

Workshop III :  
Promoting access to post-secondary education : meeting the global demand

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Harry Patrinos:

- Economies and labour forces need to become more flexible and responsive in order to benefit from the new economy. It is well known that technology drives much of the changes evident in today's knowledge economy. The implications for education can be summarised as a move from:

Terminal education	to	Lifelong learning
Information-based learning systems	to	The application of knowledge
Rote learning	to	Analysis and synthesis
Memorisation	to	Critical thinking
Learning things just in case they may be useful	to	A system that promotes just in time learning
A directive based system	to	An initiative based system
A highly centralised system	to	A devolved system

- The growing demand for new labour market skills in developing countries may not be met. This raises a number of challenges and puts new pressure on the education systems.
  - (1) *Low enrolments and decreasing public resources*: generally, tertiary education enrolment rates are low and the enrolment gap between developed and developing economies is growing. Public resources for tertiary education have decreased in real terms.
  - (2) *Inequality in access*: wealthier families largely capture education benefits. This is especially the case in higher education, where upper income families are over-represented. Typically in developing countries the richest 20 percent of the population captures more than 20 percent of total education subsidies.
  - (3) *Lack of quality and relevance*: the quality of tertiary education in many countries is low and the relevance of many programs is lacking.
  - (4) *Globalisation – knowledge economy*: equally important, most tertiary education systems do not offer students the scientific and technological literacy needed to respond to the challenges posed by the knowledge economy.
- Among the issues to be discussed are the following questions: How to promote equal opportunities for post-secondary education? How can countries tap global knowledge through trade, competition and funding mechanisms? Will the increasing demand for higher education be met if: (a) public resources are lacking; (b) demands for public resources from other sector or sub-sectors is increasing; (c) financing alternatives are not available? In a growing market for education, can the private sector fill the gaps?

Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic:

- The article of the universal declaration of human rights stipulates that higher education should be accessible to all on the basis of merit. Moreover, higher education is a public service and not a product. Trade liberalisation in higher education may involve risks of inequity, discrimination and a deepening of the digital divide. Internationalisation of higher education is positive though, and it is important to reduce the obstacles faced by institutions outside a trade policy regime.

- However, trade is happening already and developing countries are more and more involved in the knowledge economy. This change must be faced through a change of framework, especially a new quality assurance agency for offshore provision of higher education and the meeting of local quality assessment for foreign providers.
- Unesco conventions and the GATS both promote transborder higher education and the reduction of obstacles to mobility, but there is a big difference in their approach. The GATS promotes the trade liberalisation of higher education for purposes of economic profit whereas Unesco promotes a non-profit internationalisation concerned with full respect for cultural diversity and with the right to education for all.
- The issue is thus to promote “fair trade”, a globalisation made to work for all. Dialogue between all stakeholders is essential in this regard and will be promoted by Unesco through a global forum on international quality assurance on 21-22 October 2002 in Paris.

Cindy Fitzgerald:

- IT training has developed dramatically over the past twenty years. In the mid 90’s, there was a shift to CD Rom training and early e-learning attempts. Since the late 90’s, IT training is not only paper-based but also delivered through CD-Rom and e-learning. Computer-based assessment, which represents a big part of the area, can be done anytime and anywhere.
- The vision underlying this development was that there were no barriers, that people could have the tools to acquire and assess skills anytime and anywhere. In fact, few commercial barriers have been encountered and Microsoft certification has been developed in more than hundred countries and in multiple languages.
- The pricing model is based on regional economy and often offers training at break-even or even at loss sometimes.
- IT needs to provide training all the time and just-in-time, each new product launched needing a related training. It thus corresponds to a new model of training:

Higher education	Corporate training
College university	Technical education centre
Degree focused	Multiple credentials
Terminal	Ongoing
Expanding offerings	Offerings already global

- The main issue in the area lies in the protection of intellectual property, in the fight against piracy of training and exams.

Discussion :

- Position of World Bank and UNESCO on aid and trade in higher education and on the way they connect trade and the reforms of higher education systems.
  - The World Bank supports trade as beneficial to its client countries and stresses the importance of higher education, but it is still in “learning mode” as far as trade in higher education is concerned. The World Bank works with member countries to strengthen their position in the knowledge economy and hopefully benefit from the global knowledge exchange.
  - Unesco is in “learning mode” too. There is still an opacity of the implications of the GATS negotiations. Unesco should shortly clarify its position in a coming paper.
- Meeting the demand:

- The problem differs from one country to another. The problem may come from a lack of supply, but for many World Bank clients the difficulty to meet the demand comes from a lack of finance.
  - Developing countries will have difficulties to meet the demand for higher education because neither private nor public sectors are capitalised enough. One possibility would be to develop a third sector, neither public nor private, which could be called the « social sector » and would rely on young scholars, new technologies and possibly internationalisation. This sector could be more cost-effective than the public one, overburdened by unions protecting the interests of the administrative staff in a country like Mexico.
  - Some alternatives to higher education could be investigated.
  - Whereas IT represented an opportunity to deliver education at a highly reduced cost compared to traditional learning a decade ago, it has become more and more expensive and no longer appears as means of significantly reducing the cost of education delivery. Moreover, it still raises strong quality issues: some experiments of virtual universities made in Colombia have for example proven to be of very poor quality.
  - However, e-learning can offer new and great opportunities for the learning process that cannot be provided by traditional delivery of education.
- Quality assurance:
- Quality assurance appears as one of the main issues for the trade in educational services. Quality standards are not always met in transnational education, in OECD as well as developing countries. As it increases, mode 2 delivery of education requires quality control and sanctions against people and institutions abusing the situation.
  - In some countries, people are exploited either through the sale of fraudulent degrees or through the replication of what looks like a legitimate educational institution (but is not). There is a need for valid and accurate information on degrees and institutions, and of an interface between work and education that would avoid people being grugged. Getting a degree does not indeed necessarily lead to a job.
  - There is no intention of UNESCO to develop a « super-accrediting » body, as it was wrongly stated in the press.
- Brain drain:
- Eastern Europe as well as most World Bank clients in Latin America face brain drain related to the mobility of students. The financial aid of the World Bank to client countries can be largely outbalanced by the loss of human capital (benefiting OECD countries).
- GATS:
- Many of the issues raised by the growing demand (like access and equity issues) cannot be tackled by the WTO but by the countries themselves.
  - The internationalisation of higher education could be tackled by the Unesco rather than by the GATS.
  - The GATS could help identify whether the global demand is unmet because of barriers or not. If there are no barriers, internationalisation could be done outside of the GATS framework.
- Progress will be achieved through dialogue between all stakeholders, including unions, teachers and all students (i.e. students in developed as well as in developing countries, traditional students as well as lifelong learners or adult students).