Mega University = Mega Quality?

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Mega-Universities = Mega Quality?

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Introduction

It is a tremendous pleasure to be with you. Speakers always say that, but for me this event really is very special. I am honoured to give a keynote address at this Second World Summit of Mega-universities.

When I coined the word mega-university a decade ago I did not imagine that it would become part of the world's educational vocabulary. I never dreamed that a decade later I would be attending the First World Summit of Mega-universities, that splendidly memorable event hosted by China at the Shanghai TVU. I am flattered that you have asked me to speak again at this Second World Summit of Mega-universities. You must not share the view of the session chair who once introduced me by saying, 'anyone who has not heard John Daniel speak before will have been looking forward to this moment'.

At the Shanghai Summit my title was Mega-universities = Mega-impact on Access, Cost and Quality. For this Summit you have chosen a theme which is dear to me: Cross Border Delivery: Experiences of Mega-universities. To address this theme I shall ask simply Mega-universities = Mega quality? I have included a question mark that was not there in Shanghai.

To tackle this question as it relates to cross-border delivery I have invited two co-authors to help me. Professor Asha Kanwar, our higher education specialist at the Commonwealth of Learning, has recently done research on the impact of cross-border higher education on developing countries. My former UNESCO colleague, Stamenka Uvaliæ-Trumbiæ, leads the UNESCO-OECD process to develop quality guidelines for cross-border higher education.

Our first key question is simple. Can cross-border higher education help developing countries respond to the growing demand for higher education? Can cross-border HE satisfy the three 'A's: accessibility, availability and affordability?

We shall look at the reality of cross-border HE in three very different developing countries: India, Jamaica and Sierra Leone. These three cases show that today cross-border HE makes a negligible contribution to offering higher education that is accessible, available and affordable in developing countries. There may be enormous potential for the mega-universities to operate beyond their own borders, but today you are only scratching the surface.

But this could be a very important task for you. C.K. Prahalad's book, The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid, implicitly challenges cross-border education radically to change its cost structures and logistical capabilities in order to serve millions of people now deprived of higher education. The mega-universities are the only institutions with the potential to respond to this challenge.

How might you make such radical changes? The electronic delivery of services is changing business models dramatically. Electronic delivery could transform cross-border HE - provided that it exploits the breakthrough of open source software in the management of learning and the use of learning materials.

Assuming that the mega-universities can create cross-border operations at scale, governments will have to monitor you by creating quality assurance and accreditation frameworks to match that scale. Recent work by UNESCO and the OECD will help them do this.

We shall then talk about quality in the mega-universities. Always remember that open universities were set up to raise the quality of distance education and wash away bad memories of correspondence education. You cannot afford to let down your guard on quality. Finally, we shall speculate about the leadership styles that mega-universities require.

That is the plan. Now back to the beginning!

What is Cross-Border Higher Education?

What is cross-border higher education? UNESCO and the OECD, in their Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education, state that:

'Cross-border higher education includes higher education that takes place when students follow a course or programme of study that has been produced, and is continuing to be maintained, in a country different from the one in which they are residing. Cross-border higher education may include higher education by private and/or for-profit providers.'

Using the term 'cross-border' accepts national borders in higher education in a way that might have seemed strange to the academic nomads of medieval Europe and ancient Arabia. Accepting borders recognises the roles of national governments for overseeing the national HE system. The border is also a

symbol for national political, social and cultural identity.

National sovereignty over higher education has been reinforced by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organisation. Seeing trade ministers offer to trade higher education services alongside bananas and cars has alarmed some academics and heightened the fear of cross-border HE as a nasty side effect of globalisation.

Cross-border higher education can originate from various sources, not just from conventional universities, open universities and mega-universities, but also from media companies, multinational companies, corporate universities, networks of universities, professional organizations, and IT companies[1].

The GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, recognises four modes of trade. First there is consumption abroad, where students travel to another country to study, as all three co-authors of this paper once did. Second, there is the presence of natural persons, which in academic terms means visiting scholars or teachers.

Although people cross borders in both cases, neither of these traditional forms of academic exchange falls within the UNESCO/OECD definition. That focuses on the other two forms of trade, defined by the GATS as cross-border supply and commercial presence, but better known to us as distance education and the establishment of branch campuses. These are the forms of cross-border higher education that raise fears of cultural imperialism and loss of sovereignty. Some people fear the potential of your mega-universities for operating across borders. Are their fears justified?

