

JOINT SEMINAR ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN E-LEARNING and OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

March 12-13 Paris (UNESCO)

AFRICA, ARAB STATES, ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
AND LATIN AMERICA

1. Report Quality Assurance in e-learning Global Forum

1.1 Introduction

The rise in initiatives aimed at promoting the internationalization and globalization of higher education, in particular the rapid development of cross-border higher education, have underlined the need to establish robust frameworks for quality assurance (QA) and the recognition of qualifications. Quality assurance issues have become more important with the increased mobility of students, academic staff, as well as higher education providers resulting from the globalization of higher education.

Quality assurance in e-learning is of growing interest to policy makers as e-learning has become one of the main vehicles for cross-border higher education. This seminar brings together the state-of-the-art models and instruments on QA in e-learning worldwide.

Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic (Chief, Section for Reform, Innovation and Quality Assurance, UNESCO, Education Sector Division of Higher Education) and George Ubachs (Managing Director EADTU) organised this Seminar in the framework of QA in e-learning and invited EADTU and UNESCO related organisations worldwide.

1.2 Quality in e-learning Global Forum

The objective of this Global Forum is to provide input to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO (Paris, 6 – 8 July 2009) and the ICDE / EADTU Conference (Maastricht, 7 – 10 June 2009).

The Global Forum on QA in e-learning was opened by Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO and Mr Georges Haddad, Director, Division of Higher Education, UNESCO. This was followed by an outline of the topic by Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic and Zeynep Varoglu from UNESCO. Neil Butcher presented his study on “Quality Assurance of Distance Education: Lessons Emerging from Regional Initiatives” as starting point for the presentations of the various models.

The objective of the UNESCO/EADTU Forum was to bring forward and compare the approaches on quality assurance in e-learning in a forum of continents. In the Global Forum the following models were presented:

- E-xcellence: a benchmarking approach (Europe)
- CALED: Introduction on Latin American cooperation on QA in e-learning
- Commonwealth of Learning performance indicators
- Asia and Pacific Region: Approaches on Quality in e-Learning
- ACDE: “The Establishment of Pan-African Standards, Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Distance Learning across Africa”

This was followed by a workshop on QA models and the relation with international delivery. This delivered direct input for the Global TF Quality Assurance.

1.3 Seminar outcomes

The Global Forum has resulted in the establishment of a Global TF on QA in distance education/e-learning. The goal of this Task Force is to:

1. Exchange expertise on fundamental aspects of QA in e-learning and keep up with new developments.
2. Updating criteria based on new developments and innovations (Web 2.0).
3. Inventory how to organise QA in e-learning within different contexts. Show how models operate in different countries. Guide them by these examples. Look into the best examples of implementation.
4. Discuss international delivery. How to address quality in international co-operation of delivery. Single mode delivery and delivery in partnership. Ensure High quality partnerships.
5. Collect Best practices.
6. Exploring the contributions of the quality assurance models for OER.

EADTU will get in touch with ICDE in order to discuss how ICDE could become involved in this global taskforce.

More information:

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Coordinator of the European wide introduction of E-xcellence and E-xcellence Associates Label.

2. Report Open Educational Resources

2.1 Introduction

In 2006, ICDE launched its global taskforce on Open Educational Resources (OER) at a meeting held at UNESCO in Paris. This high-level group was chaired by Prof. dr. Fred Mulder, Rector of the Open Universiteit Nederland. Simultaneously, EADTU had been working on OER strategies in lifelong open and flexible learning by means of the EADTU taskforce on Multilingual Open Resources for Independent Learning (MORIL), an initiative which was chaired by Prof. dr. Fred Mulder and coordinated by dr. Kees-Jan van Dorp (Research Director at EADTU). The MORIL taskforce included all the European Open Universities and was active in promoting online learning in two modes – informal and formal – both based on OER, so as to provide new gateways to university education. Moreover EADTU has been working closely with UNESCO to promote OER. UNESCO has been very active in raising awareness of OER in its Member States as well as in facilitating capacity building, both through an international OER community, initiated by UNESCO in 2005. This community currently numbers more than 800 members from 107 countries, of which 74 are developing countries.

