Innovative Capacity Development through eLearning with a Special focus on Africa

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Workshop Report
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# Table of Contents

**INTRODUCTION AND STAGE SETTING**
- Welcome address by Prof. Janos Bogardi, UNU Vice Rector in Europe  
- Stage setting address by Prof. Govindan Parayil, UNU Vice-Rector in charge of eLearning  
- Introduction to the workshop and the agenda

**WHAT DO WE ENVISION?**

**DEFINITION OF ELEARNING**

**OUR CURRENT STRENGTHS AND GAPS: SYSTEMS OF ELEARNING AT UNU7**
- Samuel Siminyu, Head of Department of Distance Education, Makarere University
- Mama Foupouagnigni, Head of International Cooperation Service and professor at the Advanced Teachers’ Training College, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon
- Tony Carr, Staff Development Coordinator, Centre for Educational Technology, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Speranza Ndege, Director of the E-learning Coordinating Centre, Kenyatta University, Kenya
- Alice Barlow-Zambodla, Senior Education Specialist/ Researcher, South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE)

**FOCUSING ELEARNING AFRICA – HOW MIGHT OUR VISION WORK IN AFRICA?**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**ELEARNING PROJECTS**

**ANNEX OF METHODOLOGIES**

1. Human Spectogram
2. World café
3. ELearning Gallery Walk
4. Dotmocracy
Introduction and Stage Setting

The UNU strategic workshop was opened by a welcome address of the UNU Vice Rector in Europe, Prof. Bogardi, and the UNU Vice Rector in Japan.

Welcome address by Prof. Janos Bogardi, UNU Vice Rector in Europe

“I would like to welcome you to this meeting, which is an indication that you need a vision which drives your thoughts to something that might be achievable and certainly admirable. For Bonn, its aspiration is not only to become UN capital of Europe but to make a considerable contribution to elearning within UNU. Also welcome to the historical building. You might not call this a historical building because it is really not at all like some of the historical buildings in Europe, but it is a historical building nevertheless, because it is part of the German road to democracy. This building was built in the late 1960s by a famous architect – today he would be shot for this kind of architecture – but anyhow, this was built to host the officers of the parliaments and you are actually here in one of the meeting rooms which were designed in the 1960s to nurture the German democracy, which was then a mere 20 years old. It also tells something about eLearning, because I believe in the quickly evolving environment, the quickly evolving scientific agenda, and particularly the quickly evolving technological development. 20 or 40 years are an enormous time span. This is the room which belongs to UNU in Bonn and as you see these meeting rooms have some artistic features. Look above the door. It symbolises a breakthrough of science; science is pushing through, pushing aside paper and you can already see the next generation coming through underneath, again creating new papers. Now in an eLearning workshop you should, of course, rather discuss ways to be in a non-paper, non-carbon office environment.

But that is one relatively negative driver for this meeting. You know that UNU had a Global Virtual University (GVU), an associated programme in Norway, but about a year ago we learned that the Norwegian government simply stopped funding. That was something UNU is not really accustomed to. And this triggered a long chain of thought. A long chain of thought whether a distributed university of the size of UNU but with the mandate of UNU, how could it embrace eLearning? Is it something we should develop? It was actually a very positive shock, because it led to this workshop, which is taking place at a very interesting timely and institutional development juncture of UNU. Since slightly more than one year we have a new rector who set one of the strategic objectives for UNU to become a graduate, degree-awarding university. Now again I mention distributed university, interdisciplinary organized institutes according to programmes and problems, not according to academic faculties. How can we explore synergies, how can we bring this knowledge together? How can we forge a more coherent UNU? And, this is an additional feature of this workshop, how can UNU as part of the UN make good of the very frequently made and seldom followed-up promise to have Africa as a priority? For your deliberations I would formulate three core messages: How to use eLearning for education, exploring and forging the synergies within UNU and making good of the promise to have Africa as a priority.

