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FORUM

Discussing international education

TECHNOLOGY

MOOCS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE FUTURE
VIRTUAL MOBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS
E-EDUCATION AND THE DISAPPEARING HUMAN FACTOR
YOUR GUIDE TO STRATEGIC ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

SPRING
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Contents

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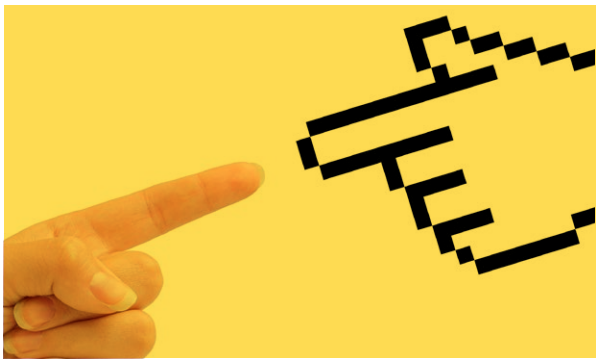

Editorial

Technology and its impact on international higher education is the key theme in this spring edition of *Forum* magazine. We've brought together a variety of perspectives from seasoned experts in the field to ignite further thinking and debate on the issue of technology and what effect it will have on the future of education as we know it. Times are changing. Could we be on the verge of an educational revolution?

Technological advances, particularly in the fields of information and communication, are having an increasing impact on higher education. There are some who maintain that the advances in technology will radically change the format in which education is delivered and received and will inevitably impact on the content. Whether this impact is positive or negative remains to be seen. Intrinsically, technology is neither good nor bad; it is the uses in which we employ it that result in desired or undesired outcomes.

At present, the effect of technology on higher education seems predominantly positive. In the classroom, it assists all students and especially those who might have some form of disability. Outside the classroom, it has for many years facilitated distance education through video conferencing. More recently, the phenomenon of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has made its entry, enabling students to access lectures by eminent academics and take courses from leading universities online and in real time without geographical restriction. Further, not only two-way communication between lecturer and student but even simultaneous communication between all those participating has become fairly simple.

Is there no downside, then, to the rapid march of technology into the arena of higher education delivery? One effect that has become apparent is the increase in plagiarism, which the internet has made both easier and more difficult to detect. However, plagiarism is something we have always had to live with. A more serious issue, as I see it, is the effect of technology on the nature of higher education. If one sees higher education merely as a means to an end, a degree as a pathway to employment, then the use of technology is ideal. If, on the other hand, higher education is also an end in itself, then I wonder whether or not something is lost through online delivery. I am not convinced that all the technological means at our disposal, including social media, can really compensate for the lack of face-to face immediate in-depth exchange of thoughts and ideas so essential to education.

The articles included here provide a variety of approaches to the current situation. There are two interesting overviews of MOOCs. One by Anna Colombini, who argues that the jury is still out on their effect but that they require flexibility and alternative methods of delivery; and another by Duleep Deosthale and Murli Nagasundaram, who note that most MOOCs are taught in English, that the majority of people in the world have no internet connection and that new pedagogies are required.

Discussing more specific aspects of technology in relation to higher education, Ann Heelan looks at its significance for those with disabilities and shows how it has become an essential tool in assisting individuals in coming to terms with their difficulties and competing on a more level playing field. Michael Steinmann considers how universities can become involved in online distance education, while Michael Bourke maintains that online education cannot succeed without good resources and that it involves labour-intensive teaching.

All this raises the question of quality assurance and Luis Delgado shows common standards and methods are needed for online education. With a more direct link to international education, Ilse op de Beeck and her colleagues discuss virtual mobility for work placements and Ebba Ossiannilsson reflects on what open education may mean for Swedish universities. The interview with Paul Bacsich also produces some interesting reflections on e-learning and distance learning in an international context.

Finally, we offer a couple of articles not directly related to the central topic: Bob Bontrager discusses Strategic Enrolment Management as a means of managing institutional change and Kees Kouwenaar proposes a model for measuring strategic goals in internationalisation.

— ***Michael Cooper**, Editor*
michael.cooper@telia.com

Contributors

Michael Steinmann

Michael Steinmann has been working at StudyPortals as EU Project Manager since 2007. Currently, he coordinates DistanceLearningPortal.eu – Europe's comprehensive source of information on distance and online education. In his article on page 10, Michael takes a look at the current offerings of distance learning in Europe, presenting some interesting findings.

Anna Colombini

Anna Colombini is Head of the International Mobility and Partnership Office at Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, Italy. Her work is currently focused on the quality of mobility for students and staff on double and joint degrees and on other projects including Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, *etc*). She also writes on recent trends in international education and on page 12, Anna shares some insights into the MOOCs phenomenon.

Michael Bourke

Michael Bourke is Program Head of Liberal Studies at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, Canada. For six years he has administered multiple sections of online courses, which has encouraged him to take seriously the potential and ongoing problems of online learning. Discover his views on the human element of e-learning on page 32.

Bob Bontrager

Bob Bontrager is Senior Director of Consulting and Strategic Enrolment Management Initiatives for AACRAO, a non-profit organisation based in Washington, DC. Bob has 30 years of experience in higher education and has worked in a variety of countries. In his article on page 40, he explains the concept and evolution of strategic enrolment management in international higher education.

Duleep Deosthale is Vice President - International Education at Manipal Global Education, New York, USA. He has set up several academic centres abroad, a branch campus in Italy and a university in Malaysia. He is a former professor of Spanish and Global Studies.

Murli Nagasundaram is a higher education consultant in Bangalore, India. He has been researching the use of technology to support group processes for over 25 years. A former professor of management, he trains and facilitates teams in innovation, creativity and design.

Mariet Vriens holds an MA in Modern History. She is employed as Researcher at the Teaching and Learning Department of KU Leuven, Belgium. Her main field of expertise is the use of technology in higher education. She was project manager of the EU-VIP project and is currently also fulfilling this role for PROVIP.

Ilse Op de Beeck works at the Teaching and Learning Department of KU Leuven, Belgium. For over 10 years, she has been working on numerous European projects in the area of virtual mobility, virtual campuses and schools, new educational technologies, *etc.* She is involved in both the EU-VIP and PROVIP projects.

Wim Van Petegem is Director of the Teaching and Learning Department of KU Leuven, Belgium. His research interests are in the field of multimedia production, new educational technology, networked e-learning, virtual mobility, lifelong learning, open and distance learning and knowledge transfer.

Luis Delgado has worked in higher education, research and innovation for more than 30 years. He is involved in policy making at national and international levels and has authored more than 150 articles and conference speeches on higher education, science, technology and innovation.

Ebba Ossiannilsson works as a consultant on national and international projects in the areas of lifelong learning, widening recruitment, internationalisation, online learning, utilisation of ICT, open education resources, user generated content and quality related issues. In addition to her work at Lund University, Sweden, Ebba is a board member of several national and international organisations.

Ann Heelan is the Executive Director of AHEAD, Ireland's national centre of expertise on the inclusion of students with disability in higher education. Ann previously worked at Rehab Group (formerly Rehabilitation Institute). As a teacher, Ann was shocked by the difficulties students with disabilities have in studying, and this led her into her current role today.

Kees Kouwenaar has been involved in international cooperation strategy at the VU University since 2008. Prior to this, he worked in the fields of international legal cooperation, international education and international recognition of degrees and diplomas, and was involved in the UNESCO Council of Europe Lisbon Convention of 1997.

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Hot off the press

ENGLISH LANGUAGE STANDARDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FROM ENTRY TO EXIT

ACER Press 2012

This publication, by Sophie Arkoudis, Chi Baik and Sarah Richardson, explores the idea that the English language skills of students are increasingly put in the spotlight due to the monumental impact of globalisation on the higher education sector. The underpinning tenets of the book are that in all contexts in which English is the medium of instruction, English language acquisition is central to academic success, and that this requires continuous and systematic development throughout the course of study. The authors are unwavering in this conviction and offer a variety of constructive approaches, acknowledging that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to developing English language proficiency in higher education. Order your copy from https://shop.acer.edu.au/acer-shop/product/A5260BK.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS: VISION AND VALUES FOR A NEW GENERATION

AACRAO 2013

Edited by Louise Lonabocker and Heather Zimar, this is a compilation of 22 articles on the topic of leadership, written by today's leaders in higher education. Each chapter shares the authors' visions and values in ways that inspire, motivate, and illustrate how to be an exceptional leader. Authors include many who have worked in the registrar's office for decades to others with varied backgrounds in theatre, student activism and German literature. To order a copy, visit: www4.aacrao.org/publications.

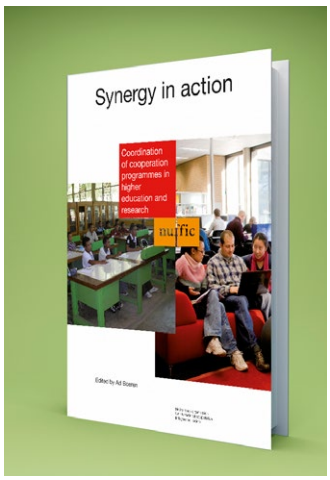
AN AVALANCHE IS COMING: HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE REVOLUTION AHEAD

Institute for Public Policy Research 2013

Written by Michael Barber, Katelyn Donnelly and Saad Rizvi, this publication aims to provoke creative dialogue and challenge complacency in traditional higher education institutions. The publication looks at the challenges ahead for higher education around the world as a result of technology advancements and globalisation. The authors argue that a new phase of competitive intensity is emerging as the concept of the traditional university itself comes under pressure and the various functions it serves are unbundled and increasingly supplied, perhaps better, by providers that are not universities at all. Download your free copy from www.ippr.org/publication.

SYNERGY IN ACTION: COORDINATION OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Nuffic 2013



This recent publication by Nuffic explores the coordination of cooperation programmes in higher education and research. It focuses on programmes which aim to strengthen higher education and research capacity in developing countries. The contributions in the book look at the possibilities for coordination of the programmes from a variety of perspectives and there is an analysis of policy frameworks of donor programmes, practical experiences in coordination of donor programmes at two universities in developing countries, coordination at country level, the Northern academic perspective and the potential to develop long term partnerships. Visit www.nuffic.nl to order a copy.

MOOCS MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES

EUA Occasional Papers 2013

The EUA Secretariat has followed the development of the MOOCs since the beginning of 2012, surveying discussion forums and publications, but also assessing the websites of MOOC providers and participating in several MOOCs in order to gain first-hand experience of this developing phenomenon. This paper provides an overview of the literature on the topic of MOOCs and identifies the key issues regarding MOOCs. Read the report at www.eua.be/Libraries/Publication/EUA_Occasional_papers_MOOCs.sflb.ashx.

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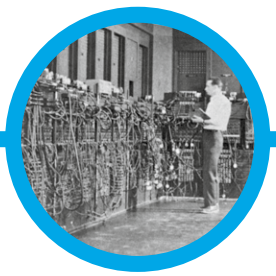
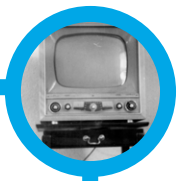
TECHNOLOGICAL TIMELINE

1946
The first computer: Electronic Numerical Integrator And Calculator (ENIAC)





1950s
TVs in the classroom as a learning tool

1867
The 'modern' typewriter

1959
The photocopier (Xerox)

1970
The handheld calculator

1801
The blackboard

1971
The Open University (UK)

1972
Apple II personal computer

1800

Technology has had a major impact on education over the last few centuries. Here are some of the key inventions which have changed the way we teach and learn over the years.

NOW

1998
Google

2001
Wikipedia

2003
LinkedIn & Skype

2004
Facebook &
Khan Academy

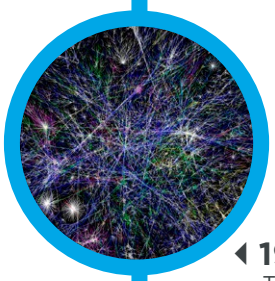
2005
YouTube
& iClicker

2006
Twitter

2007
iTunes
University

1990
The whiteboard

1989
The World
Wide Web



1985
Microsoft
Windows 1.0

1981
IBM personal
computer

2011/2012
MOOCs explosion

2010
The iPad

2008
First MOOC offered:
'Connectivism and
Connective Knowledge',
at the University of
Manitoba

2007
Surge in major textbook
publishers offering their
titles in electronic form

Photos: shutterstock.com, wikipedia.com

ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION: EUROPE IS CATCHING ON

Distance education has great potential to contribute to the European objectives on mobility, lifelong learning and equality, while ultimately supporting universities to reach out to even more students. Following the revolutionary developments in online learning in the USA, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online and distance education is becoming increasingly popular in Europe.

MICHAEL STEINMANN
StudyPortals , the Netherlands

Compared to traditional on-campus learning, distance education has several advantages. Many students nowadays are choosing distance education because of its accessibility: it enables learners to be less bound by time and location and thus gives flexibility to people who are not able to follow a strict schedule due to personal circumstances, family or work obligations. Distance education is also often less expensive than traditional education. This again can open up learning opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to study and facilitates the social inclusion of people with disadvantaged backgrounds.

With significantly fewer restrictions on capacity limits, online and distance education also benefits the universities as it allows them to expand their offer, and to reach those who ordinarily would not be able to enrol with them. Typical distance learners include regular students, parents, physically challenged people and business professionals who are looking for ways to enhance their skills during their busy schedules. Enabling any institution across the world to target anyone interested in their subject while reducing additional obstacles to international studies such as visa requirements, travel costs and travel time makes online and distance education the next step towards a truly globalised world of education.

Photo: Blend_Images (istockphoto)

PERCEPTION SHIFT

The distance learning offer is expanding both in volume and in type: online, open and blended learning; degree or credit programmes, offered by specialist distance learning institutions and also increasingly by (consortia of) traditional universities. With technology becoming more affordable and available, the interest of both learners and institutions in this special mode of education is on the rise: while in 2012 student enrolment increased by 15–20%, the offer grew by 40% as reported

by universities across Europe.[1] These rapid developments are accompanied by an increasing shift in perception. Today, online and distance education has found its way into the agenda of international media. The advent of the MOOCs, for instance, placed online and distance education in the centre of media attention across the globe. This all fosters public awareness, tackles general misconceptions regarding online and distance education and makes it an increasingly attractive option. As the Secretary General of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) Piet Henderikx puts it, "Open and distance learning has become an important answer to the current educational challenges and will significantly impact our educational landscape".

