

A PROPOSAL FOR AN ITINERANT UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Global changes will have enormous and fruitful consequences on higher education resulting in great differences in comparison to the existing institutions. In the near future, knowledge will not be dominated by the universities where anyone can easily obtain a database. As Raschke (2002, 77) speculated about the postmodern future of the university we might witness major paradigm changes in our institutions of education: "Knowledge will no longer be transmitted en bloc, once and for all, to young people before their entry into the work force: rather it is and will be served 'al a carte' to adults who are either working or expect to be, for the purpose of improving their skills and chances of promotion, but also to help them acquire information, languages, and language games allowing them to both widen their occupational horizons and to articulate their technical and ethical experience."

Yet, universities will still be a necessity to supply support for academic researches and serve for cultural needs of the society. Therefore they are essential for the future of all individuals.

The important question is about how a new vision can be introduced. It will be a crucial challenge, to make the necessary changes without jeopardizing the existing identity of universities.

For Turkey to play a major role in the process of establishing "A New World Order", with its new agenda as a member of the European Union, many institutions in the country need to undertake duties and responsibilities. In that respect, universities are also obliged to carry out important functions.

Keynotes of a prospect for universities

- The ability of the universities, in embracing changes, will provide them a central role in the future economy.
- Competition and educational needs will be main incentives.
- Many lessons can be taken from the denationalization and commercialization.
- The most important points for the future university is to identify and analyze the economic power of their intellectual assets, in order to continue their long term financial success and social value.
- The major impact for changes in universities will come from the demands of governments and organizations, as well as individuals, who will be active in trying to reach the intellectual capital of the universities.
- Profit motives that will in the future inform the new market in higher education will cause a major difficulty for universities, which are on non-profit lines.
- Global collaboration between universities from different countries can create new synergies.

The changing nature of university mediated knowledge

- In the Western world, industrial revolution created newly educated entrepreneurs. For economic and military purposes, there has been an increasing application of university generated knowledge.
- It is a reality that university generated knowledge has great importance on social changes and economic progress.
- In the future, a highly educated work force will be critical to the economic success of tomorrow's international, national, regional, local, and the growing virtual communities.

- Basic literacy and primary education are no longer sufficient to assure an individual of personal economic and social viability, neither are they sufficient to enable a community's corporations to compete effectively on the world stage.
- In the future, individuals will have to be competent and comfortable in working with new technologies, although the level of readiness and will might differ to a great extent in accepting changes and learn new skills. They will be informed of the systematic nature of their communities, and thereof also in the importance of interpersonal skills and communications.
- Higher education must have the capability and means to provide students with skills and tools to build knowledge, learning and social capacities for attaining "world class" levels in the long term.
- Organizing transnational networks of information and communication can enhance the quality of education for all universities involved.

New economic constraints

- The trend towards a highly regulated but market controlled economy and a "meritocratic" social structure means that some individuals seem to want nothing more than marketable qualifications from a university rather than academic education. This is perhaps because of the increasingly high cash and other personal costs involved in gaining a degree.
- In order to protect their market and, if possible, to grow it, big and/or international companies are prepared to invest in research and education work force. Low-tech industries are either becoming third world operations at low wage rates or pursuing a high-tech agenda to provide sufficient added value to shareholder expectations.
- The number of customers, who are in need of services of universities, are growing. Both students and the beneficiaries of academe based consultant services are prepared to pay well for the perceived added value that universities offer will tend to drive change strongly.
- Around the world, government incomes are decreasing. There is pressure that comes from the citizens both to solve the social problems of the 21. Century (social exclusion, health, crime,

transport and basic education) and to reduce the level of government expenses.

- Therefore, the funds allocated for higher education and research are far from sufficient.
- Universities will have no alternative but to focus on implementing on market based strategies such as
 - To accept non-public sector funding
 - Knowledge sharing
 - Suitable teaching strategies
 - Technological partnership
 - Creating new resources
- Collaboration with universities in different countries will be a basic asset for universities determining their overall competence in education and research.

The "virtuous circle" of academic research

A research undertaking generates intellectual capital. Historically the direct economic and social benefit of university research has been and still continues to be knowledge transfer through the production of new, well-trained and educated graduates. In this traditional model only indirectly, unpredictably and at several removes do research outcomes themselves eventually accrue economic value. This intellectual capital can, however, be converted into an intellectual asset by a university, which can then itself seek commercial exploitation for the university's direct benefit. A good commercial outcome by way of, for example, constancy fees, license fees or sale can both generate a further research opportunity and the cash to fund taking up that opportunity. This commercial approach poses a risk that over time those departments that cannot or should not market their outputs for financial reward will become starved of funds and the whole society will be impoverished as a result. This should be and can be guarded against in a considered and structured way.

The civilizing and social role of universities is an important glue that binds our society together. Educational institutions that can hold on their own in a newly competitive world will have a clear and forward looking purpose that is perceived to have value to society - or they will not be able to maintain their preeminence as leaders of thought to whom

others will look for ideas and quittance. The leaders will wish to be more disciplined and strategic in where they focus and yet more intensive, interactive and professional in how they go about their research and teaching. There are difficult and important issues of academic freedom to be addressed and essential liberties to be defended.

