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E-learning in India: The Role of National Culture and Practical Implications

Pramila Rao, Ph.D

Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management

Marymount University

Arlington, VA 22207, USA

# Presentation Outline

- Definition of e-learning
- Advantages/disadvantages of e-learning
- Challenges in adopting e-learning
- Theoretical framework
- E-learning in India
- Methodology
- Results and hypothesis proposed
- Implications for practice
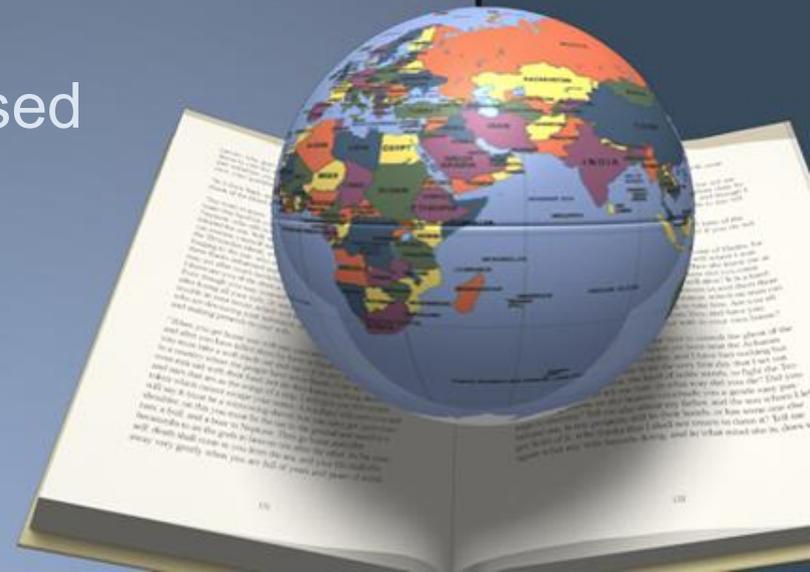
# Definition of e-learning

❑ E-learning can be defined as providing training and development to employees via any electronic medium

❑ Jay Cross, founder of Internet Time Group, and global consultant, introduced the term e-learning in 1998

❑ The definition of e-learning can further be divided into synchronous and asynchronous
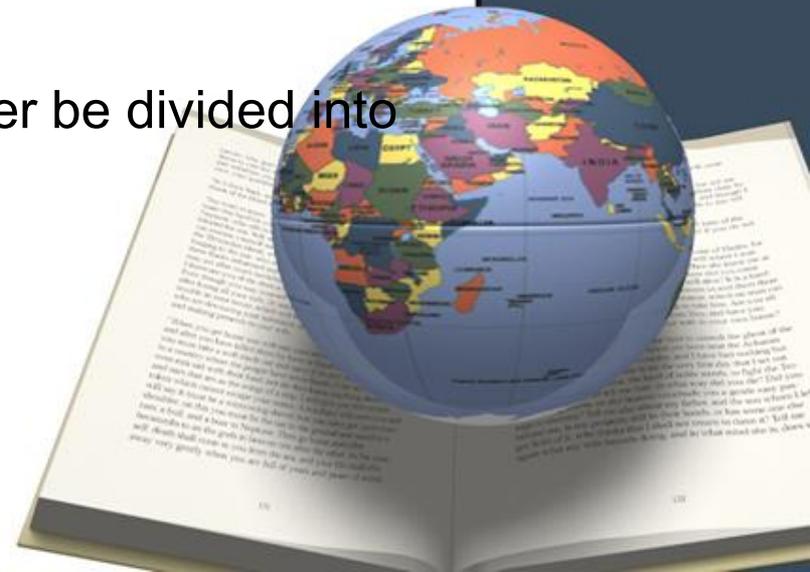
# Facts on e-learning

❑ The global e-learning market is predicted to surpass $52.6 billion by 2010.

❑ As of today, about 60% of US organizations actively promote e-learning to train their employees

