

Beyond National Borders: Extending the Higher Education Learning Community

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1. Introduction

Higher education is confronted with the ramifications of globalisation, the explosion in digital communications, the demand for greater access and equity, the expectations of lifelong learning, and the shift from a 'supply-driven' to a 'demand-driven' market. Worldwide, universities are expected to become more entrepreneurial and self-sustainable, quality conscious, and relevant to the needs of the various stakeholders.

Open and distance education is changing in response to these changing circumstances. There are already well over four million students studying through open and distance learning around the globe and there is growing interest in the potential of this mode of delivery and information and communications technology (ICT) to internationalise courses and programs and extend educational opportunity across physical, political and socio-economic divides.

There are both wonderful opportunities and dangerous pitfalls in borderless open and distance education. There is certainly great need for increased access and enhanced learning opportunities in developed and developing countries alike. There is also great opportunity to tap into new markets and provide exciting technology-based learning environments for undergraduate and postgraduate education and continuous professional development. There is also seen to be great commercial potential in the 'export' of educational products and services.

However, experience shows that for such initiatives to be sustainable, program and service delivery must be of the highest quality and substantial investment is needed in the technical and human resources and infrastructure. The markets can be fickle and the competition is fierce, so the stakes are high. So far more is called for in planning than the technological considerations. Consideration needs to be given to the teaching and learning strategies, delivery and support systems, business planning, costing and marketing. New alliances may be needed to capitalise on the primary strengths of various institutions or agencies and compete against potential rivals or interlopers. In some cases, totally new institutions or agencies may be needed. There is also often need for major changes in

pedagogy, work cultures and work practices. Such radically new approaches call for risk-taking and a new form of leadership – transformational and entrepreneurial leadership.

This paper discusses and provides examples of the current developments in borderless education: the re-positioning by the open and dual-mode universities; the rise of the for-profit and corporate universities; the jockeying to form consortia, strategic alliances and industry-university partnerships; and the advent of online and virtual universities. It considers the imperatives driving these developments and the myths, realities, successes and failures of online global learning. It concludes by considering the leadership and management implications of the future missions and scenarios for higher education institutions.

2. The ending of geographic monopolies

Scott, (2000) argues that the challenges facing higher education in the new millennium cannot be understood unless proper account is taken of the phenomenon of 'globalisation'. Globalisation is a much higher and more turbulent phenomenon than internationalisation in that it not only transcends but ignores national boundaries. Hannan & Freeman (1989) indicate that turbulent, volatile and uncertain environments provide fertile breeding grounds for new and diverse organisational forms. This has certainly been the case within higher education during the past thirty years or so, with distance education programs and methodologies taking root in institutions in developing and developed countries alike.

It is now increasingly recognised that there is an enormous potential demand and need for open, flexible and ICT-based education across the globe, particularly in the UK, US and Australasia. Khan, (2000) suggests that education in the 21st century is viewed increasingly as a global industry and educational institutions as for-profit ventures. He argues that world trade in education represents an important growth opportunity for universities and predicts that open and distance learning will become the primary means of meeting the ever-increasing worldwide demand for lifelong learning.

3. 'Macro developments' in open, virtual and e-learning

Farrell (2001) observes that current 'macro developments' indicate that virtual and open learning are now an integral part of the planning agendas of most universities and adding value to the existing delivery models. Cunningham *et al.*, (2000) identify a number of forces propelling higher education towards a globalised context that promotes standardised products, services, technical infrastructure, and communication systems across

international boundaries. However, Farrell (op cit.) observes that this all depends upon where you live. There is still the all-important issue of the 'digital divide' between the politically and economically favoured nations and communities and the marginalised.

4. Cultural considerations

Davis and Botkin (1995) suggest that there will be three stages in internationalising education: stage one: export; stage two: setting up partnerships and in-country development and delivery; and stage three: two-way exchange and development of products and services through borderless education. Rumble and Latchem (forthcoming, 2002) observe that in countries such as the UK, Australia and US, internationalisation is currently essentially at stages one and two and that the greater vision will only be realised when institutions achieve stage three. However, Hanna (2000) suggests that as technological and economic barriers fall, cultural differences and the translation of concepts and content may emerge as the most significant barrier to internationalisation.