Could we not argue that cross-border education could help developing countries to expand higher education? Today age participation rates in HE in the industrialised world approach 50% or more, yet APRs in many developing countries are still in single figures. Cross-border higher education could help to increase access and keep in the country some young people who might otherwise migrate abroad to study and then stay there.

What is the reality? First, what are the priorities of developing countries for higher education? Second, what does the evidence tell us about the contribution of cross-border HE to these priorities?

Priorities for Higher Education in the Developing World

The most comprehensive statement about the priorities for HE in the developing world came from UNESCO's 1998 World Conference which attracted 4,000 people - including 130 ministers - from 182 countries. The Conference adopted a World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century and a Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education. They proposed an international development agenda that stressed the core missions and values of higher education; notably equitable access, the advancement of knowledge through research, and the need for relevance and quality. The Conference concluded that higher education faced the most radical shake-up in its history.

For the developing world the challenge begins, as it often does, with demography. Forecasts indicate a population of 7 - 8 billion people in the developing countries in 2025 - more than half of them young people. We have already crossed the threshold of 100 million students worldwide, and numbers are forecast to grow to 125 million before 2020. But this forecast may be too modest. China has recently doubled enrolments in higher education in a short period. Today the five largest national systems of higher education (China, U.S.A., India, Russia and Japan) account for 53.1 million students, which is more than half the world total.

The challenge of absolute numbers is heightened by the huge discrepancy between developing and developed countries in rates of access to higher education. 40-50% age participation rates are becoming the norm in developed countries, whereas in some developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, APRs remain below 5%.[2] Yet people in developing countries want higher education.

Can Cross-Border HE help?

Which raises the key question: can cross-border higher education help meet the challenge of rising demand? Or will cross-border higher education, like the failed expectations of the dotcom frenzy, become a casualty of too much hype and too little performance?

History is instructive. In the 1980's many lowly American universities established branch campuses in Japan, but because of lack of interest from the locals they gradually melted away. South Africa was an attractive destination for foreign providers in the mid 1990's but only two of the 38 foreign providers that moved in have survived today's strict accreditation procedures. Let us look at three other countries that are positioned at various points on the development spectrum: India, Jamaica and Sierra Leone

Despite having the third largest HE system in the world[3], India only provides access to 7% of the 18-23 age group. To catch up with its neighbours Thailand and Singapore, which have APRs of 20% and 34% respectively; India has to find cost-effective mechanisms for expanding access. Open and distance education is a good way to reach large numbers and today 23% of all HE enrolments in India are in distance education; specifically in 11 open universities and 102 dual-mode institutions. The government's target is that by 2010, 40% of all HE participation will be through distance education. The number of privately managed institutions is also increasing in India, especially in professional disciplines[4]. However, on current trends the target of 14 million students, or a 10% APR by 2007/8, will elude India. Yet the additional market of 5 million students should be tempting for major providers. Could cross-border provision respond to this market?

The number of cross-border providers in India has increased from 27 in 2000 to 114 in 2004. But a third of these institutions are not recognised or accredited in their country of origin and the same proportion of their Indian collaborators are not part of the formal higher education system either. Even when the foreign providers are universities, they have poor reputations in their own countries. Neither branch campuses nor franchise agreements have had much success. The only exceptions are 61 twinning and articulation arrangements that allow students to go to the source country in the final year and stay on for employment purposes[5]. With such figures cross border HE is clearly a non-issue in India. The enrolments it attracts

are negligible in the Indian context.

In Jamaica the existing tertiary institutions cater to nearly 15% of the conventional age group. The average APR for the Caribbean region is 18%. [6] Jamaica has announced plans to double access to tertiary education by 2010 in three ways: by increasing the provision of distance education; by expanding franchised qualifications from the University of the West Indies to local community colleges; and by collaboration with universities outside the Caribbean[7]. Existing unmet demand opens the door for cross-border tertiary education and 31 providers are already in the country[8].

