

E-Activity and Technology in a Changing Environment

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Introduction

The second half of the last century will go down in the history of higher education as the period of its most spectacular expansion: an over sixfold increase in student enrolments worldwide, from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995. But it is also the period which has seen the gap between industrially developed, the developing countries and in particular the least developed countries with regard to access and resources for higher learning and research, already enormous, becoming even wider.¹ Berchtold² provides estimates that by 2050 the worldwide student number will increase to 185 million. This changing higher education environment requires e-activity and technology to cope with the provision of education on a global scale.

Globality is an unavoidable challenge of contemporary life. The process comprises, as Saavedra Hidalgo and Berchtold³ outline, all aspects of contemporary social life, where the economy, politics, culture, reflected in social consciousness, the way people think about the world, both its local world as well as the whole world is undergoing considerable change. Regarding the effects of globalisation on education, two phenomena are manifested contrasting: On the one hand, the education sector itself is characterized by strong inertia. On the other hand the transformation of the sectors of finance, transport, production, trade essentially because of the (stock) markets produces effects in the sectors of education in the poorest countries.

Don F. Westerheijden⁴ states that the widest possible context for any phenomenon in higher education, and a buzzword at the same time, is provided by 'globalisation'. What meanings can be given to it is a question leading to an almost endless academic debate, which he cut short by focusing on one practical element of it, namely the policy developments around the World Trade Organisation, focusing on the negotiations around the General Agreement on Trade in Services. These are bound to have an impact on the way higher education will be behaving around the world in a few years from now—or sooner. The relevant question from our point of view then becomes: Is education a service? The answer that should be given to this question is of the 'Yes, but...' type—the 'but' being that it is debated whether education, and especially higher education, is a public good that should be exempted from trade perspectives.

Friedman⁵ postulates the world has become flat, arguing that globalised trade, outsourcing, supply-chaining, and political forces have changed the world permanently, for both better and worse. He also argues that the pace of globalisation is quickening and will continue to have a growing impact on business organization and practice. "Because it is flattening and shrinking the world, "Gloablization 3.0" is going to be more and more driven by not only individuals but also by a much more diverse – non-Western, non-white –

¹ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action

² Berchtold (2006)

³ Saavedra Hidalgo, R.R., Berchtold G. (2011) *México y la Unión Europea una nueva interacción educativa: Criterios europeos para Evaluar la Calidad en E-learning y la transferencia de créditos ECTS. Área temática: Iniciativas multilaterales y gubernamentales para la innovación en educación y formación.* Universidad Azteca.

⁴ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 16f)

⁵ Friedman, 2006, 11

group of individuals. Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered.” Croucher⁶ perceives the globalisation process as a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural and political forces. The founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab⁷ sees the world growing together at high speed, globalisation is driven by technological and scientific innovation, “we can move data-capital around the world in seconds”. As John Daniel, a former UNESCO Assistant Director put it: “But having said that it is vital to recognise that, while higher education may be traded in a marketplace, it is a quite different proposition from cars or bananas. The challenge is to come up with an appropriate way of maximising the benefits and minimising the dangers now that higher education is a global phenomenon.”⁸

According to Bhagwati⁹ globalisation is often used to refer to economic globalisation, that is, integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and the spread of technology. For Noam Chomsky¹⁰ the word globalisation is also used, in a doctrinal sense, to describe the neoliberal form of economic globalisation. Chomsky asks, how after the victory of globalised capitalism the society of the future may look like and whose demands it shall serve: those of the transnational corporations, or those who have been driven aside more and more by the victory of a neo-liberal economic order? Will it be possible to develop an international society, comparable in its basics with the Third World, with islands of power and wealth in a sea of misery, and with totalitarian control-mechanisms behind an increasingly facial democracy? Or will the resistance of the populations, needing to become international as well, be successful enough in order to remove these structures of power and rule? Regarding the current state of globalisation, Diamond suggests reasons both for pessimism and for optimism about our ability to solve our current environmental problems, or, for the first time in history, we face the risk of a global decline. His remaining cause for hope is another consequence of the globalised modern world’s interconnectedness, because we have the media and opportunity to learn from the mistakes of distant peoples and past peoples.¹¹

Two driving forces - technology and globalisation - have changed the environment of universities worldwide. Technology means information technology development, the internet, e-learning, virtual classrooms, altogether new challenges for traditional classroom-based higher education settings. In principle, open and distance higher education in virtual classrooms can serve an unlimited number of students. Globalisation means both, global competition as global outreach or campus-extension, and global access to a virtual university from every corner of the world with an internet-connection.

Transnational higher education has developed from correspondence learning, via Radio- and TV-courses, towards a new age of virtual and e-learning environments, combining advanced open and distance learning tools and didactic methods with state-of-the-art information technology offering new opportunities for universities and higher education providers to go online with their degree programmes and become virtual universities and transnational players. Mega universities have developed. The biggest players globally are the Chinese Radio and TV university, the Turkish Anatolian distance university, the Indian Indira Gandhi National Open university, the UK Open university, the Spanish National university of distance education, the Catalan Open university, the Portugese Open university, the University of Phoenix online, the University of Liverpool, besides British style validation schemes (e.g. University of Wales) to name but a few. Additionally, networks of universities, consortia, and alliances, internet platforms, have developed, taking advantage of cluster solutions and numerous joint marketing websites and click-link-lead ads on the internet. Those are

⁶ Croucher (2004)

⁷ Aust et.al. 2007, 26

⁸ John Daniel, Assistant Director-General for Education for UNESCO, Paris, at the First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education “GLOBALISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION”, on the topic “AUTOMOBILES, BANANAS, COURSES, DEGREES...An ABC of Higher Education and Globalisation”, 17 October 2002.

⁹ Bhagwati (2004)

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky (1994, 2004)

¹¹ Jarred Diamond (2005)

quite common among the leading US distance university study offers, as well as in the Spanish speaking countries, e.g. FUNIBER. New, for-profit providers are increasing their market share of the TNE market, e.g. Kaplan universities in the U.S.A. The biggest exporters of TNE globally ¹² are the USA, the UK, and Australia.

Based on previous findings and new personal research this paper explores the changing environment, missions and objectives of universities, looks into the phenomenon of transnational education TNE and virtual universities, describes the settings of open and distance learning ODL.

This conference paper demonstrates that the traditional line drawn in Economics between goods versus services is outdated due to the appearance of "conservable human services" (e.g. filmed lectures) and by e-learning-tools through the application of standardised and repeatable (goods characteristics) automated services (e.g. an e-learning platform offering lectures, assignment and multiple-choice tests), services no longer provided by a human tutor rather than provided by a machine (virtual server) on the internet from anywhere at anytime. From this perspective we need to define the term "Service-Good" for describing the elements of e-activity and technology in a changing learning environment.¹³

International Context

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ¹⁴ calling upon all Member countries to publicise the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories." Article 26.(1) declares: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

The Governments of the States Parties to the UNESCO Constitution ¹⁵ on behalf of their peoples declare that ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war. To realize this purpose the Organization will collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image; Give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture; by instituting collaboration among the nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social.

The World Declaration on Higher Education ¹⁶ shapes a new vision of higher education: Equity of access: In keeping with Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, admission to higher education should be based on the merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion, showed by those seeking access to it, and can take place in a lifelong scheme, at any time, with due recognition of previously acquired skills. As a consequence, no discrimination can be accepted in granting access to higher education on grounds of race, gender, language or religion, or economic, cultural or social distinctions, or physical disabilities. Enhancing participation and promoting the role of women. Advancing knowledge through research in science, the arts and humanities and the dissemination of its results. The advancement of

¹² Berchtold, 2008, Transnational Higher Education, Universidad Azteca

¹³ Berchtold, 2006

¹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (www3.itu.int/udhr), Article 26

¹⁵ CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, Adopted in London on 16 November 1945 and amended by the General Conference sessions.

¹⁶ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action

knowledge through research is an essential function of all systems of higher education, which should promote postgraduate studies. Innovation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity should be promoted and reinforced in programmes with long-term orientations on social and cultural aims and needs. An appropriate balance should be established between basic and target-oriented research. Long-term orientation based on relevance: Relevance in higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do. This requires ethical standards, political impartiality, critical capacities and, at the same time, a better articulation with the problems of society and the world of work, basing long-term orientations on societal aims and needs, including respect for cultures and environmental protection. The concern is to provide access to both broad general education and targeted, career-specific education, often interdisciplinary, focusing on skills and aptitudes, both of which equip individuals to live in a variety of changing settings, and to be able to change occupations. Higher education should reinforce its role of service to society, especially its activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease, mainly through an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in the analysis of problems and issues. Higher education should enhance its contribution to the development of the whole education system, notably through improved teacher education, curriculum development and educational research. Ultimately, higher education should aim at the creation of a new society - non-violent and non-exploitative - consisting of highly cultivated, motivated and integrated individuals, inspired by love for humanity and guided by wisdom.

Strengthening co-operation with the world of work and analysing and anticipating societal needs: In economies characterized by changes and the emergence of new production paradigms based on knowledge and its application, and on the handling of information, the links between higher education, the world of work and other parts of society should be strengthened and renewed. Links with the world of work can be strengthened. As a lifelong source of professional training, updating and recycling, institutions of higher education should systematically take into account trends in the world of work and in the scientific, technological and economic sectors. Developing entrepreneurial skills and initiative should become major concerns of higher education, in order to facilitate employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers but also and above all to become job creators.