I am very happy that many of UNU colleagues from different institutes worldwide, also in very high professional and also from the level of senior officers came to Bonn to deliberate over this issue, I only want to mention two persons. One is my colleague Prof. Govindan Parayil from Tokyo, one of the new Vice Rectors who expressed his interest and exercised leadership in the area of eLearning. And secondly I want to mention Nancy White who is invited to moderate this session and whom I have met over lunch two days ago. It was only then that I found out that unfortunately I do not have too much time to spend with you, because I will have to serve on the executive committee at the University Bonn in the process of habilitation, the German procedure to be awarded professorship.
There is one more time juncture which is very timely and Virginie mentioned this in her letter to you. Next week, the council will meet here, all the senior members of UNU will come together and also the council, the supervisory body. This is a unique chance to send a thoughtful message to the council and the rector, the other vice-rector and all the directors about what we can and what we want to do in the area of eLearning. I wish you a very interesting two days together and I know that you are in the best hands to do so. Thank you.”

Stage setting address by Prof. Govindan Parayil, UNU Vice-Rector in charge of eLearning

“I joined the United Nations University as Vice-Rector three months ago, on 1 August 2008. But I actually have two duties, because I am also the Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Yokohama (UNU-IAS) located in Japan.

From the Rector, Prof. Konrad Osterwalder, I got the task to look into eLearning at the UNU system and I am now here thanks to Dr. Virginie Aimard, who has initiated this workshop. I am not an eLearning expert myself and I am thus also here to learn. I have written about the digital divide, but never looked into eLearning as such. So I hope to be educated on what eLearning can do for our mission, for the mission that our Rector has for the future of UNU. We hope that ELearning can help us to achieve our objectives, that it can, for example, make a contribution to the establishment of postgraduate programs and that it can help us in regard to our regional focus on developing countries in general and Africa in particular.

I gained experience in leadership as Head and Associate Professor of the Information and Communications Management Programme at the National University of Singapore (2001–2004) and I was Assistant Professor in Science, Technology and Society at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (1994–2001). I have been involved in the development of programs at the Information and Communications Management Program (now Communications and New Media) and I realized that many expectations with regard to the introduction of eLearning were not fulfilled. For example, the eLearning portfolios of large universities never came through. After eLearning kiosks had been set up in Africa, they never managed to live up to their promises, as can be seen in the cases of South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana to name just a few. When discussing Quality Assurance today, we should thus raise the question why these programs failed. Another essential issue which needs to be addressed is the digital divide, i.e. the unequal access of some members of society to information and communication technology.”

Introduction to the workshop and the agenda

The initiator of the workshop, Dr. Virginie Aimard, Academic Officer at UNU Bonn, welcomed the participants and stressed that the gathering of UNU members from around the world and representatives of African universities presents an opportunity to learn with as well as from each other and introduced Nancy White from Full Circle Associates [Link: http://www.fullcirc.com/], the facilitator of the workshop. Nancy White made it clear that this workshop is not a traditional meeting. A lot of participatory measures will be used in the workshop and some people might be asked to step a little bit out of their comfort zone. Since not all participants may have the same definition of eLearning, it will be necessary to discuss this. Moreover, participants will be asked to discuss how they envision eLearning at UNU. The methodology used in the workshop will correspond to the aim of the workshop – making eLearning experience transparent. Hence there will be notes taken on flipcharts, an outcome statement as well as a film to be published on the UNU website.
WHAT DO WE ENVISION?

If UNU is to continue to be involved in eLearning, what would be the most significant role for UNU?

Quality assurance for eLearning was raised as an important element. By 2012 participants will have experienced eLearning as learners, i.e. academics have experienced eLearning as a student, which will affect their pedagogy. Hopefully their experience has been positive and influenced the way they teach. The design of eLearning is key for the product.

