



GUNI

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY
NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Pathways Towards a Shared Future: Changing Roles of
Higher Education in a Globalized World

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CONTEXT

Globalization, which also affects higher education, is an irreversible phenomenon that is here to stay.

The way it progresses will depend on the **global responses** articulated in the present and near future, especially by higher education institutions, which are responsible for generating and spreading knowledge.

We therefore have some **collective responsibility** for how we help to build societies.

CONTEXT

Higher education institutions, as well as the societies in which they operate, are currently undergoing a global **transformation process** in all contexts, although with **specific characteristics in various parts of the world.**

The **circumstances** are therefore ideal for a **critical and constructive analysis** of the role of higher education in the world.

CONTEXT

Humanity as a whole is now facing **major challenges** and profound problems related to coexistence and relations with the natural environment.

It faces unresolved problems of social injustice, marginalization, exclusion, poverty, human-rights violations, lack of democracy, corruption, fraud, armed conflicts, and a development system that leads to the exhaustion and over-exploitation of natural resources and contributes to climate change.

CONTEXT

More resources are now spent on education and knowledge generation than ever before. Science and technology have seen spectacular advances and global education rates at all age levels have reached historic highs. The **knowledge society** is truly starting to take shape.

We need therefore question what role higher education should play in its mission to generate and spread knowledge in the service of human society. Based on the intrinsic definition of this mission, higher education has to contribute to sustainable human development in the broadest possible sense.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF HE

HEIs are well positioned to link **the local and the global**.

This gives them considerable **access to and influence over change processes** in many societies, and may enhance their potential to contribute to human and social development.

They are therefore called upon to play a fundamental **role in building society**.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF HE

HE is responsible for training the professionals who attain the positions of **greatest responsibility** in society and the labour market.

The **decisions of professionals** can make a decisive contribution to the way life develops on this planet.

This decision-making can take place through approaches that are either positive or negative for the **global progress of humankind** and societies, in both developed and developing countries.

HE, therefore, plays a decisive and fundamental role in terms of the **teaching content, ethics, values and skills** it incorporates.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF HE

HE institutions are responsible for creating and spreading knowledge, and thus contributing to solutions to global problems.

The relationship between scientific research and social needs, mainly to **support political decision-making with implications for the collective well-being**, needs to be explored and analysed.

TOWARDS A NEW IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT

Concepts are appearing that appeal to the need to rethink the current development paradigm and our **collective social values**.

Such a shift in paradigm, reflected in policies, is a laudable goal. A number of **well-known global frameworks** and initiatives aim to support its achievement, including:

- The Millennium Development Goals,
- The Kyoto Protocol,
- Education for All, Food for All,
- The UNESCO Decade for Sustainable Development and
- The High-Level Group Report on the Alliance of Civilizations.

THE CHALLENGE FACING HE

In this global era, being **prepared as a citizen** who will interact with society **through the exercise of a profession** implies:

A deep understanding of sustainable development as a collective social process to be learned;

A need for common recognition and respect for different cultures for intercultural relations and support of diversity;

The ability to deal with an exponential expansion of technology, without losing the human capacity to put it to common human service;

The need to set aside fear in order to confidently cooperate on peace building.

THE CHALLENGE FACING HE

We therefore need to accept the **complexity of reality** and the interdependence of areas of knowledge in a real interdisciplinary approach to education.

THE CHALLENGE FACING HE

There is a need for real **engagement** between universities and society.

We also need to understand the role that universities will play in this engagement, particularly the ways in which they engage with citizens—both individuals and groups.

This may be achieved in part by the forging of new relationships by universities and the emergence of social and civic networks.

THE CHALLENGE FACING HE

There is a growing need to question:

The **paradigms of knowledge** and innovation that inform the research carried out in different contexts,

The relationship of research carried out by institutions to its application in wider society, and

The way in which social and human-development needs shape the research agenda.

We need to ask what should be the nature of the policy framework for research if we are to give attention to issues of **interdisciplinary research, participatory research, action research and collaborative research.**

GUNI Report

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

Volume 3

The report will explore the role of HE and HEI and their **contribution to human and social development** in the context of globalization.

We wish to provide a space for analysis, debate and proposals with regard to the role of knowledge in our society, in which we consider ***what knowledge for what kind of society*** and how universities define their role in this regard.