McBurnie, (2000) identifies several issues in transnational relationships and cooperation that need to be transcended, including the cultural appropriateness of curriculum and pedagogy; the relationship between provider and host; and the provision of education resources. Every culture is defined by its own values, structures and norms, perceptions of reality, peculiarities of politics, points of intransigence and so on, and some countries have a legacy of colonial repression or racism which leads them to resist any suggestion of patronage. All countries' educational systems are founded upon particular beliefs about the origins, ownership and transmission of knowledge and as Goldsmith (1993, p. 285) suggests, 'there is no better way of destroying a society than by undermining its education system by destroying cultural patterns through the educative process'.

For these reasons, it is important that the internationalisation of education is collaborative and reflective, and not simply a question of imposing the values and practices of Western society, organisations and teaching and learning. As Spronk (1998) suggests, educators and educated alike need to develop the capacity to see the world through 'two pairs of eyes', their own and those of another culture, while Matthewson and Thaman (1998) suggest that cross-cultural understanding comes through developing 'navigational skills' to gauge particular cultural contexts and determine the best courses of action. There are enormous economic, political and competitive pressures at work in the internationalisation of education and it is important to ensure that these do not lead to cultural and educational imperialism.

5. International applications

International applications of open learning and information and communications technology (ICT) can help communities become less national and inward looking, participate successfully in an increasingly interdependent world and gain global understanding. They can help graduates operate anywhere and in any culture with a level of professionalism commensurate with best international practice. They can facilitate collaborative work and learning online across international divides. They can provide new, equitable, affordable, flexible and responsive forms of educational product and service. They can help poor and remote regions and communities bridge the digital divide and access the new knowledge economy. They can create professional networks and virtual communities of practice. They can also lead to new forms of educational organisation.

6. New and emerging organisational models of higher education

Hanna (2000) and Latchem & Hanna (2001) identify seven new or emerging organisational models of higher education:

Extended traditional universities: institutions moving from single-mode (on-campus) to some mix of on- and off-campus education.

For-profit, adult-centred universities: for example, the online University of Phoenix (<http://www.onl.uophx.edu/>) and accredited web-based Jones International University (<http://jiu-web-a.jonesinternational.edu>).

Distance education/technology-based universities: for example, the 'mega-universities' and other open universities (Daniel, 1996), of which the latest is Universitas Terbuka Malaysia (Unitem) (Wotjas, 2001)

Corporate universities: extended human resource organisations as established for example, by American Express, Intel and Disney.

University-university and university-industry strategic alliances: for example, the Virtual University of the Monterrey Institute of Technology comprising universities within and beyond Mexico (<http://www.ruv.itesm.mx/>); the 'virtual business' school formed between the Henley Management College and UK management consultants Ernst & Young; and the UK University for Industry (UFI) public-private initiative (<http://www.ufiltd.co.uk>) to provide a nationwide training network to improve economic competitiveness, work performance and employment prospects.

Degree/certification competency-based universities: for example, Western Governors' University (<http://www.wgu.edu>), which acts as a broker for competency-based undergraduate and graduate programs provided by its member institutions and Open Learning Australia (<http://www.ola.edu.au>), which offers entry and degree pathways for nontraditional students through its shareholding member universities and other institutions.

Global multinational universities or consortia: for example, the Scottish Knowledge consortium of fourteen Scottish universities and News International plc (<http://www.scottishknowledge.com>) and the University of Melbourne-led Universitas21 consortium of universities in ten countries partnered with Thomson Learning (<http://www.universitas21.com>).

All of these university systems are ignoring geographic and political inhibitors to growth, exploiting technology and providing flexible lifelong learning. They fundamentally challenge the traditional concept of the university which, as Bates (1995) reminds us, was designed for industrial age economies and societies that are fast disappearing.

There are predictions of further change. Duderstadt (2000) uses metaphors to describe the emerging and redefined missions and structures: The World University; The Diverse University; The Creative University; The Divisionless University; The Cyberspace University; The Adult University; The Lifelong University; and The Ubiquitous University. McNay (1995) envisages the traditional universities moving along a continuum from a collegium/bureaucratic model to something more akin to a corporate model. Jensen (2001) suggests that there will be progressively fewer operational models of universities until eventually, they are either what he characterises as globalised 'McLearn' enterprises or face-to-face institutions buttressed with more ICT bells and whistles.