Diversification for enhanced equity of opportunity ¹⁷ Diversifying higher education models and recruitment methods and criteria is essential both to meet increasing international demand and to provide access to various delivery modes and to extend access to an ever-wider public, in a lifelong perspective, based on flexible entry and exit points to and from the system of higher education. More diversified systems of higher education are characterized by new types of tertiary institutions: public, private and non-profit institutions, amongst others. Institutions should be able to offer a wide variety of education and training opportunities: traditional degrees, short courses, part-time study, flexible schedules, modularized courses, supported learning at a distance, etc.

UNESCO's policy on open and distance learning ¹⁸ is based on its overall priority to foster access to lifelong education for all. While the use of distance education was given early support by the Organization, new developments in information and communication technologies have radically increased the demand for lifelong education but also provided new means to meet the demand. Facing the educational challenges of the 21st century, UNESCO continues, through open and distance learning, to contribute to the creation of a unique learning society in a lifelong learning context.

¹⁷ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, Article 8

¹⁸ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapter XXII, p. 5

The UNESCO Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education¹⁹ stated that the great diversity of the cultures and higher education systems existing in the world constitutes an exceptional resource that must be preserved, promoted and fostered, that higher education increasingly has an international dimension, owing to the rapid expansion and internationalization of knowledge and to the links and solidarity established within the scientific and university community, and that wider access to educational resources worldwide through greater mobility for students, researchers, teachers and specialists is essential to this international dimension, the need for mutual recognition of studies and qualifications in higher education by all competent authorities and institutions as a means of increasing mobility of persons and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and scientific and technological experience, and in order ultimately to promote improvements everywhere in the quality of higher education, recognition will also promote an overall increase in the number of people able to benefit from higher education, the best possible use by all countries of the means available for education and training, and the development of human resources, greater mobility and a reduction in the difficulties encountered by persons who have been trained or educated abroad and who wish to study or practise a profession, a rapprochement and better understanding between cultures and peoples, with mutual respect for their diversity.

According to Lachenmann²⁰ lifelong learning in knowledge societies needs social spaces and institutional arrangements to be created in society and in the political system, securing access and flexibility, and including institutional learning. Thereby, a mutual relationship is created with societal transformation. Knowledge is the relevant resource for socio-economic change and innovations, starting from the every day knowledge and local knowledge). Western knowledge, partly leading to concepts of appropriate technology, partly to what could be called mystification of traditional knowledge. Nederveen Pieterse (1995, p. 45) uses the idea of 'globalisations in the plural' which follows ideas of different 'modernities' overcoming the ever present Western centrality. All institutions in society must be such as to make lifelong learning possible. Organisational development should be geared to encourage flexibility and learning. Organisations, including enterprises, should be learning organisations themselves.

All around the world, the growth and liberalization of international trade is changing the way we live and work.²¹ Trade flows and the rules that govern them are a massive force for economic, environmental and social change. International trade is becoming an increasingly important driver of economic development, as it has been expanding at almost twice the pace of total global economic activity for the past 15 years (*note:1985-2000*). A growing number of developing countries look to trade and investment as a central part of their strategies for development, and trade considerations are increasingly important in shaping economic policy in all developed countries, too.

UNESCO (1997) identifies challenges and opportunities: The last two decades have seen considerable growth in education and training. But the world still suffers from intolerable inequalities at the international level and sometimes within nations. At the root is often the problem of financing adequate provision of education and training. The rapid development of information and communication technologies and the move towards a more knowledge-intensive, interdependent society create new challenges and opportunities for the design and delivery of education. For the student/learner open and distance learning means increased access and flexibility, as well as the combination of work and education. It may also mean a more learner-centred approach, enrichment, higher quality and new ways of interaction. For employers it offers high quality and often cost-effective professional development in the workplace. It allows upgrading of skills, increased productivity and development of a new learning culture. In addition, it means sharing of costs, of training time,

¹⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-seventh session in Paris, 13 November 1993 the Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education

²⁰ UNESCO 2001: Creative and Inclusive Strategies for Lifelong Learning: Societal and cultural enabling environment, spaces, knowledge and agency for lifelong learning. Gudrun Lachenmann, p. 56ff

²¹ UNEP-ETU and IISD 2000

and increased portability of training. For governments the main potential is to increase the capacity of education and training systems, to reach target groups with limited access to conventional education and training, to support and enhance the quality and relevance of existing educational structures, to achieve more cost effective education and training, and to promote innovation and opportunities for lifelong learning.²²

Bittner²³ takes a focus on lifelong learning, pursuing the question of how different areas of education need to change in order to contribute to the implementation of this internationally recognized principle. In the modern knowledge and information society, knowledge becomes more and more important. Knowledge becomes increasingly important for the individual as much as for our society. Future life chances depend to a great extent on whether individuals are successful in acquiring knowledge. Therefore education plays a key role with respect to future changes and development, not only for personal development but also for participation and democratic citizenship, and for employability of the individual and the competitiveness of our economy. It is by reorganizing teaching and learning that we will be able to impart and acquire the knowledge that we will need tomorrow. The traditional occupation principle, that is, lifelong employment in an occupation for which one has been trained, has long since become outdated. Increasingly, work organization is based less on hierarchical structures, combines work and learning, and is characterized by team work and greater individual responsibility as well as by the ability to organize change. Social and economic progress and future competitiveness will largely depend on motivation for lifelong learning. An aging society is also a factor here. Growing qualification requirements must not lead to social exclusion. Enabling less qualified adults to engage in lifelong learning is of particular importance.

My Von Euler and David Berg²⁴ report the most common level of education offered by the different institutions represented in their survey is tertiary education. Continuing education, education offered to those who seek educational opportunities after the 'traditional' school age, for example to increase job or career opportunities, is also provided by a large group of programmes. In considering distance education and open learning opportunities in the world, the actual learning process is of greatest interest to educators.

Universities Going Virtual

Across the world there are differing standards for the legal definition of the term "university" and formal accreditation of institutions. There is no nationally standardized definition of the term in the United States, although the term is primarily used to designate research institutions and is often reserved for doctorate-granting institutions.²⁵

Dr. Carlos Tünnermann defines a university: "La institución cultural y científica por excelencia creada por el hombre".²⁶ "The cultural and scientific institution for excellence created for man".

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia²⁷, a university is an institution of higher education and research, which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects. A university provides both undergraduate education and postgraduate education. The word *university* is derived from the Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, roughly meaning "community of teachers and scholars".

The Encarta Dictionary defines the university as the complex entity of university instruction and research, buildings and housing, and people (students and faculty): a university is an undergraduate and postgraduate educational institution for higher learning typically including an undergraduate college and

²² UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapters II, III, p. 1

²³ UNESCO 2001: Creative and Inclusive Strategies for Lifelong Learning: Lifelong learning: implementing a generally accepted principle. Elisabeth Bittner, p. 11ff

²⁴ UNESCO 1998: The use of Electronic Media In Open Learning and Distance Education. My Von Euler, David Berg, p. 7

²⁵ US Department of State: Types of Graduate schools

²⁶ (Siles Levy, 2003, 3)

²⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=University&printable=yes> retrieved from Google eBook of *Encyclopedia Britannica*

graduate schools in various disciplines, as well as medical and law schools and sometimes other professional schools.²⁸

The original Latin word "universitas" referred to places of learning in Europe using Latin. The Latin word "academia" related to a number of educational institutions of non-Western antiquity. The University of Constantinople, founded as an institution of higher learning in 425 AD and reorganized as a corporation of students in 849 is considered by some to be the earliest institution of higher learning with some of the characteristics we associate today with a university (research and teaching, auto-administration, academic independence). If a university is defined as "an institution of higher learning" then it is preceded by several others, including the Academy that it was founded to compete with and eventually replaced. If the original meaning of the word is considered "a corporation of students" then this could be the first example of such an institution.²⁹

If the definition of a university is assumed to mean an institution of higher education and research which issues academic degrees at all levels (bachelor, master and doctorate) like in the modern sense of the word, then the medieval Madrasahs known as *Jami'ah* ("university" in Arabic) founded in the 9th century would be the first examples of such an institution.^{30 31}

The earliest universities in Western Europe were developed under the aegis of the Catholic Church, usually as cathedral schools or by papal bull as *Studia Generali* or or municipal administrations. The end of the medieval period marked the beginning of the transformation of universities that would eventually result in the modern research university. Many external influences, such as eras of Humanism, Enlightenment, Reformation, and revolution, shaped research universities during their development. By the 18th century, universities published their own research journals, and by the 19th century, the German and the French university models had arisen. The German, or Humboldtian model, liberal ideas pertaining to the importance of freedom, seminars, and laboratories in universities. The French university model involved strict discipline and control over every aspect of the university. Until the 19th century, religion played a significant role in university curriculum; however, the role of religion in research universities decreased in the 19th century, and by the end of the 19th century, the German university model had spread around the world. Universities concentrated on science in the 19th and 20th centuries and become increasingly accessible to the masses. In Britain the move from industrial revolution to modernity saw the arrival of new civic universities with an emphasis on science and engineering. The British also established universities worldwide, and higher education became available to the masses not only in Europe. In a general sense, the basic structure and aims of universities have remained constant over the years. Although each institution is differently organized, most universities have a board of trustees; president, chancellor, or rector; vice president(s), vice-chancellor(s), or vice-rector(s); and deans of various divisions. Universities are generally divided into a number of academic departments, schools or faculties. Public university systems are ruled over by government-run higher education boards. However, many public universities in the world have a considerable degree of financial, research and pedagogical autonomy. Private universities are privately funded and generally have a broader independence from state policies.³²

²⁸ Encarta World English Dictionary, p. 1944

²⁹ Jerome Bump, *The Origin of Universities*, University of Texas at Austin

³⁰ *Makdisi, George (April-June 1989), "Scholasticism and Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West", Journal of the American Oriental Society 109 (2): 175-182 [175-77]*

³¹ *Alatas, Syed Farid (2006), "From Jami'ah to University: Multiculturalism and Christian-Muslim Dialogue", Current Sociology 54 (1): 112-32*

³² <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=University&printable=yes>

The Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development of Higher Education³³ demands that as priority actions at the levels of systems and institutions, that each higher education institution should define its mission according to the present and future needs of society and base it on an awareness of the fact that higher education is essential for any country or region to reach the necessary level of sustainable and environmentally sound economic and social development, cultural creativity nourished by better knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage, higher living standards, and internal and international harmony and peace, based on human rights, democracy, tolerance and mutual respect. These missions should incorporate the concept of academic freedom set out in the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997.

