning is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enable and enhance teaching and learning. This follows the definition used by Stockley (2006, p. 1):

The delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means. E-learning involves the use of a computer or electronic device (e.g. a mobile phone) in some way to provide training, educational or learning material. E-learning can involve a greater variety of equipment than online training or education, for as the name implies, ‘online’ involves using the internet or an intranet. CD-ROM and DVD can be used to provide learning materials.
Many other scholars (Clark & Mayer 2003; Rosenberg 2001; Selwyn & Gorard 2003, p. 170), take the same approach, arguing that inherent to e-learning, or electronic learning, is the association of learning with the application of new technologies, namely the internet, intranet, e-mail, satellite broadcasts or audio/video tape. It occurs in a range of learning situations such as web-based learning, computer-based learning and virtual/online classrooms.

Much has been written about the importance of e-learning in promoting the use of information technology (IT) in higher education institutions learning, teaching and preparing teachers and students for the new technologies that they will face in their jobs and in the job market respectively. Bates (2000), the former Director of Distance Education and Technology in the University of British Columbia, Canada, has written extensively on the management of teaching and learning technology in higher education. Bates is less concerned with defining e-learning narrowly than with understanding the range of situations in which it might arise (Bates 2000, p. 22).

Figure 2.1 sets out the e-learning continuum that Bates described. The continuum is based on the location aspects of learning. At one end is ‘no online learning’, in the case of face-to-face classroom teaching, and at the opposite end is ‘fully online learning’, in the case of distance education. In between these opposites, Bates considers a range of mixed mode, reduced face-to-face learning approaches that are useful in understanding what e-learning has to offer.

![E-learning Continuum Diagram](image-url)
In the face-to-face classroom teaching, class discussions promote reflection and further exploration of issues and topics. Lecturers use specific questioning techniques that draw out students’ opinions, prior knowledge and experience upon which they construct new knowledge. Face-to-face teaching is more akin to a ‘traditional classroom’ that tends to encourage passive learning, ignores the students individual needs, and undervalues the development of problem solving and other higher order intellectual skills (Hannum & Briggs 1982).

Cuban (1993) describes face-to-face instruction as having the following characteristics: teacher talk exceeding student talk; instruction occurring frequently with the whole class; and small group or individual instruction occurring less often. The use of class time is largely determined by the teacher, a teacher dependent on the textbook to guide curricular and instructional decision-making, and classroom furniture often being arranged into rows of desks or chairs facing a chalkboard. Cuban (1993) explains that traditional classrooms are space-bound where learning occurs within a physical boundary for example, a classroom, a school, but may also extend to field trips, and various other locations. Traditional approaches to learning have lately been questioned in their ability to provide the learner with a ‘rich’ rather than a ‘minimalist’ environment, and with the ‘authentic’ experiences of learning that are meaningful to the learner in some intrinsic manner (Perkins 1996).

Barth (1990) argues that it is because face-to-face teaching had been proven effective over many centuries that the move away from face-to-face-on-campus graduate subjects into a fully online medium is met with considerable fear and trepidation.

In Bates’ e-learning continuum, the second mode of e-learning is ‘technology enhanced’ classroom teaching, or in Harasim’s terminology, the ‘adjunct mode’ (Harasim, Hiltz, Teles & Turoff 1995, p. 78). In this situation, the teacher meets the students in a classroom but uses electronic means to present some or the entire course. Some examples of such technologically enhanced teaching are: building a course web page with hypertext links to other sites; using PowerPoint slide presentations in classes; and students participating in online discussion forum (Bates
Harasim et al. (1995) observed that e-learning is a valuable addition to the teaching and learning environment in the face-to-face classroom. Both Bates (2001, p. 20) and Harasim et al. (1995, p. 78) claim that such types of e-learning applications are mostly used in post-secondary education.

Bates (2001) also describes the existence of a ‘mixed mode’ application of e-learning in which there is a reduce degree of face-to-face teaching and an increase in online learning. Bates’ (2001) definition parallels Harasim’s (1995, p. 80), which emphasises that in the mixed mode delivery; the electronic approach needs to be fully integrated into the curriculum and indeed have to be part of the course. The fourth and final element in the continuum is ‘distance education’, which according to Bates (2001), is to provide a parallel option to on-campus teaching, that is, to accommodate students who are not able to move away from their home or jobs and still want to better themselves in higher education. In this case, the teaching can be located in the home or working environments and is made available through distance mode. Bates (2001, p. 20) refers to a higher education institution that provides such an option as ‘dual mode’. The term ‘dual mode’ derives from the gradual transition of delivery teaching materials from print-based mode and reading materials to a situation where, over time, access to courses is increasingly through the internet sites of higher education institutions. The latter provides discussion forums, downloadable course materials, and online tutorials with teaching staff.

Distance education, whether e-learning based flexible learning or traditional study-by-corrrespondence, offers many students the opportunity to study while balancing other commitments. This enables students to study without having to attend lectures on campus. Students can study from home or in a remote area without having to relocate and can be a part-time or full-time student. Distance education may result in increased access and convenience for all students. It is not strictly limited to students in remote locations or full-time employment but rather can also encourage currently enrolled face-to-face students to make use of alternative methods of course delivery instead of being dependent upon attending the traditional face-to-face or space-bound classes.
Hooper (2008) argues that whilst educational technology in both the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) has found its niche in distance teaching, for example, in the Open University and its e-learning programs it is yet to have achieved its potential in more traditional forms of institutional education in mainstream schools and universities (Hooper 2008, p. 234). He maintains that since his first began researching the subject in 1969 that, in the US at least, educational technology has consistently failed to meet its goals.

He suggests that some of the factors behind this lack of success include the technology being too difficult to use and teachers having too few incentives to change their methods (Hooper 2008, p. 235). It is important to recognise, he explains, that different media, which include the live teacher, have different characteristics and should be used to meet different objectives. Hooper (2008, p. 236) maintains that educational technology has to be useful in overcoming time and space constraints that are fundamental to distance education.

Dufresne et al. (2005) argue that whilst developments in information and communication technology, such as the internet connectivity, have benefited international organisations in distance learning they have also led to new challenges such as ‘the internet gap’ or ‘digital divide’. Examples of the divide include access to the internet and quality of the access, cost and availability of computers, language and communication barriers. The authors offer some suggestions for bridging the divide such as establishing public information and communication centres, creating flexible distances learning options, using a blended approach and recruiting and training local facilitators (Dufresne & Bethke 2005). These points are echoed by many other researchers, including Sharkey et al. (2008) and Carnevale (2005).

Whilst the schema outlined by Bates is certainly very useful it can be argued that his analysis is incomplete. In particular, Bates fails to include a number of key concepts that are central to current discussions about of e-learning. Terms such as ‘distance education’ are today understood as referring to mid-twentieth century style programs that relied on providing students with printed materials via post. As a result, the current writers prefer to talk about online learning or to use the term ‘virtual
‘e-learning format’ (PLS Ramboll Management 2004, p.5).

Considerable claims have been made about achievements in the development of e-learning, either as stand-alone programs or alongside more traditional approaches to teaching and learning for students across school and tertiary education. The actual impact of ICT on the learning experience will depend upon the roles adopted by both teacher and learner, the model of the learner held by the teacher and the particular pedagogical approach employed.

Condie and Livingston (2007) discuss the ways in which teachers and students responded to the implementation of one particular online program and consider the approaches adopted and the attitudes to its use (Condie & Livingston 2007). They argue that national initiatives have improved the position of schools in terms of access to hardware and electronic networking, software and educational resources, and staff development. The potential of e-learning to improve learning and teaching, and in turn, attainment, may be contested by teachers, but the policy makers are generally positive. Many countries across Europe and North America have adopted ICT as a central platform in school improvement and effectiveness planning. However, the teacher and the learner remain at the centre. With the penetration of the new technologies into homes and offices, there should be more support in learning and teaching (Condie & Livingston 2007, p. 338).

Rossett et al. (2003) explore a variety of different ways to build a blended approach and identify possible issues that arise when implementing blended learning. They identify a range of distinct types of blended learning approaches (BLAs) used in teaching programs (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1: Blended Learning Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live face-to-face (formal)</th>
<th>Live face-to-face (informal)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Instructor-led classroom</td>
<td>• Collegial connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workshops</td>
<td>• Work teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching/mentoring</td>
<td>• Role modelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>• On-the-job (OTJ) training</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual collaboration/synchronous</th>
<th>Virtual collaboration/asynchronous</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Live e-learning classes</td>
<td>• E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E-mentoring</td>
<td>• Online bulletin boards</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Listservs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Online communities</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-paced learning</th>
<th>Performance support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Web learning modules</td>
<td>• Help systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online resource links</td>
<td>• Print job aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simulations</td>
<td>• Knowledge databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenarios</td>
<td>• Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video and audio CD/DVDs</td>
<td>• Performance/decision support tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online self-assessments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workbooks</td>
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Allen et al. (2007) argue that the term blended learning is best used to refer to a course that blends online and face-to-face delivery, has a substantial proportion of the content delivered online and typically uses online discussions and some face-to-face meetings.

A blended learning environment (BLE) potentially allows both the teachers and students to gradually move from traditional face-to-face classrooms to e-learning in small steps, making it easier to accept and adopt. Usta et al. (2007) examined students’ opinions about the value of the BLE using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The authors define a BLE as being a learning situation involving a blended learning in student-student interactions, student-teacher interactions and making extensive uses of online learning. The authors state that the aim in a BLE is to maintain a balance of online and face-to-face learning. Questionnaires were administered asking students to report their opinions, suggestions and challenges they faced through BLE. The results demonstrated students had many positive experiences of the structure of the program and there was high interaction between the instructor and students. Some of the positives students reported were having easy access to course materials online and having the chance to work with both
individuals and groups. Some of the negative experiences related to having difficulty accessing the program online due to computer and internet problems.

Morrison (2003) observes that whilst blended learning is a highly practical approach to adoption it may lack the speed of adoption that senior administrator’s desire. Morrison (2007) also points out that attempts to transfer face-to-face teaching and learning courses to an e-learning environment often result in the inappropriate approach to pedagogy. Morrison (2007, p. 113) explains that any system of activity is a subsystem embedded within another system; and the activities associated with an institution’s efforts to make a transition to e-learning need to be understood within the larger context of that institution.

Ellis et al. (2006) refers to blended learning as the combination of e-learning and face-to-face learning activity and suggests that there are several reasons for selecting blended learning over other learning options.

Graham argues that blended learning provides the best of both worlds (2006). However, it also acknowledged that ‘a BLE can mix the least effective elements of both worlds if it is not designed well’ (Graham 2006, p. 8). Six common reasons for blending learning include (Osguthorpe & Graham 2003): pedagogical richness; access to knowledge; social interaction; personal agency; cost effectiveness; ease of revision.

Driscoll (2002) argues that there are many reasons why blended learning is a good way of introducing e-learning to an organisation, such as making the transition to e-learning easier for learners, instructors and organisations and to limit the costs involved in replacing courseware with new technology. Driscoll (2002) provides some customer examples of blended learning or starting points such as putting assessment online, providing online office hours and maximising e-mail and messaging.

Dziuban et al. (2004) in a research brief for EDUCAUSE, describe blended learning as a pedagogical approach that combines the effectiveness and socialisation
opportunities of the classroom with the technologically enhanced active learning possibilities of the online environment, rather than a ratio of delivery modalities. In other words, blended learning should be approached not merely as a temporal construct, but rather as a fundamental redesign of the instructional model with the following characteristics. Dziuban et al. (2004) argues that blended learning involves a shift from lecture to student-centred instruction in which students become active and interactive learners. This shift should apply to the entire course, including face-to-face contact sessions. Most importantly, they argue blended learning represents a shift in instructional strategy. Just as online learning represents a fundamental shift in the delivery and instructional model of distance learning, blended learning offers the possibility to significantly change how teachers and administrators view online learning in the face-to-face setting.

Bonk et al. (2006) discuss that the widespread adoption and availability of digital learning technologies has led to increased levels of integration of computer-mediated instructional elements into the traditional face-to-face learning experience. They highlight the current uses of blended learning in both higher education and workplace settings and discusses several predictions of the use of blended learning in the future. The authors argue that blended learning is now a standard part of education and training and helping to link people across countries and the globe. Some of the benefits of blended learning presented are that it can help reduce travel time for employees undertaking management training or be used to distribute corporate developed material and resources to instructors all over the globe. The authors surveyed two different groups, instructors and administrators, in post-secondary institutions in North America and those involved in e-learning in corporate training environments. The results of the first survey found that most of the respondents in the higher education groups were professors or lecturers and more than 58 per cent were female. The majority who had used web technologies in their teaching reported that they are currently using blended learning and will continue increase in their use of blended learning in the next few years.

As IT methods are increasingly employed in higher education institution teaching, there is a growing teacher debate about the benefits and disadvantages of e-learning.

Higher education institutions have to acknowledge and respond to new technological challenges by becoming more flexible and responsive by providing life-long learning opportunities to individuals. Taylor (2001) describes that while many institutions are still coming to terms with the challenges posed by the fourth generation of technologies as the flexible learning model based on online technologies, universities that have distance education programs have been the main champions in innovation and institutional change (Taylor 2001). Universities have to be responsive and flexible to technology opportunities (Fox & Herrmann 1997; Segrave & Holt 2003) and making changes to organisational structures to accommodate changing times, economic rationalisation, changing pressures, increases in mixed mode students with different demands and needs (Bates 1995; Morrison 2003).

Many factors affect higher education institutions in the use of technology. Fisser (2000) identifies many strategic reasons for institutions to incorporate more technology into teaching and learning. Fisser (2000) continues to identify reasons that encourage higher education institutions to use technology for flexible teaching and learning. The reasons are mostly related to characteristics of technology such as ability to provide flexibility and facilitate a new teaching model; economic motivations such as cost reductions or cost effectiveness; and social concerns such as reaching the disadvantaged. Collis and Moonen (2001b) argue that social concerns also translate to economic motivations as they all relate to student enrolments and increase funds. Universities are pressured with a ‘you can’t not do it’ attitude (Collis & Moonen 2001b, p. 29) for fear of being left behind. Wilson et al. (2000, p. 29) share the same sentiments by emphasising that the ideas of ‘we really have no choice if we want to survive in our present age’. This conveys a sense of urgency to ‘keep up with the Joneses’ and to look flexible and modern in order to attract students. New web-based technologies and internet delivery courses are some key factors in
keeping up with the times and conveying a public and marketing image of being a modern player in the information society, which, in turn, attracts students.

This is an ever changing digital world in which ‘knowledge, power, and productive capability will be more dispersed than at any time in our history—a world where value creation will be fast, fluid, and persistently disruptive, a world where only the connected will survive’ (Dorman 2007, p. 6). In addition, in education, and in business, those who fail to grasp this truth will find themselves ‘ever more isolated, cut off from the networks that are sharing, adapting, and updating knowledge to create value’ (Dorman 2007, p. 6).

Benson and Samarawickrema (2009) address that the rapidly expanding range of options available for innovative e-learning approaches based on emerging technologies has given renewed importance to teaching and learning issues that have long been familiar to distance educators. These teaching and learning issues arise from the separation between learners, and between teacher and learners, which occurs when learning is undertaken wholly or partly online (Benson 2009).

Wood (2010) outlines ways in which teaching institutions have tapped into Web 2.0 technologies to enhance learning, and during the process a way was found to increase participation, motivate, and engage nurses and others in ways that would not have been possible previously (Wood 2010).

O’Reilly (2005, 2009) defines Web 2.0 as ‘a perceived ongoing transition of the World Wide Web from a collection of static websites to a full-fledged computing platform serving Web applications to end users’ (O’Reilly, 2009, p.2). In Web 1.0, users gain information through surfing, browsing, and consuming. In Web 2.0, the focus is on connecting, collaborating, sharing and developing. The current examples of this collaborative tool include social software, for example, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, web applications like Google, and learning tools like Wikipedia.

Nelson (2009) suggests that internet and Web 2.0 technologies give students opportunities to seek information easily, collect their own material, communicate and
analyse data. Motteram (2009) discusses that the Web 2.0 learners can increasingly choose what they can focus on in class and how they learn by engaging with others, either face-to-face or via digital. Web 2.0 technologies support creative and collective contribution in the classroom and online situation.

Dunlap (2009) discusses that virtual classroom environments, social networks have become an important part of e-learning. Social networks have also been used to promote online and social learning communities (Johnson 2010). The portability of mobile devices and the ability to connect to the internet almost anywhere makes them ideal as a store of reference materials and learning experiences, as well as general-use tools for research fieldwork, where they can be used to record observations via voice, text or multimedia, and access reference sources in real time (Johnson 2010). The adoption level of emerging web technologies is on the rise in teacher settings (Saeed 2009). These technologies include blogs, wikis, instant messaging (IM), social bookmarks or podcasts.

In recent years, there has been a rapid growth and awareness of Web 2.0 technologies and using these technologies to support learning in higher education (Kerawalla 2008). Technology continues to open up possibilities for innovative and effective teaching and learning opportunities (Herrington & Reeves 2009) in higher education institutions. Many senior university administrators expect that technology mediated teaching and learning is cost effective and gives return on investment in innovative and effective teaching and learning opportunities (Bates 2000).

It is important that IT provides solutions to pedagogic problems rather than looking for things that technology can do simply for the sake of using technology. Traditional instruction design and support are an essential component of the IT centre, and it is imperative that IT be part of the multimodal tool kit that our teachers have available to them. Teachers must feel comfortable with the tools that they use, and they have to be assured that any changes they make are appropriate to their own expertise and experience (Houseman 1997). Houseman (1997) acknowledges that the higher education institutions’ human side of new technology initiatives and how teachers
respond to these innovations is not seriously considered during the uptake of e-learning, indicative of the need to also consider the costs and benefits of e-learning.

The benefits of e-learning appear to be overwhelming and help to explain why governments and institutions alike have resorted to this modern technology as part of their strategies of life-long learning. The benefits include 24/7 access to information; up-to-date content materials; self-paced learning; cost effectiveness; and customised and consistent look-and-feel course content. Wilson (2004) says that the potential benefits of e-learning are so attractive that the US military spent more than $2.2 billion in the 2002/2003 financial year to provide and develop new e-learning initiatives.

E-learning has many benefits but it has also some disadvantages. Twigg (2002, p. 2) claims that online teaching and learning does not necessarily lower per student costs. Moreover, if the full potential of e-learning is to be achieved then new approaches to e-learning must address the need to restructure the pedagogical process.

Kruse (2004) lists some of the disadvantages of e-learning as being high upfront investment development costs; difficult to accomplish technology training goals; inappropriate content; lack of compatibility between hardware and software; reduced social and cultural interaction and the possible elimination of peer-to-peer learning.

Nevertheless, researchers such as O’Hagan (2003) argue that whilst the costs of introducing and marketing new technologies for teaching and learning are considerable once the transition is complete the benefits derived from e-learning initiatives outweigh the disadvantages.

2.3 E-learning at Universities

Many factors drive the introduction of IT teaching and administrative methods in universities. According to Bates (2000, p. 8), the factors are: increases in student
enrolments; the changing needs of learning and teaching; and the benefits of using new innovative technologies in teaching and learning. With the introduction of new universities providing e-learning, distance education or virtual learning options have encouraged older traditional teaching establishments to become more innovative. In an early study, Bates (1997) observed that the reasons given by universities for using technology are: 1) to improve the cost effectiveness of education; 2) to improve the quality of learning; and 3) to reduce the costs of education. Bates argues that it is absolutely essential to have a strategy for developing the technology infrastructure of a university as part of the level of investment.

In 1995, at the very beginning of the e-learning era, Bates (1995) published his influential ACTIONS model, in brief, has made an impact on e-learning. The key factors to be considered when choosing and assessing different technologies are: Access; Costs; Teaching and Learning; Interaction and user-friendliness; Organisation; Novelty; Speed.

2.3.1 Policies and Support

Despite the interest in using different new technologies in teaching institutions, the technology by itself cannot drive change. McNaught et al. (2000, p. 71) identify the three key themes that need to come together to promote the adoption of Computer-Facilitated Learning (CFL): policy, culture and support. According to McNaught et al. (2000, p. 71), a clear policy direction is needed from institutional leaders. This needs to be built on a culture in which teaching staff are motivated to be innovative through teaching awards, recognition and international collaboration.

Staff motivation can only be consistently maintained if support structures existed to facilitate the adoption process of the new innovative technologies. As in their investigation into the factors supporting the adoption of CFL at Australian universities, McNaught et al. (2000) discuss the three major themes that emerged. There are considerable overlaps between and within these themes as is illustrated in Figure 2.2. These inherent overlaps mean that there needs to be a congruence of
policy, culture and support factors if significant adoption of CFL strategies is to occur.

![Figure 2.2: Three Major Themes for CFL Adoption](image)

The policy themes examine specific institutional policies, such as equity and intellectual property, the alignment of policy throughout the organisation, the direction of policy change (bottom-up or top-down) and a number of strategic processes that flowed on from policies such as grant schemes. Culture incorporates factors such as collaboration within institutions, and personal motivation of staff to use CFL, as well as particular aspects of funding, staff rewards and time, leadership, teaching and learning models, and attitudes such as ‘not invented here’. Support incorporates a whole range of institutional issues including IT, library and administrative infrastructure, staff development for staff, student support, educational and instructional design support for teaching staff, funding and grant schemes, and IT literacy in the support of technology adoption.

2.3.2 Technology Adoption

Technology adoption refers to how a technology is introduced into the workplace, with emphasis on the decision-making process (Verona 2003). Adoption itself refers to the decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action (Rogers
Technology adoption may occur when an individual and company either passively or proactively change their existing technology with a new one.

After an individual or company adopts a new technology, the process of diffusion begins. Rogers (1995) generates significant contributions in the area of technology diffusion or technology use. Rogers defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.

The shift to online learning and teaching environments using internet and web-based technologies has originated from distance education (Farrell 2001). A range of labels such as ‘e-learning’, ‘online learning’, ‘virtual learning’, ‘web-based learning’, ‘distance learning’, ‘blended learning’ are used to describe these different modes of education. This includes in a change of thinking about what is feasible in relation to web-based teaching and learning technology in higher education institutions.

The introduction of technology in the use of a networked computer into higher education institutions can be traced back to the 1960s (Harasim et al. 1995). University staff who were early adopters of technologies recognised computer-mediated communication and conferencing and, in particular, as a new generation of technology for learning at a distance (Harasim 1989, 1990, 1994, 2000a, 2000b; Mason & Kaye 1989). There are researchers (Kaye 1992; Rowntree 1995, 1999; Salmon 2000) who identify that online teachers require special skills sets.

The increasing growth and use of technology in universities allow typical traditional higher education institutions to offer off-campus or distance learning programs (Rumble & Harry 1982). The convergence of on-campus and off-campus learning opportunities (Tait & Mills 1999) precipitated by technology is described as technology’s ‘umbilical’ connection to education that results in embracing IT for teaching and learning (Thompson 1999, p. 151).

The advent of the internet in the 1990s has had a significant impact on many higher education institutions, particularly those that have no off-campus or distance
education programs (Bates 2000). Many traditional face-to-face universities were very excited by these new technologies that enable more flexible course participation and online learning opportunities (Collis & Moonen 2001) and blurring boundaries between on-campus and off-campus learners (Bates 2000). Miller (1998) explains the impact of technology on education as creating a new environment for teaching and learning. This is caused by changes in technology and technology has made it possible. Like O’Donoghue et al. (2001), Miller (1998) sees the changes in education as a response to the ongoing developments in technology.

Rogers’ (1995) adoption and diffusion theory has been widely used in a range of disciplines to describe how innovation diffuses. The theory of perceived attributes has especially been used in several studies relating to adopting learning technologies (Jacobsen 1998; Shea, Pickett & Sau Li 2005; Sherry 1998a, 1998b; Wilson et al. 2000). Shea et al. (2005) use Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory to describe the adoption and diffusion of online teaching among 913 teaching teachers. Rogers’ (1995) theory pinpoints that adoption of innovations and emerging technologies is an active process that involves much reinvention and adopters (especially the early adopters) must reinvent the innovation and make it their own if they are to continue using it. Therefore, nurturing and harnessing the enthusiasm of adopters is often the key to an organisation making a successful technological transition. However, there has been very little concern in engaging the teachers, motivating them and discussing with them regarding their perspectives and various social, human factors. In all areas of technology, the cultural outlook, preferences and sensitivities of innovators and adopters have been important factors shaping their approach to technological transition and this applies to IT and online teaching (Wilson et al. 2000). Clearly, it is important that these cultural factors influence the use and choices of adopting new emerging technologies and e-learning innovations.

Based on Rogers’ theory (1995), the members involved in the innovation diffusion process can be categorised into different types of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Innovators are the members that introduce an innovation and are willing to take risks. Early adopters take leadership in trying out the innovation. Early majority include members that are careful in
decision-making but are more quickly in adopting the innovation than average. Late majority are sceptical members who will take-up the innovation gradually. Laggards are those who prefer their traditional ways of doing things. They are the last group of members in the social system to follow the mainstream and accept the innovation. Early adopters play a critical role in taking leadership in exploring and turning an innovation into a newly established practice adopted by the early majority. A deep understanding of the process that early adopters go through and how they engage and influence each other and other members in their community will provide useful insights to support them and facilitate the adoption of the innovation. This study focuses on the adoption of e-learning by early adopters, or more specifically, the teachers who take leadership in exploring, influencing and integrating e-learning practice within the mainstream practice by their colleagues and students in a cultural context.

![Rogers Adoption/Innovation Curve](source: www.valuebasedmanagement.net)

**Figure 2.3: Rogers Adoption/Innovation Curve**

According to Roger’s (1995) model (see Figure 2.3), his innovation adoption curve is a model that classifies adopters of innovations into various categories, based on the idea that certain individuals are inevitably more open to adaptation than others. It is also referred to as multi-step flow theory or diffusion of innovations theory. Rogers (1995, p. 22) identifies five different categories of users in the successful adoption of an innovation:

1. **Innovators** are brave people, pulling the change. Innovators are very important communication.
2. **Early adopters** are respectable people, opinion leaders; they try out new ideas but in a careful way.
3. **Early Majority** are thoughtful people, careful but accepting change more quickly than the average.
4. *Late Majority* are sceptics, they will use new ideas or products only when the majority is using it.

5. *Laggards Traditional* are people, caring for the ‘old ways’, they are critical towards new ideas and will only accept it if the new idea has become mainstream or even tradition.

There is a rush to embrace IT and people often fail to consider the human side of the equation. Houseman (1997) has simplified Roger’s (1995) adoption model so that it includes only three categories: the innovators, the followers, and, finally, the naysayers. There is an important role in assuring the success of any innovation, and each represents a different part of the adoption curve (see Figure 2.4). The initial phase is that of the innovators, which is slow; and this is followed by the middle group, which make up the two components of a rapid increase in users over time, which then slows to the point where only the naysayers, who never adopt the change, are all that are left (Houseman, 1997). The innovators are those people who will just try anything new. The followers are those who are generally interested in the innovation after someone else has initiated and worked out. Lastly, the naysayers are those who are not interested in and see no benefit to using the innovation.

![Figure 2.4: Three Categories of Potential Participants in an Innovative Initiative](image)

Adapted from Rogers, 1995; Houseman, 1997

Wilson et al. (2002) show that individuals move between stages before committing to change during the adoption process. Firstly, they start by finding information, forming attitudes leading to commitment to an innovation or technology before
implementing the new practice. Wilson et al. (2002) continue to discuss that individual and organisational learning occurs over time through the approach to and the process of adoption.

Adoption of innovations may also be influenced by whether or not the innovation meets a perceived need. Elgort (2005) focuses on the decisions made by teaching practitioners and how they influence the adoption of e-learning (Elgort, 2005). The author interviewed teachers from 22 universities across Australia, New Zealand and the UK and found that nearly all of these universities used one or more learning management systems (LMS). Elgort (2005) argues that despite the widespread use of technology such as LMS by teachers, e-learning researchers generally agree that e-learning has not realised its potential as an educational innovation (Elgort 2005, p. 184). The authors’ review of the literature suggests that the source of the problems with e-learning are mostly associated with teaching and learning processes rather than the use of technology, which can be referred to as the e-learning chasm (Elgort 2005, p. 184). The author argues that in order to overcome the e-learning, chasm it is important for teachers to voice their personal theories and beliefs about teaching, which can be evoked by using staff development interventions.

Technological innovation usually has some degree of advantage for the potential adopter but its benefits are not always obvious and not everyone is convinced that it is a better alternative. There is uncertainty about consequences, doubt, even scepticism about any solution the innovation may offer. Robinson (2001) identifies that any innovation that is disruptive to the existing system is complex,-compels change at multiple levels and is culturally situated in the context of that particular institution. She also warns that changes in learning and teaching methods or the adoption of new technologies are not simple technical changes that conform to a single section, but involve changes in other sections and in a wider culture too: ‘it is not possible to introduce a change and at the same time keep other things the way they were’ (Robinson 2001, p. 52).

Rogers explained that innovation adoption does not happen evenly and uniformly through the ranks but takes the form of a bell curve pattern where early adopters,
mainstream adopters and laggards are differentiated. Similarly, this concerns the adoption of innovative information and communication technologies (Garrison & Anderson 2000; Geoghegan 1994). Geoghegan (1994, pp.11-12) identified four factors that described the divide between the early adopters and mainstream faculty:

1. The assumption by administrators and change-agents that teachers are a homogeneous group;
2. The technological alliance between hardware and software developers and the early adopters who form an elite group that maintain control;
3. The feeling of alienation by many teachers that the new technologies as dehumanising and incompatible with what teaching and learning should be about; and
4. The lack of a compelling reason to change—no relative advantage, inability to trial, lack of incentives, lack of exposure.

The theory of diffusion and innovation is limited as it is only capable of describing innovation diffusion from the perspective of technology attributes of the innovation. Further, that these technology attributes are reported through perceptions of adopters, and this further contributes a further limitation. The theory of diffusion of innovation is deficient in not taking into consideration of the social, cultural, political and contextual factors.

2.3.3 Approaches to the Adoption of E-learning

Morrison (2003) points out that many institutions are using a blended learning model that combines traditional teacher-led, face-to-face classroom teaching with elements of e-learning introduced in small steps, making change easier to accept. An advantage of working with a blended incremental approach is that it enables both teachers and educational designers to develop the skills needed for e-learning in small increments. Blended learning is a highly practical approach to adoption (Morrison 2003) but may lack the speed of adoption by senior management.

Wilson et al. (2002) argue that individuals approach adoption by moving between stages before committing to change. Individuals will start with finding information,
forming attitudes leading to commitment to new technology, before implementing and integrating the new practice. Individual and institution learning occurs over time through the approach to and the process of adoption.

Thus far, the discussion has examined innovation adoption, specifically, the adoption of web-based learning and teaching by teachers, by reviewing several theoretical approaches to the adoption of web-based learning and teaching.

The implementation of IT to support educational and administrative work is resulting in changes to the roles of staff. These changes can give rise to tensions and difficulties. Some time ago Duke (2002) reported there are forewarnings that universities will experience significant stress associated with the implementation of e-learning.

By the late 1990s, the appearance of the internet created opportunities for genuine classroom experiences using first the synchronous chat room and quickly after the asynchronous bulletin board to create a seminar and learning community experience for adult students at a distance (Reinhart 1998, 2005). During the late 1990s, there was a strong sense among Australian higher education administrators, who were facing massive reductions in funding, that a move to online teaching and learning would increase the potential for entering new markets across the globe. Bennett, Priest and Macpherson (1999, p.207) suggest that there was also the belief that ‘the use of new technologies for course delivery will, in itself, attract students’. Further, they argue that many university administrators perceive ‘online course delivery as potentially cheaper than traditional face-to-face and distance education’.

One major benefit of online teaching often identified for the cash strapped university system is the potential for entering new markets opened up by the ability to communicate easily with students from around the world. There is also a belief that the use of new technologies for course delivery, in itself, will attract students. Further, some university administrators see online course delivery as potentially cheaper than traditional face-to-face and distance education. As McMahon (1997, p.6) points out, it is ‘significantly less expensive to produce materials electronically
than in printed form’, while in the longer term, the ‘virtual campus’ may lead to savings in both real estate and teaching costs. However, the likelihood of such savings can be disputed. For example, it could be argued that although printing costs may fall, design and development costs may rise substantially; and if time spent in the classroom is reduced, it may be more than made up for by time spent teaching and supporting students online. In addition, while the cost of producing electronic files for online delivery may be less than that for printing the same materials, there is a significant extra cost to the students if they are expected to purchase the hardware, software and services necessary for accessing online materials.

For institutions not previously involved with distance education or e-learning, new practices and procedures required for online delivery represent additional costs. Further, in the short term, the need to ensure that students without access to the internet are not disadvantaged means that online delivery may have to run in parallel with existing modes of delivery (face-to-face and print-based), requiring not a cut in the demand for teaching resources but a substantial increase. Relan and Gillani (1997 p. 43) compare ‘traditional instruction’ (teacher-centred, face-to-face approaches) with their definition of web-based instruction as the ‘application of a repertoire of cognitively oriented instructional strategies implemented within a constructivist ... and collaborative environment’.

While some of the example activities they present suggest improvements to ‘traditional instruction’, it would seem self-evident that web-based strategies have the potential to be just as inflexible and inappropriate as any other form of poor instruction. In other words, the technology is not important; it is how it is used by the teacher to create new experiences for the learner. Willis and Dickinson (1997) argue that rather than online instruction making teachers redundant, as some have suggested teachers play an essential role in the success of online education. Shotsberger (1997) sees new roles for teachers in encouraging learner involvement, blending communication methods and fostering a sense of community among learners (Shotsberger 1997).
The role of teaching has come under increasing scrutiny (Berge 1996) and significant research has highlighted the burden on staff resulting from the need to develop new roles and skills as a consequence of adopting innovations in teaching and learning approaches. Harasim et al. (1995) argue that teachers are in a transition stage and require different skills and roles in assisting learners’ interactions.

Lokken and Womer (2007) suggest that e-learning is growing at a rate that far exceeds the overall enrolment growth rate. University administrators and faculty now are reporting that online classes are as good as or even superior to traditional face-to-face classes (Gueverra 2007). Gueverra (2007) argues that more students are now relying on the flexibility and convenience of what e-learning offers and are completing their degrees from a distance. As e-learning continues to increase, there is less need for students to be on campus and this means less demand and need for traditional classroom infrastructure. Further, the traditional faculty consultation office hours are becoming less important and are replaced by a technology-based internet system that provides students with access to their teachers on a 24/7 basis.

There could be a decrease in the use of services and facilities provided by the universities such as libraries, bookstores, cafeterias and so on, which could affect other revenue generating on campuses. Any decline in the use of such on-campus resources could result in significant loss of revenue for universities. Therefore, universities must focus on strategic positioning such as a significant increases in the online student enrolments and therefore impact on their networking and electronic infrastructure to complete their online coursework and assessments (Gueverra 2007; Hartman, Dziuban & Moskal 2007). Students are attracted to online classes because of the convenience and flexibility.

Offir et al. (2004) and Barth (2004) discuss that the lack of face-to-face interaction between students and teachers in a distance and online learning environment is not only a technical issue. The absence of the non-verbal communication between students and teachers has significant effects on both the teaching and learning processes.
Abeles (2009) discusses many theories of education that have been put forward with the hope of replacing or improving the traditional classroom only to flicker briefly and then fade in the face of the pressures given that the currently acceptable measure of value defaults to basics regardless of other skills that may have been acquired. Abeles continues to say that there have been many modes of delivery from one-to-one tutoring to classrooms with rows of benches, and ‘going to a school’ to distance education, including both synchronous and asynchronous delivery via the internet; and other variations such as ‘just-in-time’ learning, and learning on the job (Abeles 2009). The rise of the internet, rather than simply offering an opportunity for mapping education from brick space into ‘click’ space, actually challenges the underpinnings of the linear education system. Abeles continued to argue that at this point the ‘virtuous cycle’ can be confronted, a suppressed form of intellectual schizophrenia (Abeles 2009).

With the introduction of the internet as an international medium of information dissemination in both education and business sectors, the results from that first generation of online education are disappointing and have created backlash in the higher education section for the use of online education as a replacement for e-learning (Sonwalkar 2008, p. 44).

It was as if no one knew which way to go next. In this, the universities were not alone, having invested tens of billions of dollars into the dot.com sector; the business community was forced to face the reality that it too did not really know where it was going (Barton et al. 2009). With a few exceptions, mostly those catering to vice (pornography and gambling) (Barton et al. 2009) or consumer-to-consumer selling (online auction sites such as eBay) the business world was forced to admit that it had not worked out how to make money out of e-commerce (Johnson 2002).

The inevitable bursting of the dot.com bubble on 10 March 2000 temporarily drained enthusiasm for web technology across all sectors, including the university sector. Over the past years, this has seen a more sanguine and stable mood emerge with respect to using web technology and university teaching is now belatedly going online on a large scale. This experience has shown us that confidence is a vital factor
in the successful adoption and implementation of web technology in the university sector.

It is a well understood that online teaching and delivery requires a considerable amount of time to design and develop, as the initiative will call for curriculum and course structure reviews, re-design as well as implementing alternative teaching methods and assessment. Williams and Peters (1997) argue that instructors must shift from the role of content provider to content facilitator, gain comfort and proficiency in using the web as the primary teacher-student link, and learn to teach effectively without the visual control provided by direct eye contact.

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter has examined the influences of policy, technology and education on the uptake of e-learning. It was found that very little attention had been paid in the literature to understanding the social and cultural influences on the uptake of e-learning in higher education institutions. The following sections will discuss the influence of human factors in general, and cultural factors in particular, on online teaching and learning, which have received little attention in the literature. This is despite the fact that cross-cultural factors have become increasingly significant as educational institutions have turned to online technologies to increase the reach of their courses and crossed geographical and cultural barriers.

Whilst breaking down the geographical boundaries, many of these technologies are changing classrooms from the traditional face-to-face environment to a faceless online environment, where instructor and student interact via text (Bower 2001). The adoption of these online technologies affects both students and instructors (Barton et al. 2006).

While both the teacher and the learner are the end-user as well as adopter of e-learning technologies, literature tends to focus on the identification of advantages and disadvantages in e-learning from the learner-adopter’s perspectives. Common advantages include the convenience in terms of time and place, self-directedness, and controlling learning pace (Lanham & Zhou 2002; Singh 2004). Common disadvantages include limited socialisation and interactivity, lag of reading and
typing, and the internet speed. In addition, some researchers (Djojosaputro et al. 2005; Campbell et al. 2004) through empirical studies suggest a number of cultural factors that influence the learner’s learning style. These studies reflect views from the learner’s perspective. Limited research (Hyland 2003; Bates 2003; Barton et al. 2006) explores the e-learning experiences from the teachers’ perspectives. According to them, although there are some teachers willing to learn new technologies, many are reluctant and resist changing their teaching practices. One reason educators may resist is due to factors related to their cultural background, influences and ideologies that incline them to be suspicious of innovation (Hyland 2003).

2.4 Cultural Theories

Some teachers are resistant to adopting new technologies and changing their teaching practices because of anxiety associated with a lack of technical experience. Others are fearful of losing their jobs (Bates 2000). Bates (2000) suggested that fears relating to professional job security were significantly high amongst teachers facing the rapid introduction of online teaching and learning.

In the context of Asian culture, social networks play a key role in moderating responses to social change. Personal networks or ‘guanxi’ are a key factor influencing individual behaviour all across Asia. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the responses of teachers in South East Asian to the introduction of e-learning technologies will be partially mediated through their personal networks and social connections Barton et al. (2006).

A variety of studies have identified ways in which cultural factors shape values, attitudes and behaviours of people (Alves et al. 2006; Hofstede 1991, 2001a, 2003, 2006; Hofstede & Hofstede 2005; House et al. 2004; House et al. 1999) and that different cultures influence views and expectations with respect to the way things ‘ought to be done’. Such influences affect the organisational behaviours of individuals in the workplace in different countries.
A number of culturally-shaped issues stand out when considering the use of technology in the classroom. Some of these issues include: cultural lag, which describes how new technologies are slow to be introduced into schools (Chen 2007, p. 1113); teacher attitudes such as perceiving new technology as a threat to their role as a teacher; and teachers who do not fully understand what is required to incorporate the technology into their teaching or do not have the time to keep up with changing technology (Chen 2007, p. 1114). Another issue described by Chen (2007) is that technology is not culture-free and can incorporate cultural preferences that may disadvantage ethnic minorities.

Several studies have investigated cultural factors in student interaction in online class discussions (Djojosaputro et al. 2005; Campbell 2004), and found different cultural backgrounds and prior learning experiences to substantially shape the way students learn. For example, Djojosaputro et al. (2005) found that students from a cultural background characterised with collectivism and ‘high power distance’ find it difficult to adjust their learning expectations and styles in a fully online learning environment in the Australian context, which is characterised by individualism and low power distance. However, little literature was found exploring how cultural factors shape the attitudes and behaviour of teachers in this online environment, especially in the context of developing nations.

Wang (2007) examined the influence on various cultural attributes that influence student perceptions and engagement online. Wang uses one of the five dimensions identified by Hofstede to differentiate culture in learning settings: power distance index (PDI). PDI refers to how people respond to those who are in positions either inferior or superior to their own (Wang 2007, p. 295). Students whose culture influences them to view teachers or instructors as superior to them might be intimidated when interacting in class and/or with the instructor. Wang’s research used both qualitative and quantitative data to search for evidence of student perceptions that can be viewed in terms of their cultural attributes (Wang 2007, p. 297). The sample used for this study included online students from the US, China and South Korea and the different types of course components included in each curriculum. The results indicated that US students had the lowest PDI score whilst
the Chinese students had the highest PDI score (Wang 2007, p. 307). US students also found it easier to communicate online in comparison to Korean students. This study lists several pedagogic implications for instructors to be aware of when designing and maintaining online courses (Wang 2007, p. 308), in particular the power distance issue, which may hinder the participation of some students from some cultures.

It is clear that cultural preferences and values affect the way that people learn, and the cultural differences between the learners and the learning design may result in poor learning performance (Chen et al. 1999; Gerbic 2005; Gutierrez & Rogoff 2003).

McLoughlin (1999) argues that culture is an issue particularly when technology is used in learning because it is a ‘cultural amplifier’ (Newman, Griffin & Cole, cited in McLoughlin 1999, p. 232). Chen et al. (1999, p. 217) express a similar view, noting that cultural differences should be a ‘significant concern’, as they believe that cultural considerations are one of the foundations of effective technology-based learning. A lack of awareness concerning cultural issues can mean that teachers may not understand how to deal with learners from different cultural backgrounds (Chen et al. 1999).

To date, Western research has dominated the areas of theories and models that describe the workplace participation of women and men in organisations. Although many previous studies have examined cultural differences around the world, the consensus is that additional specific research is needed in this area in order to broaden this knowledge base. The trend of increasing globalisation has created a sense of urgency for organisations to understand cultural sensitivities more fully in order to be successful in their new locations. Multinational organisations ideally want to acquire practical knowledge regarding the behaviours and attitudes that are acceptable and appropriate in other cultures when they are expanding across borders. Therefore, there is a need to understand cultural dimensions and cultural sensitivity in various parts of the world, as such cultural insights may allow an understanding of values,
attitudes and behaviours and how these may influence and impact on workplace participation behaviours.

To do this, there is a need to establish a firm basis of what has been discovered and learned in relation to national cultural values in the literature. One prominent researcher who has made a significant contribution into cultural research is Hofstede (1991). Hofstede (1991) provides a compellingly clear model of the various dimensions of culture, one which has been widely accepted and used in a variety of disciplines (Corbitt 2004). Indeed, one of the chief virtues of Hofstede’s (1991) writing is its lucidity and concrete expression, particular in the area of culture. Hofstede’s paradigm is enticingly clear-cut but is nuanced just enough to support his quietly confident tone of authority.

Hofstede’s view (1991, p. 5) of culture is that it is ‘learned, not inherited. It derives from one’s social environment, not from one’s genes. The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.’ Through this, Hofstede (1991, p. 10) argues that culturally, everyone belongs simultaneously to several different kinds of groups and is variously influenced by different layers of mental programming within themselves:

A national level according to one’s country (or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime); a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious group(s); a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy; a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children; a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person’s occupation or profession; for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialised by their work.

Hofstede’s (1991) research has been very influential in the literature for two major reasons: firstly, for its substantial contribution to the body of cross-cultural knowledge and secondly, for the strong criticism it attracts from the literature. Hofstede, early in his career, undertook a consulting contract for IBM with a team of researchers from Europe. The initial aim of this project was to investigate the concerns of one organisation about various aspects of staff workplace behaviours around the world. Hofstede used the basis of his consulting project to expand his
interest in cross-cultural research. The outcome of his extensive work formed the basis of the five cultural delineations widely reported in the literature.

Hofstede’s recent work has defined culture in broad terms as the ‘civilization, or refinement of the mind’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 4) and a ‘collective phenomenon’, which is shared and learned between people living in a particular environment (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 4). In this definition, culture is seen as a learned phenomenon originating from ‘one’s social environment rather than one’s genes’ and it is ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from other’ (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 4). Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) further explained that the programming of the mind refers to the specific values, beliefs and behaviours that guide people’s hopes and aspirations and that these may be different for people from diverse cultures.

One of Hofstede’s (1991) major contributions to culture research was his seminal delineation of the five major dimensions of cultural disparity, which he labelled *Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Short term Orientation*. In his view, these dimensions explained and demonstrated the key differences in people’s thinking based on national cultures. Every dimension is viewed as a scale, and countries are placed somewhere between the extremes. Each country is then allocated a score and placed according to a rank order to show their location in respect to the five major dimensions. Hofstede argued that these dimensions distinguished the differences that are present in cultures and offered an explanation for how these differences may impact on the workplace participation behaviours of people in particular societies as well as within organisations.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on these cultural dimensions first developed by Hofstede in the 1980s and on recent critical responses to Hofstede’s confident explanations. These dimensions are integrated in the current study for two important reasons. Firstly, they provide an initial conceptual framework for conducting cross-cultural research and secondly, their extensive utilisation within the culture literature
over the past 25 years suggests a broad acceptance of the validity of this framework. Therefore, these dimensions of culture are outlined below.

Hofstede (1991) identified five independent dimensions of national culture, each rooted in a basic problem with which all societies have to cope, but on which their answers vary. He describes the dimensions as follows:

- **Power distance**: related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality.

- **Uncertainty avoidance**: related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future.

- **Individualism versus collectivism**: related to the integration of individuals into primary groups.

- **Masculinity versus femininity**: related to the division of emotional roles between men and women.

- **Long-term versus short-term orientation**: related to the choice of focus for people’s efforts: the future or the present.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have conducted research that parallels that of Hofstede (1991) in several important respects. They discuss not so much stereotypes as the need to understand individuals. They, too, draw their study sample from a business environment and arrive at a series of oppositional dimensions of culture, settling on six axial pairs (2003, p. 8):

- **Universalism versus Particularism**: Universalism is focus more on rules than relationships. Whereas particularism focuses more on relationships than on rules.

- **Individualism versus Communitarianism**: Individualism is about the rights of the individual and frequent use of ‘I’ form. Communitarians see group-focus and frequent use of ‘We’ form and achieve in groups and assume joint responsibility.

- **Specificity versus Diffusion**: Specificity is direct and to the point, and purposeful in relating. Whereas, diffusion is indirect and seemingly ‘aimless’ forms of relating.
• Achievement versus Ascription: Achievement use of titles only when relevant to the competence brings to task and respect for superior. Ascription extensive use of titles especially when status in the organisation and respect of superior in hierarchy is seen as a measure of commitment to the organisation.

• Inner direction versus Outer direction: Inner direction is about thinking and personal judgment, that is, ‘in our heads’. It assumes that thinking is the most powerful tool and that considered ideas and intuitive approaches are the best way. Outer direction is seeking data in the outer world. It assumes that we live in the ‘real world’ and that is where we should look for our information and decisions.

• Sequential time versus Synchronous time: Sequential time sees events as separate items in time, i.e. one after another. It finds order in a serried array of actions that happen one after the other. Synchronous time sees events in parallel, synchronised together. It finds order in coordination of multiple efforts.

While the above cultural factors have been demonstrated to be important in understanding people’s attitudes and competency in general business practice (Hofstede 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2003), what is much less well understood is the ways in which cultural background shape their attitudes and competency with respect to adopting and using technologies for online teaching.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2003) argue that communitarians see group-focus and assume joint responsibility. From the study by Djojosaputro (2005), students seem to seek friends and relationships before they feel comfortable with each other. The research found that students not only felt at ease with the names provided online but they also felt much more comfortable when they first met face-to-face. According to Hofstede (2001), students from the power distance and collectivism culture tend to feel and find comfort in a communal and dependency environment.
Hofstede (2001) argues that in the high power distance culture, students tend to have a dependant style of learning by forming relationships to feel more at ease with each other. Even though there is an indication that the power distance is reduced in online learning environment, the students still expect that the knowledge comes from the lecturer rather than building the knowledge themselves through discussion and interaction.

The findings Djojosaputro et al. (2005) indicate that the students interviewed from a collectivist and high power distance culture prefer to be guided by the lecturer in the online learning environment. These students relied heavily on the lecturer’s information and answers whilst studying that subject during the semester.

In his more recent work (2005), Hofstede refines his argument that a clear distinction can be observed between the ways in which members of an individualist society and members of a collectivist method operate. Members of individualist societies, Hofstede argues, are typically focused on looking after their own immediate families (Hofstede 2005, p. 76). However, in a collectivist society, members typically work in a communal sense, through networks and associations. In Chinese culture, this is typically referred to as guanxi. This concept draws together considerations of social linkages, group behaviour and social capital.

Power distance, according to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, p. 46) is ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally’. The power distance index predominantly reflects the problem of human inequity prevailing in societies especially inequality in terms of wealth, status or authority. Therefore, power distance describes how individuals in society are treated based upon their social status, race or gender. Thus, Hofstede argues, the PDI provides an empirical score of the variation in human equality among countries in the world.

In lower power distance countries, for example, Australia, New Zealand and United States, inequalities among people are minimal and the organisational and societal hierarchies that do exist are often viewed as an attempt to improve the functioning of
the organisation through appropriate administrative procedures. In contrast, high power distance countries, for example, China, Indonesia and Vietnam, embrace a philosophy that there are inequalities between individuals, which underpins an acceptance of the exercise of power by people at higher hierarchical levels (Harrison 1995).

Additionally, Hofstede argues, the PDI also defines the ‘dependence relationships in countries’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 45). Countries with lower scores on the index generally respect and value each individual and accept differences between them. People in these cultures are considered more willing to acknowledge others on the grounds of one’s self-worth regardless of superiority, position or social rank. At the organisational level, superiors will be likely to demonstrate limited control and authority with the resultant fostering of greater levels of trust, and harmony between employees.