Dhanarajan (1998) predicts the emergence of a number of pan-global open learning systems, not necessarily publicly funded, led by entrepreneurs with a vision of global development, a desire to reduce disparities among peoples and nations and a willingness to strive for mutual respect, trust and benefit. Chipman (1999) predicts that all universities will become universal or nearly so, entered and re-entered at multiple points in people's lives, international in focus and delivery, and robust in their quality standards. He envisages that none will be publicly funded at even today's levels. Some will be high-cost, high-price, high status providers. Some will deliver a few unique or particularly outstanding programs globally. Some will re-organise themselves to meet rising expectations of convenience-focused delivery and be price-competitive. And some will form strategic partnerships to shore up weaknesses in their programs and services. Chipman

further predicts that all universities will need to shed time-honoured assumptions and practices and that none will be able to ignore the external imperatives, even those currently at the top of the pyramid. As Christensen (2000) warns, all organisations are susceptible to failure and none are irreplaceable.

7. Internationalising the curriculum through ICT-based learning

There is a growing recognition by universities that a mono-cultural curriculum is an impoverished curriculum and that all learners, even those studying only in their home institutions, demand and deserve an internationally competitive education that will enable them to operate effectively within international and multi-cultural settings.

Synchronous applications of ICT such as audioconferencing and videoconferencing and asynchronous applications via the Internet and the Web open up numerous possibilities for broadening institutional horizons and sensitivities in their operations. Technology can increase opportunities for, and reduce the costs, delays and staff time involved in:

- Strategic planning, negotiations, course delivery and evaluation, professional development, research and other professional interaction between teaching staff and educational managers who are physically and/or socio-economically separated.
- Providing interactive and collaborative international and cross-cultural learning for those studying at or through their home institutions.
- Preparing staff and students for work and learning in partner institutions and other settings overseas.
- Maintaining contact between faculty and students in home and overseas institutions.
- Providing teaching, learning and mentoring in different transnational settings.
- Accessing libraries, databases, experts and other resources around the world.

Examples are to be found in bilateral and multilateral European projects such as the Open to Europe Project and EUROPACE 2000, and in North America and Australasia. In these initiatives, courses or modules are co-developed and co-delivered by partner institutions, and learners study in their home institutions but work collaboratively with teachers and fellow students online in virtual classrooms. Such approaches enable staff and students to become involved in developments, systems and approaches in countries other than their own and achieve greater understanding in cross-cultural communication and uses of ICT. Such approaches are applicable in all disciplines but to date many have been in the fields of business and law (see for example, Amillon, 2000).

Cost, access to technology, and limited technical competence are barriers to the wider

adoption of such strategies and even when languages, cultures, politics, and religion are universally shared, the technology itself interjects new factors into the learning environment. ICT may facilitate connection at a distance, but asynchronous communication via a keyboard and screen or 128kbs videoconferencing is very different from live face-to-face communication in the classroom and needs new protocols and new skills. Many students in overseas settings are more familiar with the traditional teacher-centred pedagogy than learning through texts and many will be lacking in confidence and in need of teacher and peer support. Technology has until recently been employed primarily to extend the teacher rather than to empower the student, a concept that involves radically changing the assumptions that underpin the pedagogy.

8. Bridging the digital divide

The 2000 Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society declared that everyone everywhere should be able to share in the benefits of the global information society and encouraged the richer nations to help the poorer nations to bypass the barriers to improved education, healthcare and socio-economic conditions. About 90% of people in developing countries have never used a telephone, about 40% are still without electricity, and given the parlous state of most of their economies it is unlikely that such services will roll out rapidly. Even where universal service is achievable, it may be difficult to deliver 'over the last mile' to those most in need.

One way of meeting these challenges is to establish ICT-based telecentres or telecottages. These are multipurpose community development agencies offering free or low-cost access to teleeducation and teletraining, telemedicine, telecommerce, and government and community information services, and providing opportunities for online 'telework'. Equipped with computers with Internet connectivity, photocopiers, scanners, printers, fax machines, telephones, libraries and other facilities, these telecentres allow the disadvantaged to log onto a whole new world of opportunity.