SITUATION IN EUROPE

Online and distance education is offered by traditional higher education institutions, by private schools and by dedicated distance learning schools, such as the open universities, all offering distance education in a wide range of disciplines. Despite this growth and the interest in the topic on a European level, detailed statistics on European distance education are still missing. Distance education is, however, offered by at least 220 institutions in Europe. All of these are presented on a dedicated study choice website, DistanceLearningPortal which was recently launched by European Commissioner Vassilliou.[2] Created by EADTU and StudyPortals, "DistanceLearningPortal has been developed as a direct response to the needs of European universities and learners across the globe. Today, it allows learners worldwide to find and compare hundreds of concrete offers in Europe", Edwin van Rest, Director of StudyPortals states.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN EUROPE

The portal offers a unique insight into the offer and interest in distance education in Europe. As a rather recent initiative, DistanceLearningPortal can of course not yet provide an exact representation of the current offer. It is, however, the most comprehensive portal in the field and therefore the best approach to take in identifying existing and emerging trends. Looking at the offer presented on the portal, one can find a total of at least 1545 degree programmes and short courses taught at a distance in 28 European countries; most of them offered in the UK, the Netherlands as well as Germany. Looking at the spread of disciplines, the majority of programmes available are in the field of Business and Economics, followed by Life Sciences and Applied Sciences. Diving even deeper into the specific study fields, programmes related to Education, Public Health and Economics seem to be most popular when offered at a distance.

In light of the lacking European statistics on the interest in distance education, the search behaviour of prospective students on DistanceLearningPortal can serve as a valuable indication for the current demand. While the interest in online and distance education overall is increasing, some disciplines attract a lot of interest compared to the number of programmes listed in that subject area. Particularly programmes in the area of Energy Engineering, Business & Economics, Bio & Biomedical Engineering, Political Science & International Relations, and Environmental Technology are in high demand. For all of these disciplines, the offer on DistanceLearningPortal is currently particularly limited compared to the interest shown by potential learners in these fields.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To engage in distance education is a wide-ranging strategic decision with huge implications. Depending on the level of involvement and technology chosen, there are substantial initial investments to be covered. Moreover, while one of the main features of distance education is of course its delivery mediated through technology, it is even more important to remember the human side: preparing for distance education also means motivating one's teaching staff to open themselves and their teaching habits to this new form of learning, and to critically assess and most probably upgrade their professional skills – not to mention the creation or proper adjustment of learning materials, and the need for the right marketing mix to market one's offer to a potentially global audience. All these steps call for thorough preparation and require commitment throughout the institution. Nevertheless, taking these steps will allow the university to benefit from the huge potential distance education offers: to open up their programmes to an increasingly global audience while preparing for the arrival of digital natives in the world of higher education in the years to come. **F**

PROGRAMMES RELATED TO EDUCATION, PUBLIC HEALTH AND ECONOMICS SEEM TO BE MOST POPULAR WHEN OFFERED AT A DISTANCE

1. Statistics from an (as yet) unpublished StudyPortals survey 2012.
2. For more information, please visit www.DistanceLearningPortal.eu.

THE MOOD FOR MOOCS

Photo: file404 (shutterstock)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a hot spot for international education at the moment, getting quite a lot of attention – in some cases even nervous attention – from a variety of stakeholders. Where did they come from and what exactly is all the fuss about?

ANNA COLOMBINI
Ca' Foscari University, Italy

Let's start with some definitions: a MOOC is a free-of-charge class taught via the web to a large number of learners – where large means really large: hundreds or thousand of students – with a minimum number of instructors. MOOCs are currently being offered by companies in collaboration with renowned universities and individual scholars.

In a short period of time, some of these courses have attracted tens of thousands of learners around the globe: some of the providers claim to have millions of registered learners. Registration is quite easy: all you need is an internet connection, a mobile device and an e-mail address and you can browse a catalogue of courses offered by the world's top universities.

WHERE DID IT ALL START?

George Siemens, a Canadian professor and researcher, led an open online course in 2008 for 25 paying students at the University of Manitoba. The same course was offered for free to an extra 2300. The course was reported as a landmark in the small but growing push towards open teaching. In 2011, Stanford University opened up a course on Artificial Intelligence to 100 000 students from over 200 countries. Later on, this type of course became known as a MOOC.

The main providers of MOOCs today include Coursera, founded by professors from Stanford University, defined as 'a social entrepreneurship company that partners with the top universities in the world to offer courses online for anyone to take, for free'. Following in its footsteps is edX, 'a not-for-profit enterprise of its founding partners Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that features learning designed specifically for interactive study via the web'. Another key actor is Udacity, born out of the Stanford University experiment with the hundred-thousand classroom on Artificial Intelligence, and Khan Academy, a not-for-profit organisation with the goal of 'changing education for the better by providing a free world-class education for anyone anywhere'. And more are coming: just type 'MOOC' into Google, and one of the top results is 'MOOC List', a site with a complete list of MOOCs offered by the best universities and entities.

TECHNOLOGICAL TSUNAMI

These developments are all loosely linked to the technological tsunami we are living in, characterised by the use of digital, personalised technology, and by the attitude that goes with it – the habit of accessing information anytime, anywhere. The higher education students of today grew up with a technology mindset, and they are 24/7 consumers. MOOCs are built on these new technologies and related behaviours which have emerged over the last few years. Some experts predict that in the next few years hundreds of millions of students in India, China, and Africa will access low-cost education thanks to low-cost mobile learning technology. All this cannot but raise questions about the future of teaching, the value of a degree, and the effect technology will have on how higher education institutions operate.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS OF TODAY GREW UP WITH A TECHNOLOGY MINDSET, THEY ARE 24/7 CONSUMERS

DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS

International organisations dealing with higher education are watching the phenomenon with attention: the European University Association (EUA) reports on its website a recent discussion on MOOCs and their potential impact.[1] The results of a recent

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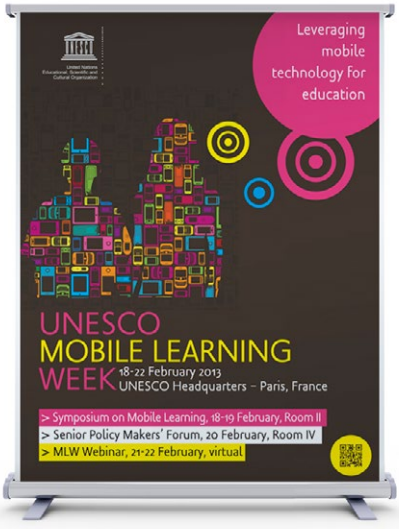
questionnaire sent to EUA members highlighted that while approximately two-thirds of the respondents had heard about MOOCs, only one-third could confirm that MOOCs had already been an issue of discussion in their institution. The Council members expressed a general consensus that "the MOOCs should be closely monitored, but also that beyond the present excitement, it would be important to analyse innovative learning provision trends, and also consider implications for institutional recognition practice and definition of degrees". The EUA announced that a task force will be established to look at these issues.

MOOCS MAKE UNIVERSITY LEADERS NERVOUS

On a different note, UNESCO recently concluded the 'Mobile Learning Week' (18–22 February 2013) and the comments were that: "The outlook for mobile learning is promising. Mobile devices such as tablets, mobile phones and e-readers are being used by increasing numbers of people". Janis Karklins, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information told forum attendees, "We cannot continue to pretend that we live in the pre-digital era, and to do so risks plunging schools into irrelevance. We live in a world where many, if not most young people carry a powerful, easy mobile computer in their pockets. The question is not whether schools and school systems will engage with these mobile technologies but *when* they will and *how* they will."[2]



NEW COMPETITION

MOOCs make university leaders nervous: they worry about having to compete with free courses from some of the world's most exclusive universities. Institutions which aren't on board yet are afraid of missing a momentous occasion, of being old-fashioned, not in line with the digital era. Some of them are rushing in: in the month of February 2013, Coursera proudly announced that 29 new universities joined in, almost doubling the number of schools offering courses on their platform. For the first time, courses across many topics will be offered in languages like French, Spanish, Chinese and Italian.

SCEPTICS

Media are giving great attention to the phenomenon, announcing a major revolution in teaching and learning systems. But there are many sceptics, and for a number of reasons. First of all, many issues related to MOOCs still need to be dealt with, for example, the possibility of awarding credits for MOOCs. In addition, completion rates are very low; assessment, grading and cheating are all challenges that have yet to be met.

In an article published by *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* in February 2013, author Nigel Thrift, Vice-chancellor of the University of Warwick, UK, analysed some reasons for the current 'obsession' with MOOCs, among which he listed middle-class anger over tuition costs and the search for ways of reducing higher-education spending, and of teaching more people more efficiently. He concluded with the advice to calm down, predicting that – as much academic research on information technology has shown – MOOCs will change some things and not others.

Nonetheless, Warwick University decided to join in "because we think MOOCs can become another generally benign way that universities can extend their influence and general visibility while realising some of the benefits of university education for those who might not otherwise receive it".[3]

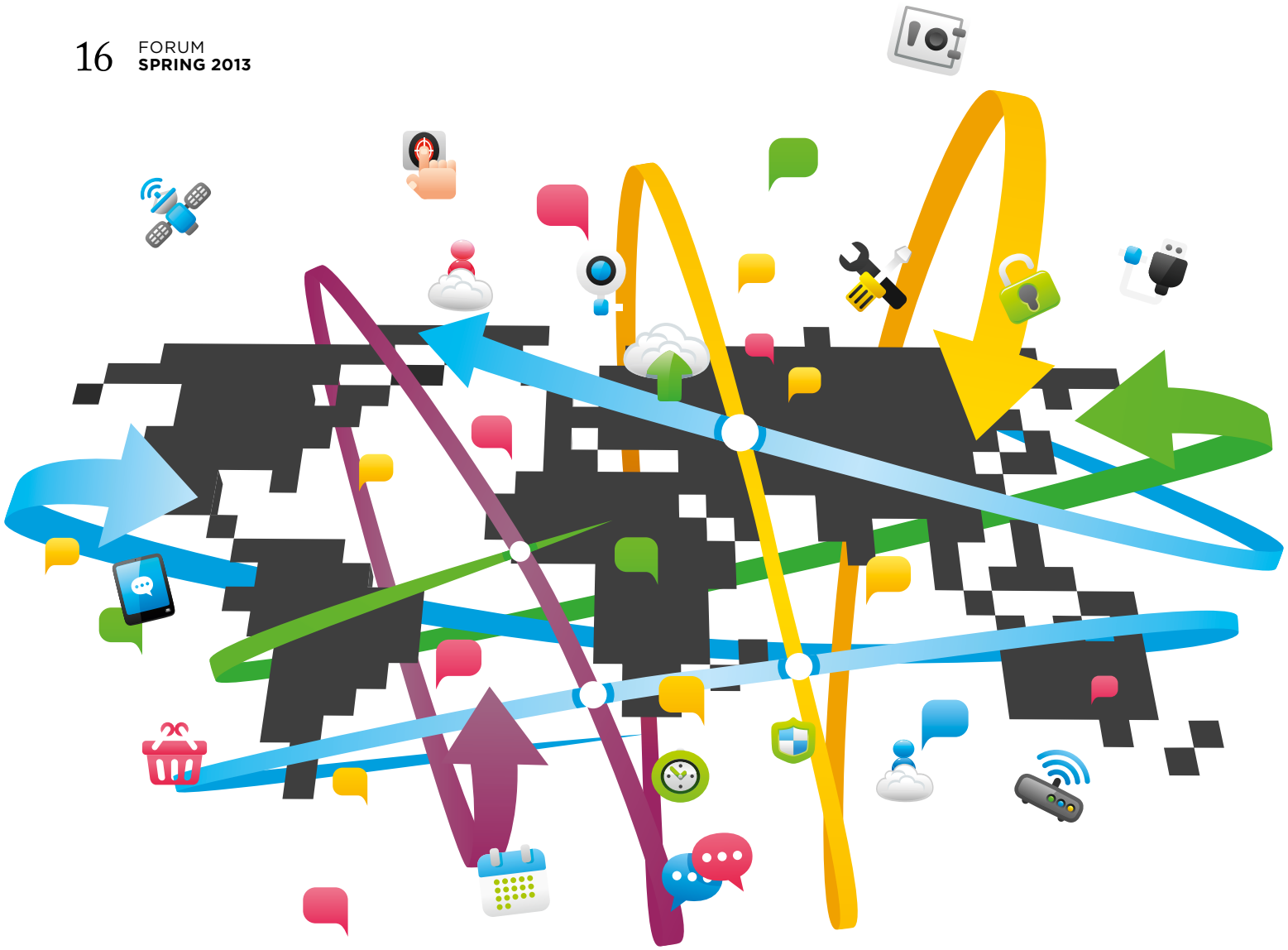
The jury is still out on MOOCs, but whatever the verdict, MOOCs are provocative for higher education as they ask for flexibility and alternative models of delivering education. We still don't now how much they will change the educational landscape but we must all get ready to face new challenges. **F**

1. www.eua.be/news/13-02-25/Massive_Open_Online_Courses_MOOCs_EUA_to_look_at_development_of_MOOCs_and_trends_in_innovative_learning.aspx.

2. www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/mobile_learning_we_cannot_continue_to_live_in_the_pre_digital_era.

3. To MOOC or not to MOOc. (13 February, 2013). Retrieved from The Chronicle of Higher Education http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/to-mooc-or-not-to-mooc/31721.

THE COMPLETION RATES ARE VERY LOW; ASSESSMENT, GRADING AND CHEATING ARE ALL CHALLENGES THAT HAVE YET TO BE MET



MOOCS
AND THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Photo: Ziven (shutterstock)

THE MOOC PHENOMENON IS TOO BIG TO IGNORE

In this second article exploring the growing phenomenon of MOOCs, the need for new business models to safeguard sustainability of online learning is put forward, together with vital questions that must be addressed if MOOCs are to determine the future of higher education.

