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UNESCO'S impact upon the development of higher education for lifelong learning through its key statements and policy documents

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of relevant UNESCO statements underlining the key role of higher education institutions in promoting adult and lifelong education. I presume that UNESCO has been one of the leading external international stakeholders to influence universities so as to develop lifelong learning and active citizenship through direct involvement in modernizing education, training and learning tools and contents. I will try to demonstrate the followings: 1) Higher education has a role to provide overarching frameworks to facilitate HEIs to operate as lifelong learning institutions. These are regulatory, financial and social/cultural; 2) Universities of Lifelong Learning demonstrate an environment where knowledge is becoming more practical and that relations between theory and practice is under the constraints of necessary reconstruction when relevant institutions face growing demand for practical knowledge; 2) Universities must develop international co-operation, but also promote local and regional partnerships with other institutions and relationships with other respected groups of the society; 3) Research is understood in a broader sense and it must include working across disciplines and across institutions. Higher education must demonstrate that adult and lifelong education and learning is a legitimate research area; 4) University educators must encourage self-directed learning and use open and resource-based learning approaches to promote learners becoming independent learners.

Key words: university, higher education, lifelong learning, educational policy.

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Historical aspects

It is of emerging interest since when and why international organisations of education, culture have started to influence the changing character, tools and aspirations of higher education, however, there were several outstanding phases in their modern history when they had to consider sending signals towards higher education institutions to recognize the time for change and time for action. We need to go back to the time of the crisis of the welfare-state, when in the 1970s there were several social, economic, and political considerations to involve more and more people in learning activities through the realization of mass education and to give impetus to the further development of adult learning and education. However, It became also clear that higher education would and should play an important role in such activities and this process would accelerate such dimensions as it had been profoundly reflected in university extension a century earlier (Fieldhouse, 2000). The UNESCO started to point out the role of higher education institutions in the development of adult and lifelong education at its CONFINTEA III (International Adult Education World Conference) in Tokyo in 1972 when it underlined the importance of cementing the basis of research and promotion of international cooperation in adult education through universities (*Adult Education and Development*, 1994).

Accordingly, it was in 1976 when the UNESCO initiated recommendations on the development of adult education in Nairobi and gave details of taking higher education into the development of adult education. I think this was the momentum of the emergence of a paradigm shift to balance the market-oriented aspects of higher education roles with rather humanistic approaches of adult education-related roles to take. At the same time, this situation highlighted upon the necessity of recognising a slowly, but constantly changing composition of higher education clientele referring to a growing number of non-traditional students/learners with a reference to an ageing society in the developed part of the world.

The UNESCO's *Nairobi-recommendations* indicated that: "(1) adult education, however, must not be considered as an entity in itself, it is a sub-division and an integral part of, a global scheme for life-long education and learning. The term "life-long education and learning", for its part, denotes an overall scheme aimed both at restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system" (UNESCO, 1976)

The UNESCO put an emphasis to the acceptance and recognition of adult and lifelong education by academic cycles and to promote the change and re-configuration of current higher education paradigms into a paradigm-shift. The same *Nairobi-recommendation* underlined, referring to the place and definition of

adult education in each education systems, that: “(7) Adult education and other forms of education, particularly school education and higher education and initial vocational training, should be conceived and organized as equally essential components in a coordinated but differentiated education system according to the tenets of life-long education and learning.” (UNESCO, 1976)

Of course, it was more than obvious even in 1976 that research of adult and lifelong education and learning and related research activities ought to be coordinated by higher education institutions in association with adult education research centres/institutes. Therefore, the *Nairobi-recommendation* pointed out, according to adult and lifelong education, in its point 35., that: “(35) Member States should actively encourage cooperative research in all aspects of adult education and its objectives. Research programmes should have a practical basis. They should be carried out by universities, adult education bodies and research bodies, adopting an interdisciplinary approach...” (UNESCO, 1976)

It is not surprising that the *Nairobi-recommendation* clearly stressed that universities would have to belong to the group of organisations and institutions to help achieving the planned its objectives as follows: “ (39) In order to achieve these objectives it will be necessary to mobilize organizations and institutions specifically concerned with adult education, and the full range, both public and private of schools, universities, cultural and scientific establishments, libraries and museums, and in addition, other institutions not primarily concerned with adult education...” (UNESCO, 1976)