❑ In 2007, IBM spent $700 million on e-learning with each employee spending at least 55.5 hours annually on online learning skills (Pollitt, 2008)
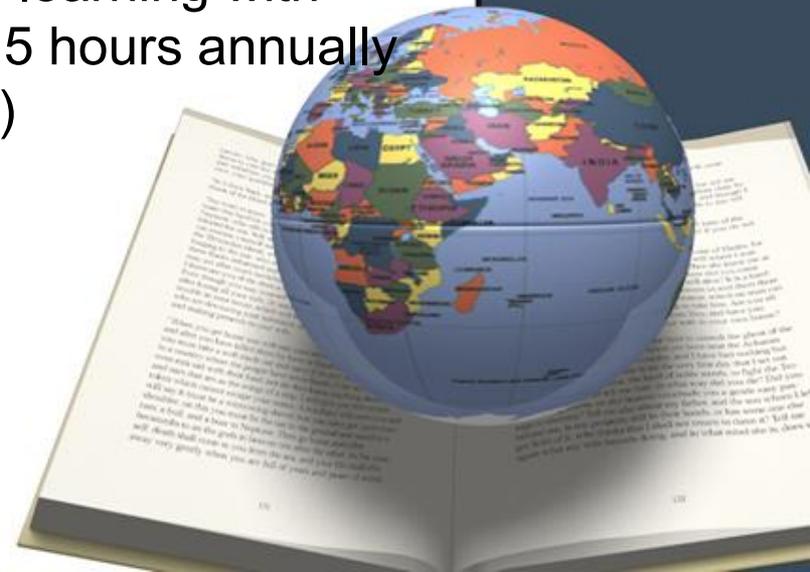
# Advantages of e-learning

❑ Cost-effective to organizations

❑ Learning flexibility

❑ Repetitive learning

❑ Standardized material

❑ International learning platform

Cost-effectiveness

❑ IBM, the training leader reports savings $50,000 for every 1000 classroom training days that are replaced by e-learning programs

(Allison, 2007)
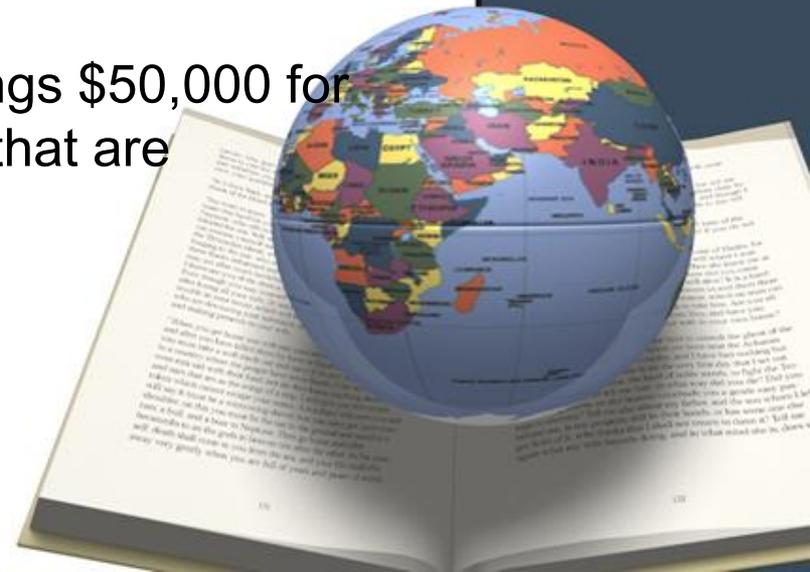
# Disadvantages of e-learning

❑ Learners cannot clarify their concerns immediately

❑ Requires self-direction and discipline

❑ Collaborative spirit of classroom learning may not be replicated

❑ Start-up costs can be prohibitive for small and medium-sized companies
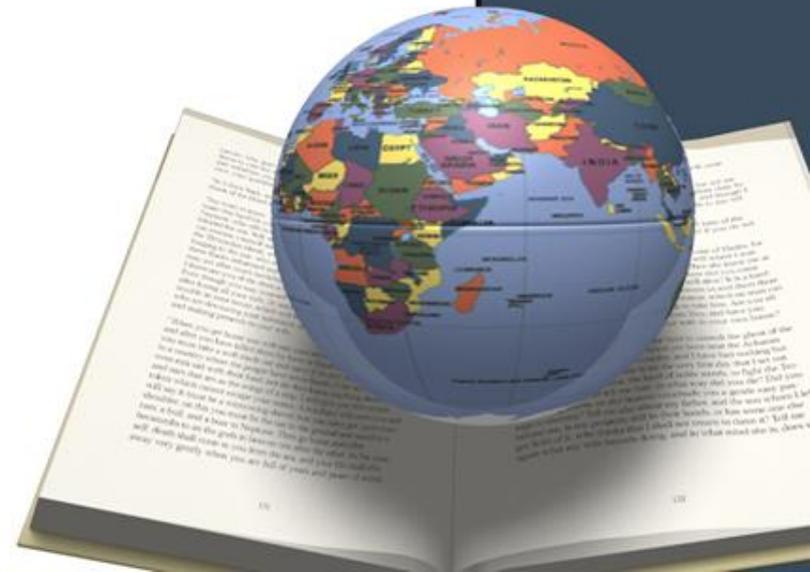
# Challenges in adopting e-learning