DULEEP DEOSTHALE
Manipal Global Education, USA

MURLI NAGASUNDARAM
Manipal Global Education, India

In a widely discussed article, New York University professor Clay Shirky compared the predicament of higher education with that of the music industry more than a decade ago when music sharing site Napster – which enabled peer-to-peer file sharing of music – was created. While the industry succeeded in shutting down Napster, it was overwhelmed by the tsunami that Napster unleashed. An industry that had once dictated what people could listen to, and in what form, is now fighting for its life: people now choose to buy only the music they wish and no more; moreover, internet music sharing has only continued to expand. Until this point in history, higher education has been largely an elitist fortress, accessible – due to geography as well as financial considerations – to a relatively small proportion of the world's population. However, the internet has rendered geography irrelevant. It has made vast troves of high-quality learning materials available for free to populations – orders of magnitude larger than all academic institutions combined – located anywhere on the globe.

THE RISE OF MOOCS

Since Sebastian Thrun (of Google and formerly, Stanford) launched his experiment in September 2011, MOOCs have taken the world's imagination by storm. It is claimed that they will change the nature of higher education forever: from small, geographically local education, to an education available everywhere on the planet. Only time will tell if this eventuality will arise, but the MOOC phenomenon is too big to ignore, as attested by over 100 top universities which are already on board.

Given that MOOCs may enrol a diverse set of students from around the world, it is not yet clear what pedagogies will be appropriate, especially given cultural differences in learning. Nor are we clear about what pedagogies might be effective online. Another thorny issue is that of conferring academic legitimacy to the courses through accreditation: can credits gained from a MOOC offered from Beijing automatically transfer to a programme offered in Argentina? These new approaches call for new business models that ensure sustainability – terms that typically don't jibe well with the academic milieu. This is, to a large degree, a shot in the dark for which there appears to be some face validity. If nothing else, millions have signed up for one or more MOOCs and the numbers are rapidly growing. But thus far, no (or very few) student has paid for the privilege of enrolment. If MOOCs establish a payment model, will students in Asia or Africa be able to pay the same rates charged to American students?

COMMUNITY LEARNING

Academicians might worry whether MOOCs are an effective means of learning. MOOCs were originally conceived as massive communities of learners that use an active, constructivist method of learning. The 'community' part is critical because the learners construct their own knowledge through discussions. The idea is to leverage the diverse expertise available in online contexts to create communities whose members help each other learn.

ACADEMICIANS MIGHT WORRY WHETHER MOOCS ARE AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF LEARNING

THE CURRENT 'xMOOC' MODELS ARE UNSUSTAINABLE

Consequently, MOOCs are ideally paired with social media of some kind (preferably custom tailored to support a learning environment). Note that the leading MOOCs – Coursera, edX, and Udacity – do not follow (as originally envisioned) the community constructivist model of learning that is core to the MOOC model. These so-called 'xMOOCs' replicate a traditional classroom paradigm which educators know is hardly conducive to real learning. They do not effectively take advantage of either the expertise or access to the vast knowledge resources on the internet. The current xMOOC models are unsustainable and will need to metamorphose to create more effective learning environments.

QUALITY PERCEPTIONS

The legitimacy of distance education has long remained suspect (often with good reason) in comparison with brick-and-mortar institutions. With top drawer institutions getting into the game, however, perceptions of quality will inevitably change. Since established institutions have finite resources and limited enrolments, admission standards and tuition fees serve as filters for entry (along with geography and availability). This situation has led to an academic ecosystem where a range of institutions serve various niches catering to different abilities, financial resources, and so on. There aren't enough institutions, however, to serve the entire population of potential learners across the globe.

CHALLENGES FOR MOOCS

For too long, the West has managed to attract talented people from across the world on the basis of their reputations, often providing financial incentives such as fellowships. The tight global economic situation is challenging for both potential learners as well as the institutions. MOOCs may be the silver bullet: high quality learning provided to every motivated learner, anywhere on the planet, whenever they need it at an affordable cost. Challenges remain, however, including:

- The majority of the world has neither an internet connection nor access to a computer.
- Most MOOCs are in English; they need to be made available in other world languages.
- New pedagogies are needed for diverse, multicultural, global, online learning communities.
- The need for face-to-face contact will never be diminished.
- New methods of online learning assessment need to be developed.
- Thus far, there is no complete degree programme being offered in a MOOC form; most learners require a diploma for employment or future degrees.
- Managing a MOOC learner community is much harder than managing a small, relatively homogeneous classroom of learners.

How might MOOCs impact global partnerships? Will they end exchange programmes, joint research, and other such collaborative efforts? Will recruitment to traditional campuses dry up? Will more universities be forced to close their doors or consolidate and join other universities for their survival? It is likely that MOOCs will be the great leveller of education.

IT IS LIKELY THAT MOOCS WILL BE THE GREAT LEVELLER OF EDUCATION

Rankings will fade into the background as a university in a developing world will suddenly have equal access to improve its quality of education. Both the best university in the world and an unranked university may have multiple opportunities to collaborate based on shared interests. Students will have a much wider range of options. Students from diverse cultures and backgrounds will share a common space that will encourage and engender a dialogue that the traditional classroom may have failed to provide.

International education will probably be the biggest beneficiary of the changes in technology since it has been at the forefront of reaching out to students and communities around the world. Those enrolled in online classes, who communicate with students from around the globe, are likely to have a stronger desire to study abroad given their increased interactions with persons in other countries. Consequently, investing in and expanding study abroad programmes, perhaps even tying such programmes to online courses, may yield quite handsomely in the long run. Such online studying and travel opportunities will position students as catalysts for change, with an ability to understand, decipher and combine cultural paradigms. **F**

Photo: alphaspirit (shutterstock)

VIRTUAL MOBILITY: A FLEXIBLE APPROACH

International work placements are gaining increasing importance in the context of internationalisation of higher education and globalisation of our (professional) world. However, traditional international work placements are not always feasible for all students due to financial, geographical, social or other reasons. Can technology help to make such internships a reality?

ILSE OP DE BEECK, MARIET VRIENS, WIM VAN PETEGEM
KU Leuven, Belgium

Virtual mobility, defined as 'a set of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) supported activities that realise or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching and/or learning',[1] offers possibilities to address issues of immobility, providing greater potential for immobile students to experience work placements abroad in one form or another. Virtual mobility can be used to facilitate and support physical international internships (blended) or to realise international internships (virtual).

ACTORS INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENTS

Any work placement involves three stakeholders: the higher education institution, the student and the receiving company or organisation. During a work placement these three stakeholders ideally interact with each other on a regular basis, although the main line of interaction will of course be between the student and the company/organisation. Virtual mobility can be implemented to facilitate this interaction at a distance. The implementation of ICT to support interaction can also range from very limited (when most of the interaction between two stakeholders takes place face-to-face) to very far-reaching (when all of the interaction between two stakeholders happens at a distance).

Looked at from a time perspective, three different phases in a work placement can be distinguished: before, during and after the placement. In each of the addressed phases one or more different actors are involved and virtual mobility activities can help to enable optimal communication between the different stakeholders. The possible integration of virtual mobility in international internships during the different phases has been assessed through a European project 'Enterprise-University Virtual Placements' (EU-VIP).[2] This initiative consisted of a variety of pilot projects conducted between 2009 and 2011, bringing together 16 partners from eight different countries. Some of the examples and experiences of participants involved in the pilot projects are illustrated here to show the role technology can play in enabling mobility.

PREPARATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENT

In the 'before' phase of a placement, it is essential to plan all aspects thoroughly. Ideally, all of the agreements, responsibilities and procedures form part of a written agreement between all actors. Virtual mobility can be useful in this phase for example in organising a synchronous discussion between actors that are geographically widely dispersed, in order to select the right student, to introduce the student to the company and the culture of the 'hosting' country and *vice versa* to introduce the company to the culture of the student's home country, *etc.*

EXAMPLE: SKYPE

In a pilot project organised by the University of Turku in Finland, an offer for an international placement was made by the TURKU-Southwest Finland European Office located in Brussels, Belgium. To select the right student for the job the organisation used Skype interviews with the candidates. After the student selection, Skype was also used to make the first arrangements regarding the placement.

EXAMPLE: VIDEO CVs

The University of Padua in Italy uses video CVs whereby students present themselves to foreign companies. The video CV has proven to be an effective way for students to introduce themselves to companies abroad, with a focus on demonstrating their communicative and linguistic skills. The video CVs are offered via an online platform which also provides a chat function through which remote interviews between the students and the interested companies can take place.

DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

During the placement the focus will obviously be on the development of knowledge and skills through practical and authentic tasks. Next to discipline-specific competencies, the student will also ideally have the opportunity to work on generic skills like teamwork, international, social and communication skills. To stimulate this learning process, coaching and feedback from academic and company mentors is essential. Virtual mobility can be used in this phase to execute tasks for a company at a distance, to mentor the student by academic or company staff, to organise peer feedback, or to stimulate student reflection (*eg* through use of a blog or an e-portfolio).

EXAMPLE: VIDEO CONFERENCING

The Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven in Belgium organised a pilot in which Business Studies students undertaking work placements abroad participated in a weekly seminar at their home institution through video conferencing. These seminars took place together with their peers at home and were aimed at exchanging experiences regarding local and international work placements. This way, the students at home had the opportunity to share the international experience. The students abroad were able to better reflect on the differences in business cultures. Additionally, the students also used an e-portfolio and an online self-assessment tool to monitor their own learning process.

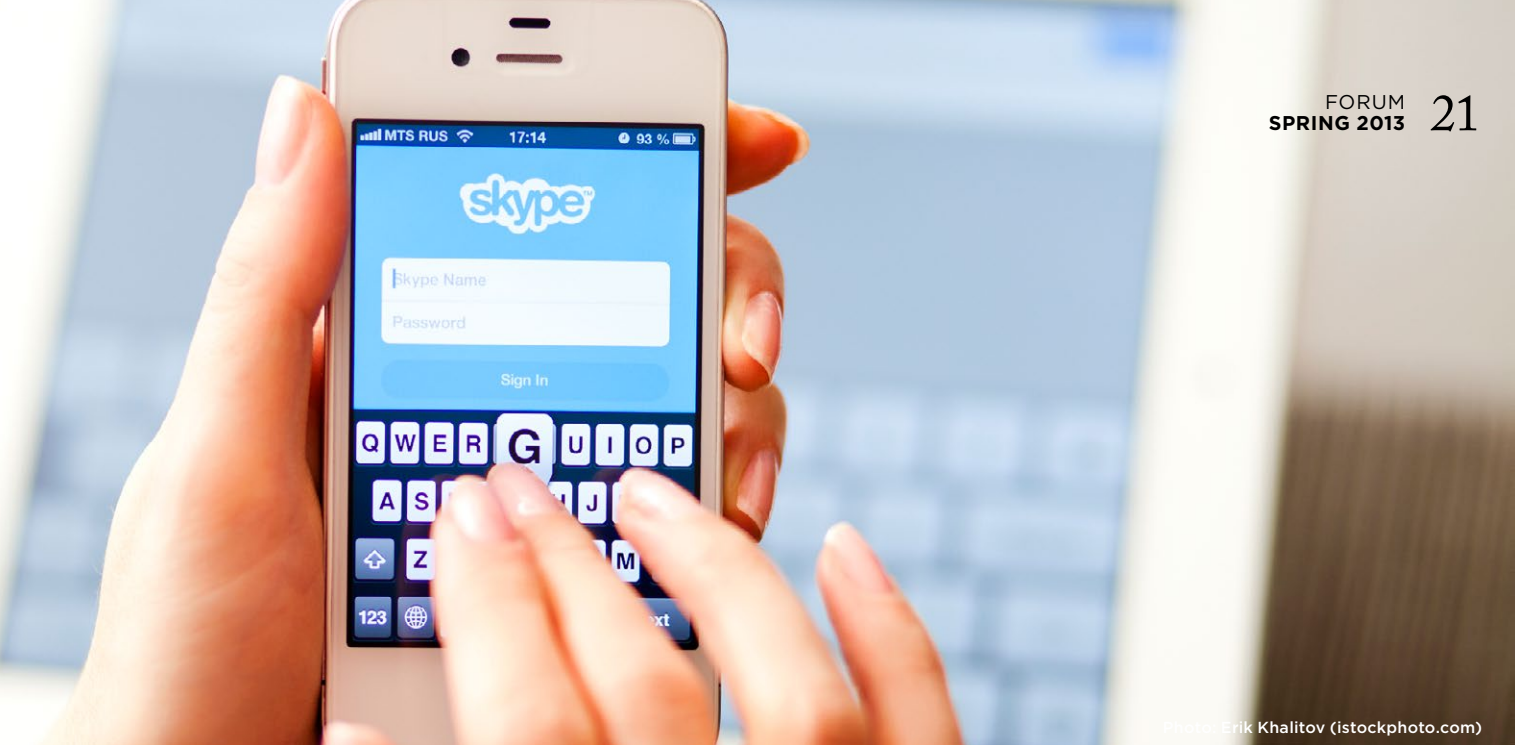


Photo: Erik Khalitov (istockphoto.com)

EVALUATION OF A PLACEMENT

In the 'after' phase, evaluation is the central theme: evaluation of the student but also assessment of the cooperation between the higher education institution and the company/organisation. Virtual mobility can come in useful here to discuss student assessment or evaluation of the placement or to make a final assessment of the student's performance based on an archived use of collaboration or reflection tools.

EXAMPLE: E-PORTFOLIO

FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany developed a Moodle platform to support students undertaking a work placement in all phases. During the placement, the students keep track of their progress through the e-portfolio function. They also have the opportunity to communicate with peers through the discussion forum. This results in a detailed log of the work placement, accessible to all actors during and after the placement. The student uses this log to perform a self-assessment and the mentors can take it into account when deciding on the end evaluation and accreditation of the placement.

EXAMPLE: BLOGGING

In a fully virtual placement organised by KU Leuven in Belgium, the student's blog (which was used to report on his or her progress) was used to replace the normal paper report. The end evaluation was based on this report in combination with a Skype meeting between academic and company mentor.