Subordinates in such settings feel comfortable about approaching and discussing issues with their superiors. These subordinates are also capable of disagreeing and challenging superiors when they are uncomfortable with tasks assigned (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005).

Organisational hierarchies are more likely to be flatter in lower power distance countries and people are likely to be treated more equally in the workplace. As a result, subordinates are more likely to work collaboratively with their managers and participate in decision-making and form better relationships. A relatively low level of power distance is believed to promote a stronger participative and collaborative type of leadership style in organisations.

In contrast, countries with higher scores on this index accept and tolerate the fact that one individual can be more powerful than another depending on their position in the overall social hierarchy. Individuals in high power distance countries acknowledge and show deference to titles, seniority, ranks and privileges. In organisational settings, subordinates are usually dependent on the direction of superiors in order to completing tasks, with most superiors being categorised as ‘autocratic and
paternalistic’ bosses (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, p. 46). High power distance may foster underlying dissatisfaction and conflict among employees and lack of trust among superiors and subordinates. However, in such contexts, subordinates usually follow instructions and rarely refuse orders given by their superiors; their relationships with their peers may be constrained (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005).

In high power distance cultures, subordinates may have limited input in decision-making, less empowerment and may not be consulted for personal preference in work-related matters. In essence, high power distance countries indirectly add to the authority and power given to leaders. It is likely that leaders in high power distance cultures exhibit a leadership style that is fairly autocratic, ‘self-protected’ and ‘humane-oriented’ reflecting leadership characteristics that involve indirect orders, face-saving, and sympathy in order to maintain group harmony. Leaders are also very aware of their status and privileges and often emphasise the differences in power and prestige while dealing with subordinates in the workplace. Subordinates hence usually show less disagreement with their superiors and carry out organisational tasks as directed. Therefore, it is possible that the differences in levels of power distance influence societal behaviours and values of people, which may have direct implications on workplace participation behaviours and attitudes exhibited at organisational level. However, the effect of power distance will depend on whether the society is individualist or collectivist, as explored next.

Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) second dimension categorises cultures into two major delineations known as individualist and collectivist. Cultures defined as individualist are those where ‘the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 75). One example of individualist culture from Germany is that people are believed to form loose relationships in family institutions (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). A classic example is when children leave home once they are grown up and thereafter have minimal family expectations and obligations; i.e. they are seen as ‘having their own life’. In the workplace, employees are treated as individual people with a set of skills that have the potential to contribute to an organisation’s profitability, often in an independent fashion with minimal supervision.
Further, in individualist cultures, Hofstede asserts, recruitment and staffing, promotion and career advancement of employees are strongly based on individual talent and ability to carry out the organisational responsibilities successfully. In essence, individualist cultures in general treat employees as single entities and individual success depends on their ability to perform independently with minimal supervision.

In contrast, collectivist cultures are defined as ‘societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 74). At a societal level, in collectivist cultures, individuals from China grow up with expectations and attachments created by family structures formed through living as a close-knit group. The group becomes an individual identity that is believed to provide security against the complexity of life. In these cultures, loyalty to the group usually develops a prime significance (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). Hence, Hofstede, asserts, there are numerous dependencies between individuals and a great sense of obligation in collectivist societies. In the workplace, employees are regarded as members of a group rather than being seen as an individual with a set of appropriate skills and talents to accomplish tasks. In collectivist cultures, there are preferential treatments among employees depending on their social status and their affiliations. For instance, relatives or a family member of the bosses may not be required to be hard working and, therefore, they might take it easy at work. In addition, recruitment can strongly be influenced by recommendations from influential and powerful people. Sometimes, this may result in close friends and relatives of employees being favoured for jobs over an unknown person; hence, the merit principle is ignored. Seniority is an important consideration when promoting staff and this value is believed to stem from the concept of respect and gratitude towards elder members in the society.

These examples of differences between individualist and collectivist societies, Hofstede argues, illustrate how cultural dimensions may influence and even dictate the attitudes and behaviours of the social group. The manifestation of such differences in cultural norms has the potential to impact on workplace participation.
behaviours. For example, motivation and commitment to management career, aspirations for career advancement and confidence for achieving career advancement may be different between countries defined as having different cultural dimensions. In individualist societies, for instance, individual motivation may largely depend on personal initiative, private interest, necessity, competence and the ability to do the job well. However, in collectivist cultures, motivation may be socially constructed, depending on the needs of the family, group or the overall community. According to House et al. (2004), the accomplishment of group tasks and contributing to the betterment of group needs may be a more powerful motivator in collectivist societies. In terms of the commitment level in individualist cultures, this may be frequently based on cost and effect/benefit multiplication. Individuals are most likely to show commitment and dedication to a task when the rewards are substantial and generous. In contrast, in a collectivist environment, career commitment may be based upon loyalty and responsibility of individuals towards the wellbeing of the group (House et al. 2004).

Importantly, Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) individualist and collectivist index for the countries have been confirmed as stable over the past 30 years by House and colleagues (2004) in recent research in the Globe study. This evidence reinforces the fact that cultures are deeply entrenched and are likely to change very slowly.

Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) typology would suggest that there is a wide gap between these two cultural orientations (individualistic versus collectivism). Other researchers (Myers & Tan 2002; Corbitt et al. 2004) have suggested that Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) fixation of national culture does not map onto the real world situation, as he seems to believe it does.

The third dimension in Hofstede’s study is the masculinity versus femininity index. The masculinity and femininity dimension essentially reflects two main features. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, p. 12) define this as ‘a society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focussed on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concern with quality of life’. The first aspect mirrors the extent
to which masculine cultures regard tough attributes such as aggressiveness, competitiveness and assertiveness to be associated strongly with men and tender characteristics such as caring, nurturing and harmony are attributed to women (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). It is predicted that high ‘masculine’ cultures promote male supremacy and greater ‘macho’ type behaviours in individuals with females taking up subordinate roles in families; if women work in organisations, they are usually helpers or in supporting roles to men. The ‘feminine’ cultures instead are meant to be more congenial to women and value feminine attributes with women being free to progress in their careers and manage in organisations in a similar fashion to their male colleagues.

The second element of the masculinity and femininity dimension explains the expectations that are held towards the role of women and men in society, in particular, the attitudes and behaviours that are deemed appropriate and acceptable for women and men in the society i.e. men are expected to exhibit tough characteristics and women are supposed to demonstrate tender behaviours in cultures with a high masculinity index.

Hence, highly masculine cultures may have implicit guidelines to separate gender roles between women and men in the society. In contrast, a feminine society is defined as one ‘when emotional gender roles overlap: both women and men are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the equality of life’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 120).

For example, in masculine cultures from the UK and the US, Hofstede asserts, men may be regarded positively for possessing assertive, tough and aggressive behaviours and women may be regarded positively for acquiring characteristics such as humility and compassion. However, in highly feminine typed cultures from Sweden and Norway, both women and men are expected to be caring, nurturing and loving regardless of gender differences and focus on quality living for the general benefit of the society (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005 p. 125). In summary, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) proposed that the femininity versus masculinity index is not merely a measure of equality between women and men but that it more accurately refers to emotional
gender roles between women and men. Subsequently, at an organisational level, societies defined as feminine may show greater emphasise for equality in terms of remuneration and rewards, conflict resolution based on conciliation and compromise, and careers not being obligatory for either women or men. Therefore, it can be argued that feminine societies would be likely to promote and encourage larger numbers of professional and qualified women in the workplace because of the importance given to the soft skills such as caring, compassion, humility and modesty. They may also treat women and men equally in terms of expectations in relation to promotion opportunities and career outcomes, in both social roles and organisational roles (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005).

In contrast, in masculine societies such as Turkey and South Korea, opportunities for careers are considered a male domain, while women are expected to remain in the house. There are clear delineations between the roles of women and men in this type of society. Such cultural constraints therefore, are likely to discourage women to take-up professional positions in organisations because masculine cultures regard masculine attributes such as aggression and toughness as effective behaviours both in the society and organisational settings. In contrast, female behaviours of participation, nurturance, collective ideas and compassion are unlikely to be valued as significant attributes for organisational jobs.

Uncertainty avoidance means ‘the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations’ (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 167). The strength of this dimension is observed by measuring the degree of tolerance or intolerance of ambiguity in cultures. Cultures with high scores on the uncertainty avoidance index are those with a low tolerance towards uncertainty and ambiguity, and hence strong regulations and commandments are in place to control any uncertainty in those societies. In contrast, a lower score on the uncertainty avoidance index indicates a much higher tolerance for any ambiguity hence people are more willing to take risks (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005).

Conversely, long-term orientation reflects future direction and planning with a focus on future investment, and long-term profitability through planning with emphasis on
saving money or property. People in societies with high long-term orientation scores are most likely to work very hard and take less time off for holidays. Such societies are very focused on monetary rewards and financial growth. Countries with a high score on this dimension are China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, which are referred to as the ‘Asian Dragons’ for their outstanding economic growth (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). Hence, Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005, p. 210) definition for long-term orientation is ‘the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards—in particular, perseverance and thrift’; and short-term orientation is defined as ‘the fostering of virtues related to the past and present—in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations.’ According to Hofstede (1980), these are the two major dimensions of cultural disparity.

As mentioned previously, Hofstede’s (1080) research, despite being substantially based on a data set that is now almost 50 years old collected during a consulting project that he undertook for IBM in 1960s, has been recognised as a major contributor towards the development of cross-cultural theories and models in the literature today. Since Hofstede’s early publication in 1980, he has written numerous papers and books making confident recommendations for the future conduct of cross-cultural research (Hofstede 1993, 1998, 2001; Hofstede et al. 1998; Hofstede & McCrae 2004; Hofstede et al. 1990). In this subsequent literature, he has repeatedly highlighted that there is a lack of understanding in the literature about other cultural practices and that this knowledge is imperative for research that focuses on management and organisational behaviour. Hofstede (1980) further emphasised that researchers need to broaden and develop knowledge across cultures in order to address this oversight. The Globe study commenced in 1991 was largely informed by Hofstede’s body of research.

The contemporary research on culture on Globe research, led by House, provided a seminal collaborative work by a large group of researchers. The Globe project extended Hofstede’s (1980) earlier work, confirmed his findings, and expanded the initial cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. The Globe study also expanded the cultural dimensions by considering ‘culturally endorsed implicit theories of leadership’ (House et al. 2004, p. 11) and managerial implications within a given
organisational constraint in 62 countries around the world. It is proposed that the divergence in cultural dimensions plays an important role in shaping individual attitudes socially as well as within the organisational context in a given cultural setting. The Globe study therefore broadens our understanding of culture and its influences on shaping the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of people in different cultural groups in a contemporary context. This very sophisticated research project aimed at theory building, specifically focusing on the relationships between cultural paradigms and leadership practices using contemporary cross-cultural findings. One particular focus of the Globe study was on the ‘relationship of culture to concepts of leadership’ (House et al. 2004).

2.4.1 Critique of Hofstede’s theories

An increasing number of scholars argue that there serious flaws in Hofstede cultural theories. Baskerville (2003) and Myers and Tan (2002) maintain that the data which formed the basis of Hofstede’s analysis was not representative of people in those countries and there is such a thing as national culture (Williamson 2002) and there is lack of research on the analysis being a territorially unique nation state (Myers & Tan 2002; McSweeney 2002a; Baskerville 2003).

Myers & Tan (2002) argue that nation states have arisen only recently and point out that nation states do not have their singular and distinct cultures but rather have multiple ethnicities (Baskerville 2003). Hofstede’s model does not allow for the complex relationships between culture and economic indicators (Myers & Tan 2002; Baskerville 2003).

A different line of critique is mounted by McSweeney (2002b) and Baskerville (2003) who make the point that Hofstede’s argument of mental programming is dependent on implicit untested assumptions, and that culture is not observable or recordable in the way that Hofstede so compellingly suggests.

Moreover, the case project sample that Hofstede undertook for IBM in the 1960s is dependent upon observations made within the context of a single, uniform and
monopolistic organisational culture (McSweeney 2002a; Baskerville 2003; Myers & Tan 2002). Baskerville-Morley takes issue with Hofstede’s ‘Cultures Consequences’ arguing that the surveys he employed are not a suitable way of measuring cultural differences; that nations are not the best units for studying culture; that a study of subsidiaries of one company cannot provide information about entire national cultures; that the IBM data set is old and, in a fast changing world now obsolete; and that ultimately four or even five dimensions are not nearly enough to begin to define a culture (Baskerville-Morley 2005, p. 391).

2.5 Other Cultural Dimensions not mentioned in Hofstede and Trompenaars

The following section examines other aspects of culture, attitude and outlook not covered by Hofstede and Trompenaars. Research on the various cultural dimensions have been limited and no general studies can be found that incorporate all the social and cultural factors involved in the uptake of e-learning for the South East Asia regions in particular. The following attributes attempt to fill some of the gaps by identifying some attributes and practices that help contribute to the literature of e-learning adoption in general and for the multicultural regions in particular.

2.5.1 Guanxi

As mentioned above, guanxi is a specifically Chinese term for personal networking. It is used to describe high-trust, long-term relationships that allow individuals to assist one another in a synergistic fashion. However, the pattern of guanxi is by no means confined to Chinese communities but rather refers to universal human behaviour that manifests itself in a variety of ways in different contexts. The importance of personal networks of the guanxi variety can be said to be endemic to teacher environments around the world. Guru-disciple; supervisor-postgraduate student; mentor-mentored: this is the warp and weft of teacher life. When inspirational, visionary early adopters mentor groups and networks of willing learners profound change is possible. Productive guanxi can form spontaneously but there is much that management can do to facilitate, encourage and empower them.
Though little researched, it is clear that cultural factors must influence the development of trust. Cultural factors clearly shape the ways that enthusiasm is inspired and that guidance is given and received.

Luo (2007) provides definitions of guanxi and related concepts, defines how guanxi is established and guanxi bases and types of guanxi bases, important philosophies in establishing guanxi, guanxi in social life and some practical examples.

Corbitt and Thanasankit (2001) describe social codes as a set of conventions that a group of people in a society use to produce and interpret their social interactions and cultural practices, which could be learned with or without training through the process of socialisation. The meaning of information is interpreted via the use of social codes within a culture. Corbitt and Thanasankit. (2001) continue to argue what is an accepted business process in one cultural context is often reinterpreted and adopted differently in a different setting and environment. For example, business in Asian cultures is dominated by guanxi and connections (Corbitt & Thanasankit 2001; Scarborough 1998; Xing 1995). There are people who interpret these connections as offering favours and nepotism and even as corrupt practices. Corbitt and Thanasankit (2001) argue that guanxi is also important to any culture that has been influenced by Chinese culture, for example, Thailand (Jirechiefpattana 1996) and Taiwan (Hwang 1987), where good relationships and personal connections influence the success of business.

The concept of guanxi has been rediscovered by a number of writers in recent years. Guanxi as discussed by Davies (1995) and Corbitt and Thanasankit (2001) as the social interactions, and are cultivated through a person’s network of connections. In their study, the researchers have begun to explore the role that guanxi dynamics play in individual motivation and change management behaviour amongst teacher faculty members involved in the pioneering of online learning IT.

Farh et al. (1998) conducted a research study in the US on the effect of demographic factors on employment outcomes. Two studies were conducted to explore the importance of guanxi and several traditional measures of relational demography in
the Chinese context. In the first study, the influence of the variables on subordinates’ trust in the supervisors as well as on their job performance and psychological commitment to their employers were analysed. In the second study, the authors investigated the importance of those factors for executives in terms of their trust in their connections and perceived business importance of the connections (Farh et al. 1998, p. 471). In the first study, the researchers found some support for the importance of both relational norms on education and guanxi (based on kinship and being a former neighbour) for subordinates trust in their supervisors (Farh et al. 1998, p. 485). In the second study, they found that whilst trust is strongly correlated with guanxi the respondents, paradoxically, did not rank trust highly as an important factor in doing business. This, of course, was contrary to the expectations of the researchers (Farh et al. 1998, p. 485). The authors conclude that the results suggest that there may be different bases for similarity-attraction and social identification in the Western and Eastern contexts (Farh et al. 1998, p. 487). In addition, the strong results for guanxi between business executives and their connections in the second study suggest the possibility that the ‘old boys’ network’ may be present and important in all cultures (Farh et al. 1998, p. 487).

Zhu and Zhange (2007) report research findings from a preliminary discussion of 20 stories collected from business executives of mainland China (Zhu & Zhange 2007, p. 385). The focus was on studying the managers’ views in the northern part of China. The interview questions had two sections with the first asking managers to define guanxi and give their views on communication strategies to enable relationship building and the second section the executives were asked to provide an example of how they initiated and maintained a successful building relationship. Based on the interviews guanxi was defined as a broad social and cultural construct (Zhu & Zhange 2007, p. 386) and emphasised the importance of making friends, developing a connection of feeling between people and continual investment behaviour. This research indicated that the definitions of guanxi emphasised here had a much broader perspective than some of the existing research. In the second section, a review of the 20 success stories about successful building relationships it was revealed that some Chinese managers will resort to a more direct and open communication style as a result of Western influence but the majority prefer a one-
to-one interpersonal relationship (Zhu & Zhange 2007, p. 387). The important elements emphasised by the managers’ stories were friendship, trust, honesty, reciprocity and care in order to achieve guanxi.

Hayes (1996) argues that individuals are becoming more responsible for their own careers. Organisations depend increasingly on teamwork and external partners to complete jobs. In such an environment, the concept of networking becomes vitally important. Hayes examines the dynamics of the contemporary business environment and discusses the different types of network available. He argues that it is essential for networking to be aimed at fostering long-term relationships, and as such, needs careful planning and targeting: without clear objectives and a value system, the ambition becomes worthless. Systematic networking reviews the changing professional and corporate culture in Europe and the US and also the growing impact of the Asian approach (Hayes 1996).

### 2.5.2 Guanxi Bases, Xinyong and Chinese Business Networks

Kiong and Kee (1998) focuses on the social foundations and organisational principles of Chinese business firms in Singapore and Malaysia (Kiong & Kee 1998). Three key aspects of personal relationships are identified: personal control, personal guanxi relationships and interpersonal trust or xinyong. The paper also examines the dynamics of guanxi and xinyong. The article defines guanxi and guanxi bases such as locality and dialect, fictive kinship, work place, social clubs and friendship (Kiong & Kee 1998, pp. 77–79). The article also outlines how guanxi is established by an entrepreneur and maintained (Kiong & Kee 1998, pp. 80–81). In the section, titles informal structures (Kiong & Kee 1998, p. 83), Kiong argues that informal ties are important because they allow traders to handle the dilemma of having to cooperate as well as to compete with each other. The author argues that good guanxi helps to develop reliable xinyong or trust (Kiong & Kee 1998, p. 84). The importance of xinyong is further highlighted (Kiong & Kee 1998, p. 85). The authors also outline the key differences between personal and systems trust (Kiong & Kee 1998, p. 88). This paper argues that personalism is resistant to change once it is established and is not dependent on legal and political stability. The authors suggest
that in order to understand Chinese business practices properly, it is important to not only study the organisation but also consider the institutional environments from which Chinese firms take their organisational principles. Leung et al.’s (2005, p. 528) study incorporates two Chinese cultural variables guanxi (personal relationship) and xinyong (personal trust) with other relational variables that are well defined in the West.

Xin et al.’s (1996) interview data from China are used to test an argument that executives develop personal connections in societies with under-developed legal support for private businesses. In China, such connections are called guanxi. An under-developed legal framework makes private company executives more dependent on guanxi than executives in state-owned or collective-hybrid companies. Compared to the other executives, private company executives considered business connections more important, depended more on connections for protection, had more government connections, gave more unreciprocated gifts, and trusted their connections more.

2.5.3 Academic Guanxi and Bamboo Networking

In this research, the researcher has begun to explore the role that guanxi dynamics play in individual motivation and change management behaviour amongst teacher faculty members involved in the pioneering of online IT learning.

In the higher education sectors, teachers do form good connections and relationships. Academic guanxi are found all around the world but their characteristics, development and dynamics are very much culturally influenced. Guanxi networks entail reciprocity, obligation, and indebtedness among actors, as well as the aesthetic protocol that comes with cultivating these relationships (China Business Review 2004). Guanxi means connection/s.

This study employs the concept of guanxi (particularistic ties built on individual trust) to understand the operation of trust and inspiration in networking and teamwork in an Asian teacher context (Corbitt & Thanasankit 2001). Particular
attention will be given to examining differences between teachers based on gender, cultural orientation (shaped by ethnicity and educational background), and social milieu (determined by education, profession, environment, and related personal preferences including cultural affinity).

In Turkey, the concept of guanxi corresponds to bağlantı kurmak in Turkish (Barton et al. 2007). Bağlantı kurmak in Turkish literally means ‘personal connections’ or ‘personal networks’. Like the metaphor of clumping bamboo in Asia, the local clusters of adopters tend to make easy use the kind of long-range ‘subterranean’ personal connections that are generally not nearly immediately obvious. In Turkey, these connections are often the product of previous mentorship relationships, including the relationships between influential teachers and their former postgraduate students. These relationships tend to work like bamboo runners (Barton et al. 2006): they run off in multiple directions below ground and remain unseen and surface after the early adopters are in a mature phase. The runners, or social groups of adopters, then throw up new clumps that grow up and then send out fresh runners of their own. The Turkish teachers tend to rely on their network of support and learning from each other in small communities built on trust and reciprocal exchanges and mutual encouragement. These collegial communities and networks enable online learning pioneers to build on their long-term orientation (Hofstede 2005) and strive to enrich the teaching-learning exchange with their students through the online environment.

Thus far, the discussion has examined the main key early adopters become change-agents by inspiring small network of their peers and via their guanxi. However, the following will discuss many other cultural benefits relating to different attributes of the uptake of e-learning in higher education institutions that is unique to each individual.

2.5.4 Motivating Teachers: Trust, Inspiration and Teamwork

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), representations of humanity universally show people to be curious, vital, and self-motivated. Some of the keys to the successful take-up and development of online learning in tertiary teaching programs lie with
culture factors. Coercion is, in general, an ineffective management technique. It is rarely ever completely effective, even with a low-skilled labour force. This is partly because if reasons for adopting new practices are not internalised by the staff undertaking them then compliance is poor. It is especially ineffective with semi-autonomous professionals such as tertiary teachers who, by nature and training, are critical of the whims of management. Coercion of teachers tends to produce minimalist responses and unsatisfactory results. Basic compliance might be achieved—but at what cost? A top-down, coercive approach fails to produce creative, innovative solutions and demoralises and dampens enthusiasm. Good e-learning requires inspiring teaching. A heavy, top-down approach can diminish the capacity of an institution for effective change management and lessen the chances of long-term success with e-learning.

2.5.5 Directive Leadership – ‘Herding Cats’

Steele (2002) in his dissertation ‘Herding cats: a descriptive case study of a virtual language’ states that anyone who has owned a cat knows that cats are impossible to herd, and he continues to explain that in his research that participants in his research will go their separate ways to do things no matter what they are asked to do. He finds this as perfect metaphor for understanding what goes on in classroom environment. Managing teachers, it is often said, is like herding cats. Cats, of course, cannot be herded but they can be persuaded, so too with teachers. If one has their trust, understands what motivates them, and allows them to go their own way in their own time, they can respond with enthusiasm. Most teachers already work long hours and battle a tyranny of deadlines. Requiring them to adopt online learning generally requires them to increase their workload, at least in the short-term, and takes time away from other projects.

It needs to be remembered that enthusiastic volunteers consistently give more than reluctant conscripts. When teachers ‘own’ an online learning project—initiating, developing and controlling it—they will give more time than could otherwise be reasonably demanded. Creativity and learning come from within and this is especially evident when it comes to developments in e-learning and online teaching.
In this field, no less than in any other, that which is learned through personal discovery and trust has unique value.

2.5.6 Trust

Teachers developing online learning skills also require a certain level of trust in management. Being convinced that management is correct and committed in its direction of development, teachers’ expectations are reasonable and that effort will be recognised is an essential to the success of the project.

According to Fukuyama (1995), the very fabric community depends on trust. And trust, in turn, is culturally determined (Fukuyama 1995). Trust is the first element of motivation. Motivation requires trust because trust provides confidence to experiment and learn. With online learning, there must be a reasonable degree of trust and confidence in the technology being used. The staff member must have confidence that they will be able to master the technology with reasonable effort in a reasonable period. They must trust the technology not to let them down.

Trust also needs to operate at both the individual and organisational levels of analysis and how trust at the two levels is related and how the mechanisms by which this inherently individual-level phenomenon translates into an organisational-level outcome that is performance (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone 1998). Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone (1998) conducted a sample of 107 buyer-supplier inter-firm relationships in the electrical equipment manufacturing industry were examined and tested using a structural equation model. Their hypotheses linking trust to performance were partially supported but they also had many unexpected findings. The results indicate that interpersonal and inter-organisational trust and related but distinct constructs affect exchange performance in different ways (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone 1998, p. 142).

2.5.7 Kiasu and Losing Face

The Hokkien Chinese word kiasu has entered broad usage in Malaysia and Singapore, even among those not from a Hokkien or other Chinese ethnic
background because of the way it precisely evokes the notion of someone who is simultaneously insecure and competitive and constantly afraid of ‘losing out’. No less necessary is trust in peers and in peer collegiality. There needs to be sufficient trust in collegial goodwill such that team members can rise above competitive sentiment and feelings of kiasu.

The term kiasu originated in the Singapore context and reflects an obsessive concern with getting the most out of every transaction and a desire to get ahead of others. Kiasu means ‘afraid to lose’ in the Chinese Hokkien dialect that is popular in Singapore. The Oxford University Press Dictionary Online (2010) has defined kiasu as afraid of losing out to someone else; anxious not to be disadvantaged; miss an opportunity. Kiasuism (a concocted noun of the adjective kiasu) as an obsessive desire for value for money is hailed as a national fixation in Singapore. It also stems from greed and promotes envy and selfishness and enforces conformity.

Kiasuism has both positive and negative outcomes. The first is a positive side that reveals itself through diligence and hard work by individuals to stay on top of the situation (Chua 1989). An example of this positive kiasu attitude generally leads students to put in extra effort into their work or to seek library resources beyond those required for class assignments. In a study by Ng and Ang (1997), it was found that this kiasu-positive attitude led students to more feedback seeking behaviours, as it is believed to enable the Singaporean students to achieve more than others do. According to Leo (1995), the kiasu person often excels because they have a desire to win. The kiasu people often look for opportunities and take very quick advantage of the situation and ensure that they gain an advantage of the opportunity (Leo 1995).

The other side of kiasuism is negative. It is revealed in personal envy and selfish behaviour (Kagda 1993). Kagda (1993) stated that kiasuism has been dubbed the ‘negative complement of competitiveness’ (Kagda 1993). Kiasuism stems from greed and promotes envy and selfishness. Ho et al. (1998) stated that competition breeds a sense of drive and commitment, while kiasuism stems from greed and promoted envy and selfishness; competition encourages calculated risk taking, whereas kiasuism calls for conformity (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998). Wong (1993), a former Foreign Minister
of Singapore, warned that being *kiasu* should not be an excuse for rudeness, dishonesty and boorish behaviours (Wong 1993).

Singapore youth are examination-oriented and lack curiosity for intellectual pursuit (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998). Ho, Ang and Ng (1998) stated that many Singaporeans have been brought up with most of the major decisions made on their behalf. This often results in a lack of vision and/or initiative, lack of idealism and enthusiasm of work (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998). Ahmad (1992) noted that in early 1980s, 19 per cent students received private tuition. A decade later, it increased more than 32 per cent with students from pre-primary to university. He continued, ‘parents feared that their children will lose out if they do not receive private tuition’ (Ahmad 1992, p.42). Yeo (1995) agreed with Ahmad and states that Singaporean parents go to great lengths in order to secure places for their children in prestigious schools (Yeo 1995). Koh (1995) pointed out that Singaporeans being descendants of migrant coolies and merchants were never cultured scholars.

Many reports of *kiasu* behaviour have been reported in Singapore local daily magazines and newspapers. Ho et al. (1998) report that a local cartoon character called ‘Mr *Kiasu*’ was very popular for the extreme *kiasu* behaviours (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998). For example, as Koh (1995) reports, financially well-to-do parents behave in such a *kiasu* behaviour. Thomas (1993) reports parents and children pile food on their plates at buffet tables, hog library books, and grab free souvenirs from airlines for fear of losing or missing out. Chua (1989) states that this behaviour is not only unique to Singapore, but it has also been observed in Hong Kong and Australia (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998).

Kirby (2007) observes that there have been very few scholarly studies involved in the construct of *kiasuism* (Kirby & Ross 2007), and there are only three works that have examined the concept: Ho et al. (1998), Hwang et al. (2002) and Hwang (2003) all utilised *kiasuism* to understand students’ behaviours. *Kiasuism* is a form of competitiveness and is a set of tactics designed to achieve a desired result (Hwang 2003). Excessive and obsessive behaviours may become a form of hyper-competitiveness (Kirby & Ross 2007). According to Bing (1999), hyper-
competitiveness is a neurotic personality attribute where the desire to win becomes an end in itself (Bing 1999), and the person sees everything as a competition that he/she must win; thus, even the competitive spirit can be destructive or counterproductive (Horney 1937).

There are conceptual similarities between hyper-competitiveness and kiasuism; kiasuism is distinct from hyper-competitiveness. Hyper-competitiveness is seen as a maladaptive behaviour (Kohn 1992); and a neurotic personality behavioural attribute (Horney 1937). According to Kirby (2007), kiasuism is a tactic rather than a maladaptive behaviour (Kirby 2007, p. 110). Kiasuism can lead onto ‘losing face’.

Losing face occurs when an individual (through either his or her own actions or those of people closely related to him or her) fails to meet the essential requirements placed upon him or her by virtue of the social position that he or she occupies. Lin (1935, p. 202) argues that face is ‘impossible to define’. Lin (1935, p. 200) stated that face is that ‘abstract and intangible, it is yet the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated’.

The literal concept of ‘face’ is found in common Chinese usage. The term is a literal translation of the Chinese words lien and mien-tzu (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2004). Hu (1944) makes an important distinction between two Chinese concepts of face, lien and mien-tzu, based on two distinct sets of criteria. According to Hu (1944, p. 45), lien ‘represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego’s moral character’. Lien is both a social sanction for enforcing moral standards and an internalised sanction (Hu 1944, p. 45). Mien-tzu ‘stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in America: a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation’ (Hu 1944, p. 45).

Goffman (1955, p. 213) defines face as the positive social value a person effectively claims for him or herself by the line others assume he or she has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes. He interprets what he calls ‘face-work’ as a subtle style of interpersonal
encounter, found in all societies, calculated to avoid personal embarrassment, or loss of poise, and to maintain for others an impression of self-respect (Goffman 1955).

Hwang et al. (2002) mention that the notion of face is a concern not only of the individual but also of the individual’s family. Thus, a student must avoid poor performance and/or personal embarrassment, as this creates not only loss of individual face but also a loss of family face. Therefore, the notion of face embodies within it a collectivistic dimension and understanding of various social and cultural issues in communities.

An often-overlooked cultural element related to this concept of face is the need for teachers involved in online learning initiatives to have trust in their students. They need to be convinced that trust extended to students, adult to adult, will be rewarded if both parties are to engage with confidence and openness.

Finally, there is the need for teachers to have confidence in the pedagogical merit of online learning. In order for good teachers to be strongly motivated to embrace new technology and explore its potential, there must be a significant level of trust in the educational merits of the project in which they are involved. The next element of motivation is inspiration. There are two aspects to inspiration in this context. The first is the role of inspiration in generating enthusiasm. All creative work requires a certain level of enthusiasm. It is understood that the effectiveness of learning increases with enthusiasm, both for the teacher (learning a new approach) and for the student (who benefits). Enthusiasm can be infectious, and if care is taken to develop favourable circumstances, one or two enthusiastic individuals can seed a wave of interest that sweeps out broadly across an entire school or faculty. The individual school teacher is helpless socially, if left to him. But when he comes into contact with his colleagues, and they with other colleagues, there will be an accumulation of social capital.
2.5.8 Social Capital

Literature on social capital describes bonding, bridging and linking types and show how social capital and education have been inherently linked from the earliest definitions of the concept of social capital. In *The Rural School Community Center*, Hanifan (1916, p. 130) describes the concept of social capital as ‘those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families. If he comes into contact with his neighbour, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community’ (Hanifan 1916). Social capital gained renewed interest some 60 years after Hanifan’s description through the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1983), James Coleman (1988) and Robert Putnam (1995), most notably in ‘Bowling alone: The collapse and the revival of American community’. Putnam (1993, p. 2) defines social capital as ‘a set of horizontal associations among people who have an effect on the productivity of the community or features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’. Putnam’s definition sets the context (individuals, community or organisation), aspects (networks, norms and trust), processes (facilitating coordination and cooperation) and outcome (mutual benefit) of social capital. These components are used in this paper to explore the role of these associations of situated learning by teachers and blended learning face-to-face between student to teacher and student to student.

According to Woolcock (2001), on a practical level, social capital can be of three types: bonding—relations between family, close friends and neighbours; bridging—relations between distant friends, associates and colleagues; and linking—relations with sympathetic individuals in positions of power. Bonding and bridging take on a horizontal structure while linking is vertical. Linking is of significance in the student learning dynamics of knowledge transfer and acquisition as ‘the capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community is a key function of social capital’ (Woolcock 2001, p.12). Woolcock (2001) notes the
Grootaert et al. (2004) outline three different definitions of social capital with the first one referring to the resources an individual can gain from relationships, the second more common form referring to the nature and extent of one’s involvement in various informal networks and formal organisations and the third form, proposed more recently, called ‘linking’ social capital, which is an individual’s ties to people in positions of authority (Grootaert et al. 2004, pp. 3–4). The authors consider six dimensions of social capital: groups and networks; trust and solidarity; collective action and cooperation; information and communication; social cohesion and inclusion; empowerment and political action (Grootaert et al. 2004, p. 5).

Daniel et al. (2003) discuss the ways in which social capital is commonly used as a framework for understanding various social issues in temporal communities, neighbourhoods and groups. In particular, researchers in the social sciences and the humanities have used social capital to understand trust, shared understanding, reciprocal relationships, social network structures, common norms and cooperation, and the roles these entities play in various aspects of temporal communities. Further, Balatti and Falk (2002, p. 281) note ‘social capital—its networks, trust, and shared values—emerges as the missing link in explaining the integrated role of knowledge and identity resources in generating adult learning benefits’. Putnam (2003, p. 4) indicates the networks that constitute social capital serve as conduits for the flow of helpful information that facilitates achieving our goals and indicates social capital ‘to be what the social philosopher Albert Hirschman calls a “moral resource”, that is, a resource whose supply increases rather than decreases through use and which (unlike physical capital) becomes depleted if not used’.

optimal combination of bonding, bridging and linking social capital change over time. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) categorised social capital according to three high-level dimensions: structural, relational and cognitive. The first describes impersonal patterns of ties between people. The second describes personal relationships that influence people’s behaviour. Trust and trustworthiness are a part of this dimension. The third describes resources such as shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning.
Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) use data collected from multiple respondents in all the business units of a large multinational electronics company, this thesis examined the relationships both among the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social capital and between those dimensions and the patterns of resource exchange and product innovation within the company (Tsai & Ghoshal 1998). Social interaction, a manifestation of the structural dimension of social capital, and trust, a manifestation of its relational dimension, were significantly related to the extent of inter-unit resource exchange, which in turn had a significant effect on product innovation.

Social capital is applied as one tenet (the other being cultural awareness) that an alignment between blended culture and blended learning is required for enhancing both teacher and learner performance outcomes in courses at multicultural higher education institutions. The concept of social capital sits well with an educational context. Social capital and particularly its dimensions of trust and reciprocity are vital components of building relationships between teacher2student and student2student, which in turn transform relationships into participation and enhanced teaching and learning outcomes.

Social capital is usually characterised in terms of patterns of cooperation and trust among social networks, concepts that fit squarely within the traditional scope of education. Curiously vague, the concept of social capital is now being harnessed to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition of human capital, the latter having assumed dominance as the overarching rationale for educational policy in Western economies. This discussion explores the impact on social and creative aspects of education, as human capital is measured in terms of ‘the quality of the workforce’ (OECD 2007). Exploring the relationship between the two forms of capital, this discussion argues that economic productivity is insufficient as the main driver for education. We need to examine groups or communities who share some common interests or things they do together as a community.
2.5.9 Communities of Practice

When Lave and Wenger (1991) examined how apprenticeships help people learn and explore the relationships between the two forms of capital, they described COP as ‘the process by which newcomers and old timers become a part of a community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 29). A COP is defined as a ‘group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger 2004, p. 1). Members of a COP are bound together by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about and how they hold each other accountable to this sense of joint enterprise. Members of a COP interact with each other establishing norms and relationships as mutual engagement and make use of communal resources (shared repertoires) such as language, routines, sensibilities, artefacts, tools, stories and styles. In this thesis, the author correlates the teacher tribe to a COP.

For COPs, common, everyday, small events are the most valuable community activities such as informal discussions on how to solve a problem (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). These activities would occur among the teacher tribes during each week of the course as tutorials took place daily. Informal discussions (both in person and online) occurred as rapid flows of information between and among members of the tribe in a way similar to a COP, which Nickols (2000) calls a ‘really effective ‘grapevine’. However, for these activities to occur, members of the tribes had to be able to engage with the community and be trusted as a partner in these interactions.

Choi (2006), in a study exploring COPs as alternative learning models of performance training in corporations found the degree of trust within a COP to be one of the most important factors for sharing tacit knowledge. Raelin (2000) notes COPs are the most suitable learning method not only for the achievement of tacit knowledge but also implicit knowledge that is passed by practice at a group level rather than a personal level. These notions are supported through the experiences of the tribes in this study.
Schwen and Hara (2003) examine the use of COPs in instructional design. Four different case studies are presented that describe different forms of COPs in various settings including consulting and legal firms. The authors then identify the key issues arising across all four cases in the section cross-case discussion (Schwen & Hara 2003, p. 260). The ‘cautionary notes’ presents five problems with COP that the authors argue challenge the widespread enthusiasm about COPs and online communities (Schwen & Hara 2003, p. 261). The authors argue that an alternative might be a design approach and outline four phases of this approach (Schwen & Hara 2003, p. 265): possible design intervention, analysis, design and evaluation and revision.

2.6 Summary

There exists a substantial body of literature on the nature and development of e-learning and the organisational factors that have shaped its development. There is a much smaller body of work that points to the role of cultural and social factors in the adoption, implementation and functioning of e-learning.

This material is useful but it falls short when it comes to explaining patterns of e-learning adoption in Asia. One the one hand, relatively little research has been conducted in Asia, particularly in South East Asia. And on the other hand, that research that has been conducted, both in the West and in Asia, has largely focussed on the experience of students. The body of research looking at the experience of individual teachers and seeking to understand impediments and incentives to the pioneering of e-learning by teachers is very small indeed.

At the same time there is a lively field of writing on culture and its impact on organisational behaviour. This literature has served to raise awareness about the importance of culture in teaching and learning, including in e-learning. Unfortunately, however, a large proportion of this material is based extensively on the narrow foundations laid by Hofstede and Trompenaar. There remains a dearth of new theoretical literature addressing the shortcomings of these earlier writers. Outside of the organisational behaviour and management literature some of the most
promising work has been done in the area of social capital and social networks by scholars such as Putnam and Woolcock.

This study will pay particular attention to the role of social capital and social networks in motivating and directing the behaviour of individual teachers in pioneering e-learning. Rather than focussing on the sort of distinct cultural variables championed by Hofstede and Trompenaar the case studies will explore individual narratives in an attempt to identify common themes informing patterns of e-learning adoption and innovation.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology, Design and Method

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains and describes the overall conceptual framework within which the research was conducted. It used the ‘stories’ of the research participants in the case studies to gain an insight into the uptake of e-learning in higher educational institutions in four Asian universities and one in Australia. As recommended by Merriam (1998, p. 5) and Creswell (1998, p. 17), data was collected with as little interruption as possible to the normal circumstances in which teachers routinely work.

The chapter will outline the methodological approach taken in this study. Since this thesis is focusing on behaviours inferring the influences of cultures in five diverse countries, this thesis will identify and differentiate the various culturally influenced and social factors that affect the way teachers from higher education institutions use IT for online teaching. The cultural background and societal practices of Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia will be reviewed to present the uniqueness of the cultures.

This chapter provides justification for the research approach used in this study. This thesis does not include the use of a quantitative research method. The qualitative approach used in this research was applied through the prism of case studies of the five countries, and within those, more detailed case studies of the experiences and perceptions of teachers.
3.2 Adoption of the Qualitative Research Approach

According to Creswell (1994), the nature of the problem partially determines why a researcher uses a qualitative or quantitative approach for the design of a research study. As for a quantitative study, other researchers have previously studied the problem and, as a result, a body of literature exists, the variables are already known and theories already exist. Qualitative study differs whereby the study is of an exploratory nature and context is very important. There is also a lack of theory in the qualitative study. Qualitative research also has different aims from quantitative research. It answers questions about what is happening in a particular situation and gives detail descriptions of the impression. It also describes in detail what is happening in a conversation, the meaning of the message, feelings, and effects (Bouma & Ling 2004).

In qualitative research, what people say is captured and interpreted to understand the participants’ perspective of a particular event or phenomenon (Burns 2000). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), and Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), the qualitative approach is appropriate to answer questions about the nature of a phenomenon with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomenon from the participant’s perspective.

This research is conducted within a framework of assumptions that determine what questions are legitimate, and how answers may be obtained. In this research, the researcher also aims to illustrate the value of research that is not consistent with the assumptions. These assumptions are similar to approaches such as appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987).

People shape their own social world within themselves. Each person’s social world is also shaped by his or her interactions with others. Meanings are continually constructed and reconstructed both within the individual, and through social interactions. Shared meanings are created through these social interactions, and these shared meanings constitute social reality (Berger & Luckman 1971). The researcher is part of a social relationship through which knowledge and understanding are
constructed. However, life is lived based on the assumption of shared meanings (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). As Kapferer (1986, p. 189) puts it: ‘paradoxically, your experience is made mine; I experience my experience of you’. Although, a researcher’s voice must always be distinct from the participant’s, the researcher’s voice can be grounded in the research participants’ experiences and reflect a shared understanding. Similarly, the researcher’s understanding of the individual’s social world is preconceived, and yet it is also socially constructed through communication with the participants and others during the period of research activity (Burgess-Limerick 1998).

The following are the key features of a qualitative research undertaking:

- The researcher is the main device for data collection and analysis, as she had to seek elaborations and clarifications from the participants.
- Participants’ perspectives and experiences are the key observations and findings; and these are observed and mediated through the researcher’s own perceptions.
- The research involves field research and detailed descriptive findings.

The qualitative approach was applied through the prism of five case studies (Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia). Within those case studies, there are more detailed stories and narratives of experiences, perceptions, social and cultural orientation of particular higher education teachers. The case studies capture the diversity, social and cultural dimensions of the participants from the five case study countries.

3.2.1 Case Study Research

Data was collected via case studies with interviews and observation of participants of the selected teachers from Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia. Myers (1997) by citing other researchers, claimed that case study research can be positivist (Yin 2009) interpretive (Walsham 1995a), or critical. Section 3.6 outlines issues of validity associated with the research. As this research adopted a critical epistemology and data was collected via interviews, issues of truth and knowledge of
the data collected and of the analysis were raised. Such issues needed to be overcome to ensure that any findings were valid and credible.

In qualitative research, there are different research methods available to collect and analyse information. The choice of research method informs the way in which the researcher collects data. Specific research methods also imply different skills, assumptions and research practices (Creswell 1994). As a qualitative approach has been adopted for this research, the researcher wishes to tell different of the selection of interviews in different institutions. The ability of telling this story can be either by being a participant and reporting the story as it unfolds, or as an observer, interviewing participants of the selection and implementation team re-telling the story from the participants’ perspective. Both approaches will be discussed. Creswell (1994, p. 11) stated that the ethnographic researcher ‘studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting during a prolonged period by collecting, primarily, observational data’. This is supported by Leedy (1997) who noted that the ethnographic method focuses itself on ‘discovering cultural patterns in human behaviour; describing the perspective of participants of the culture; and studying the natural settings in which culture is manifested’ (Leedy 1997, p. 159).

As the researcher was not a participant in the organisation or the systems implementation team, an ethnographic approach was not fully adopted for this study. As the researcher was unable to study the implementation process over a period, the alternate data collection method is the case study (multiple case studies). According to Benbasat et al. (1987 p. 370), a case study is an examination of ‘a phenomenon in its natural setting, employing multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities’. Yin (2009) further added that the case study method is an appropriate strategy when the research tries to answer ‘how?’ or ‘why?’ questions, when the researcher has little control over the events being observed, and when the object is a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context. The work by Yin (2009) can be seen as positivist, which the researcher acknowledged. However, as Myers (1997) stated, case study research can be positivist, interpretive, or critical, depending upon the underlying philosophical assumptions of the
researcher. The work by Yin (2009) had been used under a positivist epistemology (Yin 2009; Benbasat et al. 1987).

The work by Walsham (1993) had highlighted an interpretive in-depth use of case study research. Yin (2009, p. 13) claimed that the case study method was ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. In other words, the case study needed boundaries to limit the scope of the research, otherwise the case can go into other phenomena and could create distinct identity in what the researcher was trying to find. The case study needed boundaries that were sufficiently clear and obvious to help the researcher to see what was included within the case and what was excluded from the case (Denscombe, 1998). Yin (2009, p. 13) further argued that case study inquiry ‘copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefit from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’. Although this approach was positivist, through the nature of variables, the idea that multiple sources of data should be collected increases the validity and reliability of any particular study. However, the advantage of a case study was the fact that there was no specific data collection and analysis method, rather a variety of collection and analysis methods that can be used in conjunction to provide triangulation and rigour to the research. This made the case study a comprehensive research strategy (Stake 1994; Yin 2009).

Data from different sources could also be cross-examined to see the consistency of the findings to support the analysis (Denscombe 1998). Data was collected via interviews and observations with selected teachers from different institutions (see Section 3.5). Lee (1989) stated that there is a strong case study tradition in the teacher field of information systems citing the work of Benbasat, et al. (1987), and Markus (1983). Benbasat, et al. (1987, p. 381) argued that case study research was well-suited to information systems research not only because ‘the researcher can study information systems in a natural setting, learn about the state of art, and
generate theories from practice’, but also ‘to understand the nature and complexity of the processes taking place’. Although this work is dated, it does show the usefulness, significance and acceptance of the case study method for performing research in the information systems discipline. There are disadvantages of using case study as the research method (Denscombe 1998).

As the case study method uses only a few examples to represent a wider range of examples that are being investigated, the credibility of generalisation made from the findings is easily criticised (Yin 2009; Denscombe 1998). However, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1989, pp. 13–14, cited in Walsham 1993, p. 15) argued in favour for the use of case studies in post-positivist information systems research, claiming that ‘the argument of non-generalisation is often raised … [however] every particular social relation is the product of generative forces or mechanisms operating at a more global level, and hence the [post-positivist] analysis is an induction from the concrete situation to the social totality beyond the individual case’.

The findings in a case study should not be limited to just the one case, instead being generalised to similar cases because there are the same ‘generative forces’ influencing the social relationships. Drawing upon the argument of Stake (2000), and Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 111), they believed that the term ‘generalisation’ was extreme, claiming that ‘when a generalisation had been devised, no participant of that class, kind, or order can escape its pervasive influence’. There was a notion in the Information Systems discipline that craved for a theory that attempts to explain large categories of phenomena, a grand theory. Rather than focusing on these grand theories, it is believed that theories should be developed that were based on either substantive theories or middle-range theories. Substantive theories were restricted to a particular setting such as group, time, population, or problem, whereas middle-range theories fall between minor working hypotheses of everyday life and the all-inclusive grand theories (Creswell 1994; Merriam 1988).

Stake (2000, p. 439) noted that ‘generalisation should not be emphasised in all research’. It is difficult to define boundaries to limit the scope of the case (Denscombe 1998). If the definitions of the boundaries are not clear enough, the case
becomes easy to be influenced by other factors outside the scope. Conversely, if the boundaries are too inflexible, the case becomes impervious to reflect the nature of boundaries (Denscombe 1998). Benbasat et al. (1987) stated that the boundaries in case study research are not obvious; therefore, it is easy for the case to be influenced by other factors outside the scope. Stake (2000) therefore recommended the researcher to decide which factors should be included in the research and which factors should be ignored; otherwise, it would be difficult to state what the case was.

Stake (1995, p. xi) defined a case study as ‘analysis of the complexity of a single case’. Stake (1995, p. 8) continued to argue that the great benefit of a case study was its capacity to penetrate into the particular details of a situation and how things actually eventuate. This more than compensates for whatever criticisms might be made about the difficulties of generalising from a case study to a universal statement. Yin (2009, p. 33) commented that multiple case studies could to some degree rectify the limitations of a single case study. This is somewhat this thesis seeks to achieve. The universities selected in those five countries as the focus for the present work cover a range of situations within the higher education institutions. This thesis also seeks to meet Creswell’s suggestion that by collecting a wide range of data about individual cases, in-depth analysis is possible by examining the interaction of many variables that affect human decision-making (Creswell 2007). The researcher has ongoing interaction with participants and reflection was able to collect more data to support the findings and gave opportunity for the researcher to learn more from the subject or participants. Therefore, Bouma and Ling (2004) argued that in qualitative research, the researcher was more interactive with the participants than in quantitative research.

Eisenhardt (1989, p. 540) recommends that a high quality cross-comparison can be generated through multiple case studies. She advises that the tactics are driven by the reality that people were notoriously poor processors of information. People, then, will jump to conclusions based on their limited data (Kahneman & Tversky 1973), and will be overtly influenced by the vividness (Nisbett & Ross 1980). People also tend to ignore basic statistical properties (Kahneman & Tversky 1973) or sometimes inadvertently drop disconfirming their evidences (Nisbett & Ross 1980). Eisenhardt
advises on the careful selection of case studies and how information within the case studies could be collated in a manner that revealed where human experience converged and diverged (Eisenhardt 1989). According to Yin (2009, pp. 32–47), if multiple case studies are used to analyse a problem, then it is possible to generate ‘analytical generalisations’.

