CHEA INTERNATIONAL QUALITY GROUP

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THE OPEN EDUCATION MOVEMENT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

by

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Introduction

It is a pleasure for me to speak with Sir John Daniel at this CHEA Conference and, particularly, at this first Annual Meeting of CHEA's new International Quality Group. It has been an honour for me to work with President Judith Eaton in setting up this new initiative. We are delighted by the interest that it has generated, shown by your presence here today.

Our title is *The Open Education Movement: Challenges and Opportunities for Quality Assurance.* Our talk will be in five parts and we shall alternate in presenting them.

In the first part I shall set the stage by summarizing the new dynamics that are defining the development of higher education in this second decade of the 21st century. The 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education identified new dynamics in the evolution of the sector, often linked to the potential of ICTs. I shall explore these new dynamics further and then we shall give three examples of interesting developments in opening up education.

First, Sir John will comment on the growth of Open Educational Resources through the lens of last year's UNESCO World OER Congress.

I shall then return to talk about an original Chinese project in which we are both involved, the DeTao Masters Academy. DeTao's objective, by opening up new curricular approaches, is to reposition China as a nation of original inventors rather than a workshop that merely manufactures to others' designs. However, like all attempts to open up education in new ways, it has to satisfy the demands of quality assurance and recognition.

Sir John will then examine the strange phenomenon of MOOCs – the Massive Open Online Courses that were the higher education buzzword of 2012. Are MOOCs just another flash in educational technology's pan or do they herald some lasting change?

I will then return to the challenge that systems of quality assurance face in adapting to these new trends in both pedagogy and content to ensure their credibility with learners.

This session will end with a presentation from Catherine Ngugi, Director of OER Africa. Under Catherine's leadership OER Africa has stimulated the development of some tremendous OER that are now being used on other continents.

New Dynamics

That is the plan. Let me now return to the new dynamics that are defining higher education in this decade. I will focus particularly on: massification and rising demand, the diversification of providers, cross-border higher education, the role of ICTs and the internationalization of quality assurance.

Massification

The most striking new dynamic is the massification – or even the "universalization" – of higher education. There are over 165 million students enrolled in higher education worldwide (UIS, 2010). Age cohort higher education participation rates in the world as a whole grew from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2007 (UIS, 2010), although some consider a 40% Age Participation Rate as the springboard for development. Globally, enrolments have increased fivefold in less than 40 years. It is now predicted that the global demand for higher education will expand from 97 million students in 2000 to 263 million students in 2025 (UNESCOPRESS, 2009; UIS, 2011).

Diversification

A multitude of new providers of higher education is emerging to satisfy this rising demand and I will give some examples.

One of them is the trend to create so-called 'World-Class' Universities that feed on the mushrooming phenomenon of university rankings, which, while controversial, are undoubtedly influencing governments. This phenomenon is growing and we are witnessing what some call "a race for excellence".

Recent research (Salmi, Altbach 2011) demonstrates that being an old university is no guarantee for achieving excellence and that it is sometimes easier to create a new "world class" university, than trying to change old ones that don't meet the criteria. The issue here is what does "excellence" really mean and are rankings a proxy for quality?

It is worth remembering that for all the heat that discussion about them generates, these world-class universities and the rankings that sustain them are only a tiny part of the huge enterprise of higher education. Any balanced perspective should recognise this, noting particularly that notions of excellence developed for these institutions may be irrelevant in the quest for quality in the generality of higher education.

For instance, at the other end of the spectrum are transition programmes between schools and universities, such as community colleges, and a range of non-traditional competency based learning models providing a better link to the labour market.

An example of continuing training programmes for high-level personnel is the De Tao Masters Academy that I shall describe later. These may offer a better response to the employability challenge, which is a growing concern for academe.

Cross-Border Education

Another strong continuing global trend is cross-border education, which is the mobility of students, programmes and institutions. The diverse forms of CBHE include branch campuses, franchised programmes, twinning arrangements and courses delivered online. International branch campuses (IBCs) are a distinct and the smallest part of the CBHE provision, but their numbers continue to grow. The number of IBCs has grown by 43% since October 2006.

Cross-border education, however, also takes the form of eLearning. Sir John will present a new and striking example of this – the Massive Open Online Courses targeting students worldwide.

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

This brings me to the last new dynamic, the stress that the WCHE put on the opportunities offered by modern technology. To quote the Communiqué:

14.The application of ICTs to teaching and learning has great potential to increase access, quality and success. In order to ensure that the introduction of ICTs adds value, institutions and governments should work together to pool experience, develop policies and strengthen infrastructure.