CHALLENGES IN REACHING BUSINESSES

During the many EU-VIP pilot projects, the topic of virtual mobility and internships generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm among higher education institutions and students. However, the business stakeholder group turned out to be a lot more difficult to reach. It was determined that there was a clear need to enlarge the dissemination potential towards businesses. The EU-VIP project also noted that international work placements are mostly the result of individual relationships or actions. They are often made possible due to personal connections either from the student or someone at the institution, while for successful virtually supported placements a more structured implementation and collaboration between higher education institutions and companies is desirable.

IN A VIRTUAL PLACEMENT ORGANISED BY KU LEUVEN, THE STUDENT'S BLOG WAS USED TO REPLACE THE NORMAL PAPER REPORT

These issues are now being addressed in the follow-up project 'Promoting Virtual Mobility in Placements' (PROVIP) (2012–2014).[3] This project is aimed at disseminating the EU-VIP and PROVIP results to business stakeholders. It also aims to create structured international cooperation regarding virtually supported international work placements between higher education institutions and the business world, facilitated through a collaboration platform. Both projects hope to contribute to the realisation of mobility for all in the European higher education area. **F**

Those interested in the topic of virtual internships can find more information in the publication: *Make it work! Integrating virtual mobility in international work placements,* available as a free download on the project website: www.euvip.eu.

1. Vriens, M., Achten, M., Beeck, I. & Van Petegem, W., (2011). *Virtual mobility in international work placements*. www.euvip.eu/resources/EDEN_paper.pdf.

2. The EU-VIP was funded by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme. For more information, please visit: www.euvip.eu.

3. The progress of the PROVIP project can be followed via the website www.provip.info.

IN CONVERSATION WITH

PAUL BACSICH

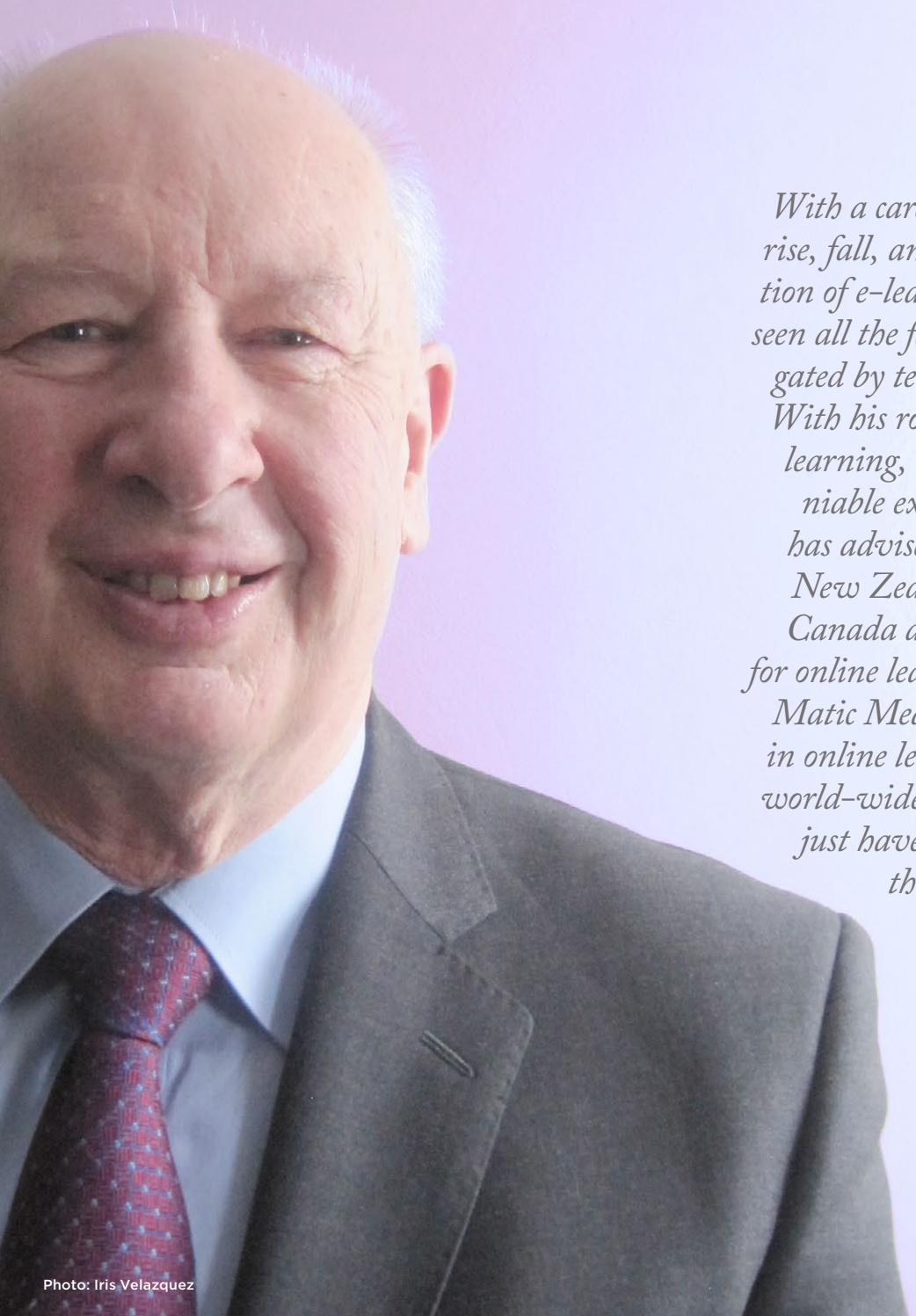


Photo: Iris Velazquez

With a career which has spanned the rise, fall, and, in some cases, resurrection of e-learning, Paul Bacsich has a seen all the fads and revolutions instigated by technology over the decades. With his roots entrenched in distance learning, Paul has developed undeniable expertise in the subject, and has advised universities in the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Canada and Thailand. His passion for online learning led him to establish Matic Media Ltd, a company active in online learning policy and practice world-wide. For someone who might just have 'seen it all', what does he think of the current fixation with online education?

SARAH FENCOTT
EAIE Publications Coordinator

DURING MY A-LEVEL STUDIES I WAS BASICALLY AN INDEPENDENT STUDENT SO I HAD SOME UNDERSTANDING OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Throughout your extensive career, you've been heavily involved in e-learning and distance learning, beginning with the Open University (OU) back in the early 1970s. What sparked your initial interest in this field?

PB: I was a newish PhD graduate and research fellow at Oxford in 1972, and as is the situation now, there was a bit of a recession at the time and university jobs were very difficult to get. I heard that there was this new place being set up, the Open University (OU), and they wanted people, fast. I had no idea how rigorous the selection process was – it was a proper selection process but I daresay in those days they took all the ones that were interested because it was seen as a very strange place – here was something that was not a university and wasn't even paying on university scales. I did know a bit about the OU before I joined because I was reasonably technological in those days. During my A-level studies in Scotland I was basically an independent student, so I had some understanding and experience of the mode of distance learning. It certainly didn't worry me that the OU was a different kind of university. I joined in 1972 and stayed there for years.

Was the OU viewed as quite a radical step for education?

PB: It was viewed in the way polytechnics were viewed years later when they became universities, and as university colleges are currently being viewed as they turn into universities – how can anything so new and so small be a university? People were very snobby, and it was made worse by the fact that the OU wasn't even teaching proper students – they were studying at a distance, and many didn't have any qualifications. But it has proved itself over the years and fought its way up to being a very respectable established institution. Through the institution I became more interested in the subject of e-learning and realised there was more to distance teaching than television and correspondence teaching and I took this through various phases of evolution and like to think I helped to move the OU on a bit faster than it might have otherwise moved.

Technology has advanced enormously over the last 30 decades. What aspect of technology do you feel has had the greatest impact on higher education?

PB: That's a very interesting question and I suspect my answer won't be the same as others. I'm very technological now, very active on Facebook and Twitter, but I do remember life before the web, and there was actually a lot of technology around even then. If you look at higher education generally, it contains an awful lot of administrators and support staff. So I suspect that in time to come, e-mail will be seen as having had the greatest impact. I lived through pre-e-mail to post e-mail and I remember the way things changed. It was once the senior managers took on e-mail personally, *ie* not getting their secretaries to handle their e-mails, that it had the greatest effect. So in the late '80s, early '90s, e-mail had a tremendous impact at the OU. Nowadays, e-mail translates to a variety of different functions which everyone uses such as texting on mobile phones and using Twitter. E-mail is so pervasive and it's all about communication.

IF YOU ARE AN EXISTING UNIVERSITY, YOU DO TAKE YOUR CHANCES BY BECOMING AN E-UNIVERSITY

Back in early 2000 there was a surge in e-universities, however many lasted just a few years before being discontinued. What do you think was the reason for their decline, and do they have a better chance of succeeding today?

PB: The e-universities were, in a way, a second wave of innovation after the open universities. The problem with the OUs was that once one country got one, other countries then needed to have one too, so a whole number of them started relatively quickly and then not much happened institutionally for years after that. At the end of the 1990s, a study called the Business of Borderless Education came out and that got people really excited across the world about e-universities, which created the big surge in the early 2000s.

The difference back then compared to now is that back then, the open universities were trying to be proper universities. With the e-universities there were two kinds: those like the Open University of Catalonia, which were in a sense open universities yet because of technology, moved on to become online open universities. If you are an existing university, you do take your chances by becoming an e-university but at the same time you have everything to play for: you're fully autonomous, and so universities like the Open University of Catalonia went from strength to strength. The second kind

were based on a 'broker model' – they weren't universities but they were vehicles to help universities deliver online learning. And this is actually a very modern model if you look at some of the service providers nowadays like Resource Development International (RDI) – their role is to facilitate universities delivering online, not to award their own degrees. What happened with the e-universities using the broker model however, was that their 'clients' essentially turned on them. If I'm delivering your courses and you suddenly don't feel I'm giving enough commission, then you can stop giving me courses, and if the broker hasn't got any courses, then it doesn't have any business. I have a very firm view that this model isn't a successful one unless you have a very entrenched deal.

Do you think any of the e-universities emerging today will have a better chance of succeeding?

PB: There are different kinds emerging today. The new kind are the 'notversities' – you might include the MOOCs with these because, although they have some of the trappings of universities – there is apparently a course you can study – there isn't actually a degree at the end of the course and employers don't yet take what you've done seriously.

They have a better chance of surviving today, not because the technology is better – it was perfectly adequate back then – but because they can learn from the past. It does help to have a credible business plan and it does help to have the right kind of vice-chancellor – all kinds of sensible things that you'd do in any other university. I do think we'll see more e-universities but I don't think we'll see enough of them, and I can't understand why governments are so risk averse to this. Why does no one ever say "this kind of university is a really good idea, don't you think we need 10?" Some countries, India is one, and even Italy (before the money ran out) did some very innovative things with telematic universities. Few other European countries have done this however. I did write in a previous article that 'we can seem to be a tired continent' and it's true. The Americans can't understand what's holding us back – but they're glad in a way! I think what's holding us back is cultural, not technological – and maybe critical mass – there isn't really an 'EU' linguistically or culturally.

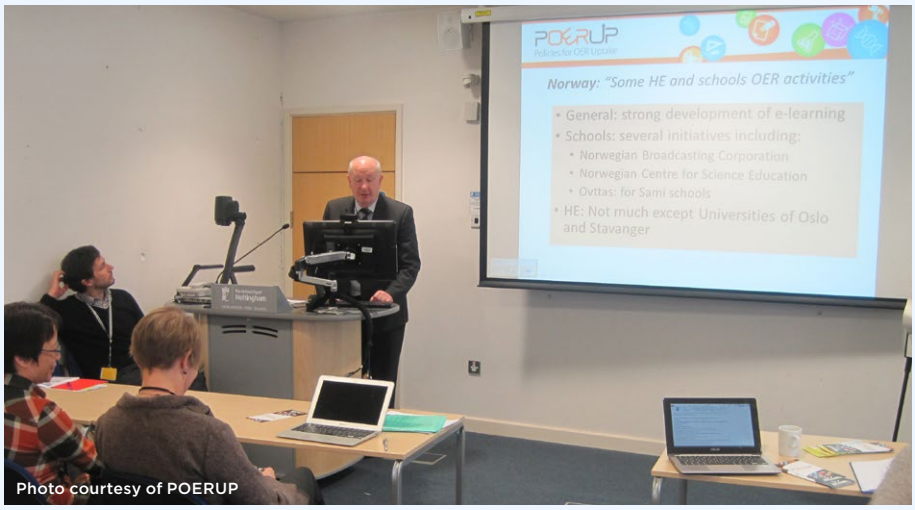
IN THE USA, ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING IS SPURTING OUT LIKE GEYSERS EVERYWHERE BUT IN EUROPE IT'S JUST A SMALL TRICKLE

In your recent chapter for the European Commission on e-learning, you mentioned that universities will find it hard to evolve as 'dual-mode institutions' whereby campus-based learning is equally balanced with distance learning. Why do you feel this will be difficult to achieve?

PB: There are two issues here. It's hard for them to become dual mode institutions and it's turning out to be quite hard for them to stay dual mode institutions. It's quite hard for them to stay dual mode institutions because half of the students are on the campus or near the campus, and the other half are off the campus. You have to take different approaches to these students – you can't just say 'hand your essay in' to the distance learning students as they might be half way across the world, and the on-campus students can get a bit miffed because the off-campus students get all kinds of extra resources, or so they like to think. There are also cultural differences – distance education is much more procedural, there's much less thought for informal things, like the charismatic lecturer who prepares her notes the night before. The cultures are very different, just like chalk and cheese and so if you're the vice-chancellor, you're basically riding two horses which are probably pulling apart or crashing into each other.