❑ National cultural dimensions
❑ Learning styles of deductive and inductive
❑ Thinking styles of inventive, evaluative and implementing
❑ Age of the learning audience
❑ Concepts of time
❑ Technical infrastructures
❑ Translation issues
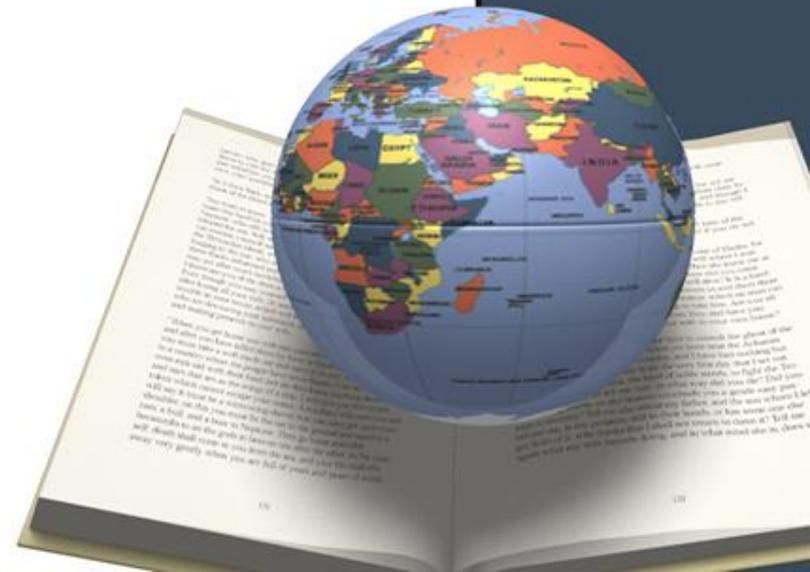
# Theoretical framework

❑ Learning theories help understand how individuals process, store, and recall information that is being learnt

❑ Behaviorist theory
❑ Cognitive learning theory
❑ Constructivist learning theory
❑ Social learning theory
❑ Social constructivist theory
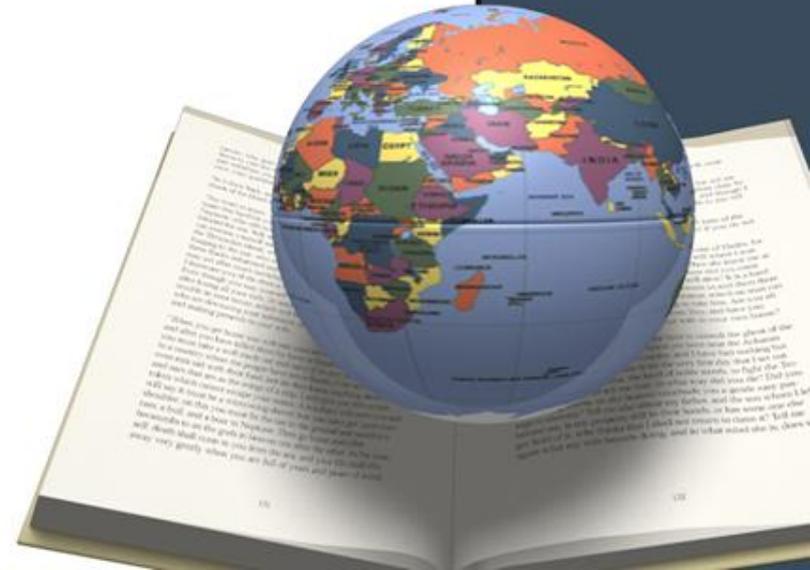
# Social constructivist theory

❑ This conceptual study will adopt the social constructivist theory (SCT)

❑ SCT suggests that individual learning is a result of the socio-cultural environment

❑ Individuals develop and construct their learning styles based on their how they have been socialized in their cultures
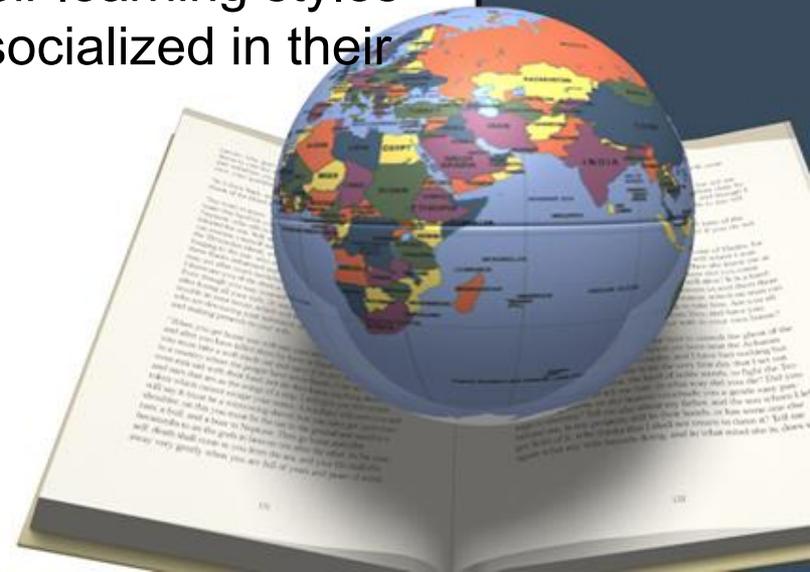
# E-Learning in India