2.2 OER seminar

The objective of the UNESCO/EADTU seminar was to explore the potential of OER for improving the provision of education in Africa, Arab States, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America, incorporating significant relationships with regional and global networks. Action was to start by raising awareness of OER and taking stock of different points of view, strategies and priorities and, more specifically, activating the sharing of experience and expertise with the EADTU membership on identified priorities. An important matter for the OER seminar was to consider how to address the different target groups in different regions for high-quality educational OER learning materials. Collaboration with EADTU was supposed to promote effective action at the local and regional level, stimulate the creation of OER, and ensure the accessibility of OER. Collaborative action should ensure a strengthened effect of self-learning on the autonomy of persons and their future prospects, by additional flexibility in OER in terms of time, place, content, method, and organisation.

The joint seminar received vital interest from the different continents that were targeted. It was opened by Georges Haddad, Director, Division of Higher Education, UNESCO. Fred Mulder, Rector Open Universiteit Nederland (<http://www.opener.ou.nl>) and chair of the OER taskforces of the Global Organisation ICDE and EADTU (MORIL), introduced the audience into the global OER arena and gave a summary of the Final Report of the ICDE OER taskforce. Andy Lane, director of OpenLearn (<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk>) at the UK Open University and board member of the OCW Consortium, outlined the European perspective on OER including the MORIL project. Susan D'Antoni, UNESCO programme specialist in OER, discussed the research and survey of the international community on OER: priorities and key issues. Freda Wolfenden of the UK OU presented TESSA as an example of a model for successful multilateral collaboration or consortia that work within and between countries (www.tessafrica.net). Vijay Kumar of MIT discussed research on OER (<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/web/home/home/index.htm>) and the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in India to the Indian Prime Minister to convert to OER (<http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/recommendations/oer.asp>). In the afternoon, break-out sessions on capacity needs and preferences of the different continents were organised. The case of Africa was presented by Fred Barasa (ACDE), the case of Latin America by Luis Miguel Romero (AIESAD), and the case of Asia and the Pacific by Amin Zuhairi (AAOU). Andy Lane acted as moderator for the afternoon session.

2.3 Seminar outcomes

Some statements:

1. "U.S. is positioned as the main initiator of the global OER movement"
2. "Europe is regarded as the major driver in the OER movement with respect to high-quality self learning materials"
3. "Asia considers OER as an important facilitator to increase low enrolment figures"
4. "Africa intends to boost educational capacity with OER so as to suffice the large demand for education".

More specifically:

- During the seminar, a force field analysis was made in order to analyse OER opportunities and threats for the participating continents which attended the UNESCO/EADTU seminar. All the information will be forthcoming on the EADTU website.
- The intention was spoken out to install 'regional' OER taskforces by ACDE, AIESAD, and AAOU, to assess the potential of OER in the different regions. For connecting these taskforces a logical role was attributed to the globally operating ICDE in collaboration with UNESCO. This could be a follow-up of the ICDE OER taskforce that has finished its work and could take the form of a platform or a network. This idea will be discussed with ICDE.
- The relation between OER and Quality Assurance (QA) must be made more apparent. This could be done by linking with the global taskforce on QA in e-Learning that was initiated during the first part of the joint seminar.
- All seminar results will be used as input to the 2009 ICDE/EADTU World Conference (M-2009, Maastricht, 7 - 10 June 2009) and the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO, Paris, 6 - 8 July 2009). It was strongly suggested to officially launch the various taskforces in the M-2009 World Conference, or - if this turns out to be unfeasible - in the UNESCO World Conference.

More information:

Dr. Kees-Jan van Dorp (Research Director at EADTU)

Coordinator of MORIL (Project co-funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; the UNESCO/EADTU OER seminar was one of the final activities in the MORIL project.)

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