The other big problem is how the institution gets there in the first place. We call it the 'second stage ignition problem'. For example, someone rushes into a university and hypnotises enough people to go ahead with online distance learning and then after a year or two the system catches its breath and says "I knew this wouldn't work" (usually before there is any evidence) and "we must regulate this and tidy it up". Just when you want to move on to doing some really big-time stuff, the system begins to drag you down. So quite often, distance learning isn't allowed to get that big. If you look at the growth of distance learning in the UK, it's changing now, but it has been quite tough to get much beyond 1000 students at most institutions. One or two have made it, the University of London International Programmes being an obvious exception, but it was set up differently, it's like an internal broker model. There are signs, however, that the barriers aren't quite as rigid as they once were as universities begin to realise the financial benefit of online distance learning. In the USA, online distance learning is spurting out like geysers everywhere but in Europe it's currently just a small trickle.

I think the model of university as we know it is not in good shape, and whether it's MOOCs or something else, we'll have to do something in the developed world – the cost situation (never mind the fees) is just too high and the payback to students is becoming less clear. Whether the government subsidises it or not is irrelevant. The MOOCs, I suspect, are a step towards a possible answer, even if it is not the answer we will end up with.



Paul Bacsich giving a presentation at the recent Open Educational Resources Conference 2013

Is it possible to control the quality of e-learning across Europe?

PB: Yes it is, but many would argue about the word 'control'. The fantasy is that quality assurance is a dialogue between the university and the regulator, not control. Perhaps we should also be doing more quality control of regular teaching across Europe, not just e-learning. It's interesting that some countries in Europe don't actually have any real quality control mechanisms at all. We are trying to bring this issue of quality control to a conclusion. We've had meetings with the European Quality Agencies to discuss principles by which schemes could be developed. And it's quite slow going, but the European Commission is quite actively involved behind the scenes. A lot depends on whether the countries really want to do it. It's not actually difficult if people want to do it, but it does raise all kinds of questions and many universities have been leading quite a comfortable life until now and are not necessarily open to such questions.

E-learning is sufficiently different – there's a whole other way of interacting in e-learning – so you do need some additional regulations to cover this.

With the growing use of social media by HEIs, do you feel the relationships between university staff and students will, or has, changed from what it used to be?

PB: There was a time a few years ago when student-lecturer contact was being cut as universities tended to focus too much on research but this is now changing and there are growing issues that people face every day, for example what are the rules for being Facebook friends? Some people try to get around this by having two Facebook profiles, one professional and one social, but that's tough for most people, there are just not enough hours in the day. There's a lack of guidance in this area and it's very turbulent – there's an awful lot of experimentation going on and it hasn't really settled down yet.

Students are definitely more open to social media in general, and in some cases using social media might be the only way they have of getting hold of their lecturer after office hours (if their office hours are very short). But then you get cases where students get quite upset when they don't get a response immediately, even if it's 10 o'clock at night! So there is this expectation that replies should be instantaneous and there needs to be a way of managing expectations. I say, let's have more contact between staff and students but keep it more structured and have a clearer set of rules.

What's your current focus now?

PB: We've just finished a big project on virtual schools and colleges, and we're moving on to a newer project on Open Educational Resources. That's my current focus, but it's just the vehicle for my interest, which is in reconstruction of universities: helping them to move towards an understanding of how they need to change in ways which are facilitated by technology, but ways which will not all be comfortable. My defence is that it will be a lot less comfortable if they don't do anything useful for the next five years because they'll end up in a situation of discontinuous change. In that whole debate, the issue of MOOCs is vital – not so much regarding what they are, because I suspect they will be lots of things, but its more about what they represent – a desire for a lower-cost but still high-quality education and a desire for a different kind of qualification and possibly more recognition of sheer hard work. They can lead to a different construction of a university environment and possibly – this is a scary one – a construction of a university, or 'notversity' which actually takes teaching seriously. We've built up this whole culture of research in universities, not realising that, for most students, they've gone there to learn. We need to rethink this whole fusion of teaching and research and, in some institutions, get back to being very good at teaching. F

WE NEED TO RETHINK THIS WHOLE FUSION OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH

WHO'S IN (QUALITY) CONTROL?

There is a wide consensus that quality assurance is essential for developing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), allowing cross-border mobility of students and graduates with easy recognition of study periods and degrees. With the recent advances in technology and the subsequent boom in online education, an even greater need has developed for quality assurance in international higher education.

LUIS DELGADO
Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Spain

Nowadays it is possible for anyone to have free access to online courses from world-class universities, mainly American institutions such as Princeton, Columbia, Stanford *etc,* but also European ones, such as the University of Edinburgh and the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. The courses offered include practical works, workshops, exams and certificates (requiring payment) and therefore have the potential to be accepted by both potential students and the labour market. In addition, educational franchising is developing quickly since – as in the case of online learning – costs are lower than in traditional universities. Though these types of free online courses are still out of the regular higher education system, there is no doubt that they will have an influence on the global landscape of higher education in the next few years.

GREATER RECOGNITION OF INFORMAL LEARNING

European Union institutions such as the European Commission call for the recognition of informal learning as a means to overcome barriers to mobility, flexibility and interaction with the labour market. There is also a request to integrate higher education institutions more actively into lifelong learning, beyond the regulated higher education degree structure and to bring innovation to the teaching and learning process. One could think, then, that the development of online courses such as MOOCs goes in this direction, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission and of the Bologna process to develop the EHEA, and therefore should be very welcome. However, there are of course some complications. The Bologna process has developed its own tools and institutions for quality assurance on the basis of the regulated three-cycle higher education structure adopted by all 47 EHEA countries: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate levels. The National Quality Agencies and the European guidelines and standards for quality assurance do not currently take into account MOOCs.

Photo: Dukes (shutterstock)

At the same time, the recognition of study periods and degrees within the regulated higher education system is still a problem in spite of common efforts since the adoption of the Lisbon Convention of Recognition in 1997, and more recent attempts through the development of the European Area of Recognition (EAR). Despite the setting up of recognition and information networks, the development of recognition manuals, and the compilation of guidelines to implement good practice in recognition, it is widely accepted that a divergence in recognition practice still exists among the EHEA countries. Only a few countries allow their universities to accredit their programmes through foreign quality agencies.

A DIVERGENCE IN RECOGNITION PRACTICE STILL EXISTS AMONG THE EHEA COUNTRIES

REVISION OF STANDARDS

There is a growing need to revisit the tools, standards, guidelines and procedures developed by the National Quality Agencies. This revision should include the new types of online delivery of higher education considering technology and its possible advantages to the learning process with the goal to really move towards creating a tool which develops quality rather than something which simply ensures compliance with a somewhat bureaucratic process.

Besides legal and cultural problems at country and institution levels, there is also a need to reinforce the mutual trust among the national and institutional quality systems so that the recognition of assessments by foreign quality agencies and/or institutions is made possible.

The complexity and diversity of higher education institutions makes it even more challenging to set common standards and methods. There is not a 'one size fits all' solution. Perhaps we should rely more on institutional quality assurance systems tailored to the specific characteristics of each institution, which cover all of the university's missions including both study programmes and teachers. The role of the National Quality Agencies would then be to focus on ensuring the adequacy and reliability of the institutional quality assurance systems, *ie* evaluating, certifying and accrediting institutions rather than individuals and programmes. This would be one step towards creating a more effective quality assurance system.

The need for a greater focus on quality assurance and recognition should by now be clear. Whatever views people may hold about the new methods of online learning which are emerging (and there are many differing views), if they are to act as a catalyst, putting standards and quality assurance of higher education in the spotlight, we will certainly have achieved something. **F**

THERE IS A NEED TO REINFORCE THE MUTUAL TRUST AMONG THE NATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY SYSTEMS

Open Educational Resources from A NORDIC PERSPECTIVE

Open education and digital learning are increasing at high speed globally. Experience has shown time after time that when the internet comes along and disrupts an industry, it doesn't go away. From music to books and newspapers, the internet changes how we work, how we think, how we see the world. In 2012, that wave of disruption hit higher education.[1]

EBBA OSSIANNILSSON
Lund University, Sweden

Free, open online courses are an exciting addition to the higher education landscape, with MOOCs gaining significant public attention in 2012.[2] At Stanford and MIT, for example, the open courses draw more students than the regular ones. Yet there's more to open education than MOOCs, namely, the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement. OER are teaching, learning or research materials that are in the public domain or released with an intellectual property license that allows for free use, adaptation, and distribution.[3] OER are seen as change agents for the transformation processes for learning and education.[4]

An open learning culture is based on people's commitment and desire to learn. This desire is increasing, with individuals demanding access to the best education in the world, regardless of their current location. Academics are also finding benefits in an open learning culture: they no longer have to reinvent the wheel themselves but can benefit from networking with colleagues around the world.


Photo: Kristian Septimius Krogh (istockphoto)

Universities benefit too: by offering free online education they can improve their international reputation and reach.

CHANGE IN MINDSETS

Moving towards open and free education requires a rethinking of educational issues in all aspects, which demands a change in mindset or a paradigm shift regarding learning, educational design, infrastructure, organisation and quality. One of the most fruitful ways forward is to involve students as change agents – enabling them to act as driving forces in the work towards increased open education and digitalisation. Other methods include social innovations[5] and strategic partnerships with other universities.

MOVING TOWARDS OPEN AND FREE EDUCATION REQUIRES A RETHINKING OF EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN ALL ASPECTS

Organisations and authorities such as the OECD, UNESCO, EC and the Nordic OER Alliance are encouraging member states to move towards open education in the years to come. Open education has an impact on many aspects of society such as educational quality, social innovation, competitiveness, democracy, globalisation, sustainability and visibility.[6] Two other strong driving forces which are often emphasised are global branding, or instant recognition; and strategic partnerships.

THE NORDIC OER ALLIANCE

The developments in the higher education arena have inspired a Nordic initiative, The Nordic OER Alliance. The aim of this alliance is to promote and utilise open education in the Nordic countries with a focus on creating a strong base for OER and Open Educational Practices (OEP) in the region, with global outreach in mind. Open education has the potential to reform education in the Nordic countries (and across the globe) although it needs strong actions on a policy, research and implementation level.[7] Through its work, the Nordic Open Education Alliance aims to contribute to:

- Enabling and supporting collaborative actions.
- Analysing opportunities and barriers for a successful implementation of online education strategies.
- Creating a knowledge resource and an awareness network for advice on OER and OEP policy building and policy implementation.

CHALLENGES FOR SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES

Universities in Sweden have decided to explore the opportunities of going for open access courses like MOOCs as many world class universities have already done, to raise their quality, reputation and outreach. In order to do so, they have to set aside human resources and funding for investigating the opportunities to make open education and digital learning more affordable and strategic. The universities need to

decide strategically on aims and possible target groups as well as on policies for open access courses since there are many possibilities. The universities may also choose to connect to ongoing international initiatives.

Countries which have succeeded in working with fully open education have ongoing research, dedicated professors and PhD candidates. For Swedish universities, this is not yet the case, unfortunately. Along with a paradigm shift, there is a great need to rethink learning and education and the challenge is to focus on learning design.[8] Increased student peer-review and collaboration could be interesting possibilities. Additionally, it is necessary to rethink staff working conditions and create incentives for working with open education. Some identified challenges can be outlined as:

- **Legal:** According to Swedish law and regulations, followers of MOOCs are not students. University staff in Sweden own the intellectual rights to teaching material they have produced. Universities can't make these materials openly available as OER without the teacher's consent and encouragement using creative commons licensing.
- **Financial:** Since MOOCs are not classed as formal education, they cannot be financed with governmental educational funding. Universities will have to finance this kind of open education with other sources.
- **Organisational:** Experience of designing and conducting courses based on digital learning isn't necessarily acknowledged when employing or promoting staff. There is a lack of necessary infrastructure and technical support at the university level. There are needs for interdisciplinary cooperation, for example, between academics, digital learning experts and librarians.
- **Educational:** Working with open education and digital learning isn't always encouraged; staff members lack the time and support to venture into the area, yet students today demand a higher degree of personalised learning. Additionally, open education and digital learning are not necessarily recognised when educational programmes are accredited.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Undoubtedly, Swedish universities also have to compete in the international arena with open education, and there is direct competition from Harvard, Stanford and others. In this situation, the issue is on what universities decide to do, how they choose to provide their own training and how they choose to market it. A traditional university education will be affected in a positive way by the use of technology through interaction, yet strict attention must be paid to teachers' working conditions and the quality of education provided.

STRICT ATTENTION MUST BE PAID ON TEACHERS' WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

With a creative approach, the identified problems can be overcome through innovation. However, some questions can still be raised regarding the way forward towards open education for Swedish universities. One of the main questions concerns quality and not quantity in the provision of education. Strategically, the question of both target groups and offered courses in a global arena are crucial. There also remain questions on how to build an organisation and infrastructure that encourages staff to work with open education and digital hybrid learning.