Sanjay Sharma, CEO of Tata Interactive systems, championed the e-learning efforts in the early 90s. (Bhattacharya, & Sharma, 2007).

E-learning programs receive support from the Indian federal government

# Social and historical context

❑ Portuguese invaders introduced the term *castas* in the 16th century

❑ The Indian caste system is divided into four categories based on a social and economic hierarchy

❑ India's was colonized by the British for almost a century

❑ The British introduced a work culture along the same lines of inequality established by the Indian caste system
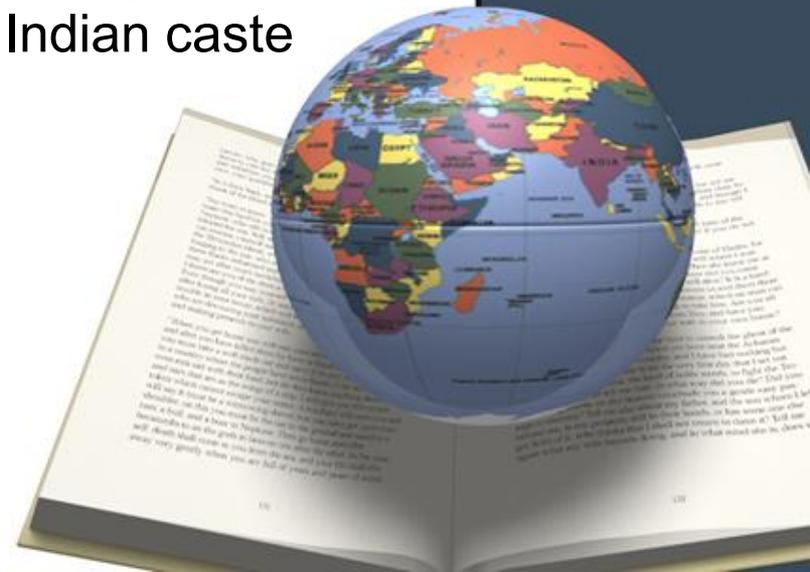
# Facts for e-learning professionals

❑ India's population of one billion has only 5.4 % internet penetration with approximately about sixty million internet users.

❑ The US has about 69.3% internet penetration with about 207 million internet users

❑ Pearson Educational Technologies, educational leader, has moved its entire e-learning development to India
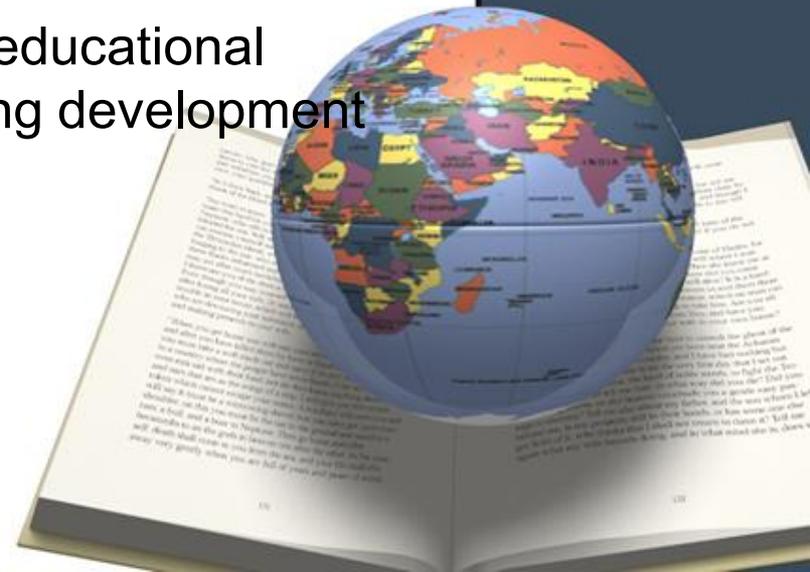
# Reasons multinationals choose India