By 2012 UNU will

**Improve quality**
- create a quality mark
- improve peer review
- will assure the quality of the eLearning content and ensure the delivery of well-designed content instead of a mere collection of material
- will develop standardized and universally accepted guidelines for eLearning and quality assurance

**Consider the context, content, design**
- meet the challenge of meeting the mix of face-face and online teaching
- respond to the cultural and language context

**Tie eLearning to increased collaboration among universities**
- offer help in terms of delivery mechanisms needed
- tie eLearning to universities which offer degree programs and create the capacity at UNU to run eLearning courses

**Create a UNU framework for eLearning**
- improve coordinated approaches
- work on a common, unified framework for eLearning at UNU and help mainstreaming eLearning within UNU, e.g. having a prospectus of courses offered by the university for students to have an overview over summer courses, etc. using online tools
- build a central repository of peer-reviewed material, a learning repository which can be delivered in different ways (e.g. using mobile technologies) depending on the needs of the learners
- develop eLearning opportunities in areas in which UNU has special expertise, and make this available to others
- connect eLearning plans to the UNU strategy (e.g. in regard to twinning)
- consider eLearning as a part of UNU, not as something separate to existing UNU activities
- will promote the understanding of eLearning as an organisation paradigm, not delivery paradigm
- will coordinate eLearning activities at UNU in a coherent way, because not all eLearning activities will be taking place in one place

**Overcome weaknesses**
- look at the real needs; courses will respond to the development needs
- design programs in such a way that they are not totally dependent on donor funding (otherwise it might happen just as with the GVU, e.g. that funding and thus the project stops due to lack of financial resources)
- overcome technological constraints for using eLearning (electricity related problems, computers, literacy)
• identify the different stakeholders of eLearning initiatives, i.e. not only students themselves but also higher education institutions
• show decision-makers the benefits of eLearning
• expand the portfolio of UNU, making it more visible

**DEFINITION OF ELEARNING**

While discussing possible definitions of eLearning, participants arrived at the conclusion that the notion eLearning meant different things to different people. For some it meant primarily the delivery of online courses whereas others define it more broadly and also consider communication via email and online ways of collaborating and learning as eLearning.

It became clear that the use of computers in the classroom is changing the relation between educator and student, that educationalists are more and more becoming coaches helping the students to reach their goals. Thus an introduction of eLearning will have a fundamental effect and induce a culture change. ELearning is not just about adding a technical component or delivering education online, it is about innovation and new ways of learning. For participants it was important that eLearning must go beyond filming a lecture and making it available online. It should not just broaden the access to, but improve the quality of learning content.

Due to the diversity of the definitions, the term “e-stuff” was coined, indicating that the term is far from being universally defined.

From the group work several components were identified which are essential for eLearning:

- Learning by means of technology
- Delivery of education
- Combination of self-based study using technology (web) for communication with tutors or other learners; media-mix, including interactive action
- Tool for the organization to rethink “learning”
- Creating learning interactions
- Mobile learning for low-infrastructure areas
Gallery walk: Systems of eLearning at UNU

Velma Grover, UNU-INWEH
– Water Virtual Learning Group

Jos Rikers, UNU-IAS, Regional Centres of Expertise and the VSCE campus

Philip Schmidt, UNU MERIT
– Open Courseware Portal

Tomasz Janowski, UNU-IIST
– eGovernment.net Cooperation

Brendan Barrett, UNU Media Studios
– Asia Pacific Initiative & e-teaching

Beatrice Ghirardini, FAO
– IMARK & Knowledge Sharing

You can download the presentations from the website.
Recapitulation of the 1st conference day, Nancy White

The first day of the workshop has made it quite clear that participants do have different ways to define eLearning. ELearning itself might be a limiting word. That is why it might be useful to introduce the term “e-stuff”, subsuming different kinds of electronic communication, collaboration, learning and teaching. Participants consider the creation of change, the delivery of content and the connection of people as fundamental features of eLearning.

The group discussions of the first day of the workshop have evolved into a strategic thinking exercise. How do the strengths and gaps we have identified relate to the reality which the African colleagues report?

The aim of this exercise was to reach a tangible outcome that helps to move things forward and identify next steps. Furthermore the attempt is made to generate some strategic input for UNU in relation to the role eLearning and online tools can play. Participants have agreed that personal experience with forms of eLearning is of utmost importance and changes pedagogy in a way that people begin to consider it as a way to improve teaching and learning, instead of merely seeing a set of technical tools.

