

New Dynamics of Higher Education; New Dynamics of Distance Education



Open University of Beijing, New Dynamics of Higher Education; New Dynamics of Distance Education

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Abstract

UNESCO's 2009 World Conference on Higher Education charted a course for higher education in the second decade of the 21st century. The conference identified important and emerging trends, notably rising demand that has created the phenomenon of mass participation, diversification of providers, the use of new learning methods, and a sharper focus on quality assurance. However, higher education is marked by large differences in participation rates and quality in different parts of the world. It is by resolutely embracing the new dynamics that developing countries will bridge these gaps.

Open and distance learning (ODL) and ICTs offer particularly important opportunities. Indeed, developing countries in Asia have led the way in the large-scale use of these technologies. The second part of the paper focuses on the new dynamics of distance education. Now well-established in higher education; ODL will now expand at secondary level and in non-formal learning. The growing pool of Open Educational Resources will both raise the quality and lower the cost of ODL materials as they are shared and adapted around the world. Mobile technology will become an important tool in non-formal learning and the advent of very low cost computing devices will hasten the end of the digital divide.

Introduction

I am honoured and delighted to give this address at the Open University of Beijing as part of my visit to China sponsored by the Beijing De Tao Masters' Academy.

As you know, I spent eleven years as head of the UK Open University. Before it was created they were going to call it the University of the Air, or the Broadcasting University. However the planning committee decided that the name should reflect its function, namely being open, rather than the technology that it would use.

I am very pleased that some of the Chinese TVUs have made the same change and are now calling themselves open universities.

I first studied your impressive Chinese open universities when I wrote my book, *Mega-universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*, which was translated into Chinese and launched at the 1st Summit of Mega-Universities in Shanghai in 2003.

Last year history repeated itself because the launch of the Chinese version of my new book, *Achieving Education for All: Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers*, also took place in Shanghai.

I prepared an earlier version of this talk with my UNESCO colleague, Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić who heads the new Higher Education Section at UNESCO in Paris and was also the Executive Secretary for the World Conference on Higher Education that took place in Paris in 2009.

The address is in two parts and our title is: *New Dynamics of Higher Education; New Dynamics of Distance Education*. We shall begin by enumerating some of the new dynamics that are determining the evolution of higher education around the world.

Our point of reference will be the World Conference on Higher Education that UNESCO convened in Paris in July 2009. Many new trends and issues emerged during those discussions but we shall focus on just eight of them.

We will then explore these same eight issues through the lens of new dynamics in distance education and technology-mediated learning.

Let us give some background about the World Conference on Higher Education before presenting the new trends that emerged from its debates.

To express its global coverage and give voice to regional and national specificities, the World Conference was preceded by six regional conferences. They were held in Cartagena de Indias for Latin America and the Caribbean; Macau for East Asia and the Pacific; Dakar for Africa; New Delhi for South Asia; Bucharest for Europe and North America; and Cairo for the Arab States.

The world event was organized at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and its recommendations will determine UNESCO's agenda in higher education for the next decade. UNESCO will work through this agenda under the guidance of its new Director-General, Ms. Irina Bokova from Bulgaria, who is the first woman ever elected to this post, and Dr. Qian Tang, Assistant Director General for Education, the first Chinese citizen to be appointed to head UNESCO's Education Sector.

The WCHE was a significant event for UNESCO. It brought together leaders from countries big and small.

Present from small countries were the President of Slovenia, the Governor-General of Saint Lucia, and the Minister of Higher Education of Oman. They spoke alongside Ministers from Brazil, Egypt, France, and India. And it was a special honour to have China's Minister of Education as a keynote speaker at the opening plenary.

Philip Altbach, a well-known American researcher, led the contribution of the academic community by presenting the most salient elements of his study *Global Trends, Tracking an Academic Revolution*, which set the scene for the debates in the parallel sessions. These gave an academic buzz to the conference as female and male scholars from around the world spoke in the sessions and mingled in the foyers.

The broad HE community was also well represented by students, who were vocal in all the political and professional debates, both as individual voices and through their associations.

The private sector, notably Hewlett Packard and Microsoft, took advantage of the event to profile partnerships with UNESCO in higher education.