Sierra Leone, a country recently emerged from conflict, has one university (with four constituent colleges) and six teacher training colleges and polytechnics. As well as these public institutions there are private technical and vocational institutions. The total number of enrolments at the University of Sierra Leone was 5445 in 2002-3; with 5394 in the six other tertiary education institutions put together.[9] The gross tertiary enrolment rates for Sierra Leone are 2.0 %[10].Comparing this with the 4% enrolment figure for Africa, the National Education Master Plan rightly envisages the need for the 'reorganization and expansion of tertiary education by 2007'. The numbers are already rising sharply. Despite limited facilities and an infrastructure wrecked by eleven years of Civil war, Sierra Leone can be an attractive destination for cross-border providers. Some are already there. Providers from the UK, USA and Australia advertise distance learning courses at degree level in the local papers.

What common features emerge from these three country summaries? First, huge unsatisfied demand calls for expansion of access. Second, for-profit cross-border providers are active. Third, these providers are of low quality despite their high prices. They tend to cater to a rich market and have low enrolments.

Data regarding enrolments in cross-border provision are hard to find and are usually underestimates. The UK's HE Statistics Agency, HESA, recorded 101,645 enrolments of UK transnational delivery (by franchise, branch campuses, and distance learning) in 191 countries across the world in 2002-3. Even if the absolute numbers have a margin of error, looking at their worldwide distribution probably gives a fair picture of where cross-border providers concentrate their efforts.

The highest numbers of cross-border students were living in well-developed countries: as measured by their rankings in UNDP's Human Development Index. The largest UK numbers were found in Hong Kong SAR (26th place in the HDI) followed by Singapore (28th) and Malaysia (58th). These are also the main markets for Australian cross-border providers. By contrast, enrolments were 1203 in India, 777 in Jamaica and less than 100 in 30 African countries taken together (excluding South Africa)[11].

We conclude that cross-border enrolments in countries with low rankings on the Human Development Index are minimal[12]. However, there is now significant and successful cross-border activity among developed countries. Yet cross-border provision from the developed to the developing world is insignificant.

So who is afraid of cross-border higher education? From this evidence no developing country should fear cross-border provision. Instead they might regret that a possible contributor to the expansion of their

higher education systems is not delivering. How can cross-border HE become more relevant? Is this an opportunity - even a duty - for the mega-universities?

Can Cross-Border HE Do Better?

One encouraging sign is the growing exports from one developing country to another. The University of South Africa, UNISA, seems set to become a major provider across Africa and IGNOU, is already targeting niche markets of the Indian diaspora in the Middle East and elsewhere. Cross-border activities now show a north-south divide; but can they become a global phenomenon?

For cross border provision to help the developing world it must address the three 'A's' of accessibility, affordability and availability[13].

Accessibility

Access to quality higher education remains a major challenge in the developing world. Decreasing public spending and increasing demand have set the stage for a diverse range of providers, including rogue providers. Countries like India with large and well-developed distance education systems will not provide easy pickings for overseas providers. For different reasons, neither will countries with inadequate infrastructure and low bandwidth such as Sierra Leone, because access to higher education relies on the technology and infrastructure through which education is delivered.

Only 1% of African people are online and 50% of them are in South Africa. Access to technology in Bangladesh is 0.1%. So what success can online provision have in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? Despite the great need to throw open access, cross-border education has yet to capture the imagination of the developing world. Today it is peripheral and insignificant.

Affordability

Costs are a major deterrent. Conventional distance education is well developed in Asia and costs much less than traditional education[14]. Foreign providers with higher costs cannot compete with local education provision. To succeed, cross-border providers must devise a business model that can take them beyond the rich to reach out to the masses.

The early history of the African Virtual University illustrates this point. At first it delivered programmes by satellite sourced from outside the continent at high cost. This proved non viable. Eventually the AVU had to establish itself in Africa and create partnerships with local universities in order to expand its enrolment. The presence of a market does not ensure consumption, because products have to be designed so that needs are converted into sustainable demand.

India has transformed higher education from an elite system to a mass system for a vibrant democracy.

Instead of bucking this trend, overseas providers should flow with the mainstream of national developments. We shall suggest how they might do this in a moment.

Availability

The subjects made available by cross-border providers are limited. Programmes are mostly in the areas of Business and Information Technology. Students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds study the same courses as in the country of origin, with no recognition of social, cultural and ethnic diversity.

When asked to identify its needs in tertiary education, Samoa listed 'agriculture, health and social development'. St Kitts and Nevis has priorities that include 'courses built on culture, heritage, health care, teacher training, natural environment and industries'[15].Cross border education provision will become relevant only when it endeavours to respond to such country priorities.