3.2.2 Multiple Case Studies

Multiple case studies brings individual cases into conversation with one another through the researcher to construct shared realities out of the individual’s perspectives (Rosenwald 1988). Rosenwald’s (1988) synthesis of images or a synthesis of stories where each story reflects a particular vantage point, which becomes part of the overall synthesis. Although the synthesis is constructed in tandem with the participants, and is grounded in the participants stories, it is ultimately the researcher’s own construction (Burgess-Limerick 1998). The participants narrated their stories about their teaching and learning experiences, and about their lives, which form an integral part of the multiple-case study. The participants’ stories, or personal narratives, represent the experiential truth of life.

3.2.3 Stories and Narratives

The researcher selects participants and purposively draws upon their own cultural experiences and understanding of the issue to choose individuals who are considered likely to develop the researcher’s understanding and choice of additional participants. Participants narrated their stories about their experiences in using new technologies for teaching and their lives, which form an integral part of the multiple-case study. These stories, or personal narratives, represent the experiential truth of life rather than the actual experience or the historical truth of the life or whole life (Mann 1992; Minichiello et al. 1995). The way in which the story is constructed is influenced by its historical, social and cultural context (Bruner 1986; Gergen & Gergen 1984). Bruner (1986) took a reflexive view of the production of ethnography and guided by an implicit narrative structure, by stories about people: storytelling.
3.2.4 Ethnography

An ethnographic research method (Hammersley 1995) was also used in this study because it gave research a deeper understanding of social behaviour and subtle human factors through interacting with and ‘living’ in the communities of online educators. People were telling their stories about their experiences and adoption of e-learning.

Interviews are often embedded in ethnography. Malinowski (1922, p. 25) said, ‘to grasp the native’s point of view, to realise his view of his world’. Malinowski (1922) made a very important contribution to the development of observation techniques when he emphasised the value of tabulating and checking the quality of one’s data. For example, he thought that it was important to record clearly whether an observation was direct or indirect or whether it had been made in context or inferred from other behaviours or indeed whether it was an observation made by a third party.

Research observation of human action is a form of ethnography (Anderson 1987; Smith 1968). One of the fundamental issues in ethnography is the extent to which the behaviour of the system is changed significantly by the presence of an observer.

Ethnographers have attempted to solve the dilemma of producing the apparent objectivity of a scientific report while acknowledging their own presence in the research field (Aptekar 1990). The first approach is a ‘disembodied’ ethnography that is based on the assumption that the researcher’s presence did not, in anyway, affect the observations that were made. The second way takes an opposite position and freely acknowledges that the researcher was at the centre stage making the impact of their presence the basis of the report. The third approach is mediated ethnography in which the ethnographer acts as an agent separating the subject’s voice and the author’s voice. The inadequacy of these approaches comes from two problems. First, the dual role of friendships and informants causes emotional strain, which results in the ethnographer not quite telling the whole truth. Second, the ethnographers in a way chose topics, in the manner they collect, record and categorise data, and in the final report, make choices that are a product of personal
choice and selective memory. Aptekar (1990) suggests that ethnographers would be better to take clinical ethnography approach that is combining the self-reflective honesty associated with clinical psychology, and the writing skills of narrative essayists.

By employing an inductive data analysis approach, ethnography allowed a rich theory to emerge from a thick description of the human interactions and cultural context under study. In this study, ethnographic data was collected via participants’ interactions and regular dialogue, including semi-structured interviews, observation and documentation (Fetterman 1998). Participants were selected based on a selected sample of tertiary teachers from those five countries, from as broadly varying cultural backgrounds as possible, who were involved in teams and networks pioneering the development of online learning.

3.2.5 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured conversational interviews are most useful when multiple interviews are conducted with each participant. There are benefits of multiple interviews, which include enhancing rapport (Minichiello et al. 1995) and providing opportunities for the researcher to check understanding (Stewart 1990). The researcher is an active and reflexive learner listening to stories, observing, reconstructing them, censoring them, and conveying them to others (Bruner, 1986; Burgess-Limerick 1998; Marshall 1992). The researcher’s interpretations are shaped by his or her social and historical positioning (Hardings 1987; Yeatman 1991). It is not possible to transcend this positioning by acknowledging it, or by: ‘reflexivity, dialogue, heteroglossia, linguistic play, rhetorical self-consciousness, performative translation, verbatim recording, and first person narrative’ (Geertz 1988, p. 131). Instead, by actively taking the researcher’s positioning into account, this adds depth to interpretation of the participants’ stories; facilitates consideration of alternative interpretations (Hardings 1987; Marshall 1992). The researcher’s biographical details such as substantive interests, philosophical stance, and personal experiences, research, cultural understanding and values, are important perspectives that the researcher brings to bear on the research and should be reported (Henwood & Pidgeon 2003).
Ribbens (1989) states that there are three levels of reciprocity: 1) responding to questions asked by participants; 2) self-disclosure; and 3) establishing a friendship. By establishing friendships with participants, an important part of a reciprocal and collaborative research relationship (Oakley 1990) has been developed.

Stake (2000 p. 437) defines an instrumental case study as where ‘a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role and it facilitates our understanding of something else’. In this situation, the case study provides insight into the social and cultural orientation of adoption of e-learning in higher education institutions. The use of case study in this context relates to Yin’s (2009, p. 13) more general definition of the scope of a case study as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’.

The choice of a philosophical approach in designing a research methodology in information systems has traditionally based on research methods of the natural sciences (Trauth 2001). In contrast, an alternative perspective, that of interpretivism, assumes that knowledge is socially constructed through culture, language, consciousness and shared meanings (Myers 1997). Interpretivism enables research to extend beyond the fact that people communicate to enable further examination of communication. Interpretive approach allows for an understanding of phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them and encompasses the range of interpretations and reflections required to address the complexity of the issues. Walsham (1995b, p. 76) argues that it is desirable in interpretive studies to preserve a considerable degree of openness to the field data, and a willingness to modify initial theories and assumptions. The research design has therefore remained flexible enough to take advantage of any array of influences and techniques. This does not excuse the researcher from providing a comprehensive description of the range of influences on which the research is based and a proposed framework of how the research will be carried out. The influences that affect an interpretive study can be many. It is essential the researcher maintained validity and rigour, and provided a clear explanation of how the research is conducted. This means the researcher had to
recognise and document the influences that affect the work in order to maintain clarity.

The research design is based on an assumption that reality is socially constructed. The research was viewed as an inherently subjective process and understanding that is convincing and useful. People shape their own values and world within themselves. Each person’s social world is also shaped by his or her interactions with others. Meanings are continually constructed and reconstructed both within the individual and through social interactions. Shared meanings are created through these social interactions, and these shared meanings constitute social reality (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Blumer 1969; Burrell & Morgan 1979; Rosenwald 1988).

The research model in Figure 3.1 summarises the factors and influences that the researcher was subjected to in the conduct of the research as laid out in this study. It summarises the influences that come into play in a case study while maintaining the necessary theoretical design perspectives that are required in the interpretive research paradigm. The research model advocates that due regard is given to the macro- and micro-forces that form the context within which the research is carried out. This adds to the amount of data that will require interpretation, but the rich insights that are to be gained from the rigorous conduct of such research will contribute much to information systems research. The conducting of such interpretative studies in areas of the information systems discipline is becoming more prevalent. In the global, networked environment in which many organisations now function, the influences of the macro-environment are strong. The political and legal consequences of operating in a global environment can affect an information system at national, regional and global levels. Infrastructure, industrial relations, the skills of workforce and cultural factors will also impact on information systems and need to be considered in the research design. In the same way, the internal culture, or micro-environment, of an organisation will have an influence on the perspectives and opinions of those who work within it. Therefore, considerations of both micro- and macro-environments have a central role in the research design. This is used to frame a picture of the organisation in order to examine the influences that affect its behaviour and thereby affect the realisation of the benefits of this study.
3.3 Data Collection

A series of semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted over a period of two years. Participants were selected based on purposeful sampling and were chosen to give a broad range of informants from broadly varying cultural backgrounds, who were involved in pioneering the use online IT for tertiary-level teaching. The researcher with permission from each participant recorded these interviews on a mini-disc recorder. The semi-structured interviews lasted for sixty minutes.

By observing the same individuals interviewed over a period, the study was structured to maximise the aspects of longitudinal study. Notes were taken during
observations of their online teaching activities. The researcher transcribed each interview for later analysis after the observations had been concluded.

The data collection procedure in this study used the case studies approach. Case studies accepted and encouraged multiple methods of data collection procedures, in order to increase the credibility, offering triangulation among the collected data. Data was collected for this research through:

- Interviews: ‘Open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings—how individuals conceive their world and how they explain or “make sense” of the important events in their lives’ (McMillan & Schumacher 1993, cited in Leedy 1997, p. 159).
- Document Collection: The collection of documents including letters, personnel files, memos, annual reports and objects such as posters to supplement the other information collection methods.
- Observation of participants’ up-taking new technologies.

This method was selected because, according to Daft and Lengel (1986, p. 560) it was the ‘richest medium because it provided immediate feedback so that interpretation can be checked. It also provided multiple cues via body language and tone of voice’. The researcher collected the information by using written notes and Mini-Disc recordings, and with the permission of each participant, an audiotape-recorder was used in each interview. After each interview, a transcription of the interview was made. Notes were also made during the interview, including reflective notes and demographic information such as the time, date and location of the interview. These aided in providing an audit trail if such a study were to be replicated. As with most types of qualitative research, the style of interviewing changed with each interview. The researcher used what has been referred to as ‘reflection-on experience’ (Boud 1993; Yoong 1999). The interviewer re-evaluated the experience, made connections with prior experience, and planned the appropriate strategy to deal with similar events in the future (Yoong 1999).

However, most interviews were in the form of, and used derivatives of, the following questions. Interviews would typically consist of open-response questions to obtain
data of participant meanings: how individuals conceived their world and how they explained the important events in their lives.

The main questions typically asked were in the form of:

• ‘Could you please tell me about your experiences in using online IT for teaching?’
• ‘In your experience, to what extent is the effectiveness of online teaching influenced by cultural issues?’
• ‘Could you please share with me any anecdotal experiences that you may recall where cultural differences have resulted in difficulties or particular insights?’

The questionnaire was modified slightly for each interview. The questions were slightly altered to suit the culture of the participants:

• ‘Could you please tell me how you and your colleague adapt to the use of e-learning after returning from your studies in UK, US or Australia?’
• ‘In your experience, to what extent does your educational upbringing bring you here?’
• ‘Could you please share with me what are the cultural differences here and when you were abroad?’

This method was used as it allowed the researcher to probe further on issues identified in interviews conducted with participant.

Each interview lasted for 60 minutes. Once the interview was conducted, a transcript of the interview was written and sent to the participant interviewed in order for them to check the interview and provide changes if information was taken out of context. Minor changes were made to some questions, particularly to obtain more information or focus on a particular event. The benefits of collecting documents as a method of data collection according to Yin (2009, p. 80) were that the information contained in documents were: stable, and could be reviewed repeatedly; unobtrusive, as they were not created by participants of the organisation for the purpose of the research; exact, as the information contained exact names, references and details of events; broad in
coverage, spanning a long period; and able to corroborate and augment details given in interviews. In order to collect the data, the researcher had adopted the metaphor of the traveller, as discussed in Kvale (1996).

The researcher could then report what had been described by the participants and what had been supplemented by the documents collected. The researcher was then able to reconstruct a story of the implementation of the enterprise-wide learning management system by the stories given by the participants interviewed. Essentially, the researcher was providing their interpretation on the narratives provided by the participants interviewed. This was similar to the ‘traveller metaphor’, as discussed by Kvale (1996). This metaphor held that ‘the interviewer is a traveller on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. The interviewer-traveller wandered through the landscape and entered into conversations with the people encountered … what the travelling reporter heard and saw was described quantitatively and was reconstructed as stories to be told to the people of the interviewer’s own country’ (Kvale 1996, p. 4). Meanings of the narratives provided by the participants may be differentiated, raising issues of validity and reliability, which are discussed in Section 3.7. The researcher acknowledges that if other researchers were replicating this study, different interpretations may be obtained.

3.4 Interviews Conducted

The interviews and observations took place in the five countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia) over a period of two years. These are shown in Table 3.1.
One of the challenges of the sort of case study approach taken in this research is the amount of space required to reporting the findings. This proved a particular challenge with the Asian case studies and ultimately it was met by reporting only a representative sample of the respondents: eight from Malaysia, three from Indonesia, four from Turkey and four from Singapore. The unique nature of the Australian case study meant that all eight respondents were reported on. Although only 27 respondents are discussed ‘by name’ the responses from all 74 people interviewed shaped the overall analysis.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

As stated earlier, this study had utilised the narrative form of telling the story of the selection universities and selected teachers working in higher education institutions in Asia, Turkey and Australia. Citing the work of Polkinghorne (1988), Mishler...
and Kvale (1996, p. 2000) stated that a narrative ‘contains a temporal sequence, a patterning of happenings. It had a social dimension, someone was telling something to someone. And it had a meaning, a plot giving the story a point and a unit the narratives of a group contribute to constituting the group’s identity.’ Further, ‘the stories are reconstructed with regard to the main points the researcher wanted to communicate. Narratives provided a powerful access to the temporal dimension of human existence’ (Kvale 1996, p. 274).

The aim of this research was to discover and examine the ways in which cultural and other human factors shaped the adoption and used of IT for online teaching. Particular attention would be given to examining differences between teachers based on age, gender, cultural orientation (shaped by ethnicity and educational background), and social milieu (determined by education, profession, environment, and related personal preferences including cultural affinity).

This study also used a reiterative analytical technique of taking the literature review, the conceptual framework and the ideological preconceptions of the researcher and applying it to the data collected. Judgements were made on the data and referrals were made to the literature review to substantiate the author’s personal judgements. Such a technique is termed ‘hermeneutics’. Hermeneutics is primarily concerned with the meaning of text. According to Myers (1997), and Klein and Myers (1999), the basic question is: what is the meaning of text? Myers (1997), and Klein and Myers (1999), drawing on the work of Gadamer (1976), claimed that the hermeneutic cycle helped us in the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its part, in which descriptions were guided by anticipated explanations. Text was interpreted based on iterations of the researcher’s own experience and existing literature and research. These interpretations were used to make judgements about text, creating further reiterations and interpretations of that text until conclusions or theorising suggested further reinterpretation. This cycle is shown below in Figure 3.2. The use of the hermeneutic cycle indicates the impact of the researcher on the analysis of the data. As pointed out in Figure 3.2 below, the stories in the following Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight, were the
researcher’s narratives told by the participants interviewed. This influences how the story is told and acknowledged that other researchers may have different findings.

![Hermeneutic Circle](image)

**Figure 3.2: Hermeneutic Circle**

(Adapted from Thanasankit 1999)

However, the literature also influenced the researcher and the way she interpreted and analysed the story, based on the existing literature. Linked into the concept of the hermeneutic circle, discourse analysis was also employed to make sense of, and analysed the collected interviews and documents. According to Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p. 4), discourse analysis referred to ‘the practice of analysing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treated a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data—speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organisations and institutions—as “texts” or “writings”. The steps of data analysis, indicating the two concurrent methods of interviewing and additional data collection, culminated in the reiterative analysis of the hermeneutic cycle.

This approach also enabled the researcher to describe the organisation from the participants’ perspective, reducing the distance between the researcher and the participants of the study. Data was analysed using a combination of hermeneutics and discourse analysis. The researcher read the complete transcript of each interview and document before analysing the transcript for the creation and transformation of
events or themes. Data was initially coded into as many categories as possible focusing on the ‘events’ as the appropriate unit of analysis (Marshall & Rossman 1989; Creswell 1994; Leedy 1997).

3.5.1 Reporting of data

The approach taken in this study is a qualitative approach focused on discrete case studies and informed by a broader analysis of country specific parameters and conditions that shape the case studies. There is a limit to how far the data in these case studies across these five countries can be extrapolated. The case studies selected here are chosen in order to be reasonably indicative of the country contexts in which they were located but they are not absolutely representative. Consequently, the following discussion should be read as primarily reflecting the circumstances of the specific case studies being discussed. Nevertheless, with due care there is benefit on reflecting more broadly about the trends and indications that can be read from these case studies across the five countries. A concluding section of each of these case study chapters together with the final concluding chapter itself, represent an attempt to do so.

The language used in the various case studies by the respondents is idiosyncratic and only occasionally aligns itself with teacher terminology and conventions. Reporting verbatim all of the material collected in interviews and in field observations would result in a document many times longer than this thesis and is clearly not a practical option. For this reason, a variety of direct quotations and indirect summaries are drawn from each case study and presented in these five chapters. However, in order to reflect some of the complexities and details of the data that cannot be conveyed in this fashion, the concluding section of each chapter will discuss the subjective appraisal of a series of key factors in each of the case studies.

3.6 Issues of Reliability and Validity

Neuman (2000) raised an important consideration for any type of qualitative research, which is the need for high quality data. Qualitative data, by its nature was
subjective, whereby participants subjectively interpreted their experiences within a social context. However, the researcher could remove subjective views to collect quality data, rather, the participants’ descriptions were required to enable the researcher to immerse herself in the study and obtain authentic experiences in the social world of participants. Validity in all qualitative studies relates to the rigor of the description and the credibility of the explanation (Boje 2000).

There were two main types of validity in case study research, internal validity and external validity. The former, internal validity, questions whether the findings or conclusions correctly map the experience. Does the research get at the substance of the story to be told? According to Trochim (2000), internal validity was only relevant in studies that try to establish a causal relationship. It was not relevant in most observational or descriptive studies, for instance, but for studies that assessed the effects of social programs or interventions, internal validity was perhaps the primary consideration. The latter, external validity, questions the degree to which findings were credible and can be generalised to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Kvale (1996) and Neuman (2000), there were activities that could increase the validity of a study. One such activity was prolonged engagement, the investment of sufficient time to learn the ‘culture’, test for misinformation introduced by distortions, either by the researcher and to build trust. The researcher attempted to familiarise herself with the participants, and spoke in the terminology with which participants would be familiar, such as discussing the uptake of e-learning and particular acronyms. Interviews were also conducted at a time that was suitable for them, and in an environment that was familiar to the participant being interviewed, typically their office. This made the participant feel comfortable and encouraged them to discuss their role and the story of the adoption of new technology for teaching and the factors influencing them in the process of up-take.

The other activity performed to increase the validity of a study was through participant checks (Neuman 2000). This activity ensured that participants were given the opportunity to provide the ability to dispute or add their own truth to the findings derived from the study by the researcher, and challenge what were perceived to be
wrong interpretations. Two participant checks were performed in this study. When participants were approached, a consent form and plain language statement was given. This informed participants of the objectives of the study and addressed any ethical issues.

Participants were also asked if the researcher could tape record the interviews, which would then be transcribed. The first participant check involved the researcher sending each participant a copy of the transcript of each interview as soon as it had been transcribed. This allowed participants to change their transcript if desired, including typographical errors and errors by the researcher misinterpreting the recording of the interview. The second participant check was performed at the completion of the results chapter. Changes resulting from the participant checks were minimal and typically involved the researcher fixing small typographical errors; however, some participants wished to add further detail to their story, providing another perspective or truth on a particular phenomenon. These changes did not affect the analysis of the story. Issues of reliability refer to whether the researcher’s findings regarding the participants and events are internally or externally consistent (Neuman 2000; Kvale 1996). Internal consistency questions if the data given was plausible eliminated human deception and ensured that the story given fitted into a coherent picture. By interviewing 74 participants from 22 institutions of the selection team and from different institutions, the researcher believed that all participants gave an accurate story. By the time the researcher interviewed the final participant, the researcher was able to recount the story due to the consistency provided by the participants interviewed. External consistency refers to the ability to cross-check observations and stories given by participants interviewed with other, divergent sources of data (Neuman 2000; Kvale 1996). The researcher used document collection as a method to supplement information given by participants interviewed to verify what they had said against established and recognised documents. This increased the triangulation of the study, ensuring that the information given by participants was accurate, minimising the misinformation, evasions, lies and fronts potentially given by participants interviewed (Neuman 2000; Kvale 1996).
The authenticity of interpretive case studies is often questioned because of doubts over reliability and validity. This related to the perception of a purely anecdotal element to qualitative research and the subjectivity that was evident in it (Garcia & Quek 1997). To distinguish between merely anecdote and good research requires recognition of the crucial role of theory in interpretive research, which was a key argument, raised by Klein and Myers (1999) principle of abstraction and generalisation.

The role of the researcher in interpretive research was very different from that of a positivist researcher. Trauth (1997) discussed the dilemma of the researcher in participating in the context of the research, but needing to remain apart to note and process observations. The researcher was an integral part of the process (the instrument) and depictions of the researcher’s activities are legitimate (Kvale 1996). The researcher’s involvement in the study required a good understanding of the subject matter, a self-questioning approach and a recognition of the bias that the researcher brought to the study (Garcia & Quek, 1997; Walsham 1995). This accorded with the principle of interaction between research and the subjects, that summarised the need for reflection on the way both researcher and the participants communicated and interacted (Klein & Myers 1999). The researcher’s subjective role in the analysis of the data needs to be addressed.

3.7 Researcher’s Subjective Role

The subjective role that the researcher had in the collection and analysis of data must be addressed to highlight that bias rather than make assumptions that it did not affect the study. The researcher was originally from Malaysia and came to further her higher education in Australia in 1980. She then stayed on in Australia. With her tacit knowledge and good understanding of the Asian culture, understanding of the subject matter, she was able to appreciate the complexity of the interpretation of the case studies.

Many experienced ethnographers described the sequence of events that guide their research work in terms of serendipity: serendipitous discoveries and accidental
processes in various social sciences research (Landes 1994; Foster & Ford 2003; Fine & Deegan 1996). By serendipity they do not mean mere chance, but a researcher who is aware and open to learning and takes advantage of circumstances that present themselves; while wondering after its discovery why it ‘took so long’ to arrive at something so obvious (Taleb 2007, p. 166).

The researcher discovered unexpected discoveries (Cunha 2005) during her fieldwork in those five countries that she did her fieldwork. It occurred because she was in the right place at the right time. The researcher drew on ethnographic fieldwork in participant observation and interviewing in those five countries to access some of the reflexive aspects of lived experience \textit{in situ} (performance social science).

\section*{3.8 Summary}

This chapter described the research method used for examining the research question. A justification was provided for the use of qualitative interpretative method. A description was provided for the questionnaire design. The methodology had described the influences that contribute to an interpretive case study and summarised them in the research model. The context of the case studies had been discussed along with the methods of data collections and analysis.

A case study methodology was employed, enabling the researcher to get inside the organisation and conduct multiple interviews and document collection in order to increase the rigour and credibility of the research. The research approach taken had enabled an understanding of the many factors that influenced and affected the uptake of e-learning and allows for a rich stream of findings that informed the case study.

Finally, the key findings from the interviews were analysed and reported. The interpretative findings of the social and cultural factors influencing the uptake of e-learning are discussed in Chapters Four through to Eight. In these chapters the case studies across the five countries are engaged with as individual narratives and the findings reported accordinging.
Chapter Four: Case Study Analysis, Malaysia: E-learning, Social Networks, Strategic Mentoring and Bamboo Networks

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents stories examining data collected from selected teachers working in Malaysian tertiary institutions. As with each of the other four country chapters, it begins with an overview of the broad factors shaping the Malaysian educational environment and then proceeds to examine the experience of a relatively small sample of individual teachers and e-learning programs. In addition, it takes an in-depth qualitative approach to engaging with this case study material based in large part upon semi-structured interviews with key actors.

One of the dominant themes that emerge from the Malaysian stories is that of the importance of social networks and mentor relations in encouraging junior teachers to move forward in the field. A second and related theme that emerges in the Malaysian case study material is the key role played by female teachers in pioneering innovative new approaches to e-learning. The chapter contains four stories that explicitly focus on female teachers. The decision to focus on female university teachers was made on the basis of background research that had indicated that pioneering female teachers represented a particularly important feature of e-learning development in Malaysia (Tembon & Fort 2008).

On the basis of conversations with several respondents it was decided that the mentor relations and social networks found in the Malaysian case studies might be aptly described as ‘bamboo networks’. Bamboo, which happens to be plentiful in the Malaysian peninsula where these case studies are based, spreads from clump to clump through a series of underground connections involving a mature clump of
bamboo sending out a subterranean runner, often over very long distances that then emerge into the open as a new bamboo clump. The metaphor of bamboo networks was readily seized upon by respondents in the Malaysian stories to describe the strong interconnections between initial pioneers in the field and those that they had mentored.

4.2 Communications and E-Readiness

- Telephone: 4.292 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 36
- Telephone: mobile cellular: 27.125 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 31
- Internet hosts: 362, 968 (2009); country comparison to the world: 53
- Internet users: 16.903 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 22
  (Central Intelligence Agency 2010)

Table 4.1: Extracts Taken from EIU (2010) E-readiness Rankings Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2010 Ranking (/70)</th>
<th>2010 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2009 Ranking (/70)</th>
<th>2009 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2008 Ranking (/69)</th>
<th>2008 Score (/10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>8.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>36th</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>38th</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2010) states that as far as Malaysia’s e-readiness is concerned, Malaysia appears well positioned internationally (see Table 4.1 above). In their survey in 2010 on e-readiness, Malaysia was ranked 36th (out of 70), 38th for the year 2009 and 34th (out of 70) for the year 2008. A study conducted by Kaur and Abas (2004) revealed that a number of issues surfaced in the wake of the success of e-learning initiatives at Malaysia’s best known centre for e-learning, Open University Malaysia (OUM). They documented how institutional policy makers and advisors had played a key role in initiating and influencing e-learning initiatives. They noted that while many of the educators and students surveyed were quite ready to take-up e-learning initiatives at their institution there were many others who clearly needed more time to be persuaded on the merits of e-learning.
4.3 Education

- Literacy rate: age 15 and over can read and write (total population: 88.7%)
- Male: 92%
- Female: 85.4%
  (Central Intelligence Agency 2010)

The 2004 E-learning Readiness survey indicated that 59% of the population felt ready for e-learning. Four years since the initial survey, the 2008 E-learning Readiness survey showed that 82.6% of the population was ready for e-learning, that 99.9% have mobile phones and that 71% have access to the internet from home.

4.3.1 Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education

4.3.1.1 Malaysia ICT Policies and Strategies

Since its independence from the British in 1957, Malaysia has made great progress in a number of economic and social developments. Malaysia also enjoys a relatively high standard of living and good levels of social harmony for a multi-racial society. Malaysia launched its first Malaysia Plan in 1966. Since then, nine Malaysia Plans have been launched. The First Malaysia Plan (1966–1970) attempted to solve many of the economic and social problems through a carefully executed strategy and effort at planned social and economic development. It was the first economic plan for the whole of Malaysia—Sabah and Sarawak included—as opposed to just Malaya, to which previous economic plans (such as the Second Malaysian Five Year Plan) had confined themselves. The Plan’s objectives were to promote the welfare of all citizens, and improve the living conditions in rural areas, particularly among low-income groups (Henderson 1977, pp. 174–293).

The Second Malaysia Plan (1971–1975) was introduced with the goal of implementing the Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP). It lasted from 1971 to 1975 and aimed to ‘restructure’ the society of Malaysia and reduce the dominance of Malaysian Chinese and foreign actors in the economy to improve the economic position of the Malays (Shuid & Yunus 2001). It was the successor to the First
Malaysia Plan, which was also intended to specifically tackle the problem of poverty among the Malays. However, the First Malaysia Plan had limited success and may have been a factor in the May 13 Incident in 1969 when race riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur. The Second Malaysia Plan was regarded by some as excessive in its zeal to increase Malay participation in the economy, and the government accordingly scaled back the emphasis on restructuring the economy when the plan ended. Although the Malays have nearly always comprised a majority of the Malaysian population, their economic power has rarely been commensurate. In 1970, the Bumiputra (native Malays) controlled only 1.9 per cent of the Malaysian economy, while the non-Malays (mostly Chinese) held 37.4 per cent, with the rest in foreign hands (Henderson 1977, p. 323).

The Third Malaysia Plan (1976–1980) constituted the second phase in the implementation of the NEP. It built upon the significant economic and social progress attained the Second Malaysia Plan. Malaysia faced the next five years during this plan with confidence (Third Malaysia Plan 1976).

The Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981–1985) proposed a level of development spending of M$42.8 billion and called for acceleration of the NEP goals for Bumiputra economic participation. Major industrial and infrastructural development projects included an M$900 million bridge between Pulau Pinang and the mainland and an M$600 million automobile manufacturing plant, both of which opened in 1985. Recent economic planning has stressed a ‘look East’ policy, with Malaysia attempting to emulate the economic successes of Japan and the Republic of Korea by importing technology from those countries.

The Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986–1990) responded to deteriorating prices for oil and other exports and moved away from the goals of the NEP, aiming instead at promoting foreign investment, particularly in export industries. Mahathir said in the *New Sunday Times* that the Fifth Malaysia Plan would take into ‘account of the recovery of the country’s economy from the effects of the global recession’ (*New Sunday Times*, 1985, p. 2).
The Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991–1995) was to sustain the growth and momentum and to achieve a more balanced development of Malaysia economy. One of the specific strategies undertaken to achieve balanced societal development is to the maintenance of social and political stability. The balanced development of the economy was essential to ensure stability in growth, minimised social conflicts and promoted racial harmony and national unity (Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991, p. 5).

The Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996–2000) put the thrust of the plan to enhance output growth and to further achieve structural transformation and balanced development (Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996). There were also special efforts put in place to upgrade skills and technological development. A plan, Vision 2020, was launched in February 1991 by Prime Minister Mahathir in a speech entitled ‘Malaysia: The Way Forward’ at the Malaysian Business Council (Economic Planning Unit 1991) to achieve a developed country status for Malaysia by the year 2020.

The Seventh Malaysia Plan started the deployment of ICT. The deployment of ICT was an important component of the development of Malaysia (Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996). Under the Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996–2000, the National Information Technology Council (NITC) was established as an advisor and as a think-tank to the government on IT development (Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996). NITC was set up in 1994 with Prime Minister Mahathir as chairperson. The government likewise launched the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) during this development period. The NITC initiated the formulation of a national IT plan and the identification of key programs for the transformation of Malaysian society into a knowledge-based society (Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996).

Malaysia’s IT Agenda was unveiled in 1996 Abu Hassan and Hasim (2008). The National Information Technology Agenda (NITA) was adopted soon thereafter to guide IT development in the country (Abu Hassan & Hasim 2008). Abu Hassan and Hasim (2008) commented that NITA identified ICT as a means to help Malaysia ‘leapfrog from being an industrial society to a post-industrial society—entitled Turning Ripples into Tidal Waves’ (Abu Hassan and Hasim 2008, p. 198). In NITA’s theme Turning Ripples into Tidal Waves, the ‘ripples’ referred to are specific
initiatives by the government such as the MSC. This initiative was aimed at providing the necessary environment to empower the people who were expected to bring about the ‘tidal wave’ of change (Lallana 2004, p. 8). This helped Malaysia develop the basis for the informatisation of Malaysian society. This then moved Malaysia in the use of ICT in all forms of life to improve their economy, productivity and enhanced quality of life: and focus was ICT for development (ICT4D) (Abu Hassan & Hasim 2008).

The Malaysian SMART School was launched in July 1997 by Prime Minister Mahathir as one of the MSC’s Flagship Applications. The aim of the SMART school was to capitalise on leading-edge technologies and the rapid deployment of the MSC’s infrastructure to jumpstart deployment of enabling technology to schools.

The Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001–2005 was developed to provide a stronger, resilient and stable platform for Malaysia’s transition towards a knowledge-based economy (Abu Hassan & Hasim 2008, p. 255). Malaysia faced greater challenges with increasing globalisation and rapid development of technology especially in ICT (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996). The National Vision Policy (NVP) was guided by the strategic challenges of Vision 2020, which set out the directions for Malaysia to become a fully developed nation by 2020 (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996). NVP also aimed to establish a united and progressive Bangsa Malaysia that lived in harmony and engaged in full and fair partnership (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996, p. 4). The Eighth Malaysia Plan’s strategy was mainly to shift the input-driven growth strategy to knowledge-driven to enhance potential output growth and accelerate structural transformation and strengthen socio-economic stability by increasing productivity and efficiency through human resource development through research and development (R&D) activities and science and technology (S&T) manpower by using the latest ICTs (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996). In order to facilitate the growth of knowledge-driven activities, the Malaysian Government continued to upgrade its communication and multimedia infrastructure (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996, p. 8). As part of the effort to enhance accessibility to knowledge, English proficiency was a key priority at the school and tertiary levels (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996, p. 15). The government put in more new institutions and campuses with twinning programmes
with local universities and foreign higher learning institutions that expanded their
distance learning programs. The government continued to improve and provide
adequate accessibility to good education, educational facilities and training and these
were put in place especially in remote areas (Eighth Malaysia Plan 1996, p16).
During the Eighth Plan, the government had invested a large sum of investment in
both the public and private sectors at building the essential ICT infrastructure and
infrastructure expansion in the rural and remote areas so as to expand access to
communication infrastructure (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006).

The Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006–2010 planned to ensure that all Malaysians share the
benefits of a knowledge-based economy. The strategies included the implementation
of ICT infrastructure for universal access (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006, p. 6). Another
major initiative from this Ninth Malaysia Plan was to establish a more robust and
comprehensive plan of action for Bridging the Digital Divide (BDD), which was a
study on a National Strategic Framework for BDD (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006, p. 6).
There was an increased use of the internet, which led to the growth of e-learning
during the Ninth Malaysia Plan. The first five-year blueprint of the National Mission
was outlined in the Ninth Malaysia Plan of the policies, strategies and key programs
that aimed at fulfilling the objectives for the 2006–2010 period (Ninth Malaysia Plan
2006). One of the Ninth Malaysia Plan’s five thrusts was to raise the capacity for
knowledge and innovation and nurture ‘First Class Mentality’ (Ninth Malaysia Plan
2006). The government placed great emphasis on human resource capacity building
and stimulating a culture of innovation in Malaysia. The plan had also moved
towards further advancement and opportunities for women in education and training
in order to help them increase their employability. For the Ninth Plan period, the
advancement of the pervasive ICT environment enabled Malaysians to have more
equitable access and participation in the new and emerging knowledge-driven
economic opportunities (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006).

During the Ninth Plan period, there was an increased use of the internet in the growth
in e-learning (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006). This had led to a potential source of online
education and training in Malaysia. Malaysia SMART school initiatives had
increased opportunities for a number of institutions of higher education for virtual
and e-learning education. MIMOS Berhad (Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems) was given the mandate by NITC to develop Malaysia Grid for Learning (MyGfL), which aimed to promote and support the life-long learning agenda in Malaysia (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006). MyGfL was another national initiative for e-learning. MyGfL’s objectives were:

- To enhance discoverability of e-learning content from heterogeneous sources;
- To develop e-learning standards to ensure conformance and adoption of best practices in e-learning content and systems;
- To provide e-learning systems and tools to enable and support e-learning activities and processes for the purpose of life-long learning;
- To encourage sharing and development of indigenous content to preserve Malaysian values and cultural heritage; and
- To stimulate the economic growth.

Figure 4.1 below shows three critical components of the framework that are addressed through MyGfL initiative: content, standards, and technology. The MyGfL portal (http://www.mygfl.net.my) was made available to the public in September 2004 (Arabee & Mansur 2006). A six month pilot program was started for rural communities to develop on their skill-based learning, basic ICT, Basic English and entrepreneurship (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006). MyGfL leveraged on the readily available infrastructure (Arabee & Mansur 2006). Arabee and Mansur (2006) commented that MyGfL program was aimed to investigate the adoption of e-learning approach by teachers and learners with their course material replaced or supplemented by online materials.
The Ninth Plan foci of ICT development were (Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006, pp.141–142):

- Enhance Malaysia’s position as a global ICT and multimedia hub;
- Expand the communications network to ensure more equitable access to information and services;
- Intensify efforts at BDD;
- Develop the existing cyber cities as well as promoting new cyber centres and MSC multimedia applications;
- Foster new sources of growth in the ICT sector including bioinformatics, a convergence of biotechnology and ICT;
- Develop skilled ICT workforce;
- Accelerate e-learning acculturation; and
- Enhance information security.

### 4.3.2 ICT Policies and Initiatives

#### 4.3.2.1 Malaysian SMART School

The Malaysian SMART School was launched in July 1997 by Prime Minister Mahathir as one of the MSC Flagship Applications. The aim of the SMART school
was to capitalise on leading-edge technologies and the rapid deployment of the MSC’s infrastructure to jumpstart deployment of enabling technology to schools.

*MySchoolNet Website:* A website, MySchoolNet was set up by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide links to enable students and teachers easier access to educational information.

*ICT Training in Schools:* The MOE used a cascade model. This model allowed suitable individuals undergo training and then pass on the training on to other trainers who in turn trained other members in schools. This then disseminated ICT training throughout the school system (Chan 2002).

*The Chinese SMART Schools:* This project was to promote ICT literacy for teachers and students in Malaysia’s Chinese stream primary schools. This project was conducted through the establishment of computer laboratories and the promotion and integration of ICT (Chan 2002).

*Private SMART Schools:* Private schools began adopting and using the SMART School concept by incorporating multimedia technology and worldwide networking and ICT applications in their educational environment (Chan 2002).

*Technology Infrastructure:* Since 1987, Malaysia has been actively involved in reforming and restructuring the telecommunications sector (Kementerian Tenaga Air dan Komunikasi, 2006). The Malaysian government developed an overall technology infrastructure development strategy called the Malaysian Information, Communication and Multimedia Services 886 Strategy (MyICMS 886 Strategy). The numbers 886 refer to eight new services to catalyse and promote the development of eight essential infrastructure that were to generate growth in six areas that had been identified as key for the consumers and business in Malaysia (Ministry of Energy Water and Communication, n.d.).

The eight new services were high-speed broadband, 3G and beyond, mobile TV, digital multimedia broadcasting, digital homes, short-range communication,
VoIP/internet telephony, and universal service provision (USP). The eight essential infrastructures are multi-service convergence networks, 3G cellular networks, satellite networks, next-generation internet protocol (IPv6), home internet adoption, information and network security, competence development, and product design and manufacturing. The six growth areas were content development, ICT education hub, digital multimedia receivers, communication devices, embedded components and devices, and foreign venture (Abu Hassan & Hasim 2006).

In 1990, Malaysia’s internet development, Joint Advanced Integrated Networking (JARING) was launched by Malaysia Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Xue 2005). JARING was the main internet service provider (ISP) in Malaysia, which had the installation of satellite link between Malaysia and the US in 1992 (Xue 2005).

_E-learning Policy in Higher Education:_ Although education was mostly sidelined in favour of socio-economic restructuring programs during the Second Malaysia Plan, some important initiatives were taken during its tenure (Henderson 1977, p. 165). In 1970, Malay, the national language, became the major medium of instruction from primary to tertiary level, replacing English. British standardised examinations were replaced with local ones, and new Malay-language textbooks were introduced. By the end of the plan, most formerly English-based schools had converted the first four years of instruction entirely to the new Malay-medium curriculum (Henderson 1977, p. 171). The education policy of the NEP is one of the plan’s more controversial points.

The Sloan Consortium (2005) published a report on e-learning and defined online learning and e-learning as learning in which the internet is used to deliver 80–100 per cent of the content (Charmonman, 2006, June). Under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010) and second phase of Vision 2020, Prime Minister Ahmad Badawi emphasised building world-class human capital, which was one of the seven strategies for the development of Malaysia. In his speech (Study Malaysia, n.d.):

The Government is interested in continuously developing the people by promoting a ‘Continuous Learning Concept’ at the industry, organisation and individual level in both the public and private sectors. The Government will set up the national ‘Lifelong Learning Council’ and all public and
private higher educational institutions should establish one centre of lifelong learning.

Hussain (2004) reported that with an increase in the demand and challenge for higher education, many institutions in Malaysia had planned for e-learning (Hussain 2004). Hassan (2002) and Hussain (2004) reported that universities in Malaysia had responded actively to this challenge that was guided by the MOE’s strategies to enhance the use of ICT in the e-learning. The MOE’s strategies were:

- The preparation of sufficient and up-to-date tested ICT infrastructure and equipment to all educational institutions;
- The roll-out of ICT curriculum and assessment and the emphasis of integration of ICT in teaching and learning;
- The upgrading of ICT knowledge and skills in students and teachers;
- The increasing usage of ICT in educational management; and
- The upgrading of the maintenance and management of ICT equipment in all educational institutional.

4.4 Malaysian Case Studies Background

A total of 27 one-on-one interviews at seven higher education institutions in Malaysia were conducted over a 12-month period. Within those institutions, more detailed observations of the perceptions and experiences of selected staff members were also captured. This approach was influenced by advocates of case studies such as Stake (1995) who argued that the great benefit of case studies comes from the analysis of the complexity of a single case (Stake 1995) with the ability to penetrate into the particular details of a situation. Similarly, Creswell (2007) argues that by collecting a wide range of data about individual cases in-depth, and by examining the interaction of many variables that impact on users making decision, deep analysis is made possible (Creswell 2007). Further, Yin (2009) suggests that if multiple case studies are used to analyse a situation, then it is possible to discern meaningful patterns or themes (Yin 2009, p. 128) and to develop rich and descriptive narratives of case studies.
Data was collected via case studies with interviews and observations of participants of the selected teachers from Malaysia. The interviews were conducted at seven Malaysian universities with 27 interviewees. From the interviews conducted in Malaysia, seven themes were identified as being significant cultural influences on the uptake of e-learning.

The following sections explore the views of the teachers at OUM, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR) and KDU Management Development Centre (KMDC) as to how, why and how e-learning impact on their meeting the expectations of both the government’s ICT policies and strategies, and their institution administration. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of all respondents have been changed.

Data from the case studies is presented first in the form of vignettes and then later in the form of aggregated assessments of key variables relating to attitudes and approaches to social capital, leadership and teaching.

4.4.1 Stories from Teachers at OUM

This section explores the views of the teachers at OUM as to how cultural factors impact on their uptake of e-learning at their institution. OUM is the seventh private university to be established in Malaysia. OUM is owned by the Multimedia Technology Enhancement Operations (METEOR) Sdn. Bhd. and is a consortium of 11 public universities in Malaysia. OUM was first established in 2000 and was formally inaugurated in August 2001. The intake in 2001 was 753 students (OUM 2010). OUM’s vision is to be the leading provider of Flexible Learning in Malaysia (OUM 2010). OUM’s mission is to widen access to quality education and provide life-long learning opportunities by leveraging on technology, adopting flexible mode of learning, and providing a conducive and engaging learning environment at competitive and affordable cost (OUM 2010). OUM’s educational goal was to provide education through the open and distance learning (ODL) mode to help realise the Malaysian Government’s vision of democratising higher education among working adults, senior citizens, single parents and other special needs groups (OUM
In 2009, there were over 79,000 students in 70 teacher programs (OUM 2010). OUM attracts working adults to upgrade their knowledge and skills for the purpose of career progression and transition and in order to fulfil life-long learning ambitions. OUM has helped bring into existence a new approach to greater flexibility in learning and teaching (OUM 2010).

OUM is the largest ODL institution in Malaysia with the current enrolment exceeding 79,000 students. In terms of teaching and learning, OUM utilises a blended approach that combines printed learning materials as the main learning resource supplemented by face-to-face interactions at regional centres and online learning through a specially designed Learning Management Systems (LMS) called MyLMS. Essentially, OUM MyLMS is an e-learning platform that supports and enhances the teaching and learning activities of OUM teachers, students and administrators. OUM online learning through MyLMS bridges the gap between their f2f tutorials and module-based independent study.

The following sections will examine the experiences of four of the six participants interviewed in this study (for the sake of brevity the experiences of the remaining two, who were not involved directly in hands-on implementation of e-learning, will not be discussed in detail). These four participants are very actively involved in the use of the MyLMS at OUM for teaching.

4.4.1.1 The experience of Wei Wei

‘Wei Wei’ was a lecturer in one of the faculties at OUM. He was new and had only been at OUM for six months when interviewed. Wei Wei was in his mid-thirties and had his primary and secondary education at Chinese schools. Wei Wei had undertaken his undergraduate and his postgraduate studies at a local Malaysian university. He was very hardworking, consciousness and, because of affirmative action policies oriented to assisting ethnic Malays, he had had to achieve extremely good results at high school in order to gain entry into a local university as a Malaysian Chinese. He did his undergraduate degree in Engineering and practiced his engineering career for a few years at a private sector before deciding he could
make a greater contribution in teaching. His passion and desire was to give back what he learnt to the community by being a teacher. He was extremely impressed with the orientation program that he was provided when he first started.

Wei Wei appeared to be reserved when I first met him for the initial interview at OUM. After discovering that we were from the same hometown, he became relaxed considerably. It helped that both Wei Wei and I conversed in our colloquial Hokkien of our hometown. Wei Wei talked about his experiences at OUM and how his early childhood learning, social and cultural upbringing had affected his positive attitude towards e-learning.

When talking about why he had exchanged a potentially lucrative career in engineering for teaching, Wei Wei said ‘after my parents had worked so hard to send me to university, it is now my turn to pay it back by helping the next generation’. A useful way of looking at Wei Wei’s philosophy towards e-learning is by using the concept of ‘pay it forward’. The concept was described by Benjamin Franklin in 1784, and popularised by Robert A. Heinlein in his book Between Planets, published in 1951, and by Catherine Ryan Hyde’s 2000 novel Pay It Forward, which was adapted into a Warner Brothers film, Pay It Forward (Heinlein 1978). The concept is considered a generalised form of reciprocity (give and take) and of doing good deeds for multiples of others in repayment of a good deed that one receives. Paying it forward is a third-party beneficiary concept that involves doing something for someone in response to a good deed done on your behalf or a gift you received. In the 2000 movie Pay it Forward, starring Kevin Spacey and Helen Hunt, a young boy was given a school assignment that required him to find some way to change the world. His response set forth a chain reaction of good deeds and inspired thousands.

The concept was first described by Benjamin Franklin in a letter to Benjamin Webb dated 22 April 1784:

I do not pretend to give such a Sum; I only lend it to you. When you ... meet with another honest Man in similar Distress, you must pay me by lending this Sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the Debt by a like operation, when he shall be able, and shall meet with another opportunity. I hope it may thus go thro’ many hands, before it meets with a Knave that
will stop its Progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money.

The term ‘pay it forward’ was popularised by Heinlein (1978) in his book Between Planets, first published in 1951:

The banker reached into the folds of his gown, pulled out a single credit note. ‘But eat first—a full belly steadies the judgment. Do me the honor of accepting this as our welcome to the newcomer.’

His pride said no; his stomach said YES! Don took it and said, ‘Uh, thanks! That's awfully kind of you. I'll pay it back, first chance.’

‘Instead, pay it forward to some other brother who needs it.’

A different way of expressing the same general principle is found in the dictum of the Australia’s First World War general Sir John Monash:

Adopt as your fundamental creed that you will equip yourself for life, not solely for your own benefit but for the benefit of the whole community.

Monash University. (2010)

Wei Wei believed he was fortunate to have been given access to education through the hard work, moral and financial support, and motivation of his parents and family members. The opportunities that had resulted from his education had had a large impact on his life and he felt obliged to do something to help others. Wei Wei explained that:

One of the most important aspects which I want to do is to return what my family members had given me. I want to help another person and others without wanting for repayment or any return. I don’t have much money to give away but I do strive to help people who cannot afford to have further studies and in need or hunger for knowledge…even at the very small or free gestures which I hope can make a difference in their life because others had made a difference in my life by providing me with education. I realise I cannot save the whole world but if I can save one person, I would be very happy.

Wei Wei had a passion for teaching; it was more than a vocation to him. His wish was to provide quality education to his students so that they would make the most of life and to ‘pay it back’ to his people what he received. The philosophy that Wei Wei
had been brought up with is that ‘you work diligently to provide for future generations so that they may have access to greater opportunities’. According to Hofstede (1997), individualism versus collectivism refers to the extent to which people are expected to stand up for themselves and to choose their own affiliations, or alternatively act predominantly as a member of a life-long group or organisation. For instance, the US is an example of individualism because as individuals, Americans tend to prefer singular achievement. This stems from a cultural upbringing that expects people to be independent from a very early age. Conversely, in many non-Western societies, there is an orientation to collectivism and many tend to prefer to work in groups (Jones & Alony 2007).

Wei Wei had an idea to help his family members and close friends who did not otherwise have opportunities. Wei Wei turned his attention to certain of his nieces and nephews who needed his help and then when those people were successful and thanked him and asked how they might pay him back he told them that instead of paying him back, they should each ‘pay it forward’ by providing to those in need. Wei Wei said that ‘when you teach your son, you teach your son’s son’.

One of Wei Wei’s colleagues at OUM, ‘Arial’, worked with the MyLMS and championed the implementation of learning management system. Wei Wei expressed his appreciation of the intensive mentoring and support that he received by Arial during his first six months at OUM and this appears to have been a significant factor in encouraging him to explore the potential of e-learning.

4.4.1.2 Stories from Arial and Sari

‘Arial’ joined OUM in February 2002. She joined because her ex-boss left their previous university to help set up OUM and needed her support and expertise, including the specialist knowledge that she had recently acquired in the US. She describes herself as being excited and full of new ideas after returning from the US and being very keen to help and implement a new learning management system at OUM. It was, she said, ‘not so much about monetary gain’ but about her passion and interest in transferring her knowledge, skills and expertise that she had gained during
her sabbatical overseas. Nevertheless, she felt that her online teaching and learning expertise was limited and so she continued to keep in touch and built on her network with her mentor that she first developed in the US.

Arial and ‘Sari’ were well-established scholars and researchers also working at OUM. Arial grew up in a Punjabi family in small town in northern Malaysia and Sari grew up in an ethnic Malay household in the national capital. Sari completed her postgraduate studies in the US and still keeps in touch with her peers from US.

Both Arial and Sari described teaching in terms of peer teaching and advocated the benefits of using students as teachers. Whitman (1988) describes the practice and benefits of using students as teachers; and explores different types of peer teaching, strategies for teacher planning, specific peer groups, evaluation studies, and the psychological merits of peer teaching.

‘To teach is to learn twice’ by Joseph Joubert (French Essayist, 1754–1824)

Arial described this philosophical approach ‘to teach is to learn twice’ in e-learning. Arial believes in life-long learning. She said, ‘you live to learn’. ‘You give, you learn’. She believed that technology needs to be accessible for all or else people’s mindset would be hard to change. For self-managed learning, students need to be in charge. Arial explained that the efforts in higher education to use students as teachers, thereby providing them with the benefits traditionally enjoyed by their professors: the opportunity to learn by teaching. Weiss and Needlman (1998) describe the formal teaching activities of paediatric residents and how they accessed formal teaching that affected them. Indeed, it was ‘to teach is to learn twice’ (Weiss & Needlman 1998). Arial freely offers and welcomes feedback as a learning mechanism. She believes that education is about sharing public knowledge.

