

## Malcolm Read



Dr Malcolm Read graduated in 1973 with a degree in Environmental Science from the University of East Anglia and went on to do a PhD at the University of Manchester on the hydrometeorology of a glacial catchment. He then worked in the Overseas Development Administration before moving to the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) in 1979. He ran the computer department at the Institute of Hydrology before moving into administrative computing to head the Joint Administrative Computing Service of NERC and the, then, Science and Engineering Research Council in 1988. Since July 1993 Dr Read has worked for the Higher and Further Education Funding Councils as the Executive Secretary to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Apart from his overall responsibility for the Executive he has been particularly involved in ICT policy and strategy development in post 16 education and research. He is also heavily involved in international ICT infrastructure activities particularly in Europe and the United States.

### **In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario regarding the use of new technologies in higher education?**

ICT is the most significant new technology with the potential to transform HE. In particular better integrated and effective use of information resources is necessary to improve organisational efficiency, exploit research resources, enhance learning and teaching, and support outreach activities.

Information should be treated as a strategic resource: as is the case with human and financial resources. Information should be meaningfully joined up across research, teaching and administrative environments.

Research outputs (eg. scholarly papers and particularly data) should be properly curated and preserved for re-use. Much data is discarded at the end of a research project; this is often a wasted resource that is often expensive to collect and, in some cases, cannot be replicated. Research data should be properly managed and made readily available, with appropriate safeguards, to other researchers. A properly managed resource of research data could greatly increase the efficiency of research and stimulate new discoveries and especially provide a broad base of experimental data to test models and hypotheses against.

Learning and teaching is already greatly enhanced by ICT, especially through learning management systems, Web 2.0 applications and on-line resources. These resources would benefit from professional management and, particularly in the case of open educational resources, being placed in a pedagogical context. There is considerable convenience and benefit to students where on-line resources are made available, particularly to support distance and flexible learning. Universities need to exploit on-line resources more effectively to provide unmet demand for higher education from students who cannot, or choose not, to enjoy a conventional campus based learning experience.

Knowledge transfer, engagement with industry and other outreach activities could also benefit from exploiting informational resources more effectively.

**In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?**

To raise the skills and knowledge base of a country's workforce to promote and stimulate economic growth, innovation and intellectual advancement.

**What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?**

Economic sustainability and a compulsory education system able to produce students of adequate calibre to benefit from further and higher education.

**In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?**

The widespread privatisation of HE which would lead to a risk of lower standards to meet commercial pressures.

**What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?**

A mixed public/private funding model, clear institutional missions directed at achievable goals in terms of research activity and addressing different student markets. Growth through an international focus addressed to unmet need for Higher Education in SE Asia, Middle East and the developing world.