Africa was a major focus and the Rapporteur General for Africa, Nigeria's Peter Okebukola emphasised the great importance of higher education for Africa.

It is very encouraging that China is now actively sharing its experience in developing education systems with other emerging countries, especially in Africa.

The New Dynamics of Higher Education

Let us now identify eight new dynamics that came out of the WCHE debates.

Rising Demand and Massification

The first is rising demand. Higher education's role in constructing the knowledge society is now acknowledged by all.

University degrees and diplomas have become passports to a good future and the demand for higher education has been growing rapidly. As a consequence, we now talk of *massification* as the dominant trend. Globally, age participation rates in higher education have grown from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2007. There were almost 153 million students enrolled in tertiary education worldwide in 2008, which represents a 53% increase over 2000 and a fivefold increase in less than 40 years.

In low income countries these percentages were much lower and rose from 5% in 2000 to a modest 7% in 2007. This means we can expect continuing rapid growth in those countries.

China has now the largest higher education in the world. 2008 statistics indicate that 30 million students were enrolled in HEIs in China while the age participation rate was 23.3%. Although the policy is now to slow the growth of student numbers, a recent education reform strategy paper projects that by 2020 enrolments in higher education will reach 36 million.

Thus China has become the largest higher education system of the world ahead of the US with a total enrolment of 18.2 million students in 2008.

Diversification of Providers and Methods

It will not be possible to satisfy this rising demand, especially in developing countries, by relying on traditional approaches based solely on public universities.

A multitude of new providers of higher education is emerging.

A major recent trend is creating so-called World-Class Universities. In some countries these are designated by governments; the China 211 and 985 projects and the Brain 21 programme in South Korea, being examples.

This trend feeds on the mushrooming phenomenon of university rankings which, while controversial, are undoubtedly influencing governments. The Shanghai University Rankings have certainly increased the visibility of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University throughout the world. However, many question the criteria used in rankings and point to methodological limitations. In particular, rankings focus on the research output of universities and do not try to assess the more important teaching function.

One of the conclusions of the WCHE was that countries should build world-class higher education systems adapted to local needs rather than focusing on a few world-class institutions. A World Bank publication, launched at the WCHE - *“The Challenge of establishing World-Class Universities”* – explores this issue.

At the other end of the spectrum, as an increasing proportion of the population seeks higher education, transition programmes between schools and universities, such as community colleges, are attracting worldwide attention. Ms Jill Biden, the wife of the US Vice-President, who teaches in a community college herself, presented the community college model at the World Conference. Community colleges provide access for non-traditional students, offer flexible curricula – include skills-based training, and allow progression to university.

China’s recent draft National Plan Outline for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development states that China will increase its competitive edge through world-class universities. However, it also points to the need for a more balanced and heterogeneous higher education system to satisfy diverse needs which brings these two global trends together.

Private Provision

Corporate structures of higher education are also changing. Private higher education is now the fastest growing sub-sector and some 30% of students are enrolled in private higher education institutions globally. Some countries (Japan, South Korea) enrol 80% of their students in private higher education institutions and in parts of Latin America these percentages reach 50%. For-profit higher education is also growing and developing specific business models that have not yet been explored sufficiently because these institutions tend to operate in an opaque and secretive way. The Conference stressed the importance of including the private sector in all quality assurance arrangements. In North America and Europe for-profit institutions are moving more rapidly into eLearning than the public institutions.

Distance Education

Modes of teaching and learning are also changing. Indeed, applications of ICTs have impacted higher education significantly. Open Universities are multiplying around the world and are increasingly powerful players in national higher education systems.

These institutions are an important response to the challenge of scaling up higher education in response to growing demand.

We will talk about distance education in detail in a moment, but let us just give two examples of mega-universities aside from the Beijing Open University.

Your sister institution the Shanghai TV University reaches out to a large number of students throughout the city and the countryside. Another is UNISA, the University of South Africa, one of the oldest and largest distance education institutions in the world which enrolls a quarter of a million students a year.

Cross-Border Higher Education

These trends come together in a steady increase in cross-border higher education.

As defined by the 2005 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, the term designates higher education that occurs when ‘the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders’.