All these questions aside, for those individuals who do not have access to a university or the funds for training, the opportunities generated by open education could be revolutionary. The empowerment to which an open learning culture can give rise will be of global value. **F**

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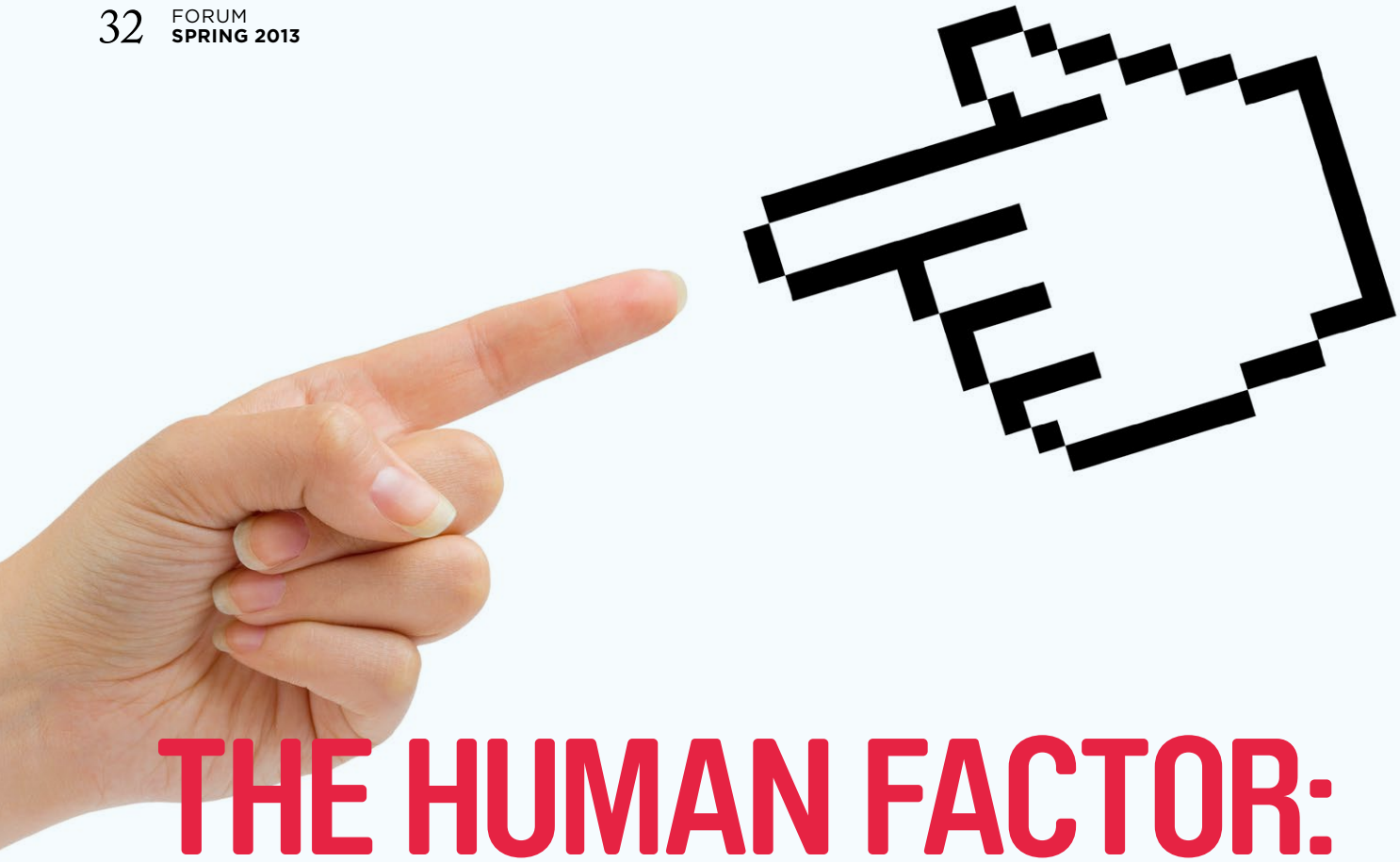

THE HUMAN FACTOR:

IS PURE E-EDUCATION THE FUTURE?

What role do and should humans play in online education? Are the new MOOCs an effective way of adhering to budget cuts and staffing issues? Can we effectively learn from artificial intelligence response systems? What does the future of higher education look like?

MICHAEL BOURKE
British Columbia Institute of Technology, Canada

Photo: Tatiana Popova (istockphoto)

Versions of the quotes above are sometimes heard to pass the lips of otherwise sensible managers of higher education institutions. I hope that many of these managers will have a chance to read a recent editorial in *The New York Times,* 'The Trouble With Online College'[1] which introduces sobering concerns about whether even far more modestly conceived online courses can live up to the e-technology promise/hype of widening access to higher education. Referring to a series of nine studies conducted by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University, the editorial presents evidence, from thousands of online courses across a wide range of American colleges, showing that a fully online delivery format produces higher attrition rates than a live class or limited hybrid model. The studies undermine the distributive justice case that one often hears managers and educational theorists making for online learning. The editorial ends, though, with this slightly upbeat conclusion: "the evidence shows that poorly designed courses can seriously shortchange the most vulnerable students".

The suggestion that there might be ways to design fully online learning sites that offer a comparable educational experience to courses where students actually encounter an instructor is in line with the recommendations of one of the CCRC studies, and possibly is defensible. But it seems to dangle the prospect of a technical fix to the problem of student underperformance and resulting high attrition rates. Many e-education enthusiasts take seriously the view that online learning problems can be solved by enhancing the allure or usability of the digital environment, or by improving the intelligence of automated tutoring systems. But these kinds of fixes to the problems of online courses overlook a more readily available solution, one which steps outside the tempting view that the technology itself holds the solution.

THE DISAPPEARING HUMAN FACTOR

I would wager that the majority of 'vulnerable' *and* well-prepared students who are being 'seriously shortchanged' by online learning have found themselves in online courses in which the interaction between instructor and student is minimal, at least relative to the level of instructor-student interaction that *ought* to be required for online courses. If that's true, then the most natural solution, or at least first step, to the problem(s) of online learning might be to ensure that instructors who take on online teaching are up to the task; that they are prepared to put in the prodigious hours required by a well-conducted online course.

A FALSE VISION

It sometimes seems that those who enthuse over the appearance of MOOCs and automated learning systems regard the future as already decided. Some of these enthusiasts have bought into a vision in which all but the most elite of current institutions of higher education will be swept away or unrecognisably altered by e-learning.

I doubt that many programme heads that have had extensive and direct experience administering multiple sections of fully online courses would share this sweeping vision. There's something about observing online courses taught with creativity and passion (a very rare occurrence?) or, alternatively, being close to the fallout of indifferently *taught* (as opposed to *designed*) online courses which reminds one that teaching essentially is a form of human interaction, even when conducted in a so-called virtual environment. It also reminds one that teaching irreducibly is an art.

TEACHING ESSENTIALLY IS A FORM OF HUMAN INTERACTION, EVEN WHEN CONDUCTED IN A SO-CALLED VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

From this viewpoint, it seems unlikely that the ongoing pedagogical task of encouraging students to make the requisite intellectual demands of themselves, and of providing creative, knowledgeable, and

Photo: Lesley Lister (istockphoto) 01

sensitive feedback to their interpretive and analytic output, can readily be outsourced to peer assessment, or to an artificial intelligence (AI) response system. This can only be successfully carried out if the peers in question are actually seasoned tutors masquerading as students, or if the as-yet poorly specified theoretical challenges of AI admit a solution.

DOES THE TECHNOLOGY MEDIUM SHAPE THE MESSAGE?

Is an online learning platform merely a pedagogical medium like any other? The late communications theorist Marshall McLuhan's famous slogan that "the medium is the message" suggests a perspective from which a technologically replete online course would seem to subsume teacher and student alike in the medium of the technology. Those of us who have taught and taken online courses know that the educational experience of e-education is distinct from giving or receiving live lectures, seminars, or tutorials. Let me take a single example, one that picks out a core activity of both online and live courses, namely 'discussion'.

An asynchronous online discussion is only roughly analogous to a discussion that unfolds during a seminar or tutorial in which the participants are in close proximaty to one another. The analogy might narrow were we to compare a synchronous online discussion with a live seminar discussion. But that's a different issue if the instructor is fully present in the synchronous/live encounter. In the case of asynchronous formats, the felt experience and structure of discussions are only loosely comparable.

Yet while the medium of exchange varies markedly between virtual and live formats, arguably the opportunity for a 'communion' between teacher and student, or student and student, remains. For that matter, the medium of exchange in an asynchronous online course might actually encourage or allow participants – interlocutors in a discussion or dialogue – cognitively to be more meaningfully present to one another than they are when exchanging views during a live encounter. This might be the case because as their discussion unfolds, possibly over several days, they each have the opportunity to consider more resourcefully and fully each other's arguments and assertions, and so to have a wider window into aspects of their respective world views, and ideally a ready opportunity to examine more fully their own world view.

The ideal of online discussion suggested by this example might be exceptional, but it suggests a pragmatic (no doubt for many e-theorists, counter-intuitive) axiom of e-education which administrators would be prudent to bear in mind, especially around budget time: *Productive online learning is more labour intensive than its live counterpart; it requires more assiduous attention and care from everyone involved.* This heuristic resists the hyper-tech trajectory of pure e-education. I won't try to justify the heuristic, except with this consideration: that the opportunity a teacher has for rapid recovery and application of successive give-and-take, corrective responses and spontaneous exchange in a tutorial or small seminar are more or less missing from the kinds of dialogue possible in asynchronous fully online courses. That missing feature requires student and teacher both to work considerably harder to communicate productively with each other; it also requires of students more patience and a greater attention span. With these limits and challenges, however, come potential advantages.

PRODUCTIVE ONLINE LEARNING IS MORE LABOUR INTENSIVE THAN ITS LIVE COUNTERPART

CLOSING THE GAP: HOLE IN THE WALL EDUCATION

Pure *(sans teacher)* e-education currently is more hype than reality. Yet there is a limited case to be made for a teacher-free


Photo: Rui Farinha 02

01. Modern method: independent online learning

02. Traditional learning environment

educational model. Many participants of the 2012 EAIE Conference in Dublin will have heard Sugata Mitra's lecture on his 'Hole in the Wall' project, in which he discussed his surprising discovery that "six- to thirteen-year-olds can self-instruct in a connected environment".[2] The implications of that finding for education and e-education should not be ignored. One likely implication is that there is no theoretical limit to the scope of self-directed, peer-to-peer learning. That implication should not be *entirely* surprising, since graduates of the highest levels of education, after mastering the methods of a particular discipline, continue their education unabated through conferences, common room discussion, publications, research, *etc*, generally with peer assistance and more or less autonomously.

ONLINE LEARNING REQUIRES RESOURCES

To realise an ideal or even acceptable outcome for online learning, a well-sustained commitment of resources is required. These include a flexible, robust, intuitive course platform, responsive tech support, mentoring of instructors new to online learning and direct assessment of their online performance. But an all-too-often overlooked need –notwithstanding Sugata Mitra's findings – is the singular time commitment of teachers who conduct online courses that are actually worth taking.

Faced with rising educational costs and revenue uncertainty, the self-instruction proposition may suggest to many managers a rationale for adopting brave new systems that would dispense with instructors in online courses. Even through the resistance of faculty associations and accreditation bodies, such a policy is bound to fascinate the managerial imagination.

UNLESS THE INNER TECHNOLOGY OF THE HUMAN BRAIN CHANGES, PURE E-LEARNING WILL NOT SERVE STUDENTS

So, the issue that will increasingly need to be addressed by those who wish to maintain the integrity of the academy is whether qualified instructors add a dimension to e-learning which is for all intents and purposes irreplaceable.

Self-instructed learning systems have already advanced quite far into higher education. Possibly the future of post-secondary education will end in fully automated, self-organising, e-learning systems. But unless the inner technology of the human brain changes, so that it develops the capacity to speed up or altogether bypass the process of intellectual maturation needed to achieve competence in specific disciplines, pure e-learning will not serve students. Short of fundamentally altering the species, acquiring facility with the analytic and interpretive skills associated with particular academic disciplines will continue to require a series of criss-crossing quasi apprenticeships with a variety of qualified, experienced (ideally highly creative) teachers.

If fully online courses are going to replace live courses without shortchanging students, they will need to be conducted by non-virtual teachers; and those teachers will need to appreciate that they have entered a far more labour-intensive teaching environment than they might have imagined. **F**

Download the winter issue of *Forum* (2012) from the EAIE Member Centre to read our interview with Sugata Mitra. www.eaie.org.

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Photo: Gary Radler (istockphoto)

TECHNOLOGY OPENS DOORS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Technology undoubtedly improves our lives, providing us with instant information and enhancing how we connect with others. Yet for some, technology goes much further than this. It can help change the lives of those with disabilities, enabling more individuals to enter higher education and even participate in international higher exchanges.

ANN HEELAN
Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD), Ireland

Technology gives people with disabilities access to information in a variety of ways and enables them to do things independently which they would otherwise be unable to do. Simple everyday things we all take for granted: reading, writing, following the news, going to school and engaging in learning, getting good grades, finding a good job, getting promoted and realising ambitions – these can all be achieved with the help of technology.

TECHNOLOGY AND STUDY ABROAD

Technology makes a huge difference to the capacity of students with disabilities, enabling them to go on international placements and to develop careers. There are over 7000 students with disabilities in the higher education system in Ireland, while only ten years ago there were just 400. In the past, these students had to rely on the good will of others to read their textbooks to them. Not so anymore, these students are using innovative 'assistive technology' to learn, study independently, acquire skills and knowledge and then transfer these to the workplace.

It could be something as simple as a book holder, or the Siri function on the iPhone/iPad which provides a speech to text function as an integral service. Or it could be smart pens such as the Live Scribe Pen which can be used to record lectures, meetings or conversations. The audio files from the these smart pens can then be saved and accessed electronically on a variety of devices including a PC, MP3 player or tablet. Using a smart pen is of huge advantage for a student with dyslexia going on an international study programme as it will give them the confidence to keep up with lectures in another language. There are also a huge range of apps available that can

enhance access to learning. Capturatalk is a new app for Android smartphones and digital devices that allows the user to capture (photograph) written text, for example from a hardcopy book, and convert this into digital text which can then be translated into over 20 different languages. The beauty of this technology is that it is not disability-specific – it can benefit all students.

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Assistive technology enables students with disabilities to gain a more equal footing when learning. Typically a student with disabilities can talk to their course tutor in advance of their placement, explain their difficulties and request that they receive their lecture notes online. They can then download them to their iPod and listen using screen reading software. Students who are deaf can receive lectures in real time transmitted to their computer screens so they do not loose out and many universities use a Speed Text system to enable students to follow lectures. Nowadays, examination questions are given to many students on MP3 players, allowing the student to independently listen and re-listen to the examination questions, reducing the need for readers and separate examination halls.