Higher education has given ample proof of its viability over the centuries and of its ability to change and to induce change and progress in society. Owing to the scope and pace of change, society has become increasingly knowledge-based so that higher learning and research now act as essential components of cultural, socio-economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations. Higher education itself is confronted therefore with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to undertake, so that our society, which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality. It is with the aim of providing solutions to these challenges and of setting in motion a process of in-depth reform in higher education worldwide that UNESCO has convened a World Conference on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action.³⁴

According to the paper, 'Open and Distance Learning: Prospects and Policy Consideration'³⁵, prepared by UNESCO as a contribution to the on-going discussion on the ever wider role that open and distance learning is expected to assume in the educational landscape of tomorrow, the increasing international interest in open and distance learning and the subsequent expansion of the respective institutions and programmes is a most remarkable development in the field of education and training of recent years. There seems to be no doubt that open and distance learning is in a process of establishing itself as an integral part of educational delivery systems; to contribute to national reflections on the use of open and distance learning, including its policies and priorities, and to inspire cooperation at the national, regional and sub-regional levels that will help strengthen the chances of providing lifelong education for all.

The UNESCO Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education provides the following definitions³⁶:

- (a) 'higher education' means all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments, that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities;
- (b) 'qualification in higher education' means any diploma, degree or other qualifying certificate that is awarded by an institution of higher education, or another appropriate authority, that establishes that the holder has successfully completed a course of study and qualifies him or her either to continue to a further stage of study or to practise a profession not requiring further special preparation;

³³ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, Adoption

³⁴ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action

³⁵ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52

³⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-seventh session in Paris, 13 November 1993 the Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education

- (c) 'partial studies' means any homogeneous fraction of a course at the first stage or at more advanced stages of higher studies that has been evaluated and authenticated and, while not a complete course in itself, can be equated with a significant acquisition of knowledge or skill;
- (d) 'secondary education' means studies of any kind that follow primary, elementary or basic education and are a prerequisite for admission to higher education;
- (e) 'recognition' of a foreign qualification in higher education means its acceptance by the competent authorities of the State concerned (whether they be governmental or non-governmental) as entitling its holder to be considered under the same conditions as those holding a comparable qualification awarded in that State and deemed comparable, for the purposes of access to or further pursuit of higher education studies, participation in research, the practice of a profession if this does not require the passing of examinations or further special preparation, or all the foregoing, according to the scope of the recognition;
- (f) 'recognition' of a foreign certificate of secondary education for the purpose of undertaking studies at the higher level means its acceptance by the competent authorities of the State concerned as entitling its holder to be considered for admission to its higher education institutions under the same conditions as the holder of a comparable qualification or certificate awarded in that State;
- (g) 'recognition' of a foreign qualification or of a foreign certificate of partial studies of higher education means acceptance by the competent authorities of the State concerned that the holder is entitled to be considered for further studies at its higher education and research institutions under the same conditions as those pertaining to the holder of a comparable qualification or certificate awarded in that State;
- (h) 'recognition' of a foreign qualification in higher education with a view to the practice of a profession means acceptance by the competent authorities of the professional preparation of the holder for the practice of the profession concerned, without prejudice, however, to the legal and professional rules or procedures in force in the States concerned and provided the holder would be entitled to practise the same profession in the State in which the professional preparation and qualification had been obtained; such recognition does not exempt the holder of the foreign qualification from complying with any other conditions for the practice of the profession concerned that may be laid down by the competent governmental or professional authorities in the States concerned.

Recognition of a qualification or certificate may not give a greater right to consideration in another State than in the State in which it was conferred.

For the purposes of the Lisbon Convention³⁷, the following terms shall have the following meaning:

Access (to higher education) The right of qualified candidates to apply and to be considered for admission to higher education.

Admission (to higher education institutions and programmes): The act of, or system for, allowing qualified applicants to pursue studies in higher education at a given institution and/or a given programme.

Assessment (of institutions or programmes): The process for establishing the educational quality of a higher education institution or programme.

Assessment (of individual qualifications): The written appraisal or evaluation of an individual's foreign qualifications by a competent body.

Competent recognition authority: A body officially charged with making binding decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Higher education: All types of courses of study, or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognized by the relevant authorities of a Party as belonging to its higher education system.

³⁷ Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region (The European Treaty Series, n°165, Council of Europe - UNESCO joint Convention) Lisbon, 11 April 1997

Higher education institution: An establishment providing higher education and recognized by the competent authority of a Party as belonging to its system of higher education.

Higher education programme: A course of study recognized by the competent authority of a Party as belonging to its system of higher education, and the completion of which provides the student with a higher education qualification.

Period of study: Any component of a higher education programme which has been evaluated and documented and, while not a complete programme of study in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge or skill.

Qualification

A. Higher education qualification: Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme.

B. Qualification giving access to higher education: Any diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of an education programme and giving the holder of the qualification the right to be considered for admission to higher education (cf. the definition of access).

Recognition: A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.

Requirement

A. General requirements: Conditions that must in all cases be fulfilled for access to higher education, or to a given level thereof, or for the award of a higher education qualification at a given level.

B. Specific requirements: Conditions that must be fulfilled, in addition to the general requirements, in order to gain admission to a particular higher education programme, or for the award of a specific higher education qualification in a particular field of study.

The World Declaration on Higher Education ³⁸ proclaims the following missions and functions of higher education: Mission to educate, to train and to undertake research, affirming that the core missions and values of higher education, in particular the mission to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole, should be preserved, reinforced and further expanded, namely, to: (a) educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity, by offering relevant qualifications, including professional training, which combine high-level knowledge and skills, using courses and content continually tailored to the present and future needs of society; (b) provide opportunities (*espace ouvert*) for higher learning and for learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with a worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity-building, and for the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice; (c) advance, create and disseminate knowledge through research and provide, as part of its service to the community, relevant expertise to assist societies in cultural, social and economic development, promoting and developing scientific and technological research as well as research in the social sciences, the humanities and the creative arts; (d) help understand, interpret, preserve, enhance, promote and disseminate national and regional, international and historic cultures, in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity; (e) help protect and enhance societal values by training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship and by providing critical

³⁸ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action

and detached perspectives to assist in the discussion of strategic options and the reinforcement of humanistic perspectives; (f) contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels, including through the training of teachers.

Ethical role, autonomy, responsibility and anticipatory function: In accordance with the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel³⁹, higher education institutions and their personnel and students should: (a) preserve and develop their crucial functions, through the exercise of ethics and scientific and intellectual rigour in their various activities; (b) be able to speak out on ethical, cultural and social problems completely independently and in full awareness of their responsibilities, exercising a kind of intellectual authority that society needs to help it to reflect, understand and act; (c) enhance their critical and forward-looking functions, through continuing analysis of emerging social, economic, cultural and political trends, providing a focus for forecasting, warning and prevention; (d) exercise their intellectual capacity and their moral prestige to defend and actively disseminate universally accepted values, including peace, justice, freedom, equality and solidarity, as enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution; (e) enjoy full academic autonomy and freedom, conceived as a set of rights and duties, while being fully responsible and accountable to society; (f) play a role in helping identify and address issues that affect the well-being of communities, nations and global society.