Cross-border higher education can take different forms, ranging from branch campuses and franchises of universities offering courses abroad to e-learning across borders.

Cross-border Higher Education, if regulated properly, as it is in China, offers great opportunities for capacity building at institutional level both in teaching and learning. This example from China is the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China, a cross-border provider representing a partnership between the University of Nottingham in the UK and the the Zhejiang Wanli Education Group – University, the first Sino-Foreign University in China approved by the Ministry of Education of China.

However, in the absence of the sort of regulation that you have in China, CBHE easily lends itself to fraud and low quality provision, the most striking example being degree mills that sell diplomas for money. The internet is an attractive tool for these bogus providers. One used Blenheim Palace, Winston Churchill’s birthplace, on their website claiming it as their campus. Others misuse UNESCO’s name to appear legitimate.

Fortunately, quality assurance provides some protection against spurious providers.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance – and especially the internationalisation of quality assurance – is one of the most striking new developments since UNESCO held its previous World Conference on Higher Education in

1998. This new emphasis on QA was reflected not only in the conference Communiqué but also in both political and academic debates during the Conference.

The Indian Minister of Human Resource Development, to quote his speech at the WCHE, expressed his approach to internationalising quality assurance rather well:

“The globalisation of higher education has added newer challenges in terms of quality assurance system, issues of mutual recognition and equivalence of degrees and transparency in the regulatory structures of national systems of higher education. (...) Quality Assurance Systems should encourage effective learning processes which are adapted to the needs of various categories of learners. The systems should encompass not merely conventional programmes in higher education but also the borderless, private and continuing education.”

The internationalisation of quality assurance is a response to the growing policy challenges facing higher education systems and institutions as a consequence of the trends we have identified, such as private higher education, cross-border higher education, eLearning and ODL, and the growing role of the Internet.

UNESCO has prepared the ground for this process of internationalisation through the standard-setting tools that were highlighted at the WCHE. These are the Conventions for the Recognition of Degrees; and the 2005 Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education.

UNESCO’s capacity-building initiatives in quality assurance were also reported, notably the organisation of Global Forums on Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications. In many countries, these have facilitated the revision of quality standards within universities and accreditation processes.

A more recent initiative is the UNESCO - World Bank Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC). GIQAC supports regional networks of quality assurance agencies. In this region, it supports the Asia and Pacific Quality Assurance Network (APQN). The APQN Secretariat is located in Shanghai Education Evaluation Institute (SEEI), China.

An important contribution to global quality assurance is the Web Portal on Recognised Higher Education Institutions. This provides students and all stakeholders with white list of accredited institutions provided by governments so that they can check the bona fides of institutions in other countries. We are pleased that China, with the largest HE system of the world, is actively contributing to the Portal.

Finally I should mention the joint publication with the U.S. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) of a document entitled - *Toward Effective Practice Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education*.

All of this work, which began after the previous WCHE in 1998, has fostered the worldwide elaboration and sharing of good practices. It has stimulated much activity in the form of regional discussions, preparation of tool kits, online courses, workshops, and quality assurance documents.

Teacher Education

The growing challenges of teacher education within higher education were highlighted as one of the global trends, underlined in Conference Communiqué in these words:

“Our ability to realize the goals of EFA is dependent upon our ability to address the worldwide shortage of teachers. Higher education must scale up teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, with curricula that equip teachers to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills they need in the twenty-first century. This will require new approaches, including open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communications technologies (ICTs). (Article 11)”

The teacher shortage is the core challenge. According to UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics, a global total of 10.3 million teachers should be recruited between 2007 and 2015. However, this is a global figure. Actual needs vary greatly from country to country. The 96 countries that have not achieved Universal Primary Education will need to recruit 1.9 million teachers for this purpose alone.

Academic Profession

The teaching force in higher education was naturally a particular focus of the WCHE. The stresses on HE systems and their academic staff caused by rapid expansion are manifest in various ways.

First, pressure of student numbers has required the hiring of less qualified faculty. For example, in China only 9 % of academic profession has doctorates, while in India it is 35%.

Second, the use of part-time professors is becoming more widespread. For example in Latin America and the Caribbean, up to 80% of the faculty have part-time status.