❑ Labor costs for entry-level knowledge professionals in India is around $25-$50/hour in comparison to those of $75/hour in the US

❑ English-speaking work force that can communicate with other English-speaking cultures

❑ The difference in time zones between US and India makes it a very attractive customer service strategy

❑ Today 125 Fortune 500 US companies have their R &D centers in India

# Methodology

❑ This study uses the national cultural scores from the GLOBE study

❑ The GLOBE study was conducted from 1994-1997

❑ Involved 170 researchers from 61 countries

❑ Introduced cultural dimensions both at the organizational and societal level

❑ Identified nine cultural dimensions
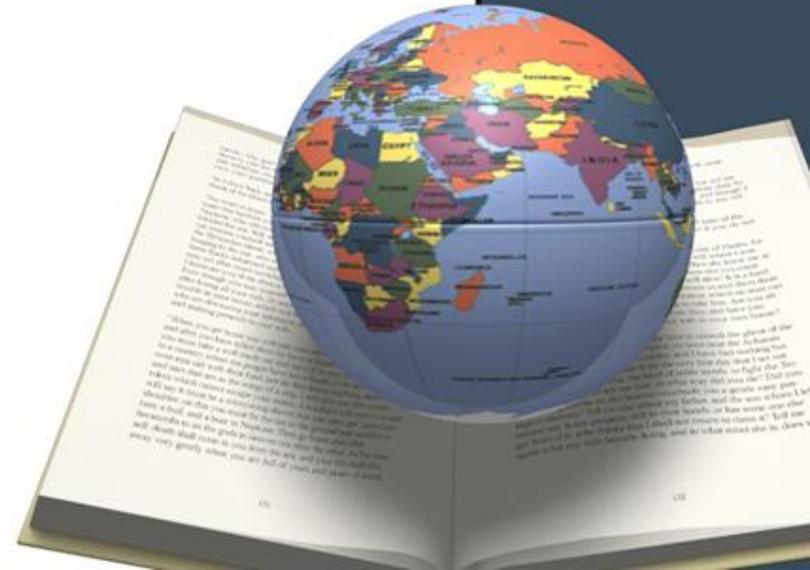
# Research Question and National Cultural Dimensions

Main Research Question

❑ What is the role of national cultural dimensions on e-learning practices (synchronous and asynchronous)?

❑ This study will examine the role of four dimensions on e-learning practices

❑ Power Distance
❑ Uncertainty-Avoidance
❑ In-Group Collectivism
❑ Future Orientation
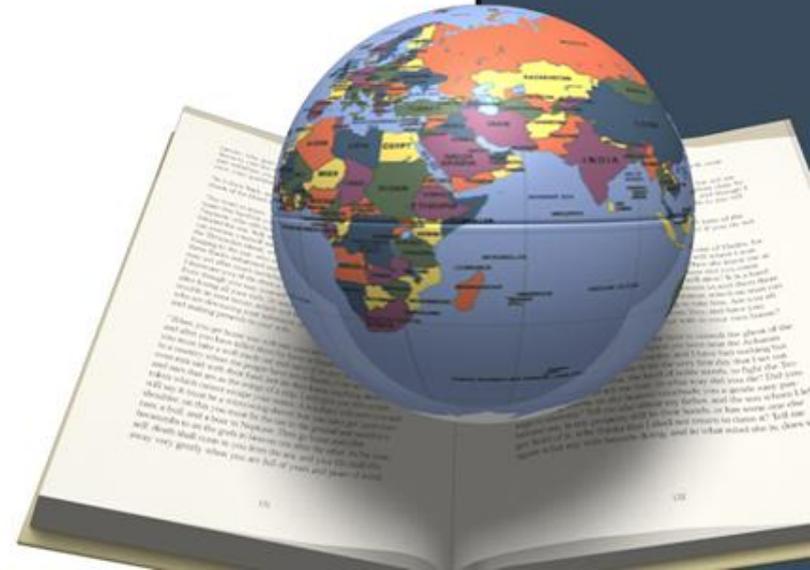
# Power Distance

❑ Indian society is distinguished by social hierarchy and power

❑ In training and development, such national cultural values dictate the type of learning and training methods employees would prefer

❑ High power distance cultures favor a learning environment that differentiates and identifies the source of expertise

H1: Employers from high power distance cultures are more likely to use synchronous e-learning methods than employers in low-power distance cultures