There is already a variety of technologies available at different levels of sophistication, which may fit most educational requirements reasonably well. There is great potential for new, advanced technologies achieved in an increasingly integrated way and at decreasing costs. The challenge will be to utilize this potential in accordance with clear educational and instructional strategies, and to integrate the cultural and intellectual developments caused by the new technologies in the global information society. Interactivity is a key element in most of the new services that are foreseen. The technologies are particularly adaptable to the communication needs of dispersed users, but on the other hand need reliable networks. There is no simple answer to the question of what models and structures open and distance learning institutions will adopt in the future. There is an increasing tendency to use open and distance learning in traditional universities, and this will almost certainly be extended to all levels and all sectors. On the other hand, there will also be room for other types of institutions, both public and private. New markets and technologies will impose changes in all existing institutions, and new types of services and institutions will emerge. Nevertheless, there will be a continuous need for dedicated distance learning institutions (open universities) or departments with a capacity for serving very large target groups. All institutions will need to develop new partnerships and alliances in order to meet the needs of society in more effective ways than most of them do today. The wealth of experience and competence in open and distance learning institutions must be capitalized on in future structures.⁴⁰

The World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action⁴¹ and Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education postulates that there is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased awareness of its vital importance for socio-cultural and economic development, and for building the future, for which the younger generations will need to be equipped with new skills, knowledge and ideals. Higher education includes 'all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities'. Everywhere higher education is faced with great challenges and difficulties related to financing, equity of conditions at access into and during the course of studies, improved staff development, skills-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality in teaching, research and

³⁹ approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997

⁴⁰ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapters XVI, XVII, p. 3f

⁴¹ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action

services, relevance of programmes, employability of graduates, establishment of efficient co-operation agreements and equitable access to the benefits of international co-operation. At the same time, higher education is being challenged by new opportunities relating to technologies that are improving the ways in which knowledge can be produced, managed, disseminated, accessed and controlled. Equitable access to these technologies should be ensured at all levels of education systems. The second half of the last century will go down in the history of higher education as the period of its most spectacular expansion: an over six-fold increase in student enrolments worldwide, from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995. But it is also the period which has seen the gap between industrially developed, the developing countries and in particular the least developed countries with regard to access and resources for higher learning and research, already enormous, becoming even wider. It has also been a period of increased socio-economic stratification and greater difference in educational opportunity within countries, including in some of the most developed and wealthiest nations. Without adequate higher education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development and, in particular, developing countries and least developed countries cannot reduce the gap separating them from the industrially developed ones. Sharing knowledge, international co-operation and new technologies can offer new opportunities to reduce this gap. Convinced that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace, and shall therefore become accessible to all throughout life and that measures are required to ensure co-ordination and co-operation across and between the various sectors, particularly between general, technical and professional secondary and post-secondary education as well as between universities, colleges and technical institutions. Believing that, in this context, the solution of the problems faced on the eve of the twenty-first century will be determined by the vision of the future society and by the role that is assigned to education in general and to higher education in particular, aware that on the threshold of a new millennium it is the duty of higher education to ensure that the values and ideals of a culture of peace prevail and that the intellectual community should be mobilized to that end, considering that a substantial change and development of higher education, the enhancement of its quality and relevance, and the solution to the major challenges it faces, require the strong involvement not only of governments and of higher education institutions, but also of all stakeholders, emphasizing that higher education systems should enhance their capacity to live with uncertainty, to change and bring about change, and to address social needs and to promote solidarity and equity; should preserve and exercise scientific rigour and originality, in a spirit of impartiality, as a basic prerequisite for attaining and sustaining an indispensable level of quality; and should place students at the centre of their concerns, within a lifelong perspective, so as to allow their full integration into the global knowledge society of the coming century, also believing that international co-operation and exchange are major avenues for advancing higher education throughout the world.

Wagner suggests a scenario for the future role of universities: Open universities, distance teaching organizations as well as traditional universities or colleges are facing more or less the same changes in the modern "electronic information world". So their challenges are similar ones. What is different are their histories, their clients, their modes and cultures of teaching and learning - thus their platforms for action and their options and conditions for change and development. Wagner does not focus on future scenarios for universities in much detail, rather than trying to outline some of the most important aspects and impacts on the prospective roles of universities and their possible strategies for "virtualization". For him there is no doubt that external and internal conditions for universities will change in a way that urges these organizations to redefine their tasks and their methods. Situated between a rich and committing history and tradition on one side and rapid change and innovation in economic, social, political, cultural and organizational areas universities will have to find (to invent) their adequate shape of the "campus" in the future. It will not only be the matter to put a lecture "on the net" and produce some CD-ROMs and multi-media courses. Universities and colleges will have to answer on fundamental issues like a new character of knowledge itself, the tentative loss of tradition, an overwhelming need for collaboration and networking. However, Wagner sees a

requirement for change-management within a framework for cooperative development: Who ever wants to start the development of a "virtual" university in a traditional environment will have to invent a rather complex plan, strategy and methodology for the change management. There will be no success if there won't be found a suitable framework for collaborative development. Collaboration is needed within a university including faculty, library, computing-, media- and distance-education-centres - as well as administration and management. Most often collaboration will be needed with resource- and competence-centres from outside one single university. Legal aspects will have to be resolved in the political and administrative area. In general collaboration with enterprises, social organizations and broadcasting / publishing / media companies will be crucial. Not many universities are used to this on an organizational level even if there may be well established networks on a personal or expert level. ⁴²

Some mega universities such as Anadolu University in Turkey and China Central Radio and TV University in China and IGNOU in India have over 500,000 active students. Considering the high level of student enrolment, the mega universities are becoming "very important for the future of higher education (HE) all over the world"⁴³, including HE as part of lifelong learning.

In parallel with the development of mega universities, cross-border DE has grown. For example, universities in Australia, UK, USA, and Canada have actively exported their DE programmes to other parts of the world. China, Hong Kong (China), India, Malaysia and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region have been among major importers of those programmes. However, among those importers, Hong Kong (China), India and Malaysia have also exported their programmes to other countries such as Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and Sri Lanka (Jung, 2004a).

Moreover, many conventional DE institutions have begun to introduce information and communication technology (ICT) mainly as supplementary modes of instruction. Some institutions including a few mega universities have created e-learning programmes. Examples include the e-MBA programme of the Anadolu University in Turkey, the online Lifelong Education Graduate School at the Korea National Open University in Korea, the online MBA of the Athabasca University in Canada. Besides these institutions, for-profit e-learning providers have appeared in the DE market. In the Asia-Pacific region, main providers of e-learning include Thomson Learning, Apollo International and UNext.

These trends challenge the existing quality assurance (QA) frameworks of DE, which have focused more on widening access than on assuring quality, and often do not address for-profit and cross-border education. Especially in the context of growing globalisation in distance education, there has been an urgent need for international initiatives to review quality assurance mechanisms of DE for higher education at the national and institutional level, discuss new challenges of a changing DE environment, and build a capacity for QA to enhance the quality provision in a globalised higher education market. ⁴⁴

Transnational Higher Education – Open and Distance Education

But having said that it is vital to recognise that, while higher education may be traded in a marketplace, it is a quite different proposition from cars or bananas. The challenge is to come up with an appropriate way of maximising the benefits and minimising the dangers now that higher education is a global phenomenon. ⁴⁵

⁴² Wagner, E., (1998) Creating a Virtual University in a Traditional Environment.

⁴³ Daniel, 1998

⁴⁴ UNESCO/COL 2005: QUALITY ASSURANCE SURVEY OF MEGA UNIVERSITIES. Insung Jung, p. 80f

⁴⁵ John Daniel, Assistant Director-General for Education for UNESCO, Paris, at the First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education "GLOBALISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION", about "AUTOMOBILES, BANANAS, COURSES, DEGREES...An ABC of Higher Education and Globalisation", 17 October 2002.

The role of open and distance learning in educational innovation, according to UNESCO ⁴⁶ is summarised: As increasing acceptance within conventional education institutions and among educational planners is gained, open and distance learning has the potential to generate new patterns of teaching and learning that may influence the way education in general is provided. By reaching new target groups distance education makes the actual needs of education in society more visible. Distance education and open learning are part of the economic and educational response to popular demand and to economic and political objectives concerning the provision of appropriate learning opportunities from the perspective of lifelong learning. It may therefore enhance a more student and consumer-oriented approach and more extensive contact between educational institutions on the one hand and community-based organizations, business and industry on the other. By developing and producing high quality learning materials open and distance learning systems often make new and better learning resources available. This may have a particular influence when teachers and professors of conventional institutions become involved in the Open and distance learning development or use of these materials, for instance on contract with a distance teaching institution. The introduction of a distance programme at a conventional university may also lead to curriculum reform and new learning materials for resident students in the same subjects. In some projects distance learning is used systematically to support conventional systems at basic and secondary levels. The potential of distance learning to increase innovation and creativity in conventional education depends on the degree of interaction between distance learning systems and conventional systems. In this connection one should not forget the role of dedicated and specialized institutions in the development of knowledge and practice. Ideally, there ought to be effective links between such institutions and the conventional system, in order that they may serve as national resource centres. The need for education for the entire population, in both developing and developed countries, generates a significant interest in the application of more technology-based educational programmes. Open and distance learning is closely linked to the development of information and communication technologies, to the emergence of new learning needs and new patterns of information access and application in the information society. The development of open and distance learning often provides a propitious environment for the introduction of and experimentation with technologies in education, and will therefore influence mainstream education. It generates new insights and knowledge about learning conditions and processes, and may even have effects beyond the realm of education itself, affecting the individual and society both economically and culturally.

Daniel suggests: In finding a way forward we should start from where we are. The regional conventions for the recognition of qualifications, (...) represent one place where we are. These conventions have a respectable history. A concerted attempt to update them and bring them together globally could be one way forward. We are also at the end of a decade during which our understanding of quality assurance and assessment in higher education has become much more sophisticated. This, too, provides a way forward. (...) to develop that sophisticated understanding of quality, which trade in higher education requires more than trade in bananas or cars. The (...) quality rankings (...) shows how quality assessment can help to reassure people that new approaches can actually enhance quality. ⁴⁷

McIntosh ⁴⁸ postulates that those engaged in making policies relating to distance higher education and the use of ICTs are constantly having to strike a balance between universalising tendencies (globalisation, student mobility, the need for international standards and norms etc.) and the demands of different nations, cultures, population groups and constituencies.

