



Message of Milton Keynes

EADTU's 30th Anniversary Conference

27th October 2017

European societies changed and will further change, due to the impact of new technologies and through new developments in the economy and in society at large. This has consequences for universities. The needs for lifelong learning will equal or even exceed the size of needs for initial degree education. Hence, this is an emergent higher education sector that needs a rapid development as part of the higher education system.

Three areas of provision emerge in European universities:

- (1) *degree education* as the backbone of a university;
- (2) *continuing education* and continuous professional development, which probably will exceed the number of degree students;
- (3) and *open education* which emerged mainly by the MOOC movement.

These areas are complementary to each other and to some extent interwoven (CPL study, 2015). New ICT-based modes of teaching and learning support these provisions, resulting in high quality degree education within rich learning environments, large scale continuing education online with the potential of meeting enormous education and training needs in the economy and society, and open education accessible by all.

The Conference looked into conditions for innovation in degree education at the institutional and governmental level.

It called upon the Bologna Follow Up Group and the Council of Ministers to take lifelong learning and the large scale development of continuous education on board of the Bologna process.

Finally, it launched the European MOOC Consortium (EMC) consisting of all major European MOOC platforms.

Blended degree education

Blended education is the dominating trend of innovation in on campus degree education. ICT facilitates also other innovations in higher education, e.g. collaborative learning and multi-campus and international learning.



Blended learning combines conventional and digital methods to achieve an “optimal exploitation of ICT and internet” integrated with the conventional technologies of physical material, and co-presence in space and time. The value of blending the two is that digital methods offer much greater personalization, flexibility, inclusiveness and efficiency than conventional methods can, but they have to be used appropriately (Laurillard, 2015).

The goal of blended education is:

- 1) developing more effective pedagogies;
- (2) an increased convenience and access to learning provisions;
- (3) an increased cost effectiveness.

Blended teaching and learning practice in degree education is increasing. EUA studies revealed that a majority of HEIs have established blended learning courses and programs. But, more than half of the institutions applied blended teaching and learning in 'some' faculties or by 'individual teachers' only (Gaebel, Kupriyano and Morais; Sursock (2015). The Changing Pedagogical Landscape study made clear that even within frontrunner institutions only 20% or less of the courses are blended. Moreover, many course models used just replicate face to face courses or don't meet the requirements of high quality course design (CPL, 2015).

The development of high quality blended education requires governmental policies and strategies, a strong institutional leadership and an academic culture in favour of innovation. Further requirements are appropriate course design avoiding many mis-conceptions on blended education, the continuous professional development of teaching staff, and evaluation and research on innovation.

EADTU will in partnership with leading universities in blended education work on a *maturity model for the development of blended degree education*, involving change processes concerning all stakeholders: governments, institutional leadership, teaching staff, teaching and learning support and technology services and students.

Short learning programmes and the Bologna process

Generally, universities and governments engage not yet on a *large scale and systemic deployment* of continuous education and lifelong learning as a flexible response to huge economic and cultural needs in society. In many European countries, even part-time education for mature students is not on the agenda.

More than ever, lifelong learning is needed in the economy and society and must become a structural part of higher education provisions in all European countries. Therefore, we call upon the Bologna Follow Up Group and the Council of Ministers to take this forward on their agenda in the Paris meeting in 2018. New formats for continuing education like short learning programmes deserve the same status as bachelor and master degrees in the European Area of Higher Education.

The role of *on line short learning programmes* will increase and become the backbone of lifelong learning, serving large numbers of students with a restricted study time horizon and meeting needs



of the economy and society at large. On-line short learning programmes will upscale the participation in continuing education to the level of the needs in society. They are both flexible for students at work and broaden the outreach of a course across a country or even internationally.

Short learning programmes vary in number of credits (largely between 5 and 30 ECTS). To be effective, SLPs are to be developed in a coherent design with specific pedagogies, adapted to the target groups and preferably in collaboration with stakeholders (businesses, innovation managers, etc.).

Where possible, universities should offer the possibility to students to chain modules and certificates in order to obtain a degree (bachelor, master).

Currently, specific standard qualifications for short learning programmes are not yet defined according to the European Qualification Framework (EFQ), which is hindering transparency and harmonization in this respect. Recognition is a major requirement when setting up SLP's.

EADTU and ENQA have opened a dialogue with the QA agencies on quality assurance of non-traditional programmes like short learning programmes and MOOCs. In the coming year we will proceed this dialogue and involve other stakeholders.

Open universities from their origin organise flexible education for students at work. They have developed pedagogical and organisational approaches for reaching out to these students and are used to large scale operations. They are the first to be able to capitalize on the benefits of online teaching and learning. This however is a major operation.

Also some traditional universities are developing strategies for a large scale approach to continuous education involving flexible and therefore online solutions. In order to be successful, they need to build extension studies structures, as is done already by some European and US universities.

Integrating SLPs in higher education systems is important for the renewed strategy for higher education of the European Commission, because they make higher education more attainable for mature learners, who combine work and study or learn for personal development. SLPs will be indispensable for the continuous innovation of our economies. Everyone will have longer and rapidly changing careers and are in need for updating innovative knowledge and skills. Also, we have to think about educating students for jobs we do not yet know about.

Public authorities (governments, EU, regions) fail in their engagement to implement policies and strategies, frameworks, national recognition, standards, funding incentives, guiding universities to a large scale deployment of SLP's.

MOOCs and the European MOOC Consortium

During this conference, the major European MOOC platforms Futurelearn (UK), FUN (France), Miriada X (Spain), EduOpen (Italy), OpenupEd and EADTU launched the European MOOCs consortium (EMC). Later on, other national platforms might join. These platforms serve large, but distinct language-bound markets and from now on will develop coordinated actions to learn from each other



with regard to pedagogies, organisational models, business models, delivering services to universities, and reaching-out to students aiming at a European coverage.

Today, the EMC consortium represents most of the MOOC development work in Europe in terms of learners and number of MOOCs, by offering together over a 1000 MOOCs. Together, they represent a large network of 250 higher education institutions (HEIs) and companies working in a variety of European languages, including English, French, Spanish and Italian.

The European MOOC Consortium will strengthen the credibility of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as a learning approach in higher education by taking a leading role in MOOCs and other innovative developments in online learning in Europe.

EMC will make MOOCs a widely considered option for employers seeking to close knowledge and skills gaps in the economy and for workers interested in changing careers. In order to do this, EMC and its partners will develop a dialogue with social partners and civil society organisations on the changing needs of the European workforce.

A dialogue on innovation and digital education

This conference has seen a fruitful exchange of visions on innovation in degree education, short learning programmes and MOOCs in European higher education. Topics were discussed with regard to new insights in pedagogies, organisational and business models, policies and strategies in those areas.

EADTU will continue its dialogue with EUA, ENQA, ESU and EURASHE on innovation in higher education and the support of digital education. This dialogue already has been intensified by recent initiatives (EFFECT project of EUA, 2016-2018; EADTU-ENQA Peer learning Activity, 2017).

EADTU will also develop a maturity model on blended education with front-runner universities and many others interested. It will develop new concepts and promote short learning programmes, including policies and strategies at the institutional and governmental level. It will play an active role in the European MOOCs Consortium, launched at this Conference.

Together with other organisations, it will extend this dialogue to the EU institutions and national governments. EADTU will call upon the Bologna Follow Up Group and the Council of Ministers to take lifelong learning and the large scale development of continuous education on board of the Bologna process.



References

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