Some of these centres are networked, some serve smaller communities through satellite or mobile centres, and some are standalone. All serve as a socially-responsive example of 'think global, act local'. Once trained in using the technology, people in remote and deprived areas can access global and national information and collect and disseminate local knowledge via satellite and the Web, thus improving job prospects, local governance and enterprise.

Telecentres originated in Scandinavia in the mid-1980s. They are now to be found in the

UK, Ireland, Hungary and other European countries, the US, Canada and Australia and Latin America, Africa and Asia (Latchem & Walker, 2001). Some owe their origins to national agencies such as the South African Universal Service Agency (USA) or the Hungarian Telecottage Association which is supporting the establishment of telecentres in rural areas in other former Eastern Bloc countries (Murray, 2001). Most of those in developing countries are due to interventions by such agencies as UNESCO (www.unesco.org), International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (www.itu.int), US Academy for Educational Development (AED) (www.aed.org/learnlink/), Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Acacia Program (www.idrc.ca/acacia), and the African Information Society Initiative (AISII) (www.bellanet.org). Some corporate donors such as Siemens, Sagem, Ericsson and DaimlerChrysler have also been involved. The national partners in such initiatives are typically ministries of education and other government departments, universities and colleges, telecom providers and non-government organisations (NGOs). The local partners are either community organisations or commercial enterprises which are expected to assume responsibility for the management, staffing and funding beyond the pilot stage.

Other international initiatives in Africa include the IDRC/Acacia policy studies and pilot projects in achieving affordable ICT access for schools, youth groups, women's networks, etc., and the World Bank pilot African Virtual University designed to share expensive resources and specialised staff across 14 anglophone and 8 francophone sub-Saharan universities. There are clearly significant opportunities for governments, donor agencies and institutions to collaborate in such projects, countless needs to be addressed, and considerable mutual benefits to be gained.

9. Virtual networks and communities of practice

ICT-based training and information exchange, knowledge banks and databases provide unprecedented opportunities for educational policy-makers and practitioners to share knowledge and experience and learn collaboratively through international networks and communities of practice. Interaction can be scheduled and synchronous, for example via audioconferencing or videoconferencing, or asynchronous, on-demand or spontaneous, using email, web conferencing and chat rooms. Such approaches provide economies of scale and greater interactivity and immediacy in bilateral or multilateral cooperation, nurture local capacities rather than relying upon external experts, and encourage reflection and action research.

Such applications are increasingly used in the professional development of teachers

(Robinson & Latchem, forthcoming, 2002). They also enable teachers to link electronically to learn about and discuss curriculum, pedagogy and ICT. Most of these initiatives have been national, for example, the UK National Grid for Learning/BECTA (www.ngfl.gov.uk), the Swedish Schoolnet, the Canadian bilingual School Administrators' Technology Integration Resource (SATIR-RISAT) (www.satir-risat.org) and Schoolnet (www.schoolnet.ca), and Red Escolar, the Mexican School Net (www.schoolnet.ca/magazine/pdf/fall-2000.pdf). However, the international potential may be seen in, for example, the European Schoolnet's (www.eun.org/eun.org2/eun/en/index.html) online workshops, teachers' forums, guides to ICT, etc., UNICEF Teachers Talking About Learning (www.unicef.org/teachers/build.htm), designed for collaboration between teachers in developing countries through the Internet and television, the World Bank World Links for Development (WorLD) which aims to link students and teachers around the world and create school-to-school partnerships through new technologies (www.worldbank.org/worldlinks), and the US Academy for Educational Development's LearnLink, Teacher Training with Technology, and ED*ASSIST computer-mediated professional development projects for developing countries such as Benin, Nicaragua, Lesotho, Kenya and Uganda.

The Commission of the European Union recognises the strategic benefits of using ICT for the professional development of teachers. Amongst other initiatives, the EU has funded the three-year Telematics for Teacher Training (T3) (1996-1998), co-ordinated by the University of Exeter with involvement by the Universities of Dublin City, Geneva, Grenoble, Minho, Oulu, and Utrecht and other public and corporate sponsoring partners. A website (T3Centrum) provided a resource for teacher trainers, modelled best practice in Internet site models, and enabled participating universities to provide, for example, a telematics course for teachers of mathematics, school-based teacher training and tutoring for a masters of education program. Such examples again serve to show that the great scope and great need for governments, higher education institutions and other agencies to seize on the opportunities for networking and collaborative learning provided by ICT.