⁴⁶ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 16

⁴⁷ (UNESCO, 2002, 41, see Daniel)

⁴⁸ UNESCO/COL 2005: CONCLUSION. Christopher McIntosh, p. 152

Sharing knowledge and know-how across borders and continents ⁴⁹ - The principle of solidarity and true partnership amongst higher education institutions worldwide is crucial for education and training in all fields that encourage an understanding of global issues, the role of democratic governance and skilled human resources in their resolution, and the need for living together with different cultures and values. The practice of multilingualism, faculty and student exchange programmes and institutional linkage to promote intellectual and scientific co-operation should be an integral part of all higher education systems. The principles of international co-operation based on solidarity, recognition and mutual support, true partnership that equitably serves the interests of the partners and the value of sharing knowledge and know-how across borders should govern relationships among higher education institutions in both developed and developing countries and should benefit the least developed countries in particular.

Daniel postulates that new need not be bad: One basic principle is that new need not be bad. One of the benefits of globalisation is that it promotes competition, and competition creates diversity. The idea that globalisation means homogenisation flies in the face of all the evidence. Globalisation is certainly creating diversity in higher education. However, higher education is a conservative enterprise. What is new is regarded with suspicion. It has to prove itself, which is absolutely right. But we must guard against the mindless rejection of new approaches even when they have proved themselves. ⁵⁰

Wagner ⁵¹ summarises his analysis of how to create a Virtual University: Universities almost everywhere in the world as well as political bodies, organizations and networks in the academic area have started to "go virtual". What does this mean? "Virtual" is a new expression in this context. Mostly it stands for organizing and delivering study programmes via telematic networks (usually the Internet). Often there is a vision of a university without buildings, without lots of teaching staff and with no students present at the same time and the same place with any lecturer. What is the attraction or need of a vision like this for a traditional university which - sometimes for hundreds of years - have done really the opposite: they worked hard to create an adequate environment for teaching and learning within the walls of the "university". To build a campus as a dedicated area for research and learning for quite some time was the benchmark.

Wagner explains the term Virtual University: "Virtual University": What is the meaning of "virtual"? Recently many universities have started projects, written papers and organized meetings and workshops dealing with the development of "virtual university". Analyzing what is really done or meant with this you may find the following activities: Courses and study programmes are put on the Internet so that students from all around the world will have access to these courses or programmes. Sometimes there is tuition on the net (newsgroups, chat, email), sometimes it is not. Lectures are sent from one university to another one to offer these at the same time to students at different places. Several universities offer selected courses for continuous education on the net for free choice and combination. All university services and functions (as administration, library, social life, meetings with staff and lecturers, cafes and so on) are simulated on the Internet so that no physical interaction will be needed any more to complete a study programme. A central institution offers combinations of study programmes or courses from different universities to create ones own curriculum (broker institution). These are some examples. They do not describe everything in this field. What does "virtual" mean in this global and rapid development? First it indicates the aspect of introducing a telematic network into the process and interaction of teaching and learning. Electronic media do play an important role between lecturers and students as well as between the students themselves. Second it is highlighted that most or even all the communications on a campus may be replaced by electronic networks. Third the characteristic "virtual" incorporates a vision that no real campus as a separate organization will be needed at all but that a university may be created as a virtual network of elements and contributions of

⁴⁹ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, Article 15

⁵⁰ (UNESCO, 2002, 40, see Daniel)

⁵¹ Wagner (1998)

different universities or other bodies. Fourth there is a focus on the independency of time and place and a virtual university thus is identified with open and/or distance learning frameworks. Summing up one can easily see that "virtual" does not really define something very specific but describes a bundle of more or less different concepts as a metaphor to point out a trend in the change of the organization of academic teaching and learning. "Virtual" may be a transitory concept, until there will be reached more precise concepts, data and experiences.

The ways in which societies, individuals, groups and communities develop uses of the Internet will fashion how and what this complexity produces.⁵²

Wagner⁵³ explains why (traditional) universities are going "virtual": It may not at all be a surprise that institutions in the area of open and distance learning are heading towards a virtual university approach as described above. But why do traditional universities start planning, project work and resource development via (at least some) elements of a "virtual campus"? Regarding the descriptions of what universities and colleges do in the field, some of the reasons seem obvious: Outside the academic area multi-media and electronic networks are rapidly gaining an increasing impact on a great many services (also in the training departments of enterprises and other organizations). Students to a huge extent enter university education with a solid and sometimes very elaborated knowledge about computers and the benefit of Internet: they are accustomed to take advantage of these technologies. So the academic sector has to keep pace with its clients. Some experts announce a strong competition between universities and private companies in the communication sector in the area of education, training and human-resource development in the near future. So strategic planning of universities has to take into account this challenge. On a somewhat lower level you may just realize that there are funds spent especially for the development of multi-media and telematics aiming a vision of over-all modernization of the academic sector - and staff as well as administration reacts on that. Some universities or colleges intend to disseminate their courses and study programs on the international level. After a time of building subdivisions or study centres abroad the "virtual" university promises to be the much more rational choice. Going "virtual" shall open the door to the global market for training and education. Last but not least you may find some ingenious people which regard it a necessary or at least very useful technology to improve the quality of teaching. Most often lecturers of this kind may be found in the science or the engineering departments. Traditional universities are developing schemes and strategies for "virtual" teaching and learning because they realize rapid and severe changes in relevant environments of their systems. This is stated for the cases when a university or college does something like organizational development. Often one will not find a clear analysis of the trends and changes and so consequently the strategic decisions do not seem to be very clear and well founded. Sometimes going "virtual" just seems to be something fancy or modern. Saying this I do not state that these changes are fancy or only something modern. What I want to point out is that many universities are lacking a clear strategic planning and management in this respect. Universities which are going to develop multi-media- and telematics-based courses and study-programs are faced to a challenge comparable with the development of distance education twenty years ago. Until now not many universities have successfully adopted modes of production, dissemination and tuition from the distance education sector. One of the reasons for this (besides cultural, pedagogical, reputation and other aspects) may be that it really means to introduce some kind of "industrialized" approaches into the academic sphere (O.Peters). To some extent this must cause frictions in the academic culture as it happened with open distance learning projects / programs within the environment of a traditional university. Even if the "virtual university" does not only mean the prolongation of distance teaching at the end of the 20th century it will lead to similar conflicts, misunderstandings and rejections.

⁵² UNESCO 2001: Creative and Inclusive Strategies for Lifelong Learning: Questions of agency and the Internet: a new way of learning. Gillian Youngs, p. 115

⁵³ Wagner (1998)

Regarding e-learning Berchtold ⁵⁴ defines a hybrid phenomenon, contradicting the traditional differentiation between “goods” and “services”. Given the example of recorded and filmed lectures – in fact materialised and storable and replicable services – as used in virtual and e-learning, and given the example of *Computer Marked Assignments* via an e-learning platform, Berchtold bridged the conventional definition gap as follows:

“Service-Goods are – by utilising audiovisual and/or automated recording and replay-techniques – storable, replicable and standardisable services as products of materialised and in advance provided human work without requiring the renewed rendering of the original core-service by human work, whereby these service-goods can be distributed in unlimited reproduction numbers. Service-Goods differentiate from software in the aspect, that they are not targeting the non-physical functional components of microprocessors and computers as firm-, system- or application-software. Service-goods differentiate from goods and products regarding the property, that their tangible and material features are not the subject of the service, but the mere carrier-medium for its storage and deliberate reproduction.”

Innovative educational approaches require critical thinking and creativity ⁵⁵ - In a world undergoing rapid changes, there is a perceived need for a new vision and paradigm of higher education, which should be student-oriented, calling in most countries for in-depth reforms and an open access policy so as to cater for ever more diversified categories of people, and of its contents, methods, practices and means of delivery, based on new types of links and partnerships with the community and with the broadest sectors of society. Higher education institutions should educate students to become well informed and deeply motivated citizens, who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities. To achieve these goals, it may be necessary to recast curricula, using new and appropriate methods, so as to go beyond cognitive mastery of disciplines. New pedagogical and didactical approaches should be accessible and promoted in order to facilitate the acquisition of skills, competences and abilities for communication, creative and critical analysis, independent thinking and team work in multicultural contexts, where creativity also involves combining traditional or local knowledge and know-how with advanced science and technology. These recast curricula should take into account the gender dimension and the specific cultural, historic and economic context of each country. The teaching of human rights standards and education on the needs of communities in all parts of the world should be reflected in the curricula of all disciplines, particularly those preparing for entrepreneurship. Academic personnel should play a significant role in determining the curriculum. New methods of education will also imply new types of teaching-learning materials. These have to be coupled with new methods of testing that will promote not only powers of memory but also powers of comprehension, skills for practical work and creativity.

Youngs ⁵⁶ discusses the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in changing the learning environments within which an increasing number of people around the world are operating. The main purpose is to reflect on ways in which ICTs may be considered to transform perspectives on learning in ways that can challenge, for example, existing hierarchies of: knowledge; control and distribution of information; knowledge communities. It argues that ICTs deepen possibilities in both individual and collective contexts and facilitate new learning strategies, some of which are integral to the building of new linkages across political, societal and cultural boundaries.