Arial and Sari felt that their colleague’s attitudes to the use of online learning are very much influenced by policy. If there is a policy that actively encourages teachers to use online learning, then, they are more likely to do so. At their university, teachers were informed upfront that their job scope includes a component of online
teaching; therefore, there was not the same level of resistance as with older, more established universities to the use of online learning.

Arial observed that, ‘a good teacher is like a candle—it consumes itself to light the way for others’. She said that her teacher used to say to her: ‘the dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called “truth”’.

With that image firmly in her mind, she continues to push and lead her staff in a unified approach towards the use of online learning: ‘so we can make sure they [other teachers involved in teaching or tutoring the course] will join together with us. Otherwise our students will suffer.’ Arial believes in personalising online learning and claims that it is an exciting area. This involves pushing personalised content to students. Personalising can benefit students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Arial describes this as: ‘personalised online learning—designed to help you gauge your own learning needs and identify the concepts on which you most need to focus your study time’.

Both Arial and Sari aspire to be brilliant teachers. As Sari pointed out, ‘one looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings’. Arial described how she mentored and ‘championed’ several junior colleagues. She talked about how she became deeply involved in online learning. The fact that we were from the same social environment or milieu, through different ethnic backgrounds, was a significant factor in enabling us to rapidly progress to an intimate and frank exchange of experiences and observations in online teaching.

Despite years of significant hype about ‘going online’, e-learning in South East Asia is not nearly as widely used as might be expected. Malaysia may have its Cyberjaya hi-tech city in the form of Putrajaya, the new satellite sister city to the south of the capital Kuala Lumpur, but there are still very few extensive internet-centred programs around, especially in the teaching and learning area.
Although Arial had undertaken both undergraduate and doctoral studies at a local Malaysian university, she had experienced several brief but significant periods of working in US universities. The most recent of these occurred in 2001, when she went to an US university to do her sabbatical. Whilst there, she met with a number of key people whom she describes as having changed her life. In particular, she met a very motivated and enthusiastic professor who is now her key mentor and champion in online learning and teaching. She said that she learnt so much during her brief time there that the sabbatical visit represents a turning point for her professionally. Essentially, she developed a social network outside her Malaysian culture.

Arial would describe herself as a collectivist in that she holds to collectivist values, whereas her US mentor belongs to a society labelled individualistic. They both get along very well despite apparently occupying two opposite poles (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 82). Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2005) typology would suggest that there is a wide gap between these two cultural orientations (individualistic versus collectivism). Other researchers (Myers & Tan 2002; Corbitt, et al. 2004) have suggested that Hofstede and Hofstede’s fixation of national culture does not map onto the real world situation, as he seems to believe it does. In this case, for example, categorising American as individualist and Asian as collectivistic, does not really help us understand the dynamics of the relationship between Arial and her mentor. There are possibly two elements here. Firstly, they both have learnt to adjust to and respect each other’s values, cultures and personalities. Secondly, it seems likely that these two individuals are never quite the polar opposites that Hofstede and Hofstede theory would suggest they are. In any case, they have certainly learned to transcend the bounds of national cultural orientation.

As it happens, I have had opportunity to engage Arial’s mentor in a number of extended interviews over several years. Having come to know him reasonably well, I would argue that in fact, Arial’s American mentor displays considerable collectivist characteristics. It is probably no coincidence that he comes from America’s small-town mid-west where collectivism is a more dominant trait. He is certainly somebody who believes deeply in principle to pay it forward, and clearly finds great satisfaction in mentoring younger colleagues whether in America or in Asia.
She continues to find encouragement from her American mentor to push ahead and promote her passion for online education. Nevertheless, Arial feels very much alone in carrying on this work. Through hard work, she slowly built up a small network of supporters locally and overseas who shared her passion for online teaching and learning. Arial’s story suggests that elemental principles behind the concept of what the Chinese call *guanxi* transcend the boundaries of Asian culture. American culture is said to be individualistic and to contrast sharply with the collectivistic culture with which Arial identifies (Hofstede 2001). Yet clearly, Arial’s case is one in which professional or academic *guanxi* extends beyond national culture. She builds more on networking and that networking is not just within the collectivist people but because they share the online passion. In other words, through these interactions, Arial has developed a professional (academic) *guanxi* network outside her local institution. Arial’s expertise in online teaching was not well utilised within her institution. They have a similar culture but not the same passion for their professional work, significantly lacking the passion for online teaching and learning. This demonstrates that *guanxi* networks can extend beyond national culture. Professional (academic) *guanxi* may extend beyond the realm of collectivism versus individualism (Hofstede 2001). The observation of Myers and Tan (2002) that we should move beyond the concept of ‘national culture’ to one that recognises the dynamic nature of culture certainly makes good sense when studying a society as complex as that found in Malaysia.

In many ways, the metaphor of bamboo shooting illustrates well the *guanxi* social capital dynamics involved in cases like Arial’s case. Arial built her academic *guanxi* networks based on both her personal and social connections, her *guanxi* based her Punjabi ethnicity and her *guanxi* derived from professional contacts.

Arial recounted how it took her long time, and much discouragement, pain and sorrow before she saw the fruits of her labour. She had very few supporters from her institution who shared her vision. She had to increase her normal workload to continue her passion for online teaching and learning. Her time developing online innovation projects was not fully rewarded by her management team. She also
experienced a lack of technical support from her institution during the initial stages. Therefore, to overcome the issues, she turned to support and networks from her mentors from overseas. Slowly, she began building a network of teachers both within her institution and outside her institution who were also interested in online teaching and learning.

After several years of work, she was finally rewarded with new clusters of colleagues and new clumps of growth. Although its passage underground long remained invisible, finally the bamboo sent up new shoots and surfaced with fresh growth. Arial builds on her cross-cultural professional (academic) guanxi to build her group of support for online teaching innovations.

Today, Arial closely mentors several younger colleagues, for example, ‘Haranah’, who is very grateful for her support and encouragement. She encourages Haranah in regular exchanges online. She helps her in projects and encourages her in her interests. Their relationship is based on deep trust between herself and a small network based on mutual encouragement.

4.4.1.3 Haranah and Arial’s stories

‘Haranah’ initially started not knowing much about online teaching and learning. Arial trained her, encouraged her and invited her to join her in related research and writing projects. Then they both encountered new roadblocks. Haranah reports being very struck by the fact that Arial was always willing to share her thoughts and ideas freely with her without holding back. In local parlance, Haranah describes Arial as not being a ‘kiasu type’, adding that she is ‘very generous’. The Hokkien word kiasu has entered broad usage in Malaysia and Singapore, even among those not from a Hokkien or other Chinese ethnic backgrounds because of the way it precisely evokes the notion of someone who is simultaneously insecure and competitive and constantly afraid of ‘losing out’.

Arial’s experience had convinced both of them that well-defined outcomes and remuneration, prospects for further career advancements and other tangible benefits
are significant factors in encouraging the adoption of online teaching and learning in most Malaysian institutions.

The current teaching statistics at OUM point to widespread adoption of online teaching and learning principles. Nearly 80% of their courses are delivered online. All new staff are required to attend online workshops, seminars and tutorials. The situation when Arial first started, that very few courses were offered online and she met with considerable resistance among her colleagues regarding moving to online teaching. It would appear that to a considerable degree, the transformation of the institution in respect to online teaching and learning is contributable to the catalytic influence of early pioneers such as Arial and Haranah.

Haranah noticed that people change their behaviour to suit cultural situations in a variety of ways:

- **Use of language.** Generally, people are more adaptive to the language. For example, if I noticed that my student from Sabah is more comfortable using a certain tone, then I will try to adapt to his tone.

- **I also try to impress my tone of language upon the students so that they ‘improve’ their communication styles.**

- **Responding to one another:** Here cultural sensitiveness in important. More in terms of mannerisms rather than content. For example in some cultures, a ‘sort-of-permission’ is sought in responding. So if we are not sensitive to this, it might lead to negative or no communication. Offending another is very visible in the online forums. This factor may need higher levels of discovery and eventually training.

  … but only if the person have had previous interactions of the culture, via intensive reading, watching movies, interaction etc. Otherwise it is rather difficult. This is due to the fact that we do not have the authentic mental schemata to formulate more probing questions to ask for clarifications.

Hofstede’s (2001) power distance factor is another way of describing different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality among members within a society, which can develop into inequalities in power and wealth. In a high power distance environment, teachers and educators are treated with great respect and honour and have abundant influence and power in the classroom (Hofstede 2001). This dynamic features prominently in the next two case studies.
4.4.2 Stories from Teachers at KMDC

This section explores the views of the teachers at KMDC as to how cultural factors impact on their uptake of e-learning at their institution. KMDC describes its mission as being one of creating value and enrichment in life-long Learning (KMDC 2010). KDU College (KDU) is a private college founded in Malaysia in 1983. Its first campus was established in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia and the second campus was later built in Penang, Malaysia (KDU College 2010). KDU is wholly owned by the Paramount Corporation Berhad Group, which was a real estate company that then diversified into education through KDU, KMDC and Sekolah Sri KDU (KDU College 2010). The college seeks to raise educational awareness between students and teachers to provide a good blend of formal and informal education. KMDC is an executive learning and resource centre offering world-class professional and enterprising leading edge programs worldwide and locally (KMDC 2010). KMDC was an expansion of the KDU Centre for Professional Education and Development (CPED), which has been operating as a professional development centre under KDU College Sdn Bhd since 1997 (KMDC 2010). KMDC Sdn Bhd was established in June 2002 and provided graduate students, working professionals and corporate organisations to learn and re-learn in life-long learning environment (KMDC 2010). KMDC describes its core values as integrity, innovation and quality. KMDC management claims to understand what motivates individuals to succeed and advance in leadership positions. Their aim is to empower their fellow teachers to become a life-long ‘learning friends’ through their programs and connections (KMDC 2010). The case of ‘Howard’ serves as a good illustration of this dynamic.

4.4.2.1 Howard’s stories

‘Howard’ was educated in Chinese-medium primary and secondary schools in North Malaysia. After he graduated from high school, he studied in Australia and earned several qualifications from Australian universities. Howard then earned an MBA from the US and later moved on to further his studies in Australia where he completed his studies in IT and e-commerce. He later graduated with Master of
Information Technology and Master of Commerce (e-commerce) in Australia. Whilst studying in Australia, he taught himself many new IT skills and set up his own websites. After his studies in Australia, he returned to Malaysia to work as a journalist. Whilst working as a journalist with a newspaper company, he pioneered the use of internet applications to deliver messages and, then, later input materials online. He was an early adopter in using e-mail for personal communication such as Bulletin Board to post news items and notices for staff.

Howard also took the lead role in designing and implementing two new diploma programs (namely Marketing and Information Systems) before he joined KMDC. Whilst he was working at the private university, he researched the use of e-learning internet based portals to deliver his course materials online. He was very innovative. He supplemented his teaching resources with internet resources by uploading electronic materials. Howard initiated uploading his online materials by employing a user-friendly platform to deliver the resources.

Not long after using this new delivery method, he was referred by his colleagues as an early adopter and user of online for teaching. He then became a ‘champion’. He found that students were very receptive to his new ways of teaching. He continued to find new ways to deliver his teaching materials. He recounted how he was confronted by colleagues who were not receptive in his new approach to flexible delivery and made life very difficult for him. Much later, however, his colleagues and his managers saw the ‘fruits’ and results and were very impressed with him. They then wanted to learn from him and find out how to use the new tools and ways of teaching.

He recounted how he was then promoted and respected as a faculty moderator and innovator from the subsidiary overseas institutions. When the department heads came to inspect the quality and teacher standards, and they noticed his expertise, he said, ‘they were very impressed’. Word then spread about his entrepreneurship and his innovative mindset, and he was head-hunted to join another new innovative private higher education institution, which had links with an Australian university. The Malaysian management at that new institution was mainly Chinese (70 per cent).
The management was aware of the importance of the technology and online learning. The management was so impressed with Howard’s innovation and entrepreneurial skills that they initiated the implementation of the use of flexible online learning by using a push ‘top-down’ approach, which proved very effective in that particular context.

Howard believes that online learning is exciting because it gives great flexibility to staff and pleases students when it facilitates a ‘customers first’ approach. He sought to make the students more aware of e-learning by requiring them to use e-learning in their assessment submissions. He introduced his requirements one clause at a time and stage-by-stage. He explained:

Whilst during the development stage, we had to take a ‘carrot and stick’ approach. We had to have two different types of rates/payments for our casual staff. Those with eLearning experience and willing to teach using online would receive a higher salary.

Whilst working at the new institution, he collaborated with several key institutional pioneers and managers. One of the key pioneers was his immediate manager and the other was the Chairman of the institution. The Chairman was very appreciative and receptive of e-learning. Howard explained that, ‘most things that appeared to empower staff, the Chairman would motivate staff and got things moving. There was a sense of trust and mentoring spirit from the Chairman’. Howard would pass on information about any innovation to his subordinates. He did face some resistance from administrative and teaching staff. He interpreted their resistance as being largely based on the fear that they would not be able to cope with new technology, the lack of experience, and a fear of losing face when they were seen to struggle with using new technology.

Howard organised and conducted professional development workshop sessions (going well beyond his job scope) to train all the full-time and part-time staff. He organised them as a group so they could help and share ideas with each other; and because, he said, he did not want staff to feel singled out during the training. He wanted to introduce a collective approach where knowledge could be learned and shared as a team. He reported that his observation from participating in numerous
workshops sessions was that he felt that staff were more at ease with working and training collectively.

Howard explained that, in his experience, Malaysians are very conservative when it comes to new ideas. He said that most new staff would take time for the new ideas to sink in first before they were willing to adopt them. He said that, ‘staff tend to let people do it first—and have a “we will wait and see what happens attitude”’. He also said that staff were like ‘sheep that follow the shepherd. In the long term, I become a shepherd. Staff will follow me and the way I do things.’

He continued to say that, ‘I am now a shepherd and I am bringing my sheep with me on the road’. He confided that his sheep tend to go anywhere. He said, ‘we will need to push and pull them back in line from time to time. We have to remember that working professionals cannot be pushed too much. Give them more time, they will be able to follow and adopt it, if they see the fruits.’

He felt that guanxi networks best developed when early adopters establish themselves. They become pioneers and propagated new skills and exchanged ideas and network. This, then, becomes teacher sharing and mentoring.

Howard asserted that there seemed to be a difference between different Chinese communities and other ethnic groups. Different ethnic groups have different cultural orientations. Therefore, the understanding of guanxi networks will vary from group to group. For example, for the ethnic Malays in Malaysia, they shared things even when they were not related to each other. The Chinese, however, tended to mostly share things with their relatives or the people with whom they are close.

Howard has taken the ‘Asian’ entrepreneurial spirit and applied it to online learning in Malaysia. Howard is the sort of person who does not want to be locked into a job. He is someone who has many skills and a true pioneer spirit. He can be said to have his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground. Paradoxically, this entrepreneurial spirit fits nicely with conservative Malaysians precisely because the cautious
majority looks to the entrepreneurial minority to lead the way in opening-up new fields.

Howard explains his approach in unambiguous terms: ‘a life without risk is a life without living. Who wants to live a life without risks? You never achieve any success or happiness in life without taking risks. But I try to minimise the severity of the risks by simply planning ahead.’ Lumpkin and Dess (1996) point out that an entrepreneurial mindset is also distinct from Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), which is a collective identity in young entrepreneurial firms that foster innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking among participants in the firm (Lumpkin & Dess 1996). In their terms, Howard displays an entrepreneurial mindset as a loan pioneer sure of himself and what he is doing.

Howard indicated he believed that if top management of a learning institution understood the importance of e-learning, then it would be much easier to spread this form of learning across courses and faculties. Howard developed an online portal that addressed the particular needs of teachers and students and value added to the learning environment of the university. Senges (2007) argues that knowledge entrepreneurship allowed universities to reap the positive effects of the vitalising qualities of the entrepreneurial spirit, while not falling into the neo-liberal ‘education as business’ trap. Senges (2007) argues that knowledge entrepreneurship was a constructive contribution because rather than arguing against, or for ‘entrepreneurial universities’, it was attempting to reframe ‘entrepreneurial’ to become more adequate in the teacher context. It can be described as the ‘what you reap is what you sow’ approach, as described in Senges (2007).

Fuller (2006) describes the university as an intrinsically entrepreneurial institution. He set out how the university constantly creates and creatively destructs knowledge. In his view, the university creates knowledge through research. In a second step, that knowledge is de-constructed through its dissemination to the students and the industry. Fuller discusses this process as immanently entrepreneurial because some of the students become the researchers of tomorrow, who then, develop new knowledge through the creative destruction of the known. In the case above, Howard
had a very creative and innovative entrepreneurial mindset (Senges 2007). Senges (2007) stated that entrepreneurship was the ‘creative mindset’. Faltin (2001) explained that the ‘creative mindset’ helped entrepreneurs to create new ideas and bring these to the market in a way that is appropriate to create value for an external audience (Senges 2007). Senges (2007) continues to argue that this is in contrast to a businessperson who needs to deal with creating order, through controlling administrating practices.

Howard, in his experience as an entrepreneur shared that, ‘they tend to let new ideas sink in and then adopt because of their mindset. They let other people do things first, adopt a “wait and see” approach. They are like sheep that follow the shepherd. When you take sheep on the road they go anywhere, you will need to push and direct them.’ Howard continued to explain that, ‘students can be like sheep. Working professionals however should not be pushed, or will not accept being pushed. If you give them more time they will be able to adapt. Howard’s manager, ‘Medley’ can be described as someone who does just what she says she will do and as leader who drives change through personal example.

4.4.2.2 Experiences by Medley

‘Medley’ was employed as a manager at KMDC. Medley could be described as representing a female Asian entrepreneur. Dhaliwal (1998) writes about how Asian entrepreneurs have been eulogised by the popular press that was keen to laud free enterprise heroes, while more detached teacher commentary had sought to identify the key success factors for this entrepreneurial minority. She argues that female Asian entrepreneurs and Asian women working in ‘family’ businesses have typically received much less attention (Dhaliwal 1998). Prior to becoming a manager at KMDC, Medley gained experience and a higher degree at an Australian university. Medley worked in close partnership with her employers to jointly design programs. She had also developed a Web-based learning (WBL) application with a unique approach to education that had attracted international attention and led to the setting up of a number of international centres. She was also involved in helping over 2,000 people gain teacher recognition for their work experience.
Medley explained that:

The coming together of KMDC and our partners fully equips KMDC with the expertise and support to provide an ideal environment for all our students and partners to network with professionals in an open exchange of knowledge, experiences, ideas and ideals.

She had also helped organisations and institutions in Malaysia improve and enhance in-house training systems. She believes that WBL allowed employees to update skills and obtain reliable qualifications. She added that, ‘this is vital in times of change’. Medley has inspired and driven home what pushed individuals and institutions to succeed, and the need to go beyond traditional classroom settings. She commented that, ‘today’s business environment is highly competitive and the credentials of professionals matter. Finding, developing and retraining the right people remain areas of the greatest manpower concerns in business today.’

In the Malaysian context, Medley had noticed that older staff knew they had to change but were reluctant to ask for help. They tend to keep to themselves for fear of losing face. This was a common theme running through the Malaysian and Singaporean case studies. Teaching staff are now established at a younger age and come from very different generations and concomitant cultural orientations to their managers. Many are overseas trained and have gained exposure to IT and online learning. They are not afraid to try new technology.

Medley believes that for changes to occur in the uptake of online learning, teachers and university policy makers must think outside the box: ‘pioneers of online learning need to be planting influences into the minds of users and management. Grassroots are one way to drive or influence change.’

Medley maintains that:

Management has to put their money where their mouth is. What I mean is that we have to put in the resources in building up our staff in order to drive the change. For example, it could refer to someone who should do what she/he says—Walk your talk’.
There are numerous similar phrases in English, for example, ‘put your money where your mouth is’. ‘Walk your talk’ is intrinsically the same and equivalent to ‘practice what you preach’. It comes from the fact that priests and preachers tell you what the right thing to do is but they do not do it themselves, so first they should do what they tell others to do. If you say that someone talks the talk but does not walk the walk, you mean that they do not act in a way that agrees with the things they say (Heacock 2003). Medley is very much an entrepreneur who acts as she speaks, someone who ‘talks the talk and walk the walk’. She is very well respected by her staff, colleagues and management.

4.4.3 Story from the Teacher at UNITAR

The following sections will examine the challenges of one of the three participants interviewed in this study. The other two participants were both championed and mentored by their boss, ‘Zodd’. All the three participants interviewed are very actively involved in the use of their in-house learning management systems for teaching.

This section explores the views of a selection of teachers at UNITAR and cultural factors apparently affect their uptake of e-learning at their institution.

UNITAR was established on 18 December 1997. UNITAR was one of the first private universities in Malaysia and it was named after Malaysia's second Prime Minister, the late YAB Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR 2010). UNITAR had its first batch of 162 students in September 1998. On 21 December 1998, Tun Abdul Razak’s eldest son, Minister of Education Najib Tun Abdul Razak (now Prime Minister of Malaysia), officially launched the university. UNITAR had become one of the first private learning institutions in Malaysia to receive the ISO 9001:2000 Standards & Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM) certification. UNITAR was awarded the prestigious MSC status certification for the university’s commitment in integrating technology and innovation in its teaching and learning (UNITAR 2010). UNITAR is a relatively new university and is rapidly establishing itself. UNITAR’s vision is to pioneer quality education in niche market within
cultural diversity (UNITAR 2010). UNITAR’s mission is to provide an innovative and market driven education integrated with global perspective in the areas of business and management (UNITAR 2010). One of the key pioneers, Zodd is very innovative and generous in providing innovative and integrated market driven education to his students and peers.

4.4.3.1 Experiences by Zodd

‘Zodd’ was a professor and a dean at one of the faculties at UNITAR. Zodd and his family went to America to further his postgraduate studies. After Zodd completed his PhD in the US, he was offered an teacher position at a well-regarded US university. Nevertheless, he and his family decided to return to Malaysia. He describes himself as being very patriotic and feeling that he owed a debt to his people after he graduated with his PhD from the US.

Upon his return to Malaysia, Zodd worked at a new private university where the university’s vision was to pioneer quality education in niche market within cultural diversity and also to provide innovative and market driven education integrated with global perspective. Zodd was very innovative and enjoyed teaching postgraduate students. He combined face-to-face classes with the effective use of web-based courseware and online tutorials. He was recently appointed dean of his faculty. Zodd is a powerhouse. Whilst he was studying his postgraduate studies in the US, he acquired new technical and management skills when employed as assistant professor and tutor. With those new innovative and creative skills, he developed and delivered online teaching materials when he was initially employed at UNITAR. He has the technical and management skills for developing online learning and a passion for deploying online learning to address the needs of regional learners. He was one of the pioneers of online learning in rural Malaysia.

Zodd saw the potential benefits of teachers from his faculty being exposed to the new ideas and the approaches used in Western countries. He used his connections with teachers in the US to open doors for two of his PhD students and staff to travel to the US and work with senior teachers in the field of online learning. These two staff
returned to Malaysia to pass on their skills and expertise to future generations of learners in Malaysia: a case of academic guanxi.

Zodd’s willingness to take the chance on opening up the world of online learning for his students and had them take a different path by connecting his students with colleagues in the West because he believed his choice in students would be the ones who shared his own passion for learning and the provision of education to regional and remote students in Malaysia. He had faith that his students would take the opportunity to experience collaboration with e-learning teachers in the West, but would decide to share those skills back in their home country: ‘because of my trust and to provide them what would make them better teachers and human beings, they in return had made serious attempts at establishing or reconnecting the Silaturrahim [spirit of togetherness]’.

4.4.4 Story from the Teacher at UKM

UKM plan to promote their vision to be committed to be ahead of society and time in leading in the development of dynamic, learned and moral society (UKM 2010). UKM’s mission is to be the national university that safeguards the sovereignty of the Malay language while globalising knowledge in the context of local culture (UKM 2010). AUKM aspires to become a world-class university by 2020. The following sections will examine the experiences of ‘Norial’ one of the four participants interviewed in this study (for the sake of brevity the experiences of the remaining three, who were in later hands-on implementation of e-learning, will not be discussed in detail). ‘Norial’ is very actively involved and pioneered e-learning at her institution.

4.4.4.1 Norial’s experiences

‘Norial’ is a professor from a UKM. Ethnically, she identifies with the Malay community in Malaysia. She did her Masters and undergraduate studies in universities in the mid-west of the US in the 1980s. Soon after she returned to Malaysia after completing her Masters degree, she continued her postgraduate
studies by commencing a PhD program at her own institution working with a local mentor. Unfortunately, her local mentor did not share the same experience or skills in online teaching and learning applications as did Norial. Nevertheless, Norial remained motivated to use her computer to prepare lecture notes, and produce a ‘story board’ for her classes.

Today, Norial is one of key pioneers and ‘early adopters’ in her institution. She initiated and established an e-community forum with other institutions within the country and in neighbouring countries. Several years ago, she started using a learning management system to put up her lecture materials and set up discussion boards for her students and other colleagues to use in their classes. She experienced difficult times working with colleagues who did not want to participate in online teaching and learning. After many years of persevering in using online methods in her teaching, Norial’s faculty now has been able to put more than 188 courses online.

Norial explained that colleagues who are more than 45 years of age were not accustomed to participating in online teaching situations. Their online experience was confined to using e-mail for communication but even that was not employed extensively. They would still prefer to meet students or staff via face-to-face meetings and classes. Staff between 35 and 45 years of age, however, in Norial’s experience, tended to be much more willing to experiment and use the online environment in their teaching. Norial was convinced that this group of staff was more receptive in the uptake of new technology. As a result, she made time to train them and provided assistance through a series of workshops, forum discussion groups and newsletters designed to encourage staff. She shared that in the first couple of years, she felt very alone and frustrated being the only one in her institution pioneering this work. Her manager was also not very encouraging of her online teaching and learning interests. Nevertheless, her doctoral supervisor was much more supportive and encouraged her to share notes with other PhD students who shared her interests. This encouraged and motivated each other to carry on the ‘good work’, which was important due to the many years they felt themselves to be isolated in their interests.
In 1999, Norial set up an ‘e-community’ environment where she hoped that a group of early adopters could come together to share ideas, frustrations and a place where they can encourage each other. She provided endless rounds of online training and support material for staff. In a collectivist communal culture, being together can suffice emotionally even in the absence of conversation. Norial explained that:

Even if we come together and nobody talks ... it is ok-lah. We enjoyed seeing each other and being together in the same place. We feel the sense of belonging and knowing that there is a place to meet face-to-face. After a little while we’ll start chatting.

In 2002, a new e-learning system was developed in-house for second year lecturers to post their reading materials, lecture notes, tutorial tasks, send e-mails to staff and students. Approximately 105 students and three staff were involved in this project. Norial developed group project work and for students to submit assessment online and the staff to mark the assessment online. Through this system, Norial set up a facility for announcements and lecture notes uploading, and helped to put materials online after training the tutors in how they could gain access to the online materials.

In 2004, Norial set up a committee for approximately two thousand lecturers to sit for a level of competency test using online teaching and learning techniques. She gave them extensive support, trained and mentored them in how to use the system before each assessment. Norial learnt from her mentor when she was studying in the US. Whilst Norial was studying for her Masters degree in the US, she met a cyber expert who became her mentor and champion. Norial explained that in Muslim society there is a concept referred to as ‘sillaturrahim’, which parallels the concept of guanxi exchanges in Chinese society. She further explained that sillaturrahim was the sharing of themselves firstly, to family, secondly, to their neighbours and lastly, others. Silaturrahim is an Arabic word meaning bonding or close ties (Silaturrahim 2010). She diligently worked on this ‘sillaturrahim’ relationship with her mentor professor and benefited from a great deal of assistance and support in online teaching and learning. This culminated in him visiting her university as a visiting professor for a period of six months.
Norial worked hard to pioneer the adoption and development of online teaching and learning techniques and technologies at her own university. She was one of the key early adopters in using online technology in her institution. She also shared in our conversations that teachers were sometimes very ‘individualistic’ when it comes to sharing knowledge and ideas. She believed that if you share no matter whether you gain now or later, spiritual rewards will be ensured. She explains that there is a ‘whole spectrum of opportunities to gain knowledge only if we are willing to begin sharing and helping others’. Norial started weekly small group forums to encourage her colleagues to innovate with e-learning technologies.

After many years of pioneering and networking, Norial and her colleagues finally established a national e-learning forum committee that is comprised of key representatives from leading national Malaysian universities and the Malaysian Department of Education. Through hard work and perseverance, she accomplished her dream of having this forum group set up in Malaysia. This group meets monthly. They also organise bi-annual conferences to which they invite key e-learning teachers from national and international universities to participate and share their experiences in new technology-enabled teaching practices. She and her colleagues then compiled papers for publication. Norial is inclined to structure her work synchronically in a manner that is reminiscent of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (2002) concept of synchronous time in which events are seen in parallel, synchronised together; and find order in the coordination of multiple efforts. Norial usually does several tasks concurrently such as building networks among her peers, colleagues, management, mentors and students; establishing e-learning forum groups; online discussion forums; and conducting workshops. She feels that time commitments are best referenced against a desirable rather than an invented absolute; and she is flexible with her plans. She found that her multi-tasking in coordinating multiple efforts at the same has been fruitful. Paralleling Arial’s experience, Norial, too, was rewarded with new growths of bamboo clumps evidenced in developments such as the ‘national e-learning forum group’. Norial continued to build on this guanxi, or as she prefers to call it sillaturrahim, relationship that parallels her cross-cultural professional peer networks to build e-learning communities.
From observation of and interviews with teachers, it became clear just how important their role was in the pioneering development of e-learning in Malaysia. These pioneers were very enthusiastic in their adoption of new technology to a degree that belied the conventional wisdom that it is men who are more inclined to explore new technology. However, it seems women are more open to experimentation and more willing to learn new things. They form their own support networks and work hard to make things work. They are very willing to share ideas and pass them on.

4.5 Discussion and Analysis

Of necessity, a uniform matrix is placed over this data set and terms are used to describe various attributes and elements that are not necessary the terms that discussants would use them. Nevertheless, these key terms carefully chosen to reflect the key issues of social capital, and to each of the case studies and present them. The other factors such as technology, policies and education discussed in Chapter 2 are undoubtedly important, and have been extensively discussed in a number of studies. Nevertheless, the focus in this study is on contribution of social capital and social networks.

There are five broad areas covered in this analysis of the Malaysian data. These five broad areas are the key issues of social and cultural factors that impact on the adoption of e-learning in these five country case studies.

1. Social capital;
2. Leadership styles;
3. Entrepreneurialism;
4. Teaching; and
5. General attitudes and outlook.

Each of these areas is then broken down into subcategories as discussed below.
Table 4.2 summarises the key faculty attributes found in the Malaysian case studies and represents an attempt for more fine-grained analysis based on synthesis of feedback from interviewees.

Table 4.2: Malaysia Faculty Attributes and Practice Seen in the Malaysian Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty attributes and practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-learning pioneering (e.g. e-pesantren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-community social capital (guanxi, grassroots)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of Practice (COP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social e-network (sillaturrehim, drinking cai, coffee shop chats, BBQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic mentoring (e.g. bamboo networking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism (Sponsoring education e.g. ‘pay it forward’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma (‘you reap what you sow’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural connection (ethnic and cultural ties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural brokering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive leadership (‘herding cats’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal trust-based leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership by example and sharing experience (‘talk the talk, walk the walk’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Wait and see’ approach (‘let others try first’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial mindset (can-do attitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary—Strategic Thinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active globalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women pioneering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching by example (mensch, fair dinkum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching as learning (reciprocal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching from life  (communicating wisdom, unpacking tacit knowledge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching across cultures (multi-cultural awareness, bicultural efficacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude and outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive instrumentalism (kiasu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-saving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Utility player’ (‘All rounder’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basic elements of this table are applicable across all five of the case study chapters. Significant variations and national emphases are discussed at the end of each chapter and an overall picture is built up progressively from chapter to chapter, so the data in one chapter is compared with the chapters before it. Finally, the concluding chapter concerns itself primarily with a discussion of all the case studies.
across these case studies. This subjective assessment of the data represents a process of synthesising a multitude of responses and assessing what these responses mean over each of these elements. This is meant as a generally indicative interpretation of the data and is neither a strictly mathematical processing of the case study and country data nor much less an indication of national trends. To obtain that level of accuracy and specificity for this kind of material, it would require a More focus qualitative study using a model and survey based on the outcomes of this research.

This study is intended to explore and to indicate lines for future research, whilst, in itself, representing a pioneering attempt to recognise cultural and social factors in shaping the environment that bears upon teachers and their practice with respect to the learning.

In Malaysia, the area of e-learning pioneering, that is to say, innovation in approaches to e-learning, remains comparatively under-developed. In Malaysia, pioneering innovations in e-learning are somewhat important but are not of prime concern. What is of prime concern, however, is social capital based around the communities. In English, this sort of social capital is described as being manifested in *grassroots networks*; in Chinese language it is described as *guanxi*. The Malaysian context of social capital is regarded as essential. Slightly less important is the more urban idea of COPs. This kind of specific social capital is regarded as very important.

The more relaxed informal kinds of social networks that people associate with chats in a coffee shop or over lunch is, despite its apparent informality and unimportance, in effect regarded as essential. No one who truly wants to succeed in their e-learning endeavours would fail to give attention to this kind of casual social connection with their colleagues. In fact, small talk over coffee or a bowl of noodles is, invariably, the first, the middle and the final part of doing business.

There is also strong recognition of the need for mentoring. Mentoring can be of several kinds and certainly can be broken down into the distinction between a general generous approach to mentoring, investing time and resources and people,
and strategic mentoring with a mentor works very deliberately with their charges to prepare them for their own initiatives. Both these kinds of mentoring are regarded as essential in the case studies in Malaysia referred to in this chapter.

A different kind of social capital is that which is sometimes described as collectivism and is evocatively captured in the phrase ‘pay it forward’. This kind of social capital is regarded as very important in these Malaysian stories. Related to it, is an underlying philosophical conviction that ‘one reaps what one sows’. This is sometimes described using the Sanskrit Hindu term ‘karma’. In other words, it is the conviction that everyone has to play their part and the expressions of apparent generosity really concerned self-interest as well, in as much as people are persuaded that the way they treat others will shape the way that they have educated themselves.

In the particular Malaysian context studied here, cultural understanding was fundamental and regarded as essential. Also regarded as essential was the recognition of that specific cultural connections involving factors of ethnicity, culture and religion were also matters of the utmost importance to certain not be disregarded.

Leadership shown to be concerned with cultural brokering (Gentemann, & Whitehead 1983) is only accorded a rank of being somewhat important. Although Malaysian society is plural, it also involves much less crossing over between communities that an outsider might expect or indeed than that which the government of Malaysia would claim to be the case. For various reasons, primarily related to recent history and politics, but also to the relative sizes of the various communities and the role played by religion, there is much less mixing between communities on a casual social basis. Some evidence of this can be seen in the relatively lower rates in intra-marriage, particularly between ethnic Malays and non-Malays but also between various Chinese and Indian communities. Nevertheless, the situation in the workplace, including in the classroom, is relatively harmonious and positive but the overall environment does not put a strong emphasis on cultural brokering (Gentemann, & Whitehead 1983; Washington, Erickson & Ditomassi 2004).
Top-down approaches to leadership are regarded as very important, as is directive leadership in general. Similarly, the idea of a reciprocal trust basis to leadership is also regarded as very important despite this orientation to a top-down directive style. Those leaders who seek to build trust and engender confidence generally do better than those leaders who merely rely on their social status. For this reason, leadership by example where ‘walking the walk’ as well as ‘talking the talk’ is given priority and is regarded as being of essential importance. This does not mean by any means that it is universal in distribution but rather that it is regarded as unquestionably desirable. Conversely, a cautious approach to leadership that takes a ‘wait and see’ approach, ‘holding back to see what others do first’, is regarded as particularly useful in these Malaysian case study contexts.

When it comes to entrepreneurialism, the Malaysian stories suggested that having a can-do attitude and entrepreneurial mindset is only desirable. Similarly, being a visionary and a strategic thinker is regarded as desirable as but no more than that as having a creative mindset. In addition, despite apparent signs of relative globalisation in Malaysia, the active pursuit of opportunities for globalisation is regarded as only somewhat important. Against these middle-of-the-road responses, it has been significant that these case studies demonstrate evidence of a context in which it is regarded as essential that women are pioneering. Some care needs to be taken here in extrapolating too far from the case study data. Certainly, it would be possible to conduct other stories in Malaysia, in which women pioneering were not a conspicuous factor. Having said that, there is a general sense in which the role of pioneering women is a conspicuous attribute of the broader Malaysian environment.

Teaching by example, much like the notion of leading by example, is regarded as very important. Closely related to this, the notion that teaching involves learning on the part of the teacher is also regarded as significant. As is the notion of teaching from life experience of unpacking learned wisdom and sharing it with students. All of these factors are regarded as being very important. As foreshadowed above however, teaching across cultures and multicultural awareness in general like cultural efficacy (Clauss-Ehlers & Ivory, 2010) is regarded as useful.
Conversely, when it comes to questions of attitude and outlook, the sort of competitive instrumentalist behaviour that is captured in the Malaysian Hokkien ‘kiasu’ is only regarded as being useful in Malaysia. Closely connected with this, is the view that behaviour based upon face-saving is also only useful. In addition, as noted in the two previous categories, multicultural awareness is given low importance. It is certainly not regarded as unimportant but it is regarded as no more than somewhat important. Conversely, reciprocity is regarded as very important, matching the high importance given to related aspects of social capital. When it comes to somebody having an attitude that makes them flexible and ready to undertake any task, the qualities or a ‘utility player’ or an ‘all rounder’ are regarded as generally important if not highly sought after.

This chapter explored the different factors and the themes of cultural and social influences of Malaysian teachers’ uptake of e-learning in Malaysia. The findings of the interviews and observations collected from interviewees were analysed using thematic analysis. These findings produced insightful description of the social and cultural influences in the use of technologies in their teaching. In the stories, mentor-networks played a significant role in the development of the pioneers of adoption of online teaching and learning in Malaysia. All of those interviewed for this study reported that they have found it rather difficult to find a support base in their first years of pioneering online developments. Therefore, what they have tended to do is to fall back on their peer networks linked to the institutions at which they studied. It is often the case that there are prominent individuals championing e-learning in the institutions where they teach. They form small groups for information sharing and networking. They tend to look to their management for tacit ‘permission’ rather than direct encouragement. Consequently, the active promotion of e-learning in Malaysia can be described as being ‘middle-down’ rather than ‘top-down’ in nature. That is to say, it is mid-level teachers that inspire those below them to join in the development of e-learning programs. They are strongly internally driven and motivated. In time, their activity should produce new generations of locally developed e-learning experts but this has yet to take place in a substantial fashion.
In many cases, the men and women at the forefront of e-learning developments in Malaysia can be said to be ‘culturally plural’, either in their background and domestic environment or in their orientation and outlook. These are people who negotiate cultural and communal boundaries with ease and grace. Individuals, who are strongly mono-cultural in their outlook, are generally reported in this thesis to be much less willing to experiment with e-learning, and are often described by their peers as being overly driven by ‘kiasu’ attitudes and the desire to save face when it comes to both innovation and peer networking.

This study shows that both men and women ‘academic guanxi’, or peer networks or similar exchanges that might be described by other terms such as ‘sillaturrahim’, play a key role in the adoption of online technologies. Key early adopters become change-agents by inspiring small network of their peers and via their guanxi. It is also discovered that motivation is not simply an individual matter but is also about groups and peer networks or communities of exchange and encouragement. Guanxi is about personal connection, friendship or networking (Corbitt & Thanasankit 2001; Chen & Chen 2004). It has been identified as a necessary condition to conduct B2B successfully in Asia. In the development of e-learning in Malaysia, there is very little activity that is not linked to small clusters of developers who are tied into wider networks through personal contacts.

Like clumping bamboo, whilst the local clusters tend to be easily seen, the longer-range ‘subterranean’ personal connections are generally not nearly so immediately obvious. These connections are often the product of previous mentoring relationships, including the relationships between influential teachers and their former postgraduate students. These relationships tend to work like bamboo runners: they run off in multiple directions below ground and unseen and then throw up new clumps that grow up and then send out fresh runners of their own.

One important implication that is already clear, for reasons explained in this chapter, is that although top-down implementation of technology, and direction of its use, is necessary it is not sufficient in itself. Instead, a more proactive approach to
developing and nurturing peer mentoring networks, or *guanxi*, amongst teachers is needed. Pioneers and champions need to be identified and encouraged. Middle-down team-building initiatives need to be seeded and cultivated. In addition, most importantly, a collegial culture of trust and strong social relationships amongst teachers need to be steadily established and developed. This is rather challenging for the teacher community as many universities tend to adopt an economics-driven view towards online teaching and learning (Corbitt et al. 2006). The instrumentalist world of the modern university, with its obsession with economic efficiencies and metrics of maximum throughput (Bickel, Marsch, & Carroll, 2000) presents a formidable environment in which to exercise the sort of visionary leadership required to do what is right for the long-term development of the kind of online teaching that genuinely adds to the students’ learning experience rather than merely presenting short-term economies of scale to the institutions that promote it. But it is leadership that is committed to understanding and nurturing the role of peer-to-peer networks, and facilitating the spontaneous mentoring that accompanies them, that is required if online teaching is to achieve the goals set for it by universities.

The diagram below (Figure 4.2) seeks to summarise the key social capital elements that have come up in discussion without attempting to assign priorities or causal relations. The terms reflect the aphorisms that were sited by respondents during interviews and other discussions in the case studies such ‘pay it forward’, ‘walk the walk’, ‘copy the west and build at an Asian price’, ‘to teach is to lean twice’, and ‘if you love someone set them free’. As has been discussed above, the concept of ‘bamboo networking’ arose during the researcher’s interactions with several respondents.
Chapter 5 presents the findings of several e-learning case studies in Indonesia. As with the Malaysian case studies, the focus is particularly upon the experience of individual teachers. The first of the Indonesian case studies, however, was chosen partly to facilitate the examination of a more grassroots engagement with e-learning outside of the regular university environment explored in Malaysia.
Chapter Five: Case Study Analysis, Indonesia: E-learning and Traditional Islamic Education

5.1 Introduction: E-Pesantren

The first case study in this chapter pays particular attention to traditional Islamic schools in Indonesia known particularly in Java as a pesantren but elsewhere in the Muslim world as a madrasah. This approach was chosen because the contrast between the largely rural, largely poor, and overwhelmingly conservative nature of these traditional religious institutions and the technology of e-learning with its great capacity to produce and enhance new social networks and new opportunities for learning is very striking.

Muslims have creatively applied internet technologies in the interest of the furthering understanding of their religion. It is only a natural for a net-literate generation to seek out specific truths and affiliations online, especially when they cannot be accessed in a local mosque or community context. Cooke and Lawrence (2005, p. 13) reflect Dawson’s point in a discussion on religion and the internet: ‘the Internet is used most often to expand people’s social horizons and involvement. People use the Internet to augment and extend their pre-existing social lives, not a substitute or alternative’ (Bunt 2004). Thus far, however, pesantren have mainly been using the internet for the purposes of its religious teaching. A recent initiative by the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP) and the Ford Foundation, is aimed more at bringing general education to pesantren via the internet. Started in 2007 and called the Open, Distance and eLearning (ODeL) Program for Pesantren, it plans on giving the pesantren students the equivalent of a high school education, which in Indonesia is split into two levels of lower middle school (Year 7–9) and higher middle school (Year 10–12).
5.2 Communications and E-readiness

- Telephone: 30.378 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 10
- Telephone: mobile cellular: 140.578 million (2008);
- Country comparison to the world: 6
- Internet hosts: 362, 968 (2009); country comparison to the world: 53
- Internet users: 16.903 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 22
  (International Development Research Centre and ORBICOM 2010)

Table 5.1: Extracts Taken from EIU (2010) E-readiness Rankings Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2010 Ranking (/70)</th>
<th>2010 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2009 Ranking (/70)</th>
<th>2009 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2008 Ranking (/70)</th>
<th>2008 Score (/10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>36th</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>38th</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>68th</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indonesia’s e-readiness ranking has maintained the same ranking as 2009. Indonesia’s e-readiness had steadily improved in 2009 to 65th ranking in the 2009 EIU E-readiness Rankings Report (see Table 5.1). The country was the second worst ranking of the 70 countries in the 2008 report. ICT progress must go hand-in-hand with the infrastructure development. The regulator is indeed a key player to follow up the development plan. According to data of the EIU Survey, Indonesia’s position in the 2008 e-readiness rankings is still above that of Iran and Azerbaijan, and below that of Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Algeria with a mean score of 3.5 (8.95 the highest).

The Head of Telematics Society Setyanto P Santosa stated that ‘the low ranking is a result of lack of infrastructure and connectivity’ (Firman & Chandrataruna 2009). Firman and Chandrataruna (2009) note other relevant factors: upsetting legal circumstances, low adoption of business and consumer, government’s views and policies, social and cultural background and improper business habitat.
Indonesia’s initial attempt into the internet world began in the late 1980s and very early 1990s, where students studying abroad were conducting discussions online via mailing lists. However, it was not until 1993 that Indonesia received its own Country Code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) of .id. The IT faculty at the University of Indonesia (UI) initially monitored this before it handed over to IDNIC. To access Indonesian sites at that initial stage, users had to be routed overseas before coming back in again, making surfing the web a slow and expensive experience. However, the creation of the Indonesian Internet Exchange (IIX), a network of Indonesian ISPs, significantly increased the access speeds of Indonesian websites (Hidayatullah & Dharmawan 2003, p. 19).

According to the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (Asosiasi Penyedia Jasa Internet Indonesia [APJII]), there are currently around two million internet subscribers, as in people who have signed up and registered for internet connections. However, there are more than 25 million users of the internet within Indonesia. This is a significant increase from the 134,000 subscribers and 512,000 users estimated for 1998 (Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association. 2007). The gap in the first set of numbers comes from the fact that multiple users can be sharing one connection, such as a family of four who have registered to a particular ISP, or people who use the internet mostly at work. Another important factor to consider is the popularity of internet cafés, or warnet (warung internet), as they are locally called within Indonesia. At first, hourly rates at warnets were quite expensive, ranging from Rp9,000 to Rp15,000. Over time, not only did prices fall, but the connection speed also increased. These days, you can find warnets with ADSL connections charging Rp3,500 per hour (around 30 US cents). With such service, it should not be a surprise that it was estimated that the number of warnets across Indonesia would surpass 12,000 by the end of 2008 (Suryadhi 2008).

Equally important is the service known as TelkomNet Instan provided by the national telephone company Telkom. What is unique about this service is that users are not required to register or sign up to be connected to the internet. Instead, by entering specific information in the dial up connection box, users can straight away
browse the web and have the charges added to their monthly telephone bills (Hidayatullah & Dharmawan 2003, p. 22).

5.3 Education

Indonesia’s education system is run by the public and private partnerships at all sectors (AusAid 2007). Indonesia’s Ministry of National Education (MNE) runs the public educational services and its decentralised offices at provinces, district and sub-district levels. Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs oversees the private and non-governmental sector, which is dominated by the Islamic institutions, mainly *madrasah* and *pesantren* (AusAid 2007).

The Central Intelligence Agency (2010) reported:

Aged 25 or over and having attained:
- no formal schooling 30.3%
- incomplete primary 32.3%
- primary 22.8%
- incomplete secondary 6.4%
- secondary 7.1%
- higher 1.2%

Aged 15 or over and having attained literacy
- Literate population 77.6%
  (Central Intelligence Agency 2010)

Indonesia as other countries established higher education policies and strategies to harness the use of ICTs for improving the country’s national competitiveness. In 2000, the government put in an initial step by establishing the Indonesian Telematics Coordinating Team (TKTI), which consisted by all cabinet ministers and chaired by former President Megawati Soekarnoputri. In 2001, the ICT national plan formulated by Presidential Decree No. 6/2001 (Five-Year Action Plan for the Development and Implementation of ICT in Indonesia) (TKTI 2001) that stated the government’s
policy towards ICT and commissioned TKTI to drive the ICT implementation in Indonesia. The Presidential Decree No. 6/2001 with its five-year action plan set out an ICT plan for education that included the areas outlined in Table 5.2 (TKTI 2001).

**Table 5.2: Indonesian Telematics Coordinating Team**

*(TKTI 2001, p. 5)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan</th>
<th>Time Schedule</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop ICT networks for public and private universities as well as research and education networks in Indonesia.</td>
<td>2001–2005</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and implement ICT curricula.</td>
<td>2002–2004</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use ICTs as an essential part of the curricula and learning tools in schools/universities and training centres.</td>
<td>2001–2005</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish distance education programs including participation in Global Development learning and other networks.</td>
<td>2001–2005</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate the use of internet for more efficient teaching and learning (e.g. School 2000).</td>
<td>2002–2005</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waluyo (2006) in his report to the Ministry of Culture and Toursim (MOCT), presented the five-year plan of Indonesia’s ICT projects:
Table 5.3 ICT Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICT Projects</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2005: ICT Familiarisation** | • To familiarise the uses of computers, networks, and other peripherals as daily supporting tools;  
                                 • Training selected people in the uses of related applications in their lines of duty;  
                                 • Reinforcing the uses of e-mails as main communication tools both internally and externally;  
                                 • Managing the e-mail traffic and follow-ups. |
| **2006: ICT Automation**      | • To identify any chains of process that could be automated or calculated by the uses of ICT;  
                                 • To design a new business process improved by these ICT automations;  
                                 • Actively campaigning internally to find any potential benefits by using ICT; |
| **2007: ICT Empowerment**     | • Forming new organisational charts for the new ICT-automated business processes;  
                                 • Delegating clear and direct responsibilities for each and every personnel involved;  
                                 • Training these very people to acquire the needed competency;  
                                 • Empowering human resources, therefore ICT human resources will be distributed, instead of centralised on Data and Information Centre (DIC) (a 3-year plan). |
| **2008: ICT Simplification**  | Focusing on paperless transaction and documentation that is by simplifying processes and de-bureaucracy. |
| **2009: ICT Organisation**    | • Empowering ICT human resources, therefore ICT human resources will be distributed, instead of centralised on DIC (final year in a 3-year plan);  
                                 • Reinventing the Ministry as an ICT organisation, one that uses ICT as an organisational advantage, not merely as technology. |

Indonesia’s ICT five-year projects plan (Waluyo 2006)

5.3.1 Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education

5.3.1.1 Indonesia ICT Policies and Strategies

On 11 November 2006, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono officially launched the National ICT council. The National ICT council’s task was to formulate
Indonesia’s general policies and set direction for strategic ICT development (Donny & Mudiardjo 2006). Indonesia’s policies and plans for education were outlined in its national strategies. Indonesia’s strategic priorities achieved through the support for the three pillars of Indonesia education strategy. The three pillars of Indonesia’s education strategies are:

- Improved equitable access to public education;
- Improved and enhanced quality of basic education;
- Improved education policy formulation and to strengthen system capacity. (AusAid 2007)

At the end of 2007, Indonesia implemented a key national ICT initiative of the National Single Window (NSW) in Tanjung Priok Harbor, Jakarta in line with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Single Window Agreement (Donny & Mudiardjo 2007). The NSW system application was used in getting customs clearance at Tanjung Priok Harbor in 30 minutes instead of 5.5 days. It had reduced from 36 steps in the previous system to just five steps with this new NSW system (Donny 2007, p. 205).