Responding effectively requires strong partnerships between the overseas provider and local institutions, not just in logistics, but more importantly in determining the content, its relevance and the methods of delivery. For example, the University of West Indies offers a programme in Tourism and Hotel Management, which is a priority area for the region. The cross-border providers do not.

Similarly, a national publicly-funded institution in Sierra Leone offers Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, not the overseas providers. Unless providers take national priorities into account, they will always be vulnerable to the charge of 'academic dumping'. Cross-border providers could identify niche areas - just as the Tamil Virtual University has done by offering Tamil language courses to the Tamil diaspora from Kuala Lumpur to California.

Cross-Border Education at the Bottom of the Pyramid

Cross-border education should learn from the thinking of C.K. Prahalad and colleagues about 'The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid'. Addressing themselves to multi-national corporations, they point to the four billion poor people in the world who aspire to better lives. They urge multi-nationals to view their globalisation strategies through a new lens of inclusive capitalism since, 'for companies with the resources and persistence to compete at the bottom of the world economic pyramid, the prospective rewards include growth, profits and incalculable contributions to humankind' (P&H, p1).

Looking at these four billion people through the lens of tertiary education, you might note that if they achieved an APR of 35% there would 150 million additional students to serve. This is far more than total current enrolments worldwide and the equivalent of one hundred new IGNOUs. Mega-universities would, however, face the same challenges as business in serving these people. It would require 'radical innovations in technology and business models'; changing from the ideal of "bigger is better" to 'an ideal of highly distributed small scale operations married to world-scale capabilities'; and 'helping people improve their lives by producing and distributing products and services in culturally sensitive, environmentally sustainable and economically profitable ways'.

Business requires multiple partners to operate successfully in this environment. Likewise mega-universities would need partnerships with local government authorities, communities, NGOs and financial institutions.

Fortunately one development is helping both business and education to serve the poor. The growing availability of telephone and Internet connections is uniting the world's rich and poor and transforming the digital divide into a digital dividend. Communication links are changing the way that poor villages in the developing world function. There is a huge opportunity for mega-universities, both at home and as cross-border providers, to develop new business models and bring education to millions.

By establishing economies of scope they would be able to reach out to the Bottom of the Pyramid and achieve economies of scale. As Prahalad says 'We have proved to the world that if you build a market for the rich, the poor wouldn't participate. If you build a market for the poor, the rich would participate'[16]. Just as cheap shampoo sachets and brand names can appeal to the poor constituencies, low-cost, high quality and need-based education can reach out to the millions that live below the poverty line but still aspire to education and training for a better future. Costs are critical in developing economies and cross-border providers must address that challenge.

New Technologies for Cross-Border Education

Fortunately, a series of developments in the ways that technology is used could help to make the dramatic reduction in educational costs that is required. These developments combine steadily widening access to information and communications technology, which we call connectivity, with new ways of using connectivity in education. We refer not simply to eLearning, but to the blossoming of the Free Open Source Software movement and its application to eLearning. Institutions offering eLearning can choose from a range of open source Learning Management Systems, which is the term for software platforms that support eLearning. Even more importantly, teachers and institutions around the world are creating and sharing learning materials and courses for use on these platforms, which are known generically as 'reusable learning objects'.

This combination of expanding connectivity and the growing reservoir of open education resources is a revolution and you can learn more about it on the COL website. (See, for example, www.col.org/lor).

This combination could open up higher education to the billions of people at the bottom of the pyramid. Much of this work will, rightly, be done by local providers. However, such a huge market will most likely spark a massive expansion in cross-border provision. Mega-universities could be active on both fronts. How will governments ensure the quality of such provision on their territories? To this we now turn.

The Future of Quality Assurance in Cross-Border Higher Education

Cross-border higher education will not help developing countries unless it is accessible, available, affordable, relevant, and of acceptable quality. Many developing countries lack quality assurance

mechanisms. Where they do exist, as in India, they are not properly equipped to cope with cross-border provision. Even though a national agency like the Higher Education Quality Committee in South Africa deals with foreign providers and approves the setting up of branch campuses, distance education from abroad eludes its grasp.

South Africa has 1408 such students, mostly with UK providers, but as yet there is no procedure for monitoring and quality assuring their programmes. Distance education and online provision is hard to identify and document. So how does one protect students from dubious deliverers and spurious suppliers? Let us look at the three countries we spoke of before: India; Jamaica and Sierra Leone.