⁵⁴ Berchtold (2006, 65)

⁵⁵ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, Article 9

⁵⁶ UNESCO 2001: Creative and Inclusive Strategies for Lifelong Learning: Questions of agency and the Internet: a new way of learning. Gillian Youngs, p. 110

European Dimension

EQUIS⁵⁷ suggests a higher education provider should have a clearly articulated strategy and policies for internationalisation. It should demonstrate its commitment to educating and preparing students and participants for management in an international environment. This should be underpinned by active collaboration with international partner institutions in fields such as student exchanges, joint programmes, research activity and corporate connections. The provider should be able to attract students and faculty from other countries. It should carry out research of international relevance and scope.

In Europe distance education is a well-established form of education, although the status and tradition varies considerably within the region. In Western Europe there is a strong private sector in distance education serving the adult population. The UK Open University has set the standards for a particular type of university institution, the open universities. Similar institutions have been established in four other European countries (Spain, Germany, The Netherlands and Portugal). In other countries the dual mode type of universities is the dominant model, and in recent years various consortia models have been introduced. In Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR the political and economic transformation has important implications for education, and has already led to fundamental reforms and restructuring of national education systems. In most of the countries distance education based on correspondence studies combined with face-to-face 'consultations' was developed and served large populations. The UK Open University is now enrolling considerable numbers of students, particularly within business education from all over Europe, including the former USSR. The European Union has for many years been promoting distance education, particularly with a European dimension and in cooperation between institutions in the member states. Open and distance learning features strongly in policy documents from the Commission of the European Communities.⁵⁸ Diversity and fragmentation in Europe goes beyond the structure and traditions of the education system.

However, according to Marleen Vanderpoorten⁵⁹, legislation is one thing, shaping a true European space of higher education in practice is still another challenge. It is the richness of the Bologna Process that it is not only a matter of national legislation, but increasingly also about developing shared ideas and concepts, exchanging viewpoints and gradually building convergence. Vanderpoorten postulates, things have changed dramatically and the pace of change still will increase in the coming years. When she looks at universities themselves, she sees many signs that they increasingly consider themselves to be operating on an international scale, especially in research but increasingly also in teaching and learning activities. The professional world is internationalising also at a very fast pace.

According to Don F. Westerheijden⁶⁰ the two main *rationales* for the Bologna Declaration (van Vught et al., 2002; van der Wende, 2000) are: To increase 'the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education' (*Bologna Declaration*, 1999) in the world market, we are losing the leading position to the United States and seeing e.g. Australia and the United Kingdom becoming main higher education exporters as well; and to promote mobility within Europe 'by overcoming obstacles' both for the graduate labour market and for students during their studies.

Marlies Leegwater and Noël Vercruyssen reflect on "Working on the European Dimension of Quality"⁶¹ summarising the Bologna Process: In 1999, 31 ministers of Education or their representatives, speaking for 29 European countries, signed the Bologna Declaration. It aimed at promoting a structure of higher education based on two cycles, in order to create transparency for mobility and employability. Since then, throughout

⁵⁷ The EFMD accreditation for international business schools

⁵⁸ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 23f

⁵⁹ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 12)

⁶⁰ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 19f)

⁶¹ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 9)

Europe, countries with various traditions of higher education have been transforming their system actively into a transparent two-cycle ('bachelor-master') structure. In each country, the transformation is laid down in laws and regulations. On the one hand, legislation is very much a national process, connected with national education systems and legal and political environments. On the other hand, transparency concerning the quality of the various bachelor and master programmes requires international cooperation regarding criteria for quality. It resulted in attention for the issue of the quality of higher education at the ministerial meeting in Prague, May 2001, which focussed on the follow-up of the Bologna declaration. The Prague communiqué (2001) called upon various actors: to co-operate in quality assurance; to design scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms; to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference; to disseminate best practice.⁶² As announced during the ministerial meeting in Prague, the conference to focus on the internationalisation of quality assurance as part of the Bologna process was organised in Amsterdam, March 2002. The aim of the conference was to present various developments in quality assurance of higher education and its internationalisation in Europe, also in perspective of developments beyond the European higher education area. At the conference various actors gave an overview of a variety of activities at various levels.⁶³

According to Jung⁶⁴ quality culture can be defined as an institutional culture that promotes the introduction of an internal QA system, values the capacity building for implementing QA arrangements, stresses the link between the internal QA system and accountability to the public at the national and international levels, and focuses on learning rather than teaching. The survey results show that a quality culture has been emerging, if not fully integrated, in the mega universities investigated. All the mega universities have developed and implemented QA standards and procedures in key areas of distance education activities and at least four mega universities surveyed have institutionalised a central QA unit and thus sought the development of a more systematic and coherent quality culture. Another indicator for the emergence of a quality culture is capacity building efforts made by the institutions. At least half of the mega universities have provided continuous staff development opportunities to their academic and administrative staff in pursuit of quality improvement. It is found that international organisations such as UNESCO, COL, OECD and World Bank have provided useful QA guidelines and resources for distance educators. Moreover, most of the institutions have shown an aspiration of obtaining national recognition as a high quality DE provider. Some have gone beyond national level accreditation and recognition and pursued international recognition such as ISO certification for their services. The Jung survey also shows that there exists a variety of QA systems of distance education even though the globalisation and competitiveness of higher education and the development of technology have brought distance teaching universities closer together in terms of developing a common quality culture. The level of QA policy integration in an overall university policy framework varies across the mega universities. Some mega universities apply a set of standards and criteria that are predetermined by the institution or by the national quality assurance agency to evaluate and monitor key areas of distance education, whereas other institutions provide only general guidelines for QA and leave room for the internal and external review teams or individual units to make QA judgments. Some mechanisms for assuring quality of distance education adopt rigorous internal QA measures, whereas in systems where the accountability concern does not dominate, the QA system is less centralised and the primary objective is self-improvement of institutions. Even though core areas – such as course and programme development and delivery – for QA are similar in most mega universities, some QA areas draw more attention than others. In some institutions, assessment of staff performance and tutoring services is emphasised, whereas in other institutions, learner assessment or monitoring of e-learning courses gets more attention.

⁶² (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 10)

⁶³ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 11)

⁶⁴ UNESCO/COL 2005: QUALITY ASSURANCE SURVEY OF MEGA UNIVERSITIES. Insung Jung, p. 91f

Andrée Sursock⁶⁵ reflects from the Higher Education Institutions' Point of View on *Accreditation and Quality Culture, postulating "If We All Think Alike, We Are Not Thinking"*. Our students today come from a variety of backgrounds and have a variety of learning needs. They differ in terms of social class, educational attainment, age and goals for their education. This diversity needs to be embraced by institutions, across the whole of national systems and the European higher education area. Teachers need to be sensitive to the intellectual starting point of their students and build from there. We need a variety of teaching methods and teaching materials. We need to match the variety of learners with a corresponding variety of teachers. This diversity has been recognised by national quality assurance agencies in Europe that have adopted, by and large, a fitness for purpose approach. Increased Europeanisation and internationalisation, however, could lead, if we are not careful, to standardisation in the name of transparency. I shall return to the challenge of Europeanisation and internationalisation later on. For now, I would like to stress that if we want a democratic system of higher education that ensures access for the greatest numbers, then whatever quality assurance system we develop for the future will need to be flexible and embrace this diversity.

Susock⁶⁶ quotes Professor Martin Trow, who has devoted his long and distinguished academic life to studying higher education policies and demonstrated the difficulties in assessing teaching and learning in higher education. He concluded that: 'The real and substantial effects of the experience of higher education extend over the whole lifetime of graduates, and are inextricably entwined with other forces and experiences beyond the walls and the reach of universities' (Trow, 1996). Trow suggests that we focus instead on the capacity for institutions to change: 'How an institution responds to change points to deep-seated qualities of the unit which must also show up in its research and teaching.'

Julia Gonzalez Ferreras and Robert Wagenaar⁶⁷ postulate: As is understood by many nowadays, university authorities, university policy makers, teaching staff but above all students, higher education has developed from a local, regional and national issue to a European and a global issue. Young people are travelling all over the world to participate in education that fits best their abilities and objectives. They demand reliable and objective information about qualification programmes on offer. This information is not only of relevance for (future) students but also for (future) employers. Both groups of stakeholders demand certainty about what a qualification, a degree, stands for in practice. The European economic area also requires an integrated European higher education area.

Politics has taken its responsibility by initiating the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague-Berlin process. A group of universities has taken up the challenge by initiating the project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*.

Some of the emerging issues in European distance education are summarized as follows⁶⁸: The problem of matching open learning and distance education provision to the needs of human resource development at national and sub-regional levels and of integrating future development with human resource and education politics and strategies; the challenge of mobilizing conventional institutions of education in the implementation of open and distance learning strategies, and at the same time capitalizing on the experience and resources of the many specialized distance teaching institutions; the need for innovation by both conventional and distance teaching institutions concerning the effective use of new information and communication technologies for education and training purposes, based on sound educational strategies and research; the need for appropriate balance and synergy between national and European development concerning policies, infrastructure, quality standards and equivalence, joint development projects and delivery and support systems; the challenge of assisting the development of distance education programmes and infrastructure in sub-regions where it is not sufficiently developed.