The following questions evolved and needed to be discussed:

- How can UNU work on quality issues across institutions?
- Does UNU have enough connection?
- How does UNU establish enough uniformity and enough flexibility at the same time?
- How does UNU address the problem of improving its gaps?
- Will eLearning be seen as a way to improve cooperation in higher education?
- How must the content be designed and how the context and costs be taken into consideration in the face of limited recourses?
OUR CURRENT STRENGTHS AND GAPS: SYSTEMS OF ELEARNING AT UNU

When UNU started to develop e-learning activities (2002-today), it was done under the motto “let 1000 flowers bloom”, which led way to a phase of creative experimentation. Today, there are different projects in this field. The challenge will be to balance the need for control and the need for openness at UNU. When moving from an experimental mode to scaling, i.e. mainstreaming eLearning as an institution, which is the necessary next step, it must also be ensured that innovative thinking is still preserved.
TEST CASE: SYSTEMS OF ELEARNING AFRICA

Setting the context: What is happening with eLearning in Africa? Why is it a priority? Who are the innovators and what can we learn from them?

Samuel Siminyu, Head of Department of Distance Education, Makarere University

“Makarere is one of the oldest institutions on the continent and has quite a reputation. Still today it plays a lead role. In the late 1990s Makarere University started eLearning in cooperation with an East African and a European university. Students worked together on the learning management system Blackboard. At the end of the project, we recognized that there was a further need.

Today Makarere Universities has 22 faculties and a population of 30,000 students. There are many projects of eLearning, but unfortunately, eLearning is not extended to the satellite campuses. We have an ICT policy including eLearning (being reviewed right now) and we have trained quite a number of people. As of today, close to 500 staff have undergone training in eLearning. As a result we have excited a number of staff to go into research on eLearning. Now we are building a community of practice, doing research activities, e.g. with the University of Cape Town and Kenyatta University.

“The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa” (Carnegie Cooperation of New York, Hewlett Foundation, etc.) aims at broadening higher education technologies, e.g. by means of eLearning. We have agreed on a research agenda of eLearning at Makarere University. But we are also facing some challenges, such as the lack of commitment (staff, management, students). Unfortunately, a smaller proportion of trained staff than expected did actually continue eLearning activities.

Still, Makarere University has been involved in eLearning long enough so that they want to serve as a role model. ELearning can help to meet the tremendous demand of students wanting to go to universities. Currently there are not enough resources to allow entrance to all qualified young people.”


Mama Foupouagnigni, Head of International Cooperation Service and professor at the Advanced Teachers’ Training College, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon

“In Cameroon there is a lack of learning and teaching material, no library, too many students and not enough staff. ELearning can help improve this situation. ELearning can provide more access for students, create more learning materials and also provide and recommend open resources. In order to do so we must raise awareness of open access. Moreover we have to build capacity of students and lecturers. It is very important that we produce content to face our local needs – bear in mind that there are 150 languages in Cameroon and some of them are dying. We must try to preserve them ourselves. no European country can do that.

Luckily, we have a group of motivated professors in their 40s. That means they will stay with the university for approx. another 25 years and still have some impact in their university. They have a good connection to Germany, because they are all former Humboldt-Fellows and the Rector of Yaoundé I University, Prof. Dorothy Njeuma, is a former UNU Council member.
In Cameroon Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a priority. With the support of UNU, the project can build capacities and have a wide ranging effect (bilingual) once the ICT center is operational. Furthermore, UNU can use this eLearning center at the University of Yaoundé I to deliver content, e.g. on Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) at Yaoundé I.

However, we are also facing some challenges. We will have to establish good cooperation with other African universities in order not to produce the same content, but head for co-production and sharing of content. We must create changes in the set of mind and make people realize the importance and benefits of eLearning. Usually, people are preoccupied with their main jobs and engaging in eLearning would mean an additional 6 hours of work each week at Yaoundé I. Unfortunately, the involvement of a lecturer in eLearning is not appreciated in Cameroon and will not help people to advance their careers and get a promotion. That is why I can only now attend to eLearning, after having received my habilitation. These difficulties must be addressed. For the future we expect increased cooperation.”