India has the National Assessment and Accreditation Council as well as the National Board of Accreditation to accredit its HE and professional institutions. The Distance Education Council, DEC, has the responsibility for quality assurance in distance education. I understand that the Government of India is reviewing whether it is appropriate for this body to be located within IGNOU, which could be seen as a conflict of interest. Nigeria, which proposes setting up a similar body, will locate it outside the National Open University of Nigeria.

The All India Council for Technical Education, which is responsible for professional institutions, has developed regulations to control the entry of foreign providers into the market for technical education. They require the foreign institution to be accredited in its home country and to give an undertaking that the diploma or degree will be recognised in its country of origin. Furthermore, the foreign provider must partner with an accredited Indian university or institution. India's University Grants Committee has not yet issued its regulations for foreign HE institutions.

The University Council of Jamaica has a dual mandate: it both accredits and has the power to confer degrees and diplomas. All tertiary institutions operating in Jamaica must register with it. Registration includes assessing the staff and support services both in Jamaica and, through a visit to the home campus, in the country of origin.

The Tertiary Education Council in Sierra Leone has the mandate to ensure standards. It hopes to evolve into a Quality Assurance Agency which could possibly regulate the entry of foreign providers.

These examples show that the developing world still needs to develop regulatory mechanisms for protecting both systems and students. In particular, existing regulations have difficulty coping with the multiple manifestations of distance education.

How can national bodies deal effectively with this increasingly complex phenomenon? What is the role of international bodies in maintaining quality provision? What should be the coordination mechanisms between national and international bodies? How will information be generated and shared?

To address these challenges in the context of cross-border provision UNESCO is mapping needs and current initiatives for capacity building in the related domains of quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of new types of qualifications for the labour market[17]. This mapping reveals major regional

variations. All regions have an emerging concern for quality assurance, but it is not matched by adequate human, institutional and financial resources. Moreover, the terms quality assurance, accreditation, registration, licensure, and qualifications recognition are often confused.

Nonetheless, developing countries feel that it is urgent to develop a common understanding of terms and to gain better insights into the different models, criteria and procedures for quality assurance. This will enable them to develop policies for inclusion in national reforms and legislation.

The UNESCO review identified some key preconditions for efficient capacity building in quality assurance. Support from government is essential, as is involving the principal stakeholders at the national level, notably higher education institutions, academic staff and students. The process must also embrace new types of provision of higher education, such as private institutions, distance education, and cross-border operations. Above all, capacity-building must have a long-term perspective.

A trend to greater regionalisation, accompanied by the ineluctable thrust towards global interconnectedness, is clearly reflected in all reviews. Thus Asia and the Pacific see the need for a nodal point for research and development, as well as a registry for regional expertise. Sub-Saharan Africa has a regional capacity-building strategy employing South-South co-operation so that more sophisticated systems can coach their less advanced neighbours. An overriding requirement is to change mentalities by promoting a 'quality culture' that can overcome the traditional resistance to change from the academic community. The continuous involvement of key players and consistent government support are essential for this.

The big challenge for UNESCO and other international organisations is to develop a global response to such diverse requirements, knowing that the interests of local, regional and global educational communities converge on some topics and diverge on others. The changing role of the nation-state, multiple identities, new dimensions of multiculturalism and international education[18] all make fresh demands on international organisations to redress inequalities and shape new 'supranational policy', through regulation and redistribution. Cross-border higher education must be placed in the larger context of policy formulation within the "complex web of relationships that extend beyond the nation-state" and embrace other emerging terms and concepts such as 'supranational policy' and 'cosmopolitan democracy'[19].

This demanding environment is the backdrop to the joint work of UNESCO and the OECD on Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education. It arose from UNESCO's on-going work of reviewing the regional conventions on the recognition of traditional qualifications in order to adapt them to new realities.

The Guidelines recognise the importance of national authority and the diversity of higher education systems. They present higher education as a vital means for expressing a country's linguistic and cultural diversity, nurturing its economic development and strengthening social cohesion. In addressing six major stakeholders in higher education, namely governments, institutions, QA bodies, credentialing agencies, student groups and professional bodies, the guidelines provide examples of good practice that

stakeholders can examine and adapt to their own regional and national realities.