10. Strategic alliances, consortia and private providers

Kaufman (1991) suggests that strategic alliances are useful in times of complexity and competition because they spread risk, enable organisations to incorporate new ideas, and help organisations bypass cultural prohibitions. Distance learning alliances can be university-university or university-business and in a single country or across national borders.

With growing recognition of the potential of the Internet/Web, such alliances are now being formed globally. For example, Universitas21 (<http://www.universitas.edu.au/>), an alliance of leading universities in Asia, Australia, the United Kingdom and North America and Thomson Learning, was created in 1999 for the purposes of:

- Developing international curricula for graduates educated and trained to operate in a global professional workforce, with credentials that are internationally portable and accredited across a range of professional jurisdictions;
- Providing a quality assurance structure that operates globally to offer internationally valid processes for the enrolment, instruction, assessment and certification of students, and an internationally recognised brand identifiable with a global network of high quality universities;
- Providing partnership opportunities for major new providers, including corporate universities, wishing to access a fast-growing international market for higher education and training;
- Bringing to such partnerships international recognition and legitimacy, premium higher educational branding, a demonstrable quality assurance capability, and a proven capacity for producing and delivering quality higher education and training programs.

Another international strategic alliance is the United States Open University (USOU) under the parentage of the UKOU.

The idea underpinning such consortia is to replicate existing programs, curricula and modes of delivery, but on a global scale, and to adapt to new and changing circumstances, market demands, cultural contexts, learner needs and entrepreneurial opportunities. It is yet to be shown whether such programs can be replicated and adapted across national borders and sectors, whether there is in face a sustainable market for international online education and whether the various partners can reconcile their institutional and collaborative goals.

11. Cost

The US Sloan Foundation has funded numerous discussions on serving more students at less cost through online instruction. In a recent online forum it was suggested that online education will become less expensive than campus education, but only by 20% or so (Mayadas, 2001). Karelis (1999) argues that capital-intensive technology-mediated instruction will be more expensive unless enrollments become very large, and that for this to happen, certain changes in practice will be necessary such as employing lower-paid teaching or graduate assistants and others less qualified to handle classroom interaction

and content delivery, and only use the services of the better qualified and more senior staff for program development, management and coordination. Such an approach would run counter to the idea of using ICT for greater interaction between staff and students, improved learning and student support and constructivist learning.

Another view, offered by Rumble and Latchem (forthcoming, 2002), is that learning could revert to the model prevalent in the 12th century, in which the students seek out the teachers rather than the institutions of their choice, in a virtual sense. Such interaction would be highly personal, based upon the needs of the learners, and possibly global. For such a scenario to unfold, virtual mobility would need to be supported through new transnational forms of assessment, credit transfer, and institutional validation and accreditation. Such strategies would allow for the emergence of multi-cultural partnerships of globally distributed teachers serving students across a borderless world. Rumble & Latchem (op cit.) suggest such organisations might be so re-engineered as to allow academics to be paid directly by their students, the university to be reimbursed for the registration and recognition of their learning (with possibly a charge levied on academics for their continued recognition as accredited teachers) and with direct control by academics of their student load and their work in other fields or for other organisations.

12. Organisational transformation

Christensen (2000) distinguishes between what he terms *sustaining technology*, which enables established industries to improve existing products, and *disruptive technology*, which he describes as playing a more dramatic role. Disruptive technology starts by offering markedly different benefits at lower cost and is initially rejected by the customers. However, it seeks out and serves new and emerging markets, improves with the growing demand, achieves the quality expectations of the mainstream market, and finally displaces the established products, bringing about revolutionary change in the industry.

The introduction of prepaid post in England in 1840 led phonographer Isaac Pitman to see the commercial potential of correspondence education to train the burgeoning numbers of office workers in his new shorthand system. In doing so, he re-defined the mid-19th century educational and training landscape and stimulated the rapid spread of correspondence education, home study and the university extension movement throughout the UK, Europe and the US.

