How distance learning could unite the world

...what is exciting is the progressive use of technology to engage the student further with the material through a virtual platform. I remember when the comparison was always, 'how can we make the distance learning experience resemble the on-site experience?' I haven't heard this used in quite some time now.

I think that it this comparison was dropped from the distance-learning modality because distance learning had to cut connection with the traditional classroom framework for it to climb Maslow's pyramid to 'self-actualization'. Further, as learning platforms have developed to more effectively streamline the distance learning experience, as experienced by the student, we have realized that there are more advantages virtual technologies with which to engage students…when compared to sitting in-class.

I design a fair amount of online courses and continually seek to find new technologies to then incorporate them into the course design. The key, as we know, is 'authenticity', or rather linking the theory taught to a real-world experience that the student would encounter in future employment. We know that adult learners need this; aside from autonomy, their primary learning need is to make connections between the theory and the real-world.

However, this is going to be a long, trial-and-error process for a variety of reasons, with the paramount considerations being cultural, language, and access to technology. It will be bridging these chasms, through online learning, that could be where we connect inter-globally. Think about it: What if, someday, students (and the instructor) cold wear virtual reality goggles that puts everyone wearing them in a classroom? And what if there existed language translation software that allowed students, from a variety of languages and cultures, to understand each other and thus find a commonality in the learning material?

The easiest method of breaking down racial and cultural barriers is to have a mix group of people participate in a team building exercise where they must work together to accomplish a task. Sociologists have found this to be true, when replicated in control studies, for the better part of forty years now. What if this concept could be used on the global level?

Racism, prejudice, and discrimination require 1. Not understanding, or having much exposure to, the race or culture that one is judging; and 2. Stereotypes propagated through media and the lived realities of people. People

overwhelmingly lose their negative preconceptions of a race, or culture, when they interact with them more because what stereotypes abound are learned to be not true.