I think the strongest point of the *Nairobi-recommendation* outlined the aim and vision of a clear message for higher education that it should integrate adult and lifelong learning into its educational programmes and to participate in such actions with partnership-oriented manner which is a message of the 40th point of the recommendation indicated as: “ (40) Member States should encourage schools, vocational education establishments, colleges and institutions of higher education to regard adult education programmes as an integral part of their own activities and to participate in action designed to promote the development of such programmes provided by other institutions, in particular by making available their own teaching staff, conducting research and training necessary personnel.” (UNESCO, 1976)

Emergence of a changing learning climate

The impact of the *Nairobi-recommendation* can be explored in follow-up debates over the 1970s and the 1980s. They connected the issue of developing quality

adult and lifelong education and learning to promoting the change and development of higher education being able to react to challenges of the knowledge society in an information-age. I agree with the argument of Jarvis, who, by examining universities as institutions of lifelong learning, indicated according to social economic changes to challenge educational structures that both adult education and universities are being forced to change to respond to globalization and the pressures of knowledge societies, while it is obviously difficult for those universities having traditionally taught discipline-based knowledge and whose main students has been young adults. He underlined that new demands for continuing education for adults are coming from a knowledge-based workforce and that universities are being forced to become institutions of lifelong learning with greater proportion of adult students than young adult undergraduates (Jarvis, 2001).

Such considerations make me emphasize that current statements and charters on lifelong learning by universities and other institutions of higher education are apparent recognition of the realization of those arguments. Jarvis, when elaborating upon the changing roles of higher education, pointed out the problem of relation of local knowledge to universal knowledge and the relationship between theory and practice as well generated by social conditions which change university-base teaching and assessment (Jarvis, 2001). These approach have reflected the changing status, clientele, forms of knowledge, nature of research, methods of delivery of programmes, role of the academic, whereas the majority of academic staff in the institutions of higher education and learning has reported stress and, on the other hand, users of academic knowledge have indicated that educational system is still unable to recognize and understand their demands.

It is essential to clarify that forces of changes come from inside and outside through global constraints in an age of instability and growing social, political and economic pressures at the same time.

University continuing education or university lifelong learning

It is worth examining how the changing social, political and economic environment for higher education brought about complex policies and promoted traditional approaches of lifelong education to integrate into the lifelong learning paradigm so as to support a rather learner-centred model for education and learning. Even if the educational models and implications of lifelong learning have been rather economy-focused and have mainly been used by the OECD for almost two decades after 1973, the European environment has helped, since 1991-92, to have a systematic combination of UNESCO promoted, rather hu-

manistic approach for lifelong education and learning, especially in the sense of the Faure-report and, of the OECD-represented economy and market-orientation. The former stressed the community-centeredness of learning and education, the later envisaged a rather learner-centred vision. Now, I think that it became peculiar for the European environment to give a chance to the combination of the two approaches in an outstanding way of Jacques Delors who implemented that combination in his famous report for the UNESCO as *Learning: A Treasure within* (Delors, 1996).

I think that the context of university continuing education was rather capable of being misunderstood, especially in those countries where the notion has never meant too much or adult and continuing, from another angle, has never been able to modify traditional academic understanding of higher education and resistance towards university-based adult and continuing education except for peculiar courses and lectures to disseminate scientific knowledge for the public.

The 1990s reflected a special phase for university continuing education (UCE) in international higher education environment to collect relevant examples and best practices of higher education-oriented adult continuing education and, at the same time, examples of efficient university structures referring both to institutional changes towards management, education and research. In the European environment, the community efforts to promote quality education and training, efficient access and equal opportunities and partnership-building have reached higher education and adult and lifelong education at the same time with an influence to shift from education towards learning in a constant process. It has resulted in various UCE actions to enable universities create close and regular links between academic staff and practising members of their profession and update their teaching to full-time students to reflect the current attitudes of their professions and, at the same time, to attract funds for research or development work creating greater freedom for action. In some other universities it has helped to fill the increasing number of student places being offered. However, the most apparent impact has been enabling universities to play a significant role in their regions' economic and social development and meet their obligations to make available state-of-the-art knowledge to all parts of society (Becher, 1993). A clear danger for higher education has been staying intact and opposing any real change required by the outside world, which later was strongly challenged by the *Memorandum of Lifelong Learning*: "Most of what our education and training systems offer is still organised and taught as if the traditional ways of planning and organising one's life had not changed for at least half a century." (EC, 2000)

But it was still in the second half of the 1990s, when the UNESCO in Hamburg, Germany stated in its very well-known *Agenda for the Future of CON-*