On 25 March 2008, the Indonesian House of Representatives passed the Electronic Information and Transaction Act. In passing that Act, the Universal Service Obligation (USO) policy and the Palapa Ring projects were expected to play key role in ‘connecting the unconnected in Indonesia’ (Donny 2007, p. 201). The Palapa Ring, which was a broadband fibre optic development, was designed to connect all of Indonesia in one internet infrastructure (Donny 2007, p. 204).

In Indonesia, the ICT development increased further with the expansion of internet cyber cafés or warung internet or warnet (internet cafés) in many Indonesian cities. In 2003, the Indonesian government had formed the Indonesian Telecommunications Regulatory Body (Badan Regulasi Telekomunikasi Indonesia) to improve telecommunications services and infrastructure (Donny & Mudiardjo 2006).
5.3.1.2 Distance Education in Indonesia

In 1955, distance education was being introduced in Indonesia (Belawati 2007). Distance education was first established as a correspondence program with the aim to upgrade teaching qualifications. Not until 1981 was there a widespread of distance education when two projects on in-service training to secondary and tertiary-level teachers were introduced (Belawati 2007). These projects later became a major part of the Universitas Terbuka (UT) (Indonesian Open Learning University) (Belawati 2007). UT is a state-owned university. It was established in 1984 with three main missions: 1) to increase access to higher education; 2) to train increasing numbers of students in areas demanded by the economic and cultural development of the country; and 3) to upgrade the qualifications of primary and secondary school teachers who had graduated from the short-term programs to enable them to obtain a full teacher training degree (Belawati 2007). UT was set up to be a flexible and inexpensive university for people who were unable to attend on-campus face-to-face classes. UT is the only university that is wholly distance education institution in Indonesia (Belawati 2007).

5.3.1.3 Pesantren, Madrasah and E-learning

It is commonly assumed that pesantren and madrasah, being traditional Islamic educational institutions, must be overwhelmingly socially conservative and committed to propagating a narrow worldview. Whilst there is some truth in this, the reality is much more complex. Many scholars of modern religious movements have observed that those movements that can be best described as fundamentalist tend to be led by those with only limited religious education in their tradition. In other words, fundamentalist movements tend to be lay movements. Conversely, those who have obtained a deep level of scholarship in the religious tradition whilst conservative tend not to see the world in black and white terms, having been trained to understand the complexity and ambiguity when interpreting texts and being accustomed to the fact that respected scholars can take opposing views on many issues.
The *pesantren* are Islamic boarding schools. In the past, the *pesantren* taught a non-formal religious curriculum, from which the students are not given state recognised certificates. They vary from schools that simply concentrate on Qur’an recitation and memorisation, to religious colleges similar to what can be found in the Middle East (Pohl 2007, p. 92). Before examining the relationship between the internet and Islamic education within Indonesia, it is important to understand what a *pesantren* is.

The *pesantren* has a strong foundation in traditional Indonesian society. M. Dawam Rahardjo (Jabali 2003, p. 81) stated that the *pesantren* is a cultural symbol of Indonesia’s indigenous education system. Historically, the approach to education developed at the *pesantren* and it has its roots in the traditional religious instruction that predominated when Hinduism and Buddhism were prevalent in Indonesia.

The term *santri* is also related to the Sanskrit term *shantri*, which refers to a person who lives in a *miskin* (poor) house or religious building in general. The identification of the *pesantren*’s origins with traditional Hindu and Buddhist religious education is justified by those common elements. Reform of the Islamic Education System to centres of religious learning that indeed shape the culture of education at the *pesantren*: dormitories for the students; a mosque where religious rites and religious learning take place; the education of *santri*, who come to the *pesantren* to study religious sciences; the instruction offered by *kyai* (religious scholars), who guide the students in religious matters and serve as an example to all; and the study of *kitab kuning*, classical Islamic texts on religious principles and related teachings, such as *nahw* and *saraf* (Arabic grammar), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *usûl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory), *hadith* (prophetic tradition), *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis), *akhlak* (ethics), and *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism).

Contrary to the popular image of traditional Islamic education being medieval and backward, these educational institutions have undergone extensive reforms since the early twentieth century. Further, not all these institutions are called *pesantren*, but vary in name according to location. In Java and South Kalimantan, they are called *pesantren*, but in Aceh they are called *dayah*. In other parts of Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Malay and portions of Sumatra, they are called *pondok*, while in West
Sumatra, they are called *surau*. The unifying feature of these institutions was that they are traditional in nature, in that their curriculum consisted almost entirely of instruction in classical Islamic traditions of knowledge. Another defining feature was the fact that they were run by the *ulama* or *kyai* as they were known in Java. These *pesantren* are dedicated to the study of the Qur’an and Hadith, jurisprudence, mysticism and Arabic sciences, amongst others. However, since the early twentieth century, subjects such as mathematics, history and English were also offered, a practice that was the norm by the 1950s. By the 1970s, the Indonesian government had mandated that *pesantren* students also complete a general elementary education at the very least (Azra et al. 2007, pp. 174–176).

Many of these reforms were initiated because of the introduction of another type of Islamic school, the *madrasah*. First established in West Sumatra and south-central Java, *madrasahs* are actually self-consciously more modern than *pesantren*. In the Middle East, a *madrasah* refers to an institute of higher Islamic learning, but the word is used differently depending on its location. In Indonesia, a *madrasah* is different to a *pesantren* because most are primarily concerned with general educational courses. Further, the teaching methods of a *madrasah* in Indonesia are different from that of a *pesantren*. The latter conduct classes by utilising study groups that circle the teacher, while the classes and courses themselves often do not have a formal structure. In a *madrasah*, this has all been replaced with classrooms, whiteboards, textbooks and exams. Moreover, unlike the *pesantren*, *madrasah* have more closely followed government regulations in terms of education standards (Azra et al. 2007, pp. 176–177).

Even more recently, a more modern institution of Islamic learning has been introduced, and has simply been called Islamic schools, offering an even greater proportion of general educational courses than both *pesantren* and *madrasah*. Ever since the 1990s, Islamic schools have become the preferred choice for many middle-class Muslims in Indonesia, despite their higher fees, Islamic Schools offer specialised programs in science, history, social sciences and foreign language studies (Azra et al. 2007, p. 177).
Being the oldest institution of education, *pesantren* are now faced with numerous challenges, such as the decline of enrolment in recent years. On top of this, many of the 25,000 *pesantren* are located in some of the poorest regions of Indonesia, filling in the gaps that the Indonesian public school system cannot cover. It is important to note here that traditionalist does not always equal conservative, and this is evident in the willingness of a large number of *pesantren* to embrace the internet.

The word *madrasah* has gained a bad reputation, especially since the al-Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001, because of the fact that a minority of Pakistan’s *madrasahs* are associated with violent Islamist movements, including the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Moreover, a larger number of *madrasah* in Pakistan and elsewhere in South and West Asia teach a limited range of subjects confined to matters of religious learning and practice. Thus, they have acquired a reputation for being supportive of violently reactionary movements, at worst, and at best, as belonging to a bygone age at odds with the modern world. Across the Muslim world, there are many *madrasah* that belie this widely held stereotype. However, it is particularly in Indonesia that this image of *madrasah, or pesantren*, begins to break down. The vast majority of Indonesia’s *pesantren* today teach the standard state curriculum from the secular schooling system. Their classes in religious matters are often conducted in the late afternoon or evening and effectively run in addition to the day school classes. This was not always the case but the last three decades have seen the transformation of the *pesantren* system. What this means is that graduates of *pesantren* can matriculate to regular tertiary institutions and go on to professional careers that are not limited to the exercise of specialist religious knowledge and skills. This is of great benefit to both *pesantren* students and to Indonesian society as a whole as approximately 20 per cent of all school-age students receive their education in the *pesantren* system and therefore, like many religious schools around the world, including Christian denominational schools in both the developed and developing world, these Islamic schools are making a vital contribution to the education of many.

Nevertheless, the stereotypical prejudice about *pesantren* being remote from modern society and marked by social-conservativism does have some foundation. For a start,
many of the pesantren students come from the poorest elements of Indonesian society. Many either do not pay for their pesantren education in cash or pay very modest amounts and attend pesantren because their families cannot afford to send them to regular schools, in a system where even the state schools require significant cash payments each term to cover costs. In addition, many of these pesantren are located in very remote rural areas, or at the very least lie largely outside of the larger urban communities, being linked with rural communities dependent upon agriculture. A very small number of these pesantren are associated with violent Islamist movements. Around 250 of Indonesia’s approximately 25,000 pesantren, or about one per cent, have a clear association with extremist ideas. Perhaps one tenth of this group, that is to say, around two dozen pesantren, have well-established links with terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Therefore, in terms of pesantren representing a security problem, the threat is greatly exaggerated. Certainly, the one per cent of pesantren with extremist tendencies do need to be kept under surveillance but authorities are increasingly becoming aware that traditionalist Islamic institutions in Indonesia, and beyond, such as pesantren, are much more a part of a solution to combating extremism than they are part of the problem.

Some of Indonesia’s most significant progressive Islamic intellectuals, who are also some of the worlds’ leading Islamic thinkers, have been schooled in Indonesia’s pesantren system. The researcher will briefly examine the biographies of several of Indonesia’s leading progressive, or as they are sometimes called, liberal, Islamic intellectuals and reflect upon the social factors that were formative in the development of their thought.

A large proportion of Indonesia’s pesantren can be described as being essentially moderate. They are committed to teaching a tolerant and sophisticated understanding of Islam that is respectful of Indonesia’s social, cultural and religious diversity and encourage constructive engagement with broader society. There is also a significant section of the pesantren community that while engaged neither with extremist religious teaching nor with supporting violent movements, is nevertheless somewhat isolated from society and given to reinforcing the sort of social conservatism that sets them in opposition to many aspects of modern Indonesian society. Evidence of
this conservatism is readily available from recent social surveys. During the Suharto era, there was very little reliable social surveying done in Indonesia apart from market research in industries such as the cigarette industry. Over the last decade following Suharto’s resignation in May 1998, however, there have been a number of very credible regular social surveys initiated.

One of the best, pertaining to attitudes, regarding religion and society is conducted annually by the Center for the Study of Islam in Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat) (PPIM) located in the State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta in conjunction with the Indonesian survey Institute. Each year, a series of surveys are conducted intended to ascertain social attitudes across the whole of Indonesian society. In 2007, three surveys were conducted as part of a set intended to understand attitudes to political Islam, Islamism, democracy and secularism. What was significant about these surveys was the extent to which there was a stark contrast between teachers and senior students in pesantren, madrasah and Islamic schools and members or for general society. The surveys revealed a somewhat surprisingly high level of support (around 30 per cent of respondents) at least nominally, for Islamism.1 Therefore, for example, a relatively high number of general respondents indicated support for application of Sharia, or Islamic law, including the more debatable aspects associated with corporal punishment.2 And significantly, when the same questions were asked of scholars and senior students in the Islamic institutions, the response rate in the affirmative in support of Islamic law and the creation of an Islamic state was double (around 60 per cent of respondents) what it was in the general population.3

1 For an extended discussion of the results of these three PPIM surveys from 2007 refer to Greg Barton (2008) ‘Indonesia’s Year of Living Normally: Taking the Long View on Indonesia’s Progress, in Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than (eds) Southeast Asia Affairs 2008, Singapore: ISEAS.
Most commentators would suggest that care needs to be taken in interpreting these affirmative responses too literally. Nevertheless, it would appear that the pesantren, madrasah and other Islamic institutions are markedly more conservative than general Indonesian Society. For this reason, many of Indonesia’s leading civil society activists who contribute to progressive Islamic thought and discourse and who are concerned about extremism affecting religious freedoms, are defined in the pesantren as being key institutions in shaping Islamic thought, practice and attitudes in Indonesia. Many of Indonesia’s progressive Islamic non-governmental organisation (NGOs)—and Indonesia has more progressive Islamic NGOs than any other Muslim majority country—are closely connected with the pesantren community. A significant majority of the pesantren and their leaders play a key role in the development and socialisation of progressive Islamic thought. Moreover, some of Indonesia’s key Islamic leaders and scholars have arisen out of this nexus, as can be seen in the next page. There is significant online engagement from these progressive pesantren and NGOs. In fact, they form the backbone of online activity propagating a tolerant and inclusive understanding of Islam that is productively engaging with modernity.

5.3.1.4 Islamic Education and the Internet in Indonesia

From the earliest days, internet development across the globe revolved around tertiary educational institutions. Indonesia has been no exception to this and consequently, there has been a history of synergetic relations between the internet and education in Indonesia. University campuses are typically surrounded by warnets, or internet cafés. Within 500 meters of the main UI campus, for example, there were as many as 20 warnets at the beginning of the decade (Hidayatullah & Dharmawan 2003, p. 22) and numbers have grown steadily since in response to unabated demand. Moreover, the link between places of learning and internet usage is not limited to elite institutions such as UI but occurs across the entire sector and includes even the most traditional institutions of education such as the Islamic boarding schools known as pesantren.
A recent survey conducted by the Indonesian Centre for Agricultural Library and Technology Dissemination, found that at least 39 pesantren had official websites (with another seven pesantren-related websites not being linked to any particular pesantren). These 39 pesantren were located across seven different provinces within Indonesia as follows:

- East Java (16 pesantren, 41.03%)
- West Java (9 pesantren, 23.08%)
- Central Java (5 pesantren, 12.82%)
- DKI Jakarta (4 pesantren, 10.25%)
- DI Yogyakarta (3 pesantren, 7.69%)
- Riau (2 pesantren, 5.13%)
- Aceh (1 pesantren, 2.56%).

This represents a significant increase from the tally of 15 pesantren with websites observed in the year 2000 and yet almost certainly underestimates by a large measure the total number of pesantren-related websites.

At the same time, there has also been significant growth in the range of technologies used. In the year 2000, there were only six main applications being widely used: websites, e-mail, usenet, newsgroup, listserve, chat rooms and internet searches. This has increased to at least 16 core application types today, with pesantren now taking advantage of the following technologies: membership, streaming, downloads, polling, rating, links, guest book, calendar functions, counter and statistics.

Out of the 46 pesantren websites observed, the report found that at least 27 of them used the internet to conduct teaching activities related to Islamic topics. This phenomenon is of course not limited to Indonesia, as countries such as Malaysia and Singapore have also seen pesantren, or madrasah (the Arabic name for schools used widely of traditional Islamic institutions across the world) establishing their own websites. Of course, students are not the only beneficiaries of the internet, as teachers and Islamic scholars have much to gain. Where it would have taken many days to travel to another institute of learning, or the many days it would have taken to send letters, communication between scholars and teachers is now near instantaneous.
Teachers, Islamic scholars and students continue to connect and link to each other in bonding, bridging and linking to one another. This shows how social capital and education have been inherently linked from the concept of social capital.

Cooke and Lawrence (2005) argue that a broad spectrum of Islamic hyper-textual approaches and understandings can be, and are, located in cyberspace, created by Muslims seeking to present dimensions of their religious, spiritual, and/or political lives online.

Muslims have creatively applied the internet in the interest of the furthering understanding of the religion for other believers, especially those affiliated to a specific worldview and, in some cases, a wider non-Muslim readership. It may be a natural phenomenon for a net-literate generation to seek out specific truths and affiliations online, especially when they cannot be accessed in a local mosque or community context.

5.3.1.5 What Makes the Internet Islamic?

According to contemporary Muslim scholars, especially those who are proactively engaged with internet technologies, there is no incompatibility between Islam as a religion and its representation on the internet (Castells 1997, p. 25). That vision is dependent on the purpose and intent for which the media is applied.

The Prophet Muhammad is said to have urged his followers to ‘seek knowledge even as far as China’ (Haddad 2005, p. 1). Many Muslim scholars argue that the internet can be used as an extension of that quest (Haddad 2005). Nevertheless, it has to be noted that access to the internet, while improving in many Muslims majority contexts, is still relatively low. There has been resistance to aspects of the internet from some Muslim quarters. This has been tempered by pragmatism, given that there is an educated generation that has grown up fully conversant with the application of computer interfaces as part of leisure, education, business, and now religious expression and understanding (Castells 1997, p. 26).
5.4 Indonesian Case Studies Background

_Pesantren_ have thus far mainly been using the internet for the purposes of its religious teaching. A recent initiative started in 2007 by International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP) and the Ford Foundation is aimed more at bringing general education to _pesantren_ via the internet, and called ODeL. It aims to give the _pesantren_ students the equivalent of a high school education.

A total of ten one-on-one interviews at five higher education institutions in Indonesia were conducted over a period of 12-month period. The qualitative approach was applied through the selected case studies of particular Indonesian institutions. Data was collected via case studies with interviews and observation of participants of the selected teachers from Indonesia. Case studies related to the selected three interviewers at two institutions will be discussed in this chapter.

5.4.1 Stories from Teacher at ICIP

5.4.1.1 Experiences from Sanwar

One of Indonesia’s leading progressive Islamic non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is ICIP, led by ‘Sanwar’. Sanwar has a long history of activism and leadership in Islamic society and in civil society. He has a career as senior editor of some of Indonesia’s leading Islamic magazines and publications such as the magazine _Ummat_. His PhD thesis from the University of Melbourne examined the nature of politics and Islamic activism surrounding Suharto’s final decade in office and his attempt to manufacture a support base from the conservative Islamic leaders that he opposed previously alienated. After completing his doctoral studies in Melbourne, Sanwar established ICIP driven by a concern that extremist teaching and energetic activism threatened to tip the balance in Indonesian society and establish greater acceptance of extremist Islamist ideas. Like many in his position, Sanwar remains optimistic that tolerant and inclusive Islamic thought and practice will continue to prevail in Indonesia but argues that this will only be the case if moderate and progressive elements become active in promoting a counter narrative to the
extremist one that increasingly prevails particularly on university campuses and amongst young people.

In 2008, ICIP launched a new project targeting conservative pesantren. Due to Sanwar’s background in Islamic activism and publishing, he has a strong reputation with Muslim leaders across the spectrum, and was able to gain the trust of some of the more conservative elements of the pesantren community to engage in his new e-Pesantren project.

This new program marks a more concentrated effort in tackling the issue of education in Indonesia. Through the website www.pesantrenglobal.org, students can register themselves, and then access educational materials such as textbook exercises and online tests free of charge. This provides the students with the government’s standardised Packet B (7–12 years old) and Packet C (16–18 years old) as well as skill and citizenship-based learning programs. This site would then be administered by eight different pesantren participating in the program.

Upon completion of the e-learning program, the pesantrens provide the students with some form of a certificate, but it is up to the pesantrens if they want to also provide degrees. Even though this program is targeted towards students of pesantren, others can also reap its benefits.

The above pesantrens were chosen precisely because they were linked to communities with low levels of education, high levels of poverty, and a low rank on the Human Development Index, in the hope that this program could increase the number of high school graduates, who not only posses the skills needed by their communities, but students who can also then go on to university. This new e-learning program can be seen as the result of government efforts since 1997 to promote distance learning programs.

Following the 9/11 attacks in the US and the Bali Bombings of October 2002 in Indonesia, much have been said and written about pesantren and madrasah, which was then given a variety of labels, from ‘schools of terror’ to ‘jihad factories’ (Noor,
In the wake of these attacks, an attempt was made to modernise the pesantren and madrasah, especially in Pakistan, through US monetary aid. Many have talked about the importance of education in creating a more tolerant, plural, moderate, and forward-looking community, and while this is true, it is only one half of the equation. The other, equally important half, in such an endeavour, is the involvement of social networks and life experiences.

The e-Pesantren project developed by ICIP is very much a visionary work of one individual: ICIP founder and director, Sanwar. Sanwar has a long association with Islamic thought and education in Indonesia. He worked for several decades as a journalist and editor of publications written for pious urban readership. For example, throughout the 1990s he was editor of Ummat magazine. Ummat magazine was aimed at a readership of urban professionals who would come from a non-practicing, or non-Santri, background but have become observant, or Santri Muslims in recent years.

Before that, he had worked for Republika newspaper, which was aimed particularly at modernist urban Muslims. Republika was closely associated with the Indonesian Association of Muslim intellectuals, or ICMI, led by Suharto protégé BJ Habibie since its formation in 1990 until Suharto’s resignation in May 1998 following the economic crisis of the previous year and serious social unrest. The formation of ICMI and the politics associated with that were the subject of Sanwar’s PhD thesis at an Australian university.

Throughout his career, he became increasingly concerned about sectarianism in Indonesian society and politics. Sanwar’s PhD thesis is sharply critical of Suharto’s manipulation of radical Islamist sentiment in an attempt to buy political support. Sanwar is a determined and hard-working individual. Sanwar sold his family home to move his wife and family to Melbourne whilst he was completing his doctoral dissertation. After he completed his PhD at Melbourne, he returned to Indonesia. It is a mark of his idealism, but when he returned to Jakarta, he channelled his energy into establishing ICIP, in order for him to put into practice the theoretical observations of his doctorate.
Owing to his long association with Islamic publishing, Sanwar has excellent connections across Indonesia’s diverse Muslim communities. Although his own background lies with Islamic modernism and the mass-based organisation Muhammadiyah, Sanwar was also close to the many progressive Islamic thinkers associated with the traditionalist organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and in particular with the charismatic NU leader and former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (Barton 1996, 1997) for what he did. This background is significant because when Sanwar decided to engage with grassroots Muslim communities via the traditional schools known in Java as pesantren, but elsewhere referred to as madrasah. He needed to draw the support of the largely rural traditionalist communities that are most closely associated with pesantren.

Sanwar chose to work with the pesantren because he recognised that these institutions formed a natural cultural bridge between rural village life and, via modern education, the prospects of white-collar work in the cities. Moreover, whilst most of his colleagues associated with activism in support of progressive Islamic thought and aimed at countering Islamist extremism, Sanwar worked primarily in the large cities of Indonesia such as the national capital Jakarta. Sanwar recognised that his work was to be effective he needed to tap into grassroots networks and the most effective way of doing this was to engage the pesantren. He was also convinced that working with the pesantren was strategic because he recognised that ideas and the formation of thought through education was key to social transformation within the highest Muslim communities in Indonesia.

With the support of the Ford Foundation, Sanwar decided that there was an opportunity to give value to traditional pesantren by introducing them to IT that would help them access curriculum material and social networks that would otherwise be outside of the reach. At the same time, he also recognised the social connectivity that came from helping these pesantren go online would be transformative of students and teachers alike.
At the beginning of the project, ICIP lacked financial resources and had poor infrastructure. Komisi (similar to ABA licensing station—regulatory) became involved in the setting up of new body to regulate the learning management content materials. This was a ‘top-down approach’ by management. This type of approach was necessary as staff at ICIP were very used to traditional ways of teaching that is face-to-face for teaching and one-to-many approach was an ‘old habit’. Students were also very traditional, showing respect to university staff.

Curricula, Rote-learning and E-learning

Pesantren in Indonesia are generally thought of as being the equivalent of madrasah elsewhere in the Muslim world, and therefore primarily concerned with imparting religious learning and specific skills such as the ability to read the Koran in its original Arabic. In fact, the pesantren in Indonesia is generally much more advanced than is generally the case of madrasah Muslim majority societies.

Under the leadership of progressive thinkers such as Abdurrahman Wahid and more senior scholars in earlier decades, Wahid’s father and both his grandfathers, were cofounders of NU, were serious pesantren pioneers in their own right. They introduced education to female students and the learning of European languages. The pesantren had been steadily modernising, in both the way they went about teaching and learning and the nature of the curriculum material that they taught.

Beginning in the 1970s, traditionalist pesantren began to incorporate teaching of the national secular curriculum within their communal boarding school walls. Pesantren that did this established secular day schools within their compounds, which were known as madrasah aliah. The madrasah aliah ran parallel within the pesantren to religious studies program that were known as the madrasah diniyah. The idea was that the students would study in the secular school in the morning and early afternoon and then in the late afternoon and evening would study religious subjects in the traditional religious school program of the madrasah diniyah. They were rewarded for doing this by being able to receive Indonesian government funding for their madrasah aliah. There continue to be some pesantren that refuse all
government funding and focus entirely upon delivering a religious education, but by
now the vast majority of pesantren contain a madrasah aliah program. This has been
a very important development for Indonesia because the pesantren constitute a
significant proportion of all schools in this poor archipelago nation. As mentioned
above, it is estimated that there are around 20,000 pesantren in Indonesia today, and
that they educate around 20 per cent of Indonesia’s primary school students. The
state curriculum in Indonesia is divided into three stages associated with three
different levels of schooling: primary schools, junior high schools, and senior high
schools. The curriculum associated with these three stages is known in Indonesia as
packet A, packet B, and packet C.

Associations between social capital and education have been investigated in the
contexts of vocational and educational training (VET) (Kilpatrick 2003), early
childhood education (Farrell, Tayler & Tennent 2004) and non-formal education
(Shrestha, Wilson & Singh 2008).

Sanwar and his staff were confronted with overcoming the traditional rote learning
method of teaching and learning in order to implement e-learning. Sanwar had noted
that older students tend to be more resistant to changes in learning styles. The
younger the group the more open they were, ‘maybe this is a generation thing’.

Sanwar confided that one way of improving the attitude to e-learning is to recruit
staff (younger ones) as they were easy to motivate and adapt to e-learning. He
continued to say that older and non-IT background staff felt embarrassed when asked
to attend basic computer courses and became confused when too much information
was provided to them.

In the eight pesantren chosen by ICIP for the ODEL pesantren program, a common
characteristic is the low social economic status of the communities they serve and the
limited capacity of the pesantren as a result. These eight pesantren previously taught
packet A or primary school material and attempted to teach packet B or junior high
school, but they struggled with packet B of the material and most of them were not
able to teach at packet C junior high school level. One of the practical contributions
made by the ODEL pesantren project was that via the internet and other digital means including DVD material, that pesantren were provided with comprehensive teaching and learning material at packet B and packet C levels.

*Organic Rice Farming*

The very practical and helpful contribution made by the ODEL pesantren program to formal education has been positively received by teachers and students alike within the pesantren communities. Nevertheless, the impact of the pesantren program is not limited to four more curricula matters. Over several years that pesantren has been running now, a number of very interesting phenomenon has been observed that have arisen spontaneously as a result of the social connectivity and access to knowledge that has been produced by bringing the pesantren online.

For example, in one of the pesantren communities in Java, Sanwar reports that the pesantren has been able to increase its revenue significantly by switching from the cultivation of regular rice crops to organic rice farming. Generally, students at pesantren pay little or no fees and instead rely upon contributions in kind by families and communities associated with the pesantren; and also by producing basic products for their own consumption and for-sale from within what is effectively a cooperative farming community immediately associated with the pesantren. Typically, pesantren grow their own rice crops and run a small number of animal flocks as well as raising ducks and chickens. In the case of this pesantren, Sanwar was pleased to discover the leader of the pesantren talking enthusiastically about the new project in organic rice farming. When he asked where the idea came from and how they managed to do this, the teacher explained that they had learnt about organic rice farming from material that they found on the internet and they had discovered, of their own initiative, that there was more than sufficient material to guide them through the process of converting their own rice fields to organic rice farming.

Online teaching and learning took off in distance learning in Indonesia and then moved onto online learning. Sanwar said that staff and students are keen to use the internet for online teaching, particularly the use of materials they learnt from the
internet, for example, organic rice farming. He initially set up web pages used for teaching and the delivery of course materials and found these to be an effective and efficient way of course delivery. He began to teach his other colleagues in Indonesia from what he had learnt from his time in Australia when he studied his PhD. He feels the sense of urgency to learn new tools himself.

Social Connectivity

Sanwar shared another incident that illustrated the social connectivity of this kind of spontaneous autonomous learning that had occurred as a product of bringing the internet to the pesantren. The pesantren in Cianjur was a particularly socially conservative pesantren even more so than many of the other pesantren associated with the project, which like most economically poor pesantren, tend towards social conservativism. In this pesantren, the teacher instructs his female students that they should not only veil their heads but that they should also cover their faces with a second veil known as the nikab. Thus, Sanwar was rather surprised when he met with female students from this pesantren at a workshop in Jakarta in which he had invited them to participate, and had found them to be veiled in the traditional fashion without their faces covered. When he politely inquired of them why they had changed the usual practice, they explained that in their own research online, they had come across the instructions and teaching of the grand mufti of Cairo, a relatively progressive figure but still very much respected within conservative traditionalist societies around the world, on the topic of veils.

In the material that they discovered online, the mufti explained from classical Islamic texts that it was not necessary for women to veil their faces and that merely covering their hair was sufficient to comply with the Koran’s commandment for modesty in dress. The girls were so impressed by the logic and scholarship of this argument that they decided amongst themselves that it was correct. Nevertheless, they explained with a laugh to Sanwar, that when they returned to their pesantren they would continue to wear their veils across the lower face as was expected of them by their teachers, but that they knew privately now that their teachers’ position on this matter was incorrect.
Sanwar gave many other similar examples of unexpected insights obtained through autonomous learning made possible by having internet connection and computer access in these poor schools.

Both students and teachers are being transformed by the social connections they form with other pesantren communities and with communities across the Muslim world and by the learning material they find readily provided online. At one pesantren, Sanwar experienced a semi-serious rebuke from the wife of the senior teacher who explained to him that she had now lost her husband’s attention in the evening between the sunset and late-night prayers because he was constantly online. When asked about this, and why it was that he spent so much time online, the teacher excitedly explained that he was encountering enormous amounts of useful teaching material that could be correctly applied at his pesantren and that he had never before had access to such richness and was excited to continue exploring and to collect material of value to his community.

5.4.2 Stories from Teachers at BINUS

This section explores the views of the teachers at Bina Nusantara University (BINUS) as to how cultural factors affect their uptake of e-learning at their institution. BINUS was originally founded on 21 October 1974 as a short-term computer training institute. It was initially established with clear vision, rapid growth and expansion and high dedication (BINUS 2010). On 1 July 1981, with the rapid growth, the Modern Computer Course had then developed into Akademi Teknik Komputer (ATK) or Computer Systems Academy (BINUS 2010). On 13 July 1984, ATK changed its name to Akademi Mangemen Informatika and Komputer (AMIK) or Academy of Information Management and Computer Science Jakarta. On 1 July 985 AMIK Jakarta changed its name to AMIK BINA NUSANTARA (BINUS 2010). On 17 March 1986, the Indonesian MOE and Culture awarded AMIK BINA NUSANTARA as the Best Computer Academy whilst during its infancy.
On 9 November 1987, AMIK BINA Nusantara merged with STMIK BINA Nusantara and it created a single institution offering diploma and undergraduate programs. On 10 May 1993, STMIK BINA Nusantara inaugurated its Master program in Information System Management and that was the first of its kind in Indonesia (BINUS 2010).

On 8 August 1996, BINUS was established. On 20 December 1998, STMIK BINA Nusantara merged into BINUS (BINUS 2010). BINUS is working on in its vision and mission to be the leading educational institution, innovative, and a step ahead in IT development. BINUS provides education, which is ready to face global challenge.

BINUS’ Multi Channel Learning (MCL) was empowered through various methods, system, chance, space time, source, and media. BINUS changed its conventional study method, which was passive, to an interactive, proactive through this MCL system (BINUS 2010). The students were possible to access lecture material and discuss with their lecturer or their colleagues via the internet. BINUS developed a network system for free internet facility for students in area of 5 km from campus. Students and staff can download their lecture materials free if their residences are not more than 5 km from campus. ‘Debbie’ stands out as one of the key innovators at BINUS developing new teaching materials.

5.4.2.1 Debbie’s experiences

‘Debbie’ is a lecturer at BINUS. She was one of the early adopters of e-learning and she was not afraid to learn and explore new ways of teaching her students. As an early adopter of e-learning at BINUS, she experienced resistance to using online learning from non-IT literate staff, who are aged over 65. She had support to introduce online learning by the board of management. She described the process of encouraging her colleagues at BINUS to take-up online learning as a ‘herding cats principle’.

Debbie noted that in particular ‘a lot of male staff was resisting learning new ways of doing things’, whereas ‘somehow women staff desired to take the opportunity to
increase skills’. She was involved in developing a LMS for the university and 90 per cent of staff had now been certified in using the new system. Debbie believed that experience using online occurred mainly by being persistent and through sheer dedication. She had managed to ‘herd the cats’. Debbie continued to explain that online learning helped to integrate learning and teaching for students and teachers and provided a richer learning experience.

Debbie believed that mentoring and support were provided to staff. Feedback was fed back into improving the delivery of online learning. Online learning was one component of MCL. Debbie indicated that her colleagues claimed that, ‘we are so excited to be online’ despite BINUS having to initially use a ‘push down approach’, and herding staff to do and learn new things. Debbie was inspired to develop many different types of learning materials for her students because she had observed that too many students at her institution were reliant upon direct ‘spoon fed’ teaching.

5.4.2.2 Yossy’s story

Professor ‘Yossy’ was a senior member of staff at BINUS. Professor Yossy was from Universitas Indonesia (UI) and took a promotion to join BINUS. According to Yossy, students at BINUS were very much ‘spoon fed’ in what he described as the ‘fill it up syndrome’. The students’ learning experience in Indonesia involved being given as much information and little interaction. Yossy continued, ‘it was difficult therefore to change this mindset of both students and teachers through the integration of online learning’. In particular, Yossy believed that staff and management needed to be forced or ‘herded’ to do and learn new things. Similarly, students needed to be forced and encouraged to learn new things via new approaches. However, Yossy was also aware that Indonesia had an infrastructure problem that was holding back the uptake of e-learning, especially in regional areas of the country. In order to establish e-learning programs and to encourage innovative participation through e-learning, early adopters in Indonesian universities had to have management provide support and encouragement. The development of such programs along with improvement in infrastructure was one way of overcoming the politics in distance learning in Indonesia, by using positive examples of programs that work. During Yossy’s brief
time at BINUS, he put in place a proper ICT infrastructure and internet broadband connection for the university. He also put in place proper ICT policies and strategies in the initial years of his employment at BINUS. His influence was very much gleaned from his time of studies in US.

Leading by Example

According to Yossy, there needed to be a substantial shift in approach: a paradigm shift. Yossy commented that there was a great deal of initial resistance by staff when e-learning was first introduced, and that it was understandable to some extent when some staff did not have proper computers to work and learn new things. Yossy observed that staff feared:

- inadequate knowledge of technology;
- losing their jobs if they could not learn the new technology;
- being forced by management to learn new things—not a gradual process;
- not being given enough time to learn new things; and
- that management do not think of such things before imposing on staff to do things.

Management at BINUS examined senior management and uptake of online teaching and learning from Western universities as ‘leading by example’. Yossy further commented, ‘to overcome the barriers to effective implementation of online learning experienced in BINUS, the leading by example approach had been necessary.’
5.5 Discussion and Analysis

This chapter builds upon the different themes and discusses the narratives of each of the themes that derive from the research. As mentioned in the previous chapter on Malaysia, data from the case studies are presented first in the form of vignettes and, then later, in the form of aggregated assessments of key variables relating to attitudes and approaches to social capital, leadership, entrepreneurialism, attitude and behaviour, and teaching.

It might be thought that Malaysia and Indonesia would yield similar datasets given the fact that they have a common language. However, the reality is that the Malaysian environment is very different from the Indonesian environment. Whilst both are developing nations in South East Asia one has a relatively small population and a relative abundance of resources in fairly concentrated pockets of settlement and the other is a vast sprawling archipelago, home to the fourth largest nation in the world, and one that, whilst rich in resources, remains relatively poor particularly on a per capita basis.

As observed in the previous chapter, one might expect that Indonesia and Malaysia would track each other very closely. With respect to the case studies in Malaysia and Indonesia addressed in this thesis, that expectation generally holds true. Nevertheless, there are some important points of that need to be observed. The first is that whereas the learning pioneering in the Malaysian stories was regarded as at best only somewhat important, in Indonesian stories, this sort of innovation was regarded as very important.

There is reason to believe this is not just generally applicable to the stories in this case study in question, but also reflects on broader national tendencies. In Indonesia, the value of innovation and striking out in new directions is highly regarded because the need is great and the rewards can be great when pioneering innovation pays off.
The sort of extreme isolation and poverty observed in the pesantren, in this case, would be relatively unknown in Malaysia. Consequently, the need to reach out and engage these communities is much stronger in Indonesia than it is in Malaysia. Moreover, in general terms e-learning can deliver even greater rewards in Indonesia, for these reasons, that might do in Malaysia.

In Indonesia as in Malaysia, the importance of the e-community social capital is also significant. It is slightly less in Indonesia than in the Malaysian stories. Perhaps because of the relative lack of development, the notion of COP in Indonesia is somewhat less important than it is in Malaysia, or at least this is the case. In the case studies discussed here, the Indonesian subjects were much more accustomed to going it alone much more than were their Malaysian counterparts. Nevertheless, in the Indonesian stories, as with the Malaysian stories, the concept of social networks was very highly regarded with this kind of social capital and is just as essential. Similarly, generous mentoring was regarded as very important. Strategic mentoring, of the bamboo networking variety, was regarded as essential, just as it was in Malaysia. In the context of these Indonesian stories, collectivism, the attitude of pay it forward, was regarded as even more important than it was in Malaysia forming an essential part of what one does in the invasion context. Not surprisingly then, the general notion of reading what one sows of a karmic law was also regarded as being of essential importance. Interestingly, culturally specific connections based upon ethnicity, culture and religion although regarded as very important in the division case studies and not regarded as essential in the way that they are in the Malaysian stories.

There is lesser emphasis on specific cultural communities when it comes to leadership in the division case studies where cultural brokering (Geertz 1960) is regarded as very important. Perhaps this is because in the Indonesian context, serious cultural brokering is required when going from urban to rural communities even in their commonalities of language and religion. Malaysia, particularly Peninsula Malaysia where the case studies in the previous chapter occur, is altogether more highly developed than is even Indonesia's main island of Java, where the Indonesian stories are located.
Top-down leadership in the division case studies was regarded as desirable, but not as being very important. However, directive leadership, the sort of leadership within the teacher context that is sometimes associated with herding cats, and reciprocal trust-based leadership are both regarded as very important as they were in the Malaysian studies. Leadership by example, in Indonesian stories, was regarded as essential as in Malaysia. Similarly, the ‘wait and see’ approach to leadership was regarded as only somewhat useful, just as it was in the Malaysian stories.

However, entrepreneurialism in this particular can-do mindset was regarded as essential in Indonesian stories, whereas in the Malaysian stories it was only regarded as desirable. In the same manner, visionary or strategic thinking entrepreneurialism was regarded as very important in the Indonesian stories compared with only desirable in the Malaysian stories, and having a creative mindset was regarded as very important in Indonesia in contrast to the only regarded as desirable in Malaysia. Even more strikingly, an active approach to globalisation was regarded as essential in the context of Indonesian case studies, whereas in the Malaysian counterparts was only regarded as desirable. Conversely, there was slightly less emphasis on women pioneering in Indonesian stories, whereas in the Malaysian stories, it was regarded as essential, in Indonesian stories and it was simply ranked as very important. This is one area in which there might be considerable variations between stories, across the same country but it does seem generally true, as was noted in the previous chapter that pioneering women play a very significant role in Malaysia; and by comparison, it is assigned a somewhat significant role in Indonesia, which is by no means quite so conspicuous.

Attitudes and practice relating to teaching in Malaysia and in Indonesia are once again very similar in these stories. Teaching by example, teaching as learning, and teaching from life experience are all regarded as very important in both sets of case studies. However, in Indonesia teaching across cultures is regarded as desirable, whereas in Malaysia it is seen as being only somewhat important.
A similar pattern holds when it comes to general questions of attitude and outlook. In both sets of case studies, competitive instrumentalism is on is regarded as being only somewhat useful. In Indonesian stories, face-saving behaviour is regarded as being of less importance than in Malaysia. However, for the reasons outlined above, in the Indonesian stories, multicultural awareness is regarded as desirable as opposed to being only somewhat useful in the Malaysian stories. In both Indonesian and Malaysian stories, reciprocity was regarded as very important and having the attitude of being a ‘utility player’ and ‘all rounder’ was regarded as just desirable.

Broadly speaking, the uptake of the internet in the education sector especially in the pesantren community is driven by demand to access information and participate in social networks. This is seen in particular in the ICIP program, where it is the power of the technology to facilitate change that is most important and not technology for technology sake. To understand what is happening in the use of internet in traditional Islamic learning, one needs to understand the social context and cultural factors to appreciate why internet usage is so attractive. The uptake of the e-pesantren appeal lies in the connectivity provided by the technology and access to knowledge that otherwise may not be readily accessible. This chapter discusses the social and cultural influences on the uptake of e-pesantren in Indonesia.

The primary finding of this case study is that progressive individuals working within a system that remains largely conservative, but is nevertheless more adaptable than often thought, choose to engage various kinds of e-learning technologies primarily because of the capacity of these technologies to facilitate learning in all of its forms. In other words, these key pioneers are motivated not so much by a deep interest in the technology or even a deep understanding of its elements but rather primarily by a desire to do all they can to encourage transformative learning experiences and environments and they use e-learning technologies because they can be done more quickly, efficiently, and economically than other alternatives.
The diagram below (Figure 5.1) seeks to summarise the key elements that have come up in the case study discussions. As with the similar diagram at the end of the Malaysian chapter (Figure 4.2) these elements are listed without attempting to assign priorities or causal relations. The expressions ‘herding cats’ and ‘fill it up syndrome’ reflect the language used by respondents. The other terms ‘rote learning’, ‘cultural bridge’, ‘grassroots Muslim community’, and ‘social connectivity’ speak to reoccurring themes raised during the fieldwork discussions.

Figure 5.1: Key Elements Arising from Indonesia Interview Discussions
The next chapter deals with e-learning case studies from Turkey. As with the Malaysian and Indonesian case studies the focus is particularly upon the experience of the individual teachers. These educators are working in an environment in which the importance of distance learning and more recently of e-learning is well understood and is institutionally supported.
Chapter 6: Case Study Analysis: Turkey and E-learning: Reaching out and Building Trust

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study of e-learning in Turkey. As with the previous two chapters, the focus is particularly upon the experience of individual educators. They are working in tertiary education environments in which the importance of distance learning, and more recently of e-learning, is well understood and is institutionally supported. Here, the focus is on how individual teachers decide to undertake new initiatives and form decisions about what approaches to take in the area of e-learning.

One of the key findings is of importance owing to the fact that it hinges on strong social networks; this finding parallels that of the Malaysia case study. But the particular element that stands out in the Turkey case study is the importance of building trust and of the considerable investments made by teachers in building relations with their colleagues and collaborators, in order to secure the advancement of new projects and ensure that they are well received and supported.

Turkey is a middle-income developing nation with very challenging topographical and demographic aspects, which means that distance education and e-learning have long been recognised as having an important role to play. It is a country in which there is an overwhelming focus on developing social capital through developing trust relations and awareness that this is an important first step in any major collaborative initiative.
6.2 Communications and E-readiness

- Telephones: main lines in use: 17.502 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 18
- Telephones: mobile cellular: 65.824 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 15
- Radio broadcast stations: 1,090 (station types) (2009)
- Television broadcast stations: 251 (2009)
- Internet hosts: 2.961 million (2009)
- Internet users: 24.483 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 15
  (Central Intelligence Agency. 2010)

Table 6.1: Extracts Taken from EIU (2009) E-readiness Rankings Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2010 Ranking (rank)</th>
<th>2010 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2009 Ranking (rank)</th>
<th>2009 Score (/10)</th>
<th>2008 Ranking (rank)</th>
<th>2008 Score (/10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>68th</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>36th</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E-readiness is a relatively new concept that has been given impetus by the rapid rate of internet penetration throughout the world, and the dramatic advances in uses of Internet in business and industry (Choucri et al. 2003, p. 2). The e-readiness concept was originated by the intent to provide a unified framework to evaluate the breadth and depth of the digital divide between more and less developed or developing countries during the late 1990s (Mutulaa & van Brakel 2006, p. 212).

One of the important aspects of the e-learning is e-readiness. E-readiness is the ability to use ICT to develop one’s economy and to foster one’s welfare. In 2010, Turkey is ranked 43rd among 70 countries ranking. In the EIU (2010) report, the quality of access remains an important indicator (see Table 6.1 above). In 2010, the EIU added a new indicator to the connectivity category of their model: the broadband quality. According to E-readiness Rankings 2009, broadband and mobile connectivity levels continued to increase for almost all countries (EIU 2009).
was ranked 43rd among 70 countries. E-readiness is a macro-concept; however, it is an important indicator for e-learning readiness in respect to actualised e-learning infrastructure. EIU (2007) state that as far as Turkey’s e-readiness is concerned, Turkey appears to be almost ready internationally. In their survey in 2007 on the e-readiness of 69 countries, Turkey was ranked 42nd, and 45th for 2006. A study by Aydin and Tasci (2005) reported that universities are ready for the adoption of e-learning in terms of skills and expertise. However, the adoption of e-learning in Turkish universities by the teaching staff and students is still at an early stage; the online teaching and learning practice is still rather ad hoc and the level of integration between online teaching technologies and teaching and learning practice is still rather fragmented and low.

E-learning with mobile learning is the long-term future of learning, and not a niche part of educational developments. It will become part of a mainstream of what educators will do for teaching and learners will do for learning. The contemporary Turkish Education system was established in 1924 after Ataturk closed the religious school to set up new secular schools.

The first efforts in defining e-readiness were undertaken in 1998 by the Computer Systems Policy Project (CSPP) when it developed the first e-readiness assessment tool known as Readiness Guide for Living in the Networked World. It defined e-readiness with respect to a community that had high-speed access in a competitive market; with constant access and application of ITs in schools, government offices, businesses, healthcare facilities and homes; user privacy and online security; and government policies that are favourable to promote connectedness and use of the network (CSPP 1998).

Since the development of the first e-readiness tool, several e-readiness tools have emerged through efforts of development agencies, research organisations, academia, business enterprises and individuals. Bridges.org divides existing e-readiness assessment tools and models into two main categories with considering their perspective: e-society and e-economy. In fact, ‘e-society’ tools incorporate business growth and use of IT as part of their larger analysis, and consider business growth
necessary for society’s e-readiness. ‘e-economy’ focused tools also include some factors of interest to the larger society, such as privacy and universal access (bridges.org 2005).

6.3 Education

Economic growth in 2007 was thought to be as high as 7.5 per cent, making Turkey one of the world’s fastest developing nations. This economic prosperity has enabled Turkey to set about transforming its educational system. Already the achievements of the Turkish education system are significant but much remains to be done. The state education system has a compulsory education for students aged between six and fourteen with secondary education been widely available for students aged between 14 and 18. It is estimated that around 1.5 million students graduate from Turkish secondary schools each year.

As the Turkish economy develops the demand for university places increases at a rapid rate. Even with this new prosperity, it is difficult for the state to keep up with the burgeoning demand for tertiary education. One way in which Turkey is attempting to meet its unprecedented demand for university education is through a series of sophisticated and extensive distance education programs. For example, Anadolu University was founded in 1981 with the express mandate of promoting distance or opened education particularly among rural Turks. In 1982, Anadolu University had an enrolment of 30,000 by 2005 and this had risen to more than 870,000. By 2008, enrolment had exceeded 1000,000 and had gone beyond the geographical borders of Turkey to include Turkish speaking students living in Europe and in Northern Cyprus.

According to Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey has a population of around 65 to 75 million where ages 6–29 are 20 per cent; ages 30–55 are 28 per cent by 2008 (TUIK 2009). Around 18% of the total population of Turkey resides in Istanbul and more than 6% of the total population resides in the capital Ankara. Approximately half of the population of Turkey is younger than 28 years old (TUIK 2009).
6.3.1 Education System

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the total adult literacy rate was around 89 per cent in 2006 (UNICEF 2010). The MNE (2006) gives the current participation rates:

- Primary 95.6 per cent
- Secondary 85.2 per cent
- Tertiary 30.5 per cent

According to Kizılsu (2005), the internet use has changed tremendously in Turkey since 1990 and nearly all Turkish universities have their own websites and this gives them the incredible opportunity to catch up to more developed countries (Kızılsu 2005).

6.3.2 Distance Education in Turkey

Distance education started as early as 1920s. It started with correspondence study and was considered the main demand for formal higher education in Turkey. Anadolu University was established in 1981 from an older institution, the Academy of Eskisehir, Economics and Commercial Sciences (EAECS). In accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1981, it was also authorised to provide distance education in Turkey on a national scale. As a result of the Higher Education Act of 1981 in 1982, the former Faculty of Communication Sciences of the EAECS had become the Faculty of Open Education, or, it is commonly called the Open Education Faculty (OEF) (McIsaac et al. 1988). In 1982, Anadolu University was established with a well-developed distance education system. This has helped Turkish government meet the demand for higher education in Turkey (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010).

According to Yamamoto and Aydin (2010), in 1982–1983, the OEF started to offer two undergraduate distance education degree programs in Business Administration and Economics with 29,478 students. By 2009–2010, the number of enrolled distance students reached 1.4 million (98 per cent of all distance students and
approximately 41 per cent of all students in Turkish higher education system) at Anadolu University (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010).

According to the Higher Education Council’s (YOK) legislations and policy, new applicants should have at least 145 on the national entrance exam in order to register for a distance education program. Applicants who held an undergraduate degree or who was studying in an undergraduate program of any university was able to enrol for a distance education program from Anadolu University (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010).

The distance programs of Anadolu University were primarily self-study textbook-based programs were students worked at their own pace and then took scheduled centralised exams administered at remote locations. The self-study program was supported with several services included broadcast state aired channel television programs throughout the country, video and radio programs distributed on cassettes, CDs or DVDs, remote evening classes, and other e-learning tools (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010).