Future university will employ advanced human resources, financial, operational, intellectual management processes and techniques in order to help its executive team to operate effectively in a more challenging environment. Its power and effectiveness in society will drive from international partnerships.

Global Expectations

In the future, businesses will need "more" new ideas and techniques to produce better services and products, which will differentiate them from their competitors. Universities, who cannot create such techniques, during this period of challenging economic context, will be disadvantaged.

In realization of intellectual capital, the universities will wish to obtain latest technologies to serve customers throughout the world. Yet they should not only focus on generating funds, but also be very concerned on serving social and cultural needs of society.

In the near future global universities will be created. The increasing economic value of education and research may lead these universities become commercial, to some extent.

The potential globalization poses a number of administrative, financial and cultural issues. The impact of these issues may bring unpredictable difficulties. Although individuals may have access to knowledge through computers, it is a necessity for them to get together to create a network and share personal experiences and benefit from lecturers. Although language difficulties may be solved technologically, English continues to be the common language, may even become more dominant and English learning should be emphasized.

An itinerant university model can offer to its students and customers the availability of an international pool of experts, databases, and services that are hard to reach otherwise.

Commercialization in Higher Education

One important question that arises is; would higher education institutions turn into profit organizations if government stops funding? Or, are there alternative opportunities for future universities?

Steve Fuller (2003), the prominent scholar of social and scientific epistemology, in a recent article, discussed the university as a social technology for the production of universal knowledge, from the perspectives of philosophy and policy. He relates the contemporary disintegration of universality in the university to the disaggregation of its three historic functions: teaching, research, and service. Our argument here is that the threat of market forces to future university autonomy can be reversed to a positive challenge.

High quality teaching deepens on high quality research where teachers convey their academic insights and knowledge to students. Teachers gain prestige (among more material benefits) from high quality research. Good universities attract good researches. There are significant synergies for those involved. The researchers themselves have strong incentives to monitor the quality of each other's work. The academics and their work become beneficiaries. The recycling of all profit into research is an appropriate application of the "virtuous circle" of research.

In contrast, commercial higher education organizations concentrate on teaching subjects that are readily defined. Subjects such as law or business are more amenable to commercialization than physics.

Both for-profit and non-profit institutions are very much likely to coexist in the future, too. But an itinerant university could combine and offer the services of both.

Proposal for an Itinerant University

The objectives of this proposal can be summarized as constructing effective cooperation and communication globally between various countries in order to enhance their development and progress in an atmosphere of peace and understanding. A center should carry out the establishment of an Itinerant University contributed by the academicians, communicators, and ministers and bureaucrats in charge of communication, belonging to the concerning countries; and the formation of a central data-base, which should accumulate and process all of the data and information about the political, legal, cultural, economic, social, technological etc. situation, capabilities and potentials of various countries to be used for the better understanding of each other as well as for all kinds of research, cooperation and business.

The short term objectives of the program should be establishing a thorough accumulation of information about the involved countries to be used for advanced research, co-projects in educational, cultural, economic etc. matters, multilateral trade and agreements, and better understanding of each other.

The long-term objectives of the program should be to improve and expand the existing state of relations in all areas, to be progressed through international cooperation. The Itinerant University should play a dominant role for the achievement of this goal, by developing programs and research projects; convening sessions, conferences and seminars; publishing reports and researches; co-producing educational and cultural programs to be broadcasted in their respective television and radio channels; and contributing the central data base in the accumulation, storage and updating of data and information available. The basic process of its implementation could be summarized in two phrases as: "periodical seminars" and "permanent communication/Information systems and networks".

We suggest the establishment of the proposed center in Istanbul, under the auspices of Yeditepe University, Faculty of Communications. The location of Istanbul which is situated in the intersection point

of the continents of Europe and Asia, would be the best possible place to establish such an international establishment serving multidimensional purposes at a global scale.

Since Yeditepe University is a polyglot university teaching in Turkish, English, French, German, and Italian the center would be able to be operated in these five languages. The center could be contributed financially and in other respects by the Turkish government and commercial/industrial circles for their benefit in utilization of political, economic etc. information which they need. Their contribution could be: financing the construction of the necessary buildings and providing the equipment. The personnel should be provided by the Yeditepe University.

The Itinerant University should be convened every year in one of the member universities. This practice should cause the cooperation to be based on an equitable and democratic setting, giving all members to play a dominant role when their turn comes.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions are facing new pressures. Decrease in government funds, global knowledge market, and the needs of customers for high quality education are some of the major problems for changes.

Universities are facing severe problems today. If changes in the Higher Education law are administrated properly there may be a new visor.

The future will be very positive for academics that grasp the opportunities presented by the New World. Academically strong institutions will be economically stronger and will provide better financial means for their academics.

The pressures for increasing commercialization, customer needs, administrative burdens, will not be optimistic for institutions that cannot adapt themselves to the new conditions.

For us there are huge opportunities to carry forward higher education as one of the brightest hopes for banishing ignorance and want, fostering civilization and bettering the lives of everyone on the planet. Let us go forward in hope and with enthusiasm towards an educated world. The Itinerant University model can become a major catalyst in activating the positive aspects of globalization, merging various national and regional experiences in the common pot of universal knowledge and disperse this synthesis all over the globe.

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