H2: Employers from Indian organizations are more likely to use synchronous e-learning methods than employers in US multinationals.
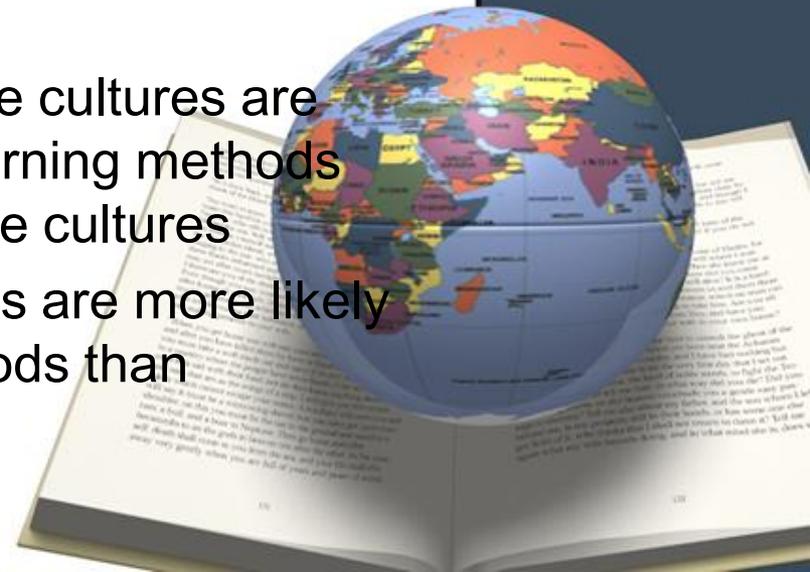
# Uncertainty-Avoidance

❑ Indian culture is very ritualistic and ceremonial - therefore the society adopts elaborate procedures to reduce anxiety

❑ In training and development, such national cultural dimensions demonstrate a strong need to reduce uncertainty in the learning process

❑ High uncertainty-avoidance cultures prefer a learning environment that clearly provides structure and rules

H2a: Employers from high uncertainty-avoidance cultures are more likely to use synchronous e-learning methods than employers from low-uncertainty-avoidance cultures.

H2b: Employers in Indian organizations are more likely to use synchronous e-learning than employers in US multinationals

# In-group Collectivism

❑ The Indian culture that is very tightly knit to both immediate and extended family

❑ In training and development, high collectivist scores depict a strong need for an interactive group learning process

❑ Collectivist cultures focus on the process of learning rather than learning outcomes

H3a: Employers from high in-group collectivist cultures are more likely to use synchronous e-learning methods than employers from low in-group collectivist cultures.

H3b: Employers in Indian organizations are more likely to use synchronous e-learning than employers in US multinationals

# Future-Orientation

❑ The society that always plan for the future- most Indians having personal savings bank accounts

❑ In training and development, high scores in this national cultural dimension reflect a work culture that is always planning for their future

❑ Studies have demonstrated that synchronous e-learning methods allows individuals to plan and organize their learning outcomes

H4a: Employers from high future-orientation cultures are more likely to use synchronous e-learning than employers in low future-orientation cultures.

H4b: Employers in Indian organizations are more likely to use synchronous e-learning methods of training than employers in US multinationals
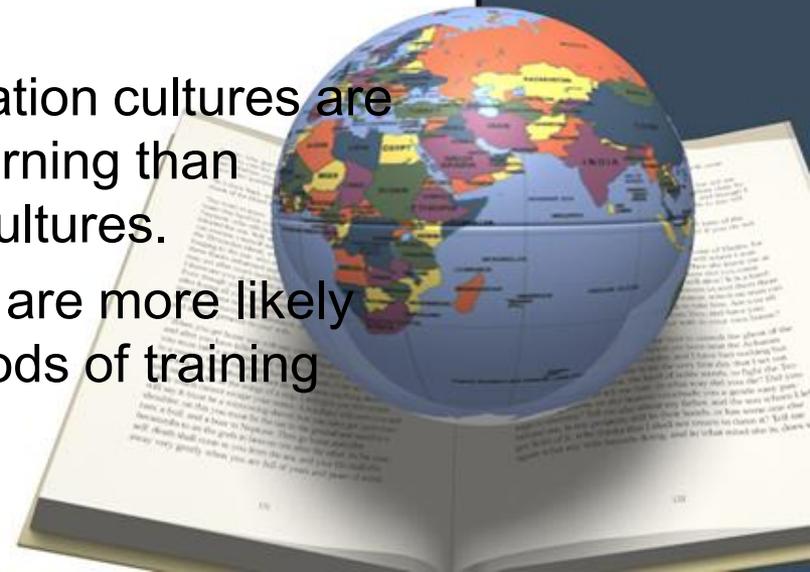
# Discussion

Gladwell (2008): Demonstrated the role of power-distance on pilot behavior evidenced from recorded conversations between co-pilots and pilots of Korean Airlines