⁶⁵ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 42f)

⁶⁶ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 43f)

⁶⁷ (Westerheijden and Leegwater, 2003, 70f)

⁶⁸ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 24

The World Declaration on Higher Education sees the potential and the challenge of technology ⁶⁹: The rapid breakthroughs in new information and communication technologies will further change the way knowledge is developed, acquired and delivered. It is also important to note that the new technologies offer opportunities to innovate on course content and teaching methods and to widen access to higher learning. However, it should be borne in mind that new information technology does not reduce the need for teachers but changes their role in relation to the learning process and that the continuous dialogue that converts information into knowledge and understanding becomes fundamental. Higher education institutions should lead in drawing on the advantages and potential of new information and communication technologies, ensuring quality and maintaining high standards for education practices and outcomes in a spirit of openness, equity and international cooperation by: engaging in networks, technology transfer, capacity-building, developing teaching materials and sharing experience of their application in teaching, training and research, making knowledge accessible to all; creating new learning environments, ranging from distance education facilities to complete virtual higher education institutions and systems, capable of bridging distances and developing high-quality systems of education, thus serving social and economic advancement and democratization as well as other relevant priorities of society, while ensuring that these virtual education facilities, based on regional, continental or global networks, function in a way that respects cultural and social identities; noting that, in making full use of information and communication technology (ICT) for educational purposes, particular attention should be paid to removing the grave inequalities which exist among and also within the countries of the world with regard to access to new information and communication technologies and to the production of the corresponding resources; adapting ICT to national, regional and local needs and securing technical, educational, management and institutional systems to sustain it; facilitating, through international co-operation, the identification of the objectives and interests of all countries, particularly the developing countries, equitable access and the strengthening of infrastructures in this field and the dissemination of such technology throughout society; closely following the evolution of the 'knowledge society' in order to ensure high quality and equitable regulations for access to prevail; taking the new possibilities created by the use of ICTs into account, while realizing that it is, above all, institutions of higher education that are using ICTs in order to modernize their work, and not ICTs transforming institutions of higher education from real to virtual institutions.

Open and Distance Education

The UNESCO paper on open and distance education ⁷⁰ suggests the strategies for the development of open and distance learning to ideally form part of any national strategy for education and training, including the harmonization of goals, an integrated and intersectoral approach is thus very important. National policy and planning should take into account possibilities for regional and international collaboration and coordination.

The International University of Panama ⁷¹ provides a brief history of distance education: In 1728 The Boston Gazette provided material for auto-instruction by mail. In 1840 Isaac Pitman introduced courses by mail in England. In 1860 the Mining Herald in Pennsylvania provided mining education by mail. The promoter Tomas Foster created ICS International Correspondence Schools. At the end of the journey, in the global world, it has expanded rapidly. In the decade between 1960 and 1970 the use of radio and television has been implemented, during the 1980 decade new technologies have entered the university studies, in the 1990 decade the new technologies of information and communication (ICT) have been introduced.

⁶⁹ World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. 9 October 1998: World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, Article 12

⁷⁰ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 30

⁷¹ <http://www.interuni.us/educacionadistancia.htm> Educación a Distancia

The terms open learning and distance education represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through new developments in information and communication technologies. The objective of this paper is to review open and distance learning in the context of present challenges and opportunities, examine relevant concepts and contributions, outline current global and regional trends, suggest policy and strategy considerations, and identify UNESCO's policies on open and distance learning, including its role in capacity-building and international co-operation. It is addressed to a wide range of potential partners, governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, specialized institutions, associations, industrial corporations, telecommunication companies, and others interested in this field, to seek their cooperation in meeting today's urgent education and training needs, through open and distance learning.⁷²

Regarding concept and contributions the paper on Open and Distance Learning suggests that Open and distance learning systems can usually be described as made up of a range of components such as: the mission or goal of a particular system, programmes and curricula, teaching/learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery systems, students, tutors, staff and other experts evaluation procedures, management, housing and equipment. There are both success stories and failures in open and distance learning, and many systems are struggling with problems and barriers to effective implementation. Some of the more common problems are: inadequate technological infrastructure, planning and programme deficiencies, lack of human capacity and expertise, inadequate financial resources: and lack of recognition of educational equivalence. Sometimes open and distance learning is used for school-age children and youth who are unable to attend ordinary schools. In developing countries, distance education for school equivalency is an important way of expanding educational opportunities to the adult population. In developed countries, there is still a need for these types of programmes for those who dropped out of the conventional system. Teacher training is an important area where open and distance learning has made a major contribution. Non-formal education and community development represent other sectors where open and distance learning is used.⁷³

Distance education at the tertiary level shows a two-fold development pattern. On the one hand, numerous single mode open universities have emerged to absorb large numbers of new learners, while, on the other hand, increasing numbers of traditional universities have begun to offer their programmes also through distance education. This tends to diminish the earlier distinction between the two types of universities. Open and distance learning has the potential to generate new patterns of teaching and learning. Linked as it is with developments in information and communication technologies, it is close to the development of new learning needs and new patterns of information access and application. There is evidence that it can lead to innovation in mainstream education, and may even have effects beyond the realm of education itself. Open and distance learning will therefore play an especially decisive role in the creation of the global information society.

Present trends in open and distance learning: Obviously, open and distance learning will be an important element of future education and training systems. It is approaching acceptance within mainstream education and training in such a way that it will make up part of the repertoire of most educational institutions in the future. This will also mean that the present distinction between 'conventional' education and open and distance learning will become less meaningful. One of the technological trends is the emergence of new forms of distance learning based on more interactive telecommunication technologies, with pedagogical,

⁷² UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, I, p. 1

⁷³ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapters IV-VII, p. 1f

economic and organizational implications. Furthermore, there is a significant trend towards internationalization. The regional overview shows great differences between all regions of the world, although there are also a number of similarities. Open and distance learning has existed for about one hundred years in the more developed regions and for one or two generations in the developing regions. In industrialized countries present trends are linked both to structural problems of education in modern society, and to technological development. The need to extend learning opportunities over the whole life span and the changing demands concerning mass education and the need for new skills represent challenges, which are not easily met by conventional structures and institutions. Information and communication technologies have great potential impact on education, and may help in creating new patterns of education and training. Governments, industry and educational institutions are eager to develop effective applications of new technologies and at the same time meet the needs of learners. National policy documents on education and training should include statements on the role of open and distance learning. A successful national launch or reform of open and distance learning requires visible and strong leadership and high-level government backing. Careful planning is essential. A cost effective operation is one that makes good use of all available resources -it is not necessarily low cost. A distance teaching institution needs sufficient resources to be able to react promptly to new demands and situations. ⁷⁴

In developing countries there are some common barriers to the effective implementation of open and distance learning. Lack of funding, problems of allocation of resources and sustained support; lack of human resources with sufficient competence and motivation; technological infrastructure, which prevents the effective use of appropriate technologies. Capacity building is important, including increased professionalism in planning and management of open and distance learning systems. ⁷⁵

The UNESCO paper ⁷⁶ provides a comprehensive summary of the concept of open and distance learning: Open learning is a term with no universally agreed definition. To some 'open' will indicate open entry and access to learning opportunities, and the focus will be on the removal of barriers to learning opportunities. To others it may include aspects of methods and organization, with the consequence that 'open learning' may sometimes be substituted by flexible learning. Jeffries et al (1990) define open learning as: "Any form of learning in which the provider (e.g. an institution or organization running a training scheme) enables individual learners to exercise choice over any one or more of a number of aspects of learning. Typically this involves helping learners take responsibility for aspects such as what they learn, how they learn, where they learn, how quickly they learn, who to turn to for help and whether, when and where to have their learning assessed." Distance education in most cases shares the concern for openness and flexibility, but definitions tend to focus on the possibility of communication between participants in the learning process across time and/or space, particularly as brought about by new (and some old) technologies. Perraton (1993a) describes distance education as "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner". This definition covers most of the traditional approaches to distance teaching, although it does not reflect the fact that the learners are also usually dispersed in space and/or time. This may be quite important in view of the evolving variation of learning environments and patterns of communication. Distance education may involve the use of a range of media, such as print, written correspondence, audio, video and computer based media and networks as well as multimedia, both for presentation of information and for communication between participants. Open and distance learning is often used when one wants to address a whole range of related forms of teaching and learning, without concentrating too much on exact delineation and definition. It stresses at the same time openness concerning access, organization and methods, flexibility in delivery and communication patterns, and the use of various technologies in support of learning. Open and distance learning is usually contrasted

⁷⁴ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapters VIII-XIV, p. 2f

⁷⁵ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Executive Summary, Chapter XV, p. 3

⁷⁶ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING, p. 10f

with 'conventional' or 'face-to-face' education, which may be described as the form of education which takes place in a classroom or an auditorium. However, both 'distance' and 'face-to-face' education are labels covering a wide range of variations and methods. Face-to-face education in its pure form may vary along a continuum from one-to-one tutorials, group activities, seminars and classroom teaching to lectures for large audiences. In each case different educational approaches and methods may be used. A range of media may also support face-to-face education, and it is usually combined with periods of independent study, with more or less direction from the teacher and dependence on specific learning materials. In a similar way, distance education has a variety of forms, according to the choice of media, methods and organizational approaches. The original, and still most widespread form is correspondence education. Print is used as the dominant learning material, with the usual medium of communication being by correspondence. Other forms are radio schools, educational television, telephone teaching, audio and video teleconferences, and computer-mediated communication. Very often the media bridging the distance are combined with face-to-face interaction in working groups, seminars or lectures. This means that although there is a clear distinction in theory between distance education and conventional or face-to-face education, the distinction in practice is far from clear. This is also underlined by the fact that an increasing number of educational institutions use both conventional and distance types of methods when designing education programmes -either as alternative forms (cf. the term 'dual mode' institution) or in a mix of the two types within the same programme (sometimes called 'hybrid' forms). So far, various forms of distance education have been described mainly as a function of different media. However, media represent only one aspect of distance learning systems and there is considerable variation between them concerning other aspects. The most common distinction is perhaps between 'single mode' and 'dual mode' institutions. Single mode institutions are established and organized with the single purpose of offering distance education, while dual mode institutions offer both distance education and conventional forms of education within the same institution. In many cases distance learning is provided in partnership between several institutions of the same kind or by different types of institutions with different roles. The private sector is also active, often in competition with traditional educational institutions. The focus of each system will lead to significant differences as to how the various components and sub-systems are designed, organized and managed. This is not the place to consider the structures of different systems, but it is important to be aware of the main components common to the majority of actual systems.