Tony Carr, Staff Development Coordinator, Centre for Educational Technology, University of Cape Town, South Africa

“The Centre for Educational Technology (CET) was formed in 2005 and is based at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

UCT is one of a small number of elite, formerly whites-only universities that currently only has a population of 50 per cent black students and even less black staff. UCT has benefited from large corporations over many decades. It ranks in the top 100 of universities and has many renown scientists. UCT is a research-based university, i.e. research is privileged over teaching when it comes to promotional academics. For our work in eLearning, we rely on persuasion; a top-down policy does not work.

CET supports the use of educational technology for teaching and learning and works in partnership with the university community. We enable, promote and investigate the integration of learning technologies in teaching and learning at UCT and in higher education. CET exists to realise the principles expressed in UCT’s Educational Technology Policy. CET’s work is organised both vertically and horizontally through five areas of work namely curriculum development, learning technologies, staff development and research and teaching. More information is available in our leaflet an on CD-ROM – which includes the report “ICTs and Higher Education in Africa”, a report about the state of ICT in eight African universities.

We engage in

- **Staff development**: CET works with UCT educators to develop capacity to teach effectively with technology. CET makes available workshops, seminars and ‘show and tell’ sessions to raise educators’ awareness of the ways in which educational technology can be used for teaching and learning.

- **Curriculum Development**: This area focuses on the integration of educational technology into curricula at both the course and programme level. CET works with educators on curriculum partnership projects to develop online teaching and learning resources to support specific curricula or course objectives. CET also offers provide small grants as incentives to UCT educators interested in exploring the possibilities of using educational technology for teaching in their courses.
• **Learning Technologies:** CET develops and supports online learning environments (Vula) and other learning technologies which support teaching and learning in UCT courses.

• **Research:** CET’s research mission is to ensure that the design, development and use of ICTs for teaching and learning are based on rigorous contextualised research. Our objectives are to provide equitable access to higher education, enable social redress, and improve the quality of teaching and learning at UCT, in South Africa and in countries with similar needs.”


**Speranza Ndege, Director of the E-learning Coordinating Centre, Kenyatta University, Kenya**

“Kenyatta University established an e-Learning Coordinating Center (eLCC) in 2006 to coordinate all e-Learning programmes in the University. ELearning as a mode of delivery was launched in 2005, with the aim of reaching out to the wide clientele of students.

At the beginning there was no ICT infrastructure. In 1997 we got the first computer. But the University has invested heavily in terms of time and resources to: establish an e-Learning Coordinating Centre; build capacity in e-content development in multimedia productions; purchase hardware and software; build information management systems; and create e-Learning awareness/sensitization through public lectures, workshops, seminars and international conferences. The University has both experience and expertise in delivery of online programmes developed over a long period of time from joint collaborations with African Virtual University (AVU), Australian and American Universities in online certificate, diploma and degree online. Now we have increased bandwidth and 3000 computers. So far 550 lecturers have been trained and are using moodle now and there are 300 online courses.

We even managed to raised money for a regional eLearning conference to bring universities, ministries, and organisations together to find out who is doing what in eLearning and to share experience. So the “1st Regional Conference on e-Learning 2008” was jointly organized by Kenyatta University, Kenya and Computer Aid International, UK (18 -20 NOVEMBER 2008).

The outcome of the conference was that we realized that

• not everybody is on the same level concerning eLearning
• people worked individually and not in partnerships
• staff has to be convinced that eLearning is useful and parents who wanted face-to-face teaching also had to be convinced of eLearning courses
• there is a lack of computer literacy so that students had to be trained on the basics (software);
• there is insufficient internet access in rural areas
• there is a lack of adequate computers
• there is a lack of strategic plans in the eLearning institutions
• often there is no budget planned for eLearning in higher education institutions
• there is no budget planned for the deployment of eLearning in schools at the ministries neither

The regional eLearning conference has become an annual event now and established a steering committee for the regional of East Africa.”