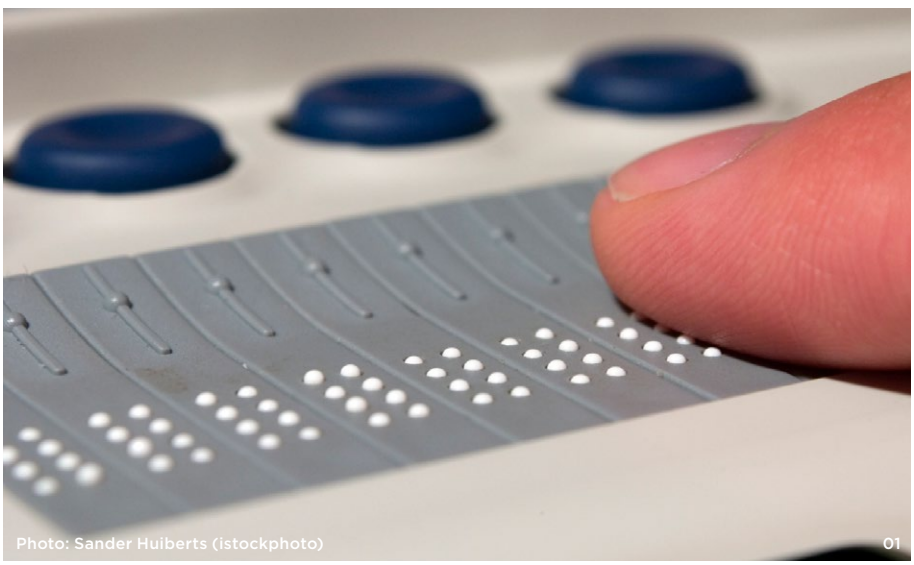
Assistive technology also includes a wide range of hardware solutions ranging from different size keyboards, adapted screens and mouse alternatives tailored to suit people with dexterity difficulties. Innovative software is being developed all the time and sometimes it can be difficult to keep up with the pace! For students with a text disability (whether it be a student with a visual impairment or a student with dyslexia), voice recognition software such as Jaws and Dragon Naturally Speaking can assist them to read and write using computers. The software allows the book to be read back to the student by scanning the textbook and then reading the text aloud using a sophisticated artificial voice, therefore giving the blind student or the dyslexic student the same opportunities to learn as other students.

BUILT-IN ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility software does not always carry a high price. Standard accessibility features on our computers include grammar and spelling features, zoom text, and auto text. Voice recognition is available in newer computers with the latest software built in, however many of us are actually unaware of the capabilities of our computers and so the features remain underutilised. For example, correctly formatting documents using the built-in formatting and style menus in word processing packages like Microsoft Word is probably the single most important step to making electronic documents accessible for students who have difficulties accessing written material. Microsoft Word offers pre-set styles: Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3 and Normal. By using these to mark or tag your document, you can tell the user how the document is structured. For example, if you put the title of your first section in the style 'Heading 1', the title of the sub-sections in 'Heading 2' and the body of the text in 'Normal', when a student using screen reading software accesses the text, they can skip through the headings (these could be chapter headings) to find the information they are looking for easily and without having to listen to all of the text. This is particularly important if the document contains many pages. If a document is correctly styled, users can also use the navigation pane to navigate through the document. The author can create an automatic contents where the users click on the section to bring them to the correct place in the document. Using the styles or 'tagging' documents is a key part of ensuring ease of access to learning materials and therefore successful outcomes in the learning environment.

Education is the portal to a better quality of life for all students including those with a disability. In a higher education system which is based on textbooks alone, learning without technology would be impossible for many students with disabilities. In the current climate, technology is fun and is increasingly used by everyone. It has become part of our lives. We all covet the newest phone, the eBook reader or the iPad, but is it worth remembering that technology is not just a gadget or gimmick, for some, it really does open doors and change lives. **F**

To find out more about assistive technologies and creating accessible documents, visit: www.ahead.ie, www.assistireland.ie http://accessibilityessentials.jisctechdis.ac.uk/2007/AE1/index.html.



A braille device for blind computer users

TRENDING TOPIC

MEASURING STRATEGIC GOAL ATTAINMENT IN INTERNA-TIONALISATION

Photo: originalpunkt (shutterstock)

Current debate (and practice) in the measurement and assessment of internationalisation focuses on specific instruments (study abroad, mobility, recruitment) or institutional policy (strategy documents, internal structures). Less attention is devoted to the measurability of the broad and far-reaching goals or strategic objectives of a university's internationalisation strategy. This is an initial attempt to explore that terrain from the perspective of internationalisation at VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

KEES KOUWENAAR
VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Measuring the achievement of strategic internationalisation objectives implies that these objectives are indeed measurable. Equally, it implies a benchmark measurement either before or without the interventions which are undertaken to achieve the objectives. What could this mean in the context of a particular university? At VU University Amsterdam, the officially adopted strategic internationalisation objectives include the following:

- Enhancement of the intercultural competencies (for undergraduate as well as for graduate education).
- Enhancement of academic activities (education and research) in institutionally embedded international networks.
- Enhancement of the international character, atmosphere and composition of students, academics and other staff of the academic community.

What can be said about the measurability of these objectives and of a benchmark measurement before or without internationalisation intervention activities?

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

For intercultural competencies, the Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), developed by Janet and Milton Bennett, may be used. We aim to define adequate levels of intercultural competencies, although these may differ among countries, universities or disciplines. An internationalisation activity may be designed to advance levels of intercultural competencies if current levels are seen as insufficient. This is assuming that intercultural competencies may be seen as an additive requirement on top of prior existing requirements for educational programmes. It also assumes that these prior and general requirements may be seen as captured – at least partially – through grade point average (GPA) and time to completion of the degree.

It could be suggested that activities to enhance intercultural competencies need to be assessed in terms of their impact on intercultural competencies, but equally in terms of their impact (at the least not negative) on GPA and time to degree, and possibly indicators of educational quality. Of course, the necessary intercultural competencies may differ by subject and discipline; additional measurement of subject-specific intercultural competencies may be necessary.

INTERNATIONALLY EMBEDDED ACADEMIC COOPERATION

For the issue of international embeddedness of academic activities, we skate on much thinner ice. The issue is more complex and its validity as a strategic internationalisation objective is much more debated and contested. Also, it treads on the domain of autonomy and sovereignty of academics, many of whom debate or refute any institutional role in this. It could be argued that, even if the issue itself is entirely up to the academics, it is important to clarify what could be measurable indicators for adequate or inadequate levels of 'embedding'.

Could we ask the academics – in any particular school or department or centre – to define for themselves what they would see as the threshold levels of international embeddedness of their research and education? They would probably answer in terms of participation in international networks of peers, or contact with international colleagues. There might or might not surface a distinct minimum threshold, such as jointly-written research publications or taught courses or supervised PhDs.

COULD WE INVITE OUR ACADEMICS TO DEFINE AN OPTIMAL OR TARGET THRESHOLD LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL EMBEDDEDNESS?

Could we invite our academics – by school, department or centre – to define an optimal or target threshold level of international embeddedness? Could we invite them to position the proportion of academics at the unit who indeed achieve that higher level? We can imagine – although this must be discussed and decided by the academics – that the following directions might be useful:

- An institutionalised academic cooperative link would require not just one academic, but at least 2 (or 5 or 10?) academics from the unit cooperating with peers in the partner institution.
- For this cooperation, an articulated joint research agenda exists.
- Minimal joint outcomes may be defined, such as annual numbers of joint research publications or educational courses (in credits or ECTS).
- Number of jointly supervised PhDs.
- Jointly secured external research funding.

There may be other or better indicators; the matter is open for discussion, and it is up to the university leadership to promote such discussion if embedding of academic work in international networks is one of the strategic internationalisation objectives of that university.

At VU University Amsterdam, this strategic objective also receives a more specific focus with regard to cooperation with partner universities in countries like Brazil, China, South Africa and others. But such specific focus on academic cooperation with partners in these countries may not need a different apparatus for measurement. The expected impact of an intervention may be influenced by the idiosyncrasies of university evolution in these countries and other factors. But the indicators may be the same, as the basic notion that we need our strategic objectives to be measurable and that we need benchmarks to assess the impact of intervention against non-intervention.

INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

For the international character of a university, we could pose that this is an inherently subjective indicator, which nonetheless can be translated into measureable inter-subjective categories both inside and outside the university itself. Objective categories may be added in terms of the proportion of internationals among students, academics and other staff. For the internal perception of the international character of the university, existing surveys such as the iGraduate International Student Barometer provide an indicator which allows the monitoring of the university's position over time and in comparison to other universities.

For the external perception, one may turn to existing ranking instruments. Well known rankings like THE and QS are often – and with reason – criticised for their factoring in of aspects that are more related to international reputation than to 'hard' data on research and education quality. But precisely because of these 'flaws' in their methodology, these rankings may serve well in monitoring a university's position from an international perspective over time and in comparison to others. The QS Stars system may add value, as it digs deeper and focuses explicitly on the international students.

It is hoped that this article will raise new thoughts and discussions on measuring strategic internationalisation objectives and the far-reaching goals of internationalisation strategies as an alternative/addition to the measurement of specific internationalisation instruments. **F**

Photo: zeber (shutterstock)

TRENDING TOPIC

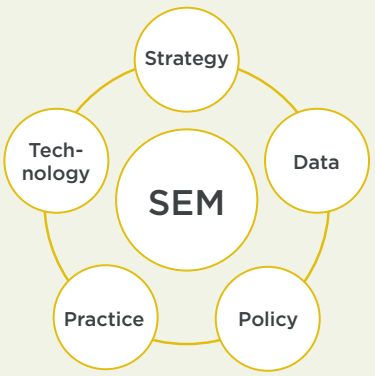
STRATEGIC ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

Taking a more strategic approach to enrolment of students can boost your institution's performance in the complex international arena. Here, the basics of strategic enrolment management are explained, as the increasingly popular approach gathers force in Europe.

BOB BONTRAGER
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, USA

Global higher education is changing at an ever-increasing pace. New governmental expectations and funding models, along with goals for increasing internationalisation and increasing access among underserved populations are creating unprecedented challenges for those managing change at the institutional level. Strategic enrolment management, or SEM, offers a conceptual framework for managing these institutional changes. SEM came into practice in the USA in the mid-1970s in response to demographic shifts and the resulting impact on enrolments at American colleges and universities. Since then, SEM has evolved into a framework for addressing not only enrolment goals, but a wide array of challenges across institutions. Combining elements of strategic planning, institutional policy, operational practices, data analysis, and technology deployment as shown in Figure 1, SEM has proven to be a powerful catalyst for helping institutions attain new levels of efficiency, effectiveness and success.

Figure 1. COMPONENTS INVOLVED IN SEM



As can be readily seen from its definition and purposes, SEM involves multiple components of institutional operations including goal-driven strategy formation, relevant data, policy alignment, business practices, and the effective deployment of technology. SEM provides an institutional framework for managing the institutional change required to align these components, generating stronger enrolment and financial outcomes.

SEM HAS PROVEN TO BE A POWERFUL CATALYST FOR HELPING INSTITUTIONS ATTAIN NEW LEVELS OF SUCCESS

WHAT IS SEM?

SEM is a concept and process that enables the fulfilment of institutional mission and students' educational goals. In practice, the purposes of SEM are achieved by:

- Establishing comprehensive goals for the number and types of students needed to achieve the desired future of the institution.
- Improving students' academic success by improving access, transition, persistence, and graduation rates.
- Enhancing institutional success by enabling more effective enrolment and financial planning.
- Creating a data-rich environment to enable informed decisions and the evaluation of strategies.
- Strengthening communications with internal and external stakeholders.
- Increasing collaboration among departments across the campus to support enrolment goals.

THE GLOBALISATION OF SEM

Global trends are making SEM much more than just an American phenomenon. From Canada to the UK to Australia, major enrolment-related forces are shifting in ways that have sparked interest in SEM concepts. As in the USA, shifting demographics is a significant factor, with a decline in traditional college-going populations happening concurrently with changes in students' socioeconomic status, the latter being strongly correlated with race, ethnicity, and immigrant status. Internationalisation itself is a driver for SEM, as an increasing number of countries devote additional resources in an effort to enrol more students from a limited pool of students seeking transnational educational opportunities.

GLOBAL TRENDS ARE MAKING SEM MUCH MORE THAN JUST AN AMERICAN PHENOMENON

Economic forces have further intensified interest in SEM globally. Canada, the UK, and other countries have experienced declines in financial support to higher education. That fact itself drives institutions toward SEM in multiple ways. It leads to increased tuition fees, which prompts students to exhibit higher degrees of consumerism and comparison shopping. Institutions are more reliant than ever on the number of students they enrol, and the tuition fees represented by each student, to balance the institutional budget. As these forces have come to the fore, a growing number of institutions in more countries are adopting competitive practices focused on marketing and enhanced prospective student communications to a greater degree.

A NEW VERSION OF SEM

Yet the rise of SEM internationally is much more than merely mimicking US trends. In Canada and elsewhere, institutions are beginning to create not just their own version of SEM, but one that furthers the profession in the USA and abroad. This is a key development. Whatever the successes of SEM in the USA, there have been pitfalls as well. Those have included, as examples, an unbalanced focus on recruitment in relation to retention resulting in poor student retention rates; over-reliance on marketing hype; inequitable deployment of student financial assistance; and, in general, prioritising institutional interests over those of students. Other SEM professionals around the world have learned from these missteps and are developing stronger SEM theory and strategies, and so the evolution continues. The subsequent improvements in enrolment-related practices should result in the ultimate benefit for our institutions and the students we serve. **F**

Additional SEM information and resources can be found at www.aacrao.org.

A NEW ERA FOR TURKISH EDUCATION

ISTANBUL CONFERENCE 2013

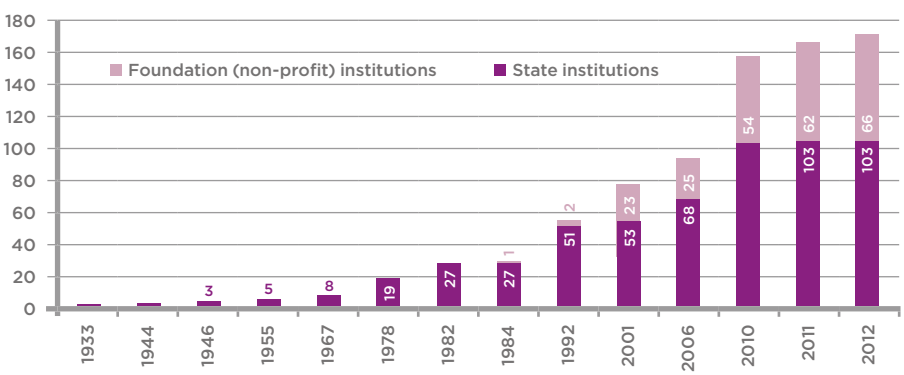
Do you know when the first university in Turkey was established? Or how much of a role open education plays in the region? Which country sends the most students to Turkey through the Erasmus programme? With our focus turning towards Istanbul for the upcoming EAIE Conference, this article puts Turkish higher education firmly in the spotlight.