During the second half of the 20th century, the tools and techniques of mass production, mass media and multimedia were employed by some traditional campus-based universities

to transform themselves into 'dual-mode' and to create totally new institutions, the open universities (Daniel, 1996), offering academic, professional development and general programs to a far wider public.

Now, at the start of the new millennium, the Internet/Web is leading to further transformations in institutional structures and practices and to new alliances and 'virtual institutions' targeting global markets. What began at the 'low end' of the marketplace as correspondence education is becoming a dominant force, and only tradition, bureaucracy, and scepticism about the potential of the technology are stalling institutional progress.

13. The need for leadership and management-led change

Achieving systemic and radical change in higher education is no easy matter. Universities comprise many disparate operations and cultures, all underpinned by a strong tradition of academic autonomy. Cohen & March (1974) describe the typical academic structure as an 'organised anarchy' in which almost any idea can be justified or attacked by the staff, thwarting internal change.

The head of a flexible learning centre in an Australian university, Bruce King (2001), observes that some staff resist new methods and technologies because they feel threatened by the shifting locus of power and control and challenged in their competence, that others embrace the new without adequate reflection on purpose or practice, and that others adopt what Bates (2000) calls the 'lone ranger' approach, leading to replicated programs and services, incompatible technological configurations and a loss of quality control. He argues that this means that there is need for management-led change.

The President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning, Gajaraj Dhanarajan (2001), expresses concerns about the naïve faith placed in new technology, the loss of commitment to access and equity in the rush to embrace technology and the market, the insensitive, brand-waving commercialisation of education, the shifting of costs from the institution to the learner, the mismatch between the global market and the local curriculum, the alienation in the academic community (fearful of the erosion of academic freedom, jobs, intellectual property rights and quality), the poor level of investment in staff training, and the lack of leadership to manage these challenges.

Fullan (1993) argues that without a radical and system-wide overhaul, all that will be achieved is a continual stream of fragmented, ephemeral and surface innovations. Canadian distance teaching university president Ross Paul (1990) stresses that in the

inevitable chaos of complex organisations such as universities, the responsibility for open learning initiatives must rest right at the top.

Schein (1992) suggests that the significant difference between leaders and managers is that the former create and change cultures, while the latter live with them and work for acceptable compromise. Zaleznik (1996) suggests that managers are people who hold the view 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', whereas leaders are people who understand that 'When it ain't broke may be the only time to fix it'. It is for such reasons that that open and flexible learning requires transformational and entrepreneurial leadership.

Transformational and entrepreneurial leaders create visions of what they want to achieve, believe that they will succeed and envision the steps to realising their goals. They have the capacity to motivate and inspire others to think beyond their current frameworks to what is desirable, necessary and possible. They create optimal environments for innovation, quality and enterprise and they gain collaboration and commitment, even in environments initially characterised by low trust and low morale. In redefining and reforming organisations, they point to the way ahead. They also have the courage to say: 'That is not the way to go'.

Leadership can be 'top down' (by far-sighted senior and middle managers) and 'bottom up' (by far-sighted departments and staff). Ideally, these two sets of directional drives will be complementary. However, Hammer and Stanton (1995) observe that where there is no top-down leadership or the leadership is nominal and lacking any real commitment to change, failure may not occur straight away but is inevitable

14. Concluding remarks

Change in higher education in the 20th century has generally been evolutionary rather than transformational, resulting in small incremental structural adaptations implemented within the constraints of local and geographical contexts. The 21st century is characterised by globalisation. It has started with the enormous hope that technology and enlightenment can internationalise education and empower the disenfranchised. It has also shown that frightening forces such as international terrorism can span the globe and strike home to everyone.

Internationalisation calls for major transformational change far beyond the current vision of most educational institutions. Institutions with leaders who only focus on cost, efficiency or safeguarding the status quo will find it difficult to envision entirely new relationships,

responsibilities, products, services and markets.

For internationalisation programs to be successful and sustainable, program and service delivery must be of the highest quality, substantial investment must be made in the human as well as technological resources, and there must be organisational transformation and risk-taking. This requires strong leadership at all levels. Those who lead our institutions need to recognise that change is essential for organisational renewal and even survival. They need to show vision, consider the options, review and change the organisational cultures, practices, human resource and reward systems, and 'walk the talk' in guiding new directions.

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