Third, part-time faculty seek adequate salaries by working in several institutions. In particular, private higher education institutions tend to rely heavily on part-timers, some of whom are moonlighting from public institutions, which can cause tensions between the two sub-sectors.

Fourth, the academic labour market is now global. Academics migrate from poorer to richer countries. Singapore, the Gulf States, Western Europe and North America tend to import faculty whereas regions like the South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa are exporters.

Fifth, one side effect of the rapid spread of technology is that young people who are used to using digital devices in everyday life expect to use them as students – whereas many faculty continue to teach in traditional ways.

Sixth, however, ICTs provide new opportunities to expand access to quality learning and facilitate the tasks of teachers. In particular, the growing trend to develop Open Educational Resources means that academics and students will be able to draw on a worldwide pool of excellent teaching and learning material that can be fully adapted to local needs.

UNESCO is working with COL to empower HE institutions, ministries of education and quality assurance agencies to take full advantage of these resources. A major goal of this work is to ensure

multidirectional flows of Open Educational Resources so that developed countries use resources from developing countries as well as vice-versa. This was the topic of a vigorous debate between two South Africans, Barney Pityana and Brenda Gourley, at the World Conference.

Since then four workshops held in Cape Town, South Africa; Windhoek, Namibia; Bamako, Mali; and Kochi, India have provided examples of the use in the USA of OERs from institutions in Ghana and Malawi. This helps to dispel the fear of neo-colonialism expressed in the WCHE debate.

Let me give an example from China, CORE. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China has recently published a list of 2009 Chinese Quality Open Courseware (CQOCW). So far, the total number of CQOCW items has been over 3,000.

That is our summary of the new dynamics of higher education that emerged at the World Conference. Let us now examine them again through the lens of the new dynamics of distance education.

The New Dynamics of Distance Education

I note that at the 2003 Mega-Universities Summit conference held in Shanghai that we launched the Chinese version of my book *Mega-universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*. I am delighted that last year we launched the Chinese version of my latest book: *Achieving Education for All: Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers*.

For these reasons I feel very much at home in China and I congratulate the China TVUs on their tremendous achievements. My message today is that future will be even better. The steady evolution of technology will give technology-mediated education – for which I will use the traditional term distance education – a pre-eminent place in higher education. All universities will begin to emulate your methods.

The framework will be the eight new dynamics in higher education from last year's world conference: rising demand; diversification of providers and methods; private provision; distance education; cross-border education; quality assurance; teacher education; and the academic profession.

We shall touch on each of these topics in order to show how the new dynamics of distance education complement these new dynamics of higher education. However, you must remember that not all of the important dynamics of ODL are new. Sometimes the frontiers of learning are behind us! In implementing new technologies we must hold fast to the lessons that we have already learned about how to use technology successfully.

I have been privileged to see a draft of your National Plan Outline for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development, which has much to say about the trends that I shall explore.

Rising Demand and Massification

The first new dynamic of higher education that we talked about earlier was rising demand. The figures show that access to higher education in China is growing faster than anywhere else in the world. You are

still a long way from having a mass higher education system but you are on the way there – with the Beijing Open University playing an exemplary role.

Here we simply want to insist on the revolutionary role that technology can play in ensuring that the massification of higher education occurs with higher quality and lower costs.

Governments want three outcomes from their higher education systems:

- Access: to be as wide as possible
- Quality: to be as high as possible
- Cost: to be as low as possible

The nature of the challenge is clear when you create a triangle of vectors. With traditional methods of face-to-face teaching this is an iron triangle. You want to stretch the triangle like this to give greater access, higher quality and lower costs.

But you can't!

Try extending access by packing more students into each classroom and you will be accused of damaging quality. Try improving quality with better learning resources and the cost will go up. Try cutting costs and you will endanger both access and quality.

This iron triangle has hindered the expansion of education throughout history. It has created in the public mind – and probably in your own thinking – an insidious link between quality and exclusivity. This link still drives the admission policies of many universities, which define their quality by the people they exclude.

But today there is good news. Thanks to globalisation successive waves of technology are sweeping the world – and technology can transform the iron triangle into a flexible triangle.

