



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 14/10/04  
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC  
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address at the Opening Session

by

Professor. Michael OMOLEWA

President of the General Conference

Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO

UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on  
“Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education”  
Drafting Meeting 2

14-15 October 2004

Tokyo University, Tokyo, Japan

In collaboration with Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to be here, in the beautiful city of Tokyo, for the Second Drafting Meeting to develop joint UNESCO/OECD joint guidelines on “Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education”.

Allow me, first of all, to thank our hosts, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), for their kind hospitality and their support to allow this meeting to be inclusive; and bring the whole UNESCO family around an issue of such high importance as is quality in higher education, especially higher education provided across borders, in an era of globalization.

I wish to remind you that I join you here once again, as I did at the first Drafting meeting, in April in Paris, in both my capacities, as the President of UNESCO’s General Conference and as the Ambassador of Nigeria to UNESCO. I also join you as an academic and a scholar with a firm belief that the guidelines currently being developed by you respond to one of the priorities of UNESCO Member States and can constitute a first step in capacity-building and policy development in such a sensitive area as quality cross-border provision of higher education.

UNESCO has the responsibility and the duty to ensure that the quality is in place. It is part of our mandate, as it is for the International Monetary Fund to ensure the conditions of currency. This, in particular, needs to remain a priority in cross-border higher education provision. This has been and will remain a priority for UNESCO.

A general conceptual framework and a line of action towards the renewal and reform of higher education reforms worldwide, have been provided by the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education <sup>1</sup>, organized by UNESCO in Paris with strong focus on quality. The 5,000 participants from 182 states with 30 Ministers of Education that attended that conference approved the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and agreed on the following guiding principles:

- To broaden the access and secure the promotion of higher education as a key factor of development, as a public good and as a human right;
- To promote the renewal and the reform of systems and institutions with a view to enhancing quality, relevance and efficiency through closer links to society, notably the world of work;
- To secure adequate resources and funding – both public and private – in keeping with the increased demands placed on higher education by society as a whole and by all stakeholders;
- To foster international cooperation and partnerships.

The World Conference on Science, organized in Budapest in 1999, provided additional elements for the renewal process of higher education with regard to its increased role in the production, dissemination and application of knowledge and in enhancing capacities for R&D.

Internationally, UNESCO has created a platform for dialogue on international issues of quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications, through the Global Forum that held its second meeting on 28-29 June 2004 in Paris to further analyse and propose new orientations for capacity-building. This work has the strong support of our Member States, as was expressed at

---

<sup>1</sup> World Declaration on Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/ev.php?URL\\_ID=7152&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201](http://portal.unesco.org/education/ev.php?URL_ID=7152&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201)

UNESCO's 32nd General Conference, through a resolution entitled 'Higher Education and Globalisation: promoting access to the knowledge society as a means for sustainable development', that was submitted by Norway and supported by Mozambique, Tanzania and other countries. The basis of this support also lies in the important role higher education is playing in reaching the Education for All (EFA) objectives by strengthening national higher education systems in all UNESCO Member States in general, and in developing countries in particular. The role of the university in its knowledge production, research function, curriculum development and teacher-training cannot be overemphasized as a prerequisite for the success of EFA.

A very significant development in this work is this joint initiative of UNESCO and the OECD to develop guidelines on quality provision in cross-border higher education. This will be complementary to the on-going regional activities in the sense that it will both draw on their ideas and help them develop their own frameworks. We shall have the advantage of pooling the resources of two international organisations and we do this at a time when the OECD has emphasised its commitment to education, in addition to its traditional role in economic analysis and policy development, by the creation of the Directorate of Education,

OECD's interest in the role of higher education in economic growth complements UNESCO's interest in harnessing higher education to sustainable development. The strong role of the OECD in conducting reviews of national higher education policy and doing research in this area will be a great asset to this work.

This is the reason why UNESCO has joined forces with OECD in this joint endeavor and our strong presence here, with colleagues, is a further testimony of UNESCO's full involvement in that process. To work together on cross-border education, and bring a global perspective to a global phenomenon.

Finally, we should once more emphasize the need for partnerships and support to those institutions that may be left behind unless some interventions are introduced. This brings us back to the very foundations of UNESCO. Perhaps I may recall that at its very inception in 1945, the founders of this organisation had carefully considered the need to make UNESCO inclusive, and had appreciated the need to involve other partners partly because of the limitations of funding and personnel, and partly because it considered the work of UNESCO too vast for any organisation to handle all on its own. It was for that reason that UNESCO had established contact with scientific and professional organizations, NGOs, intellectual committees, distinguished personalities etc. Thus Dr Julian Huxley, the first Director General of UNESCO, then reporting the work of the Preparatory Commission in his capacity as its Executive Secretary observed at the second plenary meeting of the first session of UNESCO on the afternoon of Wednesday, 20 November, 1946 that UNESCO must cultivate the habit of searching for partners. In his words "we have considered the obvious necessity of cooperating with all existing agencies with similar aims. We could never hope to undertake everything ourselves; duplication of effort would be grave, partly because it would give rise to wasteful and dangerous competition, partly because there are not enough good people to carry out this difficult and exacting type of work, and perhaps most of all because we feel it right in principle that people should help themselves, rather than transfer all their responsibilities to some remote overgrown organisation. Thus, wherever responsible voluntary agencies exist, capable of carrying out the work for which we exist, we shall endeavour to assist them to do so".

This wisdom should be used to pursue this work further, as an excellent platform for the development, adjustment and fine-tuning of the Organization's programmatic responses to the needs of higher education communities all over the world, by creating a community of shared interests between the developed and the less developed. These guidelines will address five main

stakeholders in the process of assuring quality in cross-border provision of higher education: governments, higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, recognition qualification bodies, professional bodies and students. Their intention is not to be prescriptive, rather to inspire the building of capacity at national level by creating reliable and competent institutions and developing criteria and procedures that can professionally sustain the process. They will constitute only the first step in long-term process for Members States to develop and adapt them to their existing needs and concerns related to quality in cross-border higher education.

I look forward to the results of this work that may be reflected in the next session of the General Conference and conclude by wishing you a lot of success in your work over the next several days but also until January 2005 when you will finalize the proposed guidelines, by underlining this final point: guidelines will be significant in the UNESCO context only if they help promote equity of access and strengthen capacity at national level, where this capacity is needed. It is this concern for capacity building – one of the five functions of UNESCO that lead all its activities – that should be at the heart of this exercise.

I thank you for your attention.