The effectiveness of the Guidelines largely depends on strengthening the capacity of national systems to assure the quality of higher education. Further support to capacity building in quality assurance carried out by UNESCO, by other multilateral organisations and by bilateral donors will sustain and complement the Guidelines. Exchanging information among a wide range of stakeholders is a good foundation for capacity-building. It also empowers learners and promotes quality 'literacy' when it is shared with students, employers and parents. Data-bases, publications, knowledge repositories for decision-makers on policy issues in higher education, and electronic forums to promote communities of interest in QA and QR are all part of the process.

The policy debates they generate encourage the dialogue across borders that is a prerequisite for the solid international frameworks of quality assurance that can be catalysts of change.

Quality in Mega-Universities

What are the implications of all this for the mega-universities? What quality criteria should mega-universities use to assess their work and does eLearning, which will be a significant element of cross-border teaching, require new criteria?

A recent UNESCO survey showed that most mega-universities have not developed a separate QA system for e-learning but use the same criteria as for their conventional distance education offerings[20]. However, the Korean National Open University (KNOU), which offers 60 eLearning courses, uses three quality assurance measures: a) the appropriateness of e-learning objectives and content accuracy and structure; b) the pedagogical strategies, multimedia components, user interface, and course management functions; and c) two formal evaluation sessions during the development process.

AIOU has adopted a QA process in developing multimedia contents for its courses. Other mega-universities - such as the UKOU and China's RTVU system, are incorporating e-learning into their programmes but have no special QA measures for e-learning. Anadolu University offers an e-learning MBA programme and is working on details for a QA for e-learning.

Our general view is that while there must be quality assurance of eLearning, mega-universities have much to gain by using quality criteria which are recognisably similar to those used across the rest of higher education. I came to this view when I was Vice-Chancellor of the UKOU, when a major reform merged UK higher education into a single system. Partly because of the strong arguments made by the UKOU, all institutions, whether contact or distance, were placed within a single framework for purposes of funding and quality assessment.

The UKOU was subject to the same processes as other universities for quality audit, for the assessment of research, and for the assessment of teaching quality. All three processes were extremely beneficial, particularly the teaching quality assessment. Every year the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education picked a number of subjects and sent teams into each university to assess how well they taught

them. The team had to allocate up to four points in each of six areas:

*Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
*Teaching, Learning and Assessment
*Student Progression and Achievement
*Student Support and Guidance
*Learning Resources
*Quality Management and Enhancement

That meant that you could score up to 24 points in each subject and the UK press decided that 22/24 or better indicated excellent teaching of that subject. The newspapers then rated universities according to the proportion of subjects that had been ranked as excellent.

Here is the table for 2004. You can see that after the system had been running for some years the UKOU had risen to fifth place in the rankings of some one hundred universities, being placed just above Oxford, where I did my undergraduate degree.

You got some interesting results when you combine these quality assessments with student numbers. When they assessed General Engineering eight universities received excellent rankings, with the OU at the top. The seven others together had 4,687 full-time equivalent students enrolled in this subject. The OU had 4,331. This meant that 48% of all students studying excellent-rated General Engineering courses in the UK were at the Open University. There were similar results in other disciplines. In Music the OU accounted for 65% of all excellently taught students, in Geology 62%, in Social Policy 54%, in Chemistry 42% and in Business 32%.

I also bring you some very fresh news which gives me enormous pleasure. Four days ago the UK published a survey of student satisfaction conducted amongst 170,000 students across the whole university system. Top of the class is the Open University with a score of 4.5 out of a maximum possible 5. Here I'm afraid I can't make comparisons to my alma mater, Oxford, because Oxford and Cambridge tried to organise a boycott of the survey and the response rates from those universities are too low to be statistically significant. In their editorial commentary the following day the press told Oxbridge to grow up!

I draw three conclusions from all this. The first is that mega-universities should not fear being assessed on the same quality criteria as other universities. The second is that these six criteria capture the key aspects of quality in teaching and learning. The third is that students can be more satisfied with the service they get from well-organised mega-universities than from contact institutions.

Mega-universities should progress beyond formal quality assurance processes towards a culture of quality that unites all members of the institution. How can we do this? How can we inspire faculty and staff to adopt a sustainable culture of quality?

The recent AAOU conference heard of the quality audit that Universitas Terbuka had undergone with the International Council for Open and Distance Learning, ICDE, which is a non-governmental membership

organisation. It will take time for quality audits done by an NGO like ICDE to establish the same credibility as those done with government involvement. Nevertheless, the outcomes of this ICDE process reflect well on the staff and leadership of UT.