Internationalisation of Quality Assurance

Before asking Sir John to talk about OER, the first of our three examples of how ICT is opening up education; let me mention that an overarching new dynamic at the WCHE was the internationalization of quality assurance. All of the global trends described above raise new challenges related to quality.

I will now hand over to Sir John to talk about Open Educational Resources, after which I will continue with other examples of openness.

Sir John Daniel

Open Educational Resources

Observing the early impact of MIT's OpenCourseware project UNESCO held a forum in 2002 to assess its potential impact on higher education in developing countries. The term Open Educational Resources was coined at this Forum, which defined them as educational materials that may be freely accessed, reused, modified and shared. In the

Forum Declaration participants expressed their wish 'to develop together a universal educational resource for the whole of humanity'.

In the following years most OER activity involved communities of OER producers, but in 2009 UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education picked up the theme and urged that more attention be paid to the potential of ICT generally and OER in particular. The UNESCO General Conference later that year reinforced this message by urging greater advocacy about OER. Both Stamenka and I have been involved since 2010 in two joint UNESCO and Commonwealth of Learning projects with this aim.

Advocacy for OER

The first was aimed at educational leaders in developing countries. It involved workshops in Africa and Asia and the publication of two supporting documents: A *Basic Guide to OER,* and *Guidelines for OER in Higher Education.*

Last year our focus moved to governments. With support from the Hewlett Foundation we were able to survey the world's governments about policies and uses of OER. The results were analysed by Sarah Hoosen in South Africa who reported that:

"There appears to be great interest in OER across all regions of the world, with several countries embarking on notable OER initiatives. Indeed, the survey itself raised interest and awareness of OER in countries that may not have had much prior exposure to the concept."

We also commissioned Neil Butcher and Sarah Hoosen to do a report on the business case for OER. This revealed that the idealism that motivated the early work on OER is now supported by solid economic arguments.

We held regional policy forums around the world in order to encourage dialogue about OER between governments and practitioners, to promote the World OER Congress, and to develop, in a consultative and iterative way, a Declaration on OER to be submitted to the Congress. We held these forums in all UNESCO regions and they produced some good discussions with helpful proposals for the Paris Declaration on OER. A final draft was presented to the Congress and approved by acclamation. The Congress also allowed governments and practitioners to share experience of OER on a worldwide basis.

The Paris Declaration

We shall not take you through the Declaration, which is on the UNESCO and COL websites, but simply note the last recommendation, the punch line if you like, that encourages the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds. Declarations such as this one are not binding on governments but experience shows that they have significant influence on government policy making.

To conclude on OER we can say that thanks to the efforts of practitioners and governments worldwide, the idea of open licensing is rapidly gaining ground for both

idealistic and economic reasons. Governments will be major beneficiaries of open licensing thanks to the potential of OER to improve the cost-effectiveness of their large investments in education.

Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

OER are an example of opening up access. Another dimension of openness is opening up the curriculum to new approaches and content.

The DeTao Masters Academy

This is what the De Tao Masters Academy, with which I am proud to be associated, is doing in China. I am delighted that DeTao has joined CHEA's International Quality Group and is represented at this meeting.

DeTao is one expression of China's policy of diversifying its education and training systems with strong foci on internationalization and lifelong learning. The aim of the DeTao Masters Academy (DTMA) is to enhance China's cultural, economic and social development by increasing its capacity for innovation in business, industry and education.

De Tao brings eminent professionals and experts to China, where they share the tacit knowledge that brought them to world leadership in their fields with high-level Chinese colleagues. This new model for high-level knowledge transfer is a private-sector initiative that blends traditional wisdom with the latest knowledge. Sustained partnerships with enterprises and universities are a core element of its work. Inspired by the creative excitement of the 2010 Shanghai Expo, George Lee, an eminent business leader, developed his vision for the DeTao Masters Academy: to assemble some of the world's top talent to help China recover its tradition of innovation.

De Tao has already recruited over 100 recognised thought leaders (Masters), to pass on their 'tacit knowledge' to apprentices who act as bridges to larger Chinese professional and executive communities. Many of the first group of Masters are major international figures in architecture, design and the creative industries. This span of professional expertise will broaden rapidly as the number of Masters grows to over 1,000. For example, DeTao is working with the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts to create a cluster of expertise in support of the region's creative industries.

Let me give some examples of these Masters, starting with two from the Film Industry: **Sing-Choong Foo**, a Master of Special Visual Effects and **Nathan Wang**, Master of Music. Both are of Chinese origin but live and work in California. They already have functioning studios in Beijing.

Also in the area of music **Anthony De Ritis**, a composer and specialist in electronic music, has made a special study of Chinese musical instruments with which he creates unique compositions by exploiting the possibilities of computing.