According to the UNESCO paper on open and distance learning ⁷⁷ The mission of a distance learning system defines the role of the system within the specific context of education policy. It may be directed towards particular purposes, target groups, regions, sectors or levels of education and training, and led by particular values and philosophies of learning and education. Programmes and curricula make up important components, which define the profile of a system or an institution. Teaching and learning strategies and techniques depend partly on the type of programme and the needs they are designed to meet. But they also depend on the educational philosophy and values of the particular system, and the educational characteristics and potential of the technologies used. Learning materials and resources make up necessary components in all distance-learning systems. Comprehensive, well-developed materials may greatly stimulate self-learning and influence the quality of the system as a whole. Development and production of materials is often considered as a subsystem in distance teaching organizations. Existing materials, textbooks, software etc. may be used. Communication between teachers and learners is seen as a necessary component in distance education, as in all other forms of education. Thus, self-study without any communication and support is not usually considered to fall within the concept of distance education. Open learning systems on the other hand are often heavily based on self-study. Another crucial component is the interaction between learners. Support delivered locally is a common component. The delivery system may

⁷⁷ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 11f

comprise both distribution of pre-packaged material, transmission of programmes, lectures etc., and systems of communication/interaction and local support. The student and tutor sub-system is often distinguished from the course materials subsystem. Staff and other experts in a distance learning system need a range of different competencies. Tutors have already been mentioned. A range of other experts with different qualifications is also needed, either as full-time staff or as external consultants: planners, instructional designers, developers and producers, researchers, media experts, marketing experts and administrative staff. Effective management and administration needs not only competent staff, but also well designed, efficient administrative systems and routines, planning and monitoring systems, budgetary and accounting systems etc. Many of these will be quite different from the corresponding systems needed in the management of other forms of education. The requirements of housing and equipment may be very different from conventional education institutions. A single mode distance learning system has no residential students, and thus there is no need for classrooms, lecture theatres etc. at the central location. Such facilities may be needed locally, and are often provided in cooperation with local institutions. At the central location there will be need for production facilities and storage capacity, although some decentralized production is also possible. Finally, evaluation should be a component, in order to provide information relevant to the adjustment of the roles and operation of system components, and in order to secure their optimal contribution and development.⁷⁸

Open University

Distance education is widely used at the tertiary level within the framework of open and distance-teaching universities which provide programmes and degrees equivalent to conventional university and college education. Traditional universities often use the same curricula for distance and residential students, and the students are often but not always subject to the same entrance requirements and examinations. Single mode open universities generally have their own degrees and curricula, but they are often similar to the curricula and degrees of a conventional university. Degree studies in distance teaching universities thus increase the capacity of higher education systems, mainly catering for the adult population. The similarity of curricula and degree structures may be seen as a demonstration of equal quality, and makes the recognition of distance education at the tertiary level easier. The expansion of single mode open universities, many of which have developed to 'megauniversities' with more than 100.000 students (ICDL, 1995) on one hand, and the transformation of traditional universities to dual mode universities on the other, are important contributions to the diversification and development of higher education systems. The increasing tendency of traditional universities to deliver their programmes also through distance education appears to diminish the earlier distinction between the two types of universities.⁷⁹

According to Jung⁸⁰ Mega universities (i.e. those with over 100,000 students) are among the most important providers of distance education worldwide and are increasingly using ICT-based learning. Until recently they placed more emphasis on widening access than assuring quality, but now they recognise quality assurance as a key issue that needs to be addressed not only within individual universities but also jointly and in the global context. Over the past few decades, there has been a noticeable growth in distance education (DE) around the world. More than 10 mega universities have been developed to meet the increasing educational needs of adults and lifelong learners.¹ A mega university is defined as "a distance teaching institution with over 100,000 active students in degreelevel courses" (Daniel, 1996: 29). In parallel with the development of mega universities, cross-border DE has grown. Moreover, many conventional DE institutions have begun to introduce information and communication technology (ICT) mainly as

⁷⁸ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 12

⁷⁹ UNESCO 1997. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING. Prospects and Policy Considerations. ED-97/WS/52, p. 15

⁸⁰ UNESCO/COL 2005: QUALITY ASSURANCE SURVEY OF MEGA UNIVERSITIES. Insung Jung, p. 80-90

supplementary modes of instruction. Some institutions including a few mega universities have created e-learning programmes. These trends challenge the existing quality assurance (QA) frameworks of DE, which have focused more on widening access than on assuring quality, and often do not address for-profit and cross-border education. Especially in the context of growing globalisation in distance education, there has been an urgent need for international initiatives to review quality assurance mechanisms of DE for higher education at the national and institutional level, discuss new challenges of a changing DE environment, and build a capacity for QA to enhance the quality provision in a globalised higher education market. QA in mega universities is considered to be especially important since those mega universities provide higher education to millions of students around the world with collaboration or in competition with for-profit or cross-border providers. QA policies and regulations have been set in all the institutions surveyed. However, the degree of elaboration in those policies and regulations and the level of integration with the general university policy framework and the national QA framework vary across the institutions. A variety of QA methods are observed in the mega universities. The popular methods of QA include providing a wide range of opportunities for training workshops, conducting evaluation research, introducing internal review processes, and inviting external audits and assessments. The mega universities surveyed have developed QA criteria for key areas of distance education. Detailed QA criteria are provided for several of the mega universities surveyed. It appears that the quality assurance of the cross-border operations and e-learning practices is still in the initial stages of development in most of the mega universities. However, the institutions seem to recognise the need for special attention to QA systems for those new challenges.

The challenge is to provide for sustainable globalisation of transnational higher education TNHE. Berchtold defines "Sustainable Globalisation as a system of global trade of goods and services, including financial services and transactions, and the free travel of people, exchange of cultures and the flow of information and knowledge (data-capital) around the world, including the internet, and the development of a cosmopolitan culture that meets the needs of the global requirements for the functioning of that worldwide system, without endangering and compromising the current and future needs and generic and indigenous infrastructures, cultures, societies and communities at local, regional and national level." ⁸¹

Development is conceived by Spooner ⁸² "generally to include all modern planning and project implementation which is designed to increase productivity, to modernize traditional systems, and to raise living standards. Bode ⁸³ demands that a just globalisation policy must integrate fighting poverty, security policy and environmental policy. According to US-President Obama "the challenges of the 21st century cannot be met without collective action. (...) I've spoken often, at home, about a new era of responsibility. I believe strongly that this era must not end at our borders. In a world that is more and more inter-connected, we have a responsibility to work together to solve common challenges." ⁸⁴ "The fundamental facts that brought about cooperation, society, and civilization and transformed the animal man into a human being are the facts that work performed under the division of labour is more productive than isolated work and that man's reason is capable of recognizing this truth. The principle of the division of labour is one of the great basic principles of cosmic becoming and evolutionary change." ⁸⁵ "When social cooperation is intensified by enlarging the field in which there is division of labour or when legal protection and the safeguarding of peace are strengthened, the incentive is the desire of all those concerned to improve their own conditions. In striving after his own—rightly understood—interests the individual works toward an intensification of social cooperation and peaceful intercourse. Society is a product of human action, i.e., the human urge to remove

⁸¹ Gerhard Berchtold, 2009, Sustainable Globalisation

⁸² Spooner (1984)

⁸³ Bode, Thilo (2003)

⁸⁴ Barack Obama, US President at the G-20 Summit, London, April 2009

⁸⁵ Mises, 1949, 1996, p. 144f

uneasiness as far as possible.”⁸⁶ “Society always involves men acting in cooperation with other men in order to let all participants attain their own ends.”⁸⁷ James Martin⁸⁸ provides *a vital blueprint for ensuring our future*, calling it humanity’s grandest challenge that a vital task for the 21st century is to cope with the avalanche we have started, and its consequences for today’s young people living at a time of extraordinary opportunities and immense problems – his main theme to be taught and talked about everywhere: that the 21st century is unique in human history in that it will produce a great transition that enables humanity to survive. Edgar Morin⁸⁹ draws the two great ethical-political objectives of the new millenium: to establish a relationship of mutual control between the society and the individuals by means of democracy; and to complete the planetary community. In continuation of anthropoethics the planetary community of fate can create common awareness and joint consciousness of mankind in solidarity of the human species. Mankind is no longer just a biological term without roots, but with a home – earth, being endangered – and mankind is a reality as a collective community of fate, aware that we are all global citizens.

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⁸⁶ Mises, 1949, 1996, p. 146

⁸⁷ Mises, 1949, 1996, p. 169f

⁸⁸ James Martin (2006)

⁸⁹ Morin, Edgar (2001) *Die sieben Fundamente des Wissens für eine Erziehung der Zukunft*.

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