Leidner & Kayworth (2006): Identified in their meta-analysis of 82 articles the signifcant role of culture on IT adoption

Biech (2008); Rodrigues (2005); Suggested that learning theories imply learning is largely a result of how individuals are socially and culturally trained

Edmunson (2009): Identified learning discrepancies due to cultural preferences in different countries

# Strategic Implications for Multinationals
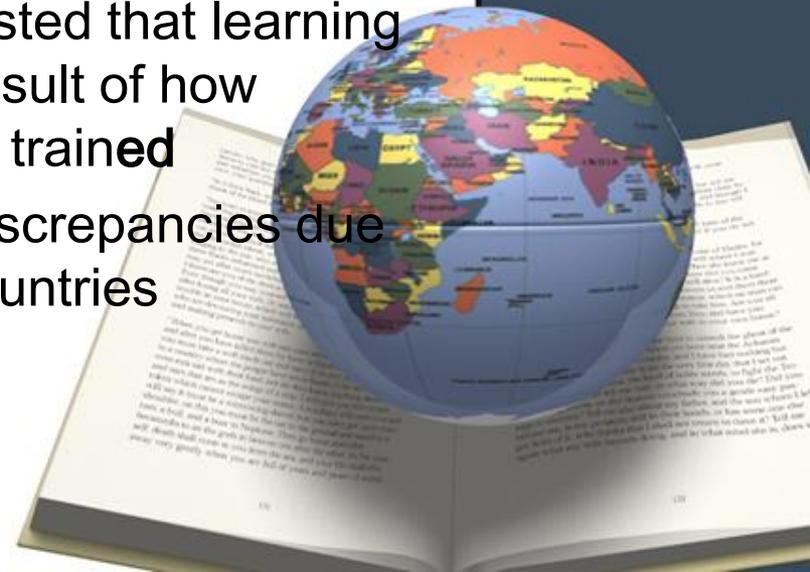
# Strategic Implications for Multinationals

❑ Employees from different cultures would prefer different methods of e-learning based on their cultural and social experiences

❑ National cultural dimensions help understand what learning theorists suggest as to how individuals have been cultured to learn
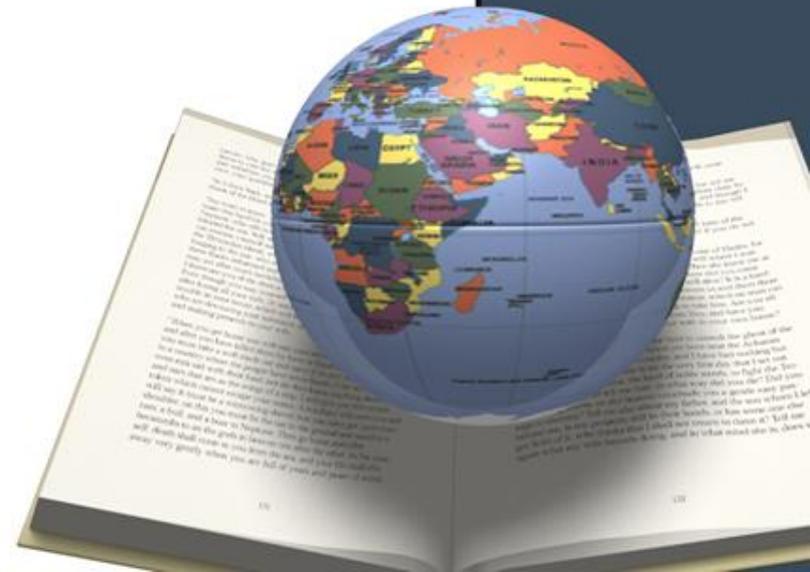
# Strategic Implications for Multinationals

❑ These cultures would prefer synchronous e-learning :