The notion of 'university' first emerged during the Ottoman era in Turkey. All educational institutions in the Ottoman period were collected under one structure: *medrese* (muslim theological school). In the late 1800s, the idea of a new form of higher education other than *medrese* was raised and in 1900, the first university in the history of Ottoman Empire was established: Daru'l-funun (Ottoman University).

During the republican period, Daru'l-funun was turned into Istanbul University and since then, the Turkish higher education system has seen substantial growth. In 1946, the 'Law of Universities' was accepted, which brought university autonomy onto the agenda of the Turkish higher education system. This autonomy enabled the selection of rectors and deans to be carried out by university staff. It also introduced a culture of research into the system, meaning that universities were not only classical accumulations of knowledge; they became places where knowledge was produced.

By 2012, the number of universities had increased to 169, as shown in Figure 1, with 66 being foundation (non-profit) institutions and 103 being state institutions. Parallel to this, the number of students increased from 2167 in 1930 to 4.3 million students in 2012.

Figure 1. UNIVERSITY GROWTH IN TURKEY[1]



01

OPEN EDUCATION IN TURKEY

The massive educational, economic and logistical challenge of serving an enormous number of students in the region has been overcome, in part, by open education. Open education constitutes a significant share of Turkish higher education in terms of student numbers. As Figure 2 shows, in 2012, 1.9 million students out of 4.3 million students were taking part in open education.

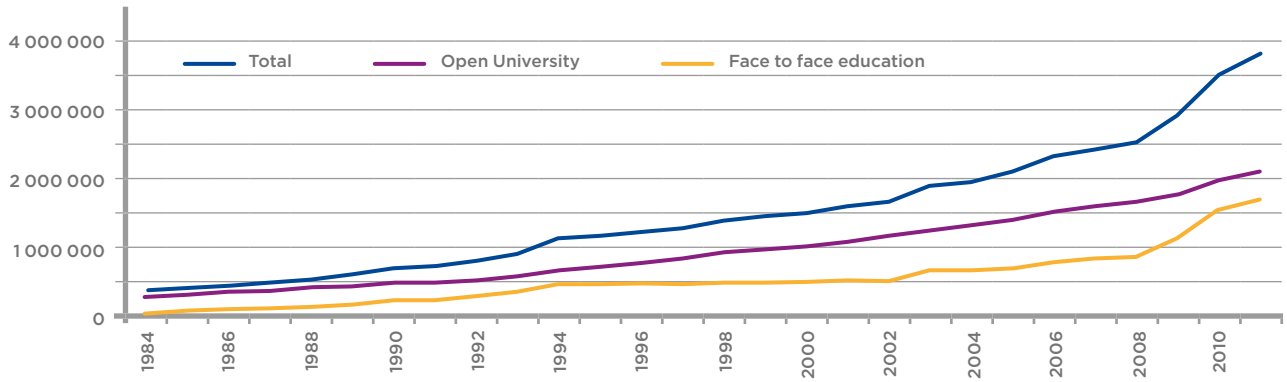
Anadolu University is the national provider of open/distance education in Turkey and was established in 1982. One of the main reasons for the establishment of the open education system was to educate people who live in the rural areas and others who don't have the financial means to enrol in conventional universities. This effort has been largely successful. Open education in Turkey currently offers 35 Bachelor's and associate degree programmes. Over 1100 programmes are also available as streamed videos on the internet. Course programmes are aired nationwide for six hours a day on weekdays and for three hours a day on weekends on the Turkish Radio and Television Channel 4 (TRT4). Course materials are also available for sale. Copies are free for students in the EU countries which are unable to receive TRT4.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN TURKEY

According to UNESCO statistics, around 4 million students are currently studying in countries other than that of their origin. UNESCO predictions also show us that in 2020, the number of internationally mobile students will reach 7 million. Furthermore, OECD reports show that cross-border higher education has developed differently across OECD countries and regions. Student mobility has been policy driven in Europe and demand driven in the Asia-Pacific region, while North America has mostly been a magnet for foreign students.

Turkey's attractiveness in international student mobility has also been increasing

Figure 2. TYPES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY[2]



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01. Yeditepe University
02. Bahceshir University
03. Bilgi University
04. Istanbul Kultur University
05. Sabancı University

over the years. Turkey's main attractions for international students are its role in the surrounding geography –bridging the East and West – and its investments in higher education over the last 10 years which have formed an implicitly growing higher education system. According to 2011–2012 statistics,[3] there are approximately 32 000 foreign students from more than 150 countries studying at 127 universities in Turkey. In the academic period of 2012–2013, this number is expected to increase to 40 000. Most of these students come from Turkic Republics and Azerbaijan. In 2012, 5400 foreign students came to Turkey through the Erasmus programme, mostly from Germany, Poland, and France. Although acceptable, these figures could be improved.

IN 2012, 5400 FOREIGN STUDENTS CAME TO TURKEY THROUGH THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

When we look at the international student performance of Turkey from 2000–2013, it is very much below the OECD average. The international student ratio compared to the number of domestic students is lower than 1% in Turkey, compared to the OECD average of 7.5%. To help attract more international undergraduate and graduate students and address this imbalance, the government implemented 17 different scholarship programmes in 2012 and the Council of Higher Education has started a reform process with a new draft law for higher education.

RESTRUCTURING TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION

Preparations for a new higher education law represent an important step in restructuring the Turkish higher education system according to its recent growth and the needs of internationalised higher education systems around the world. This reform process is also needed in order to improve the competitiveness of Turkey and the quality of education, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development and an improved democratic political culture in Turkey.

What becomes apparent in this new draft law is the need for diversifying the structure of higher education institutions. The main themes of the new draft law include institutional autonomy and accountability, evaluation of performance and scientific competition (determining salaries of academics in accordance with their scientific creativity), financial flexibility and multi-source income structure, and quality assurance. Instead of having centralised policies, the law anticipates different management patterns for different types of universities. In the current system, there are state and non-profit foundation universities. The new law would allow for private universities which can be run on a profit basis. It also allows branch universities from other countries, which is not an option in the current legal structure. This approach aims to encourage growth in the system. It is also hoped that it will open the system to international actors, and, in turn, increase the number of international students studying in Turkey.

Between 2005 and 2025 the Turkish higher education system is predicted to have one of the highest growth rates among OECD countries.[4] The new draft law is a way of ensuring that Turkey's growth will continue in the future with new types of universities and a new system which is more internationalised, diversified, accountable, financially flexible, qualified and ready to meet the challenges and opportunities that this new age of higher education brings. **F**

Text courtesy of **Ercan Laçin,** Ministry of EU Affairs, Turkey. Photos courtesy of universities.

1. Statistics from The Center of Surveying, Selecting and Placement (OSYM). www.osym.gov.tr/belge/1-128/sureli-yayinlar.html.

2. Gunay, D. (2011). Quantitative Developments in Turkish Higher Education Since 1933. *Journal of Higher Education and Science Journal*, 1 (1), 1–22.

3. Statistics from the report of the head of Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK): http://etkinlik.aydin.edu.tr/dosyalar/07.01.2013-EE%C4%B0K_TOPLANTI_RAPORU.pdf.

4. OECD Publishing (2012). Looking to 2060 long term global growth prospects. www.oecd.org/eco/outlook/2060%20policy%20paper%20FINAL.pdf.

Perspectives

A senior lecturer and supervisor of exchange students at Hanze University of Applied Sciences shares his views on social media

What encouraged you to incorporate social media into your work?

WO: My ideal is to be only one click away from my students. Or, using Facebook: no click extra at all. All of my students are thirsty for new experiences, new knowledge, new skills or just need urgent information. As a supervisor, I can help them cope with those needs instantly, thanks to Facebook. I have made different interest lists containing both local and international information resources. One click on the Facebook 'share' button is enough to bring new information under the attention of all the other group members.

How do your students make use of social media for their studies?

WO: Facebook is not only used for socialising: at IBS Hanze University, all students tell me that as soon as they have to do a group assignment, a Facebook group is created. Most often this is a 'secret' group: the members have to 'approve' any new member. In those groups, the students have direct access to each other anywhere and anytime, can see who's online and can share information, documents and internet sources. Or just start a discussion. As the students themselves have created those groups, they have total control on who is going to see what.

How do you manage your work/personal life on social media?

WO: To keep my two worlds strictly apart, I decided to have two Facebook accounts: one account for private use and one exclusively for my job as a teacher and supervisor. This has proven to be a very wise decision; colleagues of mine who haven't separated their domains constantly run into private/work interference problems. At this moment, I am using two social platforms:

- **Facebook** for my teaching activities (Spanish) and the supervision of my students abroad in China, South Korea, Taiwan, Macau, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. I meet with my study abroad students in a closed 'Year Abroad' Facebook group.
- **LinkedIn** for the contacts with our partner universities and schools abroad. Along with the need to have direct contact with my students, I like to have easy access to my colleagues (supervisors) at the partner schools and departments and the local International Student Offices.

How much does using social media affect your regular workload?

WO: Very little, on the contrary, it saves me time because I can follow resourceful pages, relevant people and organisations. Facebook and Twitter provide useful information that comes directly to me without me having to request or to search for it. With my Facebook 'lists of interests' which are focused on the country where my students are studying I keep myself constantly updated. All those students belonging to the group can post information, it's not limited to only me posting information.

What's been your overall experience of social media and communicating with students so far?

WO: It boils down to one thing: it really works! Since I started using Facebook, I have significantly more interaction with my students than ever before and I have a much better view of the concerns of my students. It is interesting to see that, although the supervisor is so easy to access, the students hardly ever 'abuse' this easy access. Only when it's really necessary they come up with questions like 'Help: I have to change the subjects of my original Learning Agreement'. Facebook has proved to be and is still proving to be an excellent way to get know what is going on and gives me a very good opportunity to witness directly the concerns of my students abroad.

Photo courtesy of Wim Oostindier

Quick questions

Name: Wim Oostindier

Age: 64

Nationality: Dutch

Job role: Senior Lecturer, Supervisor Study Abroad

Institution: Hanze University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Degree and university: MA University of Groningen, the Netherlands

Favourite city in the world: Amsterdam

Best book ever read: *The 12 Chairs* by Ilf and Petrov

Mac or PC? Both

Approximately how many hours do spend using the internet each day? 8 hours per day

What do you think has been the best technological invention during the last 100 years? Internet

Calendar

9 TO 10 MAY

23rd Annual EURASHE Conference

'Higher Education – Making the Knowledge Triangle Work'

LOCATION: University of Split, Croatia

INFO: European Association of Institutes in Higher Education, Brussels, Belgium

TEL +32-221-41 97
E-MAIL eurashe@eurashe.eu
www.eurashe.eu

14 MAY

EUCIS-LLL Annual Conference 2013

'Rethinking Learning: Transversal competences in the spotlight'

LOCATION: Hotel Panorama, Vilnius, Lithuania

INFO: The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning, Brussels, Belgium

TEL +32-2-738 07 68
E-MAIL info@eucis-lll.eu
www.eucis-lll.eu

★ 15 MAY

EAIE Annual Conference 2013 online registration opens

www.eaie.org/istanbul

26 TO 31 MAY

NAFSA 2013 Annual Conference & Expo

'Ideals and Impact in International Education'

LOCATION: MO America's Center, St Louis, USA

INFO: NAFSA, Washington, USA

TEL +1-202-737 36 99
E-MAIL conference@nafsa.org
www.nafsa.org/annualconference

3 TO 5 JUNE

The 22nd EAN Anniversary Conference

'The Evolution of Access: Adapt to Survive? New Challenges and Opportunities in Widening Participation in Higher Education'

LOCATION: The Agora, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France

INFO: : European Access Network, University of Roehampton, London, UK

TEL +44-208-392 38 57
E-MAIL info@ean-edu.org
www.ean-edu.org

9 TO 11 JUNE

EFMD 2013 Annual Conference

'Does Management Education Create Impact?'

LOCATION: Crowne Plaza Brussels Hotel City Centre, Brussels, Belgium

INFO: European Foundation for Management Development, Brussels, Belgium

TEL +32-2-203 62 00
E-MAIL diana.grote@efmd.org
www.efmd.org

9 TO 11 JUNE

ACA Annual Conference 2013

'Internationalisation and international mobility. Where do we stand, where are we heading?'

LOCATION: De Nieuwe Kerk, The Hague, the Netherlands

INFO: ACA Secretariat, Brussels, Belgium

TEL +32-2-513 22 41
E-MAIL info@aca-secretariat.be
www.aca-secretariat.be

18 TO 19 JUNE

6th EUA-CDE Annual Meeting

'From Student to Researcher – are we on the right track?'

LOCATION: University of Warsaw, Poland

INFO: European University Association, Brussels, Belgium

TEL +32-2-230 55 44
E-MAIL isabelle.deneyer@eua.be
www.eua.be

24 TO 27 JUNE

18th WACE World Conference

'WIL-Power: Fuelling the Future Workforce'

LOCATION: Durban University of Technology, South Africa

INFO: World Association for Cooperative Education, Lowell, USA

TEL +1-978-934 18 76
E-MAIL danielle_perry@uml.edu
www.waceinc.org

25 TO 28 JUNE

57th World Assembly of International Council on Education for Teaching

'Innovations and Trends in Education'

LOCATION: Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand

INFO: International Council on Education for Teaching, Illinois, USA

TEL +1-847-947 58 81
E-MAIL contact@icet4u.org
http://icet2013.stou.ac.th

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www.eaie.org/istanbul

★ 1 TO 5 JULY

EAIE training course

'English in the international workplace'

LOCATION: Dublin, Ireland

www.eaie.org/english-international-workplace

14 TO 16 JULY

2013 AACRAO Technology Conference

'Integrating Technology and Student Success on Campus'

LOCATION: JW Marriott Starr Pass, Tucson, USA

INFO: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Washington, USA

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