My next example is **Haim Dotan**, an architect who works in both the US and Israel. Prof. Dotan is a man with a mission: to achieve low cost, ecological green cities and more socially focused and culturally authentic communities.

Matias del Campo, another architect, who designed the Austrian pavilion for the Shanghai Expo, took the unusual decision to build it entirely in China from 3D models. He considers that DeTao is the 'epicentre of an earthquake' in architectural training.

Rainer Maria Latzke is a practitioner of mural art and Frescography, from Germany. He intends to collect a world heritage of mural and ornamental art and make it available in his studio. He wishes to help his students become masters themselves, using 3D production techniques.

Roger Fidler (USA) has a background as journalist, designer, technologist, entrepreneur and information designer. In the early eighties, he forecast that digital publishing would be the future and conceived a 'tablet' that would be portable, lightweight, and easy to use but would respect the essence of newspapers - browsing. The tablet became a reality in Steve Jobs' iPad 30 years later and Fidler received one of the very first iPads from Apple in April 2010.

I end with **Timothy Jacob Jensen**, the son of renowned Danish designer Jacob Jansen, who is famous for a streamlining form language playing between light and darkness. He is an artist but also a businessman who has set up a design studio in the De Tao complex in Shanghai.

The De Tao Masters Academy is still a very new project, but by sharing the expertise of some of the world's top professionals, it could become a unique approach to fostering innovation and creativity and increasing professionalization at the highest level of industry.

Sir John Daniel

Massive Open Online Courses

Let me conclude our selection of three new approaches to opening up education by commenting on last year's higher education sensation, MOOCs. These Massive Open Online Courses are being offered free worldwide by just those highly selective universities where the fees for campus study are rising out of the reach of ordinary people.

MOOCs will now evolve rapidly, so we shall just share some reflections on them from my recent paper entitled *Making Sense of MOOCs: Musings in a Maze of Myth, Paradox and Possibility*.

Last year MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, offered its first MOOC. This online course, 6.002x, *Circuits and Electronics,* was free and open to anyone, anywhere in the world with no admission requirements. It attracted 155,000 registrations from 160

countries. Of these 155,000 learners only 7,157 passed the course as a whole. Anant Agrawal, who heads the programme, said the exam was 'very hard'. To criticisms of the extraordinarily high drop out rate of more than 95%, Agrawal replied, 'If you look at the number of passes in absolute terms, it's as many students as might take the course in 40 years at MIT'.

Since MIT announced its first MOOC at the end of 2011 many other US universities have launched similar ventures. There is a herd instinct at work. Coursera, a for-profit company that helps universities do MOOCs, now claims nearly 2m registrations and is presently offering 200 courses with over 30 partner institutions.

Both the MIT and Coursera courses have all had terrific dropout rates, which MOOC providers have been trying to defend, although the media and bloggers have given Coursera the rougher ride. One reporter found that 'some classes were so rife with plagiarism that professors have had to plead with their students to stop plagiarizing'. One reason is that in order to handle the challenge of scale, Coursera asks students to mark each other's work.

MOOCs in Perspective: Quality

Let us try to put MOOCs in perspective. There is plenty to criticise and we shall do that, but there are also possibilities and, either way, they are an important element of the turbulence that is the subject of this paper.

We start with some myths about MOOCs. First, since most of the universities offering MOOCs are well-known US institutions, a first myth is that university brand is a surrogate for teaching quality. It isn't. The universities gained their reputations in research. Nothing suggests that they are particularly talented in teaching, especially teaching online.

Most countries now have quality assurance agencies for higher education and one of the criteria quality auditors usually review is the rates of course and degree completion. They take the view that students seek not merely access, but access to success, which institutions should do everything to facilitate while maintaining standards. In this context MOOC completion rates of less than 10% are a disaster.

The problem is that MOOCs universities have scarcity at the core of their business model. They measure institutional prestige by the people they do not admit, so they are relaxed about high drop out and failure rates.

MOOCs in Perspective: Certification

This brings us to the central paradox in MOOCs. In most MOOC institutions, success in the course exam, which MIT called 'very hard', does not lead to credit, but to a certificate. Therefore what determines whether a student can get a degree is not their

mastery of MOOC courses, but the admissions process to the university for regular students.

This is disreputable. If we were students who had passed a MOOC that was the same as the course offered on campus in the home university we would be upset if we did not get credit for it. My late Athabasca University colleague Dan Coldeway called this practice of basing reputation on tough admission requirements the principle of 'good little piggies in, make good bacon out'.

MOOCs in Perspective: Pedagogy

Let's look at pedagogy. A reporter who took a Coursera course found it had little pedagogical input. Tony Bates stresses that MOOCs are not a new pedagogy. He notes that the teaching methods 'are based on an old and out-dated behaviourist pedagogy, relying primarily on information transmission, computer-marked assignments and peer assessment'.