✓ High power Distance

✓ high uncertainty avoidance

✓ High collectivist cultures

✓ High future orientation

❑ Identifies an expert

❑ Reduces anxiety in the learning

❑ Provides for collaborative learning

❑ Helps plan ahead
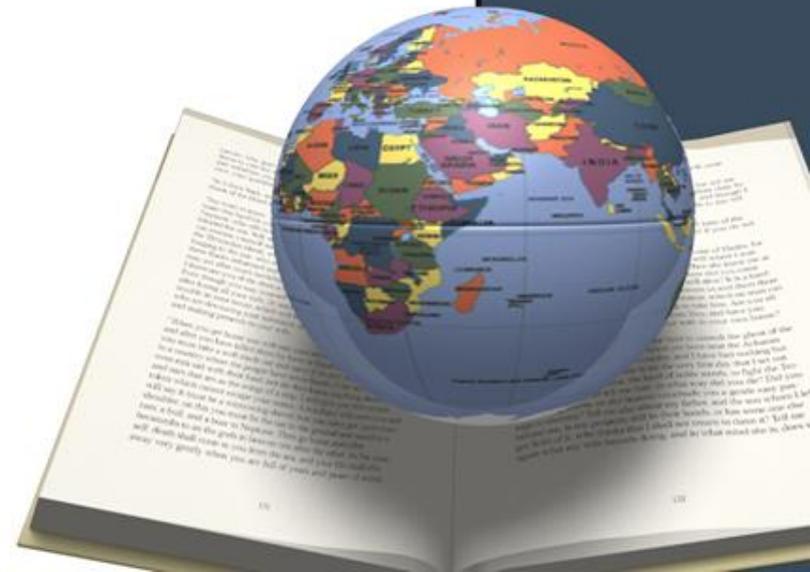
# Strategic Implications for multinationals

These cultures would prefer asynchronous e-learning

- ✓ Low power Distance
- ✓ Low uncertainty avoidance
- ✓ Low collectivism
- ✓ Low future orientation

- ❑ Prefer self-directed learning
- ❑ Open to novel learning approaches
- ❑ Prefer individual learning
- ❑ Do not plan for future learning outcomes
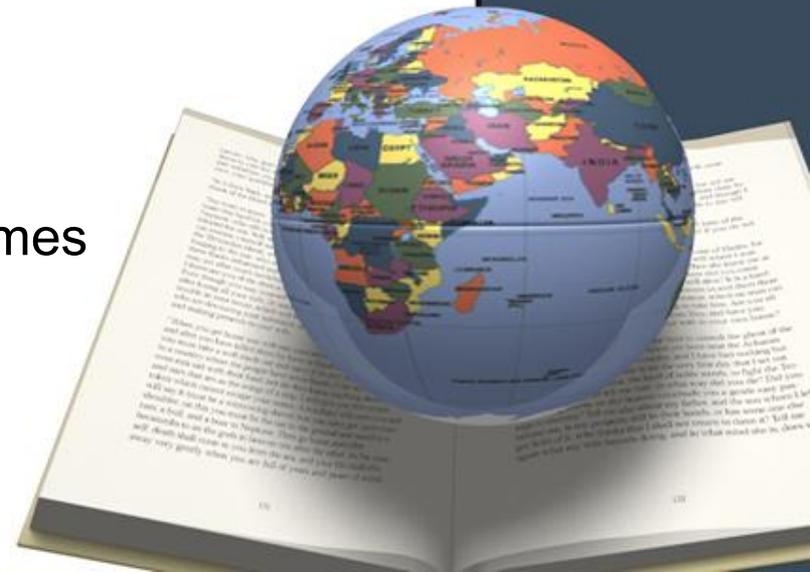
# Conclusions & Contributions

❑ Provides a theoretical model that can be tested

❑ Suggests strategic implications for multinationals

❑ Enhances research by integrating learning theories with national culture theories

❑ Focuses on a strong emerging economy
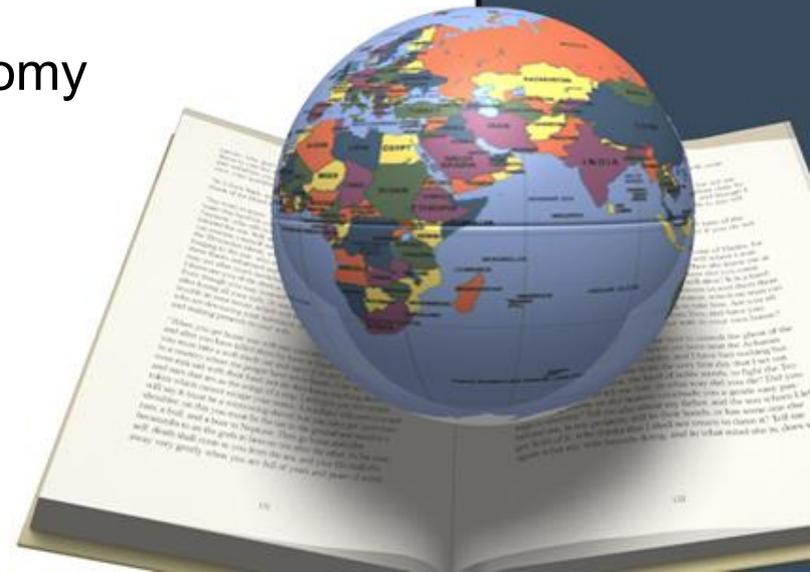
# Questions?

✓ I would be very happy to answer any questions or address any comments