Alice Barlow-Zambodla, Senior Education Specialist/ Researcher, South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE)

“I work for a NGO focussing on research and development in distance education and I am working in a project of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) was formed as an educational trust in July 1992. Its explicit brief is to assist in the reconstruction of education and training in South Africa. It promotes:

- open learning principles
- the use of quality distance education methods and
- the appropriate use of technology.

SAIDE works closely with policy makers and providers of educational programmes to translate these approaches into practice. It contributes to new models of distance learning education. Its mission is to increase meaningful access to learning, promote open learning and the appropriate use of technology, to develop learner support systems, to build knowledge, to help to develop policy and capacity building in terms of materials development, management of distance learning and quality assurance. Quality means fitness for purpose, fitness of purpose, social and individual transformation as well as value for money. We provide digital spaces for team members and make material available to the widest possible use. This involves disseminating knowledge and active networking. We are, for example, also involved in the The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa.


The Project “OERAfrica”

OER Africa has been established in the belief that Open Educational Resources (OER) have a tremendously powerful positive role to play in developing and capacitating higher education systems and institutions across Africa. The project has been set up to ensure that the power of OER is harnessed by Africans for Africans to build collaborative networks across the continent.

OER Africa aims to:

- Work systematically with partners to enhance institutional capacity in higher education to design, develop, and deliver quality higher education programmes and materials;
- Advocate the merits of collaboratively creating and sharing intellectual capital in higher education as a mechanism to improve quality and enhance long-term cost-effectiveness; and
- Facilitate the re-development and reinvention of African higher education programme curricula and course materials in order to ensure that higher education programmes on the continent are of exceptional quality and direct contextual relevance, producing world class graduates.”

FOCUSING eLEARNING AFRICA – HOW MIGHT OUR VISION WORK IN AFRICA?

Challenges to Higher Education in Africa

When it comes to education, developing countries face various structural challenges. In the 21st century, knowledge has become the primary production source and gained more importance in comparison to capital and labour. African universities have encountered a dramatically increased number of enrolments. The number of teachers remains very limited, though. This holds true for Kenya, Cameroon as well as other African countries.

In Kenya the educational system is affected largely by the introduction of cost-free primary education. The number of students enrolled increased and currently there are not enough schools to accommodate this large amount of students. Due to free primary education the number of university enrolments also increases. As a consequence, the Open University of Kenya was established last year.

The COL is trying to come up with a strategy to tackle this problem, since Kenya is not the only country on the African continent facing this problem and Makarere University is even experimenting with mobile learning now.

Also in Cameroon the number of students going to university exploded. Each year 50,000 new students more are entering university. In 1993 only a single university, Yaoundé I, existed. Politics created further universities (the University of Buea, the University of Douala, the University of Dschang, the University of Ngaoundere, the University of Yaounde II and the University of Maroua) to react to the growing demand, but still it is not enough. New classes have to be created.

The role of UNU

What is the relevance of UNU’s work for your work in African universities?
Which role can UNU play concerning curriculum and course development?
How should the relation between UNU and African universities be?
What can UNU do considering that higher education falls under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education?

UNU could

• provide material that can be adapted to local needs, e.g. in fields of expertise such as Integrated Watershed Management, environmental security, etc.
• use the expertise from the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE), which deal with the issues that developing countries are facing. UNU already has a network of RCEs dealing with these themes spread over Africa.
• provide an electronic repository of material that could be translated for the use in African universities
• help to facilitate the contact with the respective ministry
• help to establish an open university
• also work with existing universities to establish quality in eLearning
• establish networks between African universities and encourage them to share experiences, make use of synergies and learn from each other as not to repeat the mistakes of the colleagues, but rather start from their success
• help to keep these networks alive, not necessarily by frequent conferences, but also by email, etc.
MISSION OF THE UNU

Where is the biggest opportunity for eLearning to help achieve a particular strategy?