By using technology you can achieve wider access, higher quality and lower cost *all at the same time*. This is a revolution – it has never happened before.

How does it work? The fundamental principles of technology, articulated two centuries ago by the economist Adam Smith, are division of labour, specialisation, economies of scale, and the use of machines and communications media. Adam Smith wrote more than two centuries ago so the revolution of technology is not a new dynamic. Sometimes the frontiers of learning are behind us and we must not forget the wisdom of the past.

My basic point here is that each new generation of technology can, if we use it properly, do even more to make massification possible at low cost and high quality. The economies of scale inherent in the technology are becoming greater and greater. However, we must remember that specialisation and division of labour in the organisation of our institutions are the keys that unlock those economies of scale.

Diversification of Providers and Methods

The second trend we highlighted earlier was the diversification of providers and methods. We make two comments here: one about providers; the other about methods.

Distance education has proved itself at university level through splendid examples like the success of the Beijing Open University, and the 40 years of success of the UK Open University. It is spreading to other levels, notably secondary education. Providing quality secondary schooling to all of the world's young people is now our biggest educational challenge. Much of my new book is about how distance education can help us respond to it. There are already many mega-schools that are the secondary equivalent of mega-universities.

Second, of course, a major trend is that conventional universities are diversifying their methods as they adopt the approaches and technologies of distance education. They usually call them something different, like blended learning, flexible learning, or eLearning, but distance education is what it is.

This too is not new. Last year I was in New Zealand where Massey University was celebrating fifty years of its distance education programme, which it calls extramural studies.

We call universities that teach both on campus and at a distance 'dual-mode' institutions. The main challenge facing them is to remember that the frontiers of learning about how to organise distance education are behind them. Massey University has just gone through a cycle, familiar to many dual mode institutions, of decentralising the organisation of distance learning to the academic units and faculty members and then, when they find that the wheels fall off, re-establishing central coordination. We shall return to this issue when we talk about the academic profession.

Private Provision

One aspect of the diversification of providers is private provision of higher education. We are thinking particularly of private, for-profit provision. Private provision is a complex reality.

Take the example of Open University Malaysia, a private institution that pays dividends to its shareholders, which are Malaysia's public universities. That must make it a for-profit institution, although it feels quite different from others such as the American University of Phoenix.

We make three comments about distance education and private providers.

First, private, for-profit correspondence education has a long history, and private providers of distance education such as Phoenix Online, with over 100,000 students, are now moving strongly into eLearning. I expect that profit margins are higher in face-to-face education but they are also responding to student demand. Ten years ago most of the providers who created fully online learning programmes failed to attract students, but today online enrolments are growing much faster than classroom enrolments in North America.

We may expect this sector to continue to expand, because commercial companies are good at the basics of technology: division of labour, specialisation, economies of scale and the use of machines.

Second, these providers respond to clear rules and incentives. The good private providers prefer to work in a clear legal framework. If they are given incentives to get their students to complete courses, rather than drop out, they are good at that too. For example, private providers are more robust about reminding their students to submit assignments than most public providers.

Third, as we already noted, in the absence of regulations degree mills will spring up, and these are a menace to legal providers.

Distance Education

The fourth new dynamic that we identified was distance education. Here again I make three comments.

First, universities are expanding into distance education to expand their reach but also because they expect it to cost less. In fact, unless they remember Adam Smith's principles of technology, it will cost more, and the programme will not last.

Second, if you do follow Adam Smith's principles, each new generation of technology does allow you to reduce costs, except in one vital area, which is the development of courses. This is inherently expensive because it requires a team of academics and skilled people.

But as we pointed out earlier, we now have a major advance in this area with the development of open educational resources. Your national plan is enthusiastic about these and states:

It is essential to intensify the development of eTeaching resources, introduce quality eTeaching resources from abroad, develop and eLearning curriculum, construct eLibraries and virtual laboratories, build open and flexible public service platform on education resources, and renovate the mode of eEducation to push high-quality, high-level diploma granting distance education.

It is good to see that China is already well-advanced down this route.

Third, technologies are changing. In many of the countries where the Commonwealth of Learning works, mobile phones rather than laptop computers are the expression of information and communications technology. We are already using these very successfully for helping farmers improve their livelihoods in India.