FINTEA V that “/.../ We commit ourselves to: 19. Opening schools, colleges and universities to adult learners: (c) by establishing joint university/community research and training partnerships and by bringing the services of universities to outside groups; (f) by providing systematic continuing education for adult educators; (g) by calling upon the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998) to promote the transformation of post-secondary institutions into lifelong learning institutions and to define role of universities accordingly.” (UNESCO, 1997)

The overall aims of the *Agenda for the Future of CONFINTEA V* became very influential and together with the respected Hamburg-declaration of the same event strongly supported a learner-centred approach and gave way to adult and lifelong learning to serve as a new paradigm both for adult and continuing education and for higher education! It became also obvious that higher education had to signal new tasks in the frame of lifelong learning. Some distinguished scholars of CONFINTEA V went on to formulate a new debate over higher education and lifelong learning by indicating institutions of higher education aiming to understand and consider new roles for universities in a changing time preparing for the Millenium in the year of 2000. Therefore, the UNESCO, together with respected university-based adult educators, scholars and specialists in the field of lifelong learning, together with NGO representatives, organised a conference into Mumbai, India, when preparing for the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris, for a debate over the issue and a statement followed and concluded the discussions named as the *Mumbai Statement*.

The *Mumbai Statement* recalled the words of the *Hamburg Declaration*, considered the relevant points of the *Agenda for the Future* stated that global trends affect higher education and other institutions of higher education which struggle to cope with new opportunities and demands. The *Statement* indicated that higher education institutions will have to play new roles in the perspective of lifelong learning (*International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 1998) The imperatives of education, the *Statement* pointed out, throughout life are driven by diverse demands of global economy and those of equitable and sustainable societies. Therefore, the *Mumbai Statement* recognized that: “(2) Lifelong learning has become a key concept in the thinking about education and training worldwide; (3) We see a key purpose of lifelong learning as democratic citizenship, recognizing that democratic citizenship depends on such factors as effective economic development, attention to the least powerful in our societies, and on the impact of industrial processes on the caring capacity of our common home, the planet...; (5) Lifelong learning is about the interaction between learners, educators, and diverse knowledge. The long tradition in adult education of supporting learning

opportunities for the excluded groups of women and men in our societies draws attention to the rich and different ways of knowing and representing knowledge within our societies. As the construction, understanding and sharing of knowledge is the most fundamental purpose of universities and other institutions of higher education, so a full understanding of lifelong learning calls on us to examine many of our assumptions about what is taught and why; (8) Changes and adjustment to academic life implied within lifelong learning include such practices as flexible and responsive systems of access, delivery, curricula, and accreditation which take adult learners' backgrounds, daily schedules, prior learning and life contexts into account. Counselling and guidance, for instance, may need to be available at later hours or in community-based settings for ease of access. The education of university level professionals needs to be rethought, taking into account initial university education and continuing learning throughout life. Importantly, the faculty and administrative staff of institutions of higher education need support and personal development opportunities in the light of changes due to the implementation of lifelong learning; (9) The transformation to genuine lifelong learning institutions require a holistic approach which (a) supports the institution becoming a lifelong learning community itself, (b) integrates academic, financial and administrative elements, (c) provides structures which are responsible for organisational, staff, student and curriculum development and community engagement; and (d) aligns the various supportive structures such as academic information systems, library provisions and learning technologies to the new mission of universities in learning societies." (UNESCO, 1997)

The *Mumbai Statement* moved forward the debate and discussions over university lifelong learning and also helped the European cycles of university adult and lifelong education and learning to promote such implications with the Memorandum-debate over lifelong learning and the new contexts of the Bologna-process, the former to demonstrate a wide-range discussion in Europe over lifelong learning and its key messages and the later to frame the tasks of a reconstructed European higher education preparing for quality centred changes both in education and research. However, the *Mumbai Statement* reflected the implications of the lifelong learning paradigm in structural changes within institutions of higher education in order to prepare for lifelong learning action/service for various learners, regardless of age, sex, nationality, etc.