Group discussion showed that “e-stuff” can actually be used to support all three strategic points:

1. Improving core activities, research, teaching, capacity development & sharing of knowledge
2. Strengthening collaboration with other UN organizations, the private sector & civil society
3. Renewing structuring & improving quality

Listed according to priority, participants identified the following components of the strategy as fields where eLearning has the biggest opportunities to help meet the goals:

1. Twin institutes
   - promote shared interest in quality: Creates need for both transparency and mechanisms to access quality
   - eLearning in twinning can stimulate examination + improvement in teaching (catalyst)
   - eLearning should be integrated into twinning from the start
   - twinning can make use of “e-stuff” which can assist in collaboration at a distance; support transparency
   - eLearning can be a “leveller” across distance with twins
   - concerns about funding
   - meeting real needs of both partners?
   - e-stuff might save funds
   - twinning and joint degrees can be supported with e-stuff
   - build database of existing twin institutions

2. Improving access to education
   - widening access to learning opportunities (not only to classroom teaching)
   - goal: make learning available to all
   - create new, reuse, remix, contextualise, localise content
   - provide flexibility in education delivery modes and processes (online, CD-ROM, print, individual learning, social learning, etc.)
   - need awareness and prioritization of learning (leadership, policy, etc.)
   - think bigger than “virtual classroom” or “university class” training, etc. → big view

3. Strengthen knowledge dissemination and sharing
   Open
   - access to journals and publications, UNU knowledge
   - reusable, modular; “one stop shop”
   - research paper etc for UNU
   - recognize key role of OpenCourseWare and OER
   - rethink eLearning policy to accommodate

Collaborative
   - foster collaboration between UNU units, library
   - set in place virtual capacity building unit

Target & Impact
   - customising our knowledge outputs to target groups
   - putting content where the audience is
   - sharing information and evaluating our existing impact AND
   - What about resources and incentives???

4. Cross-cutting Issues
   - interrelated net of aspects: goals, approaches, activities
   - 3 levels: sky, surface, fundament
- **Fundament**: open access + improved quality of learning
- **Surface**: create vibrant activities of twinning for degrees (joint)
- Develop coordination with partners, collaboration within UNU and strong leadership
- Research, knowledge production, dissemination and teaching are our assets
- **Sky**: reflects the guiding principles: strong internal collaboration, systems thinking and should in turn lead to an improved strong UNU brand
- At the heart, eLearning contributes to an exchange of information/communication within and allows to deliver degrees and have contact externally
- SEE PHOTO!
- E-Learning for degrees and research, eLearning as research field facilitation

**SUMMARY**
UPCOMING EVENTS

UN Workshop Technology Supported Learning in the UN System @Online Educa Berlin Conference, 3 December 2008

23rd ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education
Maastricht, The Netherlands, 7 - 10 June 2009
More information: www.icde.org

4th International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training
Dakar, Senegal, 27 – 29 May 2009
More information: http://www.elearning-africa.com/

FOLLOW UP

- writing e-stuff manifesto : elearning at UNU strategy
- creation of an e-learning group at UNU composed of the people involved in this field from the different UNU RTC/Ps to exchange ideas and find synergies and areas of collaboration in the field of e-learning
- creation of an online collaboration platform for the group
- stock taking of the e-learning activities, courses and materials available

ELEARNING PROJECTS

OpenCourseWare (LINK: http://ocw.unu.edu)
Asia Pacific Initiative (LINK: http://ecourse.tipg.net/)
E-governance UNeGov.net (LINK: http://www.unegov.net/)
Water Virtual Learning Centre (LINK: http://wvlc.uwaterloo.ca/)
Library of e-case studies (LINK: http://fieldtrip.unu.edu)
Our World 2.0 (LINK: http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/)
Virtual Campus for a Sustainable Europe (VCSE) (LINK: http://www.vcse.eu/)

ANNEX OF METHODOLOGIES

1. Human Spectogram

The Human Spectogram is a group exercise that helps to break the ice at the beginning of the workshop, in which a colored tape is laid out across an open floor. Ideally the tape stretches ca. 15 meters. One end of the tape is marked as “Strongly Agree”, and the opposite end is labelled as “Strongly Disagree”.
Participants are then read a short, controversial or extreme statement or a question. Those who agree with the statement or support the question are invited to move toward the “Strongly Agree” or “A lot” end of the line, positioning them closer to the end if their agreement is complete and towards the center if their agreement is mixed. Those who disagree with the statement or would answer “None/Never” are invited to do the same in the opposite direction.