In Anadolu University, the use of e-learning tools and the number of online programs increased dramatically. Anadolu University had a fully online program of the Information Management Associate Degree Program, an eMBA (a joint initiative with the State University of New York [SUNY]) and a hybrid ESL Teacher Training programs (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010). These fully online programs used the e-learning tools extensively (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010). At Anadolu University, each course in all the distance programs had an online support site, e-learning portal, in which students could access multimedia learning materials, e-books (PDF version of textbooks), videos (broadcast TV programs), audio textbooks (in mp3 format), asynchronous and synchronous discussion, technical, managerial and many other technical support tools (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010). Anadolu University offered also offered these materials to general public as free access learning materials under another portal, entitled Yunus Emre: New Generation Learning Portal (Yamamoto & Aydin 2010).
E-learning distance educational programs at Anadolu University were considered the largest e-learning system in Turkey. This was because Anadolu University had extensive use of online support teaching and learning materials for their distance program learners. At Anadolu University, the e-learning portal provided digitised version of their teaching and learning materials (textbooks, broadcast TV programs, audio books, online trial exams, and automated feedback systems) to support their learners. The university also offered almost all of these materials as free access learning materials to anyone who would like to learn.

6.3.3 Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education ICT Policy in Turkey

Turkey’s Information Society Transformation Policy was adopted by the e-Transformation Turkey Executive Board. The Board is a top-level institution involved in the e-transformation of Turkey (OECD, 2008). The Board comprised of the Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Industry and Trade, Minister of Transport, Undersecretary of State Planning Organisation (SPO) and chief advisor to the Prime Minister (OECD, 2008). In 2003, the 58th and 59th Government Urgent Action Plans was launched (European Union 2007).

Two action plans were launched since the adoption of e-transformation Turkey Project. The two action plans covering 2003–2004 Short Term Action Plan (SPO Prime Ministry 2003) and 2005 Action Plan (SPO Prime Ministry 2005) were implemented successfully. SPO had also prepared Turkey’s Information Society Strategy and annexed Action Plan was adopted by High Planning Council (SPO Prime Ministry 2006). The innovations in ICT in Turkey had a very important effect on the development of globalisation and influence of Turkey’s economic and social transformation towards information society in Turkey. The e-transformation Turkey Project stated Turkey’s vision of transformation into an ‘information society’ as: ‘to be a country that has become a focal point in the production of S&T, that uses information and technology as an effective tool, that produces more value with information-based decision-making processes and that is successful in global competition, with a high level of welfare’ (OECD 2008). Turkey’s Ninth Development Plan covers the 2007–2013 period with a vision that ‘Turkey a country
of information society, growing in stability, sharing more equitably, globally competitive and fully completed her coherence with the European Union’ and also within the framework of the Long Term Strategy (2001–2023) (SPO Prime Ministry 2001).

6.4 Turkish Case Studies

Twelve one-on-one interviews at four higher education institutions in Turkey were conducted over a four-month period. The qualitative approach was applied through the selected eight case studies of one Anadolu University. Data was collected via case studies with interviews and observation of participants of the selected teachers from Turkey. From the interviews conducted in Turkey, five key themes were identified for the social cultural impact on the uptake of e-learning. Case studies related to the selected four interviewers will be discussed in the following sections. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of all respondents have been changed.

6.4.1 Stories from Teachers at Anadolu University

This section explores the views of the teaching staff at Anadolu University on how cultural factors impact on their uptake of e-learning at their institution. As outlined above, in 1982, Turkey made a start to distance education with the Anatolian university open education system with 29,000 students. In the Turkish education year 2004–2005, more than two million students were educated in open education primary and high schools, and Anatolian University open education. One of the main reasons that Turkish students went on the open education system, and that was preferred were: 1) working at a job; 2) keeping up with military services; 3) mature age education; and 4) personal reasons that prevented them from attending a classic education. Among these, were women who were housewives who wanted to accomplish their education whilst still be able to further their studies in an open education system and women who felt unable to attend regular university campuses because of the government ban on the wearing of Islamic head coverings on campus. Open education is one of the important ways to provide equal opportunity in education.
Basic education materials in open education were textbooks that were prepared with
distance education pedagogy and suitable for self-learning. There were thousands of
writers and editors from many universities who contributed to the hundreds of
textbooks that have been published for students’ access. TV programs were prepared
that parallel the unit lessons and aimed to support and strengthen the students’ self-
learning effectiveness.

In 2003–2004, textbooks and television programs were broadcast online (primarily
using e-books and e-television). The students could reach these services free of
charge just by using their citizenship numbers.

The MNE recognised the need for English language teachers, which had increased in
Turkey. As a result, the Ministry made foreign language courses compulsory for the
4th and 5th year students in elementary schools.

6.4.1.1 Beyi’s Story

In 2000–2001, the MNE began a Distance English Language Teacher Training
(DELTT) BA program at Anadolu University OEF in order to meet the demand for
English teachers for both elementary and high schools. The courses in the DELTT
program were offered in a blended learning delivery mode where face-to-face and
distance education was used. The program’s 1st and 2nd year courses were taught
using conventional education methods because the courses were very much run as
skilled courses (reading, writing, grammar, and translation), which were more
effective in a classroom situation and the 3rd and 4th year courses were taught in
distance education delivery mode. The DELTT Program at Anadolu University in
Turkey contributed to education for all in different ways. It gave opportunities to a
large number of people in both genders, living in both urban and rural areas in
Turkey who wanted to become English language teachers but who were not able to
receive on-campus education for different reasons to give them the chance to become
English language teachers.
Beyi’s experience with online learning and teaching has been very interesting. ‘Beyi’ is a distance English language teacher, education and virtual specialist at Anadolu University Faculty of Open Education. She was also an online English language program expert. She designed, evaluated and implemented a series of Online English language e-learning programs for her university. As an expert in online English language program, Beyi was of the opinion that individual instructors or teachers had to play a key role in facilitating the university’s strategy planning by having course materials uploaded and posted on the learning management system portal. Beyi learned and studied the university’s e-learning system at her own time and pace.

The English language program was designed to solve the English language teacher education problem in Turkey. The purpose of the program was to give those who would like to become English language teachers the privilege to achieve their goal, and secondly to increase the supply of English teachers in the country and allowed students who wanted to learn English but could not learn because of a lack of teachers to learn English.

Beyi is a pioneer who brings students and facilitators together. She developed a discussion system on the computer screen that did not require it to be online at the same time: asynchronous forum was developed. It was designed conveniently for groups of students who lived in different time zones around the world; with working commitments that did not allow them to come together at the same time to meet. This asynchronous forum allowed facilitators and learners to participate according to their own schedules.

Beyi stated that this new program, ‘gave the students who would like to become English language teachers, the right to receive education in this field using the facilities of distance education, particularly e-learning systems set up by this university’. She continued:

This certainly increases the supply of teachers of English and allows students who want to learn English but who cannot learn because of not enough English teachers. I feel the empathy. It all depends on the university e-learning initiatives. If the institution is initiating an e-learning program, then it must start with the institution framework or perspective. The institution and the learners must be ready to launch this together. I did a
readiness assessment amongst the current students, and the results were very positive and encouraging. They were hungry and very keen to learn the new language. So there was a real push and eagerness from the learners.

Beyi was very dedicated in making that happen. She worked very hard for many months and with support from the university to start the program. She acknowledged:

It is important in this information age and different cultures that the need for communication amongst each other increases in this globalised world. Our people need to be educated and learn languages from different cultures and especially English language where it is it a very common and useful language of this global communication.

6.4.1.2 Naili’s Story

‘Naili’, a university teacher in her late 30s at the time of being interviewed, is a Thai-born teacher who works at Turkey’s largest distance education university. She stood out amongst her colleagues as someone who was constantly making an effort to reach out and engage with people in her direct, face-to-face encounters. Her online style closely matches her face-to-face style of communication. Naili is a classic example of someone who has learnt how to use technology to engage people and minimise distance. Naili had her undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications from the US. Her mastery of English worked to her advantage and she is generally perceived as a modern, Western ‘American’ lady. Naili made good use of power distance in her relationship with her students. She had formed strong networks with peers and mentors from the US, the UK and all around the world.

Naili developed and established the eMBA online program in which she teaches. She constantly initiated online discussions with her students and earnestly encourages her students to participate in online discussions and communication. She regularly seeks feedback from students and counterparts from SUNY, with whom her university had a partnership program, to improve her eMBA course.
Naili has a great deal of online interaction both professionally and personally with her students and used this to help her constantly refine and develop her eMBA program. She observed:

My students will e-mail me 24/7 and because I’m often online, I reply to them. During semester breaks, [when] I go overseas for conferences, I still engage my students as long as there is internet connection.

She laughingly added, ‘they don’t know whether I’m here in Turkey or Thailand.’ Naili was happy to share plentiful anecdotes about her teaching experience and is quick to see the humour in situations in which she finds herself. For example, she related:

I am constantly involved in online discussion with my students. One day, a Turkish male student confided and shared about his problems with me regarding his problems and difficulties in studying as an adult. Being a professional teacher, I responded and thought that person was a female student. Low and behold, when we met face-to-face during our one-week seminar, we both were shocked to find out that I was not a male teacher and he was not a female student.

She added, ‘I have to be more careful in my assumption regarding my communication during online communication’. Naili’s comments demonstrate that online communication and the teacher’s personality and attitudes can support the social process in teaching and learning.

Further, it became clear that because Naili herself feels comfortable with holding discussions online, she naturally elicits the trust and confidence of her students and close colleagues. Revealingly, Naili volunteered: ‘good friends here are hard to come by. So I very often have a cup of coffee with my good trusted friend, Shabby who is from South America’. Naili used her heritage to build her network and influence her students and colleagues to use online technology in teaching. Shabby, was also a migrant from South America and married to a Turkish man who is also one of her colleagues. Naili often encouraged and showed Shabby how to use online technology to improve her teaching. Naili shared that: ‘I am very willing to share and help her in using online technologies. I feel the more people using these tools, the better it is for us to influence other staff and students.’ During their weekly informal chats, both Naili and Shabby often discussed their online experiences with students and ways of making incremental improvements to online course delivery.
Naili also explained that, ‘I’m a go-getter and willing to try everything to motivate students to study online.’ She continued to explain that, ‘I formed network and trust with peers and mentors from States, UK and all around the world’. Naili got along very well with students studying online. She seized every opportunity and therefore got things done, especially in motivating her students to be involved in online teaching and learning activities.

Naili explained enthusiastically: ‘I spend more than 50 per cent of my time communicating with peers, colleagues and students overseas using electronic medium. The response is so fast and often instantly especially using MSN, IM or any other chat facilities.’ Her external cultural experience was useful for her to define the approach to teaching and learning online where she interacts with international students from America and Turkey. Naili also communicates and builds her trust with external peers and collaborate in writing journal articles. For example, she explained that, ‘most of my recent journal articles that I collaborate with my peers globally via MSN and e-mails. It is so easy these days.’

In summary, Naili used online technology such as online chat rooms and e-mails to gain a network of support from her colleagues as well as from students to share stories of her online teaching experiences with colleagues (to mentor them and to learn from them) and to encourage students to learn and communicate with the teacher online. Her professional experience sharing and personal influences (guanxi) have become important factors in forming a network of other adopters and engaging them in the innovative practice.

Even though Naili originally came from Thailand (high in power distance relationship), her regular mannerisms and way of doing things were very much low power distance relationship) suggesting that her extensive Western education from an early age had shaped her approach. It was clear that she did not feel entirely comfortable with some of her older Turkish male colleagues and was irritated by attitudes that she perceived to be patriarchal and small-minded. Nevertheless, it was also evident that deep down she believed in building networks and relationships with
her peers who shared the same interest and values with her. She was very selective with who she interacted with on a deeper level.

Naili noted that, ‘drinking çai together is a good way of establishing friendship here’. She continued that drinking çai was very important in building good friendships and networks, a dynamic that paralleled modes of interaction in Thai society. This also relates to Arial’s case of bamboo networking and social networking. Despite her Western influence and ways of doing things, her Asian outlook and upbringing continued to influence Naili. Certainly, it seemed clear to the researcher that she related very well with her because she saw her as someone very much like herself: of similar age and background, an Asian woman married to a non-Asian, a career minded person who enjoyed motherhood but did not wish to remain at home.

Naili strongly believes that online technology is the way forward. She struggled with peer support in moving forward and found both discouragement and disinterest. Her academic dean was a female professor and had been very supportive but some of her colleagues found her threatening and her enthusiasm disruptive.

Naili used online and offline informal and formal communication mechanisms to encourage students and colleagues to learn and teach online and to engage people in online communication rather than just simply following a top-down approach. While other colleagues were hesitant or reluctant to make changes, through informal and formal communication mechanisms, Naili built a network of with her students and colleagues, an academic guanxi, to support her early adoption of online technologies in her teaching practice.

6.4.1.3 Hakan’s Story

This section explores the views of one senior teaching staff at Anadolu University as to why initial IT strategies failed to meet the initial high expectations of the university and the government project plan. This story considers the extent of his initial experience to change and implement the change, and his role as senior management in pushing and implementing through IT reforms. This story explores
how attitudes and social and cultural influences affect e-learning at Anadolu University.

‘Hakan’ is a senior staff member in one of the faculties at Anadolu University. When interviewed, he had over eight years of teaching and senior administration experience and had made very critical policy decisions, strategies of online learning of the university. He questioned and criticised the role of e-learning and the lack of resources and facilities at the university:

The university needs physical and logistics interactions among students and teachers. There is currently very limited resources and teachers who are able to teach using e-learning. How would e-learning help teachers become world class teachers? We do not have proper facilities. The environment and technology will change and will continue to regain education. How do we keep up? Students learn on the run.

Clearly, Hakan was disappointed and frustrated with the existing environment and infrastructure in Anadolu University. As a senior member of staff, he made the point of getting involved and teaches in one of the postgraduate classes:

Despite the lack of IT infrastructure when I initially wanted to use the internet in my classes, I persisted by bringing in my laptop and overhead projector to classes. I want to teach my students to use portable technology despite no internet access. This had affected my teaching.

As Hakan persisted and had a ‘never give up attitude’, he explored ways to involve better e-learning delivery. Hakan’s real involvement in e-learning had earned rewards from his staff members and colleagues and he wanted:

To practice what I preach to my students and staff. I want to be involved in e-learning myself, so I know how to empower my staff because I received neither guidance nor support as to how to use these new technologies.

Hakan’s commitment and dedication in using e-learning technology despite the lack of infrastructure and support provided him with motivation and he did not give up. He had a spirit of a ‘good fighter and positive energy person’. Hakan observed:

I sometimes have to become a good fighter and know how to balance the momentum and lead with my strong hand and to get strength with my weak. I try to aim for the right opportunities and not throw any punches.
Hakan’s experience as a good fighter and citizen in Turkey had helped his university succeed in being a world-class distance online learning university. He shared:

Because you need to fight and be determined to achieve valuable things in life. There is always a price to pay to get that valuable thing. The valuable thing does not come out of thin air. You need to have goals. When I first took up the senior position here at the faculty, I knew I had to be a good fighter and have a specific goal to motivate what I need to succeed for myself and the institution. I need to know where the finishing line is.

With his creativity and experiences in using new technology and senior administration, he then could motivate senior university administration to understand what was required to become a world-class e-learning university. Hakan confided, ‘I often watch with my eyes like an owl sitting on top of the tree and move only when I need to. Like the saying—you have wings, Use them wisely.’ After much hard work, Hakan’s positive energy has yielded clear results.

6.4.1.4 Basir’s Story

‘Basir’ is Turkish born teacher in his mid-30s, at the time of being interviewed, teaching at the same mega distance university in Turkey as Naili. Like Naili, he taught in the eMBA course used online technologies in all of his courses. Unlike Naili, he was entirely locally educated: he did his undergraduate and Masters Program at his current university and was currently enrolled in a PhD program at his university. Although he had never studied abroad nor lived outside Turkey for a prolonged period, Basir travelled frequently to Europe and America for partnership course exchanges with his university.

Basir is fluent in both Turkish and English but was, understandably, more comfortable in Turkish than English. Basir generally used Turkish when communicating with his students in both online discussions and in face-to-face teaching. Although many of his students had excellent English language skills and he himself was articulate and comfortable when speaking English, he seldom used English to communicate with his students. He explained that he felt he could reach
out to a wider community by using Turkish. Basir felt that he gained sympathy and support from his locally based network.

He was actively involved in conventional distance education (his university has an enormous conventional, paper-based, distance education program) before he started using IT to deliver his course content online.

Basir said that, ‘in Turkish culture, trust is very much my thing. My students trust me because I give them information and knowledge to learn’. He further explained that trust was very much an individual thing and is generally not given easily. He built his trust and network with his students. He had the ‘power’: power distance online relationship with his students. He communicated and gave feedback very frequently using discussion groups with his students.

With his colleagues or peers, Basir admitted that he did not feel that he could easily trust his colleagues with certain things and that he had a fear of losing his ‘intellectual property’ if he were not careful and allowed people to steal his ideas. Basir explained:

You know, it took me a long time to collaborate with my colleagues. I think I only have one or two colleagues whom I write papers together. But somehow, I feel I could trust and share writing with you.

He added that he believed that information and knowledge were very powerful and that he felt the need for caution with many of his peers and colleagues.

Basir explained that although Turkey was very much a male dominated patriarchal society; this was not without positive attributes. He made a point of mentoring younger colleagues and advanced student, continuously building what he described as a ‘boys’ network with his peers. He explained that even though he has this ‘personal trust’ with his ‘male’ colleagues, he still could not share his professional ‘intellectual’ work or writings with them.

Together with Naili, Basir is one of his university’s pioneers in online teaching and learning. In 2003, he first made use of IT to e-mail his weekly power point notes to
his students. Then, in 2005, he began to use IM to conduct weekly discussion forums.

Basir’s weekly IM forum discussions expanded to daily discussions and even 24/7 online discussion and chat with his students. By 2006, he was in near constant discussion with his students across Turkey and beyond and had initiated hundreds of discussion threads.

After observing his extensive usage of this technology and the enthusiasm with which his students responded to the opportunity for free and open discussion online, Basir’s university began to call upon his expertise and seek his advice on adopting this technology more broadly. Beginning in late 2005, the university developed a localised LMS. Basir became the leading contributor to the new LMS, which was widely used. He continued to run workshop sessions marketing and explaining the new LMS.

Apart from the LMS itself, Basir shared with his colleagues other ways of using IT tools for online learning. Unfortunately, due in part to a general lack of resources, his time spent in getting other staff to use the system was not adequately compensated. Nevertheless, because he strongly believed that online technology delivery was the way forward, he continued to build groups of experts in different areas. Due to his outgoing nature and personality, he had persuaded many of his colleagues to use different online technologies. In addition, because they knew him, his sharing of experiences and his seniority at the university has enabled him to gain trust.

The eMBA at Basir’s university was initiated with SUNY. Basir and Naili together pioneered the program. He looks after groups of Turkish students and his counterparts in the US look after American students involved in the same program.

It was evident that Basir has helped his Turkish students overcome fears of using online technology by spending a great deal of time in answering their queries and simplifying the online delivery process. He generated reports from the discussion threads and used them to enhance his online teaching methods. At the same time, he
had analysed and researched ways to improve the course based on students feedback. Basir believed that establishing trust and building sound relationships with his students helped him and his students in online teaching and learning. The findings of Djojosaputro et al. (2005) indicate that the interviewed students from a collectivist and high power distance culture want to be guided by the lecturer in the online learning environment. These students relied heavily on the lecturer’s information and answers whilst studying that subject during the semester. This also applies to Basir’s online teaching delivery with his students. Similar to Naili, Basir builds his guanxi social networks with colleagues and students and engages them in his innovative online teaching practice. Naili builds her network of practice through informal çai drinking and personal and semi-formal communications, whereas Basir built his network of practice through establishing trust and sound relationships with them. This difference reflects the masculinity dimension in Turkish culture.

This chapter explored the different themes and vignettes of cultural and social influences of Turkey teachers uptake of e-learning in Turkey. The findings of the interviews and observation collected from interviewees were analysed using thematic analysis. These findings produced insightful description of the social and cultural influences in the use of technologies in their teaching. Turkey is a country in which culturally there is an overwhelming focus on developing social capital through developing trust relations and awareness that this is an important first step in any major collaborative initiative. It builds upon the different themes and discusses the narratives of each of the themes that derive from the research.
6.5 Discussion and Analysis

Indonesia and Turkey are even more similar than are Indonesia and Malaysia, at least when it comes to the case studies involved in this thesis. Turkey, like Indonesia, is a large developing nation that has significant pockets of relative poverty and isolation. Turkey is wealthier and better developed than Indonesia overall but both nations are characterised by a very forward-looking, progressive outlook that optimistically looks to the future and generally is not content to gaze wistfully into a golden past. In both nations, people are generally keen to continue with development, they are optimistic that tomorrow can be better than yesterday and that this century is better than the previous century.

Turkey is not nearly as geographically spread out as is Indonesia but the factor of geographic isolation is at least as important in Turkey as it is in Indonesia. In Indonesia, communities are often separated by large amounts of open sea, whereas in Turkey they are divided, particularly in the eastern two thirds of the country, by rugged mountain ranges and extreme climatic conditions. For these reasons, e-learning has a particular utility and appeal in these nations compared with smaller wealthier nations. Consequently, in the Turkish stories as in the Indonesian counterparts, e-learning pioneering was regarded as essential. The community social capital, grassroots’ networks, was also regarded as very important. However, a significant difference between the two nations is that in the Turkish stories the notion of COP is regarded as very important as compared to only being recognised as desirable in Indonesia. In Turkey, as in Indonesia and Malaysia, social e-networks, in formal exchanges of friendship and fellowship over a meal or a cup of sweet tea [çai] are regarded as essential. In Turkey, as in Indonesia and Malaysia generous mentoring is also regarded as very important. Strategic mentoring is similarly regarded as very important though not quite essential. Collectivism and the principle of karma are also seen as very important, once again indicating a subtle difference between the Turkish stories and the Indonesian stories where these matters are regarded as essential.
When it comes to leadership, cultural brokering is not as highly regarded in Turkey as it is Indonesia. In the Turkish stories, it was seen merely to be desirable. Top-down leadership was a somewhat more significant aspect of leadership in the Turkish stories and was in Indonesian stories just is also more important in Malaysia, being given a rating of very important. In all three sets of case studies, directive leadership and reciprocal trust-based leadership was also regarded as equally very important. Leadership by example in all three nations was regarded as essential. Interestingly, the Turkish stories followed those of Indonesia and Malaysia in regarding the approach of ‘wait and see’, of letting others try first, and possibly failing, as only somewhat useful when it comes to leadership.

With respect to entrepreneurialism that stories in Turkey suggested a similar pattern to those in Indonesia where ‘a can-do attitude’ was regarded as essential in Turkey, just as it was in Indonesia well ahead of being merely desirable as was recorded in the Malaysian stories. Interestingly, in Turkey, where the creative and knowledge industries represent a well-acknowledged strength of the national economy, and a considerable source of national pride having a visionary and strategic thinking mindset was regarded as essential to leadership, whereas in Indonesia it was nearly very important and in Malaysia just important. Having a creative mindset was regarded as very important in the Turkish stories just as it was in the division case studies being one level ahead of the Malaysian stories. Active globalisation, however, whilst regarded as being very important in the Turkish stories, was not regarded as essential in those studies in comparison with the Indonesian context. Conversely, in Turkey, as in Malaysia, the idea of all women being pioneering was regarded as being of essential importance in leadership.

With respect to teaching, the stories in Turkey closely matched the stories in Indonesia and Malaysia with teaching by example as very important; teaching as learning and teaching from life as being regarded as very important. In Turkey, teaching across cultures, the related multicultural awareness was regarded as very important as significant difference from Indonesia and Malaysia.
When it came to attitude and outlook, the findings from the Turkish stories also closely followed those of Indonesia and Malaysia. Competitive instrumentalism was regarded as being at best only or somewhat useful. Face-saving was regarded also as being merely useful. Multicultural awareness was even more important in Turkey than it was in Indonesia and Malaysia where it received a rating of very important in the Turkish stories. As in the other two sets of case studies, reciprocity was regarded as very important, but the Turkish stories differed from the other two sets in that the attitude or outlook of being a ‘utility player’ and ‘all rounder’ was regarded as very important.

In the stories discussed above, the experiences of Naili and Basir are broadly indicative of the overall research finding that key teachers making an effort to reach out and engage with people and to build trust have played a significant role in the development and establishment of online teaching and learning in Turkey.

Although keen, self-starting teachers like Naili and Basir are undoubtedly capable of operating independently of top-down initiated programs, it is clear that a proactive approach to supporting such teachers could significantly increase their number and influence. By identifying and promoting champions, mentoring them and helping them mentor others, a much larger pool of technology pioneers can be built-up, and built-up more quickly, than would occur without this proactive engagement. Even more importantly, a high priority needs to be given to fostering a collegial culture of trust and strong social relationships amongst teachers if innovation and initiative is to be nurtured and broadly reproduced.

This finding fits with that of a previous study (Barton et al. 2006) that showed that key early adopters become change-agents by inspiring small network of their peers and via their social networks. It is also discovered that motivation is not simply an individual matter but is also bound up with groups and peer networks or communities of exchange and encouragement. These networks motivate individual teachers through the encouragement that they find in personal connection, friendship and networking (Corbitt & Thanasankit 2001; Chen & Chen 2004) enabling them to become effective and consistent change-agents. Without such lower and middle level
pioneers taking the initiative to develop online teaching programs in their areas top-down attempts to push such developments are unlikely to succeed.

In Turkey, one key factor driving adoption was the role of social networks or ‘connections’, known in Turkish as bağlantı kurmak. This is very similar to the Chinese notion of guanxi. Like the metaphor of clumping bamboo in Asia, the local clusters of adopters tend to easily use the longer-range ‘subterranean’ personal connections that are generally not nearly so immediately obvious. In Turkey, these connections are often the product of previous mentorship relationships, including the relationships between influential teachers and their former postgraduate students. These relationships tend to work like bamboo runners (Barton et al. 2006) they run off in multiple directions below ground and remain unseen and surface after the early adopters are in a mature phase. The runners, or social groups of adopters, then throw up new clumps that grow up and then send out fresh runners of their own.

One important implication that is very clear is that, although top-down implementation of technology, and direction of its use, is necessary it is not sufficient in itself. Instead, a more proactive approach to developing and nurturing peer mentoring networks, or guanxi, amongst teachers is much needed. Pioneers and ‘champions’ need to be identified and encouraged. Middle-down team-building initiatives need to be seeded and cultivated. Most importantly, a collegial culture of trust and strong social relationships amongst teachers needs to be steadily established and developed. This is rather challenging for the teacher community as many universities tend to adopt an economics-driven view towards online teaching and learning (Corbitt et al. 2006).

The instrumentalist world of the modern university, with its obsession with economic efficiencies and metrics of maximum throughput, presents a formidable environment in which to exercise the sort of visionary leadership required to do what is right for the long-term development of the kind of online teaching that genuinely adds to the student’s learning experience rather than merely presenting short-term economies to the institutions that promote it. What is required rather is leadership that is committed to understanding and nurturing the role of peer-to-peer networks, and facilitating the spontaneous mentoring that accompanies them, if online teaching is to
achieve its true potential. This represents a fascinating and somewhat surprising finding given that previous studies have tended to suggest that in high power distance cultures, people generally take and follow top-down directions from management. However, from the research and finding from this thesis, the Turkish teacher community seeks and commit to building their trust and network with their students and colleagues. The Turkish teachers tend to rely on their network of support and learning from each other in small communities that are built on trust and reciprocal exchanges and mutual encouragement. These collegial communities and networks enable online learning pioneers to build on their long-term orientation (Hofstede 2005) and strive to enrich the teaching-learning exchange with their students through the online environment.

The diagram below (Figure 6.1), like similar diagrams in previous chapters dealing with Malaysia and Indonesia (Figure 4.2 and Figure 5.1), seeks to summarise the key elements that have come up in case study discussions without attempting to assign priorities or causal relations. The four themes of ‘drinking çai’, ‘adopting technology’, ‘building trust using technology’ and ‘building trust to build networks of support’ were the key thematic elements that arouse in the Turkish case studies.

Figure 6.1: Key Elements Arising from Turkey Interview Discussions
The next chapter will discuss the social and cultural influences on the uptake of e-learning in Singapore. These Singaporean case studies in many respects represent a mirror image of the Turkish case studies.
Chapter Seven: Case Study Analysis: Singapore E-learning: Building Trust, Social Capital and Kiasu

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on case studies of e-learning in Singapore. What is interesting about these case studies is that in many respects they represent the exact opposite of the Turkish case studies. In Singapore, we have a relatively small and relatively rich nation that has not found great need for e-learning or for distance education but, nevertheless is drawn to it for reasons of prestige and a desire to be seen at the cutting edge of IT development and application. In Singapore, trust and social capital also very important elements but they often act in a somewhat reverse fashion to that which occurs in Turkey. One of the key cultural traits seen in the Singapore environment is risk aversion and the tendency not to try new things out of an anxiety about the failure. Specifically, it is generally understood in Singapore to revolve around concerns about the loss of face.

The Hokkien term *kiasu* is commonly referred to as summing up this dynamic and this term is often translated into English as ‘fear of losing’. This cultural dynamic is understood to motivate some individuals to move ahead out of fear that not to do so would make them look bad by being left behind, but at the same time it tends to hold people back from making the first move out of fear that they might look foolish if they are perceived to fail. Hence, a dynamic occurs in which there are long periods of no one wanting to do anything and then suddenly of furious competition as every player tries to get to the front of the field with each player seeming to be taking a leading role. In many respects, this is the converse of the Turkish situation in which individuals would rather consolidate social capital and move ahead as a group rather than attempt to take the lead as individuals and where there is generally a strong sense of optimism that constructive and collaborative initiatives will occur on sufficient trust that has been established in the relationships involved.
7.2 Communications and E-readiness

- Radio broadcast stations: AM 0, FM 19, shortwave 1 (2008)
- Television broadcast stations: 1 (broadcasting on 8 channels); additional reception of numerous UHF and VHF signals originating in Malaysia and Indonesia (2008)
- Internet hosts: 864,943 (2009); country comparison to the world: 43.
- Internet users: 3.37 million (2008); country comparison to the world: 55.

Table 7.1: Extracts Taken from EIU (2009) E-readiness Rankings Report

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>42th</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>36th</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>38th</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>6.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>65th</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>68th</td>
<td>3.39</td>
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</table>

In 2010, Singapore ranked 8th in the E-readiness rankings (see Table 7.1). The importance of speed and quality is considered convenient, reliable and affordable access to voice and data services. The report (EIU 2010) report shows continued steady improvement in broadband, mobile and internet connectivity levels across most of the countries. Singapore is shown great improvement in their digital economy and broadband services. Broadband quality is high in Singapore by their adoption of fibre-optic access. E-infrastructure for online learning is in place in Singapore as the e-readiness ranking for the country indicates. After jumping 7th places to 6th in the e-readiness rankings of 2007, Singapore’s ranking for 2008 remained steady at 6th with a score of 8.6/10.
7.3 Education

The age structure of a population affects a nation’s key socio-economic issues. Countries with young populations (a high percentage under the age of 15) need to invest more in schools, while countries with older populations (a high percentage aged 65 and over) need to invest more in the health sector. The age structure can also be used to help predict potential political issues. For example, the rapid growth of a young adult population unable to find employment can lead to unrest (Central Intelligence Agency. 2010).

**Literacy:** age 15 and over can read and write; total population: 92.5%; male: 96.6%; female: 88.6% (2000 census).

**Education expenditures:**
3.7% of GDP (2001); country comparison to the world: 122 (Central Intelligence Agency. 2010).

7.3.1 Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education

The Singaporean government has identified the need for Singaporeans to be ICT/computer literate. The government has implemented various strategies, policies and initiatives in order for the country to achieve its goals and objectives. The Singapore MOE had set up three Masterplans in Education to be carried out in five-year phases (Guo 2008). A summary of the three Masterplans in Education as outlined in Table 7.2 below (Guo 2008).
Table 7.2: Summary of Masterplans in Education
National University of Singapore. (2010, pp. 1-7)

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laying a strong ICT foundation.</td>
<td>Deeper integration into Lessons (striving for more interactivity and engagement).</td>
<td>Transforming the learning environment (a continuum of MP1 and MP2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide all schools with the basic infrastructure.</td>
<td>Baseline ICT Standards set for students to achieve at certain milestones. Innovative use of ICT in daily learning (recognition as LEAD ICT @ Schools or FutureSchools@Singapore).</td>
<td>4 goals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide training of teachers (by sending team of trainers to each school).</td>
<td>Alternative pedagogies (inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning, usage of virtual worlds such as Second Life, as well as usage of blogs, wikis, podcasts, e-portfolios, animations and video production, as well as mobile learning).</td>
<td>1. Strengthen competencies for self-directed learning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of content by 30%.</td>
<td>Producing own digital content and expanding the resource base for others to share (i.e. West Zone Sharing of Resources Project, WeSHARE &amp; Inter-cluster Sharing of Resources project, iSHARE)</td>
<td>2. Tailor learning experiences according to the way that each student learns best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target to have ICT-enabled lessons for 30% of curriculum time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Encourage students to go deeper and advance their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved a change in mindset of teachers to embrace ICT as a tool for teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Learn anywhere - the use of ICT allows mobility and flexibility in learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 strategies:
1. Bring ICT into the core of the education process.
2. Focus on improving the capabilities and skill sets of teachers (must also be able to translate into effective teaching).
3. Improve the sharing of best practices and successful innovations.
4. Further build-up infrastructure (in phases).
Masterplan 1 was the first Masterplan in Education implemented by MOE Singapore from 1997–2002 (National University of Singapore. 2010). The first Masterplan was to integrate ICT into the Education system and its main focus was to build strong ICT foundations for future Masterplans and also to change the teachers’ mindsets that were reluctant to make the change (Guo 2008). By the end of the first Masterplan in 2002, 363 schools were using ICT in their curriculum and a shift in teachers’ mindsets and seen ICT become an accepted tool for teaching and learning at schools (Guo 2008).

Masterplan 2 was initiated in 2003 for another five-year period after a successful integration of ICT into school curricula (National University of Singapore. 2010). The aim of Masterplan 2 was to generate more interactivity and usage of ICT in the high school teaching and learning processes (Guo 2008). The key education priorities were to set a baseline for ICT standards, which fully support schools to achieve higher levels of ICT use in education by introducing recognition schemes and finally to strengthen the integration of ICT in the curriculum and assessment.

Masterplan 3 commenced in 2009 and incorporated lessons learnt from Masterplans 1 and 2 (National University of Singapore. 2010). According to Guo (2008), 30 per cent of Singapore’s teachers are under the age of 30 and the level of IT literacy is high. The Singaporean MOE worked with the National Institute of Education (NIE) and Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) to carry out the strategies of the Masterplan 3. The FutureSchools@Singapore initiative was set up. The MOE worked with Nanyang Technology University and Ngee Ann Polytechnic to develop programs for the School of Science and Technology.

### 7.4 Singapore Case Studies

Seventeen semi-structured one-on-one interviews at five higher education institutions in Singapore were conducted over a period of 12 months. A qualitative approach was applied through four case studies in two Singaporean institutions. Within those institutions, more detailed case studies of the perceptions and experiences of particular staff members were captured and will be discussed in this chapter. The
following sections explore the views of the teachers at Singapore Polytechnic, National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) as to how e-learning is involved in meeting the expectations of their institutions and in implementing government ICT policies and strategies. The case studies that follow consider the extent of the social and cultural influences that impact on the uptake of e-learning by the teachers. As with the other case studies, the names of all respondents have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

7.4.1 Story from Teacher at Singapore Polytechnic

This section explores the views of the teachers at Singapore Polytechnic as to how social and cultural impact on their uptake of e-learning at their institution. The next section will discuss one of the three participants’ experiences.

Singapore Polytechnic was established in 1954 and was the first polytechnic in Singapore (Singapore Polytechnic 2010). Singapore Polytechnic had provided training and teaching to about 150,000 trainers. Its current enrolment is about 15,000 full-time and part-time students enrolling in diplomas and post-diplomas courses (Singapore Polytechnic 2010). Singapore Polytechnic’s e-learning strategies are (Singapore Polytechnic 2010):

- Development of a flexible learning system;
- Provision and use of e-learning systems to enhance students’ and staff’ experience use of IT; and
- Empowering staff through training and development in interactive learning technologies.

Singapore Polytechnic ensures that the institute achieves its goals (Singapore Polytechnic 2010) by ensuring that:

- There are adequate physical resources and infrastructural support;
- Training and development system is comprehensive and supports their business needs; and
- Administrative structures, systems and processes are aligned to and support teaching excellence.
Singapore Polytechnic Virtual College (VC) was established in 1996 as a pilot project with two main intentions: 1) to promote independent learning among Singapore Polytechnic students; 2) promote life-long learning through distance education for graduates and professionals from industry (Gagnon 2002).

7.4.1.1 Hocking’s Story

‘Hocking’ is a lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic in his 40s. As one of the key senior lecturers in his faculty with much to bring to his faculty, he wanted to perform at his best and set a good example for his management and colleagues by using and implementing e-learning in his teaching. After he completed his undergraduate studies in Australia, he returned to Singapore to raise his family and completed his military training obligations. Hocking believed that the national Singaporean psyche is centred on Singapore not having an abundance of natural resources and that this therefore, means that there is a common conviction that the country needs to do well with what they have. Hocking explained, ‘as for most things, despite our differences, we get along, partly because we have to and have a can-do attitude to make things work. We are also a generous spirit that fostered a fruitful country.’ What they also have is the infrastructure and funding for quality online learning and the geographic location to be a teacher hub of Asia.

From his experiences on teaching online, Hocking had noticed that students were generally not keen on participating, but once they began they became enthusiastic for the process as they learn to apply technology to their learning experience. Like many top teachers, Hocking was convinced that there was a need to shift the mindset of students from the rote learning that had been the foundation of the Singaporean education system. He knew from his experiences with blended learning while studying overseas that that style of learning would not get his students very far. He continued to say, ‘all children are naturally creative and intuitive but the older generation of teachers would not allow this, and instead conducted rote learning. I believe we need to have a can-do attitude environment. This is important.’ Hocking used a carrot and stick approach to get students accustomed to online learning by
offering them five per cent bonus marks for completing online components of his courses. Hocking said that, ‘you need to have a can-do attitude—make the most of what you’re given. If you are given lemons, make lemonade’.

### 7.4.2 A Story from a Teacher at NUS

NUS is a leading global university in Asia. It offers a global approach to education and research (NUS 2010). NUS’ vision is to aspire to be a dynamic community with a ‘no walls’ culture that strives for positive influence and impact in its education, research and service, building up well-rounded minds and to succeed (NUS 2010). The following section examines the experiences of one of the three participants interviewed in this study.

#### 7.4.2.1 Yingjui’s Story

‘Yingjui’ is a Chinese young male lecturer who completed his primary and secondary schooling in mainland China. After he successfully graduated from his final year of high school in China, he was offered a scholarship to further his studies in one of the prestigious universities in Singapore. He accepted the scholarship in Singapore and completed his engineering degree at NUS. After completing his undergraduate engineering degree, he was offered to further his education with a PhD at NUS. Whilst he was completing his PhD, he was offered some tutoring work at the university and was then offered a permanent tenured lectureship position when he completed his PhD. Being young and academically successful, he was very quick to learn and implement new teaching and learning styles for his students. With many ideas on how to teach his students, he piloted different approaches to teaching. Finally, before he finally delivered his first online lectures, he used a blended approach to learning. He adopted online participation with his students.

When interviewed, he had been teaching in the fully online environment for three months. He shared his experiences from classroom teaching and students’ feedback. He became aware of the cultural issues that were involved in face-to-face teaching. From there, he captured the different learning styles, cultural variations and then
slowly developed a style where he trialled with his students. Firstly, he started with online discussions, sharing of information and forming support groups using the online forum. The university he was teaching in used US teaching styles that involved an interactive teaching approach. He observed that Singaporean students tend not to be active in asking or answering questions in the classrooms. He gave the students the opportunity to learn by themselves and also ask questions by using the e-learning tools, for example, discussion forums, discussion boards, e-mails (and not face-to-face) and they found this less threatening.

Yingjui trialled online discussion forums and e-mails for three months. He then received positive feedback from his students. He then developed more teaching materials and delivered them in the online environment. One student explained his preference for online discussions over classroom discussions as being based on, ‘fear of being embarrassed in the classroom. It’s like whenever you give the wrong answer, the rest of the classroom will start making fun or laughing at you.’

Yingjui believed that members of a team were more likely to communicate with each other successfully if they were aware of each other’s cultural characteristics and sensitivities. According to him, cultural understanding could be fostered in a virtual environment because students were keen on discussing issues in a virtual environment.

Yingjui believed his students were not keen on the US style of interactive teaching whereby students ask and answer questions in the classroom. Yingjui was mindful that cultural differences would always exist no matter what environment students were working in: the real world or the virtual world.

Yingjui explained:

When using technology we have to be sensitive to students needs. Students are so worried that they will be laughed at and ridiculed if they said anything silly via the online discussion. But I still believe that online is the way forward.

But at the same time, he continued, ‘saving face is very important for Chinese culture’. He then further explained: ‘the concept of losing face is associated with a couple of other Chinese words: mianzi and lian.’ Mianzi refers to the meaning
perception of level of prestige and lian meaning the confidence of society in a person’s moral character (Lin 1935). In Asian cultures particularly, the loss of face can also equate to loss of trust within social networks and a consequent loss of authority. In Chinese culture ‘face’ refers to one’s very self and translates into power and influence and affects goodwill (Carr 1993).

Yingjui explained that the basic claim to face may rest based on status, whether ascribed or achieved, and on personal or non-personal factors. It may also depend on the groups with which a person is interacting. For example, he said:

In certain groups or classes, some students are so fearful of saying or asking in classes let alone online. They were so afraid that their social standing or status will be damaged. This is especially true if the students come from a non-English speaking background.

Yingjui observed:

Losing face for staff is also a very difficult process especially when I post something incorrectly on the discussion board. I feel my social and professional status being scrutinised. It is difficult to define.

Lin (1935, p. 202) argues that ‘face’ is ‘impossible to define’. Lin (1935, p. 200) said of face that is ‘abstract and intangible, it is yet the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated’.

Yingjui explained: ‘I am Chinese and feel that face is a positive social value. Face is an image in terms of social attributes or acceptance.’ Goffman (1955) interpreted what he called ‘face-work’ as a subtle style of interpersonal encounter, found in all societies, calculated to avoid personal embarrassment, or loss of poise, and to maintain for others an impression of self-respect.

Yingjui mentioned, ‘I also must avoid poor performance or personal embarrassment, as this creates not only loss of individual face but also a loss of family face. This is very important for me.’ Hwang et al. (2002) mentioned that the notion of face is a concern not only of the individual but also of the individual’s family and wider circle of families and friends. Therefore, the notion of face embodies within it a collectivistic dimension (Hwang, Ang & Francesco 2002).
Yingjui explained that at his institution, a BLA was used for learning but formal online participation in online forums was still minimal. Students prefer one-on-one MSN chat sessions with their instructors. ‘Students felt they are judged by their peers if they are in a group online forum. As a teacher I also feel judged by my peers and students if I post something incorrect.’ He said that online learning is best used as a supplement for students to work at their own pace. He also shared that the level of participation can be tailored for students. Online learning can help the poor and middle ability students to adapt to the pace of the content; and good students who feel bored with the content can be provided with more challenges. Finally, Yingjui commented, ‘with online and flexible learning, we can adapt and be flexible in our teaching materials to suit different types of students. So this might help avoid being judged by peers and students.’

7.4.3 Stories from Teachers at NTU

NTU began with an association with Nanyang University in 1955, which was the first Chinese-language university in South East Asia (NTU 2010). Nanyang is the Chinese name for the South China Sea region and for South East Asia in general. In 1981, Nanyang Technological Institute (NTI) was established with government funding. In 1991, NTI amalgamated with NIE and became NTU (2010). In 2006, NTU was corporatised and had autonomy and flexibility to increase global education and research (NTU, 2010).

NTU describes its vision and mission as being striving to become a:

A great global university founded on science and technology. Nurturing creative and entrepreneurial leaders through a broad education in diverse disciplines (Nanyang Technological University, 2010).

7.4.3.1 Pete’s Story

‘Pete’ is involved in the leadership of the Educational Development at NTU. Pete oversaw the planning, organising and conducting of workshops, information sharing and clinical sessions on the use of IT in education for teacher and IT support staff.
He also provided educational leadership in the form of personal school visits, workshop presentations and advice with respect to blended learning at NTU as required. He provided instructional design services to teaching staff for converting traditional courses to web-based blended courses; services that include analysis of problems, trouble shooting, identified alternative solutions, and provided recommendations in leveraging web technology for use in instruction.

For Pete, the formal hierarchical social structure in Singapore universities is frustrating from an outsider’s perspective. He quickly became accustomed to biting his tongue and quietly persevering. He encountered an ‘old school mentality’ amongst management. He described this approach by management as a Confucian approach. Pete noticed the use of an authoritarian approach in conversations that were very lean on words and the frequent use of the term ‘ah beng’ to describe perceived lack of cultural refinement on that part of junior staff or students. He found that there was a strong kiasu attitude in Singaporean society and that people generally wanted something in return for whatever they contributed. He was very much aware that he was an outsider (he originally came from England), and having to battle against the pre-existing traditional system mindset was very challenging for him. Pete noticed that students tended to be ‘spoon-fed’ and take what was given to them without questioning. As a change-agent he found this very difficult but believed that the situation was changing and things would be different in one or two generations.

As a change agent, Pete believed that there it is necessary to create inertia to adopt change in peoples’ minds. For this to occur, people must become practitioners but this was difficult when ‘management just gave direction and provided very little or no encouragement or motivation’. Pete explained that he continuously observed the kiasu behaviour of students and staff at the place he was working.

*Observations of Kiasu Behaviour*

Pete observed that Singaporean Chinese students tend to be very attentive in class, with many choosing to sit in the front rows making notes as he lectures, but they hardly say a word. They show great interest in the subjects and generally do well
during their exams and assignments. However, they are reluctant to speak out in lectures or in the classroom environment. Pete asked questions after every class or lecture, but was generally met with a painful pause and silence. When he dared to pick out a student to answer a question there was often a very timid response. Pete often pondered, ‘what are the reasons for this silence—one may ask?’ Is there a cultural explanation for the reluctance of Chinese students to be involved in classroom environment?

Pete referred to a Chinese proverb by way of explanation:

Guard your mouth as though it were a vase, and guard your thoughts as you would a city wall (Ching 1973).

This proverb pointed, he argued, to a distinct cultural orientation. Hwang, Ang and Francesco (2002, p. 71) describe similar teaching experiences in both the Far East and the West, where Chinese students were more than often markedly more reluctant than their Western peers to raise questions or speak in class. Dougherty and Wall (1991) described some of the challenges they faced whilst teaching students in China. Their experiences in many ways parallel those described by Hwang et al. (2002) and Pete.

Pete commented, ‘I noticed a lot of Singaporean students and staffs are pressured to maintain the competitive spirit amongst their peers. They are very “kiasu”—it is a common word that people use here in Singapore.’ According to Hwang et al. (2002), the pressure to maintain lien (form of security interest) by conforming to social expectations and to increase mien-tzu (external social face that involves social recognition) through better education or career accomplishment has created a highly competitive spirit especially in Asian cultures.

Pete explained:

I find that people here are so competitive and have such a competitive mindset to get ahead of others. I also noticed that people here worked very hard and stay on top of things. For example, staff will put extra effort into their work to seek promotion, bonuses and pay rise each year; and as for students – a kiasu attitude generally leads them to put extra effort more than class work. They also look for opportunities to excel.
According to Leo (1995), ‘the kiasu person’ often excels because he or she wants to win. The kiasu people often look around the surrounding for opportunities and take very quick advantage of the situation and ensure that they gain an advantage of the opportunity (Leo, 1995).

Pete continued that, ‘Kiasu can also promote some negatives in relationship and personal envy behaviour.’ The other side of kiasuism is negative side. It is revealed in personal envy and selfish behaviour (Kagda 1993). Kagda (1993) says that kiasuism has been dubbed the ‘negative complement of competitiveness’ (Kagda 1993). Ho and Ng (1998) argue that whilst competition can contribute to building drive and commitment kiasuism results from greed and promoted envy and selfishness.

Pete commented, ‘a former Foreign Minister of Singapore, warned that being kiasu should not be an excuse for rudeness. I often reminded my students and staff about this.’ Wong (1993) also contends that being kiasu should not be an excuse for rudeness, dishonesty and boorish behaviours.

Pete also noticed that many of his students’ decision were made on their behalf. Ho (1998) said that many of the Singaporeans have been brought up with most of the major decisions made on their behalf potentially resulting in a lack of vision and/or initiative, lack of idealism and enthusiasm of work (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998).

Koh (1995) pointed out that many Singaporeans were the immediate descendants of migrant coolies and merchants and rather than cultured scholars. Many reports of kiasu behaviour are been reported in Singapore local daily magazines and newspapers, suggesting a widespread concern with its negative effects. Ho et al. (1998) note that a local cartoon character called ‘Mr Kiasu’ was very popular (Ho, Ang & Ng 1998). Koh (1995) comments that even financially well-to-do parents behave in such kiasu behaviour. Similarly, Thomas (1993) describes parents and children piling excessive amounts of food on their plates from buffet tables, hogging library books, and taking free souvenirs from airlines for fear of losing or missing out (Thomas 1993).
Kirby and Ross (2007) notes that to date there have been very few scholarly studies on the social construction of kiasuism where kiasuism is a form of selfish competitiveness and a set of tactics designed to achieve a desired end result regardless of the cost to others (Hwang 2003). One of Pete’s colleagues at NTU, ‘Neil’, worked with the WebCT Learning Management Systems and championed the implementation of learning management system at NTU.

7.4.3.2 Neil’s Story

‘Neil’ has been in charge of e-learning (using TopClass) at a teaching and learning centre at NTU since its inception in 1998. Today, Neil has successfully implemented ‘University 2.0’. Born into a local Chinese family but educated abroad, Neil is well regarded by his colleagues for his vision and for his receptivity to learning new things. One of his colleagues commented of him:

He has an amazing sense to spot and neutralise any form of inefficiency to the process of doing anything you can imagine. He is not so IT-Savvy (admits he is a one-finger typing educator), but he is exceptionally learning-savvy and proactive hands-on leader, and his stream of ideas and leadership is to my understanding the secret recipe that has propelled NTU to become the higher education benchmark for e-learning in Singapore and perhaps South-East Asia.’

