Visionary Leadership for Digital Transformation
Higher education for the sustainable world we want
24 May 2017
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Hosted by UNESCO, organised by all three partners

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Draft Message from the Forum 24 May: 'Visionary Leadership for Digital Transformation: Higher education for the sustainable world we want'

Preamble

24 May 2017 leaders of higher education from all regions of the world met in Paris, hosted by UNESCO, to call for action for fostering and implementing good governance and visionary leadership for digital transformation in higher education.

The main message from the Forum is that the goals and targets for Education 2030: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" will not be met unless stakeholders, based on humanistic values, teams up for leading digital transformation of higher education – making online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning a part of the solution.

The Forum calls for actions, for inspirational cases and projects showing good practice and pathways for grasping the opportunities by leading the digital transformation of higher education to achieve the sustainable world we want.

1. From Vision to Reality.

The vision is that for the first time in human history it is possible to achieve inclusive and quality education for all (Sustainable Development Goal 4, SDG 4). However, countries around the world are still falling behind agreed targets leaving hundreds of millions without access to quality learning opportunities at all levels of education. Therefore, governments and institutions must immediately speed up on ambitious strategies and actions for leading the digital transformation of higher education, to dramatically improve access, equity, quality and relevance, - and to close the gap between higher education and economies and societies demand.

To turn this vision into a reality, governments, education institutions and the private sector must come together and take the lead in concrete actions for the digital transformation of higher education to achieve the sustainable world we want.

2. Leading Digital Change.

To avoid increasing gaps and injustice, the digital transformation must be based on humanistic values and adapt to the realities of the market place.

The leadership of this change must include all stakeholders of higher education, including faculty, students, employers and the wider community to and must cover the diverse missions of higher education provision, traditional learning programmes, research and lifelong learning opportunities.

3. Aiming High .

Digitization should not be seen as a goal in itself but an enabler and catalyst for rethinking learning and opening up access to the contemporary learner.

The ultimate aim is to build on open-learning models and facilitate joy in learning through the introduction of innovative pedagogies, methodologies and technologies made possible by virtual reality, artificial intelligence, personalized learning and digital assessments.

Digital leadership consortia must explore, promote and build opportunities for the learner (both graduate and non-graduate) to build recognized skills throughout life.

4. Bridging Digital Divides

We call on all stakeholders to join forces to speed up bridging the digital divides by:

- The public and private sectors working together to facilitate high capacity infrastructures
- Governments and institutions cooperating on guaranteeing affordable access to high capacity networks
- Countries implementing advanced solutions, building on their strengths and opportunities to jump over stages (leap frog) others have been trough.
  Providing capacity building and digital and technological skills training in higher education faculty and administrators to lead change from the bottom-up.

5. Relevant Digital Investments.

Governments and educational stakeholders need to find effective ways to invest and build digital capacities and leadership to transform education and transform society.

Strategies and actions for investments for leadership for learning and teaching in the digital age need to be seen as essential for transforming how, where, what knowledge and skills are provided and to whom.

Investments at the national, institutional and community levels are necessary to achieve the vision of the Education 2030 Agenda. Harnessing under- or un-used human resources and human capital through more effective and efficient investments in lifelong learning systems will have significant long term returns on socio-economic development, national growth, peace and stability.

6. Ambitious and Bold Action Now.

The diversity and differing needs and levels of implementation of digital higher education provision demand urgent actions which are also realistic and relevant to national and regional priorities. We need action now, why?

- While the set goals and targets for Education 2030 are ambitious and bold, the achievements published by UNESCO last September 2016 show that the targets are met too late, and for
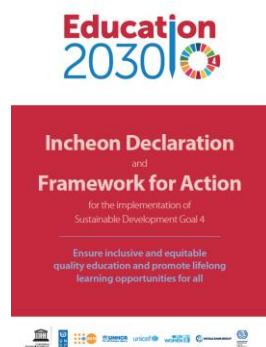
example universal upper secondary education will in average happen in 2084, not 2030. We must see a fundamentally change if we are to reach our global development goals.

- Education, and increasingly important higher education, is crucial for achieving all Sustainable Developments Goals, in particular for Good Health (3), Good Jobs and Economic Growth (8), Responsible consumption (12) and Climate Change (13).

- Higher education has a great impact on all level of education, for the learning material and the pedagogies, for the education of teachers on all levels and for nursing research and innovation.

- Studies (OECD) shows that higher education is beneficial for the individual, for the state through taxes, return on investments, for the region and nation competitiveness and for the society in large through the contributions from an educated individual.

- The new paradigm of lifelong learning is emerging in all parts of the world. Learners are of all types in all ages, and what was before non-traditional learners become the "new traditional" learners. What was before sequential, play-learn-work-retire, becomes more parallel, play-learn-job. Higher education is the core resource for serving that paradigm shift.

- There are urgent needs that need to be met now, for example Higher Education development in Emergencies, the urgent and long-term need for teachers in Africa, supporting outstanding learning and teaching in the digital age.

The goals and targets for Education 2030: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" will not be met unless stakeholders, based on humanistic values, teams up for leading digital transformation of higher education – making online, open, flexible and technology enhanced learning a significant part of the solution.

7. Set examples, share good praxis and pilot implementations. We recommend:

- governments, private sector and education to take action now.

- sharing practices by making your case, your model, available for others.

Target 3, point 43.:
A well-established, properly-regulated tertiary education system supported by technology, Open Educational Resources (OERs) and distance education modalities can increase access, equity, quality and relevance, and narrow the gap between what is taught at tertiary education institutions and what economies and societies demand. The provision of tertiary education should be progressively free, in line with existing international agreements.