MOOCs in Perspective: for what Purpose?

A key question about MOOCs is why they are being offered. The tension is between the ideal of sharing knowledge freely and the need to make money. No one yet has a clear strategy for making money out of MOOCs for the universities involved.

One MOOC provider claims that they are the answer expanding higher education in developing countries. A promotional video for MOOCs showed this stampede for admission at the University of Johannesburg with the implication that MOOCs are the answer to the massification of higher education. But Bates (2012) comments bitingly: 'these elite universities continue to treat MOOCs as a philanthropic form of continuing education, and until they are willing to award credit and degrees for this type of programme, we have to believe that they think this is a second class form of education suitable only for the unwashed masses'.

Academic Partnerships: a different approach

However the very large-scale MOOCs we have talked about are only part of the story. There are now examples of partnerships between universities and private companies to offer online learning in which both parties are making money and students are graduating with degrees. For example, the 40 universities associated with the organisation *Academic Partnerships* are extremely pleased with the way that it has been able to expand their impact and reputations. They are dealing with thousands of students per course rather than tens or hundreds of thousands – but these students are graduating from their online programmes at the same rate as on-campus students.

MOOCs in Perspective: Possibilities

So much for our criticisms of the hype and contradictions associated with MOOCs. But they are a fascinating development. So many institutions are involved that they will not

just peter out. They could chart new paths by improving teaching and cutting the costs of higher education.

Although current MOOCs pedagogy is out-dated, this will now change fast. Competition will produce a great diversity of approaches and much healthy experimentation. Soon the media, student groups and educational research units will start publishing assessments of MOOC courses that will quickly be consolidated into quality rankings. Placing courses in the public domain before a global audience will force MOOCs institutions to pay more than lip service to importance of teaching and put it at the core their missions. This is the real revolution of MOOCs.

The new dynamics are creating even more change and turbulence than participants at the 2009 World Conference could have expected. We have noted three developments that are making higher education more open. Each poses challenges for quality assurance and I hand over to Stamenka to make some concluding comments about them.

Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

Quality Assurance

So let us end with a few remarks about quality assurance, recognition and accreditation: terms that have been mentioned throughout our talk.

Not many years ago, in a speech about the multiplication of quality assurance agencies around the world Judith Eaton, our President of the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation, described it as 'the spread of the familiar' and worried that there was not enough variety in approaches.

The three examples of new approaches to open education that we have described show how right she was. Each calls for new types of quality assurance, recognition and accreditation.

Open Educational Resources

How does one determine the quality of OER? We hope to hear more about through the African perspective that Catherine Ngugi will present to us.

 The 2012 Paris OER Declaration, in one of its recommendations called upon States to:

"Promote quality assurance and peer review of OER. Encourage the development of mechanisms for the assessment and certification of learning outcomes achieved through OER."

DeTao Masters Academy

Similarly, the specific model of DeTao Masters Academy that we presented above also requires a certification and assessment models to be adapted to the specific needs of its high-level apprentices.

DeTao's has the world's top experts in a wide range of fields share their expertise and experience with people who are already highly successful in their careers. The new insights and practices that they will learn by working with the DeTao Masters will take them to the most advanced levels of practice and innovation. At this level the most appropriate body to certify their new wisdom and skills is surely the community of practice of their field. For example, the DeTao Masters in Architecture, each of whom is one of the top practitioners in their country, are better qualified to judge the value and quality of the outcomes of DeTao's architectural apprenticeships than university QA process designed for lower levels. The community of practice could award recognition analogous to badges.

Can open badges provide one of the models in response to these new forms of competency based learning or does quality assurance need to reinvent itself and design new tools to adapt to these new trends, and others that the future may bring?

Massive Open Online Courses

Finally, MOOCs pose a quite different challenge. At present most of them are little more than OER with some test material. Most quality assurance systems for orthodox university courses and programmes make judgements after reviewing quality on a number of dimensions such as student support, student counselling and, above all, completion rates. In most MOOCs these are either absent, or in the case of completion rates, dismal.

It would be sensible to let MOOCs evolve and mature, letting the market determine their success or otherwise, before introducing any system of quality assurance. At present the press interest in MOOCs, as well as their very public nature, is sufficient to keep the institutions involved up to the mark. Indeed, a growing number of institutions are now responding to criticisms by awarding credit for their own and others' MOOCs. Academic Partnerships announced last week that some of their state university partners would make the first course in their regular online programmes a credit-bearing MOOC.

We leave you with the question: can the QA systems in place adapt to these new demands and, if not how can we develop systems that do?

We count on the CIQG to explore these issues further and make responding to such challenges its core objective.

Thank you.