Quality depends on leadership. Mega-university leaders must have a long-term vision of giving students access to success. Through unimpeachable integrity the leader must inspire confidence as a role model for colleagues. We want a cadre of future leaders; not just one good leader, so we must invest in leadership. This means empowering faculty and staff to become leaders in their own right by delegating responsibilities to them, including responsibilities for quality.

Is a separate kind of leadership required for mega-universities? Are they different from other institutions? Because they offer higher education to the masses they are part of the global march towards democracy, so elitist models of leadership that rely on hierarchy are not appropriate. More democratic and consensual leadership is called for.

Moreover, because of their popular nature, mega-universities - and distance education generally - attract a higher proportion of women as both students and leaders than contact institutions. Of the eleven open universities in India, three are led by women, as is the UKOU. Do mega-universities require leadership with more womanly attributes? In reflecting on their leadership traits two women leaders, Professors Brenda Gourley of the UKOU and Surabhi Banerjee of Netaji Subhas Open University, both identify resilience as part of their styles. Is this trait a female speciality or is it shared by men and women?

Rather than speak of male or female leadership styles, we should perhaps speak of the androgynous leader-or a leader with both male and female traits. Eastern cultures believe in the complementary concepts of the ying and yang, and there is the Hindu concept of the androgynous -the Ardh-Narishwar - or a complete whole embodying both the male and female principles. The androgynous leader would combine the best of leadership qualities, combining moral authority, empathy, decisiveness, creativity, caring and compassion.

I realise that I have only scratched the surface of the huge topic of leadership, but I hope that your researchers might explore further the leadership requirements of mega-universities. Mega-universities play a crucial role in their societies and current thinking places more and more emphasis on leadership as the key to institutional strength and success - so we need to get leadership right.

It is time to conclude. I hope that I have demystified the topic of cross border education and shown that mega-universities have an important role to play in its development. To play this role effectively they will need to combine a vision of openness with an ability to cut costs while maintaining high quality.

I have suggested that combining expanding connectivity with open education resources could help them, with good leadership, to do just that. It has been a pleasure to talk to the mega-university community and I wish you well in your important work.

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[3] 330 university-level institutions, over 15,000 colleges and 9.2 million students

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[6] There are three universities: University of Technology, University of West Indies (Mona Campus) and Northern Caribbean University, a private institution established in 2001 and 38 Tertiary level institutions. Both UWI and UTech offer distance education courses. COL-UNESCO Report (2003).Robin Middlehurst & Steve Woodfield, ' The Role of Transnational, Private and For-Profit Provision in meeting Global demand for Tertiary Education: Mapping, Regulation and Impact'.

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[9] COL commissioned Environmental Scan on Education in Sierra Leone (2005), p 48

[10] Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education World Bank, 2002, p 188

[11] qted in Richard Garrett, 'Does Crossborder HE make sense for Africa?' Paper for the 11th General Conference of the AAU, Cape Town, February 2005, p 15

[12] (UK Education flourishes most in high HDI countries (65,139) followed by medium HDI countries (33, 534) and finally low HDI countries (2662). Jamaica is ranked 78, India 127 and Sierra Leone 175 in the Human Development Report 2003.

[13] CK Prahalad and Stuart Hart, (2002). 'The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid', Stategy+Business Issue 26.

[14] Yoshida, A, (2001). Distance HE and a New trend of Virtual Universities in Asia in F T Tschang and T Della Senta (Eds.) New Information Technologies and the Emergence of the Virtual University. Pergamon: Amsterdam

[15] COL commissioned Report on the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, 2005.

[16] Times of India, Dec 27, 2004

[17] Initiated by the 2nd Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications, a review of capacity needs and current initiatives for satisfying them covered Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean countries, and South-East Europe.

[18] One of which is the notion that students go abroad not only to get an education but also to get a 'global imagination'; In Globalization and Education: Critical perspectives, Ed. Nicholas C. Burbules and Carlos Alberto Torres, Routledge, 2000.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Jung, Insung (2005), "Quality Assurance Survey of Mega-Universities" in C. McIntosh (Ed.) Lifelong Learning and Distance Higher Education, UNESCO-COL, Paris/Vancouver