Neil is a visionary for e-learning at NTU. He strategically designed and implemented aspects of e-learning in two-year phases from 2000. In 2000, he witnessed critical mass, adoption, and buy-in from staff towards online learning at NTU. In 2002, he implemented Phase 2: Humanising E-learning and that resulted in 1,300 courses being available online. In 2004, when Pete arrived at NTU to assist Neil with the technical and human side of online learning, Neil understood that he and his team needed to improve the human side of online learning in order for it to meet its full potential. Out of this situation came Phase 3: Effective Learning. In 2006, Phase 4: Web 2.0 examined the use of Web 2.0 applications for enriching the online learning environment for teachers and students. In 2007, Neil focused on University 2.0 and by that stage, the online learning portal he had developed at NTU was receiving nine million page views per week. Neil’s area of interest was in virtual communities. In
2008, he was working towards ‘the twenty-first century campuses, a campus for all, and an interactive blended e-learning model. Neil commented, ‘this twenty-first century campus is for everyone and it is interactive blended and flexible learning.’ Neil shared, ‘students are asking more questions. Students, who ask better questions, are independent learners, deep thinkers and ethical leaders of the future.’

Neil further explained that NTU had become the first educational institution in the region to benefit from a powerful online learning design and delivery tool that supported its teachers and all staff in their development of a creative and interactive teaching pedagogy. Neil said:

NTU has also developed a highly intuitive visual authoring environment of learning activities—ranging from individual tasks, to group work on both content and collaboration. Eventually this had allowed NTU students to progress through highly engaging, interactive and supportive learning activity. This has been a great success for NTU in it e-learning capacity.

It is due to the hard work and commitment of staff like Neil that NTU is a regional leader in e-learning. Neil confidently confided:

True to its role as a leading university of excellence, NTU will also share its expertise of this innovative online teaching tool known as Learning Activity Management System, with other educational institutions here and in the region.

Neil explained:

When we first explored the concept of Reusable Learning Objects (RLO), RLOs (digital and web-based resources which are smaller, self-contained, re-usable units of learning) way back in 2002, we realised that it represented one track of a railway line. The other track is the concept of adaptive and reusable learning paths that will allow such RLOs to be plugged in/out easily, and reused in other courses and contexts.

Neil was a visionary and saw beyond staying with ‘one track of a railway line’:

When I heard James Dalziel sharing about LAMS at an eAgenda event, I knew my eyes had seen the future. We have progressed together a long way from then. Today marks a partnership that history may well one day identify as an important milestone in the development of online courseware. We are excited that on that day, NTU and LAMS Foundation forged a partnership.

Partly through Neil’s leadership and vision, NTU has gained a position of prominence in the region in the field of e-learning. Hambari wrote in the local press:
NTU in its history has gained the prominence in the global eLearning environment as the first university to successfully integrate LAMS as a Blackboard Building Block and it's consequent development of a very successful and highly interactive Blended Learning model, which builds substantively on the delivery of learning content using LAMS learning design features, NTU is uniquely poised to champion the use of LAMS locally and in the region as a rapid, extensible, scalable, and affordable content development software (Hambari 2008).

This was due to the one key person who had the vision to have made this happened at NTU.
7.5 Discussion and Analysis

This chapter builds upon the different themes and discusses the narratives of each of the themes that derive from the research.

If the case studies in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey were for the most part marked by very similar faculty attributes and practice, there is a marked shift in findings when compared with this case study in Singapore. It might be thought that Singapore, which physically lies between Malaysia and Indonesia, would be more or less the same as its neighbours but in fact, in terms of the attributes and practice observed in the case studies in this thesis, Singapore is as different from Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey as is Australia. The casual observer visiting the universities of these countries is struck by many evident similarities and would assume that the cultural frameworks would be broadly comparable. However, the findings of this study indicate that the cultural differences are much more significant than initial impressions might suggest.

The most significant area of difference between the Singaporean case studies and the other sets of case studies lies in the area of social capital, and then to a somewhat lesser extent in the area of teaching. In Singapore, for example, e-learning pioneering is ranked no higher than desirable. This contrasts sharply with the case studies in Indonesia and Turkey.

As discussed in the earlier chapters, this can be partly attributed to the physical differences between the nations. Indonesia is a vast archipelago, whereas Singapore is a city-state based in one small island. In addition, even though Turkey’s territory is not as expansive as the Indonesian archipelago is, Turkey nevertheless faces significant challenges from geographical barriers. Singapore has some of the best roadways and public transport networks in the world and one can travel from one end of the nation to the other in around half an hour. It is not surprising then, that e-learning pioneering is not regarded as essential in Singapore in the way that it is in
Indonesia and Turkey. Interestingly, it is still regarded as desirable in Singapore, whereas in Malaysia it is merely regarded as useful. This higher rating in Singapore is perhaps because Singapore is orientated towards all things online and high-tech.

When it comes to e-community social capital and the notion of *guanxi*, Singapore only accords this kind of e-community social capital a ranking of desirable compared with very important in Turkey and Indonesia, and essential in Malaysia. Once again, this sort of cultural difference would not be immediately obvious to the casual observer but to anyone who spent longer periods working in universities in these countries, the result is not so surprising. In general, Singapore tends to be more individualistic and more competitive than other parts of Asia, including Turkey. In a highly educated, urban society such as Singapore, the notion of COP might be expected to rank highly; however, it only scores a ranking of desirable, whereas in Turkey and Malaysia it was regarded as being very important. Once again, this difference might be explained in terms of greater individualism and competitiveness in this small developed nation. Following a similar trend, social e-networks, and casual informal friendship and fellowship are regarded as desirable in Singapore, whereas in the other three countries they are regarded as essential. Similarly, strategic mentoring is regarded as useful in Singapore and the other three sets of case studies it was seen to be very important and essential. Equally striking is the fact that collectivism in the small Asian nation that prides itself on Confucian values was regarded as merely desirable, well down from the ranking accorded to it in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey. Following this trend, the principle of ‘reaping what you sow’ was merely seen to be useful in Singapore. However, specific cultural connections based upon ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious lines were seen to be very important in Singapore just as they were regarded as very important in Indonesia, if not quite as essential as they were seen to be in Turkey and Malaysia.

When it comes to matters of leadership, the differences between Singapore and the other case studies in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia were not quite so stark. Cultural brokering (Michie 2003) in leadership in Singapore was seen to be desirable just as it was in Turkey and Malaysia. However, in Indonesia, it was seen to be very important. Once again, it is interesting to observe that despite the obviously plural
nature of Malaysian and Singaporean society, there is not as great an emphasis placed on cultural brokering as one might expect. Top-down leadership and directive leadership of both seem to be very important in the Singaporean case studies, following a similar pattern to that seen in the other case studies. Given the earlier observations about social capital, it is perhaps not surprising that in Singapore the case studies’ reciprocal trust-based leadership is only regarded as desirable, whereas in the other case studies it was seen to be very important. An even more striking difference is evident with the category of leadership by example, whereas in the other cases, walking the walk and talking the talk was seen to be essential, but in Singapore, it was merely regarded as desirable.

The most striking difference of all comes in the category of a ‘wait and see’ approach to leadership. In the stories, this aspect of leadership in Singapore was regarded as essential, whereas in the other case studies, it was merely seen to be somewhat important or useful.

Similar differences are also clear that comes to entrepreneurialism. In the case studies in Indonesia and Turkey, but not Malaysia, having an entrepreneurial mindset, or a can-do attitude was seen to be essential, and being visionary and possessed of strategic thinking was also regarded as very important, just as it was in Indonesia and even more so than in Malaysia. In Turkey, the stories suggested this was an essential quality. There is a stark contrast when it comes to having a creative mindset. The Singaporean stories suggested that, at best, having a creative mindset was regarded as merely useful, whereas in Turkey and Indonesia, it was seen to be very important. Even in Malaysia, it was regarded as important. Similarly, seeking out opportunities for globalisation was regarded as merely useful in stark contrast to being seen to be very important in Turkey and essential in Indonesia.

Singapore is more like Malaysia but it is also like Turkey and Indonesia. One of the most striking findings of all was that in the Singaporean stories was the idea of women pioneering was regarded as unimportant. This is indeed a surprising outcome in a smartly dressed city-state full of power-dressing businesswomen and abundant signs of apparent gender equality. Once again, this is an area in which different case
studies in the same nation might well yield very different results but it does seem reasonable to draw a general conclusion that crossing the Singapore-Malaysia causeway, one sees a shift from a relative absence of women pioneers, at least in perceptions of importance, to a relative abundance of women pioneers. The fact that Singaporean society is seen by many, not least in Singapore itself, as being more progressive than Malaysian society makes it somewhat enigmatic and paradoxical.

When it comes to teaching, the findings for the Singaporean stories show a consistent differentiation between Singapore and the other case studies. In general, in Singapore there is less emphasis on individual capacity and character of the teacher. So, teaching by example, teaching as learning, teaching from life and teaching across cultures are all seen to be merely desirable rather than very important, as they are seen in most of the other case studies.

A striking difference between Singapore and other case studies is also evident when it comes to attitude and outlook. Here, the difference can be summed up in a single word: *kiasu*. In Singapore, competitive instrumentalism, or *kiasu*, is regarded as being of essential importance, whereas everywhere else, it seemed to be merely useful. Closely related to this in Singapore is an attitude of being aware of the need for face-saving, which is regarded as being of essential importance, whereas elsewhere it is seen to be merely desirable. The difference is less striking when it comes to the question of multicultural awareness. In Singapore, at least in the case studies examined here, being more culturally aware is seen to be very important, as it is in Indonesia, but not very important, as it is seen in the Turkish stories. Having an attitude of reciprocity is regarded as desirable in Singapore but this is in contrast to the other case studies where it is seen as very important. Conversely, in Singapore, the idea of being an ‘all rounder’ or a ‘utility player’ is seen as very important, whereas in Malaysia and Indonesia, it is ranked as merely desirable.

One of the key cultural themes seen in the Singapore environment is risk aversion and the tendency not to try new things out of anxiety about failure. Specifically, it is generally understood in Singapore to revolve around concerns about loss of face. *Kiasu* is understood to motivate some individuals to move ahead out of fear that not
to do so, would make them look bad by being left behind but at the same time it
tends to hold people back from making the first move out of fear that they might look
dullish if they are perceived to fail. Hence, a dynamic occurs in which there are long
periods of no one wanting to do anything and then suddenly of furious competition
as every player tries to get to the front of the field and be seen to be taking a leading
role.

The diagram below (Figure 7.1), like the diagrams in the the preceding chapters
(figures 4.2, 5.1, and 6.1) seeks to summarise the key attitudinal elements and
attributes - such as ‘face-saving’, ‘can-do attitude’, competitive instrumentalism
‘kiasu’ and ‘visionary/strategic thinker’ - that have come up in the field discussions
without making an attempt to assign priorities or causal relations.

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Figure 7.1: Key Elements Arising from Singapore Interview Discussions
The next chapter presents the final set of case studies and focuses on the social and cultural influences on the uptake of e-learning in on the Australian tertiary environment. In many respects, this represents the most complex case study as although there is a dominant cultural background to Australian society and Australian tertiary institutions, the individuals involved in the case study studied here come from a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds in the pattern that is increasingly typical of modern professional groups in Australia.
Chapter Eight: Case Study Analysis: Australia: Blended Cultures and Blended Learning

8.1 Introduction

This Australian case study is that of learning that occurs more efficiently and more effectively when the teachers are aware of and sensitive to the complex cultural environments into which they are teaching. These complex cultural environments that can be described as representing blended cultures are prepared to fully harness the flexible potential of e-learning technologies in an innovative approach of mixing and matching various elements, an approach that can be called blended learning.

The key finding here is that, just as in any other educational context, better outcomes can be expected to occur on a more consistent basis when teachers are aware of the cultural factors shaping the complex social environments into which they are teaching. This general dynamic is amplified when blended learning is involved. This is because blended learning technologies, referred to collectively by the participants in this case study as blended learning, offer a greater range of possible approaches and patterns of engagement and consequently the downside of not being culturally aware is greater but the upside of appropriate cultural awareness and sensitivity is even greater still.

In traditional face-to-face learning of the student or teacher coming from a cultural background that differs sharply from the dominant cultural environment, one quickly learns to adapt to that dominant environment. Therefore, for example, when the children of Asian aristocracies were sent to study at Eton or later Cambridge or Oxford in England, they quickly conformed to the environment that they found themselves in and tuned into the dominant cultural currents that they encountered.
This produced a number of very gifted members of the elite in Asian societies and these key minority figures have been broadly influential.

In the late twentieth century, a shift occurred in which individual nation states and global communities as a whole moved increasingly towards mass education. At the same time, in the final two decades of the twentieth century, new IT tools became available. This meant that where e-learning was applied over large geographical distances or kept within smaller geographical confines, a new dynamic emerged in which teachers have to teach in a much more obviously culturally diverse, or blended, environment. At the same time, they began to avail themselves of the new tools at their disposal provided by IT developments.

If the earlier generations of teachers teaching into a more traditional elite model of education could work on the assumption that their students would adapt and fit in, this generation of teacher can no longer afford to fall back on this comfortable and undemanding position. Instead, they must themselves adapt and the extent to which they can appropriately employ new e-learning technologies that can greatly increase their effectiveness. The participants in these case studies demonstrate a high level of general awareness about this dynamic. It is clear that the more aware the teacher is of blended culture and all of the options available, the more effective they are at teaching.

### 8.2 Communications and E-readiness

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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In the 2010, of the 70 economies surveyed by the EIU in 2010, Australia’s e-readiness ranking had dropped from the 6th ranking in 2009 to the 9th ranking in 2010 (see Table 8.1 above). It measures the current state of its ICT infrastructure and the degree to which its consumers, businesses and government are able to capitalise on internet based opportunities and its e-commerce capabilities.

Australia’s e-readiness score was supported by the high broadband penetration and its social and cultural environment (ranked best in the world) and connectivity (which is ranked in sixth in the world and second in the Asia Pacific) (EIU, 2009).

8.3 Education

Generally, education in Australia follows a three-tier model that includes primary education (primary schools), followed by secondary education (secondary/high schools) and tertiary education (universities and/or TAFE colleges).

Education is compulsory up to an age specified by legislation. This age varies from state to state, but is generally 15–17, that is, prior to completing secondary education.

8.3.1 Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework) provides the VET sector with essential e-learning infrastructure and expertise (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). The Framework was launched in 2000. The first 2000–2004 Framework strategy was to raise awareness of potential e-learning and build capacity. The second 2005–2007 Framework strategy was to continue the first Framework and extend the focus on engaging with key target groups. The current 2008–2011 Framework strategy was to maximise and build on the national investment in e-learning infrastructure (Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

Australia has recently become a pioneer and champion ICT for education purposes (UNESCO 2006). The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in Australia (MCEETYA) is a key body responsible for introducing
national school education policy, which includes developing and implementing ICT policy and plans in education (UNESCO 2006).

The primary goal of Australia ICT policy is to create an educational system so when students leave schools, they will be ‘confident, creative and productive users of new technologies including ICTs, and understand the impact of those technologies on society’ (UNESCO IPS 2010, p. 21). In 2000, the Education Network Australia (EdNA) developed a national action plan for schools (UNESCO 2006). The Commonwealth help in the policy development and introduced five key action areas concerning ICT introduction (UNESCO 2006):

- **People:** Improved learning outcomes for students, supported by educational leaders, teachers and administration staff with the skills and motivation to use ICTs effectively.
- **Infrastructure:** Access to an advanced ICT infrastructure that supports teaching and learning.
- **Content and Services:** Access to, and application of online resources and services that support continuous improvement in curricula, in classroom and distance learning and in school administration.
- **Supporting Policies:** Policies that support the integration of ICTs in schools.
- **Enabling Regulation:** A legal framework in Australia that supports rather than inhibits the use of new ICTs to enhance learning.

According to UNESCO (2006–2009), in Australia, ICT has become fully integrated within the primary school and secondary schools teachings (UNESCO 2006–2009b). Each higher education institution has its own self-governing flexible teaching and learning policy and strategy in place.

There is no formal national flexible learning policy in higher education. The current Australian Labor government has set up broadband infrastructure. The former Rudd Labor Government announced in 2009 the development of a new super fast National Broadband Network and will be the single largest nation building infrastructure project in Australian history (Conroy 2009). This super fast Broadband Network will connect 90 per cent of all Australian homes, schools and workplaces with broadband
services with speeds up to 100 megabits per second: 100 times faster than those currently used by many households and businesses (Conroy 2009). It will also connect all premises in Australia with next generation wireless and satellite technologies that will deliver broadband speeds of 12 megabits per second (Conroy 2009).

The Australian Government’s approach to higher education includes (Conroy 2009):

- The importance of opportunity for all, especially those from groups underrepresented in higher education;
- Access to university based on merit, not ability to pay;
- Academic freedom and autonomy; and
- Research that advances knowledge and critical thinking.

In March 2008, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, announced a review of Australia’s higher education system. In December 2008, the review panel chaired by Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley released its Report. The Report (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) recommended a more flexible approach that allows all existing providers to utilise a variety of teaching arrangements such as distance learning, collaboration and sharing of infrastructure with educational and training providers.

As Australia’s higher education system embraces emerging technologies that promise a better and improved way of flexible delivery, resource-based learning, online learning, and mixed mode delivery have become ‘buzz-words’ of higher education. With Australian universities having a strong desire to integrate multifaceted online learning, also known as blended learning, into course programs while at the same time depending upon high levels of international student enrolment for financial viability, flexible learning brings a much-needed set of new tools into the teacher’s toolbox. The dependence of the universities on international students has contributed to an increase in competition between universities to develop online offerings. This has meant that universities with a strong heritage in distance education, such as the Australian university case studies discussed in this chapter, are at risk of losing their historical competitive advantage. Consequently, it is more
important than ever that we identify the factors that shape teaching staff attitudes, innovation, development of competency, and effectiveness in the use online technology. Given the diverse multicultural staff profiles of Australian universities and the impact that this has on teaching a culturally diverse student body it is essential that we now give attention to investigating the contribution of culture to blended learning programs. Research about such cultural factors, their influence and their distribution is still very much at an early stage.

This research seeks to identify and differentiate the various culturally influenced personal and social factors that influence the way teachers and students from diverse cultures align in this multifaceted environment.

Multi campus universities have become the norm in Australian universities since the Dawkins Revolution reforms of the late 1980s that saw the emergence of new universities, and substantially expanded universities, such as Deakin University, from amalgamations between tertiary colleges and other institutions. Now, we are seeing the next phase of this process in which many universities are establishing campuses overseas and seeking to be involved in off shore education (Blight 1999). According to Bates (1997a), and Bates and de los Santos (1997), off shore distance education has been substantially shaped by new information and communication technologies.

**8.4 Australia Case Studies**

The context of this research is the delivery of a second year undergraduate Business Communication subject within a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the Faculty of Business and Law, Deakin University in Australia. Deakin University has very strong background in distance education and great reputation as a leader in the use of technology (Deakin University 2009). Deakin University has an excellent platform to achieve its flexible learning education and become a recognised national leader in flexible education by promoting and supporting innovation in teaching and learning (Deakin University 2009). Another of Deakin’s goals is to have an international outlook in relation to teaching and research and to enhance intercultural
understanding amount students, staff and the wider community (Deakin University 2009). To illustrate, the university will pursue the following strategies (Deakin University 2009, p. 20):

- Increasing the number and building the diversity of international students studying at each Deakin Campus, off campus and through sustainable, high quality offshore teaching partnerships; and
- Providing professional development programs for staff to enhance their ability to work in an international environment.

Another of Deakin’s strategic priorities is to have a workplace culture that fosters and supports excellence in teaching, research and the services that support those activities through recruiting and retaining a workforce that values people, culture and change (Deakin University 2009, p. 26).

The total number of students was approximately 1300 enrolled in each semester across five campuses. The subject was delivered as a blend of face-to-face and online learning across five campuses (one main Melbourne suburban campus where the majority of students were enrolled and attended; two satellite campuses in a rural location; and two off-shore campuses). The focus of this case study was on the culturally influenced learning experiences of approximately 1000 students and ten teachers participating in the main Melbourne campus delivery. Of the approximately 1,000 students enrolled in the Melbourne campus, the ratio of international to local students was approximately 8:1. The diverse cultural mix of the international student population included students from Chinese (including Hong Kong), Thai, Indian, Iranian, Middle Eastern (United Arab Emirates), Japanese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Sri Lankan, Vietnamese, Korean, Kenyan, Greek and Italian backgrounds. The teachers involved in delivering the course were drawn from a similarly diverse array of cultural backgrounds including Malaysian, Italian, Turkish and Anglo-Saxon Australian (and of the two local Anglo-Saxon Australian teachers, one has a significant cross-cultural awareness through marriage to a partner recently migrated from Vietnam). Before the semester began, pre-semester workshops were conducted to help teachers to be more effectively engaged with the richly diverse student body and associated diversity of learning styles and preferences. The professional
development workshops were intended to help teachers working in culturally diverse environments, and employing modern digital and online educational media, to better understand the principles of good communication and effective teaching and learning. A part of the Deakin Strategic Plan is to provide professional development programs for staff to enhance their ability to work in an international environment (Deakin University 2009, p. 20).

Many teachers have become accustomed, consciously or unconsciously, to teaching with one largely unchanging style in the conviction that it is the responsibility of the students to adapt to them and not teachers to the students. This has never made for the best approach to education and in the highly globalised modern tertiary education, it fails basic standards of competency and professionalism for a number of reasons. In Australian universities today, local students from cultural backgrounds are very different from that of the majority of their lecturers and represent a significant proportion of the student body. Although it is easy to assume that since we all live in the same world, that we understand things in the same way and respond similarly to messages, the reality is not quite so simple: ‘my world is not (quite) your world.’ (Hale 2008)

Relationships are based on the development of trust and consolidating trust is the first step in building stronger, longer lasting relationships. Fukuyama (1995) argues that communities depend on mutual trust and will not arise spontaneously without it. Good communication facilitates trust and that a relaxed attitude in culturally mixed class as a result of high levels of trust helped to make a more effective learning environment. Since community depends on trust, and trust in turn is culturally determined; it follows that spontaneous community will emerge in differing degrees in different cultures (Fukuyama 1995). By being respectful, approachable, the provision of helpful and constructive feedback, these are some of the ways in which trust is formed. The development of trust through communicating was also seen as a result of social connectivity and cultural awareness. There should be a need for trust and openness for good communication and learning in order for cultural differences to be bridged.
Over the past two decades, Australian universities have experienced an increasingly large influx of international students, particularly from Asia (China and Thailand) and the South Asian Sub-Continent (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). The integration of such a diverse cohort of international students into existing course programs presents a range of implications for institutions, students, both local and international, and particularly for the teaching staff involved in administering and delivering courses.

There is also an influx of overseas professional migrant teachers in Australian universities. These migrant teachers come with a wide range of experiences and rich cultural influences in the Australian tertiary institutions. The blend of cultures shaping these teachers in their approach to teaching clearly helped equip them in their approach to the culturally diverse needs and expectations of international students. This is one of Deakin’s goals to have an international outlook and intercultural understanding among students, staff and wider community (Deakin University 2009, p. 20).

Drawing on the interview data, the researcher produced a report for professional development activities to help teachers cater for the increased diverse multicultural student cohort enrolled in the course the researcher was delivering. The report identified principles of effective teaching for culturally diverse groups of teachers and students.

Effective teaching is inclusive of culture, ability levels and different learning styles. Effective teaching means making the course information accessible to all staff teaching in the course and also to all students enrolled in the course, in a way that it cuts across barriers connected to language, learning, culture and educational background. This was intended to help them broaden or alter the ways in which they presented materials to students through being more sensitive to cultural factors and giving greater attention to building trust and relationships with students and other teachers. These elements can be viewed as representing good principles for effective teaching in a culturally diverse context. A survey was conducted to gain insight into possible correlations between ethnicity and preferences of certain modes of learning.
8.4.1 Stories from Teachers at Deakin University

The researcher began with the hypothesis that for universities to truly fulfil their commitment to be internationally aware, be culturally sensitive and to effectively communicate and teach cross-culturally when engaging with the international students on whom they depend for financial viability, there needs to be an alignment of appropriate blended culture teaching and learning approaches designed to improve performance from both a teacher’s (effective pedagogical) perspective and from a student (participation in class and improved grades) perspective.

All the eight teachers interviewed indicated that teacher-student relations begin by attempting to get to know each other. There are numerous ways this can occur, from formal class ice-breaker activities to informal discussions before or after classes. The teachers observed students as they attempted to get to know other students well in class by chatting with each other about assignments and progress while waiting for classes; by being active in class and being open with the students around them. During class, the teacher discussed problems with other students and helped each other: that was also how the students became well acquainted with their group assignment members.

8.4.1.1 Sue’s Story

When we teach our students, we pass on aspects of our culture to them through class discussion. When they learn they also teach us and pass on aspects of their culture to us. Therefore, culture works both ways. ‘Sue’ is a teacher and has over three years experience teaching at undergraduate level and 12 years as Educational Designer and Developer at Australian and American universities. Having been in Australia as a migrant for 28 years, she has a wealth of multicultural anecdotes to share with students.
She also conducted various ice-breaking activities that led to discussions and forming bonds between students and students and students and tutors with common interests in classes. The simple act of smiling was observed as being open-minded and friendly and was how the students attempted to become acquainted with each other in class. An example of how social connectivity was manifested between students is best summed up by the following observation that first of all, through a friend they already knew in class, the student was then introduced to their friend’s friends and became acquainted with each other in the same assignment groups. Utilisation of discussion forums as a learning support and communication tool also enabled social connectivity to occur when face-to-face communication was not possible. When students had a question, the teacher would answer it. Sue’s reply made them feel very comfortable. Alternatively, if the students have a problem and needed help outside of classes, they just sent a message to other students and they received timely responses.

Sue also attempted to get to know her students by acknowledging everyone by name, through inclusiveness and discussions and walked around class engaging individual students. Getting to know students was a daunting task considering the diverse cultural and language backgrounds of students and that most tutors had 70 to 100 student names to remember during the semester.

8.4.1.2 Amanda’s Story

‘Amanda’ is an Australian teaching teaching at the university for several years. Again, every year in her first tutorial classes, she would explain to her students to, ‘just call me Amanda’. When international students arrive in Australia to study, they bring with them the patterns in communicating that they have developed during their education in their home countries. In some cultures, there is a deference directed to teachers (teachers, advisors or supervisors) by students. In Australia, there is generally not the same level of deference given. Initial meetings or correspondence may begin in a deferent way in Australia but the situation quickly becomes less formal. Amanda often discovered in her first tutorial teaching in this major unit where there was a large number of international South East Asian students where
tutors will often be addressed as sir or madam, doctor or even professor. Amanda feels uncomfortable being addressed in this way in her tutorial or practical classes, regardless of inaccuracies in official titles. She will just tell her students to, ‘just call me Amanda’ and in a much less formal way of addressing and explain to her students that this is the culture in Australia where tutors or lecturers would prefer to be called by their first name.

8.4.1.3 Danny’s Story

‘Danny’ has five years experience tutoring undergraduate and Masters level students at three Australian universities. Danny grew up in Europe. He came to Australia to do his PhD and whilst studying in Australia married a fellow student from Indonesia. Danny nominated life experience (travel, family and teacher) as the building blocks of tacit knowledge in fully engaging with a multicultural classroom. Students reported that the teacher got to know them by learning and calling them by their name (initially often mispronounced yet students appreciated the effort), allowing students time to introduce themselves during Week 1 ice-breaker activities, ‘I constantly communicated with my students and encouraged them to see me if they were having any problems’. He continued, ‘I also move around the room starting conversations with smaller groups.’

Danny acknowledged the multicultural makeup in the class by providing many multicultural examples related to the subject content, mentioned the diversity of cultures and especially languages in the first tutorial when discussing public speaking components of assessment items. ‘Our class was very diverse, he asked a lot of questions about our culture, our backgrounds and where we were from.’ Danny indicated being sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of students was a reference point for elaborating upon discussion points in tutorial classes. Danny believed these reference points were a subconscious process as a result of the teacher’s own cultural background.

Danny indicated he did not intentionally set out to conduct his tutorial classes with multicultural makeup in mind. Rather, the sensitivity to cultural awareness and the
possibilities this awareness leads to would promote the inclusion of all students in the learning environment of the multicultural classroom and this has become instinctive as a result of the teacher’s exposure to other cultures over the course of the teacher’s own learning and teaching experience. Danny indicated that by being able to read between the lines and interpret the invisible cultural codes in communicating with the entire multicultural (international and local) student mix, he has embraced the principle of inclusiveness in his classroom. One student indicated that ‘the teacher was great, spoke to the class in a clear manner which allowed international students to understand and never used jargon’. ‘He uses [plain vanilla] English in classes’ and ‘when speaking, not using complex language or words’. Another student reported that Danny was ‘open to all sorts of opinions, patient with students whose first language is not English, waiting until students had finished and always showed respect’. Teachers need to tread a fine line between using plain, simple language and not being seen as condescending or as if they are dumping down conversations.

8.4.1.4 Sue’s and Danny’s Stories

The formation of trust was mentioned by all the teachers interviewed and observed as a key mechanism for increasing participation in class. When trust is formed between teacher and teacher, student and teacher, and between student and student, students are more comfortable and more willing to participate openly in classroom discussions. They know that the trust they share with class team mates and between themselves and their tutors will protect them from fear of embarrassment or losing face, particularly for Asian students.

A student commented that because of the build-up of trust in the classroom, participation in class activities increases to the point where ‘we speak with our hearts’. They are less guarded and considered in their willingness to give answers to questions, to ask questions themselves or give feedback and encouragement to fellow students.
Sue and Danny observed that trust was formed between themselves and their students by giving and receiving help to students when required, showing respect for one another, talking and listening, through clarity in giving reliable instructions and information on assignments and being honest, friendly, smiling and communicating. Communicating was a common way trust was formed. Both Sue and Danny were always willing to speak to students individually, hence keeping privacy if needed. This aspect of cultural awareness is significant in communicating with students of certain Asian backgrounds who feel they may ‘lose face’ by asking the ‘dumb question’. By providing moments in class for one-on-one interaction, both Sue and Danny could interact, develop friendships and form trust as students came to realise the respect and support being offered to them by their teachers. The development of trust through communicating was also seen as a result of social connectivity and cultural awareness.

It was observed by all teachers interviewed that trust was not as freely formed as discussed above. From a negative perspective, it was observed that some students were very systematic in their assessment of how trust was formed; trust had to be earned. From anecdotal discussions in classes between students and Danny, a few students indicated that the level of trust depended on the corresponding correctness of information sought in a question to their fellow students, an assignment task completed on time, a team meeting attended to on time and correct information provided by their teachers on assessment items. Overwhelmingly, both Sue and Danny felt trust developed through social connectivity and influenced by an underlying cultural awareness helped improve students’ participation and performance in class. Being able to reach a level of trust where a student confided to Danny ‘we use the heart to answer your questions’ is most satisfying for the teacher.

Sue responded that it is not only ‘trust [that] is important between everybody’ but it is also important that the students and the teachers have ‘respect for each other and able to freely ask questions in classroom and not feel threatened’. Sue continued, ‘the domestic and international students by and large share some basic views on the issue of “trust” in the class, but disagree on the ways and means how the trust among the students and between the lecturers and the students could be enhanced.’ Particularly
the expediency of conducting different activities to build trust—international student often stressed the importance of teachers, ‘[encouraging] the students to answer his or her questions; always try to make a good team in the class, he always asks everyone in the class to persuade each other, to know each other’. Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares (2009) described how the interaction of asking a question and remembering the answer between student and teacher captured the beginning of a meaningful relationship and where the student acted as a cultural broker (Michie 2003) to gain confidence of and engage with other students. This then further helped build students’ confidence.

Sue and Danny shared that they ‘have to face so many barriers in terms of culture and language. This is why building and maintaining a high level of trust with [their] tutor and a fellow student here is even more important than back at home.’

When analysing the Sue’s and Danny’s responses with respect to what they viewed as an effective teaching approach, perhaps the most frequently used adjective—the key-word—was ‘clear’. They emphasised the importance of such a teaching approach where ‘messages are explained clearly’ and ‘clearly focusing on the subject and use of different learning activities and technologies in classes.’ Having ‘good, effective, communication with students … good communication skills … [and being a] good public speaker’ were other desired features of a successful teaching approach. Bates and Poole (2003) noted that the best results generally come that a blend of face-to-face, use of classroom aids, distance learning and e-learning. According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), the effectiveness of blended learning is directly related to its ability to facilitate a community of enquiry.

Danny stressed that:

The use of different methods during teaching to encourage a sense of community in the classroom is very important. My students expressed their preference for me to use a ‘clear’ and not-way-too-complicated verbal communication style—its main aspects can be summarised as:

- Easy to understand verbal communication;
- Good accent;
- Slow speaking—easy to follow;
- Appropriate communication skills and not too fast;
• Paraphrased all important information;
• Happy to explain things more than once to ensure students understand;
• Explains each and everything again to make sure everyone in class understands him.’

Another clear theme that came out of the survey data analysis was the emphasis on the importance of empathy and patience, ‘giving good attention for each and every student in the classroom.’ One of Danny’s colleagues, ‘Joe’ has very effective approach to teaching. Many of Joe’s students commented on his approachable personality.

8.4.1.5 Joe’s Story

‘Joe’ is a teacher who grew up in a small town in rural Australia. Despite not being widely travelled he has been challenged to develop his cross-cultural awareness though his marriage to a fellow postgraduate student who is from Vietnam. He described himself as being open and friendly: ‘I’m a generally very friendly and approachable individual—students are not shy to approach me and talk about their problems’ and that their trust towards the lecturer was enhanced when there was trust between the lecturer and student. He continued to explain, ‘groups of students displayed a preference for a lecturer who has a very friendly and approachable [personality].’

According to Joe, the effective approach to trust-building between the students and the teacher is when the latter is ‘using plain language in order to make sure everyone can understand’. Somewhat surprisingly, this view was supported by an equal percentage of international and domestic students. The next effective trust-enhancing approach to develop a better cross-cultural communication in the diverse classroom is the simple act of the teacher addressing the students by their name. Research conducted by Djojosaputro et al (2005) suggested that students seek friends and relationships before they feel comfortable with each other. The research found that students were not only feeling at ease with the names provided online but also they would feel much more comfortable when they first met face-to-face, and lecturers know who they are and their names. According to Hofstede (2001), students from the
power distance and collectivism culture tend to feel and find comfort in a communal and dependency environment. Joe explained that the next effective trust-enhancing strategy for a teacher is when ‘[he/she] is very open with me and always tells me—privately and confidentially—her/his honest opinion about my progress’.

8.4.1.6 Laurie’s Story

‘Laurie’ had been a casual teacher for two years at Deakin University at the time of being interviewed. An effective teaching strategy developed from the interview observations, as ‘the teacher [showing] an open interest and asks questions about students’ cultural background’. Laurie shared her concern that, ‘again, the students appear to be sensitive to a situation when they feel that the teacher ‘dumbs down’ the education level’. This approach came across to students when teachers lack cultural and language awareness of students (particularly international students). Therefore, it is important that teachers are informed and aware to the different culture awareness.

Laurie observed that: ‘Teachers who are aware of cross-cultural international students’ preference for a private and confidential discussion about their teacher progress with their lecturer can be partially explained in the context of face-saving, which is a fundamental concept in the fields of sociology, psychology and political science. This is how I observed students in my classes.’ ‘Face-saving’ generally refers to maintaining one’s dignity, self-esteem and prestige.

With respect to teachers’ understanding and the influence of the ‘face-saving’ concept upon students’ behaviour in the multicultural class setting, one international student of Asian background aptly explained (provided by one of the interviews):

A Business Communication teacher needs to have more knowledge about culture differences as there are over 70% international students in this unit. [One] teacher usually asks questions in the class and a large number of international students' oral English is not good enough to quickly give response which sometimes cause embarrassment to the students. Therefore, that's one of the main reasons why students are not willing to attend the tutorial class. Moreover, this teacher is very unhappy when the students ask questions after tutorial had finished and he keeps asking 'I have asked you many times if there are any questions, you didn't respond, now class finished!! Why don't you ask me in the class?!! The reason is that many
Asian students do not like to answer the question in front of every classmate because it sometimes causes embarrassment if they do not know the right answer. [The lecturer] really should not just put the student on the spot. A much better way could be to answer individual's question individually.

The researcher collected data on the teachers’ attitudes towards learning and teaching in the cross-cultural environment of an Australian university and identified major motivational and attitudinal patterns among each of the above mentioned language-cultural groups towards ‘trust-building’ and ‘social adaptability and connectivity’ in the context of the multicultural classroom.

The attitudes and approach of these teachers can be describedly reasonably completely in terms of ‘social capital’ and ‘bicultural efficacy’. The idea of ‘social capital’, as a sociological concept often used in social sciences, generally refers to connections within and between different social networks. It is argued that the possession of social capital, namely extensive social contacts, can have a positive effect on the productivity of individuals and groups. For example, Zhou’s (2000) study about young Chinese migrants in the US illustrated the high degree to which the preservation of traditional ethnic values and ethnic solidarity can facilitate their integration into the mainstream American society. Zhou argues that ethnic support from within the Chinese community provides the children with a form of social capital that contributes positively to their teacher success (Zhou 2000).

8.4.1.7 Saris’s Story

‘Saris’ grew up in Thailand and came to Australia to undertake her PhD at an Australian University. Her partner comes from New Zealand. Saris observed that as she and her partner migrated to Australia leaving behind families and friends, they essentially had no choice but to gain the necessary social capital through forming new bonds and friendships both with other colleagues who migrated from their own regions or countries and with Australian-born teachers. This also explains the marked difference between the desire of local and migrant teachers to ‘form friendships with colleagues from different countries.’ Unlike the teacher overseas migrants, their
Australian-born colleagues, being on their own turf and receiving support from their families and friends, have much less need to enhance their social capital through building other relationships at university. Social capital allows a person to draw on resources that can take the form of beneficial knowledge or information, personal friendships and relationships, or to build teams or groups (Paxton 1999) from other members of the networks to which they belong.

The idea of bicultural efficacy offers further explanation for the major attitudinal difference between groups of teachers. The sociological concept of bicultural efficacy (Clauss-Ehlers 2010) can be generally defined as the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relations within two groups without surrendering one’s cultural identity. It has been argued that ‘the person’s bicultural competence will assist [him or her] in building and maintaining support networks in the different contexts while also providing support when either group rejects [him or her] or when [he or she] is developing competence in one group’ (Kawahara 2007, pp. 17–33). As pointed out by Saris, ‘hope to form friendships with other colleagues from different countries’. This fact suggests that while maintaining her cultural connections with the other colleagues from their country of origin, a substantial number of teachers appear to be successful bicultural individuals who are enthusiastic about forging new relationships and bonds with local Australian colleagues—a process that will in turn allow them to enhance their social capital.

Another positive view in this regards to forming a sense of community and friendship was observed by Saris in one of her classes: ‘I hope to form friendships with other students from different countries, but its' harder than I thought. Especially, it seems like local students don’t like to discuss and group with any Asia student like me—‘cause it would made the group get the low-mark in presentation.’

Saris commented from her feedback from student, ‘and, finally, another Indonesian student liked the fact that “I [can] mix with my Indo [Indonesian] friends”’. As Wenger (2008) pointed out, COP is defined as ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger 2008, p. 1).
8.4.1.8 Margie’s Story

‘Margie’ migrated to Australia from Malaysia three years ago. Margie says that she enjoys teaching very much and she feels that she understands her students well. Her informal approach and informal chat with her students has earned her students’ trust and confidence in her.

Margie shared that she and her students enjoyed ‘having a chinwag’ while waiting outside class waiting for one class to finish, for classroom to empty before going in and beginning their class. (‘Chinwag’ is an Australian colloquial term for a discussion or chat. A chinwag is informal and can involve gossip or news.)

She explained that students especially liked it when she was ‘open to discussion’, ‘always asks students if they have any questions’ and ‘often talk about what they did on weekends and other non-related topics’. She was encouraged and continued that, ‘another student provided a more concrete example: “I find you very friendly and approachable and like one of us outside of class. You are like one of us”’. She added that her student was so pleased and commented, ‘if I ask you, you always answer even after the tutorial time ended … always comes back with answers to questions.’ In addition, the simple act of smiling, building up friendship and trust with students were regarded very highly regarded and interpreted as that the teacher was approachable and open-minded.

Margie received responses from her students about some of the characteristics of her behaviour that made her students feel comfortable in the class:

- ‘Kind, nice, always smile, jolly face’
- ‘Friendly and approachable attitude toward the students’
- ‘Enthusiast, very patient, helpful, willing to help; supportive of students’
- ‘Works well with people … interactive … interaction between student and teacher is good’
- ‘Makes students comfortable in the class … easy to get along with’
From the Australian case studies it is clear that one of the most important elements of teaching is the development of trust—as seen from both the teacher and student perspectives. The development of trust can be seen as an outcome of social connectivity and cultural awareness. Two most effective approaches to building trust involve:

- the teacher encouraging the students to work and share ideas in groups and help each other; and
- the teacher constantly promoting informal, casual and relaxed atmosphere in the class.
8.5 Discussion and Analysis

The analysis of the survey data sought to gain a better understanding of, firstly, the teaching issues that may arise when teaching in a culturally diverse class and, secondly, approaches to breaking down any real or potential barriers to the development of social connectivity, cultural awareness and ‘mutual empathy’ within the classroom. Consequently, attention focused on the role of various culturally influenced personal and societal factors in shaping the dynamics of student-teacher interaction and on how these in turn contribute to the building of trust between the teachers and the students and among (both international and domestic) students.

Another important finding based on the qualitative data analysis was that the teachers’ cultural own background and their exposure to other cultures plays an important role in affecting the level of social connectivity and ultimately the trust between an individual student and their lecturer or tutor. In the words of one international student, the lecturer or tutor’s ‘multicultural background [provides him/her with] a good understanding of overseas students’ needs, feelings and conditions’. As another international student puts it, a lecturer or tutor who is immersed in multicultural and multilingual settings is better positioned to ‘understand the needs of students, i.e. language barriers due to cultural differences’.

It could be reasonably assumed that those teachers that are immersed in high levels of cultural and ethnic diversity are more likely to define themselves, and likely to be defined by their students, along multiple cultural—as well as possibly ethnic—boundaries. To this end, a domestic student observed, ‘I find it very interesting because my tutor is from Europe and seems to understand multicultural environment very well. I could understand him very well. He is a very good tutor.’ Another international student from Vietnam, for example, explained, ‘I could relate to my tutor/lecturer coz his wife is Vietnamese too. So there is a connection.’ Similarly, an international student who comes from an Asian country summarised his or her view
in the following way: ‘my tutor who is also from an Asian background tries to get to know all of us individually despite of where we come from.’

It is clear that multicultural experience, cultural awareness and social connectivity play an important role in shaping cross-cultural communication and identity formation. Individuals develop their respective identities partly through the process of socialisation and interaction with others in their own cultural groups and/or across multiple cultural and ethnic boundaries. Hence, cultural and ethnic identity development is essentially a process involving familial and cultural socialisation that is continually created and re-created by the individual’s exposure to other cultures.

It could then be assumed that if a teacher, for example, is exposed to various contexts—whether by means of travelling, living in or socially engaging with another culture—his or her sense of identity may well be re-shaped, refined and possibly ‘expanded’ (Samovar 2009, pp. 163–165). The findings of this thesis suggest that through past interactions with other cultures, a teacher can develop a more refined, nuanced, heterogeneous and inclusive cultural identity. One of the important consequences of this process is that it will enhance the teacher’s skills in cross-cultural adaptation and tolerance for diversity, and enable him or her to respond flexibly and quickly to the complex and often conflicting needs of a highly diverse class.

On a practical level, social capital as described by Woolcock (2001) is vitally important in bonding in relations between family, close friends and neighbours; bridging in relations between distant friends, associates and colleagues; and linking in relations with sympathetic individuals in positions of power. Putnam (2000) argues that bonding social capital reflects strong ties with family and close friends, who might be in a position to provide emotional support or access to scarce resources. The optimal combination of bonding, bridging and linking social capital change over time (Woolcock 2001) as do social networks as relationships are formed or abandoned. Changes in social networks can affect a persons social capital especially when that person moves from one location in which their network was formed and thus loses access to those social resources (Ellison et al. 2007).
The findings of the case studies suggest that the inherent barriers between students and teachers can be broken down by building social connectivity and paying attention to cultural awareness and sensitivity; particularly through the formation of trust, this can be summarised as building social capital. Putnam (2000) viewed social capital as a set of horizontal associations among people who have an effect on the productivity of the community or features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Putnam (1993, pp. 163–185) argues that trust creates reciprocity and voluntary associations, reciprocity and associations strengthen and produce trust.

These three factors need to align in order to enhance performance outcomes of improved participation, grades and learning outcomes from student perspectives; and pedagogy and teaching outcomes from the teacher perspectives. The cross-section alignment of the teachers, students and the enterprise-wide suite of learning technologies is the intersection of student-teacher-learning technology as shown in Figure 8.1. It illustrates the relationship between teachers, students and technology of major unit delivered at Deakin University in a semester.

![Figure 8.1: Alignment: Blended of Cultures](image-url)

This study has confirmed that for universities to deliver on their claim to international awareness, cultural sensitivity and ability to effectively communicate and teach cross-culturally, there needs to be an alignment of a blended culture to blended learning activity (see Figure 8.2), especially an alignment between cultural
delivery and e-learning activity to achieve enhanced performance from an teacher (pedagogical) perspective and from a student (participation in class and hopefully improved grades) perspective. The connecting factors between the students and the teachers, and the enabler of any alignment, the researcher believes, are cultural awareness and social capital (see Figure 8.2). This fits with the work of Balatti and Falk (2002) who argue that ‘social capital—its networks, trust, and shared values—emerges as the missing link in explaining the integrated role of knowledge and identity resources in generating adult learning benefits’ (Balatti & Falk 2002, p. 4).

**Figure 8.2: Blending of Cultures: Connectivity by Breaking down the Barriers**

At the outset, it might be expected that the odd one out in all these cases would be Australia. By now, however, it should be obvious that the case studies in Australia are in some respects not broadly representative of general Australian society. As in the other five countries case studies have focused on the behaviour, practice, attitudes and outlook of teachers involved in e-learning (see Table 8.2 above). Urban Australia is already markedly plural and this plurality becomes greater again amongst white collar professionals. However, on the university campuses another factor comes into play. Almost one-third of the income for Australian universities is derived from overseas students. The largest groups of overseas students come from China and from India with significant numbers also coming from South East Asia and somewhat lesser numbers coming from Africa, North America and least of all South America. This means that Australian teachers work in a highly plural environment. They themselves, as we have seen above, are a highly plural group. All of these factors are emphasised in the stories taken from Australia. This means that
with respect to the extreme stories, perhaps even more than the stories in the other four countries, there is a marked gap between what can be observed in the participants in the case studies and what might generally pertain to society as a whole.

In general, the results for the Australian stories are more similar to the results for Singapore than they are for the stories from Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia. This is certainly true when it comes to the issue of social capital where the results for Australia closely track the results for Singapore. Thus, when it comes to e-learning pioneering in the extreme case studies of this kind of social capital, seen through pioneering initiatives, this was only regarded as desirable, whereas it was seen to be essential in Indonesia and Turkey. The community social capital that is referred to as guanxi in Chinese, was seen to be no more than useful in the Australian case studies, below the level of desirable given in Singapore and well below it was observed in the case studies in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Following the same trend, the emphasis on COP saw this aspect of social capital as being regarded as being merely useful in the Australian case studies. Despite the fact that Australians in general talk fondly about the importance of barbecues and having a drink with a mate in the Australian stories, in this thesis, this kind of social capital was only seen to be useful. Generous mentoring in the Australian case studies was seen to be desirable that this ranking is below that for Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia. Similarly, strategic mentoring was also seen to be desirable, well below the ranking of essential in the Malaysian and Indonesian stories or very important in the Turkish stories but above the useful ranking in the Singaporean stories. The Singaporean stories were marked by a low level of importance for the idea of collectivism where this kind of social capital was regarded as being merely useful. In the Australian stories, this concept was essentially non-existent with this kind of social capital being regarded as unimportant. In keeping with this, the idea of ‘you reap what you sow’ was also seem to be only useful in the Australian context. Somewhat surprisingly, specific cultural connections based on ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious factors was seen as being of essential importance in the Australian case studies. This would appear to be explained by the fact that university
teacher teachers in the Australian stories were intensely aware of these factors and consequently rated them most highly, seeing them daily in evidence in the interactions between the students they teach and in their own interactions with their fellow teachers.

In Australia, the quality of cultural brokering in leadership was seen as being no more important than it was in the other case studies. Nevertheless, the fact that it was seen to be desirable, just as it was regarded in the other case studies suggests that the Australian teachers are certainly conscious of cultural factors. The more striking result is that in the extreme case studies, top-down leadership was seen to be merely useful—a strikingly low result compared with the other case studies. The same was true of directive leadership. It almost looks as if the person who described directive leadership in the university context as being like ‘herding cats’ was very familiar with Australian universities. Reciprocal trust-based leadership was regarded as important in the Australian stories just as it was regarded as important in Singapore but this is one ranking below that observed in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia where it is seen to be very important. Following the same pattern, in the Australian stories, as in the Singaporean stories, leadership that emphasised example—talking the talk and walking the walk—was regarded as being merely important, whereas in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia it was seen to be essential. Conversely, a ‘wait and see’ approach to leadership was seen to be completely unimportant in the Australian case studies in contrast with its essential importance in Singapore and the recognition of being useful in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Having an entrepreneurial mindset was seen to be desirable in the Australian case studies. In contrast to which, it was seen to be essential in Turkey, Singapore and Indonesia. The visionary and strategic thinking along with having a creative mindset and an active globalisation were all seemed to be desirable in Australia, well below the ranking in Turkey, Indonesia Malaysia, but at a higher ranking than in Singapore. Conversely, women pioneering was seen to be desirable in Australian stories but was completely unimportant in the Singaporean case studies.
When it comes to teaching, the Australian results turn around. In the Australian case studies, teaching by example, teaching as learning, teaching from life and also teaching across cultures are all seen to be of essential importance in marked contrast with the findings from the Singaporean case studies and a variance to all the other case studies.

When it comes to attitude and outlook, the Australian stories return findings more or less similar to the stories in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia but at stark variance with the stories in Singapore. In Australia, competitive instrumentalism was seen as being merely useful as was face-saving behaviour. Conversely, multicultural awareness was given a ranking of essential in the Australian stories, much higher than the Singapore result and higher than all the other results. Once again, this particular finding reflects the specific circumstances of the Australian stories where teachers were working in a very plural environment. In Australia, as in Singapore, reciprocity is seen to be desirable, whereas in Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, reciprocity is seen to be very important. Finally, in the Australian stories, the attitude and outlook of being an ‘all rounder’ was seen to be desirable just as it was in Indonesia and Malaysia. This is slightly down on the very important ranking given in the Singaporean and Turkish stories.