Cross-Border Higher Education

We come now to cross-border higher education. Here we simply want to make a plea that we think of cross-border higher education in terms of bi- and multi-directional partnerships. Simply pushing programmes in one direction at another country is not sustainable.

A nice example of a multi-directional cross-border partnership is a project called the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth that the Commonwealth of Learning is facilitating. It is not a new institution but a collaborative mechanism that permits small states all over the world to work together on producing open education resources.

Here a dozen countries got together in Mauritius to develop courses on eco-tourism. This group of experts from 18 small countries worked together in the Maldives in March of last year to develop a diploma course in sustainable agriculture for small states.

Quality Assurance

Earlier we emphasised the importance of quality assurance and noted how it is becoming a worldwide concern with global mechanisms to match. I shall make just two comments from the perspective of distance education.

First, quality distance education is a subset of quality education. Distance education should be subject to the same quality assurance mechanisms as education generally. This also has the advantage that comparisons can be made between the quality of distance and face-to-face provision.

This table indicates that the UK Open University outperforms Oxford, where I once studied, in the quality of its teaching. We can show such a table because all UK universities were assessed in the same way.

Second, distance education should not fear quality assurance. It is easier to demonstrate quality in distance education than in face-to-face teaching. That is because everything in distance education: the courses, the student support and the administrative processes, are explicit, public and available for scrutiny.

Teacher Education

Earlier we made two points about teacher education. First, training teachers is the major contribution that universities can make to achieving education for all. Second, there is a massive shortage of teachers worldwide. Half of my new book is devoted to the challenge of teacher education and I make four key points.

First, many countries will not be able to train the new teachers they need without using distance education. The conventional facilities for training the millions of teachers required are simply not there. Moreover, distance education has been used to train teachers very successfully for many decades.

Second, distance education allows the emphasis of teacher education to be shifted from pre-service training to in-service training. This allows the focus of training to be on the classroom, which makes training much more effective.

Third, by using open education resources we can conduct teacher in-service education at scale while also customising it for every country and every school. An example is the TESSA programme in Africa, which is a consortium of 13 African universities, the UK Open University and five international organisations. It works across nine African countries – with more participating informally – by creating teacher education materials in Arabic, English, French and Kiswahili.

Fourth, this kind of training has a direct and beneficial effect on the children. Last year nearly half a million African teachers worked with materials and resources produced through the TESSA community.

Since these are classroom-based in-service materials they have a direct impact on millions of children through their use in the classroom.

We note that your National Plan includes provision for in-service training and we hope that this will be done through distance education so that it can be more frequent than every five years.

Academic Profession

We come finally to the implications of the growth of distance education for the academic profession. Earlier we noted the multiple stresses on teachers in higher education. We pointed out that, while some of those stresses are caused by the spread of information and communications technology, ICTs and notably open educational resources also have the potential to make teachers' work more productive and satisfying.

We shall make one final point here, which is that to take advantage of ICTs and open educational resources teachers will need to work more in teams and less as isolated individuals.

If you want to do distance education and eLearning well you must use the principles of division of labour and specialisation that I have continually emphasised. Some people in higher education find this difficult. They want to continue with the cottage industry approach, where each academic does their own thing and takes care of every step in the instructional process.

My fellow Vancouverite, Professor Tony Bates calls this the 'Lone-Ranger' approach to eLearning. For teachers to operate with low productivity like this may not matter in rich countries; but it matters a lot in the places COL works where resources are scarce and access to education woefully limited. We think it matters in China too.

The insidious links between quality, cost and exclusivity are balls and chains holding nations back. Distance and eLearning should be liberating forces not a throwback to the past. Our aim must be to use the technology of distance education to stretch the iron triangle. So that quality education is accessible to all at reasonable cost.

Conclusion

Let us now conclude. We began by outlining the new dynamics in higher education that were identified at UNESCO's World Conference last year.

Then we took those trends and commented on the many ways in which the new dynamics of distance education can help to advance higher education generally.

Our conclusion is that universities like the Open University of Beijing, which focus on distance education and do it well, have a great future ahead of them.

Thank you. It has been an honour to address you.