The *Mumbai Statement* was, in the context of the UNESCO was followed by the famous *Cape Town Statement* of a further debate after Mumbai at the University of Western Cape, South Africa. The *Cape Town Statement* moved further with the familiar issues of lifelong learning and connected higher education, lifelong learning to active citizenship and it called for characteristic elements of

a lifelong learning higher education institution. The following six such elements were outlined by participants of the Cape Town Conference discussing the characteristics elements of a lifelong learning higher education institutions:

1. Overarching frameworks which provide the contexts facilitating an higher education institution to operate as a lifelong learning institution. These are: regulatory, financial and Cultural/social;
2. Strategic partnerships and linkages – to include the following, forming relationships internationally; forming relationships with other institutions; forming relationships within institutions as well as forming relationships with other groups in society;
3. Research is understood in a broad sense and includes working across disciplines and/or across institutions. Lifelong learning is regarded as an important and legitimate research area;
4. Teaching and learning processes – Educators encourage self-directed learning, engage with knowledge, interests and life-situations which learners bring to their education and use open and resource based learning approaches;
5. Administration policies and mechanism – service to learners is top priority of the administration;
6. Student support system and services – Learners are supported to become independent learners in various ways. “ (UNESCO, 2001)

I want to stress that the *Cape Town Statement* generated further debates over university lifelong learning (ULLL) and such debates over ULLL was promoted by EUCEN in programmes like CEPROFS at the University of Mulhouse in 2001 and onwards.

The UNESCO has dealt with the issue of promoting adult and lifelong learning in various ways, forms, and at several occasions, like at the Bangkok Interim CONFINTEA meeting and its synthesis report (UNESCO, 2003). However, the most reluctant indication of roles for higher education in the development of adult and lifelong learning was in *Statement of the UNESCO's Pan-European CONFINTEA VI Conference in Budapest*, from 3 to 6 December, 2008.

The *Budapest Statement* indicated at its 4th point that: “ (4) Countries should promote access to adult and lifelong education (ALE)... In addition, higher education institutions should become more responsive to the increasing demand for higher level qualifications; (8) Policies, structures and measures to assure the quality of learning should be developed....Higher education along with

other providers has a key role to play in this regard; (9) ALE is a legitimate and essential research area.” (UNESCO, 2008)

These points, I think, are relevant examples to reflect the necessary recognitions of and interrelated and interdependent status of higher education and adult lifelong education in development and change. Higher education will inevitably play a significant role in the promotion of adult and lifelong education, while higher education will also benefit from this cooperation in case it considers recommendations of the examined UNESCO statements and policy documents.

Conclusions

In my paper, I tried to point out that the UNESCO has played a significant role in and had, therefore, a peculiar impact on promoting university lifelong learning and in the development of adult and lifelong education for all. Universities being engaged in the development of their institutional structures, educational and research provision can take respected points of those elaborated UNESCO statements and recommendations for further considerations and take them into comparison and debate, I suggest, with the points of the *Lifelong Learning Charter of the European Universities' Association* (EUA, 2008).

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Uticaj stavova i preporuka UNESCO-a na razvoj koncepcije celoživotnog obrazovanja na visokoškolskom nivou

Apstrakt: U ovom radu razmatra se uticaj stavova i preporuka UNESCO-a koje se odnose na vodeću ulogu visokoškolskih ustanova u promociji obrazovanja odraslih i celoživotnog obrazovanja. Polazimo od toga da je UNESCO jedna od vodećih međunarodnih organizacija koja se zalaže za to da univerziteti podrže celoživotno obrazovanje i aktivno učešće građana u društvenom životu putem modernizacije procesa, metoda i sadržaja obrazovanja. U radu nastojimo da ukažemo na sledeće: 1) uloga visokog obrazovanja jeste da pruži sveobuhvatni okvir koji će olakšati visokoškolskim ustanovama da funkcionišu kao ustanove za celoživotno obrazovanje – i to zakonski, finansijski i društveno-kulturni okvir; 2) u kontekstu celoživotnog obrazovanja univerzitet predstavlja sredinu u kojoj znanje postaje praktično i u kojoj se, u procesu suočavanja sa rastućom potrebom za praktičnim znanjem, menja odnos između teorijskog i praktičnog znanja; 3) univerziteti moraju da razvijaju međunarodnu saradnju, ali i da promovišu partnerstvo između relevantnih društvenih grupa i institucija na lokalnom i regionalnom nivou; 4) istraživanje se shvata u širem smislu, ono mora da postane interdisciplinarno i interinstitucionalno, a visoko obrazovanje treba da pokaže da su obrazovanje odraslih i celoživotno obrazovanje legitimne oblasti istraživanja; 5) nastavnici univerziteta treba da podstiču samousmereno učenje i da koriste otvorene strategije učenja i strategije zasnovane na analizi empirijskih podataka i da na taj način pomognu odraslima da postanu samostalni u procesu učenja.

Ključne reči: univerzitet, visoko obrazovanje, doživotno učenje, politika obrazovanja.

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