The diagram below (Figure 8.3), as with the other diagrams in the earlier chapters (Figures 4.2, 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1), seeks to capture the key elements that have came up in the field discussions without attempting to assign priorities or causal relations. The diagram seeks to capture the key themes that arose in conversation with university lecturers as they explained what they felt were the key issues in teaching and learning social interactions at Deakin University. The expressions ‘vanilla English’, ‘getting to know you’, ‘just call me ‘Sue’” and ‘having a chinwag’ are expressions used by the respondents.
Earlier generations of teachers teaching in a more traditional elite model of education could work on the assumption that their students would adapt and fit in. Today’s teachers, however, can not afford to fall back on this comfortable and undemanding position. Instead, they must themselves adapt and appropriately employ new e-learning technologies where they can greatly increase their effectiveness. The participants in these case studies demonstrate a high level of general awareness about this dynamic. They express a view that the more aware a teacher is of blended culture and all of the options available, and of blended learning, the more effective they become at teaching.
Chapter Nine: Discussion and Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study set out to document and explain the influence of social and cultural factors in the adoption of e-learning in higher education in Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Singapore and Australia. It examined how cultural norms, values, attitudes and behaviour influence the adoption of e-learning in practice.

The case studies in this research have focused primarily on individual pioneers: teachers who have gone out of their way to incorporate e-learning technology in their teaching and who have encouraged others to do so. It is common to think of pioneers in any field as being ‘lone wolves’ who go out ahead of the pack possessed of a strong sense of purpose and dependence. That assumption is not entirely incorrect when it comes to the subject of the case studies examined here but it turns out that how these pioneers connect with other people is also very important.

This research engaged with the personal narratives of the research participants to gain a deeper insight into the uptake of e-learning in higher education institution in four Asian universities and one in Australia. In exploring the experiences of teachers adopting e-learning, it focused on issues of motivation and encouragement and drew upon social and cultural theories explaining social networks and cultural capital. The axial question at the centre of the research was:

- In what ways do social and cultural factors influence the uptake of e-learning in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia?

Using a case study methodology and an interpretive approach enabled an understanding of the many factors that influenced the uptake of e-learning. This relies upon an empathetic and engaged approach guided by awareness that although the researcher’s voice must always be distinct from the participants. The researcher’s
voice can be grounded in the research participants’ experiences and reflect a shared understanding. Similarly, although the researcher’s understanding of the individual’s social world is inevitably preconceived in part, it is also socially constructed through communication with the participants and others during the period of research activity (Burgess-Limerick 1998).

As was explained in Chapter One, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Turkey were selected because of their interest in e-learning and because, despite their many similarities, their contrasting circumstances nations make for interesting comparisons. What each of the five case studies revealed was that the overriding factor in how university teachers adopt and implement IT, and specifically online learning and teaching technology, depends very much on issues of motivation that are intimately bound up with social networks and social capital rather than with technology alone. Within each of the five country case studies, certain dominant characteristics emerged, some of these confirmed what we already know and some highlighted issues that show the impacts and differences generated by cultural and social practices. To illustrate these differences, this chapter begins with a brief reiteration of the factors that impact on the adoption of e-learning that we already know about followed by a summary of what this research showed.

9.2 The Adoption of E-learning: What We Know

By definition, e-learning depends upon the use of ICT for teaching and learning (Jenkins & Hanson 2003). Getting this technology right is vitally important to the successful adoption and implementation of e-learning. However, many other factors affect the adoption of e-learning. University policies, which includes policies relating to management structures and leadership, and strategic planning schemes affect the funding of teaching and learning initiatives and shape the environment for the adoption of e-learning.

Recent research has identified a number of ways in which the implementation of educational technology should be designed to be most effective in higher education institutions. It also points to a number of areas in which there has been a failure, or at 251
least a substantial lag in uptake, in the broader adoption of certain kinds of the style of educational technology. This follows a pattern identified by Reeves (2002) who observed that where educational technology has been widely adopted it has been through replication of traditional teaching methods.

Similarly, Mc Naught et al. (2000) argued that some of the key factors affecting the adoption of educational technology are a range of institutional issues relating to institutional culture, policy and support. Cultural factors such as the extent of collaboration within institutions, peers, colleagues, personal motivation, innovation, as well as the attitudes of institutions towards staff reward and teaching and learning innovation and substantially impact on the use of educational technology. Mc Naught et al. (2000) also recognised that there is significant overlap between these three components.

An issue often raised in adopting e-learning relates to its rapid introduction and the fact that there is ‘an attempt to compress the process of innovation itself. And the fact that e-learning took off before people really knew how to use it’ (Zemsky 2004, p. 57). People form personal opinions about the pedagogy of teaching and learning reasonably early in their lives as students or teachers and do not change them easily when they become university teachers (Robertson 2004). Robertson (2004) observes that university teachers adopt new educational technology only if they are aligned with their values, rewards and beliefs about teaching and learning. Zemsky (2004) explains that teachers often continue to teach in the ways they always learned and taught whether in the area of e-learning or traditional teaching. Individual perceptions and attitudes, perceived innovative attributes such as cost, personal demands, policies, and work schedules also affect the adoption of e-learning (Zhang 2009).

Universities also tend to be driven by a ‘you can’t not do it’ rationale (Collis & Moonen 2001b, p. 29) out of a fear falling behind their peers. At the same time, the technology continues to advance rapidly and universities are forced to recognise that there are new technologies that are being widely used in society in general, and by young people in particular, that are directly relevant to the sort of learning and
knowledge interactions in which universities feel themselves to be leaders. The rapid growth of Web 2.0 technologies in broader society, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, has forced universities to rethink how they use these technologies to support learning in higher education (Kerawalla 2008). Developments in technology continue to open up new possibilities for innovative and suggest promising teaching and learning opportunities (Herrington & Reeves 2009) for higher education institutions.

Other factors that need to be considered in the adoption of educational technology into particular countries or region are local factors relating to use of technology, economic stability, culture and social priorities (Palvia 1992). A decade ago, Hasan (1999) argued that of the all factors listed, culture tends to be the most difficult to isolate, define and research (Hasan 1999). Early in the development of e-learning Tan and Watson et al. (1995) observed that culture had not been widely discussed or featured in the research literature in the adoption of educational technology (Tan et al. 1995).

One key reason that higher education institutions adopt new educational technology is that they hope that the new technologies will help them to transform university learning and teaching into a more engaging experience for students in the twenty-first century (Russell 2009). According to Bates (2000, p. 8), the reasons for the institutions to adopt e-learning are: 1) to increase student enrolments; 2) the changing needs of learning and teaching; 3) the benefits of using new innovative technologies in teaching and learning.

Teachers must feel comfortable with the tools that they use, and they have to be assured that any changes they make are appropriate to their own expertise and experience (Houseman 1997). At the beginning of the e-learning era, Houseman (1997) observed that the human side of the engagement of higher education institutions with new technology initiatives, including how teachers respond to these innovations, was not being given sufficiently serious consideration. Since then, there has been remarkably little written by teachers on these human factors.
9.3 The Adoption of E-learning: What We Now Know about the Impact of Culture and Society

Research on the various dimensions of culture and society has been very limited and no general studies have been undertaken that incorporate these social and cultural factors in the uptake of e-learning, especially in South East Asia. The case studies examined here shed light on the impact of culture and society identified in the case studies. A central theme that emerged in the findings is that the adoption of e-learning by pioneering teachers is very much dependent upon the social networks that support them. All of the subjects interviewed in case studies spoke about the role of social networks in guiding and encouraging them in initiatives in e-learning. It became readily apparent that the principle way in which cultural and social factors influence the adoption of e-learning is through social networks. Social network dynamics are substantially shaped by culture and social context and very in complex and subtle ways across the case studies whilst at the same time following common concerns and underlying principles.

9.3.1 Social Networking

The Hokkien term for networking, widely used across South East Asia, is *guanxi*. The three South East Asian case studies paid careful attention to the role that *guanxi* dynamics play in individual motivation and change management behaviour amongst teacher faculty members involved in the pioneering of online learning IT. The term *guanxi* is used to describe high-trust and long-term relationships. The term *guanxi* is not used in Turkey but the dynamics it describes, particularly with reference to the building of trust, were also central to the Turkish case study and also featured in the Australian case study. Though comparatively little researched, it is clear that cultural factors must influence the development of trust. Davies (1995, p. 156), for example, explains *guanxi* as ‘the social interactions within the network place and its members’. Similarly, Corbitt and Thanasankit (2001) begin with the observation that *guanxi* are ‘cultivated through a person’s network of connections’.
In a paper reporting part of this research, Barton et al. (2006) examine the ways in which the metaphor of bamboo shooting illustrates guanxi social capital dynamics. Bamboo is a very ‘social plant’ in that every new outcrop is linked to some earlier clump of growth. This remains the case even when there does not appear to be any direct connection between two clumps as bamboo is capable of sending out runners over long distances underground forming hidden networks of connected growth. Barton et al. (2006) discussed the case of a Malaysian teacher who built her academic guanxi based on both her personal and social connections (networks), her guanxi (based on culture) and her professional guanxi. After several years of work, this teacher was finally rewarded with new clusters of colleagues and new clumps growing. Although its passage underground long remained invisible, finally the bamboo sent up new shoots and surfaced with fresh growth. She built on her cross-cultural professional (academic) guanxi to build up her group of support for online teaching innovations. This study shows that both men and women ‘academic guanxi’, or peer networks—or similar exchanges that might be described by other terms such as the Muslim term ‘sillaturrahim’—play a key role in the adoption of online technologies. Whilst the local clusters tend to be easily seen, the longer-range ‘subterranean’ personal connections are not nearly so obvious. These connections are often the product of previous mentorship relationships, including the relationships between influential teachers and their former postgraduate students. These relationships tend to work like bamboo runners: they run off in multiple directions below ground and unseen and then throw up new clumps that grow up and then send out fresh runners of their own.

In Turkey, guanxi can be understood through the bağlantı kurmak in Turkish (Barton et al. 2007). Bağlantı kurmak in Turkish means personal connection or networks. Like the metaphor of clumping bamboo in Asia, the local clusters of adopters tend to easily use the longer-range ‘subterranean’ personal connections that are generally not nearly so immediately obvious. In Turkey, these connections are often the product of previous mentorship relationships, including the relationships between influential teachers and their former postgraduate students. Turkish teachers tend to rely on their network of support and learning from each other in small communities built on trust and reciprocal exchanges and mutual encouragement. In Australia, concepts such as
‘fair dinkum’, ‘fair go’ and ‘mateship’ speak to the issues of personal trust and personal connections. These concepts parallel the concepts found in guanxi in Asia. Collegial communities and networks enable online learning pioneers to build on their long-term orientation (Hofstede 2005) and strive to enrich the teaching-learning exchange. Teachers often strive to perform well in their teaching are often directed by their leaders to achieve these goals.

9.3.2 Directive Leadership: ‘Herding Cats’

Success in the take-up and development of online learning in tertiary teaching programs depends upon some key culture factors. Motivating teachers depends very much on building trust, encouraging inspiration and facilitating teamwork. A heavy, top-down approach can diminish the capacity of an institution for effective change management and lessen the chances of long-term success with e-learning.

Managing teachers has been famously likened to herding cats (Steele 2002). Cats, of course, cannot be herded but they can be persuaded, so too with teachers. If one has their trust, understands what motivates them, and allows them to go their own way in their own time they can respond with enthusiasm. In the Indonesian case study, it was pointed out that adopting any new educational technologies requires persistence and strong dedication. In Indonesia, innovation is highly valued because the need for development is great and the rewards are substantial when pioneering innovation pays off. In Indonesia the uptake of the internet in the education sector broadly and especially in the pesantren community is driven by the demand for access to information and the desire to participate in broader social networks.

9.3.3 Trust

Social networks cannot form, much less function successfully, without mutual trust between participants. Building trust is essential to the development of social networks. Fukuyama (1995) has argued that community depends upon trust and that trust is culturally determined. At the same time, trust is the first element of motivation. Motivation requires trust because trust provides confidence to
experiment and learn. With online learning there must be a reasonable degree of trust and confidence in the technology being used. The staff member must have confidence that they will be able to master the technology with reasonable effort in a amount of time. They must trust the technology not to let them down and feeling the loss of face amongst their peers.

9.3.4 Competitive Instrumentalism: Kiasu and Losing Face

The findings of the Singapore case study point to a strong kiasu attitude in Singaporean society where people generally want something in return for whatever they contribute. Consequently, there needs to be sufficient trust in collegial goodwill such that team members can rise above competitive sentiment and feelings of kiasu. The contemporary popular use of the term kiasu originated in the Singapore context and reflects an obsessive concern with getting the most out of every transaction and a desire to get ahead of others. Kiasuism has both positive and negative outcomes. The first is a positive side that reveals itself through diligence and hard work by individuals to stay on top of the situation (Chua 1989). The kiasu people often look around the surrounding for opportunities and take very quick advantage of the situation and ensure that they gain an advantage of the opportunity (Leo 1995).

Loss of face occurs when an individual, through either his or her own actions, or those of people closely related to him or her of the social position, fails to meet essential requirements placed upon him or her by virtue of the social position occupied. Lin (1935, p. 202) argues that face is ‘impossible to define’. Hwang et al. (2002) mention that the notion of face is a concern not only of the individual but also of the individual’s family. For example, in the Singapore case study, it was clear that students seek to avoid poor performance as this creates not only loss of individual face but also a loss of family face. Therefore, the notion of face embodies within it a collectivistic dimension and understanding of various social and cultural issues in communities and their social capital networks.

The concept of social capital sits well with an educational context. Social capital and particularly its dimensions of trust and reciprocity are vital components of building
relationships—teacher-student and student-student—which in turn transform relationships into participation and enhanced teaching and learning outcomes. It is interesting to see that e-learning pioneering, social networks, ‘reaping what you sow’, and cultural connections were all regarded as important elements of social capital in this research. This research has shown that their interconnections and what they demonstrate are important in e-learning adoption. These are the focus of the next section.

9.4 Culture, Society and E-learning Adoption

9.4.1 Women Pioneers

In Malaysia, women have historically played a major role in economic activity such as trading, in farming and in the management of household chores. The impact of the NEP with a strong element of affirmative action in promoting ethnic Malay participation has substantially shaped, and in some respects distorted, the Malaysian tertiary sector, in comparison with that of Singapore, Indonesia or Turkey. It seems likely that these distortions have both given greater opportunities for women teachers as well as forcing upon them a greater burden with respect to innovation and improvement of standards. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that much of the pioneering in the area of online teaching and learning has been led by women.

Interestingly, in the case studies from both Malaysia and Turkey, the factor of women pioneering was regarded as being of essential importance slightly ahead of the case in Indonesia and well ahead of the case in Singapore. In Malaysia, professional women teachers have championed and pioneered new initiatives and carrying out research and teaching and adopting new technologies in a male dominated domain (Farnworth 2009). These women pioneers have generally received little or no recognition from their superiors and most of their initiatives were taken for granted. The educational environment is generally marked by a similar governing structure as those of traditional rural communities and is primarily male-dominated (Sanyang 2008). Nevertheless, it does seem that as on the surface both Singapore and Malaysia seemed to be well accounted for when it comes to independent and self-assured professional women.
9.4.2 Social Transformation

If the roles played by women pioneers were relatively less significant in the Indonesian case, the role of pioneering in general was altogether more significant. Whereas Malaysia is a comparatively well-developed country in which universities are generally well resourced, in Indonesia the situation is very different. In Indonesia, absolute levels of poverty and under-development are much greater and universities are not nearly as well resourced as their Malaysian counterparts. Consequently, in Indonesia there is a much greater need for bold innovation. The Indonesian case study reflects this context and focuses on several examples of bold innovation. There is a great degree of innovation emerging in Asia in terms of computer software and IT-enabled services (Ernst 2006). This is perhaps most dramatically seen in the case of the pesantren project described in the Indonesian case study.

The full scope of e-learning extends well beyond IT and its communicative features (Garrison 2003). When its potential is fully realised, e-learning is has a truly transformative power (Garrison 2003; p. 3). In the Indonesian case study, the potential of e-learning to facilitate social transformation is more fully demonstrated that is the case in Malaysia, precisely because the distance between undeveloped and well-developed communities is much greater in Indonesia than it is in Malaysia. It is precisely the promise of transformation that motivates e-learning pioneers to innovate boldly to ensure that the technology can be brought to the communities that most need it. These pioneers also act as mentors to other colleagues within their institutions. The initial development of the internet and related technologies occurred primarily in the West. This led to a situation in which the internet technology of e-learning tended to be exported from the West to the East without sufficient consideration being given to the socio-cultural changes that come with the adoption of these technologies (Shah 2010).
9.4.3 Leadership and Entrepreneurship

There is a broad variance across the five case studies in terms of response to specific factors of social capital but there is much less variance when it comes to leadership factors. The most striking finding is that Singapore parts company with the other four case studies in its preference for a leadership approach based on taking a ‘wait and see’ attitude. Despite the increasing use of e-learning in general and of specific technologies such as virtual worlds, most institutions in Singapore continue to have a ‘wait and see’ approach and to hang back whilst keeping an eye on other institutions and other early adopters (Wankel & Kingsley 2009). In Singapore, this aspect of leadership is regarded as being of essential importance and appears to be closely linked to an aversion to suffering loss of any kind, including loss of face. Face-saving is generally viewed as important in high-context cultures (Hall 1990). However, if the view in Singapore is that there is always virtue in taking a ‘wait and see’ cautious approach to leadership, in Australia, the opposite is true where such an approach is regarded as being of little value.

This one factor aside, it is perhaps not surprising that when it comes to factors of leadership, Australia is the odd one out. It is striking to see how social behaviour, at least in the case studies examined here, sharply downplays the importance of top-down leadership (Spendlove 1987) and directive leadership, and even old reciprocal trust-based leadership and leadership by example. On these latter two points, Singapore once again tracks closely with Australia. Conversely, there is very little difference between perceptions of importance on leadership factors in Malaysia Indonesia and Turkey.

The findings on entrepreneurialism are in many ways a combination of the findings with respect to the elements of leadership. Leadership development focuses on building social capital of organisations and builds on the human capital of individuals (Day 2000). Visionary and strategic thinking is regarded as being more important in Turkey than it is in Indonesia: it being seen to be essential in the former and merely very important in the latter. Conversely, the factor of valuing an active
approach to globalisation is regarded as being of essential importance in Indonesia but only very important in Turkey.

In the area of entrepreneurialism, the findings breakdown into roughly two groups but this time Malaysia and Australia are more alike than are Singapore and Australia. Malaysia and Australia produced the same (McGrath 2000) results with respect to the first four categories and is the only on the fifth category of women pioneering that significant differences are seen. Significantly, only in Singapore is women pioneering regarded as anything less than important.

It might be assumed that all of the various factors of entrepreneurialism are closely related and that therefore there is unlikely to be much breakdown between each of the factors. As it happens, however, Australia stands alone in according a moderate level of importance to each of the five factors. But perhaps not too much should be made of this, as it seems likely that the difference between, for example, judging an entrepreneurial mindset to be of essential importance and a creative mindset to be merely very important, as is the case with Malaysia and Indonesia, is not such a significant difference. Nevertheless, it seems possible that being entrepreneurial is seen to be more desirable than being merely creative. That explanation at least would explain the Singaporean case study responses where having a creative mindset was regarded as being merely useful, whereas having a entrepreneurial mindset was seen to be essential (McGrath 2000).

This aspect of caution and reserve on the part of the Singaporean respondents perhaps also explains why taking an active approach to globalisation is seen to be so relatively unimportant in Singapore. In the city-state, it would appear that being an entrepreneur and a visionary is reputable and desirable but being creative and actively globalising is not seen to be particularly important. Singapore aside, all of the other case study responses suggested strong to very strong importance is attached to all aspects of entrepreneurialism. Where academicians and researchers are concerned, successful entrepreneurs also tend to have the qualities required for effective leadership (Raymond & Sexton 1996).
9.4.4 Social Behaviours and Trust

The underlying factor driving the adoption of e-learning is the role of social networks or connections, known as bağlanı kurmak in Turkey. The dynamics observed in the Turkish case study very much parallel those observed in the Malaysian case study where they are expressed through the metaphor of bamboo networking. Here too, the importance of social capital and social networks is strongly emphasised. Naturally, in Turkey this element is described in particularly Turkish terms, most notably in terms of drinking çai together, but the underlying message is the same. Malaysians might talk of going to the Mamak curry restaurant to eat and chat and Indonesians might talk of the importance of social visits, whereas Turks speak of the importance of drinking çai together, but they are all talking about essentially the same thing.

A particular emphasis that comes through in the Turkish case study is that of building trust. Whereas this was implicit in the ways in which Malaysians and Indonesians spoke of the importance of socialising and consolidating social capital and social networks in the Turkish case study, trust was much more explicitly referred to. There is a sense, in the Turkish case study, that trust has to be carefully built up because the normal state of affairs is marked by certain level of caution and absence of trust. Consequently, the respondents in the Turkish case study spoke explicitly of the need to foster trust and overcome fear whether on the part of the students they were teaching or the part of their colleagues who might be sceptical about their motivations and intentions.

The Turkish cultural context is one in which pioneers tend to speak more explicitly not only about trust and the need to foster it but also about the importance of the energetic pioneering. The Turkish respondents have a strong desire to share knowledge openly in an atmosphere of trust (Jameson 2006) with their peers. The respondents' observations convey a sense of a ‘warrior ethos’, of pioneers charging forward overcoming obstacles and ultimately clearing a way for others to follow. Consequently, the Turkish respondents often spoke in terms of personal energy and enterprise. They also describe the need to sit with their colleagues, and peers and
drink çai, to invest in the social network and to try to build consensus and overcome doubts. In Turkey, drinking çai is linked to building of social networks, friendship and trust.

Effective collaborative leadership of e-learning across higher education are enabled by trust and collective learning, and this helps to promote life-long learning (Jameson 2006) and also life-long learning is not just about learning, it is also about not being ‘afraid to take your time, follow your values and to attend better ways of doing things’ (Burge 2007, p. 110). This also forms a social network whereby a group of people connected to one another through interpersonal contacts such as friends, common ideas, interests. Social networking was not initially formed in the age of the internet and computers but it existed long before because people require friendships and relationships with other humans for survival (Coyle 2008).

9.4.5 Bamboo Networking

Bamboo networking is an evocative way of speaking about the ways in which one pioneer, or group of pioneers, gives rise to other pioneers and clumps of pioneers. Pioneering, in this field just as in others, can be a very lonely and demanding activity that is often unrewarded for long spans of time. The question of motivation, engagement, achievement and encouragement is vital in achieving success and increase acceptance in performance at work (Martin 2010). What became clear in the Malaysian case study was that pioneers begat pioneers via a mentoring process that was intrinsically connected to natural social networks that emerged around higher degree research supervision and other collegial relationships. To the casual observer, the social networks were often invisible, or subterranean. But in talking to the pioneers concerned, most of whom happen to be women, common stories emerge of social networks providing vital encouragement and mentoring. The role of the teacher as a mentor emerges as a critical factor in success in this area. For invariably, where their small clumps of productive and successful pioneers, they will be linked together through networks of mentoring.
The upshot of these two key factors is that the Malaysian case study revealed the importance of e-learning entrepreneurs and pioneers as change-agents. Whether there were successful cases of implementation of online teaching and learning technology in the new programs commencing, it was generally the case that a handful of e-learning entrepreneurs and pioneers had played a key role such that without them little would have had happened. However, this it would have been much less effective without other accompanying social behaviours such as trust, motivation and honesty for mentoring and encouragement through social networks such that these pioneers were consistently reproducing themselves and transferring their insights and passion to another cohort.

9.4.6 Face and Risk Avoidance

If the Malaysian, Indonesian and Turkish case studies revealed broadly similar concerns and dynamics, than the Singaporean case study is the one that stands out as being the exception. Or at least, it appears to do so at first glance. Singapore is a wealthy developed society in which there is much less need for individual pioneers to push for breakthroughs. There is comparatively little absolute poverty and consequently little pressing need for innovation. The most obvious influence that emerges in this ever-growing case study is of the attitude of kiasu.

At first, it would appear as if this concern with kiasu or being afraid to lose is the exact opposite of what was observed in the other three case studies. Closer inspection, however, reveals that similar dynamics are at work, it is just that the emphasis is shifted such that in the Singaporean case study some things appear to be inverted. In fact, the same issues of fostering social networks and building social capital emerge. Similarly, individual teacher pioneers also play a significant role in Singapore. However, the significant thing about the Singaporean cultural context is that there is a heightened sense of anxiety about losing out and about failing served to dampen the impetus towards innovation.

‘Losing face’ is a multifaceted concept and its meanings are inextricably linked with the cultural context. Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 2) defines ‘face’ as ‘the interaction
between the degree of threats or considerations one party offers to another party, and the degree of claim for a sense of self-respect or demand for respect towards one’s national image or cultural group’. In high-context cultures, people dislike direct confrontation. Ting-Toomey (1999) continues to argue that these people would prefer group harmony and to keep pleasant appearances.

Despite the high level of caution, innovation still occurs in Singapore, but when it does, the individual pioneer tends to be even more conscious than their peers do in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey that they are doing something risky and dangerous. At the same time, there remains a common element of mentoring and encouragement being vital to success. It is just that in the Singapore case study, the stakes appear to be higher for the innovator.

The key finding in the Singapore case study is the dominance of the *kiasu* attitude, which produces a ‘wait and see’ approach (or ‘let others try first’) out of fear of losing face. Brown (1977, p. 275) pointed out that the issue of losing face is of central importance:

> Among the most troublesome kinds of problems that arise in negotiation are the intangible issues related to loss of face. In some instances, protecting against loss of face becomes so central an issue that it swamps the importance of the tangible issues at stake and generates intense conflicts that can impede progress toward agreement and increase substantially the costs of conflict resolution.

### 9.4.7 Cultural Diversity

If there really is an odd one out in the five country case studies, then it is the Australian case study, which is at odds with the other four. This is not so much because the same social dynamics do not apply in Australia as it is because the tertiary teaching environment is so much more mixed. In Turkey and in Singapore, there is the strong sense of a relatively homogenous culture. This is a little less so in Indonesia and even less the case in Malaysia, but in all four cases, it is possible to speak of general national tendencies and of an overarching cultural context.
What is remarkable about the Australian case study is that the university environment it is describing is in many ways atypical of broader Australian society. Although the metropolitan culture of Australian capital cities has been noticeably impacted by migration, particularly from Asia in recent decades, the university environment continues to be dramatically more plural and culturally mixed than is broader Australian society. The consequence of this is that university teachers in Australian tertiary situations have become accustomed over the last several decades to teaching to a very diverse student body. This diversity is more evident in some faculties and discipline areas than in others. The Business Faculty and the business subjects chosen for the Australian case study in this research represent an extreme case in which the vast majority of students come from Asia and the faculty teaches them come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.

At the same time, the general Australian cultural context is one in which individualism and self-belief are strongly emphasised and collectivist thinking relatively deemphasised. Therefore, in terms of the underlying national culture, the Australian case study is at odds with the other four in terms of the attitudes and initiatives of the individual respondents. In this case study, there is much more in common with their situation and that of their years in Asia than might first be thought.

Consequently, all of the observations noted above with respect to the other four case studies also apply in the Australian case study. However, in the Australian case study, the concept of being afraid to lose, or *kiasu*, which was so notable in the Singaporean case study, was even less significant in than it was in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey. At the same time, there was a greater emphasis on culturally sensitive learning environments (Reeves & Reeves 1997; Collis 1999; McLoughlin & Oliver 2000) and working cross-culturally. The Australian teachers were teaching to a diverse range of students with different learning styles and were very conscious of negotiating cultural differences. They had come to understand, for example, that in some Asian cultures, the words used are less important than their context: the meaning is inferred ‘through tone of voice, use of silence, facial expression, body language, and the status of the speaker’ (Latchem & Jung 2010, p. 15). Such non-
verbal cues are considered very important. As a result, they were very conscious of the need to build trust and to reach out across cultural divides of teachers using different tools for different jobs to reach out across cultural divides (Prentice & Miller 1999). To a significant extent, these findings are also mirrored in the multicultural awareness across the five case study countries. In keeping with previous findings, multicultural awareness was regarded as essential in Australia and very important in Turkey but merely useful in Malaysia.

The results were even more tightly grouped when it came to reciprocity. Here, the earlier breakdown between developed nations and developing nations appears to hold strongly. In Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey, reciprocity is seen to be very important but in Singapore and Australia, it is seen only to be desirable or merely important. The difference is not particularly striking but is likely to be significant nevertheless.

It is interesting that the notion of being a ‘utility player’ attracts a midrange response from subjects in Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia but a stronger response of being very important from subjects in Turkey and Singapore. It is the Singapore result that is a little surprising here and that might be explained in terms of what appears in other findings to be a characteristically conservative approach. In Singapore, concern about losing out and losing face seems to be particularly behind the first two sets of factors. It is striking that in four out of the five case study countries regard competitive instrumentalism as being merely useful but in Singapore, it is seen as being essential.

In many ways, all of the subjects interviewed in each of the five countries can be regarded as having similar qualities attitudes and concerns. This is not surprising given that they were selected because of their active engagement in e-learning and blended learning. Nevertheless, based on observations off their national environments and specifically of their institutional environments and based on their direct and sometimes indirect responses it is clear but the cultural environments in which they work differ substantially. As a group, these teachers have a great deal in common; however, the social and cultural contexts in which they work vary significantly.
9.4.8 The Impact of Social Capital

A major finding of this research is that social capital and trust among entrepreneurs (Neace 1999) represent vital resources necessary for creating the social and business networks that make possible the expansion of e-learning. Social capital is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, all with two elements in common: all involve some aspect of social structure, and they all facilitate certain actions by key actors (Coleman 1988). Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of capital expanded the category of capital to refer to more than just economic value and, in particular, to identify culture and social connections as forms of capital. Bourdieu (1986) places social capital alongside cultural capital to describe the forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has that gives them higher status in society. In *The Rural School Community Center*, Hanifan (1916, p. 130) describes the concept of social capital as:

Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families. The individual is helpless socially, if left to him. If he comes into contact with his neighbour, and they with other neighbours, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community.

Very few pioneers in the field of e-learning work entirely alone. This should hardly be surprising, as e-learning technology is primarily concerned with connecting people. Consequently, it makes sense that the vast majority of subjects interviewed in these case studies explained that social networks and relationships—social capital—were centrally important elements in motivating them and in enabling them to do their work. Nevertheless, there were some significant differences between the case studies on the issue of social capital.

horizontal associations among people who have an effect on the productivity of the community or features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’. Putnam’s (1993) definition sets the context (individuals, community or organisation), aspects (networks, norms and trust), processes (facilitating coordination and cooperation) and outcome (mutual benefit) of social capital, whereas there was quite broad variance in terms of response to specific factors of social capital responses to the question of leadership factors show much less diversity. The most striking finding is that in four of the five case studies country sets a leadership approach based on taking a ‘wait and see’ attitude is regarded as comparatively unimportant. It is in this area but Singapore stands out as being strikingly different. In Singapore, the importance of waiting to see what happens before initiating a course of action is regarded as essential importance and appears to be closely linked to the notion of not wanting to suffer loss of any kind, including loss of face.

Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock (2004, pp. 3–4) outlined three different definitions of social capital. The first refers to the resources an individual can gain from relationships. The second is the more common form, which refers to the nature and extent of one’s involvement in various informal networks and formal organisations. The third form, proposed more recently, is called ‘linking’ social capital, which refers to an individual’s ties to people in positions of authority. The authors considered six dimensions of social capital: groups and networks; trust and solidarity; collective action and cooperation; information and communication; social cohesion and inclusion; empowerment and political action (Grootaert et al. 2004, p. 5). In Malaysia, the area of e-learning pioneering remains comparatively underdeveloped. In Malaysia, the prime concern of social capital is based around the communities. This sort of social capital is described as being manifested in grassroots networks, and, as discussed above, is commonly referred to in South East Asia as guanxi.

The concept of COP is described by Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) in their study of how apprenticeships help people learn and explore the relationships between the two forms of capital ‘the process by which newcomers and old timers become a part of a
community of practice’. Members of a COP are bound together by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about and how they hold each other accountable to this sense of joint enterprise. Members of a COP interact with each other establishing norms and relationships as mutual engagement and make use of communal resources (shared repertoires) such as language, routines, sensibilities, artefacts, tools, stories and styles. In the Turkish case study, the notion of COP is regarded as very important. In Turkey, as in Indonesia and Malaysia, social e-community networks, in formal exchanges of friendship and fellowship over a meal or a cup of çai are regarded as essential to explore and build trust and relationships between each other. In Turkey, as in Indonesia and Malaysia generous mentoring is also regarded as very important. These social networks, and the social capital that accrues from them, prove to be of vital importance in overcoming the various barriers faced by teachers in adopting e-learning.

9.5 Social Capital Framework in the Adoption of E-learning

The teachers involved in adopting e-learning in the case studies were drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds, as represented in Figure 9.1. When teachers are employed to teach at any institutions, barriers emerge that impact on relationship building, collaborative learning and participation through not knowing each other, and consequently trusting each other, amongst themselves and their students. Different types of barriers were evident such as the ‘baggage’ of preconceived ideas or stereotyping, unfamiliarity, no base or foundation, fear of unknown and different expectations. These barriers affected teachers from adopting new ways of teaching and adopting new technology. The five case studies described the adoption and uptake of e-learning technologies as being strongly shaped by cultural and social factors but not in the ways that might first have been expected. It did not initially appear that there were any specific cultural and social factors affecting the adoption to specific e-learning technologies. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the uptake of these technologies relies very much on teachers being motivated, led, mentored and empowered to adopt new technology. The case studies showed that there needs to be sufficient social capital to enable the broad adoption of new technology. This can only occur when social capital is mediated through social
networking, bamboo networking, academic guanxi, women pioneering, the development of sufficient trust to overcome competitive instrumentalism (kiasu and losing face), social and cultural awareness, transformative power, good leadership, entrepreneurship and directive leadership (‘herding cats’).

![Social Capital Model of E-learning](image)

Figure 9.1: Social Capital Model of E-learning

It was shown in the case studies that these barriers (see Figure 9.1 above) were broken down through the exchange of ideas and through the development of social capital and trust (Neace 1999). These elements of social capital are vital resources for creating social networks that lead to the expansion and adoption of e-learning and the breaking-down of barriers. They assist in the development of friendships and the building of trust. The teachers interviewed found it to be very helpful to understand and to recognise the cultural and social elements that impact on the adoption on new technology.

### 9.6 Research Limitations

Research theses are inevitably bound by limitations as researchers are compelled to focus on certain aspects of a particular problem. In this thesis, priority was given to understanding the concept of social and cultural influences impact on teachers in the uptake of e-learning in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Turkey and Australia. The perceptions of students could not be addressed, given the limited scope of this thesis.
and the fact that securing access to students also proved to be problematic and difficult.

This section examines limitations of the current study and considers the impact they have on the research conclusions. There are a few intrinsic limitations related to a research study of this type. First, these social and cultural influences require consideration in more depth and greater number of participants. The use of self-reported data can be often confused with a number of biases such as social-desirability bias (Fisher 1993). In some cases, interviewees may be tempted to give the socially desirable response rather than describe or explain what they really think and do (Peterson & Kerin 1981). A second limitation was that the number of higher education institutions selected for this study was selected at the start of the research process and over the period of the research, the impact of the adoption has significantly changed. The researcher has to adjust constantly to keep up with the changing situation.

Another significant limitation faced in this research was the lack of access to essential documents. As in the case of Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey, most of the policy formal documents and guidelines were not in English. More time was taken to do the translation. As a result, much more time was involved in collecting the resources and some of the documents were not for public access. This study sought to overcome these constraints through in-depth interviews and observations. Ultimately, interviews were conducted with 74 teachers in 22 tertiary institutions in the five countries.

Recognising these limitations, some of the results should be perhaps regarded as more suggestive than conclusive. Nevertheless, the case studies discussed in Chapters Four through to Eight demonstrate that the various social and cultural influences predicted in the literature do apply; the results and analysis point to the need for further research into the influence of the social and cultural spheres on the adoption of e-learning in these countries. Despite these limitations, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature of the social and cultural factors affecting the uptake of e-learning in the five case study countries on which it was established.
Lastly, this study provides some in-depth understanding of the adoption and uptake of e-learning technologies is strongly shaped by cultural and social factors.

9.7 Implications for Further Research

Given the constraints of the research, only a limited and generalised description of social and cultural influences of the selected teachers were considered for this research in the uptake of e-learning in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Turkey and Australia higher education institutions. Further, research on social and cultural influences in the adoption of e-learning has been limited to these countries.

The findings of this study suggest that whilst local cultural factors and regional variations represent but some of the many factors shaping the uptake of new e-learning technologies, it is clear that they are sufficiently important that without an understanding of their role we cannot achieve a full understanding of behaviour in this field. In other words, the cost of remaining ignorant of these factors is considerable.

Moreover, no general studies were found that incorporate all of the social and cultural factors discussed in the case studies. While the investigative work in this thesis points to the need for further study, it does make distinct contributions to our knowledge of theory and practice in the influence of social and cultural factors on the uptake of emerging technologies. There is scarcity of literature and studies on the influence of social and cultural factors in the uptake of e-learning in South East Asia and this study addresses this by identifying some of the key factors and drawing out important findings about the role of social networks and elements of social capital in motivating and directing the adoption of e-learning.

At the same time, it is clear that this study has just scratched the surface of the issue and that much more research on cultural and social factors is necessary before we can be confident that we fully understand the patterns behind the uptake and use of these and other learning technologies. It is clear that future research is required to understand properly the influence of factors such as gender, age, prior education,
organisational cultural, leadership, mentoring and so forth. In addition, given the rapid changes occurring across Asia it is clear that this requires ongoing research to understand the pattern of current behaviour and accurately anticipate the direction of future change. Moreover, there needs to be considerably more fine-grained research conducted than was possible in the general preliminary national case studies undertaken here. At the same time, new and more sophisticated paradigms and explanatory models for understanding cultural difference need to be developed. The established models outlined in the literature survey in Chapter Two are clearly inadequate when it comes to explaining the subtle complexity of cultural differences observed in this study.

A great deal more research needs to be undertaken before we can draw definitive conclusions that apply at a truly national level. Nevertheless, the findings from these case studies are sufficient to emphasise broad differences between the national contexts and to remind us that when we talk about cultural difference we are talking about a complex bundle of factors. It is clear from the findings of this study that we need to understand cultural difference and its impact upon motivation and behaviour in teaching as being composed of an array of factors that relate to each other in a complex fashion and need to be read together.

Broad distinctions such as that of ‘developed nation’ and ‘developing nation’ have considerable validity but they fail to tell the whole story. If we are to better understand the environment in which teachers work and seek to pioneer e-learning and blended learning in particular, we need to pay close attention to the subtle combination of factors an important differences in emphasis.

It is useful to understand the differing nature of cultural influences across the five national case studies examined in Chapters Four through to Eight, because it captures the essential dynamics at work and sheds light on a central paradox. The paradox is that whilst there are significant differences between each of the case studies, each is subject to the same basic elements of cultural influence. These elements include social capital, social networks, mentoring, pioneering and entrepreneurial leaders,
social conservativism and instrumentalism, degrees of cross-cultural sensitivity in teaching and an attitude of reciprocity and social responsibility.

This, of course, is not a perfect way of understanding social and cultural factors but it does help us put certain things into perspective. It reminds us that when it comes to discussing cultural factors and their impact on teaching, and the adoption of new technologies and new ways of doing things, that the differences should not be seen in black-and-white terms marked by stark distinctions but rather should be understood as a series of subtle differences. Moreover, this subtle complexity does not make the differences unimportant, on the contrary, it reminds us of just how very important is that we pay attention to cultural complexity and avoid reductionist generalisations when moving between differing cultural contexts. Some factors, such as the importance of social capital and social networks, remain important across a wide range of cultures. Others, such as kiasu in Singapore, or women pioneers in Malaysia, have a particular importance in specific contexts that does not translate across all national contexts.

What is required then is that cultural and social factors be accorded the same sort of importance previously attributed to pedagogy, instructional design and technological specification. For what is clear is that the cultural and social contexts in which educational pioneers adopt learning technologies are at least as important as the technologies themselves in determining uptake and implementation.

9.8 Conclusion

This research shows that the adoption and uptake of e-learning technologies is strongly shaped by cultural and social factors but not in the ways that might first have been expected. It was not so much that there are specific cultural and social factors relating to specific e-learning technologies. Rather, it is that the degree of uptake of these technologies depends on teachers being encouraged, guided and assisted to innovate and adopt new technology. This can only occur when there is sufficient social capital, mediated through appropriate social networks, to build trust, overcome objections and anxieties and generally motivate staff to engage in
challenging, time-consuming initiatives in e-learning that generally do not promise immediate rewards. The issues of mentoring, bamboo networking, trust-building and overcoming fear of losing face (kiasu), facilitating women to take the initiative, developing sensitivity to cultural difference, encouraging entrepreneurialism and rewarding pioneering endeavours were present in varying degrees across all five case studies. They were subtle variations on a theme but that central theme was clearly that of social capital. It was social capital played out through personal relationships and social networks that most strongly influenced individual teachers and teachers to be sufficiently motivated to add to an already busy schedule by taking on the additional burdens of pioneering e-learning technology and it was those social relationships that provided guidance and ongoing encouragement.

In certain circumstances, it was women more than men who benefited from these social networks and consequently made the greatest contribution. In some contexts, the key manifestation of social capital was described in terms of mentorship giving rise to new social networks such as bamboo networks linked by subterranean personal relationships between mentor and mentee. In other contexts, the key barrier to overcome was a fear of losing face, or kiasu, but the relationship was the same: it turned upon whether there was sufficient social capital manifesting in the form of a facilitating and motivating social networks where individuals were encouraged to move forward.

In some cases, the pressing need for development and for transformative change was a key impetus but social capital remained the most important factor in realising the desire for transformative change through the pioneering work of individual teachers and activists. In some contexts, the key initial barrier was not so much a fear of losing face as it was of a need to build trust and to be certain about relationships with colleagues and superiors. However, in the end this too came down to a question of social capital and of human relationships built through hours of informal contact and the steady development of trust. In some cases, there was a heightened awareness of the need to reach out across cultural barriers and to the cross-culturally sensitive. However, the individuals who proved most aware and who had the greatest capacity to do this were those who worked within the richest and strongest social networks.
In all of the case studies, individuals played important roles but they could only play these roles with the help of mentors, colleagues and friends who inspired and motivated them to start and who guided them along the way. Whilst the adoption of e-learning might appear to be all about technology, in the end it proved to be all about people. Whilst these human factors varied in emphasis, the same factors were present in varying degrees across all five case studies and the underlying theme was invariably social capital expressed through relationships.

The research in this study has made it clear that the social factors outlined above—sensitivity to cultural difference, trust-building and overcoming fear of losing face (kiasu), bamboo networking and mentoring in general, including encouraging entrepreneurialism facilitating women to take the initiative and developing and rewarding pioneering endeavours—all of which are manifestations of social capital, are essential to ensuring the sustained uptake of e-learning technologies. Other factors, such as technical training, user-interface design, broadband capacity, affordability and so forth, remain important but without appropriate social networks to motivate, guide and encourage e-learning pioneers the potential of e-learning will be slow to be realised.

No matter how much technology is involved, communication is about people connecting with people (Bovée & Thill 2010, p. 58)
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Appendix A: Interview Questions

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM:

I, __________________________ of __________________________

By Siew Mee Barton

and I understand that the purpose of her research is to identify and understand the key factors influencing the ways in which lecturers from different cultural backgrounds use IT for online teaching.

I understand that I will be observed and interviewed by the researcher, Siew Mee Barton in regards to my experience in using IT for online teaching.

I am also aware that the main questions asked will be in the form of: ‘Could you please tell me about your experiences in using online for teaching?’; ‘In your experience, to what extent is the effectiveness of online teaching influenced by cultural issues?’, ‘Could you please share with me any anecdotal experiences that you may recall where cultural differences have resulted in difficulties or particular insights?’.

I understand that I will be interviewed by the researcher, Siew Mee Barton in relation to the above topic and that the interview will last between thirty (30) and sixty (60) minutes, and I will have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview, once the interview has been transcribed.

I understand that the researcher, Siew Mee Barton will collect documents such as notes, reports, meetings notes and minutes.

I understand that the researcher, Siew Mee Barton will be aware of any private and personal information relating personally to the participant and the organisation may be collected.

I acknowledge:

1. That the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. That I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.
5. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Please return to:
Ms Siew Mee Barton
School of Information Systems, Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, Victoria 3125 Australia

The Research Ethics application was initiated and conducted when the candidature was at Deakin University. The transfer of Candidature to RMIT University was in 2007.
We, of

Hereby consent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken

By Siew Mee Barton

and we understand that the purpose of the research is to identify and understand the key factors influencing the ways in which our lecturers from different cultural backgrounds adopt IT for online teaching.

We understand that we will be observed and members of the organisation will be interviewed and documents will be collected by the researcher, Siew Mee Barton in regards to the use of IT for online teaching. We are also aware that the main questions asked will be in the form of: Interviews will typically consist of open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings – how individuals conceive their world and how they explain the important events in their lives. The main questions typically asked will be in the form of: ‘Could you please tell me about your experiences in using online for teaching?’ , ‘In your experience, to what extent is the effectiveness of online teaching influenced by cultural issues?’, ‘Could you please share with me any anecdotal experiences that you may recall where cultural differences have resulted in difficulties or particular insights?’

We understand that the researcher, Siew Mee Barton will be aware of any private and personal information relating personally to the participants and the organisation may be collected.

We acknowledge

1. That the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to us.

2. That we voluntarily and freely give our consent to our participation in such research study.

3. We understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on our authorisation.

5. That we am free to withdraw our consent at any time during the study, in which event our participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from us will not be used.

Signature: Date:

Please return to:
Ms Siew Mee Barton
School of Information Systems
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, Victoria 3125 Australia
Dear ______________,

My name is Siew Mee Barton and I am a PhD student of Deakin University, Australia. I am conducting research under the supervision of Professor Brian Corbitt. The qualification I am aiming to achieve upon completion of my research is a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Information Systems. The title of my research is: Key factors influencing the ways in which lecturers from different cultural backgrounds in Asia adopt IT for online teaching. The aim of this study is to investigate how lecturers use information technology (IT) and the internet to deliver course material, interact with students and teach.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, I would like to meet with you at your workplace between January 2005 and December 2005 to discuss your experiences as a lecturer. I would conduct two interviews with you. I estimate the first interview will last between thirty and sixty minutes.

During this interview I will discuss with you a series of questions relating to the impact of online teaching has had on you carrying out your role as an academic. Interviews will typically consist of open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings – how individuals conceive their world and how they explain the important events in their lives. The main questions asked will be in the form of: ‘Could you please tell me about your experiences in using online IT for teaching?’, ‘In your experience, to what extent is the effectiveness of online teaching influenced by cultural issues?’.

It is anticipated the a the second interview would take approximately forty-five minutes and at that stage I will discuss with you a series of incident questions. Examples of questions I will ask you at this interview include; ‘Could you please share with me any anecdotal experiences that you may recall where cultural differences have resulted in difficulties or particular insights?’, ‘Think of some situations in your organisation relating to the adoption of online teaching practices that you have handled successfully or unsuccessfully during the past 12 months.’

In both instances you will be given the questions prior to the interviews being conducted. If you agree to being interviewed, I would also like to tape-record our discussions. If you do not want the interviews taped, I will take handwritten notes. Transcripts made from the handwritten notes and tape recordings will be forwarded to you before any analysis occurs. If you wish to make any changes or omissions you will be able to inform me of these areas and I will delete the information from the collection, or add to it. All information obtained in the interviews will remain confidential and will not be able to be identified with you. Pseudonyms for individuals and organisations will appear on the transcripts and a code will be used and known only by my supervisor and myself to link the data that will be stored separately. In accordance with the Deakin University Ethics Committee Guidelines, the collected data will be accessed by myself and my supervisors, securely stored and destroyed after six years.

Your participation in this study is not compulsory. You are free to withdraw from observations, interviews and research at any time and there will be no consequences from your withdrawal. Any information collected prior to your withdrawal will be destroyed of automatically upon your withdrawal. Conventions for maintaining anonymity will be employed in the writing of the thesis and in any subsequent publications.
Attached is a consent form for your signature. The consent form informs me that you agree to being observed and to any subsequent interviews and the proposed use of your information and opinions, and that you are aware of the research conditions, including the purpose and use I will make of your comments. Please feel free to e-mail me if you require further information of the informed consent requirement, or if you would prefer not to be an interview participant.

Kind Regards
Siew Mee Barton

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123).
Sample Interview questions:

We are interested in receiving frank and constructive feedback from you regarding your experiences in online teaching.

The questionnaire will be split into three sections:

1. Personal information
2. Experiences in online teaching
3. Real life experience

Responses will be aggregated on a group basis so that confidentiality will be maintained.

1. Personal information:
   - Age: □ 18-20 □ 21-25 □ 26-35 □ Over 35
   - Gender: □ Male □ Female
   - Nationality: ______________________
   - Tertiary institution you are currently teaching: ________________________________
   - Where did you complete your tertiary studies? ________________________________
   - How long have you been teaching in tertiary institution?
     □ 1 – 5 years □ 5 – 10 years □ 10 – 15 years □ Over 15 years

2. Experiences in online teaching:
   • For how many years were you involved in using online information technology (IT) as part of teaching?
   • What IT tools (i.e. Communication/discussion, etc) do you use?
   • What was your first experience in online teaching?
   • How was the online course material that you work with and developed?
   • To what extent does this online teaching address cultural issues?
   • How did you become aware of cultural issues involved in teaching online?

3. Real life experience:
   • The literature highlights that adapting to another’s culture is important in virtual team communication, yet there is generally little suggestion of HOW people should do this. Have you any idea of how people are changing their behaviour to suit cultural situations?
   • If you could suggest three steps outlining HOW people could adapt to culture, what would they be?
   • It is often said that having met team members face-to-face is of great benefit. Do you believe that cultural understanding can be obtained in a virtual environment where team members have not met face-to-face?
   • Would you encourage at least one face-to-face meeting, or perhaps a video conference meeting in the teaching program?
   • Do you believe that a team is more likely to communicate successfully, if they are aware of each other’s cultural characteristics and sensitivities?
   • When a team member is aware of cultural differences, how are they most likely to put this awareness into action?
   • Do you believe people can ‘over adapt’ their behaviour in an online situation?
   • Are there any anecdotal experiences that you can recall where cultural differences have resulted in difficulties or misunderstandings?
   • Some people argue that cultural differences don’t exist anymore in today’s modern world. Would is your response to this proposition?