The facilitator then “interviews” people along the line, asking them why they are standing where they are. Passion is encouraged in describing positioning, and listeners are encouraged to shift their position on the spectrogram as points are made which alter their thinking and perspective on the question.

Examples of statements and questions from the workshop included:

- How many languages do you speak?
- How often do you use a search engine?
- Do you think the search result is good quality?
- “I have taken an online course (curriculum, person in charge).”
- Did you ever learn informally from colleagues around the world using online tools (online groups discussing my profession, I read other people’s blogs, etc.)?
- Did you hear about digital natives (younger generation who naturally uses online tools)?
- “I would like to be in a lose affiliation of knowledge sharing (create win-win situation, find partners, relationship & visibility, create a virtual space or online community space or RSS Feed to keep in touch).”
- “I am interested in a smaller subset that wants to do some specific follow up of this workshop.”

Such statements and questions are deliberately structured to be vague and ambiguous, and participants are encouraged to interpret the statements in whatever way they see fit. The result is often an emergence of community and conversation amongst the participants. Also it helps to give a first impression of the topics and opinions that people want to explore and discuss. Spectrograms can also result in laughter, which is an excellent way to loosen up the atmosphere and make people feel comfortable.

2. World café

The World Café is a simple and effective method to get a medium-sized or large group of people engaged in a conversation with each other on a topic that shows the collective knowledge of the group. The methodology presupposes that
conversation between people is of fundamental importance.

The setting is rather informal and is supposed to resemble the relaxed atmosphere of a sidewalk café, at which people talk to each other casually. The participants are sitting at small table, not more than three to four people at each table. Due to the casual atmosphere and the small groups, people began to take interest in each other and to really listen to one another. They do not defend their positions, but are open to the others.

The world café is used to lead a conversation about a certain topic or question and gives visibility to the common answer of the group. Thus each participant might recognize new courses of action.

The world café is particularly useful when the knowledge of many people shall be used for a complex topic, when all participants shall be encourage to talk to each other and think about something together, when the common view on a particular topic or question shall be made visible and when the input of speaker shall be processed in a group.

The small groups are encouraged to write down their idea on the „table cloth“(white paper) and use illustrations if they like. After 15 minutes people begin to move and only one person of the group stays at the table as the “table host.”

The topic discussed during the UNU eLearning workshop was the vision for the future: “Imagine its 2012 and we are gathered back here in the room, discussing the success of the last three years. Think about one or two things you are most proud of. Write down these things on the red moderation cards and share your vision with the others at the table and then present them to the group.”

3. **ELearning Gallery Walk**

The Gallery Walk is a discussion technique that gets participants out of their chairs and into a mode of active engagement. It is used promote group discussion, higher order thinking, cooperative learning, and team building. A Gallery Walk can be conducted with computers, with pieces of paper on tables, or with posted chart paper. It can be scheduled for fifteen minutes or for several hours. For participants it is a chance to share thoughts in a more intimate, supportive setting rather than a larger, anonymous group. For instructors, it is a chance to gauge the depth of student understanding of particular concepts and to challenge misconceptions.

When the group returns to the station where it started, the group synthesizes comments and makes an oral report to the larger group. This stage of the Gallery Walk is a great chance for involving the entire group in discussion and to address misconceptions.

In the gallery walk the current strengths of the systems of eLearning at UNU were discussed. The method was used to find out what is happening in the field of eLearning at UNU and wider UN agencies and what assets to UNU can build on in the future.

4. **Dotmocracy**

Dotmocracy is an established facilitation method for collecting and prioritizing ideas among a large group of people. This group decision-making process is highly participatory and provides equal
opportunities. Participants apply dots under each idea to show which ones they prefer.

At the UNU eLearning workshop participants were asked to distribute their dots on the strategic points in order to indicate where they see opportunity for “e-stuff” to support this strategy point.

The final result is a graph-like visual representation of the groups’ collective preference.